

Ward,RE

From: Department of Health and Social Care <DoNotReply@dhsc.gov.uk>
Sent: 25 January 2022 14:41
To: Ward,RE
Subject: Your correspondence of 28 May

Our ref: DE-1334661

Dear Mr Ward,

Thank you for your correspondence of 28 May to the Prime Minister about a national heat risk strategy. Your correspondence has been forwarded to the Department of Health and Social Care and I have been asked to reply. I apologise for the long delay in doing so, which has been caused by an unprecedented volume of correspondence in recent months.

I appreciate your continuing concerns.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) takes the growing risks from hot weather to public health seriously. Under the National Adaptation Programme, the UKHSA has committed to delivering a single adverse weather and health plan. This will bring together and improve existing evidenced-based guidance to strengthen coordinated action within the health system and across government departments and local communities, reduce health risks of adverse weather, and address the health risks identified in the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment.

Whilst the UKHSA focuses on developing the single adverse weather and health plan, significant updates will not be made to the Heatwave Plan until it is replaced by the new plan in 2023. The guidance contained in the Heatwave Plan is kept under regular review and the guidance and actions outlined in the current plan remain up to date. This year, the UKHSA has reviewed the Heatwave Plan and associated guidance materials including the *Beat the Heat: coping with heat and COVID-19* poster and leaflet and the *Heat-health risks and COVID-19: actions to prevent harm* slide set, and held webinars to engage stakeholders.

The UKHSA also contributes to climate change and health-related research, on a wide range of topics, including: the effects of temperature, air pollution, flooding, heatwaves and droughts on health; health risks of climate change specific to the urban environment; climate change adaptation; and the potential benefits to health from policies to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

In summer 2020 there were an estimated 2,556 all-cause excess deaths during episodes of heat across all ages (excluding deaths from COVID-19). This was the highest heatwave-associated all-cause excess mortality observed in England since the introduction of the Heatwave Plan in 2004.

The number of deaths observed during summer 2020 likely reflect the combined impact of the heatwave and a number of other factors related to the COVID-19 pandemic; the exact nature of these impacts is complex and will need further exploration.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

Joseph Rawlinson
Ministerial Correspondence and Public Enquiries
Department of Health and Social Care

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