

Applying Climate Just in Liverpool

Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust



Architect's impression of new hospital building (under construction) and new green space alongside © John Cooper Architecture

1. SUMMARY

The Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust is one of the largest and busiest hospital trusts in the North, with three hospitals over two sites and a major rebuilding programme underway to replace the existing Royal Liverpool building. The Trust has a pro-active approach to climate change adaptation and is working on this as part of its NHS sustainability commitments. It is using Climate Just as part of its approach to help engage and influence staff and partners.

2. CONTEXT

All NHS Trusts are expected to have a board-approved [Sustainable Development Management Plan](#) in place to articulate their sustainable development objectives, including carbon reduction and climate adaptation, and to report annually on their progress in taking action. Such plans help Trusts to meet legislative requirements, save money, increase efficiency and manage risks. Support for this is provided to NHS Trusts and other parts of the health and social care system by the national [Sustainable Development Unit](#) (funded by NHS England and Public Health England). The Royal Liverpool Trust launched its first such plan in March 2014 and has reported its progress and future plans to the Trust Board since with an annual [Sustainability Plan](#).

The expectation in national guidance to make commitments and take action on climate adaptation was welcomed, but the guidance (from 2014) lacks definition about how to do this in practice. The Trust, in response, commissioned a research project from the University of Liverpool 'Exploring the role of NHS Trusts in planning for climate change adaptation using the Royal Liverpool University Hospital as a case study'. This was undertaken by a Master's student for their thesis and aimed to clarify the role of an NHS Trust in undertaking adaptation.

One of the conclusions from the thesis 'Education, communication and leadership have emerged as the strongest roles for these [healthcare] organisations and within the academic literature the role of health professionals in education and communication of issues relating to climate change and health is particularly emphasised' is helping guide the Trust's approach to the issue.

3. ACTIVITIES

Following the Trust's participation in a Climate Just training event in January 2016, information from Climate Just has been included in the Sustainability Plan 2016 – 17, a map of surface water disadvantage in Liverpool (showing significant areas of acute disadvantage) and four adaptation commitments:

1. Provide guidance for staff of the predicted impacts of climate change
2. Review existing patient guidance
3. Identify schemes to use our estate and assets as best practice
4. Identify partners to work with to increase community resilience

1. The Trust surveyed staff in April 2016 to find out what knowledge they had about climate change impacts and adaptation to help establish a baseline. Training is now being developed with some external support which will be piloted with targeted groups of staff (building on sustainability training already provided as part of internal training and development). The aim is to raise staff awareness about the unequal impacts on socially vulnerable groups (drawing from Climate Just maps, data and research) and to explore appropriate responses, according to people's professional responsibilities.

2. The Trust aims to use existing guidance on the management of severe weather impacts as appropriate, but to supplement this where needed and to make it more locally relevant. As an example, the annual Heatwave Plan produced by Public Health England now incorporates additional guidance for health and social care professionals, but the aim is to interpret this in a Liverpool hospital context.

3. Thanks to the current investment in new facilities, the Trust will soon have some good examples of estate based adaptation actions to showcase. The new Royal Liverpool Hospital building will incorporate a number of sustainable design features, including high energy efficiency, ground source heating and cooling and rainwater collection (to be reused in toilet flushing). A new, high quality park will also be created, linking to other green space nearby, helping create a larger area of green infrastructure.

4. Extreme weather events may result in local health impacts, particularly amongst socially vulnerable people that require hospitalisation. As an acute hospital, the Trust's role is to respond by treating people once they come in the front door, rather than take a more preventative approach, as this role is more down to primary care and public health providers. However the Trust recognises the importance of proactive partnership working across NHS and other organisations in order to make a difference and is seeking local partner organisations with an interest in adaptation, to help facilitate joint projects. This builds upon an already established Knowledge Quarter Sustainability Network in Liverpool which has helped bring together interested people from a number of large institutions and facilitate joint working.

4. USING THE TOOL

The use of Climate Just has been led by the Trust's Head of Sustainability who first encountered the tool in a previous role in the Fire Service that included work on climate adaptation. Its potential value to an NHS Trust was clear from the outset and the Climate Just map visuals have been particularly appreciated for their value in engaging staff. The Climate Just training in January 2016 was found to be helpful, though using the tool back in the office has been more challenging.

5. BARRIERS AND PRINCIPLES

NHS Trusts, particularly acute hospitals, are large and complex organisations with a wide range of statutory responsibilities and targets. It can be difficult to introduce, justify and respond to new concepts like climate disadvantage, particularly when there are more immediate demands and resource pressures. However, having a committed and knowledgeable champion with the backing of national guidance and the support of the Trust Board does enable progress to be made.

6. CONTACT

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