IMPATIENCE EARTH

Inclusive Futures

A primer for funders: climate action that works for **neurodivergence**, **disability** and **mental health** in the UK, through a greater understanding of the impacts

April 2026

...I found myself battling dizziness and nausea for 48 hours. I discovered my symptoms matched those for heat exhaustion, something I had never experienced before.

It was only then that I found out my medication, which I take for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), could make me more sensitive to heat.

– Erin Lister
Source: BBC

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...a couple of days later the house was flooded, with water up over your ankles. The electric wheels on Rona's chair were skidding with the deep water and it was dangerous, so she had to sit outside.

– Source: BBC

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With gratitude to

Matt Little and Eibhlish Fleming from Barnwood Trust and Dan White and Kamran Mallick from Disability Rights UK for advisory support.

IMPATIENCE EARTH

Impatience Earth is a team of advisors with expertise in climate, biodiversity, social justice and philanthropy, united in our vision of an equitable world in which all life on earth thrives. We support our clients in taking bolder decisions to address the climate emergency.

Since 2020, our engagement with over 40 philanthropic foundations and businesses has supported them to make over £250m of new funding available for climate action, and we have already helped them make grants to over 300 different organisations.

Crucially, we help clients to identify how and where to invest philanthropically to build both climate resilience within the business and demonstrate their leadership across the sector.

Contact info@impatience.earth if you would like to explore how we can help your organisation.

“

...I, as a blind person, was being sighted guided by my girlfriend in 30C (86F) weather because it was too hot for my working [guide] dog to be out.

– Sean Dilley
Source: BBC

Foreword: a funder's perspective

Matt Little – CEO, Barnwood Trust
Eibhlish Fleming – Head of Funding & Influencing, Barnwood Trust

At Barnwood Trust, we work alongside Disabled people and people with mental health conditions to build a fairer, more inclusive Gloucestershire. We aim to do this by backing people and organisations, and by working in partnership in communities and across systems to address social and systemic issues.

Climate change is, without a doubt, one of the most pressing challenges we face here – and this report makes clear why that is. Although Impatience Earth initially carried out this research to inform our organisation's response to the climate crisis, the clarity and imperative of their findings is now prompting us to think much bigger and bolder.

Like other similar organisations, we have our environmental policies, ideas and commitments. Yet, when faced with the enormity of this issue, they can sometimes feel like deckchair-shuffling. In recent years we have, however, made some positive strides with the outdoor and nature sector by focusing time, energy and resources on the concept of improving access to nature in the county. Working with partners like the Cotswolds National Landscape, National Trust and Forestry England, we have all wrestled with the barriers to, and tested enablers of, equitable access to the natural world. It has taught us that there is a real appetite to join a movement centred around equity in this sector, as well as an active network of people with protected characteristics who feel passionately about this topic and are making positive change happen locally. But, until we did this work with Impatience Earth, we hadn't really found a way to cut to the heart of the matter; that is, **how do we use the momentum of this programme to move the conversation on?**

Climate breakdown is reshaping daily life with each passing day, and this change already disproportionately affects Disabled people, people with mental health conditions, neurodivergent people and minoritised groups.

(Continued)

This first-of-its-kind research sets out our collective challenge in the context of disability and mental health, whilst highlighting the interesting and exciting opportunities to collaborate, innovate and regenerate – all while centring lived experience in the design of both this work, and of a better, fairer and more inclusive world.

For Barnwood Trust, this report brings three key perspectives into focus:

1. From a social sector starting point, it explains how attention to the environment is of critical and practical relevance to lives well and fairly lived. It reminds us that the state of our climate is not an outlying issue, nor is it something to get round to once the harder and more pressing social stuff is done and sorted.

2. From an environmental starting point, while there can be jargon, challenges around diversity and inclusion, arguments about science and counter-science, and abstracted notions such as 'just transition', there is still some confusion about what this means practically or will involve. The report explains this well and at the same time lays out the moral imperative for action.

3. From a Barnwood Trust perspective, this report emphasises that we must work in partnership on this issue, and press beyond the passive notions of organisational policy and commitment. We want this report to spark a new discussion with delivery organisations, funders and policymakers – both locally in Gloucestershire and nationally – about how we can make a difference collectively, collaboratively, and creatively.

In summary, we think this report should matter to all of us, regardless of sector, political stance, or agenda. We know that sharing it is essential if we are ever going to have a new conversation about this crisis with people who, like us, have the resources and power to do something about it. We welcome your thoughts, ideas and partnership if you, like us, feel compelled to act after reading this research.

Matt Little, CEO Barnwood Trust
Eibhlish Fleming – Head of Funding & Influencing, Barnwood Trust

Foreword from the authors

Liz Gadd, lead researcher and report author
Yasmin Ahammad, CEO at Impatience Earth

At the core of our work at Impatience Earth is supporting funders to recognise that the climate and nature crises are fundamentally human challenges. That is why we were thrilled to partner with the Barnwood Trust to delve into how their target communities are particularly affected by the climate crisis and to understand to what extent these challenges are being tackled across the UK. We are grateful that they agreed to publish parts of our research to support wider funder learning on what are insufficiently supported intersections of climate and social justice where funders can make a significant impact.

This report shows how climate change and environmental degradation in the UK are already shaping the lives of Disabled people, neurodivergent people, and people with mental health conditions. It makes the case for why inclusive design must sit at the heart of climate action. These groups often face barriers created by the way environments, services and systems are designed. Addressing those barriers improves rights, opportunity and inclusion. Designing with accessibility and inclusion in mind therefore strengthens communities and climate action for everyone.

The findings of our work for the Barnwood Trust underline that people who are disabled, experiencing mental health conditions or neurodiverse are amongst those most affected by our changing climate. To ensure effective action that does not risk deepening inequity, those most impacted must be involved in decisions about how to reduce environmental damage and how we adapt to changes in how we live.

Funders can play a crucial role in raising the voices of those most impacted, and ensuring that our climate responses are grounded in equity, participation and care. We invite you to get in touch with the Impatience Earth team to explore the findings and recommendations of this report.

Terminology and the social model of disability

The social model of disability

If you haven't come across the social model of disability yet we recommend you take a moment to familiarise yourself with it (see helpful explainers from Scope and Disability Rights UK). **The social model of disability has been developed by Disabled people, and states that people are Disabled by the barriers put in place by society, not by their impairment or condition.**

A note on the terminology used in this report

- **Disabled people:** in the UK, the term 'Disabled people' is used to describe people with impairments who are Disabled by barriers constructed by society. Check out Disability Rights UK for more information about the term.

- **Neurodivergence:** the word neurodivergence means that information is processed by the brain in a way that diverges from what is considered as 'typical' by society. As explained by the National Autistic Society, there is no official list of who is considered neurodivergent though some of the neurodivergences most commonly talked about are autism and ADHD.

- **People with mental health conditions:** as explained by the charity Mind, everybody has mental health and we need to take care of it, and mental health conditions affect around one in four people in any given year. Rethink Mental Illness highlights that some people live with severe mental illnesses, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and psychosis, which are less common but can have a significant and long-term impact on daily life, requiring specialist support.

It's a really liberating thing [the social model of disability], but it also means you can change it.

We can say to the world, "Look, you must put a lift in this building. You must make sure that the signage is readable for people with visual impairments."

– Mik Scarlet, broadcaster and journalist
Source: Scope

Executive summary

Climate change and wider environmental degradation are amplifying inequality across the UK. While everyone is affected by rising temperatures, extreme weather, biodiversity loss, nature access, pollution and toxic chemicals, the burdens fall disproportionately on people already marginalised or with reduced adaptive capacity.

Among those most affected are Disabled people, neurodivergent people, and people living with mental health conditions – groups who experience compounded risks from environmental and economic stressors and systemic barriers to inclusion in policy and adaptation planning.

Disabled people are among those most directly affected by the changing climate:

- Hotter summers intensify symptoms of many physical health conditions and increase hospitalisations, seizures, and medication side effects.
- People with mobility impairments or chronic illnesses may struggle to regulate body temperature, access cooling, or evacuate safely during emergencies. Poorly insulated and inaccessible housing exposes many to both heat and cold stress, with energy costs driving further hardship.
- Air pollution and toxic chemicals aggravate respiratory, cardiovascular, and neurological conditions, and are impacting fetal development, risking increases in childhood disability.

Image: Callum Bennetts / Maverick Photo Agency

- While flooding and extreme weather events can create displacement and social isolation as well as pose health risks for those less able to regulate their temperature.
- If equity is not central to their design, initiatives such as Clean Air Zones and the reallocation of urban space for active travel can also limit Disabled people's mobility and access, particularly when combined with cuts to accessible community transport.

Recommendation

The transition to net zero offers opportunities – inclusive housing design, resilient local energy systems, and accessible transport – that can improve health, reduce emissions, and foster independence. It's vital that Disabled people are meaningfully included in shaping these solutions through participatory, justice-oriented approaches that recognise their knowledge, agency, and the need for care-full, interdependent climate action.

Neurodivergent people face distinctive and often overlooked challenges linked to environmental change:

- Air pollution, chemical exposure, and overheating have been associated with neurological and cognitive impacts that can exacerbate existing conditions such as ADHD and autism.
- Disruption from floods, storms, or relocation can cause acute distress due to sensitivity to change and sensory environments, while barriers to accessing green spaces or community resources heighten social exclusion.

Recommendation

Access to nature has been shown to support focus, reduce anxiety, and improve wellbeing among neurodivergent children and adults alike. Designing public spaces, nature-based programmes, and climate adaptation measures that are sensory-friendly, predictable, and inclusive would not only reduce harm but actively enhance resilience and participation.

People with mental health conditions are already living with the psychological toll of the climate and nature crises:

- Extreme heat is linked to higher rates of suicide, anxiety, and manic episodes, and people with pre-existing mental health conditions are several times more likely to die during heatwaves.
- Flooding, drought, and wildfire events can have a significant toll on mental health – including post-traumatic stress and depression – while rising living costs, housing damage, and food insecurity add chronic stressors.

Recommendation

Climate and environmental action, if done well, can serve as prevention and care: clean air, stable housing, access to green and blue spaces, and community-led climate resilience programmes all improve mental health outcomes.

Embedding long-term, trauma-informed mental health support within climate adaptation plans would ensure that those most affected are supported to thrive in a changing world.

Image: NCVO London

Part 1: impacts and opportunities

An overview of the direct impacts of climate change and wider environmental issues on Disabled people, neurodivergent people, and people with mental health conditions, plus the opportunities to improve lives via climate action

The case for doubling down on equity

There is unequivocal evidence that climate change is making extreme weather in the UK, such as heatwaves, heavy rainfall, and wildfire-conducive conditions, more likely and more extreme (CCC, 2025)**.** Our homes, infrastructure, and public buildings are overheating, winters are wetter, and flooding is impacting millions of households. Our daily lives, our food security, and our health are all impacted. These changes are already reshaping lives in the UK, and its burdens fall hardest on those least able to adapt.

Meanwhile, global action to mitigate climate change is insufficiently bold or swift. And here in the UK adaptation efforts are patchy. The UK's current readiness to shield communities from climate harms remains weak, with many strategies labeled "inadequate" according to the Climate Change Committee (CCC, 2025).

These shifts do not affect everyone equally. Low-income households, people with disabilities, and racialised ethnic groups are habitually more exposed to high heat in poorly insulated homes, elevated air pollution, flood-prone areas, and volatile energy costs. The additional mental health burden is significant, and for people living with mental health conditions, the added stress of extreme heat, forced evacuations, and food or energy insecurity compounds pre-existing vulnerability.

The policy choice before us is stark: we can double down on *in*equity — or we can design inclusive housing, energy and transport systems that build resilience while cutting emissions.

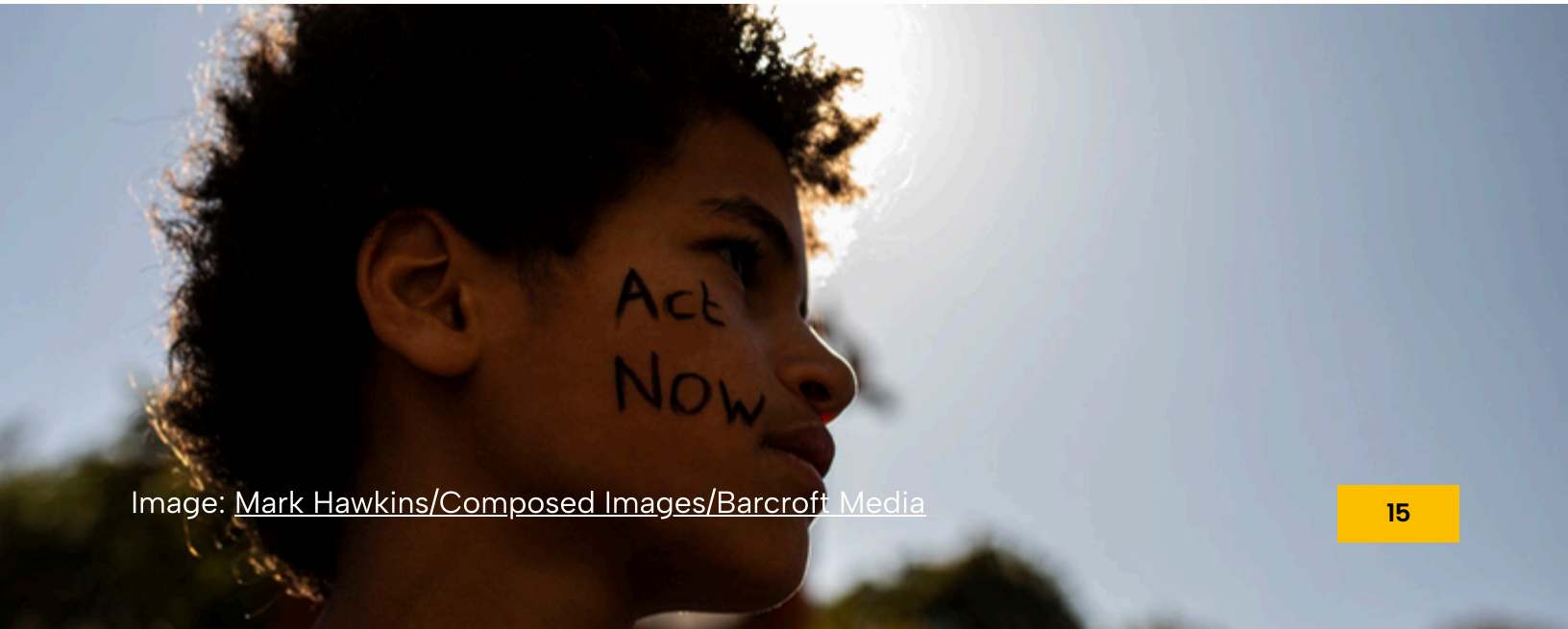


Image: Mark Hawkins/Composed Images/Barcroft Media

A breakdown of direct impacts by type of climate and environmental hazard

The current research shows the following impacts on Disabled people, neurodivergent people, and people with mental health conditions. See appendix on page 42 onwards for more details.

Heat

- Higher hospitalisations, suicides, seizures, and manic episodes in hot weather
- Symptoms of conditions like epilepsy, Multiple Sclerosis (MS), Postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome (PoTS), Ehlers-Danlos Syndromes (EDS) worsen, with three quarters of Disabled people reporting their condition is significantly affected by hot weather
- Medications can increase heat sensitivity
- Social isolation risk, especially for Disabled people and neurodivergent people
- People with mental health conditions are 3x more likely to die from heat related causes
- People affected by drought have a 26% higher likelihood of mental health conditions (agricultural workers 28.9%)
- Wildfires cause post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in 92% of the affected population, and children have a 21.5% likelihood of developing an anxiety disorder

Image: Christian Julliard

Cold

- Cold homes triple mental health risks
- Pain, respiratory and cardiovascular conditions worsen
- Children face higher anxiety and depression
- Energy costs become a recurring burden

Floods and storms

- PTSD, anxiety, depression remain elevated years after events
- Displacement and recovery can be harder for Disabled people
- Carers face added strain
- Neurodivergent people can be distressed by disruption
- Social isolation risk increases, especially for Disabled people and neurodivergent people

Study: Over half of cold homes lived in by a person with an illness or disability

James Murray
28 November 2025 • 6 min read

Image: Government figures show over half of households that report struggling to keep warm in winter are lived in by a person with an illness or disability / Credit: ArtMarie - iStock

Source: BusinessGreen

'Eating or breathing': energy costs force stark choices on disabled people

People with severe disabilities and chronic conditions struggling in cost of living crisis, research shows

Poet and scriptwriter Karis Williamson is on full-time ventilation and uses a powerchair.

Source: The Guardian UK

Toxic chemicals

- Exposure linked to cognitive impairment and neurological disease
- Risks for autism, ADHD, learning disabilities linked to prenatal exposure
- Early links to mental health conditions
- Toxics are hidden in everyday products and environments including pans, toys and menstrual products

Air pollution

- Linked to anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, post-partum depression
- Air pollution exposure in childhood a risk factor for mental health issues later in life
- High air pollution days see increased mental health support required in community and hospital settings
- Linked to cardiovascular and neurological conditions
- Children with learning disabilities more exposed
- Possible prenatal links to autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD)
- Link to increased physical disability risk in older adults

Image: Crispin Hughes / Clean Cities Campaign / Climate Visuals

An overview of our opportunities to improve lives, via climate action

The current research shows the following opportunities to improve the lives of Disabled people, neurodivergent people, and people with mental health conditions. See appendix on page 42 onwards for more details.

Access to nature

- Improves mental health, reduces stress, aids physical and mental health recovery
- Regulates local temperatures
- Narrows health inequalities
- Neurodivergent people find symptoms mitigated, especially children with ADHD
- Disabled people face barriers to access and people on low incomes have the lowest access to nature

Food and water security

- Affordable, healthy, fresh food for all with fair access across communities
- Secure access to water and food despite climate shocks
- Environmentally friendly, plant rich, diets are better for the health of people and planet

Transport and air quality

- Clean air and accessible low-emission transport that improve health and independence
- Accessible active travel infrastructure (walking, cycling) support physical and mental health

Homes and energy

- Lower energy bills through efficiency and clean energy
- Warm, dry, healthy homes resilient to damp and mould
- Fair sharing of costs for decarbonisation and retrofitting
- Inclusive housing retrofits and design that meet diverse access needs
- Affordable, accessible cooling and heating technologies in private and public housing
- Resilient local energy systems (community-owned microgrids, solar co-ops) to reduce energy insecurity

Education, jobs and community empowerment

- Training and fair access to new ‘green jobs’ to spread opportunity equitably
- Inclusive education and awareness programs on climate risks and resilience for Disabled and neurodivergent people
- Community-led climate initiatives that create social cohesion and local ownership
- Culturally and linguistically appropriate climate services to ensure racialised communities can access support
- Support for adaptive technologies and assistive devices to maintain independence during extreme weather

Image: Sam Bush / Nesta / Climate Visuals

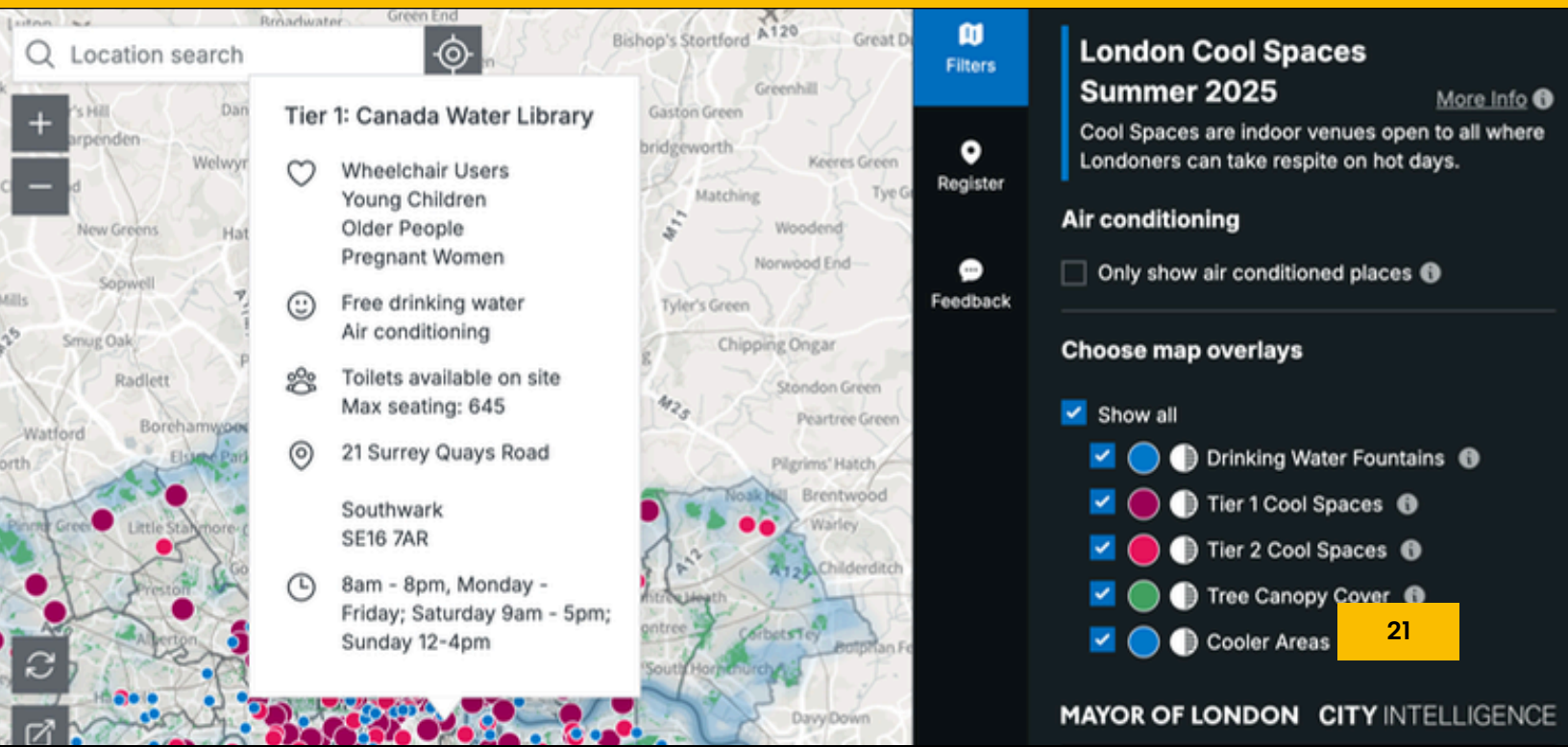
Health and wellbeing

- Long-term, tailored mental health support embedded in climate resilience plans
- Mental health support for carers and families recognising compounded climate stress
- Safer everyday products with lower toxic chemical exposure
- Barrier-free access to nature for better physical and mental health, reduced symptoms and neurodiversity, and community connection

Addressing climate risks and resilience

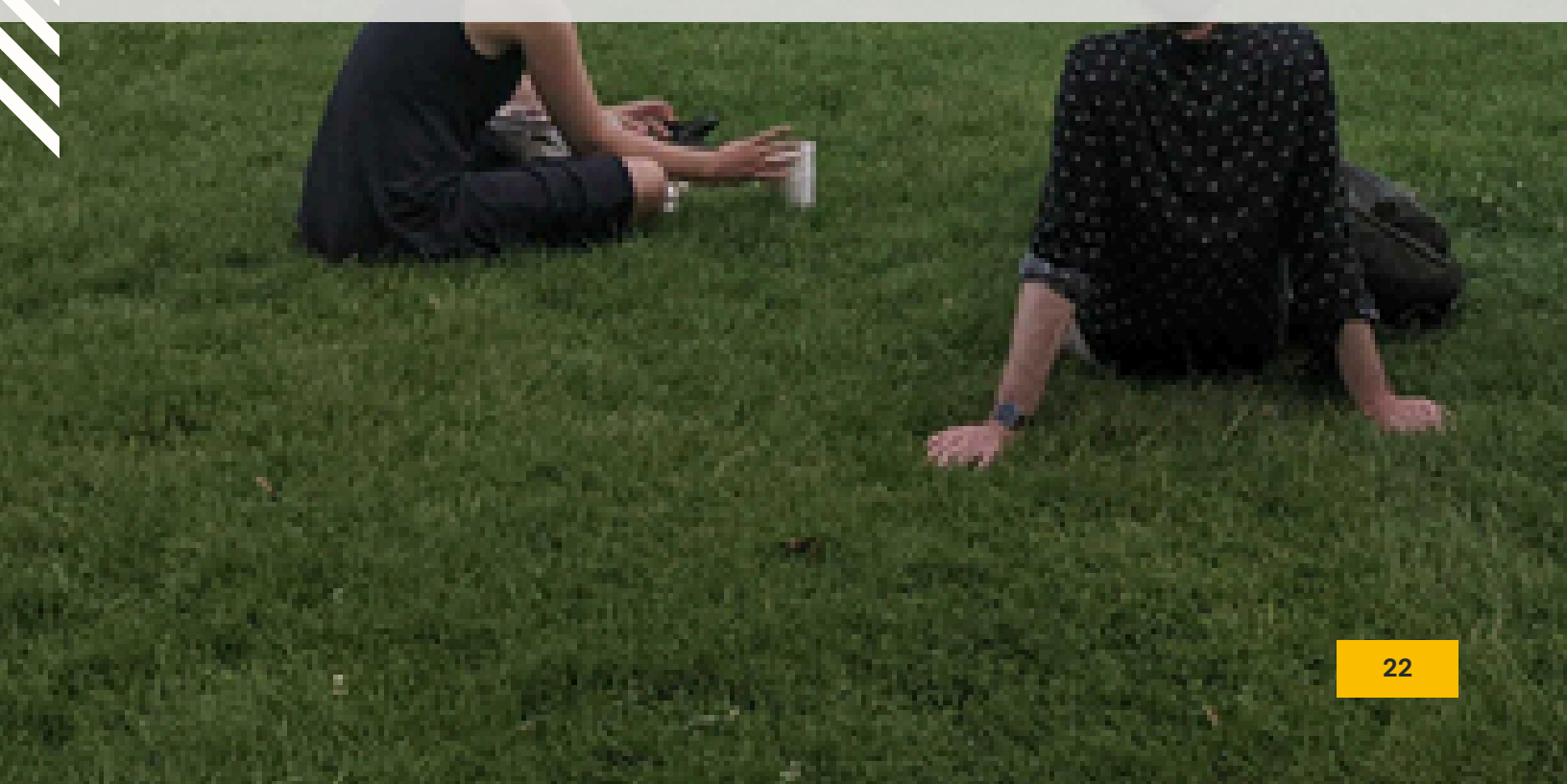
- Reduced risk of overheating, drought, wildfires, flooding, and subsidence through resilient infrastructure
- Accessible cool and warm hubs for community resilience in extreme weather
- Emergency preparedness and early warning systems tailored for different needs
- Support for climate-related relocation or adaptation for those at high risk

Visual below: screenshot from the Mayor of London's cool spaces map



Part 2: a closer look at climate change and mental health

How climate change, and wider environmental degradation are increasing the prevalence of mental health conditions



What the data tells us about climate change, and the increasing prevalence of mental health conditions

Eco-anxiety

Eco-anxiety (severe and debilitating worry) and ecological grief (grief related to current or anticipated ecological loss) are increasingly widespread amongst adults and young people.

There are indications that eco-anxiety is, in large part, driven by inadequate government responses to the crisis. For example, almost half of UK adults feel worse about the climate crisis due to government policy, with one study finding that 51% of adults feel a sense of grief about what is happening to nature and the planet, and 48% saying that government inaction on climate issues makes them feel worse about the crisis (ISEP, 2023). Women, young adults, and those with 'left-wing' views are more likely to feel climate anxiety (Carbon Brief, 2025). Eco-anxiety is generally held to be higher amongst young people and children, indicating an escalated mental health crisis due to climate change worries. One study found that 78% of primary school age children are worried about climate change (Greenpeace, 2025).

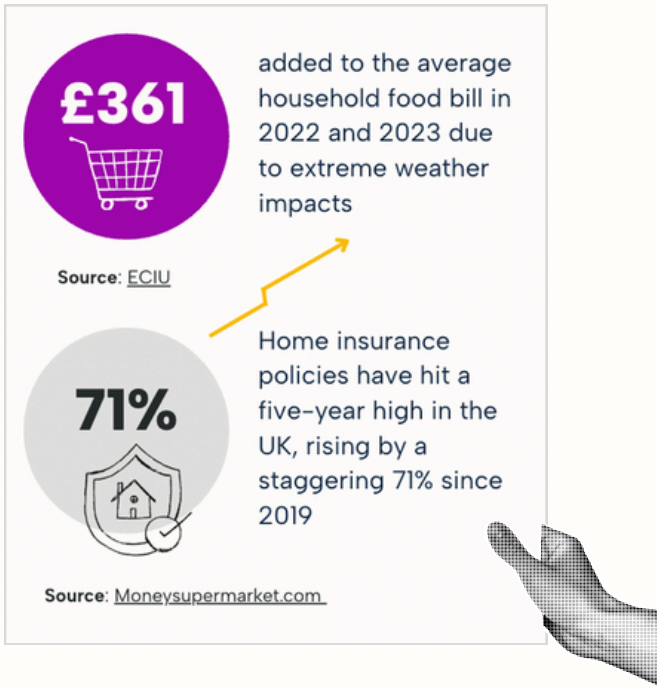
Despite being uncomfortable and, in extreme cases, debilitating, eco-anxiety should be recognised as based on a rational understanding of the climate science, and should not be regarded as unreasonable, illogical, or pathological (Sanson et al, 2021).

Images: the British Red Cross Weather Together programme

Cost of living concerns and the connection to climate change

Not all adults and young people express concern about climate change. For example, in one study 60% of adults said that rising food and living costs are a more immediate worry to them, and 65% of young people said they are more concerned about rising rent and mortgage costs (ISEP, 2023).

However, there are links to climate change across many such concerns, including and estimated £361 per year added to the average UK household's annual food bill due to climate change (ECIU, 2023), and UK households facing an estimated £3,000 per household of climate damage costs in 2025 (Global Witness, 2025).



> *Climate change is already impacting mental health, and these risks will increase as the climate warms and extreme weather events become more frequent and severe.*
>
> *– Professor Lea Berrang Ford, Head of the UKHSA Centre for Climate and Health Security (CCHS)*

Environmental problems, extreme weather and mental health

About two-thirds of people in the UK (68%) say their local area has experienced at least one environmental problem in the past year This included severe storms (34%), flooding (32%), air pollution (31%), water pollution (29%), extreme heat (16%), agricultural pests and diseases (9%), rising sea levels (8%), water shortages (6%), droughts (4%), or wildfires (3%) (Climate Communication Yale, 2025).

All of these experiences can cause or exacerbate poor mental health. For example, Public Health England have estimated that people affected by flooding are six times more likely to experience depression, anxiety, or PTSD for up to three years at significant cost to the economy (BRC, 2025) and research is clear that rising heat could cause more mental health disorders (University of Adelaide, 2025).

Environmental drivers of mental health conditions

The majority of research and action at the intersection of climate change and mental health focuses on eco-anxiety, and insufficient attention is given to the embryonic yet growing body of evidence that indicates how environmental change can drive mental health conditions.

For example: air pollution is linked to schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders (Attademo et al, 2017); there is a clear link between increased temperatures and mental health issues (WEF, 2022); and whilst the mental health impacts of flooding are not yet fully understood, the UK's Public Health Register states that mental health issues 'may prove to be the greatest health impact of flooding' (UKPHR, 2016). Similar root causes are under-researched in relation to neurodiversity, including the impact of toxic chemicals (Science Alert, 2025) and plastics (Stein et al, 2023).

Building climate resilience and wellbeing

Building climate resilience is essential to safeguarding mental health. This requires multisector partnerships and community-based approaches that reduce vulnerabilities while addressing mental health needs. Strengthening social connections and fostering community cohesion are central to resilience, alongside supporting community-led solutions that work with researchers and knowledge partners to build evidence for effective action.

Ensuring climate education for everyone can also help transform individual anxiety into collective action, mobilising a movement that understands the costs of inaction far outweigh those of taking sustainable, wellbeing-centred climate action. (Mishra et al, 2025).

Part 3: climate change and the compounding forms of marginalisation

Disabled people, neurodiverse people and people with mental health conditions can also experience oppression and marginalisation due to race, gender or poverty

...Disabled people from Black, Asian, and minoritised ethnic communities are often treated as anomalies, ignored and othered within both identity-based movements and the climate movement. Climate spaces are not currently designed to listen to these voices.

This exclusion is a result of inaccessible spaces, the undervaluation of lived experience, and structural biases in decision-making.

– Source: Race Equality Foundation
From the blog series 'Disability, race, and the climate crisis'

ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM AND RACIAL JUSTICE

Disabled people, neurodiverse people and people with mental health conditions are likely to face multiple disadvantages and increased climate vulnerability if also from a racialised community.

For example, racialised communities in the UK experience greater exposure to climate and environmental harms in comparison to white peers, including:

Heat – racialised communities are more likely to live in urban areas (UK Gov, 2022), where temperatures are up to 10°C higher than surrounding areas due to the 'heat island effect' (Red Cross, 2021).

Racialised communities are more likely to live in poorly adapted housing (Prevention Web, 2022). Approximately three in five non-White people (62%) have experienced a heatwave in the UK that caused sleep loss and discomfort (Ogunbode and Kidwell, 2022), which is more than in comparable surveys of the general population (Cardiff University, 2020)

Flooding – although being at no greater risk of flooding than the general pollution (Fielding, 2018) racialised communities often have lower levels of insurance and therefore are significantly impacted when extreme weather causes damage to their homes (Sayers, 2020)

Adverse weather and mould– extreme weather from climate change can worsen mould issues in homes. Across the UK, 6.5 million people live in properties with faulty heating, electrics, or plumbing and with damp, affecting young people, low-income families, and racialised communities most (Guardian, 2023).

Air pollution – air pollution is higher in housing areas with more than 20% racialised communities (Fecht et al, 2014) and research shows that women are disproportionately impacted by air pollution (Impact on Urban Health, 2025).

Green space deprivation – 40% of people from racialised communities live in the most greenspace-deprived areas vs 14% of White people (Friends of the Earth, 2020).

Dad of boy who died due to mould in flat says he's 'proud' of his son for saving lives

Faisal Abdullah told Big Issue that the support of the public has kept him going as a new law in memory of his son Awaab Ishak comes into force promising to fix social homes with damp and mould

LIAM GERAGHTY | 27 Oct 2025

Source: Big Issue

London council received hundreds of damp and mould cases in first few weeks of Awaab's Law

Source: Inside Housing

Millions of tenants safe from black mould through Awaab's Law

New laws are now in force protecting social housing tenants from emergency hazards and damp and mould. The changes are a lasting legacy to Awaab Ishak.

Source: Gov.UK

People from racialised communities are disproportionately represented in low income households (Health Foundation, 2024), leaving them more greatly exposed to many environmental harms.

However, after taking into account the complexities, some analysis shows that people from racialised communities face substantial excess exposure even after accounting for area-level deprivation (Fecht et al, 2015).

There is limited research of this nature exploring environmental racism directly, there are numerous examples; including:

- Racialised communities are more likely to live in 'air pollution sacrifice areas', in close proximity to pollution-heavy infrastructure such as recycling centres, industrial sites, and incinerators (Runneymede Trust and Greenpeace);
- Two-thirds of the 60 short-term 'transit' traveller sites in England – and just over half of the country's 242 permanent sites – are within 100m of one or more environmental hazards (Katharine Quarmby).

LEARN MORE

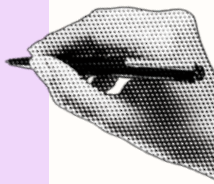
For more information, including the global view of environmental racism, we recommend the following resources:

- Disability, race, and the climate crisis (Race Equality Foundation, 2026)
- How will the climate and nature crises impact people from ethnic minority communities? Report (NPC, 2023)
- A vision for climate justice: Tackling the climate and nature emergency and global systemic racism (APPG Race and Community, Runnymede, 2025)
- Confronting Injustice: Racism and the Environmental Emergency (Runnymede and Greenpeace UK, 2022)

CLIMATE CHANGE AND GENDER JUSTICE

Disabled people, neurodiverse people and people with mental health conditions are likely to face multiple disadvantages and increased climate vulnerability if also female (NPC, 2026) or non-binary.

More women than men are Disabled (WBG, 2025), women are more likely than men to experience mental health conditions (Mind, 2025); and although men are more likely to be diagnosed as neurodiverse than women, this is considered to be a reflection of system bias that can leave women unsupported (Daisy Chain, 2025)



Similarly, LGBTQIA+ people are more likely to be Disabled (DRUK, 2025); more likely to experience mental health conditions (MHF, 2025) and more likely to be neurodiverse (NHS Dorset, 2025).

Women in the UK experience greater exposure to climate and environmental harms in comparison to men, including:

Eco-anxiety – Women are more likely to experience eco-anxiety (Carbon Brief, 2025)

Heat – Women are at greater risk from heatwaves than men (Guardian, 2022) and heat worsens the symptoms of Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder and Pre-menstrual syndrome (Liz Gadd Consulting, 2025)

Source: Carbon Brief, 2023

Chemical exposure – Women are more greatly exposed to toxic chemicals through sources including toiletries (THINK chemicals, 2025) and menstrual products (Pesticide Action Network & Women's Environmental Network, 2025)

Pregnancy and childbirth – Women face pregnancy challenges and adverse birth outcomes from climate impacts, including heat exhaustion (CDC, 2024), pre-term births (Chersich et al, 2020) and increased postpartum depression (The British Psychological Society, 2024)

Fuel poverty – Women are overrepresented in households vulnerable to fuel poverty, increasing health risks in cold winters and limiting cooling options in heat (End Fuel Poverty, 2025)

Age – When older, women are more likely to live alone and be in poverty, compounding health impacts of extreme weather and energy price shocks (Age UK, 2022)

Gender-based violence – Women are likely to be at greater risk of gender-based violence during heatwaves (University College London, 2024)

Disasters – Women are more likely to die in disasters (UNDP, 2024)

Image: 2021 Lancet Countdown UK Policy Brief

CLIMATE CHANGE AND LGBTQIA+ JUSTICE

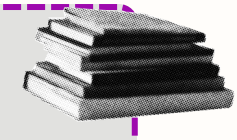
Although under researched in comparison to other social groups, LGBTQIA+ people in the UK experience greater exposure to climate and environmental harms, including:

Health disparities – Climate change may exacerbate existing health disparities among LGBTQIA+ people (Mann et al, 2024)

Mental health – LGBTQIA+ people live with a higher baseline mental health burden (Fellng, 2024), making climate shocks and eco-anxiety potentially more damaging. Many also face discrimination in the health sector, reducing access to support (MHUK, 2025)

Housing and work insecurity – LGBTQIA+ people are overrepresented in insecure housing (SHP, 2025) and insecure work (TUC, 2024), increasing vulnerability to climate shocks.

LEARN MORE

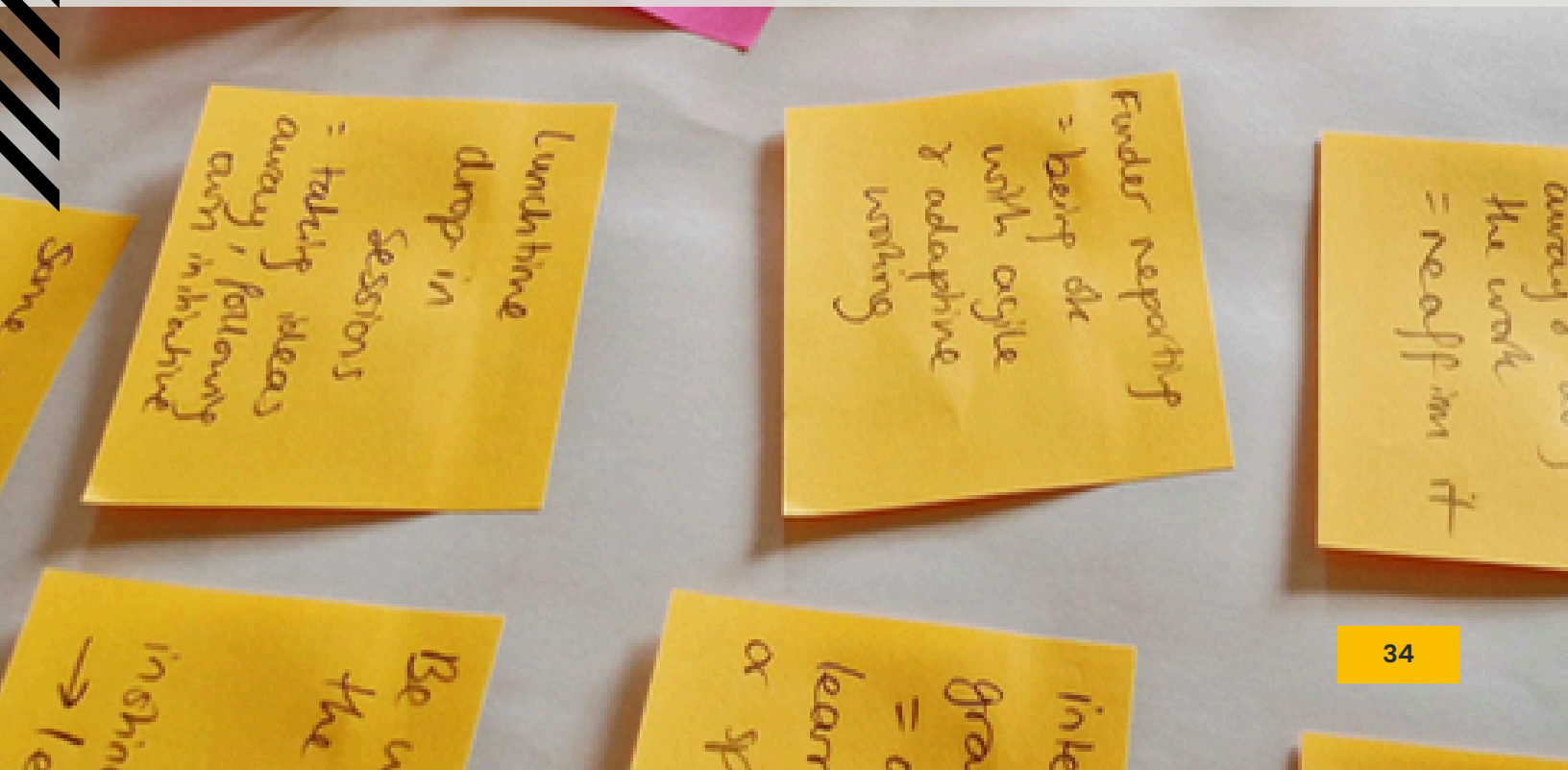


For more information, including the global view of climate and gender see see:

- Invisible women: Why women and marginalised groups should be central to UK funders' climate resilience strategies (Impatience Earth, 2025)
- How does climate change impact the LGBTQIA+ community? (Impatience Earth, 2024)
- Climate and nature crises impacts on women and girls (NPC & WEN, 2026)
- A Crisis of Queer Invisibility: Climate Change as a Risk Multiplier for LGBTQ People (ReportOUT, 2023)

Part 4: how charities and funders are responding

Spotlighting the organisations engaging with the intersections of climate action and disability, mental health and neurodivergence.



Your work on climate action is not equitable if it doesn't include Disability, neurodivergence and mental health

Across the UK, action at the intersection of disability, mental health, neurodiversity *and* climate or environmental issues is emerging but it is uneven across charities and funders.

While awareness of the importance of inclusive approaches is growing, activity tends to be concentrated in a handful of organisations and research initiatives, with capacity and resources remaining limited.

Much of the current work is framed within broader social or health agendas rather than explicitly focused on the unique challenges posed by climate change and environmental issues for Disabled people, neurodivergent people, and people with mental health conditions. **There is a shared need for more coordinated action, stronger recognition of environmental drivers of inequality, and dedicated funding that enables these communities to influence policy and benefit from environmental solutions.**

What have we missed? We invite you to get in touch

The information shared on the following pages are indicative of the organisations working at these intersections and will not be exhaustive.

The Barnwood Trust and Impatience Earth teams are keen to hear from other charities and funders working in the space: contact info@impatience.earth

A spotlight on charities and grantees

The following pages detail what we know about organisations implementing work at the intersection of climate/environment and disability, mental health and neurodiversity. The information shared will not be exhaustive.

Charities in the UK working at the intersection of disability and climate/environment

Over recent years, there has been a noticeable shift in awareness of the need to engage Disabled people in climate action and environmental policy.

- **Disability-led organisations** such as Disability Rights UK, initiatives like Everyone's Environment, and research projects such as Sensing Climate, are making important inroads in ensuring Disabled voices are heard in climate debates.
- There are also a number of charities – including Camphill Village Trust, Sensory Trust, The Conservation Volunteers and the Wildlife Trusts – that **combine disability support or health programmes with access to nature,** highlighting its wellbeing benefits.
- Others have engaged Disabled people in **campaigning and/or litigation** interventions such as Friends of the Earth and Extinction Rebellion.

Despite this great work, plus early work of the Everyone's Environment on climate action Disabled people would like to see, and the ongoing work of bright spots like the Bristol Climate and Nature Partnership, the voice of Disabled people is insufficiently incorporated into climate mitigation and adaptation discussions. Action is limited by capacity in this highly underfunded subsector, and further funding is required to ensure that Disabled people's voices are heard in policy decisions that affect their lives.

Charities in the UK working at the intersection of mental health and climate/environment

The intersection of climate and nature with mental health is a growing area of action, backed by significant research and a Lancet Commission on Climate Change and Mental Health.

In the UK charity sector, action is widespread yet often fragmented, sometimes duplicating effort, and rarely building upon existing work rather than generating new projects. The environmental drivers of mental health conditions are often ignored in favour of focus on 'eco-anxiety'. And overall, the focus is often on young people.

However, there are exciting developments across the country that buck these trends, including:

- Norfolk and Waveny Mind's sUStain project with partners including the Climate Psychology Alliance supporting communities at risk of displacement due to coastal erosion.
- The benefits of access to nature for improved mental health are also being acted upon, including through green social prescribing by the Wildlife Trusts and others.

Charities in the UK working at the intersection of neurodiversity and climate/environment

Action at the intersection of neurodiversity and climate or wider environmental issues is limited.

This research did not find related action by major charities in the neurodiversity space though we recommend this EFN blog post and Nifty Sustainability webinar with activist Emma de Saram, in conversation with Chris Packham. The potential environmental drivers of neurodiversity are in the early days of research and are, therefore, somewhat controversial. Action in this sector is at the earliest stages of engagement.

A spotlight on funders

The following pages detail what we know about grantmaking organisations supporting work at the intersection of climate/environment and disability, mental health and neurodiversity

Funders in the UK working at the intersection of disability and climate/environment

This research found no funding *specifically* dedicated to the intersection of disability with climate and wider environmental issues. Funding for this intersection appears to be available only within wider social issue focused funding, for example:

- The National Lottery Community Fund runs multiple programmes that would consider funding at the intersection of disability and climate;
- The National Lottery Heritage Fund supports increasing accessibility of gardens, parks and historic landscapes to Disabled people;
- Esmée Fairbairn's 'Investing in our natural world' programme explicitly notes funding that supports Disabled people, however its commitment appears to be more to inclusive grant making rather than explicitly on the impacts of the climate and nature crises on Disabled people;
- The Wellcome Trust explicitly funds projects on disability in its research portfolio and offers disability-related support to grant holders.

Recommendation

There is a need for more targeted funding that explicitly addresses the unique challenges faced by Disabled individuals in the context of climate and environmental issues.

Funders in the UK working at the intersection of mental health and climate/environment

Funding at the intersection of mental health with climate and wider environmental issues appears to be a growing area of funding, with the majority of funding focussed on the mental health benefits of wider interventions and/or access to nature.

- The National Lottery Community Fund, National Lottery Heritage Fund, People's Health Trust and Esmée Fairbairn Foundation support improved mental health via access to nature programmes and/or as a part of wider work.
- The Wellcome Trust funds research into how climate change affects physical and mental health and supports projects that make climate impacts on mental health visible and actionable, and UKRI funds research projects that include mental health.

However, dedicated funding for the environmental drivers of mental health conditions, climate resilience building, and disaster recovery appears to be unavailable at present.

Funders in the UK working at the intersection of neurodiversity and climate/environment

Funding at the intersection of neurodiversity and climate/environment is an emerging area in the UK.

- Esmée Fairbairn's 'Investing in our natural world' programme explicitly notes funding that supports neurodivergent people, however its commitment appears to be more to inclusive grant making rather than explicitly on the impacts of the climate and nature crises on neurodivergent people;
- Broader funding that incorporates a focus on inclusivity, for example the National Lottery Community Fund, provide opportunities for grant seekers.

Recommendation

There is a need for more targeted funding that explicitly addresses the unique challenges faced by neurodivergent individuals in the context of climate and environmental issues.

An opportunity for multisolving: funding social and climate/environmental issues

Overall funding at the intersection of social and environmental issues is growing, however it is hard to categorise because of the interconnectedness of social and environmental issues.

The gaps tend to mirror existing inequity, for example Disabled people's organisation's are generally underfunded and we see in parallel a limited amount of climate related funding in the same space.

The mental health and climate intersection, on the other hand, is receiving much greater attention – in large part because of significant funders such as the Wellcome Trust acting in this space.

Signatories of the UK Funder Commitment on Climate Change report a range of progress on integrating social and environmental issues within their funding, with the newest signatories often the least advanced in this area. (UKFCCC, 2025)

The picture is similar internationally. Over three quarters (77%) of signatories to the International Philanthropy Commitment on Climate change report that they have reviewed existing programmes or designed new programmes to actively support climate action and a just transition. However, almost as many (72%) were already climate funders when signing the International Commitment (International Philanthropy Commitment on Climate Change, 2025,p.5).

Recommendation

More social issue funders need to consider environmental impacts, and more environmental funders need to consider that progress on their cause areas will be limited without diverse engagement.

Are you a funder integrating climate action into your philanthropy? Support is available

On integrating climate action into your philanthropy "the question is not whether to act, but how" (Philea, 2025). There are many resources, networks and advisors available – including Impatience Earth and the Environmental Funders Network.

The Philea report "How to Integrate Climate into Your Philanthropic Programmes: What Foundations Need to Know, and Where to Begin" identifies five clear pathways to doing so:

Purpose: Make climate change a central or integrated goal of your philanthropy, informed by motivation, resources, desired impact, and climate's effect on other goals.

Strategy: Embed climate considerations into organisational strategy using approaches like intersectionality and foresight, aligning with values, assets, risks, and stakeholder expectations.

Programme creation/review: Design or revise programmes to advance climate and philanthropic goals together, factoring in justice, co-benefits, climate risks, evidence, and organisational capacity.

Project decisions: Integrate climate adaptation, resilience, and emissions reduction into everyday grantmaking and programme activities, while incorporating diverse perspectives.

Support for partners/grantees: Help partners embed climate considerations into their work through training, advice, funding, and continuous learning based on partner insights.

Most signatories of national and international funder climate commitments begin their journey with 'education and learning'. In addition, most report that decarbonising operations and endowments are the hardest areas on which to act. (International Philanthropy Commitment on Climate Change, 2025, p.47)

APPENDIX

In more detail: what the research tells us about how climate change and environmental degradation in the UK are shaping the lives of Disabled people, neurodivergent people, and people with mental health conditions, plus the opportunities to take action.

Image: Liz Seabrook / Nesta / Climate Visuals

	RISKS	OPPORTUNITIES
HEAT		
MENTAL HEALTH (HEAT)	**Heat exacerbated mental health issues** Climate change increased temperatures, heatwaves and temperature variation, are all risk factors for worse mental health outcomes (Rhiannon Thompson et al, 2021) People with bipolar disorder may have increased manic symptoms and reduced depressive symptoms at hotter temperatures (P.Clery et al, 2025) Studies have found increased mental health mortality is linked to high temperature, one study found there is a 2.2% increase in mental health-related mortality per 1 °C rise in temperature (Liu et al, 2021), another that suicides increase between 0.7% (USA) and 2.1% (Mexico) (Burke et al, 2018), and a further study that prolonged drought raised suicide risk by 15% for rural middle-aged men in Australia (Hanigan et al, 2012). **Heat increased vulnerability** People with mental health conditions may be more vulnerable to heat because medications such as antipsychotics and antidepressants can interfere with the body's ability to regulate temperature, reduce sweating, and increase sedation, which together heighten the risk of overheating. (CDC, 2024) Heatwaves lead to more emergency hospital admissions for psychosis and dementia (Culqui et al, 2017; Liu et al, 2021). People with mental health conditions are 3× more likely to die from heat-related causes (Boudreault et al, 2025). **Heat increased prevalence** Rising heat could cause more mental health disorders (University of Adelaide, 2025) Drought is a chronic psychological stressor due to loss of livelihood, diminished social support, and rupture of place bonds (Vins et al, 2015) People affected by drought have a 26% higher likelihood of mental health conditions, with spikes in depression and anxiety (Edwards et al, 2024). Agricultural workers are 28.9% more likely to be severely affected by mental health disorders during/after drought than the general population (Yazd et al, 2019)	**Keeping cool on a budget** Passive cooling measures, such as green roofs and solar shading, can mitigate some of the problem and would require no additional energy input, but similarly efforts to decarbonise heat and improve ventilation for health and well-being must be addressed simultaneously (MBS, 2024) The following can support reducing overheating: • passive options such as natural ventilation (including night purging and stack effect), external shading (overhangs, louvres, awnings, PV shading), and reflective or green surfaces (cool roofs, planted walls). • Active options include fans to improve comfort, heat pumps for mechanical cooling, and measures to limit internal heat gains like insulating hot water pipes and ensuring MVHR (Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery) systems have summer bypass. In addition, risk assessment tools, indoor monitoring with alerts, and clear occupant guidance help ensure these measures are used effectively. (RIBA, 2024)

	RISKS	OPPORTUNITIES
MENTAL HEALTH (HEAT) *continued*	Flooding related anxiety and depression persists for three, possibly more years after the flood experience (Robin et al, 2020). An increased rate of mental health disorders post-wildfire has been found in both the adult and children. In one study, climate-induced wildfires caused PTSD in 92% of the tested population 3 months after; after 18 months, depression was 33.3% and anxiety 28% (To et al, 2021) Children exposed to wildfires have a 21.5% chance of developing an anxiety disorder, compared with 16% in the general population (McFarlane & Van Hooff, 2009) Extreme weather can leave people isolated if less able to leave the house.	
DISABILITY (HEAT)	**Heat exacerbated symptoms** Three quarters of Disabled people report their condition is significantly affected by hot weather (Scope, 2025) High temperatures can trigger more frequent and severe seizures for people with neurological conditions like epilepsy. (Elizabeth Rayne, 2025) Over 60% people with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) say symptoms get worse in the heat. (MS Society, 2018) Heat is challenging for people with autonomic nervous system issues, such as PoTS, who can find temperature regulation harder (POTSUK, date unknown) People with spinal cord injuries where the sweating function is affected have reduced ability to cool themselves down in high temperatures (Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation, date unknown) People living with syndromes including Ehlers-Danlos syndrome (which affects connective tissue) can experience challenges with sweat function, especially when it presents with Dysautonomia (The Elders-Danlos Society, date unknown) Hot weather means your body has to work harder to keep its core temperature to normal levels, and this puts extra strain on your heart, lungs and kidneys. This means that you can be at greater risk if you have a heart condition (BHF, 2023).	Retrofitting as above **Climate and disability friendly building design** "Climate resilient inclusive design", i.e. retrofitting and constructing buildings to be both sustainable and accessible, is an essential but often overlooked aspect of the transition to a post carbon economy (GDIH, 2020)

	RISKS	OPPORTUNITIES
DISABILITY (HEAT) *continued*	Heatwaves can worsen respiratory problems like asthma and COPD (Asthma+Lung, 2018) **Heat increased vulnerability** People with disabilities face a 1.07 times higher risk of hospitalizations from heat compared to the general population (Pusan National University, 2025) In extreme temperatures, Disabled people experienced higher rates of injury, heat-related illness, functional impairment, heart disease, mental disorders, and mortality than people who were non-Disabled (Rhim et al, 2024) People with disabilities often take medications like beta-blockers, diuretics, or pain medicines that can lower blood pressure, reduce thirst, or impair circulation, increasing the chance of dehydration, fainting, and heat-related illness. (CDC, 2024) There is evidence from Disabled people, not yet backed by formal research, suggesting that heatwaves can reduce independence – for example the ability to leave the home, guide dogs struggling with hot pavements, and sunhats echolocation Extreme weather can leave Disabled people isolated if less able to leave the house.	Habinteg's 2020 Forecast for Accessible Homes reported at least 1.2 million UK wheelchair users alongside a rapidly ageing population, while the Centre for Ageing Better found that nine in 10 homes fail to meet minimum accessibility standards. Since one million homes need to be retrofitted each year to cut energy use and reach Net Zero, this presents an opportunity to also address accessibility gaps, particularly for wheelchair users. Incorporating small accessibility improvements into retrofit projects could significantly enhance their social, economic, and environmental impact. (Habintech, 2023) Ensure Cool Hubs are disability friendly
NEURO-DIVERSITY (HEAT)	**Heat exacerbated symptoms** Many neurodivergent people, especially those with autism, can experience heightened sensory sensitivity, making the sensations of heat, sweat, and certain clothing feel uncomfortable and heatwaves unbearable (Bjelland, date unknown) **Heat increased vulnerability** Neurodivergent people may be affected by stimulants or anticholinergic medications that alter central thermoregulation, blunt thirst signals, or impair sweating, leaving them less able to sense or respond to dangerous heat. (CDC, 2024) Neurodivergent people, especially those with autism or ADHD, may struggle to read bodily sensations like thirst, increasing their vulnerability to heat stress. (Neff, 2023). Extreme weather can leave neurodiverse people isolated if less able to leave the house. **Heat and increased prevalence of autism** Early research links high night time temperature during early and late pregnancy to autism in children (Lugio et al, 2026)	Retrofitting as above Ensure Cool Hubs are neurodivergent friendly

	RISKS	OPPORTUNITIES
COLD		
MENTAL HEALTH (COLD)	*Whilst climate change is commonly associated with rising temperatures, uncertainty in the tipping points of key global systems (particularly the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation) means that plummeting temperatures in the UK are possible although uncertain. If this were to happen, those who are housebound, on low incomes, and/or in poorly adapted housing are most vulnerable. (Guardian, 2025)* **Cold exacerbated symptoms** Cold weather can increase the costs of heating the home, exacerbating mental health challenges for those in financial difficulty. **Cold increased vulnerability** Adults that experience prolonged cold temperatures at home risk of exacerbating existing mental health issues three-fold. (Institute of Health Equity, 2024) Extreme weather can leave people isolated if less able to leave the house. **Cold increased prevalence** Adults that experience prolonged cold temperatures at home double their risk of developing new mental health conditions (Institute of Health Equity, 2024) 1 in 4 (28%) children that live in cold homes are at risk of multiple mental health symptoms, such as anxiety and depression (Institute of Health Equity, 2024)	
DISABILITY (COLD)	**Cold exacerbated symptoms** Cold exposure is generally accepted to increase pain, stiffness, and reduce mobility for those experiencing chronic pain conditions. **Cold increased vulnerability** In Britain, a cold spell during an otherwise mild winter can have escalating health impacts depending on its duration: after two days there is a sudden rise in heart attacks by up to a third, after five days the number of strokes increases significantly, and after twelve days respiratory illnesses become more common. Extreme weather can leave Disabled people isolated if less able to leave the house.	

	RISKS	OPPORTUNITIES
NEURO-DIVERSITY (COLD)	**Cold exacerbated symptoms** People with autism can find temperature regulation challenging, and exposure to cold can be uncomfortable or trigger extreme reactions (Brown, 2025) Extreme weather can leave neurodiverse people isolated if less able to leave the house.	**Improved symptoms** Cold exposure can trigger a surge in norepinephrine, a neurotransmitter linked to improved alertness and focus, which can benefit those with ADHD (ADHD Certify, date unknown)
AIR POLLUTION		
MENTAL HEALTH (AIR POLLUTION)	**Air pollution exacerbated symptoms** Air pollution is linked to increased hospital admissions for mental health (Public Health Scotland, 2024) A relatively small increase in exposure to nitrogen dioxide can lead to a 32% increase in the risk of needing community-based treatment and an 18% increase in the risk of being admitted to hospital (Kings, 2021) **Air pollution increased vulnerability** Small increases in air pollution are linked to rises in common mental health issues such as depression; with one study reporting an incremental increase in nitrogen dioxide heightened the risk of common mental disorders by 39% (Bakolis et al, 2020) Air pollution increased mental health condition prevalence Air pollution is linked to schizophrenia (Attademo et al, 2017) Air pollution can have a lasting impact on white matter (which plays an essential role in the nervous system) in young brains (Barcelona Institute for Global Health, 2024) Exposure to air pollution in adolescence is a risk factor for depression (Manczak et al, 2022) Air pollution in childhood is linked to poor mental health by the age of 18 (Kings College London, 2021) Mid-pregnancy pollution exposure linked to postpartum depression (The British Psychological Society, 2024) Some air pollutants can disrupt hormone levels during the menopause transition, possibly exacerbating symptoms including mental health issues (University of Michigan, 2024) **Ecoanxiety** Growing rates of ecoanxiety and ecological grief, despite being uncomfortable and, in extreme cases, debilitating, should be recognised as based on a rational understanding of the climate science, and should not be regarded as unreasonable, illogical, or pathological (Ann Sanson et al, 2021	**Reduced prevalence** Low emission zones could reduce mental health problems. Babies who are exposed to air pollution while in the womb and during early childhood may be more likely to have mental health problems when they are teenagers and young adults (University of Bristol, 2024) Building climate risk awareness and resilience is critical.

	RISKS	OPPORTUNITIES
MENTAL HEALTH (AIR POLLUTION) ***continued***	More than half of child and adolescent psychiatrists in England are seeing patients distressed about the state of the environment. (Royal College of Psychiatrists, 2020)	
DISABILITY (AIR POLLUTION)	**Air pollution increased vulnerability** Air pollution increases physical disability risk in older adults (Lancet, 2024) Children with learning disabilities are significantly more likely (~30%) to live in areas of high air pollution than their peers, which may contribute to the health inequities experienced by people with disabilities. (Emerson et al, 2020) Exposure to air pollution results in higher rates of obesity, cardiovascular disease, poststroke neurological and functional disability, and mortality in Disabled people than in people who were not Disabled. (Rhim et al, 2024) **Air pollution increased disability prevalence** Air pollution might be an underappreciated risk factor for physical disability in later life, although additional research is needed (Geo et al, 2024) Air pollution affects fetal development (Rachel B Smith et al, 2017) (Barcelona Institute for Mental Health, 2024) (Broseus et al, 2024)	
NEURO-DIVERSITY (AIR POLLUTION)	**Air pollution exacerbated symptoms** Air pollution reduces people's ability to focus on everyday tasks (Faherty et al, 2025) **Air pollution increased neurodiversity prevalence** Studies show links between pollutants such as fine particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, and ozone, and a higher risk of ASD. While part of the rise in ASD diagnoses is due to better screening and broader criteria, evidence suggests that interactions between genes and the environment play a key role. Pollutants can affect the brain through inflammation, oxidative stress, changes to gene regulation, and disruption of neurotransmitter systems. The greatest risk is during pregnancy and early childhood, when the brain is rapidly developing (Ojha et al, 2024 & Lim et al, 2026). Prenatal exposure to wildfire smoke may increase risk of autism among children (Luglio et al, 2026).	

	RISKS	OPPORTUNITIES
FLOODS / STORMS		
MENTAL HEALTH (FLOODS)	**Flood exacerbated symptoms** The psychological trauma of the recovery process can exacerbate pre-existing anxiety and depressive disorders in the months following floods. The elderly, including those relying on social care and support services, were also affected due to the upset and disruption caused by displacement. (Flood Hub, 2022) **Flood caused mental health challenges** Post-disaster income loss (fires, storms, floods) can increase violence and abuse, especially against women and vulnerable people; victims are more likely to develop mental health disorders (Molyneaux et al, 2019) Children and young people are particularly vulnerable to experiencing trauma as a result of flooding as toys, networks, home and school are disrupted. (National Flood Forum, date unknown) Severe flooding can trigger post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression, phobias and panic, sleep disorders, cognitive deficits and intellectual disabilities with studies showing that teenagers are particularly vulnerable. (Ann Sanson et al, 2021) Women more likely than men to suffer psychological distress from having their homes flooded (University of York, 2021) **Increased prevalence** Prevalence of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in populations exposed to extreme weather events in the UK is high. Key contributing factors are water depth, absence of flood warnings, and displacement from home (Cruz et al, 2020) Flood-affected UK residents showed PTSD prevalence rising from 7.06% to ~43.7% (Cruz et al., 2020) People who experience extreme weather events such as flooding are 50% more likely to suffer from mental health problems including depression and anxiety (ECIU, 2024)	**Strengthening resilience** Living with the uncertainty of persistent flood risk can have significant psychological impacts. Interventions that facilitate the empowerment of individuals living with persistent flood risk may strengthen psychological resilience. (Fothergill et al, 2021) Flood victims' subjective appraisal of their ability to cope does not necessarily encompass consideration of the role played by climate change. Therefore, support for victims of extreme weather should include explicit acknowledgement of the involvement of climate change and the need for action to mitigate future climate risks (noting a risk that psychological resilience to flooding and other extreme weather events can translate to diminished motivation to mitigate climate change) (Ogunbode et al, 2018)
NEURO-DIVERSITY (FLOODS)	**Exacerbated symptoms** Many people with neurodivergent conditions experience heightened sensitivities to sensory stimuli, such as loud noises, bright lights, or strong smells. The chaotic environments typical in disasters can be extremely distressing for them (Hamsted, 2024)	

	RISKS	OPPORTUNITIES
DISABILITY (FLOODS)	**Flood exacerbated symptoms** **Disabled** people are more likely to experience poor mental health following a flood than peers. (Bailie et al, 2022) Flood impact on Disabled people International research shows that people with disability and carers are more likely than others to be affected and displaced by fooding, their needs are more immediate and urgent than most, and their mental health is more likely to be compromised. As people with disability will take longer to recover, they will require longer term tailored support. (Bailie et al, 2021)	
TOXICS		
MENTAL HEALTH (TOXICS)	**Toxic chemical caused and/or exacerbated symptoms** Endocrine-disrupting chemicals have been linked to increased oxidative stress in brain tissue, which is strongly associated with depression. This connection may stem from disruptions in serotonin pathways, neurogenesis, stress response, and neuroinflammation, as well as imbalances in synaptic plasticity. (Liu et al, 2025) There is mounting evidence that microplastics from ultra-processed foods may be accumulating in human brains – and it may potentially be contributing to the rising global rates of depression, dementia, and other mental health disorders. (NR Times, 2025) Girls exposed to certain endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs) may experience early puberty. Early puberty is associated with an increased risk of psychosocial problems as well as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and breast cancer (Natalie Shaw et al, 2024) Many researchers have found a link between exposure to industrial and environmental chemicals and the development of mood disorders and cognitive impairment in adolescence and adulthood. Among these chemicals, pesticides -especially organophosphate pesticides (OPs) - are among the most frequently studied. Animal studies show that OPs negatively affect neurotransmitters involved in mood regulation, memory, and learning. This may explain the association between pesticide exposure and the neuropsychological and psychiatric symptoms often reported in epidemiological studies. (Mackenzie Ross, 2017)	**Benefits of plant rich diets** Environmentally friendly plant rich diets that increase fibre intake could reduce 'forever chemicals' in bodies (Jennifer Schlezinger et al, 2025)

	RISKS	OPPORTUNITIES
MENTAL HEALTH (TOXICS) ***continued***	There is a growing body of literature that suggests developmental exposure to some environmental chemicals increases a child's risk of mood, anxiety, and behaviour problems. (James et al, 2023) There is an association between depressive symptoms and common environmental toxicants including acrylamide, arsenic, ethylene oxide, formaldehyde, iodine, metals, nicotine metabolites, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, volatile organic compound (VOC) metabolites; and perchlorate, nitrate, and thiocyanate. (Guo et al, 2024)	
DISABILITY (TOXICS)	**Toxic chemical caused and/or exacerbated symptoms** There are links between birth defects and industrial pollution, for example in the town of Corby (Guardian, 2009) Many studies have associated environmental exposure to chemicals with neurological impairments (NIs) including neuropathies, cognitive, motor and sensory impairments; neurodevelopmental disorders (NDDs) including autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); neurodegenerative diseases (NDGs) including Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) (Zeliger, 2013)	
NEURO-DIVERSITY (TOXICS)	**Toxic chemical cause and/or exacerbated symptoms** Brain development is affected by an extensive list of toxic chemicals. For example, there are links to autism, ADHD, learning disabilities, aggression, and depression. Pesticide exposure during pregnancy increases likelihood of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and attention deficit/hyperactive disorder (ADHD) Exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals in utero is linked to autism, ADHD, learning disabilities, aggression, and depression (Kajta et al, 2013) ADHD linked to heavy metal pollution – lead and copper – exposure (Universittat Rovira i Virgili, 2025) Pesticide exposure during pregnancy increases likelihood of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and attention deficit/hyperactive disorder (ADHD) (Beyond Pesticides, 2022) Early research suggest microplastics may be a potential risk factor for Autism Spectrum Disorder (Zaheer et al, 2022) Neurodevelopmental disabilities, including autism, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, and other cognitive impairments, affect millions of children worldwide, and some diagnoses seem to be increasing in frequency. Industrial chemicals that injure the developing brain are among the known causes for this rise in prevalence (Grandjean et al, 2015)	

	RISKS	OPPORTUNITIES
ACCESS TO NATURE		
MENTAL HEALTH (ACCESS TO NATURE)		**Improved symptoms** Frequency of visits to green spaces and views of green space from the home are significant predictors of general health (EEA, 2019) A greater likelihood of having many different bird species in a person's area of residence might positively contribute to mental health, especially for people with lower socioeconomic status (Joel Methorst, 2024) Access to green space can reduce inequalities in mental well-being between affluent and low income households by 40% (European Environment Agency, 2020) Green school playgrounds have been shown to improve wellbeing and reduce physiological stress (European Environment Agency, 2019) Abundant green space in urban areas is linked to lower rates of heat-related illness and deaths, as well as better mental health and wellbeing (London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, 2024) Hearing birdsong can improve mental health (Mechelli et al, 2022) Simply looking at nature – or even just digital pictures of it – can relieve pain (Steininger et al, 2025) **Reduced prevalence** Time spent near 'blue spaces' – rivers, lakes and coasts – in childhood is linked to increased wellbeing as adults (Vitale et al, 2022) People who live near green space are less likely to struggle with mental health issues (Urban Mind, 2024) **Support required** The main barriers to accessing green space for Disabled people include physical barriers such as steps, slopes, lack of toilets, limited access for private transport, and insufficient accessible parking; psychological barriers such as lack of confidence, fear for personal safety, low motivation, and unfamiliarity; and organisational barriers such as limited information, interpretation, or guide dog facilities. (Sensory Trust, date unknown)

	RISKS	OPPORTUNITIES
DISABILITY (ACCESS TO NATURE)	**Barriers to access to nature** Natural England, drawing on existing research, found that Disabled people often face barriers to enjoying nature, including limited mobility and affordable access, unsuitable infrastructure, low confidence in natural settings, a lack of representation, and the impact of stereotypes and assumptions from others. They recommend actions such as clearly communicating and monitoring available infrastructure, co-producing approaches with Disabled people, recognising their agency, expanding sensory opportunities to experience different natural environments, and promoting small-scale, local, or 'stepping stone' encounters with nature. (Natural England, 2022)	**Improves symptoms** People with learning disabilities benefit from engaging in nature-based activities and spending time outdoors. Opening up access to the outdoors is a simple and effective way of enhancing wellbeing. (Sensory Trust, date unknown) Outdoor environments, from local parks to nature trails, are vital to our physical health, mental well-being and social connection. Fresh air, spaces and places to play help us relieve stress and give us more choices to be active. Yet too many Disabled people face barriers that keep them from enjoying these same benefits. By understanding these barriers and taking proactive steps to remove them, we can create more inclusive, healthier communities for everyone.(Activity Alliance, 2025) Nature offers important sensory, emotional, and social benefits, especially for the 14.1 million people in the UK with disabilities. (British Ecological Society, 2022)
NEURO-DIVERSITY (ACCESS TO NATURE)		**Improve symptoms** Access to nature is linked to better concentration, especially for children with ADHD (Taylor et al, 2009) Access to nature is linked to reduced symptoms of ADHD (EEA, 2019) **Importance of neurodiversity in environmental action** Across Britain, 15% of people are thought to be neurodivergent, and 30% of conservation employees are estimated to be neurodivergent. There is a strong case for the natural world needing a neurodiverse cohort of people to save it (Harkness, 2025)

	RISKS	OPPORTUNITIES
CLIMATE JUSTICE / 'JUST TRANSITION'		
ACROSS ALL GROUPS (JUST TRANSITION)	**Poverty** – People on low-incomes are most impacted by the climate and nature crisis (NPC, 2024). For example those living in more deprived areas experience higher air pollution regardless of whether they live in the city or more rural areas and across all emissions sources, not just transport (University of York, 2023). Similarly, people in deprived areas are more than twice as likely to live in places which are significantly hotter than neighbouring places, due to the urban heat island effect. (BBC, 2022) **Ethnicity –** is, similar to poverty, a cross cutting theme in relation to climate vulnerability (NPC 2023). For example low-income and minority ethnic people in England most at risk from dangerously hot homes (Guardian, 2025); and people from ethnic minority communities have lower levels of flood insurance (Sayers & Partners, 2020) **Costs of climate change** – the cost of inaction on climate change is greater, than the cost of action. If global temperatures rise by 2°C, the UK's economy will reduce by at least 1% by 2045 (Guardian, 2022) **Cost of energy decarbonisation** – Many economists argue that the most efficient way to transition is to slowly increase the cost of fossil fuels, spurring innovation and changes in consumer behaviour. People unable to switch to renewable sources would pay more, and therefore policy makers would need to identify ways to support those on lower incomes. To secure the benefits often requires access to new technology that has an up-front cost and the evidence on whether heat pumps save households money in the long term is mixed. (BBC, 2023) **Planning for inclusion** – Embedding different neds into emergency and non-emergency planning is under developed (Kirkcaldy, 2025). The Bristol and Nature Partnership are leading the way with such resources: Climate and Disability Resources (Green & Bell, 2025). Inclusion Scotland are exploring disability-inclusive climate emergency planning (Inclusion Scotland, 2025)	**Increased disposable income** – the UK's Climate Change Committee predicts that the changes needed for the UK to meet its net zero goal by 2050 will increase real disposable income (CCC, 2020) Increased employment is one of the main drivers of the increase in real disposable income, especially up to 2030, and then by 2050 a driven by lower electricity prices (CCC, 2020) **Improved public transport** – Decarbonising transport requires improvements in the quality, quantity, and emissions of public transport. People in low income households are more likely to use buses (IPPR, 2022) and less likely to use the London Underground or rail networks, than more financially secure peers. Therefore, improvements to bus services and reduced costs will positively impact low-income groups, for example by reducing barriers to education and employment (NatCen, 2019) **Health benefits from low emissions zones** – A global study of low emission zones including UK data found that they improve health, with impacts including fewer admissions to hospital, fewer deaths from heart attacks and strokes, and fewer people with blood pressure problems. (Guardian, 2023) **Job creation** – The Climate Change Committee (CCC) estimates that between 135,000 and 725,000 net new jobs could be created by 2030 in low-carbon sectors, such as buildings retrofit, renewable energy generation and the manufacture of electric vehicles. (CCC, 2023)

	RISKS	OPPORTUNITIES
ACROSS ALL GROUPS (JUST TRANSITION)	**Costs of keeping cool** – Heatwaves can cause serious health and economic impacts, but many effective adaptation measures such as window awnings or air conditioning (though high carbon) are beyond the control of tenants or the budgets of low-income households. Even low-cost options like fans, sunhats, travelling to green spaces, cooling baths or showers, or keeping curtains closed during the day (which may mean using lights) have cost implications, with Disabled people often particularly vulnerable and advised, for example by the MS Society, to 'pre-cool' through a cool bath or cold drink before exertion. (MS Society, date unknown) **Cost of keeping warm** – The costs of keeping warm are well known, but there is also a less certain risk that the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC) – the current that keeps the UK warmer than Moscow – could weaken or collapse. (BBC, 2025) Scientists warn this tipping point could be reached within 20–30 years, which would make the UK much colder and wetter (Hansen et al, 2025) **Food security** – climate change and wider environmental issues have massive implications for the cost of food, especially when complicated by geopolitics and war. The Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit reported that in 2022 and 2023, extreme weather and fossil fuel costs collectively added approximately £605 to the average UK household's annual food bill. Specifically, the climate-related costs alone contributed an average of £192 per household. (ECIU, 2023) More recently, Global Witness have estimated that UK households are facing an estimate £3,000 per household of climate damage costs in 2025. This estimate includes the economic costs of flooding, crop losses, sea level rise, droughts, storms, disruption to overseas trade, and harmful impacts on public health that result from global heating. (Global Witness, 2025) **Infrastructure and medical disruption** – extreme weather impacts infrastructure and transport causing delays e.g. data centres collapse in heatwaves affecting hospitals (BBC, 2022), hospitals cancel surgery (University of Birmingham, 2023), access to medical appointments is disrupted (NHS, 2023) and A&E is swamped (NHS, 2024)	**Energy efficiency reduces bills and improves health** – for example insulation, double/triple glazing, draught-proofing, and insulating tanks, pipes and radiators. Thousands of deaths per year can be saved and mental health improved for many more (Sheffield Uni, 2028). The Resolution Foundation estimates that putting solar panels on the roofs of low-income households could lift 1.2 million families in the UK out of fuel poverty by cutting their energy bills by a quarter. (Resolution Foundation, 2025) **Energy efficiency reduces bills and improves health** – for example insulation, double/triple glazing, draught-proofing, and insulating tanks, pipes and radiators. Thousands of deaths per year can be saved and mental health improved for many more (Sheffield Uni, 2028). The Resolution Foundation estimates that putting solar panels on the roofs of low-income households could lift 1.2 million families in the UK out of fuel poverty by cutting their energy bills by a quarter. (Resolution Foundation, 2025)

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MENTAL HEALTH (JUST TRANSITION)	Irrespective of environmental attitudes or climate change belief, people with autism or mental health conditions can experience barriers to taking pro-environmental action. For example, sensitivity to sensory stimulation that can make public transport more challenging, or specific dietary requirements. (Taylor, 2021) The climate crisis threatens to disrupt the provision of care for people with a mental illness diagnosis (Grantham Institute, 2021)	
DISABILITY (JUST TRANSITION)	**Decarbonising road transport costs** – Disabled people reliant on cars for their independence will be one of the groups most impacted by decarbonisation of road transport. For example, the second-hand electric vehicle market is immature (CCC,2022), electric vehicles cost twice as much to insure as traditional petrol or diesel vehicles (Bloomberg, 2024), scrappage schemes have not run smoothly (BBC, 2023), and as government income from car tax and fuel duty falls the impact of reduced budgets is unknown (Sky, 2023). Charging electric vehicles can also be a challenge for those without access to a charging point at home. 85% of electric car owners charge their vehicles at home and yet ~40% of UK households do not have access to a garage or driveway (MER, 2025). As public charging tends to be more expensive, and charging away from home makes it harder to access off-peak tariff benefits, then these people, often those living in rented flats, will struggle to maximise the benefits of an electric vehicle.	
NEURO-DIVERSITY (JUST TRANSITION)	Autistic people often have pro-environmental attitudes similar to the general population, but they face significant barriers when trying to act on them. These challenges include sensory issues, such as noisy or crowded public transport, difficulties in changing routines or diet (like reducing meat consumption), and other structural or financial limitations. To support neurodivergent people in taking climate-positive actions, policies and initiatives need to be more inclusive—making public transport and other services autism-friendly, providing practical or financial assistance, and designing environmental actions that do not exclude them. Involving autistic and neurodivergent people in the development of climate policy is also essential to ensure accessibility and effectiveness. (Cardiff University, 2021) Irrespective of environmental attitudes or climate change belief, people with autism or mental health conditions can experience barriers to taking pro-environmental action. For example, sensitivity to sensory stimulation that can make public transport more challenging, or specific dietary requirements. (Taylor, 2021) Neurodivergent individuals often rely heavily on public transport, as only 39% drive regularly compared to 60% of neurotypical people, but they can face sensory overload from noisy, crowded, and unpredictable environments. Inconsistent services and unclear communication further increase anxiety and uncertainty for these passengers (Autistica, 2025)	**More support for neurodiverse people in environmental roles** can enable more inclusive climate action (EFN, 2025)

Supporting your journey to transformational climate philanthropy

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