

Communicating the Health Impacts of Climate Change: A Toolkit for Healthcare Workers

“Saving the planet is no longer just a scientific challenge but a communications challenge”

- Sir David Attenborough



Foreword

Climate change is no longer a distant concern—it is here, shaping the health and wellbeing of our communities right now. As healthcare professionals, we stand at the intersection of science and compassionate action. Every conversation we have with patients and with each other offers an opportunity to create a healthier, more sustainable future.

This toolkit is more than a resource; it is a call to leadership. In the Scottish Borders, we see firsthand how flooding, rising temperatures and changing weather patterns affect the most vulnerable among us: older adults, children, those living in deprivation, and those whose livelihoods depend on agriculture. These challenges are profound. However, by connecting climate action with health benefits, we can inspire hope and strengthen resilience.

Our role is clear: to speak with confidence, to act with purpose, and to lead by example. The evidence is compelling—climate action is the greatest global health opportunity of the 21st century. Cleaner air, active travel, sustainable diets, and greener spaces are not just environmental wins - they are prescriptions for better health.

Let's use this toolkit to empower conversations that matter. Together, we can turn concern into action and ensure that the Scottish Borders remains not only a beautiful place to live, but a safe and healthy one for generations to come.

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Glossary – Understanding Key Terms and Concepts

 **Climate Change** - Climate change affects us all. It refers to long-term changes in global temperatures and weather patterns. These changes are increasingly linked to more extreme, and unpredictable adverse weather events such as heatwaves, floods, storms, and wildfires.

 **Sustainability** - Sustainability means meeting our current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. It's about living within the limits of our planet's resources.

 **Sustainable Development** - True sustainable development balances three pillars:

- **Environmental protection**
- **Social fairness**
- **Economic viability**

All three must be valued equally—none should dominate the others.

 **Triple Planetary Crisis** - This term describes the three interconnected global challenges:

- **Climate change**
- **Pollution**
- **Biodiversity loss**

 **Pollution** - Pollution is the introduction of harmful substances (pollutants) into the environment. It can be caused by natural events (e.g. volcanic eruptions) or human activities such as transport, manufacturing, and agriculture.

 **Biodiversity and Ecosystems** - **Biodiversity** refers to the variety of life including plants, animals, and microorganisms in a given area.

- An **ecosystem** is the complex web of interactions between living organisms and their environment.
- **Biodiversity loss** occurs when species and ecosystems disappear, disrupting the balance of nature and affecting human health.

 **Climate Change Adaptation** - Adaptation means preparing for the impacts of climate change that cannot be avoided. It includes:

- Adjusting to current climate and weather patterns
- Planning for future changes based on scientific projections

 **Climate Resilience** - The capacity of a social-ecological system to cope with a hazardous event or disturbance, responding or reorganising in ways that maintain its essential function, identity, and structure, while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning and transformation.

Communicating about Climate and Health: Toolkit Overview

There is a growing public interest in environmental issues and the health impacts of climate change. Public surveys increasingly show that people are concerned about climate-related health risks and are open to conversations about how climate action can improve health outcomes.

This toolkit is designed to support **healthcare workers who want to talk about climate and health in the Scottish Borders**. It provides practical guidance and confidence-building resources to help communicate effectively and take meaningful action. You do not need to be a climate scientist to talk to the people you work with about climate change. If you are concerned the impacts on health climate change is already causing, you are already in a good position to start conversations that really matter.

The aim of this toolkit is to support you as healthcare workers here in the Borders to:

Deepen your understanding of how climate change affects health and how climate action supports better outcomes.

Gain confidence to discuss climate and health with patients and colleagues.

Support actions that reduce carbon emissions and improve resilience in healthcare settings.

Discover local initiatives that align environmental sustainability with improved health and wellbeing.

Why this Resource was Developed – A Scottish Borders Perspective

Staff in NHS Borders are uniquely placed to help communities understand how climate change could affect them and to promote actions that help to protect both people and the planet. Research¹ shows that health professionals are highly trusted sources of information around the world, and that presenting information about the health harms of climate change is an effective communication strategy that leads to enhanced engagement on the issue.²

¹ Chen, Vasudev, Szeto, & Cheung, 2018; Clemence, 2020; Reinhart, 2020; Ipsos, 2019

² Maibach, Sarfaty, Mitchell, & Gould, 2019

Communicating the health impacts of climate change in the right way is important and can make a real difference.

The Scottish Government and NHS Scotland acknowledge the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution and their interlinked impacts on human health. NHS Scotland recognises that addressing these challenges can deliver significant co-benefits for health and wellbeing.

Work is ongoing across NHS Borders to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change that will protect and improve population health, increase health systems and services and protect the NHS Estate. Departments across the Board are taking action to reduce carbon emissions and improve sustainability whilst balancing patient care across a diverse geographical area against the impacts of climate.

Why Climate and Health Communication Matters

“Climate Change is the single biggest health threat facing humanity”

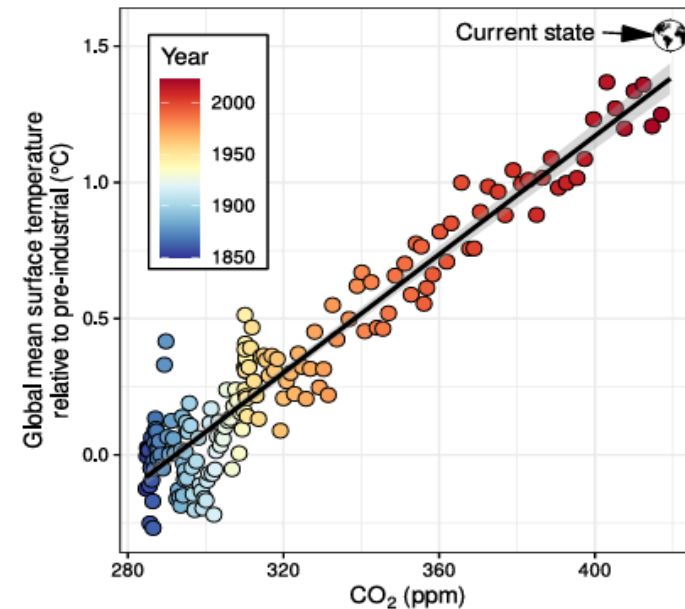
- World Health Organisation

Climate change describes long-term alterations to weather patterns and temperatures. This is not a new concept and has been occurring for millions of years due to natural events. Since the industrial revolution however, human behaviour has been a major driver of climate change due to the burning of fossil fuels which has released greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. These have acted to insulate the earth and cause artificial warming, which in turn is anticipated to cause many

other impacts. The risks of this are now considered to be extremely imminent, and without global effort are going to have huge implications for the health of the population.³

Climate “tipping points” are thresholds where warming can trigger rapid, self-reinforcing changes in major Earth systems (like ice sheet loss, dieback of major forests, or disruption of ocean circulation), making impacts much harder to stop or reverse. If several tipping points are crossed, they can amplify each other and push the planet toward a far more dangerous “hothouse” pathway, with long-lasting disruption to the conditions that support societies. For health, this raises the risk of larger and more persistent harms to population health through more extreme heat and weather, reduced food and water security, displacement, and wider knock-on effects on health systems and wellbeing. While there is uncertainty about exactly when specific tipping points may be reached, the potential impacts are so severe that they strengthen the case for urgent emissions reduction and robust adaptation planning now.

B Modern historical temperatures and CO₂

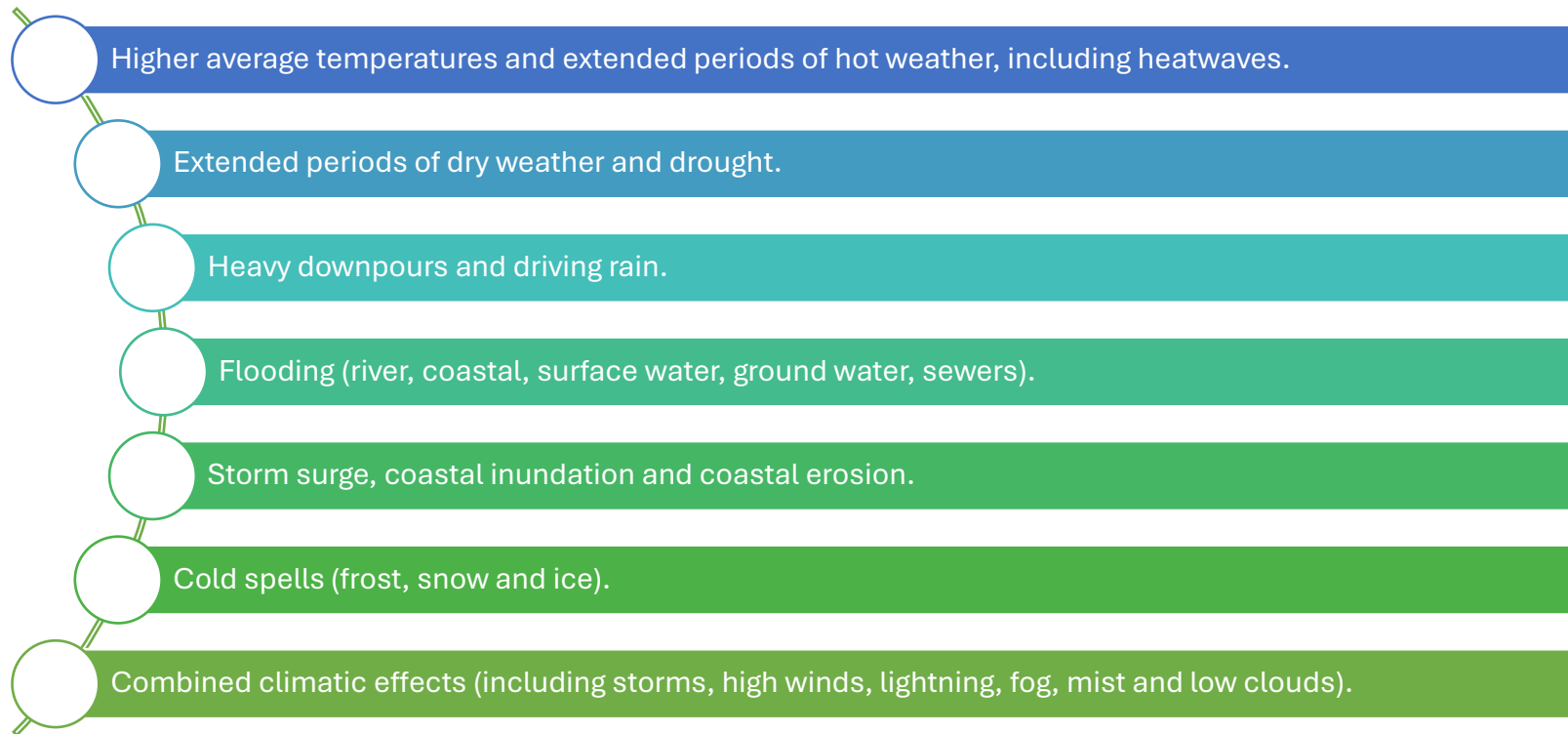


(Ripple et al, 2025)⁴

³ [Climate Change and Health Impacts Scottish Borders report](#) (2025)

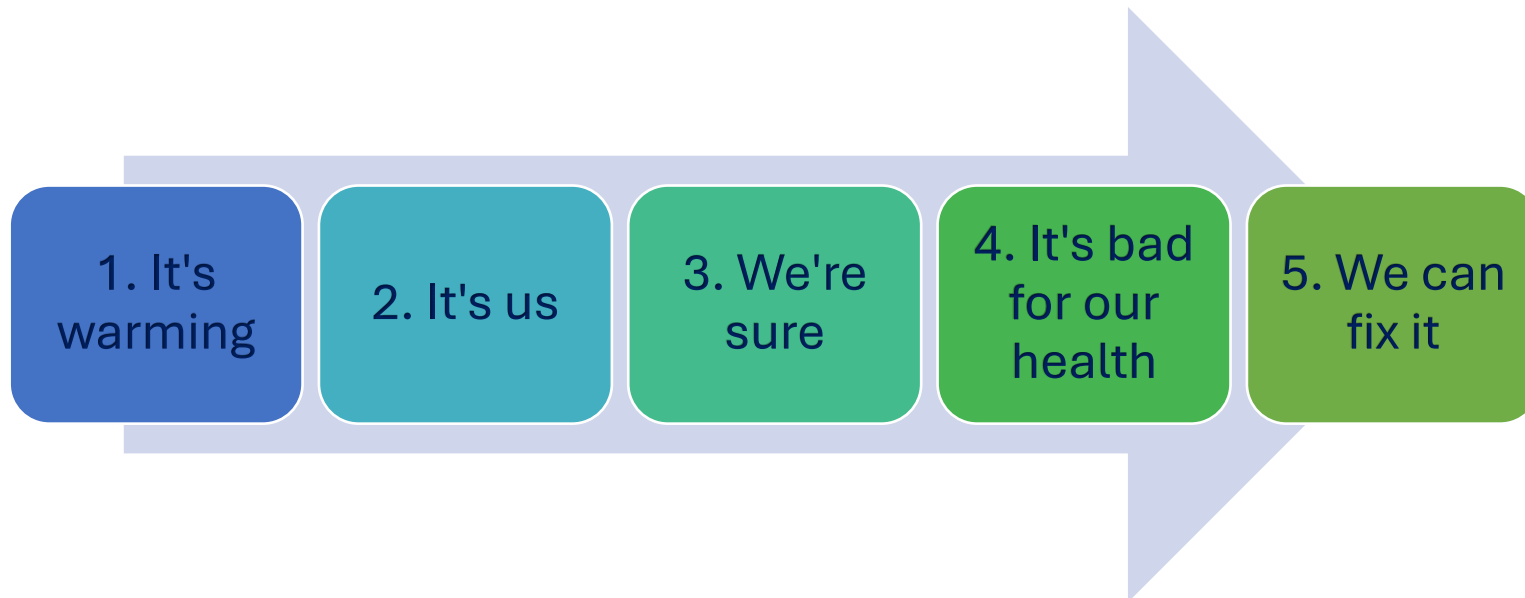
⁴ [The risk of a hothouse Earth Trajectory, Ripple et al \(2025\)](#)

In Scotland, climate hazards include:



The World Health Organisation reports that ‘there is conclusive scientific evidence showing that greenhouse gas emissions are warming the globe, leading to an accelerated pace of climate change. The past 10 years have been the warmest on record, and the average surface temperature is already more than 1.1°C higher than pre-industrial times. Over the last four decades, tens of thousands of peer reviewed scientific articles have been published on climate change. Periodically, these

are synthesised by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to give a comprehensive review of climate science. This robust scientific process confirms these five points again and again'.⁵



If you understand these five points, you know enough climate science to be an effective climate communicator

⁵ Communicating on climate change and health: toolkit for health professionals. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2024.

Health Impacts of Climate Change

It is now acknowledged that climate change is already affecting the health of people in Scotland, including in the Scottish Borders. The possible direct and indirect health harms of climate change are outlined in a recent report published by the Department of Public Health, NHS Borders in 2024 [Climate Change and Health Impacts Scottish Borders report](#).

Consequences of climate change for the Scottish Borders

-  Temperatures will increase overall
-  Winters will be warmer and wetter
-  Summers will be drier and warmer, but with more intense rainfall events
-  Cold weather events will continue in the short-medium term
-  More severe weather events will occur including more weather warnings and named storms
-  There is an increased likelihood of flooding events
-  Sea levels will rise and coastal erosion will worsen
-  Water scarcity may worsen, with private water supplies being particularly vulnerable
-  Water quality could be negatively impacted as a result of many types of weather event, and again impact private water supplies to a greater extent
-  There is the potential for increased high risk wildfire days as temperatures become much warmer



The likelihood of landslides will increase



Migration will likely increase



Biodiversity of the area will change which brings with it many risks, but can also present opportunities for new types of crops and livestock



Changes to air quality will occur over the next century, depending on the extent and speed of mitigation and adaptation measures

The health impacts from climate change are difficult to fully estimate. They are nuanced, interdependent, and may change based on action to mitigate climate change, behaviour changes in the population, and global events that are unpredictable at this point in time. There is more evidence for some of the health impacts than others; namely the impacts of flooding, heat and cold, and vector borne diseases. The health impacts that are anticipated, and summarised below, are based on current evidence and modelling which may change in the future as more information comes to light.

Direct Health Impacts

-  **Mortality**
-  **Vector Borne Disease and Zoonoses**
-  **Infectious Diseases**
-  **Mental Health and Wellbeing**
-  **Respiratory Disease**
-  **Cardiovascular Disease**
-  **Renal Diseases**
-  **Cerebrovascular and Neurological Conditions**
-  **Skin Condition**
-  **Cancer**
-  **Maternal Health**
-  **Eye Conditions**
-  **Injuries**
-  **Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke**
-  **Hypothermia**
-  **Bone Health**

Indirect Health Impacts

-  **Damage to Infrastructure and Access to Services**
-  **Ability to Care for Physical and Mental Health**
-  **Migration**
-  **Food Supply and Safety**
-  **Measures to Mitigate or Adapt to Climate Change**
-  **Chemical Exposure**
-  **Change in Behaviours**

People most at risk in Borders

-  **Older adults** are particularly vulnerable to the changes in climate. The older adults of today are at risk of current climate changes, but it is important to remember that the 45 - 64 year age group are those that are likely to be most vulnerable to the impacts that are anticipated by the 2050s (which in Borders is our current largest proportion of the population).
-  **Children, pregnant women and those with pre-existing health conditions** are vulnerable to many of the same consequences of climate change. Especially at risk are those who: are unable to alter their living environment, those who are homeless, those who use substances, and people with poor mobility and other disabilities.
-  Those who live in the **most deprived areas of Borders** are at risk of many of the impacts of climate change due to their baseline vulnerability and inability to adapt quickly to any severe weather events or infrastructure. They are also at risk of some of the mitigation and adaptation measures for climate change if these are not carefully considered.
-  Those who **work in agriculture** are at risk of the effects of climate change, particularly flooding and drought. There are opportunities within this sector as well, in terms of crop and livestock type and yields, although this is a careful balance with the imminent risk to this type of livelihood. In Borders a large proportion of our population are employed in this industry.
-  **Rural communities** are especially at risk due to the lack of infrastructure currently in place in these areas, the remoteness of the settings, the type of employment that is available, and the ecosystems present in more rural areas. Flood disadvantage (the combination of living in an area at flood risk and the degree to which socially vulnerable communities are disproportionately affected by flooding) is greater in dispersed rural communities.
-  Those who live in **coastal communities** are at risk of sea level rises and coastal erosion. Flood disadvantage is also high within coastal areas.
-  Those who live in new builds or purpose-built flats, care home, hospital sites and education settings are at risk of overheating and ventilation issues.
-  Individuals who **work outdoors and in manual labour** jobs are also at greater risk from increased temperatures.

Climate Anxiety – Children and Young People

The Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) for the Scottish National Adaptation Plan 2024-2029 states that in 2022, the [Mental Health Foundation](#) found that in the UK, more than 2 in 5 young people (41% of those aged 18 to 24) reported that thoughts and feelings about climate change have a negative impact on their mental health. 42% of young people aged 11 to 25 surveyed across all local authorities in Scotland reported that climate change was one of the most important issues for young people in Scotland today⁶.

In 2019, [BBC Newsround](#) polled children on a variety of climate-related issues:

- 62% of 8-16 year olds in Scotland were **worried about climate change**.
- 61% of 8-16 year olds in Scotland felt their voice was **not being listened to** when it comes to climate change.
- Roughly **one in five** 8-16 year olds in Scotland reported thinking about climate change had kept them awake and or stopped them from eating (21%) or that they have previously had a bad dream about climate change (19%).

Co-benefits for Health and Wellbeing

There are still opportunities to act, to mitigate or adapt to the predicted impacts that climate change will bring. If these are carefully managed and considered, they can present co-benefits for health as well as climate.

“The greatest global health opportunity of the 21st century”

- Lancet Commission on Managing the Health Effects of Climate Change

⁶ Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) for the Scottish National Adaptation Plan 2024-2029

Health co-benefits of climate action can be described as the benefits to population health, wellbeing, and equity beyond those directly linked to climate change. Climate actions can deliver positive outcomes for health in a number of ways.

Climate action brings significant health co-benefits alongside its environmental impact. Measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to changing conditions can improve air quality, leading to lower rates of respiratory and cardiovascular diseases and reduced mortality from air pollution. Warmer temperatures and improved outdoor environments may encourage more physical activity and time spent in nature, which supports mental wellbeing, lowers blood pressure, and reduces risks of chronic conditions such as dementia and type 2 diabetes. Increased sunlight exposure can also boost vitamin D levels, benefiting bone health and immunity. Additionally, climate-driven changes in agriculture and dietary patterns, such as a shift toward plant-based diets can improve nutrition and reduce risks associated with zoonotic diseases and antimicrobial resistance.

Adaptation strategies offer further health benefits by addressing social and environmental determinants of health. Improving home insulation enhances thermal comfort, reduces cold-related illness, and alleviates fuel poverty, while active travel initiatives cut emissions and promote physical activity. Expanding access to green spaces fosters mental wellbeing and lowers obesity and cardiovascular mortality. Community-led climate initiatives can strengthen social resilience and connectedness, improving overall wellbeing. Thoughtful implementation of these measures can also reduce health inequalities, ensuring that climate action supports both planetary and population health.

Your Role as a Healthcare Worker

Healthcare workers are considered by many to be trusted communicators and educators who, on a daily basis, have many conversations with patients and colleagues as well as family and friends. Every conversation can inspire action and build public support for climate solutions. The evidence is clear that healthcare workers can make a difference by talking about climate change.

There are many ways you can act:

Taking Action

- Look out for **climate updates** coming through organisational staff share communications.
- Talk to colleagues, patients and friends about **small changes you can make** in your work or personal life to be more sustainable. Small actions add up, and because most people are concerned about climate change, many are already making changes.
- Post on **social media** about climate action.
- Use this toolkit to support **community engagement**.
- Share **local examples of climate action** and how this can improve health and wellbeing.
- Complete the NHS Scotland sustainability course to **deepen your understanding**: [Environmental sustainability and climate change | Turas | Learn](#)
- Be familiar with tools and **resources that can help with your conversations**, for example – NHS Borders, [Ways to be well](#) or the [SBCAN](#) website, Health Impacts of Climate Change in the Scottish Borders report [Climate Change Health Impacts report](#)

Top Tips for Communicating the Health Impacts of Climate Change

Know your audience and goal:

- **Tailor your message** - depending on whether you are speaking to patients, peers or the public.
- **Define your goal** – what is your intention? To inform, empower, reduce anxiety, or advocate for change?

In the UK the majority of people accept climate change is a problem but don't see how it can be fixed, so:

- **Make it doable** – balance urgency with story telling that points to solutions.
- **Normalise action not inaction** – acknowledge what has already changed, and that 8/10 people are concerned, while you talk about the need for further action
- **Keep it down to earth** – use accessible language, bringing everyone in, avoid jargon and beware that 'net zero' is not well understood. Be aware that using language like 'climate crisis' or 'climate emergency' in a clinical setting with patients can cause fear and have unintended consequences.

Climate change is often considered an environmental issue, but connecting it to health can boost understanding and engagement

Below is a list of key messages and examples of how to communicate about the health impacts of climate change.⁷

⁷ Sources: Kate Llewellyn, Head of Training and Engagement at [Herd Climate](#) and Ed Maibach, Director of Climate Change communications at WHO

Key Message	Description	Example
Empower people to make good decisions about their health.	Reinforce with people that they can protect themselves from the impacts of climate change and that this may reduce feelings of anxiety.	“Heatwaves can affect your heart, here’s how to stay safe.” “Climate change is making asthma symptoms worse for many people, but with the right plan, you can keep well.”
Use simple, clear messages.	Effective messages are those that are simple and repeated often by trusted sources.	“What’s good for the climate – clean air, active travel, green space, is good for your health too.” “A changing climate means more heat, more pollution, and more illness. Protecting the planet protects your health.”
Connect the planet’s health with our health.	Use concrete examples and metaphor where relevant.	“In NHS Borders, we know that caring for our communities begins with caring for the place we call home. When the land, air, and water around us are healthy, our people have the best chance to be healthy too.”
Talk about climate change as a health problem and not an environmental problem.	This helps to localise the issues, so they are not abstract to other countries in the world. And talking about the health benefits of climate change makes it real for people in our communities.	“Climate change is a health issue because it affects your breathing, your heart and your wellbeing, not just the environment.” “When the climate changes, it shows up in our health first. More breathing problems, heat stress and illness.” “It’s not only about the planet, it’s about keeping you healthy.”
Talk about health impacts focusing on your local context	The health impacts can change across the world, for example air pollution, heat exposure, food insecurity and extreme weather. Talk about climate change during extreme local weather events where appropriate.	“We’re already seeing the health impacts, let’s talk about it.”

Talk about the health benefits of climate action and let people know that taking action is good for our health	The solutions include renewable energy, active transport, local plant rich diets and protecting green spaces.	“When we take steps that are good for the planet, we often end up improving our own health at the same time.” “Small climate-friendly choices, like walking more or cutting air pollution can protect the planet and your health together.”
Tell stories to connect with people	If you have personal experience of witnessing the health effects of climate change, share the story in a respectful way.	See some of the examples in the next section – Local Initiatives That Aim to Increase Environmental Sustainability and Improve Health and Wellbeing, page 20
Where appropriate, identify policy solutions	Talk about clean energy, improved community design or community resilience.	“Climate action is a win-win for health and the economy.”
Affirm helpful social norms	Reinforce that caring about climate change puts you in the majority.	“Most people are concerned about climate change because they care about their families’ health, so you’re in good company.” “You’re not alone in this. The majority of people want cleaner air, safer home, and a healthier future.”
Don’t debate the science	Redirect back to professional expertise and the links between climate change and health.	“I’m here to look after your health. What we’re seeing in healthcare is that changes in weather, air, quality, and heat are already affecting people’s breathing, heart health, and wellbeing.” “My job isn’t to convince you about climate science, it’s to let you know what’s impacting your health. The conditions we’re seeing more often in clinics line up with changes in air quality, temperature, and extreme weather.”

Support Local Initiatives that Aim to Increase Environmental Sustainability and Improve Health and Wellbeing

Across the Scottish Borders, community groups and local organisations are already taking practical steps that protect the environment and strengthen health and wellbeing. Getting involved in climate action can be a positive, connecting experience that promotes cleaner air, more active travel, greener spaces, and a stronger sense of purpose and community. The examples below highlight some of the many local initiatives you can join, whatever your interests, time, or starting point.



Case study: Scottish Borders Climate Action Network (SBCAN)

Scottish Borders Climate Action Network (SBCAN) is part of the Scottish Government's regional climate hub programme and is delivered by Southern Upland Partnership, the work of the hub supports communities across the Scottish Borders to take practical climate action that also strengthens health and wellbeing. Through its signposting, events and community action mapping, SBCAN helps people find local groups and activities that reduce emissions while improving everyday quality of life, such as walking, wheeling and cycling initiatives, community growing and food projects, and community-led work to improve homes and energy use. This approach makes climate action feel more achievable and more personal, focusing on benefits people can experience now, including cleaner air, warmer homes, more time outdoors, and stronger social connection.

A good example is SBCAN's annual *Borders Act for Change*, which brings together thousands of people and dozens of organisations to take part in local, positive actions throughout February. By encouraging communities to do something tangible, whether that's trying active travel, hosting a repair event, or joining a local nature or food project, SBCAN helps turn concern into hopeful action. Taking part can boost wellbeing by building confidence and skills, creating opportunities to meet others, and reinforcing a shared sense of purpose and community resilience alongside measurable climate benefits.

A selection of initiatives across the Borders is outlined below, grouped by theme or interest. These support climate and environmental aims, while also having positive impacts on health and wellbeing through social opportunities, nature-based activities, and helping to take climate action.

Active Travel



Active travel including walking, wheeling and cycling supports better health and a healthier climate. Choosing to cycle for everyday journeys helps people build physical activity into their routine, can improve mental wellbeing, and reduces air pollution that contributes to respiratory and cardiovascular disease. It also cuts emissions from car travel, helping protect the environment that underpins our health. Community based cycle hubs play an important role by making cycling more accessible through bike loans and hire, training, and basic maintenance support which helps more people feel able to give cycling a try.

For details of the cycling hubs in the Scottish Borders and what they offer: [Cycle Hubs in Scottish Borders](#)

- ❖ Cycling Routes: [Cycling tours in the South Of Scotland - Scotland Starts Here](#)
- ❖ Walking routes: [Walks and trails | Scottish Borders Council](#)
- ❖ Active Travel [Active Travel — SBCAN](#)

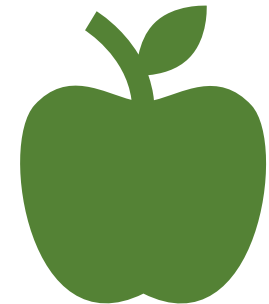
Local Food

“Sustainable Healthy Diets are dietary patterns that promote all dimensions of individuals’ health and wellbeing; have low environmental pressure and impact; are accessible, affordable, safe and equitable; and are culturally acceptable.”

- UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO)

Local food and sustainable food systems offer a clear opportunity to **support both health and environmental wellbeing**. Eating a balanced, more plant-rich diet that includes plenty of fruit, vegetables, wholegrains and pulses supports heart health and helps reduce the risk of long-term conditions. Beyond nutrition, cooking and eating together can strengthen confidence, skills and social connection, all of which are important for mental wellbeing and resilience within communities.

Choosing locally produced and seasonal food can also make healthy eating more accessible while **supporting local livelihoods and reducing food waste**. From an environmental perspective, climate-friendly food choices and local growing can help lower emissions associated with food production and transport. These choices also help protect the natural systems, such as soil quality, water and biodiversity, all of which our health depends on, highlighting the close link between sustainable diets, climate change and population health.



Healthcare workers can use these messages to explain how everyday food choices can deliver “co-benefits” for health, communities and the climate. Signposting to local initiatives such as community gardens, food partnerships and sustainable food projects can help people feel empowered to make changes that are good for their health while also contributing to climate action at a local level.

Healthier dietary patterns can be aligned with frameworks like the British Dietetics Associations One Blue Dot project which provides guidance, such as their Environmentally Sustainable Diet Project.

YouTube Video for more information: <https://youtu.be/Psut5dk05qg>

Local projects that support food sustainability include:

- ❖ [The Food Foundation Peebles](#)
- ❖ [The Tweed Feast — SBCAN](#)
- ❖ Let's Eat Better CIC
- ❖ Farming for 2045 [Food and Farming — SBCAN](#)
- ❖ Abundant Borders [Abundant Borders](#)
- ❖ [Café ReCharge CIC](#)



Sustainable Heating / Electricity Advice and Support

In the Scottish Borders, there is a growing range of local advice and support to help people improve heating, energy efficiency and comfort at home. Community-based initiatives such as Community Heat Teams (including Tweedsmuir, Broughton, West Linton and Smailholm) and Sustainable Borders in Selkirk offer trusted, practical support focused on keeping homes warm, reducing energy costs and improving wellbeing. These local services can be particularly valuable for people living in rural areas, those using private water supplies, and households affected by **fuel poverty or rising energy prices**.



Healthcare workers can play an important role by **signposting people to local, trusted sources of advice** rather than expecting them to navigate complex systems on their own. Conversations about heating and electricity can be framed around staying well at home, protecting lung and heart health, and reducing stress linked to cold or high energy bills. Highlighting that support is available locally and that many people are already taking small, positive steps can help build confidence and reduce anxiety.

Linking people to Borders-based support reinforces the message that climate-friendly energy choices are also health-protective choices. By connecting patients and communities with local services that improve warmth, air quality and comfort, healthcare workers can help turn concern about climate change into practical action that delivers immediate benefits for health and wellbeing, while also supporting **longer-term resilience across the Scottish Borders**.

- ❖ Community Heat Teams - Tweedsmuir, Broughton, West Linton and Smailholm [Scottish Borders Green Map | GreenMap.org](#)
- ❖ Sustainable Borders, Selkirk [Sustainable Borders](#)

Volunteering

Across the Scottish Borders, there are many opportunities for people to volunteer in ways that support both wellbeing and the local environment. Community groups and organisations offer activities such as conservation and nature-based volunteering, **litter picking, tree planting, community growing, repair and reuse projects, and creative or youth-led environmental action**. These opportunities allow people to get involved at a level that suits their interests, abilities and time, whether that is regular volunteering or one-off events.

Healthcare workers can support positive action by signposting people to local networks and initiatives that make volunteering accessible and welcoming. Organisations such as the Scottish Borders Climate Action Network (SBCAN) provide information on local groups, events and opportunities across the Borders, helping people find activities that combine climate action with social connection and wellbeing benefits. Community woodlands, rivers and coastal groups, reuse hubs, and volunteer-run green groups also offer practical ways for people to **spend time outdoors, build skills and feel part of something positive**.



Framing volunteering as a way to support mental wellbeing, reduce isolation and build confidence, while also caring for local places can help climate conversations feel hopeful and empowering. By linking people to **Borders-based volunteering opportunities**, healthcare workers can reinforce the message that taking care of the environment can also be a meaningful way to take care of our own health and the health of our communities. Here are some examples:

- ❖ [Guardians Of The Tweed | River Tweed](#)
- ❖ [Borders Forest Trust](#)
- ❖ [Community Clean Ups | Sea The Change](#)
- ❖ [Home | Berwickshire Marine Reserve | Eyemouth](#)
- ❖ [Conservation and Rewilding | Our Work | John Muir Trust](#)
- ❖ [Mauldsheugh Wood Community Wildlife Project - Go Wild Scotland](#)
- ❖ [Gala Waterways Group | Scotland's environment web](#)
- ❖ [Young Rewilders Forum - Bright Green Nature](#)
- ❖ [Stow Disruptors: Life on Land — SBCAN](#)

Creativity

Creative activities can play an important role in supporting mental wellbeing while also helping people engage positively with climate and environmental issues. Opportunities to take part in art, crafts, music, film or creative workshops can reduce stress, improve mood and build confidence, particularly for people experiencing anxiety, isolation or low wellbeing. Participating in the arts has also been associated with increased longevity.⁸ Creative approaches offer a gentle, accessible way for people of all ages to express feelings about environmental change, connect with others, and spend time in supportive community settings. From a health perspective, **creativity can act as a protective factor, supporting emotional resilience and social connection at a time when climate change can feel overwhelming** for many people.



In the Scottish Borders, creative activity is already being used to connect wellbeing, community and environmental action. Initiatives such as the Little Art Hub in Galashiels, which offers drop-in activities using recycled materials and environmental themes, provide inclusive spaces where people can take part at their own pace. Events like the **Back to Nature Festival** at the Eastgate Theatre in Peebles combine creativity with film screenings, talks and shared experiences that explore nature and climate action in an engaging, non-technical way. These types of activities support wellbeing through creativity and participation, while also encouraging reflection on caring for local places and the wider environment.

Healthcare workers can use creativity as a hopeful and person-centred way to talk about climate change and health. Framing creative activity as something that supports mental wellbeing, builds confidence and offers enjoyment, rather than as “climate action” alone can make conversations feel more relevant and less daunting. Signposting people to Borders-based

⁸ Fancourt, Daisy, and Andrew Steptoe. "The art of life and death: 14 year follow-up analyses of associations between arts engagement and mortality in the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing." *bmj* 367 (2019).

creative opportunities allows them to **engage in ways that suit their interests and circumstances**, reinforcing the message that caring for the environment can also be creative, social and good for health.

- ❖ [About | Little Art Hub Galashiels](#)
- ❖ [Eastgate Theatre – Arts in Peebles](#)

Circular Economy

Circular economy approaches support both health and environmental wellbeing by reducing waste, encouraging reuse and strengthening local communities. The Circular Economy Strategy published by the Scottish Government in 2026 sets out the rationale and benefits of a more circular economy within the wider economic framework [Circular Economy Strategy 2026](#). Activities such as sharing, **repairing, swapping and reusing items** help cut pollution and reduce the demand for new resource-intensive products, supporting cleaner air, water and environments that underpin good health. From a health perspective, circular economy initiatives can also **reduce financial stress** by making everyday items more affordable, while providing opportunities for social connection, skill-building and purposeful activity, all of which are important for mental wellbeing and resilience.

In the Scottish Borders, local circular economy initiatives already offer practical, accessible ways for people to take positive action. Reuse hubs and **community-led projects such as Berwickshire Swap, Selkirk General Store and Tool Library**, and other local reuse and repair spaces enable people to share tools, household items and clothing rather than buying new. These initiatives help reduce waste and emissions while creating welcoming community spaces where people can meet others, learn practical skills and feel part of something positive. For some people, especially those experiencing isolation or financial pressure, these spaces can offer a sense of belonging and support alongside environmental benefits.



Healthcare workers can use the circular economy as a **hopeful and practical way to link climate action with everyday health benefits**. Framing reuse and repair as ways to save money, reduce stress, stay connected and care for local places can make climate conversations feel relevant and achievable. By signposting people to Borders-based circular economy initiatives, healthcare workers can reinforce the message that small, local actions, such as borrowing, swapping or repairing can protect the environment while also supporting wellbeing, community resilience and long-term population health.

- ❖ [Reuse Hub — Bays](#)
- ❖ [Berwickshire Swap | childrens clothes swap | Eyemouth, UK](#)
- ❖ [The General Store Selkirk – Reuse Repair Repurpose Retail](#)

Useful Links

- NHS Borders Ways to Be Well [Ways to be well](#)
- SBCAN [SBCAN Website](#)
- SBCAN Events Calendar-[Events — SBCAN](#)- sharing events and opportunities from across the Borders linked to environmental action
- Borders Green Map - featuring organisations and community groups taking climate action/ offering climate action opportunities [Scottish Borders Green Map | Sites | Open Green Map](#)
- Climate Anxiety Workshops - workshops have been delivered in the Borders and support those dealing with climate anxiety to find hope and resilience amongst difficult circumstances
[The Work that Reconnects - Chris Booth Ceremonies](#)
- Take One Action - Film organisation supporting climate and social action screenings in local communities
[About us – Take One Action!](#)
- [Climate Ready South East Scotland | Commonplace](#) – to add climate change experiences to build a Borders picture

Volunteer run Green Groups in the Borders

- -Greener Peebles -[Greener Peebles](#)
- -Green Stow-[Green Stow | Facebook](#)
- -Greener Melrose- [A Greener Melrose | Facebook](#)
- -Greener Duns <https://greenerduns.org.uk/>

Closing Section

A Final Thought.....Talking about climate change in healthcare isn't about having all the answers – it's about starting caring, honest conversations that protect health today and for future generations