

Health Co-benefits of Climate Action Webinar: November 2024

Summary Report

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Contents

Summary 3

Introduction and Background..... 3

Webinar Programme 4

 Participants 4

 Agenda 5

Webinar Feedback 7

 Post-webinar feedback received: 7

Acknowledgements 10

About the UK Health Security Agency 12

Summary

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Health Protection Research Unit (HPRU) in Environmental Change and Health undertake work to increase the evidence base around the health impacts of environmental change, including the broader health co-benefits of climate action. Communication and dissemination of this evidence is imperative in order to increase understanding around the topic across multiple organisations and ensure that important research findings are disseminated. A broad range of stakeholder organisations were invited to a 70 minutes stakeholder webinar, held in November 2024, to share and discuss key pieces of research work from the HPRU in this area. This report presents an overview of the webinar and key feedback received from attendees. Overall, there was a lot of interest from attendees in finding out more about the health co-benefits of climate action and general positive feedback about the event. Future events could provide a series of more in depth events on one topic and involve stakeholders in discussions around implementation of the evidence.

Introduction and Background

The UK has committed to reaching net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050. Actions to reduce GHG emissions can benefit health by limiting warming and averting some of the anticipated adverse health impacts from climate change. Actions to reduce GHG emissions may also have other additional positive impacts on health, known as health ‘co-benefits’ for example, improvements in air quality from reducing fossil fuel burning.

In 2023, UKHSA published the Health Effects of Climate Change in the UK (HECC) report, with Chapter 14 “Net zero: health impacts of policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions” delivered under the HPRU¹. The HPRU also conducted a public involvement and engagement workshop with the HPRU’s Public and Patient Involvement and Engagement (PPIE) group - known as PLANET (Public Led & Knowledge Engagement Team), to explore public perceptions of the health co-benefits of climate change mitigation actions. The workshop, held in July 2023, was based on the main themes within the HECC Net zero chapter, with PLANET members asked to reflect on different areas for net zero actions,

¹ The Environmental Change and Health Protection Research Unit (ECH HPRU) is funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) and provides research to support decision making relating to the impacts and responses to the environmental changes that affect our health. Further information can be found at this link: <https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/research/centres-projects-groups/hpru-ech>.

where they think responsibilities around these actions lie, as well as any potential barriers to these actions, and communication of these issues to the public.

General feedback from the PLANET panel was that this area is heavily policy focussed, and although it is beneficial to communicate these actions to the public, it is also important that the health benefits of these actions are better communicated to decision-makers and other stakeholders, as there were lots of questions relevant for these groups relating to how policy shapes and enables uptake of climate mitigation actions. Therefore, work was carried out towards a stakeholder-facing audience including 1) a webinar on the health co-benefits of climate action and 2) a governmental stakeholder workshop. This summary report will focus on 1) the stakeholder webinar.

Webinar Programme

Delivering action to reduce the UK's GHG emissions, and actions and policies which can affect our health are not limited to one sector or organisation. To meet the UK's 2050 net zero goals it will be necessary to enact policy across multiple sectors. Policy enacted outside of the health sector can still have impacts on our health, and thus it is important to increase awareness of the potential health co-benefits or unintended consequences for health of climate action, to maximise opportunities for health co-benefits of decarbonisation for the UK population.

A one hour and ten minutes stakeholder webinar was held by the UKHSA and HPRU on the 4th November 2024 to present key pieces of evidence in relation to the health co-benefits of climate action across four sectors: housing, transport, food, and greening and nature-based solutions. The aim of this webinar was to share and disseminate research and evidence from the HPRU to increase understanding of the potential health co-benefits of climate action to a wide audience of stakeholders.

Participants

A broad stakeholder audience was invited through a range of UKHSA and HPRU distribution channels. There were 362 registrations for the event and 241 attendees on the day at the time of the event. Representatives were included from multiple national government organisations, local authorities, NHS, charities and academia.

The webinar was run by UKHSA Climate and Health Assessment Team (CHAT), with technical support from UKHSA External Affairs Team, with planning support from HPRU partners. The webinar was held online via Microsoft Teams Webinar functionality.

Agenda

A series of topic-specific talks were given from researchers working within the HPRU followed by a 20-minute question and answers session run through the MS Teams Q+A function:

	Item	Speaker	Time
1	Welcome and intro.	Dr Helen L Macintyre	14:00 – 14:05 (5 min)
2	The potential health co-benefits of climate action: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Housing and indoor environment 2. Transport Interventions and health 3. Agriculture and food 4. Greening and nature-based solutions 	Dr Giorgos Petrou, Dr Christina Mitsakou, Prof. Rosemary Green, Dr Jennifer Israelsson	14:05 – 15:05 (10 min presentations followed by 20 min Q+A)
3	Summary and Close	Dr Helen L Macintyre	15:05-15:10 (5 min)

Dr. Helen Macintyre began the session with an introduction and overview of potential health co-benefits of climate action, drawing on findings from the HECC Net zero chapter that highlighted key co-benefits to health from action on climate, while noting that there may be some potential unintended consequences that can be managed with careful design and implementation .

Dr. Giorgos Petrou presented on the health considerations associated with housing retrofit and indoor environmental quality within housing stock. Issues such as different housing retrofit scenarios, improved indoor air quality and also the need for adequate ventilation to prevent potentially unintended impacts were discussed.

Dr Christina Mitsakou presented on the potential health implications of transport interventions. Issues including reductions in exposure to air pollution, increasing active travel and transport interventions around schools were discussed. The presentation covered various transport related interventions including decarbonising transport (electric vehicles, zero emission cars), low emission zones (localised policies in areas with high air pollution), active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling) and public transport and sustainability (shifting journeys from private vehicles).

Prof. Rosemary Green presented on the potential health co-benefits from agricultural and dietary change. Topics such as meeting healthy dietary guidelines, changes in production and consumption behaviours to meet GHG targets and potential health improvements from swapping certain food groups were discussed. The environmental impacts of different food groups were shown in terms of greenhouse gas production, land use, freshwater use, eutrophication and biodiversity impacts. A combination of production and consumption changes' impact on both air pollution and additional health co-benefits was discussed in detail.

Dr Jennifer Israelsson finished the presentation session by presenting on the health co-benefits from greening and nature-based solutions. The presentation discussed different nature-based solutions (e.g., woodland areas, urban greenspace) on both physical and mental health impacts, health inequalities in relation to greenspace and also touched on some potential risks of these strategies such as vector habitats and allergies and management of these.

The webinar was concluded with a 20 minute question and answers session for attendees, who submitted questions through the MS Teams Q+A function.

Key themes that emerged from the Q+A session alongside technical questions on presentation content were:

- How can organisations support and work together to ensure that this evidence is included in decision making when implementing interventions and at a local level?
- An interest to see how different solutions or pathways impact different population groups differently.

Topic Specific Questions

Questions related to housing included the impact of both heat and cold on mortality, objectives for installing air pollution monitors around homes and planning permissions for heat pump installations.

Questions around transport interventions included about how active travel impacts on exposure to air pollution, tyre/brake wear pollution and monitoring of this, logistics of providing the right areas for active travel to be accessible and achieving the infrastructure for electric vehicles.

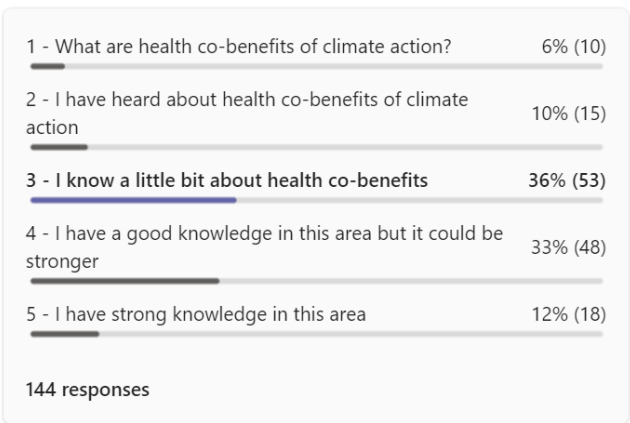
Agriculture and food-related questions include topics around protein intake when switching from meat to plant-based diets, interventions for increasing fruit/vegetable intake and how these worked, and healthy plant-based alternatives to meat.

Greenspace and nature-based solutions questions included topics such as how to choose the right plant species when putting in greenspace and questions around tick surveillance and how to manage change of this in the future.

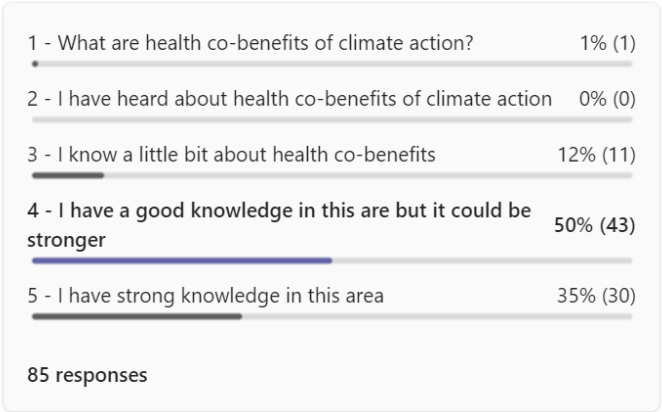
Webinar Feedback

A poll was run at the beginning and again at the end of the webinar to gauge knowledge of the audience both before and after presentations were given. Overall, knowledge improved: the most common response shifted from “3 – I know a little bit about the health co-benefits of climate action” to “4 – I have a good knowledge in this area but it could be stronger”(to note that there were less respondents to the second poll due to some attendees having left the event).

Poll run at the beginning of the webinar:

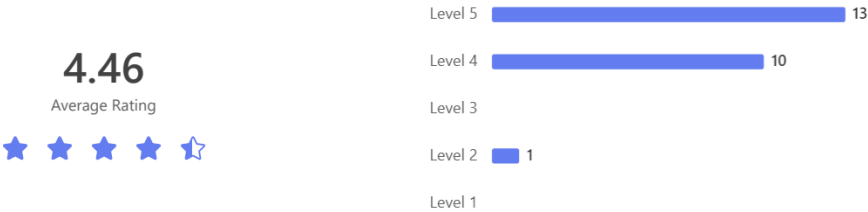


Poll run at the end of the webinar:

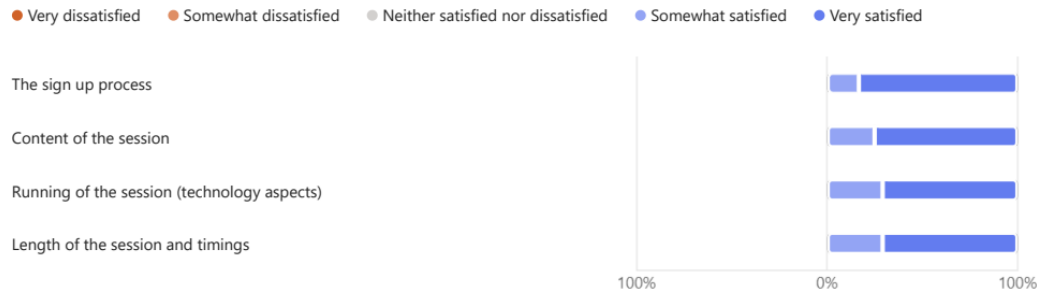


Post-webinar feedback received:

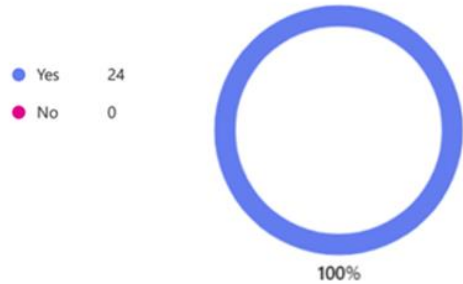
1. Overall, how satisfied were you with the event?



2. How satisfied were you with the following aspects of the event?



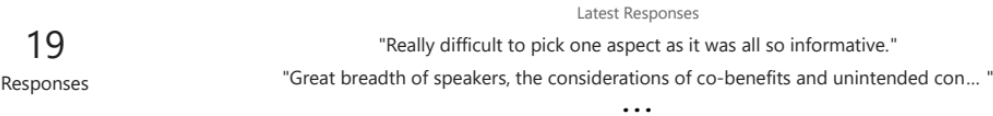
3. Would you like to see more events like this in the future?



4. Were your expectations of the event met?



5. What did you like most about the event?



6. How could the event be improved?

17
Responses

Latest Responses
"I felt the timings and content were excellent."
"More of them!"
...

Feedback responses were received from 24 participants across a range of organisations, sectors and roles including:

Environmental Scientist, Non-Departmental Public Body
Scientist, Non-Departmental Public Body
Senior Health Protection Practitioner, Local Health Protection Team
Improvement Practitioner - NHS
Environment & Sustainability Manager – Council
Co-ordinator
Senior Specialist – Non-Departmental Public Body
Public Health Lead – County Council
Climate Science Advisor
Health Protection Manager, Local Council
Research fellow, University
Chair, Global Climate Health Alliance
Advisor, Non-Ministerial Department
Senior Analyst – County Council
Project Support Officer
Public health Specialist – City Council
Public Health Specialist
Knowledge Transfer Facilitator, Ministerial Department

Clinical Fellow, NHS

Infection Prevention and Control Sister, Local Community Health Centre

The above are summaries of all responses generated by MS Forms. Overall, feedback was very positive with 96% of respondents rating the event either 4 or 5 stars out of 5 and all participants wanting to see more of these events in the future.

The most commonly reported positives from the webinar were:

- Knowledge and presentations of the speakers
- The running of the session online, allowing for attendance remotely
- The variety of topics covered within the presentations
- A good Q+A session
-

The most commonly reported improvements for the webinar or suggestions for the future include:

- Potentially running a series of webinars on each of the topics to allow for an opportunity for more in depth conversation and presentations
- Improved advertisement of the event
- Involvement of stakeholders in discussions about how this can translate into implementation at different levels and in different settings

Acknowledgements

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- Dr. Giorgos Petrou (University College London)
- Dr. Christina Mitsakou (Air Quality and Public Health Team, UKHSA)
- Prof. Rosemary Green (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine)
- Dr Kerry A Broom (HPRU Knowledge Mobilisation Manager, UKHSA)
- Mel Darvill (External Affairs Team, UKHSA)
- Graeme Larkin, Will Maule (Policy Team, UKHSA)

About the UK Health Security Agency

UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) prevents, prepares for and responds to infectious diseases, and environmental hazards, to keep all our communities safe, save lives and protect livelihoods. We provide scientific and operational leadership, working with local, national and international partners to protect the public's health and build the nation's health security capability.

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