Written submission from the Scottish (Managed) Sustainable Health Network (SMaSH)

Background

The Scottish (Managed) Sustainable Health Network (SMaSH) is a network of professionals with an interest in the relationship between sustainable/unsustainable development and health and their impact on resilience. The majority of members are from a public health background, but the Network also benefits from membership and input from other health professionals, non-clinical NHS colleagues and other public sector organisations. The SMaSH Network believes that sustainable development action is one of the most important public health opportunities through which substantial and achievable gains for population health can be made, and the goal of sustainable development is necessary for ensuring that the basic needs and quality of life for everyone are met, now and in the future. SMaSH is hosted by the Scottish Public Health Network (ScotPHN). ScotPHN is part of NHS Health Scotland and is also accountable to the Scottish Directors of Public Health.

Comments

SMaSH welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the draft Climate Change Plan.

We applaud the ambitious emission targets set for some sectors although seek assurance from the Scottish Government that the necessary resources and technologies are available to meet these targets and these technologies have been proven to be safe and effective at scale. In this respect, we are aware of, and support, the written evidence supplied by the NHSScotland Sustainability Steering Group on this point, though SMaSH will continue to support NHS sustainability managers and facilities colleagues to reduce carbon emissions on the NHS estate.

SMaSH’s main remit concerns the relationship between sustainable/unsustainable practice and health. We were pleased to see that the draft plan recognises that mitigation actions may have negative and positive consequences in other areas especially health. This position aligns with the Paris agreement, which the Scottish Government welcomed. At Paris in 2015, the Conference of Parties (COP 21) finally recognised climate change as a health issue due to the many impacts now and in the future. It also acknowledged the many co-benefits to human wellbeing and resilience in mitigation and adapting to climate change (para 109).1

We suggest that the plan requires that in meeting the climate change duty, all the identified sectors must consider the positive and negative health consequences as result of mitigation or adaptation actions. This could in part be accomplished through a formal requirement for health impact assessments (HIA) to be undertaken during the planning phase of mitigation actions. In addition, health outcomes should be captured whilst monitoring the effectiveness of mitigation activities. These requirements would ensure that the co-benefits to health are identified and optimised, and threats to health from climate change mitigation actions are recognised and managed appropriately. We would hope this will be reflected in the evaluation and monitoring framework of the Climate Change Plan. It is important that
the anticipated health consequences as a result of mitigation actions are monitored and reported. Additionally there should be flexibility in the plan and monitoring framework to allow information on unexpected health consequences to be recorded.

SMaSH would welcome the opportunity to work with the Scottish Government on planning for and monitoring of the positive and negative impacts on health from climate change mitigation and adaptation actions.

1 Adoption of the Paris Agreement (2015): Enhanced Action Before 2020, para 109

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