

Consultation on the second Health Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan

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Consultation Overview

The Department of Health has prepared a draft Statutory Adaptation Plan for the Health Sector for the purpose of public consultation.

The aim of this consultation is to gather feedback from individuals, communities, businesses and organisations across Ireland on the draft second Health Climate Change Sectoral Adaptation Plan.

Consultation Background

Ireland's climate is changing in line with global trends. These changes are unprecedented, and the risks associated with the impacts of climate change will increase over the coming years.

Against this background, a revised National Adaptation Framework has put in place a coordinated approach across the State to improve the country's resilience to the impacts of climate change. It provides the basis for a suite of Sectoral Adaptation Plans, covering the period 2025-2030, which will build on progress made to date in a coordinated and collaborative manner.

In addition, the National Climate Change Risk Assessment (<https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/climate-change/national-climate-change-risk-assessment-main-report.php>), which was published in June 2025, provides a comprehensive overview of the risks and opportunities posed by climate change in Ireland. Its analysis underpins the sectoral approach to climate adaptation action under the National Adaptation Framework.

The Health SAP 2025-2030 is a successor to the 2019 Plan, which can be accessed at <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-health/campaigns/climate-change-adaptation-plan-for-the-health-sector-2019-2024/>

Revised Health Sectoral Adaptation Plan

The Department of Health is undertaking a public consultation on a draft Sectoral Adaptation Plan to cover the period 2025-2030. This document is informed by Sectoral Adaptation Plan guidance issued by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment and by the overarching policy context outlined above. It identifies the range of climate impacts which will be faced by the health sector going forward. It is a strategic document which charts a pathway towards health sector climate resilience.

This draft Plan can be found at https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/Draft_Health_Sectoral_Adaptation_Plan_2025-2030.pdf

While the recommendations and actions included in this draft need to be confirmed in consultation with relevant policy leads, the Department wishes to use this opportunity to engage with a broader audience on its current iteration.

We want to hear your feedback in relation to the approach taken by the Health SAP 2025-2030, in relation to the approach that has been taken in its development, the risks that are addressed by the Plan, and in relation to the climate ambition displayed by the sector.

The views and opinions collected will be considered and used to inform the further development of the Plan. We would like to hear from as many people as possible as this is a health sector challenge that has widespread impacts.

What we will do with your response

The responses received will inform the development of the final Sectoral Adaptation Plan for Ministerial approval and onward submission to the Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment.

We intend to publish a summary report outlining the responses received and the issues raised. Contact details will be redacted (i.e. removed) from this report.

This consultation will run until COB on Tuesday 23 September 2025.

This draft Sectoral Adaptation Plan has been developed on the basis set out in the National Adaptation Framework, and is informed by the National Climate Change Risk Assessment. Do you feel that this represents a solid basis for the development of recommendations and actions aimed at improving the resilience of Ireland's health sector to the impacts of climate change?

[This submission is made on behalf of St Patrick's Mental Health Services (SPMHS), and focuses on mental health considerations. SPMHS welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this important consultation] The research on climate change and health impacts is fast growing, and given the escalation of the climate crisis and new and emerging health consequences, relevant and most up-to-date research and data should additionally inform the Sectoral Adaptation Plan, including emerging mental health impacts of air pollution, increased heat, extreme weather events, and climate change- related anxiety and distress. SPMHS suggests 'Integrating Mental Health into Climate Adaptation Policies' (United for Global Mental Health, 2025, <https://unitedgmh.org/app/uploads/2025/07/Integrating-Mental-Health-into-Climate-Change-Adaptation-Policies-Final.pdf>) which includes comprehensive recommendations, as an important reference in the context of mental health (United for Global Mental Health, 2025). There should be particular attention to children's health and wellbeing within the Sectoral Adaptation Plan, and Section B of the General Comment no.26 of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child should be consulted and implemented as appropriate. (CRC/C/GC/26: General comment No.26 (2023) on children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/crccgc26-general-comment-no-26-2023-childrens-rights>)

This draft Sectoral Adaptation Plan sets out the proposed response by the health sector to the range of risks identified in the National Climate Change Risk Assessment. It covers both those relating directly to the health sector, and to those risks which originate in other sectors but can subsequently have health impacts. Do you feel that the draft Plan covers all health impacts of climate change, or are there any additional ones which need to be considered?

There would appear to be inadequate attention to mental health impacts, including child mental health impacts. Indeed 'children' are only mentioned once throughout the draft document, and this is in relation to health inequality factors rather than noting additionally the direct climate change impacts to which children are well-evidenced as being particularly vulnerable. Of note, this has been evidenced within research as a marked shortfall of climate adaptation plans nationally – “There is an absence of explicit attention to children’s mental health in adaptation policies, despite well documented needs in the context of climate change. Children’s mental health is a crucial public health concern that requires immediate attention.”(Zangerl, Kathrin E et al., The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health, Volume 8, Issue 7, 532 – 544) This is additionally highlighted in a policy brief by the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the context of climate change – “children and young people are also at higher risk of experiencing negative mental health symptoms and outcomes due to climate change, in part because exposure to a severe stressor during childhood or adolescence has a stronger or and longer lasting impact on mental health than if it occurred during adulthood.” (Morgera, E., December 2024, Policy Brief Climate Change, Mental Health and Human Rights <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/climatechange/policy-brief-climate-change-mental-health-1-en.pdf>) It may also be important to note in-utero exposure to the stress of extreme weather events via pregnant women’s direct exposure and stressful experiences, with consequences indicated for increased risk of development of mental health difficulties in childhood. (Nomura et al (2023) Prenatal exposure to a natural disaster and early development of psychiatric disorders during the preschool years: stress in pregnancy study, The Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry 64 (7) 1080-1091; Delgeniis et al, (2025) Prenatal exposure to extreme ambient heat may amplify the adverse impact of Superstorm Sandy on basal ganglia volume among school-aged children, PLOS ONE 20 (6): e0324150) Regarding mental health overall, while the mental health impacts of flooding and coastal degradation are noted - there is no apparent reference to the impacts of heat on mental health nor to the impacts of extreme weather events or catastrophic climate change-induced events such as wildfires. (Lawrance et al, (2022). The Impact of Climate Change on Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing: A Narrative Review of Current Evidence, and its Implications. International Review of Psychiatry, 34 (5), 443-498, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540261.2022.2128725>). For example, associations with increased incidence of suicide, and increased physical and psychological morbidity amongst people with existing mental health difficulties during periods of high temperatures have been indicated by research. (Ibid) Further there is no reference to the growing evidence related to air pollution/ air quality and associations with short-term and long-term mental health implications. (Global Mental Health Action Network (2024) Need2Know – Air Pollution and Mental Health. <https://gmhan.org/need2know/need2know-air-pollution-and-mental-health>). This is important to note given the potential for greater levels of air pollution relative to heat and occurrence of wildfires. (Pinho-Gomes et al (2023) Air pollution and climate change. The Lancet Planetary Health, 7 (9) 727-728) These impacts should be highlighted, with differentiated risks across the lifespan and in particular for children and young people, and for those with existing or previous history of mental health difficulty or trauma noted. At a broader level, the significance of building resilience via mental health promotion and improving climate literacy amongst the public has been highlighted as a significant climate adaptation measure. (Morgera, E., December 2024, Policy Brief Climate Change, Mental Health and Human Rights <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/climatechange/policy-brief-climate-change-mental-health-1-en.pdf>)

The draft Health Sectoral Adaptation Plan seeks to improve the resilience of the sector to the impacts of climate change over the period to 2030 and beyond. It seeks to integrate climate considerations across all relevant health policies, and to integrate health considerations in the climate adaptation responses of other sectors. Do you feel that the Plan demonstrates sufficient ambition?

There is greater opportunity to address and respond to differentiated impacts of climate change, in particular for children who are most especially vulnerable to both physical and mental health impacts. Furthermore there is a need for attention to gender considerations in recognition of research which indicates for example disproportionate risks and psychosocial stress for pregnant women, and indications of heightened risk of domestic violence following extreme weather events with physical and mental health consequences. (Spotlight Initiative, 2025, Colliding Crises: How the climate crisis fuels gender-based violence. Issue Brief <https://spotlightinitiative.org/sites/default/files/publication/2025-08/Colliding%20Crises%20How%20the%20climate%20crisis%20fuels%20gender-based%20violence%202025.pdf>) Far greater ambition is required as regards capacity-building via informing and preparing the healthcare workforce, and future healthcare staff (via undergraduate training), across Ireland as to the physical and mental health impacts of the escalating climate crisis, and the impacts this will have on public health and wellbeing in the coming years. Regarding mental healthcare - it is important to note that "improving access to mental healthcare is considered an effective form of climate adaptation". (Morgera, E., December 2024, Policy Brief Climate Change, Mental Health and Human Rights <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/climatechange/policy-brief-climate-change-mental-health-1-en.pdf>) In this regard, it's essential that adequate funding for the mental health service is urgently established to address waiting lists, shortfalls in service provision and upstream, early intervention investment. It is long overdue that the health budget allocation for mental health be increased to the 10% recommendation of Sláintecare in this context. The recognition of the need for more research and data to monitor health impacts of climate change-related factors in the draft plan is welcome and important. This should include mental health impacts in overlooked areas – for example in relation to heat and air pollution.

If you have any further comments on this draft Sectoral Adaptation Plan please provide them below or contact the Department of Health at healthyireland@health.gov.ie.

The importance of cross-sectoral collaboration is noted within the draft plan. It may also be of benefit to ensure collaboration within the broader health sector itself including with community and voluntary groups, and to explore opportunities for learning and collaboration with independent service providers, in health-related climate adaptation efforts.

Contact

[Contact Form](#)

