Our vision is a world in which health is improved as climate change is solved.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter from the Chair</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter from the Director</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timeline of health and climate advocacy</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our vision and mission</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our focus areas</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018: Our impact</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study: The Lancet Countdown on health benefits from the UK Climate Change Act: a modelling study for Great Britain</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018: Our impact in numbers</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An overview of our finances</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plans for 2019</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to get involved</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“The Alliance has gone from strength to strength this year.”

Healthcare professionals have always been vocal in urging more action on climate change and the Alliance is the successful culmination of these efforts, highlighting the important and far ranging health benefits of climate change mitigation from infancy to old age, both nationally and internationally. The significant achievements of the Alliance in 2018 demonstrate that the voice of health professionals is becoming a more and more important force as the imperative to act grows.

“the voice of health professionals is becoming a more and more important force”

Over the last year, the Alliance has impacted political debates on air quality, the role of the NHS in decarbonisation and the need to phase out greenhouse gas emissions entirely. Its success is founded on an excellent team and its diverse healthcare members, providing a combined and united voice for some 650,000 health professionals across the UK.

As we look forward to another successful year, the Alliance will seek to become evermore representative of the geography of the UK and the variety of health professionals that serve its people. If you’re interested, get in touch. Together, our voice is stronger and a vibrant unified health voice in climate change debates is more important than ever. Enjoy reading about our successes this year – and we look forward to working with you in 2019.

“I am delighted to be joining the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change at such a pivotal time and look forward to continuing to support the vital work it does on behalf of health professionals.”

In the coming year we will ensure that the voices of the health community are heard in discussion on how to mitigate climate change and improve public health. We will continue to engage with the Government on air quality and active travel and launch a new strand of work on healthy diets and their interrelationship with climate change. As a movement we will debate our membership structure and seek further funding to expand what we do. I look forward to meeting and working with all our members and supporters in the coming months and unlocking the potential of the Alliance to make a real impact.
2018 was a big year for the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change. Highlights include co-launching a major academic study showing the health benefits of meeting the UK’s climate change commitments, releasing a new all-member policy position on air pollution and participating in another excellent Clean Air Day, this time with an event in Glasgow. As a result, this year the Alliance has led the UK health profession’s response to climate change.

While 2018 was a successful year for the Alliance, the threat of climate breakdown is growing. In particular, the global scientific community unequivocally warned the world that a 12 year window remains to avoid catastrophic climate change. Only a few weeks later, it become clear that carbon emissions actually increased in 2018, after a couple of years of growth.

The need to rapidly decarbonise societies around the world is now acute. As The Lancet Countdown’s latest report showed, the negative health consequences of climate change are growing and are set to be catastrophic if we continue as we are. This is why, at the end of the year, the Alliance and its members wrote to the Prime Minister, calling on the government to commit to full decarbonisation, uniting the health profession in calling for the only appropriate response to the climate change threat – to end the release of greenhouse gases.

But, as the Alliance has always argued, the actions needed to stop climate breakdown are also those that will make us healthier anyway. Phasing out polluting vehicles reduces air pollution while enabling us to replan cities; increases in cycling and walking improve health; more sustainable diets are healthier diets. What is good for your health is good for the planet, and the Alliance will spend 2019 growing its activities and impact to realise a world in which health is improved as climate change is stopped. Time is running out and the voice of health professionals in the UK can play a crucial role in stimulating adequate action.

It has been a pleasure to lead the Alliance over the last year and I am very excited for what it will achieve over the next. Thank you to everyone who made 2018 such a successful year.
Timeline of health and climate advocacy

2007
The Climate and Health Council was formed, with the mission to:
Inform about issues related to climate change and global health
Affirm beliefs on a personal and professional level
Advocate a global framework for action
Innovate by developing and supporting new solutions
Disseminate key information to those in a position to help

2008
NHS Sustainable Development Unit founded, with the purpose of embedding the principles of sustainable development, social value and the wider determinants of health across the health and social care system in England.

2009
The Lancet and University College London Institute for Global Health Commission name climate change as “the biggest global health threat of the 21st century.”

2011
The Global Climate and Health Alliance (GCHA) was formed. Alliance members are health organisations from around the world, united by a shared vision of a sustainable future. The GCHA works to tackle climate change and to protect and promote public health.

2015
World Health Organisation holds its first conference on climate change and health, where WHO director general Margaret Chan states, “The evidence is overwhelming. Climate change endangers human health. Solutions exist and we need to act decisively to change this trajectory.”

2015
The Lancet Commission on Health and Climate Change concludes that “responding to climate change could be the greatest global health opportunity of the 21st century.”

2016
The UK Health Alliance on Climate Change is formed, with the mission of bringing together doctors, nurses and other health professionals to advocate for responses to climate change that protect and promote public health.

July 2018
The UK’s Environmental Audit Committee report into the UK’s resilience to extreme heatwave concludes that heat-related deaths are likely to dramatically increase, unless the government takes coordinated action with local authorities and the NHS.

September 2018
Public Health England and the Sustainable Development Unit release a report showing that the NHS is making significant progress in decarbonising – the health and social care carbon footprint has reduced by 18.5% between 2007 and 2017, which equates in scale to the annual emissions of Mauritius or Cyprus. Simultaneously, some indicators of NHS clinical activity are up by 27.5% over the same period, signalling an effective ‘decoupling’ of clinical growth from carbon emissions in much the same way as the UK economy has grown while its emissions have fallen.

October 2018
World Health Organisation holds its first conference on air pollution and health in Geneva.

October 2018
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report states that we have only 12 years to reduce our emissions by 45% to keep global warming to 1.5C (compared to 1990 levels). The report warns that warming beyond this level is likely to significantly increase the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people.

November 2018
The health case for UK net-zero emissions lands. YouGov polling commissioned by the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change finds that 79% of healthcare professionals support the UK adopting an aim to cut its carbon emissions to zero, and the Alliance publicly calls for a net-zero target. Meanwhile, The Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change releases its 2018 report, stating “trends in climate change impacts, exposures and vulnerabilities show an unacceptably high level of risk for the current and future health of populations across the world.”
Our Vision

While climate change stands as the greatest health threat of the 21st century, the actions needed to halt climate change can unlock large health co-benefits. The Alliance was formed in reaction to these profound threats and opportunities to help drive an accelerated policy response.

Accordingly, the vision of the Alliance is a world in which health is improved as climate change is solved.

This vision divides into four components. We want a world in which:

1. Action to mitigate climate change is urgently accelerated in order to protect health.
2. Health is promoted in the process, through maximising the health co-benefits of actions to mitigate climate change.
3. Resilience of health systems to the impacts of ongoing climate change is improved.
4. Policymakers, health professionals and the public are also aware of and responding to other environmental changes, and are aware how these may interact with climate change and impact on health.

Our Mission

The role of health professionals

Health professionals protect and promote the health of individuals and populations. The Medical and Nursing Royal Colleges, Faculties, Societies, Journals, and other health professional associations do this through their work on clinical standards, advocacy, education and training – raising the quality of care through the excellence of their clinician members and fellows. This leads to doctors, nurses and other clinical professionals working on illness prevention as well as on the treatment of illness.

Health professionals have a crucial role in responding to climate change, including by:

Advocating: As trusted members of society, they can be powerful messengers advocating for safer and healthier climate change policies from national and international governments. They understand that the health impacts are being felt today, and that they are being felt in every country. Advocacy for health has always been an essential element of the work of healthcare professionals, and that advocacy works at an individual patient level, at a family and community level and at a national level.

Mitigating: Many of the most effective climate change mitigation policies have the potential to yield unprecedented health benefits. By engaging with energy, transport, agricultural and infrastructure decisions, health professionals can ensure that policies which benefit both public health and the environment are implemented.

Adapting: Health system strengthening and improvements in community health are among the most effective adaptation strategies available. By ensuring populations and health systems are more resilient, health professionals can minimise the harm caused to vulnerable populations by climate change.

Leading: They can lead by example to help directly reduce emissions in their local clinic or hospital, or by encouraging patients to take actions which are good for their health – for example, reducing red meat consumption or walking or cycling to work – and for the climate. These changes often improve patient quality of care and reduce cost pressures on overburdened budgets.
Actions to mitigate climate change can also be those that improve health, beyond reductions in climate change-induced ill health. These are health benefits that could have been realised even without the climate change threat; this threat should act as a final impetus to realise these health benefits. The Alliance has identified three priority areas where action on climate change can deliver an immediate and direct improvement in UK public health:

**Sustainable Diets**

There are local and global implications for the environmental and social impacts of the food we produce and consume. 20% of global carbon emissions are from agriculture and food, and agriculture is the biggest driver of deforestation and associated biodiversity loss across the world. Furthermore, we have an obesity crisis. Therefore, the Alliance has recognised the food system as an area that needs addressing if we are to meet our Paris commitments, as well as an area where big health co-benefits can be unlocked.

**Active Transport**

The need to encourage individuals to participate in physical activity has never been greater. Over half the population do not reach a healthy level of activity, with wide variations between groups, sufficient to cause ill health. Analyses have concluded that the cost of this inactivity in the UK is over £20 billion a year. There are greater intangible costs too – in the UK, lack of physical activity is acknowledged as one of the top four factors responsible for premature deaths and long term diseases (alongside smoking, alcohol and poor nutrition), and is considered a key driver for health inequality. By encouraging a shift away from polluting and unsustainable transport, the promotion of active travel is incredibly beneficial to our health and the environment, bringing with it savings to the public purse and happier communities.

**Air Quality**

Air quality is a key issue for the Alliance and its members. This is because of the large negative health impacts of air pollution, which range from asthma to diabetes, and have an estimated mortality impact of up to 40,000 deaths a year. Estimates of the resultant costs to society and the economy exceed £22 billion. In turn, actions to limit air pollution not only reduce the burden of poor air, but can improve general well-being through increases in physical activity and by helping to mitigate climate change.
2018 was a busy year for the Alliance. The increasing importance of the issues we are addressing was noticed – by the public, healthcare professionals and governments, both regionally, nationally and internationally. Climate change more generally was consistently at the top of the news agenda, with many landmark political moments taking place this year. Alongside this, the effects of climate change were more visible than ever before. Within the UK, the Alliance firmly established itself as the leading voice of healthcare practitioners on climate change.

Our main focus area for 2018 was air quality. In October we released an all-member policy position paper, Moving beyond the air quality crisis, launched at Great Ormond St Hospital. The report was featured in the Times and the Guardian. This body of work was used to feed in to the ongoing development of the Government’s Clean Air Strategy.

On the 21st of June, we partnered with Global Action Plan for Clean Air Day – a national day of action to inform the public about air pollution, its health impacts, and how to reduce it and protect health. The Alliance hosted a panel debate in Glasgow, which was an opportunity for supporters to hear about the air quality crisis in Glasgow and Scotland more widely, the solutions for tackling it and the health benefits that are realised in the process. To coincide with this, we also released a public facing information brochure, Air pollution and your health: how bad is it and what can you do?

Coinciding with Green Great Britain week, we launched Greener Hospitals, Healthier Communities, a briefing describing how a more strategic approach by the NHS to its local and national impact could drive more sustainable outcomes. It includes case studies of previous initiatives by NHS Trusts, draws on the work of the Sustainable Development Unit, and puts forward policy recommendations for central government.
Finally, in December last year we launched our campaign for net-zero emissions, landing the health arguments for complete decarbonisation. On the day the The Lancet Countdown 2018 Report was launched, the Prime Minister received our missive – signed by a senior representative of each UKHACC member organisation – asking her government to commit to a plan of achieving net-zero carbon emissions before 2050. Our letter was reported by the Telegraph, BBC 5 Live News, Business Green and the BMJ.

This was the beginning of our campaign for net-zero emissions, which will continue throughout 2019. It will be our primary focus for next year, and serve as the umbrella rationale for all of our focus areas and activities.

Alongside all of the above, our outputs included a monthly newsletter, which has seen its subscriber base grow over 400%, daily social media activity, where our Twitter followers have more than doubled, regular broadcast and print media appearances and over 30 talks given by the Alliance secretariat at conferences and events.

We also responded to six government consultations:

1. Defra consultation on its proposed Clean Air Strategy
2. Environmental Audit Committee’s enquiry on Planetary Health
3. Defra consultation on single-use plastics
4. DfT & Defra call for evidence on brake, tyre and road surface wear
5. The Transport Committee enquiry on Active Travel
6. Defra consultation on the environmental principles and accountability for the environment post-Brexit

Call to speed up petrol car ban

Ben Webster, Environment Editor

A ban on sales of new diesel and petrol cars should be brought forward a decade to 2030, according to groups representing 600,000 doctors, nurses and scientists.

The UK Health Alliance on Climate Change (UKHACC), which includes the royal colleges of GPs, surgeons and nursing, the British Medical Association and the Faculty of Public Health, want a new clean air act to tackle sources of air pollution, which causes up to 40,000 deaths a year in Britain. In a report published today they note that Norway has pledged to ban the sale of conventional cars by 2035 and countries such as India have more ambitious plans for boosting sales of electric cars.

The Commons business, energy and industrial strategy committee recommended this month that the ban should be brought forward to 2022.

The UKHACC also wants government spending on walking and cycling to double to £20 a year per person by 2020 and calls for more government funding to help local authorities introduce clean air zones in towns and cities.
The Lancet Countdown on health benefits from the UK Climate Change Act: a modelling study for Great Britain

The UK Health Alliance on Climate Change was the policy and communication partner for the launch of this case study published in The Lancet Planetary Health journal on 27 April 2018. This involved a policy brief and policy round-table, launch event and media and social media outreach. The Alliance effectively mobilised its communications network and partners to ensure a successful launch.

The launch event, held on 30 May at the Royal Society of Medicine, included presentations and interventions by King’s College London, RCPCH, RCS, Committee on Climate Change and Medact.

The Alliance prepared a joint press release with The Lancet Countdown focusing on the findings of the study, particularly the anticipated reductions in nitrogen dioxide air pollution if the UK meets its climate change targets. The Alliance secured quotes from three of its members: RCGP, BMA and RCPCH. In total, the story gained 318 media hits in print and online, including ITV News, Daily Mail and the Evening Telegraph. Martin Williams, the lead author of the study, also spoke on Today Programme (BBC Radio 4) and Laurie Laybourn-Langton, Director of the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change, was interviewed by Sky Radio.

The UK Health Alliance developed a policy briefing based on the findings of the study in collaboration with The Lancet Countdown, and organised a policy briefing for government officials and key partners. The lively policy discussion was attended by 18 representatives from across government and the Alliance membership, including the Department for Business Enterprise and Industrial Strategy and the Committee on Climate Change, Defra, RCGP, RCS and RCN.

318 press stories, with an advertising value equivalent of 10.7 million Euros, and a potential reach of 6.2 million people
2018: Our impact in numbers

4 reports launched:
- Moving beyond the air quality crisis
- Greener hospitals, healthier communities
- The Lancet Countdown on health benefits from the UK Climate Change Act: a modelling study for Great Britain
- Air pollution & your health: how bad is it and what can you do?

Representation of over 650,000 healthcare professionals

Over 10 roundtables hosted, including representatives from government, the NGO sector and other high-profile stakeholders

Over 600% increase in website users, equating to over 20,000 page views

The second half of 2018 saw UKHACC receive around forty print and online media mentions and ten broadcast appearances, bringing the total media hits for the year to around seventy.

1700 Twitter followers

6 government consultations responses

400% growth in newsletter subscribers

30+ talks given by UKHACC staff nationally

Featured in:
- The Guardian
- The Telegraph
- The British Medical Journal
- BBC News
- FT Health
- Business Green
- El Pais
- BBC 5 live
- ITV News
- Daily Mail
- Evening Telegraph
- Food Active

An overview of our finances

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1. Air quality & active travel

The huge health co-benefits that can be unlocked when tackling air pollution as a climate change contributor, and the timely policy relevance of the issue mean that in 2019 action on air quality will be a key priority for the Alliance. We will be feeding into the ongoing development of the Environment Bill by encouraging government to adopt our key policy calls.

Detailed strategies will be developed that will outline the activities we believe will achieve our aims, this will include hosting roundtables ensuring our messages are heard by government, conducting polling to demonstrate support and working with relevant stakeholders to achieve our aims. Our work on air quality will be interwoven with our work on active travel, as two intrinsically linked areas. You can find all the latest policy calls in our report, *Moving beyond the air quality crisis.*

2. Food and diet

Food and diet is a relatively new area for the Alliance, so 2019 will involve us establishing an all-member policy position for this area. Our work on food and diet will form part of our work calling for net-zero emissions.

Our policy work in this area will explore what policy change is needed to make us a healthier nation, while also minimising the environmental impact of the food system. Much like with air quality, food and diet is an area where there are many health co-benefits that can come from improving the food system to mitigate climate change.

3. Extreme Weather

This year, forest fires, droughts and subsequent crop failures swept across Europe, during one of the continent’s hottest summers on record. The UK experienced the driest summer on modern records, the European heatwave being reported as two and five times more likely because of global warming.

The Alliance will provide a credible health voice in policy debate around heatwaves and other extreme weather like floods, and also help inform the public about the dangers of heat to health and our planet.

The Environmental Audit Committee report into the UK’s resilience to extreme heatwaves concluded that heat-related deaths are likely to dramatically increase, unless the government takes co-ordinated action with local authorities and the NHS. Globally, the cost of natural disasters is also increasing – 2017 was the most expensive year for natural disasters globally, costing the insurance industry $135billion (£103.45billion) in inflation-adjusted losses.

4. Membership and governance

This year we will be reviewing our membership and governance structure to ensure we remain fit to face the challenges to climate and health. Our Council will advise and work with us, as we diversify our funding base and expand our activities, to ensure our collective voice is heard and we achieve maximum impact.
How to get involved

What you can do:
Read more about our current policy positions, recent consultation submissions and other Alliance activity at www.ukhealthclimate.org/resources
Sign up to our newsletter at www.ukhealthclimate.org
Follow @UKHealthClimate on Twitter

Membership
Our membership is made up of organisations that represent an aspect of the UK health professions, and/or are involved in their education or professional development.

If you are an organisation interested in joining the UKHACC, please contact our Director, Nicky Philpott: nicky.philpott@ukhealthalliance.org

Contact
We are always interested to hear thoughts on our work.

UK Health Alliance on Climate Change
C/O BMJ Publishing Group
Tavistock Square
London, WC1H 9JR
info@ukhealthclimate.org

For media enquiries, please contact:
Dr Claire McLoughlin, Communications Manager
claire.mcloughlin@ukhealthalliance.org

For policy and public affairs enquiries, please contact:
Antonia Jennings, Policy and Public Affairs Manager
antonia.jennings@ukhealthalliance.org
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