

Summary of built infrastructure for older people's care in conditions of climate change (BIOPICCC): toolkit impact development



Introduction

The Adaptation and Resilience in the Context of Change (ARCC) Network funded a collaboration between Jonathan Wistow (Durham University), Catherine Max (Catherine Max Consulting) and Kristen Guida (Climate UK) to strengthen and broaden the impact in national policy and local practice from the BIOPICCC toolkit and associated learning. The proposal for the grant centred on the development of a peer-to-peer learning event. This grant has led to valuable insights about how the toolkit is interpreted and used and whether it remains relevant and fit for purpose. The project plays an important role in helping to maintain momentum around the BIOPICCC project and ongoing. This briefing paper provides a summary of the project and focuses in particular on the following key objectives of the project: sharing learning; leveraging good practice citations to promote and increase the use of the toolkit; ensuring the toolkit remains fit for purpose; and disseminating knowledge and learning.



Background

The BIOPICCC project ran from November 2009 until October 2012. The aim of the project was to develop a methodology for selecting locally sensitive, efficient adaptation strategies during the period up to 2050 to ensure that the infrastructures and health and social care systems supporting well-being of older people (i.e. those aged 65 and over) will be sufficiently resilient to withstand harmful impacts of climate change.

A key output from BIOPICCC was a toolkit that provides a series of resources to assist local authorities, partner organisations, and neighbourhood and community groups with local level resilience planning. Specifically, the resources were designed to support users to develop plans to make health and social care services for older people (aged 65 years and older) more resilient to the effects of extreme weather. However, the resources have proven to have wider applicability for extreme weather planning.

Between November 2013 and May 2014 Wistow and Curtis were initially funded by NERC PURE to collaborate with Public Health England's Extreme Events and Health Protection around extreme weather advice and guidance. The project was extended through additional funding from Durham University's Institute of Hazard, Risk and Resilience. The project built on work undertaken through the BIOPICCC project and the approach developed through the ARCC funded research. The project aimed to:

- Evaluate the interpretation and implementation, by service managers within local authority areas, of PHE advice and guidance about Extreme Weather Events (EWE)
- Develop tools and resources to assist local stakeholders to cascade national guidance and scientific evidence across local systems

The report from this project is being circulated with this report. An academic paper has recently been accepted for publication by the Journal of Public Health.

In June 2015 Max and Wistow were funded to write an impact validation report on the BIOPICCC project by the Department of Geography at Durham University. This report is also being circulated alongside the current report and the learning from this was developed and used in the current project. In particular, findings from this report suggest that the BIOPICCC approach and methodology had a greater depth and longevity of impact among participants who used the toolkit autonomously rather than in the original case study sites. This is consistent with a key aim of the toolkit design, i.e., to make the toolkit sufficiently flexible to be applied to a wide variety of local characteristics and issues and that the process of adapting the toolkit to local circumstances would provide benefits such as closer working relationships between partners. However, this process also relies on local ownership and drive for the independent adoption of the toolkit.

The findings from the impact validation report helped to shape the focus and agenda for toolkit impact development project funded by ARCC in November 2015. The project centred on a peer-to-peer workshop called, 'Resilient health, care and wellbeing in a changing climate: Lessons from research and local practice,' at which original BIOPICCC stakeholders and impact research participants shared their experience with other local authorities and stakeholders. Learning from the BIOPICCC project was disseminated alongside a session to co-design changes to the toolkit and test whether it remains fit for purpose.

Sharing learning

The peer-to-peer workshop had 32 attendees from a wide variety of organisations including: local government; the NHS; national executive arms of government (Public Health England); the Environment Agency; national and regional climate change networks (Climate UK and Sustainability West Midlands); advocacy groups (e.g., Independent Age); local politicians and national and international academic institutions and co-ordinating networks.

Learning was shared among these stakeholders. The morning session focused on case studies from localities that had used the BIOPICCC toolkit and/or been involved in the original research (East Riding, South Staffordshire and Essex). The morning session closed with a presentation and response/reflections from Dr Angie Bone, Head of Extreme Events and Health Protection at Public Health England. This provided an up to date overview of national policy in the field of extreme weather events and climate change adaptation and an opportunity for local stakeholders to question and provide feedback to a national executive agency.

The afternoon session was designed to initiate the process of co-designing a refreshed toolkit so that it better meets the needs of its target end-users. These discussions were focused on local issues in developing resilient health, care and wellbeing in a changing climate. Peer-to-peer discussions were structured around what helps effective action; challenges to effective action and informing long-term and strategic planning. A brief summary of the discussion in relation to each of these is included below:

1. What helps stakeholders take effective action?

The overwhelming majority of responses highlighted the significance of planning and included the following aspects: scenario planning; having plans that are both fit for purpose and flexible in place; clear roles, responsibilities and lines of command; and testing action plans and using scenarios and visions of the future. In addition participants also considered: good coordination and communication across the system – identify gaps and cascade effects; statutory requirements; and past experiences of an event to be important factors helping the development of effective action. One participant stated that persistence rather than a ‘business case’ was identified as being central to success.

2. What are the challenges?

Communication across sectors and networks was highlighted as a challenge. Participants noted difficulties in: communicating responses and how messages are interpreted; while information may be available on organisational websites it might be difficult to get people to access (or even discover it) and use it; and environmental and sustainability language is not very helpful for communication with different audiences. Unclear responsibilities and lack of understanding about the issue and how to respond were also identified as barriers. Category 2 and 3 responders and the public were considered to be less informed about resilient health, care and wellbeing in a changing climate and too much information can get in the way of effective planning and action. Also there are a range of different priorities at a local level e.g. the NHS ‘lurches from crisis to crisis’ – that may crowd climate change adaptation out of local priorities. Denial of risk was also identified as a factor. Not all residential care settings have a plan in place. Social care was viewed as an area where there is a lack of knowledge about what is being done – a research gap.

Finally, resourcing was identified as depleting and this is restrictive for planning. For example, given that actions differ at the local level, plans may not always be tested at service levels due to the time and effort involved. Independent groups may be less able to support due to grant cuts. In addition, residents may feel that through the process they are delivering services that the council should be providing – this is something practitioners had to engage with at a locality/community level in one of the case study areas. However, it should also be noted that in the wettest December on record this area reported no flooding, which had been a problem prior to using the BIOPICCC toolkit to embed community participation in local planning. This in turn saved considerable time and resources that would have been spent in the clean-up of the flooding.

3. Informing strategic and long-term planning

Business continuity and adaptation plans are important and need the involvement of senior officers (including head of finance) and councillors. The supply chain should be considered in business continuity planning. Building and estates should ensure that design considers the future although this may get lost if a project is going over budget. Language can be important and focusing on climate change may not be helpful – instead risk management, business continuity, resilience, and energy waste may be more useful. Past weather events should inform planning more frequently.

Leveraging good practice citations to promote and increase the use of the toolkit

The workshop provided an opportunity for peer-to-peer learning about the toolkit, which promoted the use of the toolkit and we hope has increased its use (although tracing additional use of the toolkit is beyond the scope the project). Good practice citations from for example: the National Adaptation Plan, 2013; the Cabinet Office [Communities Prepared](#) website; and the Sustainable Development Unit's [Under the weather](#) report, 2015, were used in the workshop. This helped to both illustrate the reach of the BIOPICCC toolkit in national guidance and can assist stakeholders at a local level to make a case for using the toolkit (and investing the time and resource in doing so) in locally sensitive climate change adaptation. A representative of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation attending the meeting reiterated that they recommend the usage of the toolkit and following the event would seek to cite the toolkit through the [Climate Just](#) website.

Ensuring the toolkit remains fit for purpose

Participants at the workshop agreed that there was a need for the toolkit. However, there were questions about the demand for the resource, which was considered to be much more variable. The BIOPICCC impact validation report circulated with this report also picks up on this and will form an important part of reframing the toolkit. The toolkit, itself seems to align well as an approach to overcome the barriers identified by participants in the workshop. However, two related issues, in particular, need further consideration. Firstly, targeting and responding to variable demand for these kinds of resources. Our case studies demonstrate that the toolkit can be an effective resource in assisting local planning (at strategic and neighbourhood levels) for extreme weather events and/or climate change adaptation. However, it works best when there is a strong demand and commitment to use it. Where this is present it is a useful resource in identifying and building stakeholder engagement to develop community resilience. This has overlapping benefits in joining-up the growing fragmentation and complexities in local service delivery at different scales.

Secondly, one participant at the workshop commented that we are ‘preaching to the choir’ at this type of event. There is a need to focus on social care and care homes more. In addition, a closer focus on ‘entry points’ was considered a useful development by some. We need to better recognise that adaptation is not core business and this forms part of a NERC funded offshoot from the BIOPICCC project (see attached report). The idea of different entry points to the toolkit was considered in the original toolkit design and is reflected in the toolkit itself. However, given that there are so many potential entry points for different stakeholders to use the toolkit (see the organogram appendices in the online toolkit) it was considered that developing bespoke entry points across sectors and at different levels of health and social care system would add too much complexity to it. Instead we developed a flexible approach for cross-sectoral and multi-level governance of this issue. Creating demand for this type of activity is a necessary part of promoting resilience. A wider programme of engagement, awareness raising, agency creation, partnership working and coordination are important for getting people and organisations to a place where there is consistent demand for resources like BIOPICCC.

Prof Curtis has completed some revisions to the toolkit website design that take account of recent policy developments and simplify the resource building on feedback from the workshop. These changes will be online in September 2016.

Wistow and Max have explored a further collaboration with Uscreates and Climate UK for a more substantial refresh of the toolkit via the Durham University Research Impact Fund to broaden the reach of the toolkit and, crucially, to employ ‘user experience design’ methodologies to ensure that it meets the needs of different audiences. Following promising early discussions it became apparent that the Impact Fund was likely to favour projects that retain much more substantial levels of funding within Durham University.

Disseminating knowledge and learning

Presentations from the BIOPICCC case study sites have been shared with ARCC and appear on the website under the BIOPICCC project. Wistow and Max intend to develop a case study around the implementation of toolkit in a local setting. He will draw largely on the example from South Staffordshire and use this to address issues (outlined above) around demand and capacity for implementing this type of resource. The case study will appear on the BIOPICCC website and a short piece will be prepared for LGiU building on this focusing on issues around implementation and ‘entry points’ e.g., the role of local government in ensuring business continuity across the range of independent providers of health and social care services.

Max wrote a blog for LGiU [Adaptation the key to community resilience – lessons from research and local practice](#) which provided an overview of the work to appraise the impact of the BIOPICCC research including whether and how political and economic change had affected their ability to act on the project’s recommendations.

Wistow contributed to a technical paper for LWEC called ‘Impact of extreme weather events and climate change for health and social care systems’ which has been accepted for publication and cites the BIOPICCC project.

Wistow has also agreed to collaborate with Briony Turner of the ARCC network around a [So what, now what?](#) guide for BIOPICCC. An article for [The Conversation](#) will be developed in conjunction with this, which can be banked for a heatwave. Wistow has also agreed to attend an LCCP-ARCC event in London on 12th April 2017 to give a presentation on BIOPICCC to the wider care community.