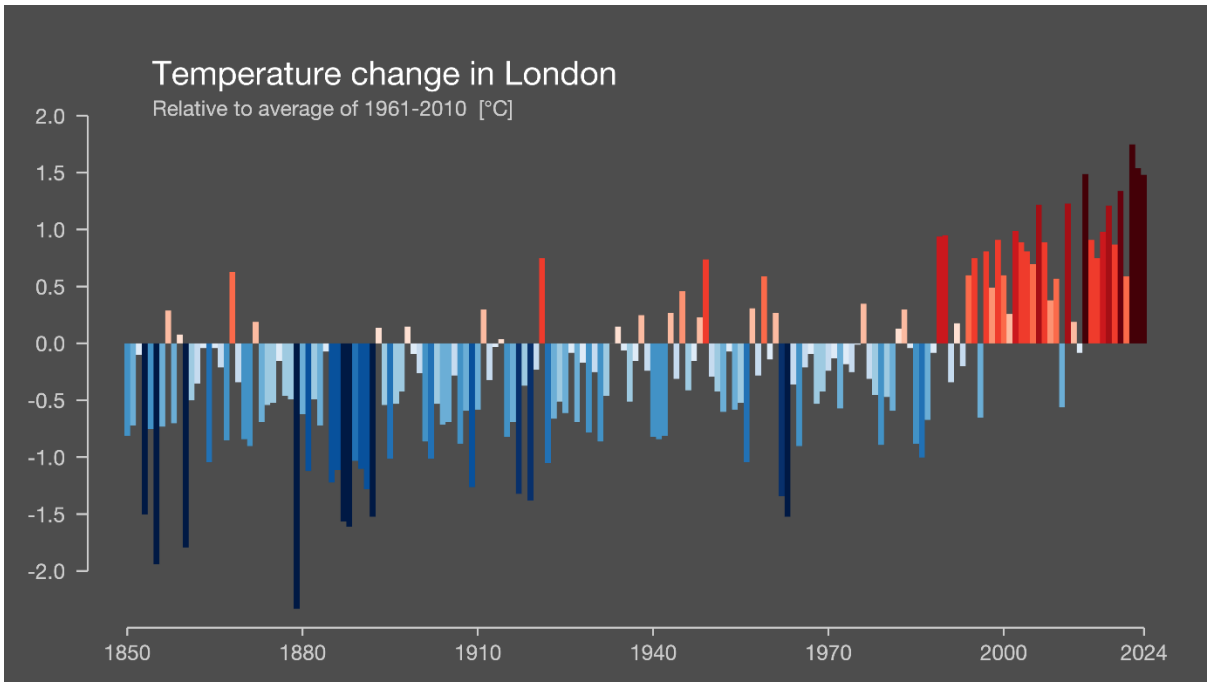
LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND UPON THAMES

Extreme Heat – Guidance for Voluntary Sector

Context: As climate change progresses the global average temperature is rising and the number of extreme heat events and heat waves in the UK is increasing. London also generates its own microclimate, known as the Urban Heath Island (UHI), which can result in the centre of London being up to 10°C warmer than the rural areas around London, further aggravating the effects of hot weather.



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Problem statement: Extreme heat can make our homes, workplaces and public transport uncomfortable, and can affect our health.

Health Impacts: The impacts of adverse weather events can affect everyone and influence many aspects, including health. However, the extent to which individuals, communities, and populations experience the negative health impacts of such events will vary based on their ability to adapt to the stressors imposed.

Preventative Measures: Effective action, taken early, can reduce the health impacts of exposure to excessive heat. Most of these are simple preventive measures that need to be planned in advance of a heatwave to be effective.

Aim

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to organisations in the voluntary sector on how to prepare for and respond to extreme heat events.

The document outlines the risks associated with extreme heat, identifies vulnerable populations, and provides actionable steps to ensure the safety and well-being of staff,

volunteers, and the communities they serve. The document also provides a bank of resources for organisations to expand their response to extreme heat events.

What are the risks of extreme heat?

Health Risks

- Heat exhaustion
- Heatstroke
- Heat cramps
- Sunburn
- Dehydration
- Worsened chronic conditions e.g. cardiovascular, mental, respiratory and diabetes related conditions
- Acute kidney injury
- Death

Operational Risks

- Disrupted and compromised health services e.g. through loss of power supply and transport
- Reduced working and learning productivity
- Increased risk of accidents
- Increased likelihood of hazardous air pollution events

Who is at risk from extreme heat?

Everyone is at risk from the health consequences of heat, but there are certain factors that increase an individual's risk during a heatwave. These include:

- Older people aged over 65 years
- Babies and young children under the age of 5 years
- People with underlying health conditions, particularly heart problems, breathing problems, dementia, diabetes, kidney disease, Parkinson's disease or mobility problems
- People on certain medications
- People with serious mental health problems
- People who are already ill and dehydrated (for example from diarrhoea and vomiting)
- People who experience alcohol or drug dependence

- People who are physically active and spend a lot of time outside such as runners, cyclists and walkers
- People who work in jobs that require manual labour or extensive time outside
- People experiencing homelessness, including rough sleepers and those who are unable to make adaptations to their living accommodation such as sofa surfers or those living in hostels.
- People who live alone and may be unable to care for themselves
- Socio-economic status is also a risk factor; several studies have shown an increased risk of mortality in more deprived groups. This risk may be due to poor access to information and mitigation strategies, differences in housing standards or the underlying prevalence of chronic disease.

What can you do?

Here are some actions you can take to make sure that your organisation is more resilient to extreme heat. These can be edited and added to suit your organisation and provide a comprehensive heat plan.

Your Buildings

Action	Notes	Status
Close your windows and curtains/blinds in the morning so that the heat does not build up	Covering windows during the day protects your building from direct sunlight and prevent it from heating up	
Turn off central heating	Avoids generating additional heat	
Turn off lights and any electrical appliances when they're not in use	Avoids generating additional heat	
Use portable fans to improve airflow and ventilation.	If the temperature is above 35°C you risk spreading warm air around your building	
Check fridge, freezers, fans, and air conditioning units are working		
Store water in your fridge for a quick way to cool down	Drinking cold water can cool you down quickly	
Consider installing shading measures such as shutters, leafy plants, or planting trees	Shading measures could even be temporary e.g. sheets over windows Shading is especially important over south facing windows	
If you can, register your building as a cool space via the GLA Cool spaces form	Cool spaces are indoor spaces for Londoners to shelter from the sun, cool down, rest and take respite on hot days	

	All Cool spaces appear on the GLA Cool spaces map, which is live 1 June - 30 September Public buildings such as places of worship or local libraries may be cooler than homes, if they are nearby consider visiting one of these as a way of cooling down Registering is a quick process but could have significant community benefits, giving residents a safe space to cool down	

Your Staff

Action	Notes	Status
Ask all staff/volunteers to sign up to the Weather-Health Alerting System	Weather-Health Alerting system registration form This system will send out alerts in extreme weather events and their health risks	
Check the local weather forecast so you are aware of when hot weather is expected		
Make sure that you have a comprehensive document with all staff/volunteers contact details and emergency contact details		
Establish a 'ring around' or buddy system when heat alerts are given. This means that all staff/volunteers will have someone to check up on them, and someone they will check up on in the event of hot weather	Establish a system where staff/volunteers are each responsible for checking up on another member of staff/volunteer when a weather-health alert is sent out. This can start with a call to the person they are responsible for checking up on to make sure they are ok and feeling able to manage the heat	
Advise staff/volunteers to wear light, loose clothing		
Advise staff/volunteers to wear wide-brimmed hats and sunglasses to shade themselves	If you are able to you could provide staff/volunteers with wide brimmed hats to wear	

Encourage staff and volunteers to stay in the shade, between 11am and 3pm when the sun is strongest. When staff/volunteers are outside, ensure regular breaks.	Between 11-3 are the hottest hours of the day, if possible, it is best to avoid being outside during these times	
Advise staff/volunteers to apply suncream and reapply throughout the day	Apply sunscreen generously and re-apply frequently, especially after activities that remove it, such as swimming or towelling. The NHS recommends that this should be with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30, and 4- or 5-star ultraviolet A (UVA) protection If you are able to, you could provide staff/volunteers with suncream	
Ensure that staff/volunteers do not spend long periods of time in small, enclosed spaces such as stationary cars.	Stationary cars heat up very quickly and can become dangerously hot	
Ensure that staff/volunteers carry water with them at all times.	It is important to remain hydrated in extreme heat	

Your Work

Action	Notes	Status
Carry out the Heat Health Alert action card	Heat-Health Alert action card for the voluntary and community sector - GOV.UK Heat-Health Alert summary action card for the voluntary and community sector	
Identify the vulnerable groups that you work with and the difficulties that they may face in an extreme heat event.	e.g. if you are working with groups taking certain medications/drugs this increase their risk of developing heat related illness	
Ensure staff/volunteers are familiar with how to spot signs of heat stroke and heat exhaustion and basic first aid to treat it	Materials provided by the British Red Cross give first aid advice on how to recognise and treat heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Learn heat exhaustion first aid | British Red Cross	

	Heatstroke and heat exhaustion first for children and babies Learn heatstroke first aid | British Red Cross	
Monitor those that you work with for any early signs of heat-related illness and initiate treatment when needed	If you suspect someone has heatstroke, call 999. While waiting for the ambulance: • continue trying to cool them down using the measures outlined above • encourage them to drink cool fluids if they are conscious • do not give them aspirin or paracetamol • put them in the recovery position if they have lost consciousness	
Following a heatwave warning, encourage those that you work with to store water in case of any problem with the water supply		
Share the GLA Cool spaces map with those that you work with and encourage them to use it find water fountains and cool indoor and outdoor spaces in which to cool down	This map is live from the 1st of June – 20th September	

Further resources and reading

- https://www.communitiesprepared.org.uk/london-community-resilience-toolkit/
- Preparing your community for emergencies | London City Hall
- NHS Volunteering and Heatwaves (animated YouTube video)

HHA action cards for the voluntary and community sector

- Action card for voluntary and community sector
- Summary action card for voluntary and community sector

Beat the heat: hot weather advice

- Beat the heat: staying safe in hot weather
- Beat the heat: staying safe in hot weather - easy read (pdf)
- Beat the heat: staying safe in hot weather - BSL video
- Beat the heat: keep cool at home checklist

- Beat the heat: keep cool at home checklist - easy read (pdf)
- Beat the heat: keep cool at home checklist - BSL video
- Beat the heat: poster (pdf)
- Beat the heat: poster - BSL video

Met Office: Community Resilience

- met-office-2024-online-community-resillience-training-prospectus.pdf
- Community Resilience - Met Office
- 2024-community-resilience-leaflet.pdf

Richmond Council Webpages

- Heatwave - London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
- Adverse Weather and Health Plan - GOV.UK
- Corporate Resilience Plan
- Emergency links and information - London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
- Business continuity planning - London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
- What businesses can do to prepare for emergencies - London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

Infographics to Share

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