



UK Health
Security
Agency

Local Authority Risk and Adaptation (LARA) toolkit: Heat Edition

A guide to support local completion

Making it easier for local authorities to assess the risk, prepare, respond, and reduce health harms from heat.

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Background

UK Health Security Agency

UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) prevents, prepares for and responds to infectious diseases, and environmental hazards, to keep all our communities safe, save lives and protect livelihoods. We provide scientific and operational leadership, working with local, national and international partners to protect the public's health and build the nation's health security capability.

Centre for Climate and Health Security

The Centre for Climate and Health Security (CCHS) provides scientific advice to partners at all levels ensuring climate change and extreme weather impacts on public health are included in system design.

We are the go-to place for information on climate and health impacts, key risks and equity considerations. We provide summaries and tools while also signposting to relevant guidance and advice.

Our mission

Our mission is:

- to support local authority partners to navigate the complexities of climate change and health security
- to help mitigate the health impacts of climate change and protect communities

What we do

The Centre for Climate and Health Security is responsible for:

- raising awareness of the public health impact of climate change
- contributing to surveillance and response
- developing evidence on the impacts of climate change policy on public health
- using evidence to inform climate change policies locally, nationally, and internationally

Foreword

Climate change is already increasing the frequency, intensity, and duration of hot weather in England. Heat poses significant and unequal risks to health, particularly for older people, children, people with disabilities, those with long-term conditions, people experiencing homelessness, and those exposed through their occupation.

Local authorities play a critical role in protecting communities from these risks. The 'Local Authority Risk and Adaptation (LARA) Toolkit: Heat Edition' provides a structured way for local authorities to understand local vulnerability, assess current action, identify gaps, and prioritise improvement.

This guide to support completion supports local authorities across the country to use LARA consistently, proportionately, and effectively, helping them to embed heat and health considerations into leadership, planning, service delivery, and partnership working.

1. Introducing the LARA

The 'Local Authority Risk and Adaptation (LARA) Toolkit: Heat Edition' is an evidence-based approach to assess the risk, prepare, respond, and reduce health harms from heat that every local authority can use.

It provides a simple, structured way to:

- assess preparedness for heat-related health risks
- identify gaps and areas for improvement
- consider approaches to protect groups at risk from the health harms of heat
- plan practical actions
- monitor your progress over time

The LARA Toolkit encourages collaboration across local authority departments and wider partners, helping to recognise local capabilities and establishes practice, alongside opportunities to build resilience and reduce preventable harm from high temperatures, hot weather and heatwaves.

The LARA Toolkit:

- is free to use
- is evidence informed and aligned to national guidance
- encourages collaboration across council departments and wider partners
- complements the Adverse Weather and Health Plan (AWHP)

This guide provides practical advice for using the LARA Toolkit: Heat Edition. It is designed to support local authorities to systematically review, assess, evidence, and strengthen their preparedness and response to heat-related health risks.

It is important to emphasise that LARA is not an inspection or external audit process. Results from your self-assessment process belong to your locality and exist only to enable reflection, collaboration, and evidence-based planning and action to protect health from the harms of heat.

UKHSA will evaluate the impact of the LARA toolkit on heat. Evaluation will be co-developed in partnership with local authorities that have used the toolkit and relevant partners and stakeholders.

Planned evaluation will explore how the toolkit is used and implemented within local authorities and endeavour to understand what outcomes it contributes to.

2. Why heat and health matters

High temperatures, hot weather and heatwaves can increase risks of illness and death, especially for populations more at risk of the health harms which heat can pose. With climate change driving more frequent and intense heatwaves, proactive planning is essential to protect health and prevent widening of inequalities.

Hot weather increases the risk of:

- heat exhaustion and heatstroke
- heart attacks and strokes
- worsening of respiratory, cardiovascular, renal and mental health conditions
- increased demand on health and care services

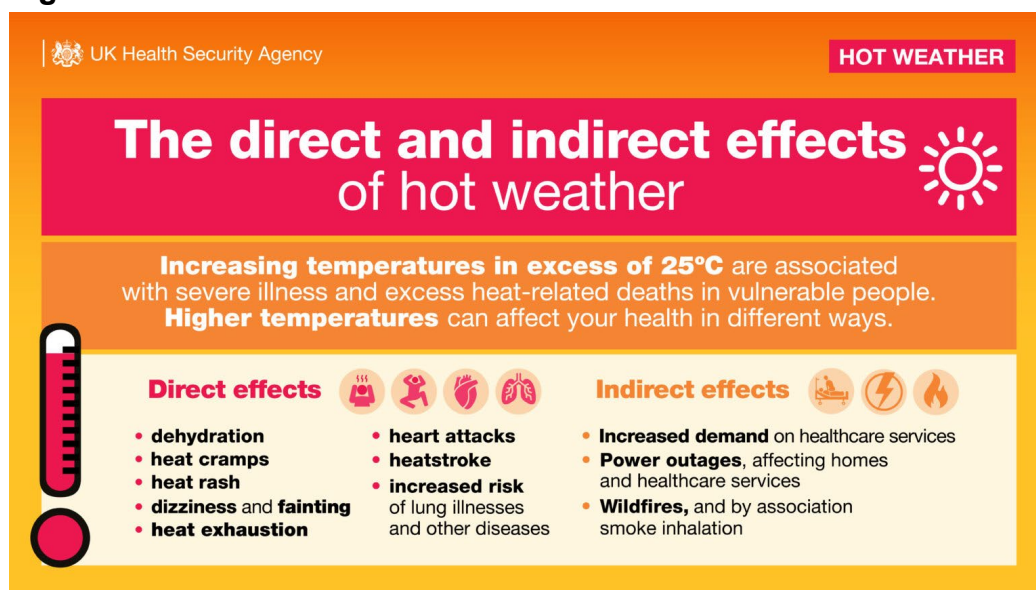
Its important to know that heat does not affect everyone equally.

Factors which may contribute to individual heat-health risks include:

- age and health status
- housing quality and overheating
- occupation and working conditions
- access to services, green space, and information
- social isolation and deprivation

Many heat-related harms are preventable through early planning, co-ordinated action, and clear communication.

Figure 1. The direct and indirect effects of hot weather



Text version: This infographic lists the direct and indirect health effects of hot weather, including dehydration, heat exhaustion, heatstroke, heart attacks, increased risk of lung illness, increased demand on healthcare services, power outages and wildfires.

3. The LARA toolkit framework and its domains

The purpose of LARA toolkit framework is to support local authorities to understand the health risks posed by heat, to consider the implications of your local context, and to identify a range of options for action.

The LARA toolkit provides a structured approach to identify areas of good practice already in place, and to guide local authorities to consider further steps, using national guidance, to protect communities and vulnerable groups from inequitable and preventable harm from heat.

The framework includes sections on the following:

1. Leadership.
2. Local authority-wide action and communications.
3. Care settings: risk groups (for example, people aged 65 and over, the disabled, and those with underlying health conditions) living in care settings (such as care and nursing homes).
4. Home and domiciliary settings: risk groups (for example, people aged 65 and over, the disabled, and those with underlying health conditions) living in their own home and domiciliary settings.
5. Young people.
6. Children and young peoples' settings: schools, education and care.

7. People experiencing homelessness, including rough sleepers and those who are unable to make adaptations to their living accommodation such as sofa surfers or those living in hostels.
8. Settings: Homes.
9. Planning.
10. Vulnerability due to occupation.
11. Infrastructure.
12. Adverse Weather and Health Plan cross-cutting actions.

Each domain follows a consistent structure.

Table 1. Structure and explanation of the LARA ToolKit within Excel

LARA domain	Explanation of domain
Purpose	Outlining why this area matters for heat and health
Actions	Outlining specific recommended actions
Self-assessment	For local authority self-assessment in relation to actions. Self-assessment rating options include: No Action (0) – no evidence of local authority action Partial Action (1) – some evidence, but gaps remain Completed Action (2) – strong evidence that the action is in place
Evidence or examples to support rating	Outlining examples of what local action might demonstrate achievement, to support self-assessment
Contributor name	Outlining the name of local authority officer that contributed to the self-assessment of the action
Contributor role	Outlining the job title of local authority officer that contributed to the self-assessment of the action
Comments	Additional comments relating to how the self-assessment in relation to the actions
Potential steps to take	Suggestions of options to progress to complete the action
Rationale and evidence for inclusion	Reference information to support why this action is recommended by UKHSA
Rationale and evidence for link	URL or line to the rationale evidence

Example: Leadership

Strong leadership, across members and officers, enables joined-up planning to prepare for and respond to heatwaves effectively.

Leaders can make sure that help reaches those who need it most, such as older adults, children and young people, and people with existing health issues.

Strong leadership also promotes actions to create more resilient communities.

Actions include:

- brief senior leaders on the harmful effects of hot weather on health, including who is most at risk locally
- brief elected members on the harmful effects of hot weather on health, including who is most at risk locally
- brief the Health and Wellbeing Board on the harmful effects of hot weather on health, including who is most at risk locally

Together, these domains reflect leadership, systems, settings, and population groups.

4. Using the LARA self-assessment tool

Getting Started with LARA

Those involved in the piloting of LARA reported:

“It is really useful to bring colleagues together to discuss action and programmes from across the Council, often departments are working in silos and we don't know what each other are doing. It is a good central tool as a focus for bringing people together, and also helps foster relationships for working on other cross.”

To get the best out of the toolkit, you will need a broad understanding of local policies and approaches across your local authority. It is most important that the self-assessment is completed in consultation with a wide range of partners, rather than by one or 2 individuals.

This framework is best completed with input and contributions from a range of local authority colleagues. This may include colleagues from different authorities in two-tier and combined authority systems of local government.

Each local authority will have its own partnerships and collaborative mechanisms (such as Climate Change Boards, Health and Wellbeing Boards, Health Protection Assurance Boards and other governance structures) which may assist in completing this tool.

However, we encourage Directors of Public Health and Public Health teams to lead and facilitate its completion. LARA has been developed as a public health and health protection toolkit, designed to support local authorities with their public health responsibilities, noting the

health effects of heat have direct and indirect impacts on a range of services, functions and responsibilities that local authorities have such as social care, housing, emergency planning and safeguarding.

Firstly, appoint a coordinator and lead for LARA (often within public health) who can help to:

- co-ordinate contributions from different contributors
- ensure consistency in self-assessment and detail of responses
- collate evidence
- support follow-up actions
- get the right people involved from across the authority and wider local health and care system

LARA works best when completed collaboratively. Relevant contributors may those working in roles in:

- public health
- adult social care
- children's services
- housing and planning
- emergency planning
- environment and sustainability
- communications
- education
- commissioning and procurement

Different approaches can be used to support completion, this may include:

1. Workshop based completion - where a group of people complete the LARA Toolkit together.
2. Themed sessions by domain - where a small group of people complete a specific domain they have knowledge and or responsibility for.
3. Short structured interviews - where individuals are interviewed to elicit the information from others to complete the toolkit.

Use of existing boards or partnerships where discussion and completion of LARA is part of the agendas, meetings and workshop where the relevant partners already meet.

Using the LARA self-assessment tool

Scoring, evidence and results

Across this tool, cells that are for you as the user to complete will be filled blank, whilst locked sections which are for your reference will be filled in grey.

Each domain contains a series of specific actions. For each action, the local authority is asked to rate current activity as:

No Action – no evidence of local authority action

Partial Action – some evidence, but gaps remain

Completed Action – strong evidence that the action is in place

Contributors are encouraged to:

- agree ratings through discussion
- record evidence or examples with the blank cells
- identify potential next steps where action is partial or absent

LARA is designed to encourage honest reflection. Selecting No Action or Partial Action is not a failure, it highlights where improvement or investment may be most valuable.

Figure 2. Example of the Leadership domain completed

Leadership

Strong leadership, across Members and Officers, enables joined-up planning to prepare for and respond to heatwaves effectively. Leaders can make sure that help reaches those who need it most, such as older adults, children and young people, and people with existing health issues. Strong leadership also promotes actions to create more resilient communities.

ID	Actions	Action Taken Rating	Evidence or Examples to support rating	Date of review	Contributor Name	Contributor Role	Comments	Potential steps to take	Rationale and evidence for inclusion	Evidence source link(s)
LD 1	Brief senior leaders on the harmful effects of hot weather on health, including who is most at risk locally.	Completed Action	Yes - the Council Management Team received a presentation in 2025 about the health and wider impacts that heat can have on our local population and the services we provide. This was led by Emergency Planning and Public Health staff. This will now be annual update ahead of Summer.	01/03/2026	A. N Other	Head of Emergency Planning and Health Protection Manager	Ensure this is booked for 2026	Review and update slides within presentation. State that the Council is completing this LARA tool on heat	Effective leadership and partnership working with national and local partners is crucial for the success of the Adverse Weather and Health Plan (AWHP), as it ensures clear communication, coordinated action, and a strong response to extreme weather events. The AWHP, developed by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), aims to protect individuals and communities from the health impacts of adverse weather.	Adverse Weather and Health Plan - GOV.UK
LD 2	Brief elected members on the harmful effects of hot weather on health, including who is most at risk locally.	Partial Action	A presentation was made to members on the health effects of climate change in March 2024. However, this was not very detailed on heat and the health impacts of this on specific groups.	01/03/2026	A. N Other	Public Health Manager	Explore ways to brief elected members before the Summer. Consider how the lead member of health and the lead member for social care could chair	Talk to Director of Public Health first	Effective leadership and partnership working with national and local partners is crucial for the success of the Adverse Weather and Health Plan (AWHP), as it ensures clear communication, coordinated action, and a strong response to extreme weather events. The AWHP, developed by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), aims to protect individuals and communities from the health impacts of adverse weather.	Adverse Weather and Health Plan - GOV.UK
LD 3	Brief the Health and Wellbeing Board on the harmful effects of hot weather on health, including who is most at risk locally.	No Action	There is no evidence of this. We haven't shared anything with our health and wellbeing board on environmental hazards and health.	01/03/2026	A. N Other	Public Health Manager	Explore ways to brief elected members before the Summer. Consider how the lead member of health and the lead member for social care could chair	Talk to Director of Public Health first	Effective leadership and partnership working with national and local partners is crucial for the success of the Adverse Weather and Health Plan (AWHP), as it ensures clear communication, coordinated action, and a strong response to extreme weather events. The AWHP, developed by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), aims to protect individuals and communities from the health impacts of adverse weather.	Adverse Weather and Health Plan - GOV.UK

Once users have filled out each of these tabs the toolkit will generate a number of figures and graphs that are displayed in the Dashboard tab, including a spider diagram of relative strengths and a score distribution enabling comparison across the 12 areas of work (see below).

Figure 3. Spider diagram of assessment of LARA domains

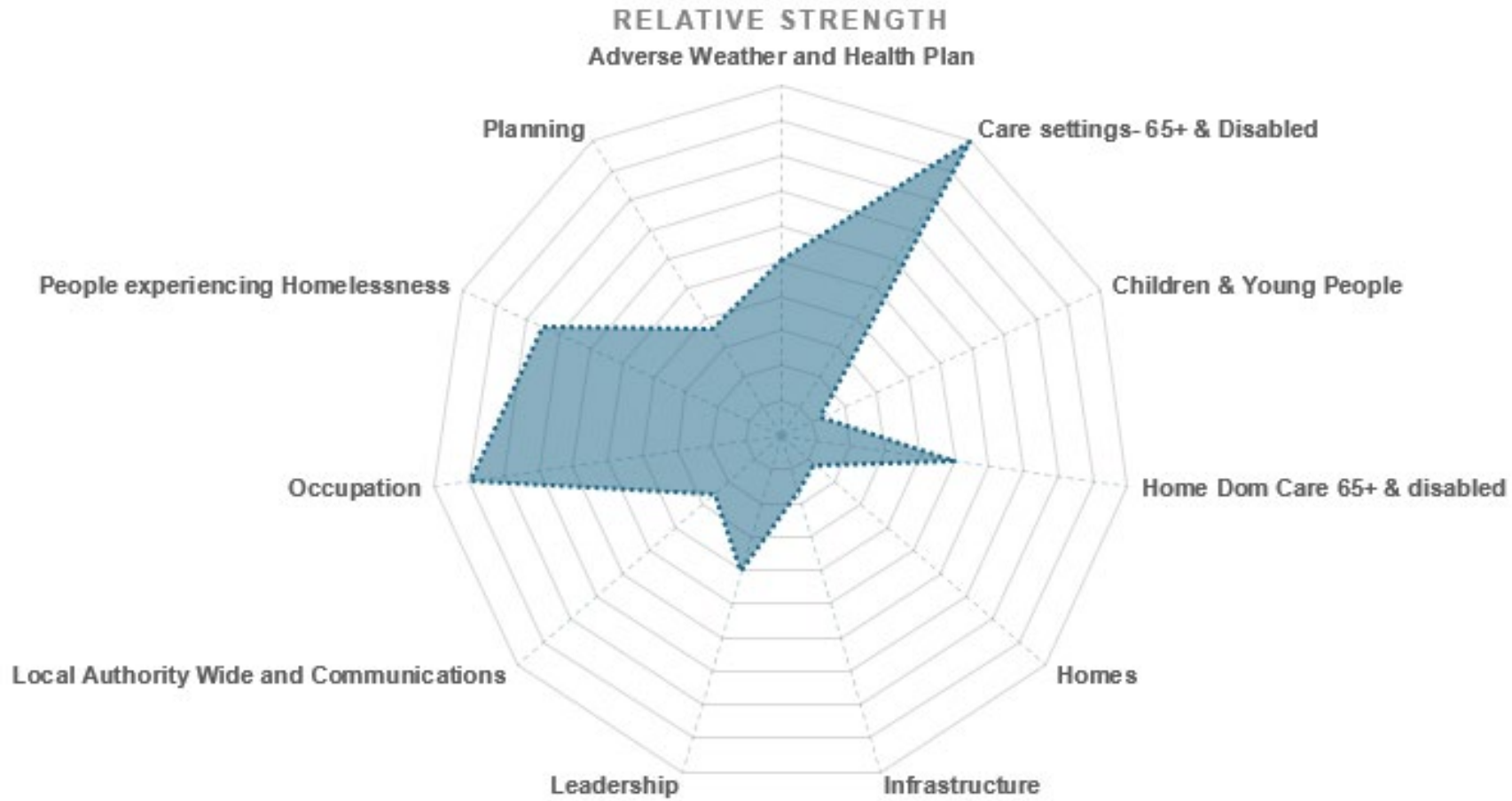


Figure 4. Table of scores for the assessment of LARA domains

Category	Total Score	# Qs	Relative Strength	% of Qs Answered
Adverse Weather and Health Plan	7	7	1.00	100%
Care settings- 65+ & Disabled	14	7	2.00	100%
Children & Young People	2	8	0.25	100%
Home Dom Care 65+ & disabled	7	7	1.00	100%
Homes	9	36	0.25	47%
Infrastructure	2	6	0.33	100%
Leadership	4	5	0.80	100%
Local Authority Wide and Communications	5	10	0.50	100%
Occupation	9	5	1.80	100%
People experiencing Homelessness	6	4	1.50	100%
Planning	11	15	0.73	80%

Your strongest category/categories: Care settings- 65+ & Disabled

You will find in the 'Actions' tab, a list of actions from across the tool in which your authority has rated as not complete. This enables a quick overview of areas that to-date are lacking in effective action on heat.

Figure 5. Table of actions that were rated as partially completed or not completed

All Actions Rated as Not Completed

ID	Category	Action	Action Taken Rating	Potential Steps To Take	Notes for Initial/Next Steps
LD 2	Leadership	Brief elected members on the harmful effects of hot weather on health, including who is most at risk locally.	Partial Action	Talk to Director of Public Health first	Ann Other to lead with DPH and Democratic services by April 2026
LD 3	Leadership	Brief the Health and Wellbeing Board on the harmful effects of hot weather on health, including who is most at risk locally.	No Action	Talk to Director of Public Health first	Ann Other to lead with DPH and Democratic services by April 2026
LD 4	Leadership	Senior leaders publicly support action which will protect against the harmful effects of hot weather on health.	No Action	talk to DsPH	Ann Other to lead with DPH and Democratic services by April 2026
LD 5	Leadership	Elected Members publicly support action which will protect against the harmful effects of hot weather on health.	Partial Action	talk to DsPH	Ann Other to lead with DPH and Democratic services by April 2026

Once completed, local authorities may want to consider how they can best use the framework and action list to facilitate their future action on heat.

They may also want to consider comparing their assessments with other local authorities to learn from each other.

UKHSA will not 'assess' local authority's responses.

Results from the self-assessment are for local use. We would recommend that the self-assessment process is refreshed periodically (at least every 2 years) to monitor any changes and reinvigorate local action.

It is not advisable for LARA outputs to be used to compare or rank authorities without context.

5. Using LARA to drive improvement

Local authorities involved in the pilot of the LARA reported that:

“It is a useful checklist and guide to prioritise and monitor local action. It brings together both system advocacy and immediate support under the same framework. The actions for specific vulnerable groups are simple and feasible eg offering existing training, signposting to weather-health alerts. The automatic action plan based on scoring is particularly useful.”

LARA can support:

- integration of heat and health into corporate risk registers
- alignment with the Adverse Weather and Health Plan
- commissioning and contract assurance, particularly with service that care and support groups more at risk of harm from heat
- workforce training and development
- place-based planning and adaptation
- partnership conversations with NHS, VCSE and LRFs

Many authorities may choose to:

- repeat the assessment periodically
- focus on priority domains
- share learning with peers

6. Resources

This framework is designed to complement the range of evidence based guidance produced to support action on heat and health. Furthermore this framework is supported by the UKHSA Centre for Climate and Health Security webpages and digital resources such a guidance includes the Adverse Weather and Health Plan.

These webpages have been developed with local authority representatives to help them take action on a range of climate related hazards (such as heat, high temperatures, flooding and vector borne diseases) and that are changing due to climate change. These web-based resources are continuously being developed and updated.

[UKHSA Centre for Climate and Health Security website](#)

[Collection: Hot weather and health: guidance and advice](#)

[Sign up to the quarterly CCHS newsletter](#)

About the UK Health Security Agency

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