



# Built for Change Network

*Powered by young people, investing in our educators to weather a changing climate.*



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# 1. Built for Change programme overview

Sheffield City Council are working with partners Let's Go Zero, Connected by Water (including Yorkshire Water), Business in the Community, Sheffield Hallam University and Learn Sheffield to support educational settings in Sheffield to adapt to the changing climate, and to help them on their way towards reducing energy costs and reducing their carbon footprint, whilst at the same time supporting the health and wellbeing needs of children and young people.

This programme is primarily funded by funding from Sheffield City Council Public Health to support schools to adapt to the changing climate.

## Education providers and climate change

From overheating classrooms to flooded playgrounds and classrooms, schools in Sheffield are already starting to experience the impacts of the extreme weather conditions created by the changing climate. These can have a range of negative effects<sup>1</sup>, including:

- worse educational outcomes from lost school days or unsuitable learning environments, with many schools experiencing overheating in hot weather
- worse health and wellbeing due to unsuitable learning and play conditions
- increases in vulnerability of pupils from homes with challenging circumstances in the event of school closure
- financial costs.

The energy used by education settings is also a significant contributor to the city's carbon emissions as well as having a huge impact on budgets.

The changing climate and climate crisis is a source of anxiety for many young people, and one of the best ways that this anxiety can be reduced is to take action.

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<sup>1</sup> Additional information about the impact on education and education providers of the extreme weather caused by climate change, and on the action that education providers need to take is provided at the end of this document.

## Making it easy to act

Government is expecting all education settings to have identified a sustainability lead and developed a climate action plan by 2025<sup>2</sup>.

We know education providers are overwhelmed with responsibilities and by trying to look after the education and wellbeing interests of their children and the support we offer aims to make it easier for you to meet current and future expectations from government, and to achieve other outcomes at the same time.

Support from Let's Go Zero's workshop sessions can significantly reduce the time needed to complete action plans, and many of the actions which help reduce emissions or increase resilience to climate change can help you save money, provide curriculum linked learning and enrichment opportunities and improve pupil and staff wellbeing.

We know that finances are tight for most organisations, but you often don't have time to apply for funding. We hope to be able to support you by applying for funding on behalf of multiple settings as and when funding becomes available.

## Two levels of support

### Accelerated support pilot

The education settings which have been identified as being most vulnerable to climate change have been invited to apply for one of 12 places on the accelerated support pilot. This provides settings with:

- intensive support to complete their climate action plans by October 2025, in line with government expectations (an in-kind value of around £1380 per school)<sup>3</sup>
- guaranteed funding and/or partner delivered interventions with an estimated value of £20k+ per setting.
- a range of learning and enrichment opportunities for young people.

Built for Change will be powered by young people, with opportunities for pupils to be involved in climate action planning, choosing and designing interventions and communicating with their families and local communities.

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<sup>2</sup> [Sustainability and climate change: a strategy for the education and children's services systems - GOV.UK](#) (Action area 4).

<sup>3</sup> Let's Go Zero also provide this service for free for schools meeting their priority criteria outside of this programme – further information available at <https://letsgozero.or/climate-action-advisers>.

## Built for Change Network

To allow us to reach as many education settings as possible with our limited funding, the Built for Change programme includes a Built for Change Network which is available for all other interested settings in Sheffield (and unsuccessful applicants to the accelerated support pilot).

## 2. Built for Change Network

### What's on offer?

Over the course of the programme (which is currently funded until December 2026), there will be opportunities to receive a range of capacity-building opportunities and potential access to resources (all of which are subject to availability), including:

- Information about local and national support to respond to the climate emergency to support climate action planning
- Two climate action planning sessions run by Let's Go Zero. This training will result in a climate action plan for your setting and a chance to identify support and funding.
- access to education workshops and resources by Yorkshire Water
- flood resilience toolkits and advice from Connected by Water
- other advice & information sessions and resources TBC
- receive information about relevant grants and opportunities
- opportunities to be included in shared supported bids for funding for interventions to both help schools to adapt to the changing climate and to reduce their emissions (and save money on energy costs).

Built for Change is a fluid collaboration with a range of organisations, including Sheffield Hallam University and we encourage settings to join in with their [South Yorkshire Sustainable Schools Network](#) to receive their regular newsletter and attend network sessions as we will not be looking to duplicate this activity.

## How do I get involved in the Built for Change Network?

Simply enter your organisation's details into the [short online form here](#) (if you are applying to be part of the accelerated pilot you can apply for the network in the same form – you do not need to apply separately).

We encourage you to join as soon as possible, but there is no deadline and no organisational approval is required.

## What happens next?

We'll store your details securely and be in touch later in the summer term with an initial information pack, and then in the future with opportunities as they arise.

## Contact us

The Built for Change programme is led by Sheffield City Council's Sustainability and Climate Change Team. We can be reached by email at [BuiltForChange@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:BuiltForChange@sheffield.gov.uk).

## Appendix: Climate vulnerability and education in Sheffield

Sheffield's climate is changing, and our education system is not prepared for the changing climate. Year after year, we are seeing weather records broken for extreme heat and/or rain. A number of Sheffield schools, nurseries and post-16 settings are located in areas at risk from river flooding or from surface water flooding heat, and many Sheffield schools are already experiencing overheating on hot days. Hot weather and extreme rain conditions are expected to continue to increase in the coming years.

### The impacts of extreme weather on children and education

Children and young people are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change because of their limited capacity to respond to severe weather events, due to lack of experience of changing conditions, lack of knowledge to help them adjust their behaviours and – if of early years or school age – their dependency on teachers and other adults for guidance.

There is a [strong evidence base that summer heat has a negative impact on educational attainment](#) and a [study on disruption to children's learning experience](#) in Southampton, UK, found that summer heat had the largest detrimental impact of the nine factors studied.

The [impact of excess heat on mental health is well documented](#) and providing cool environments could support preventative mental health work.

There is some evidence that [students from some ethnic backgrounds more likely to experience multiple disadvantage are disproportionately negatively impacted by school buildings that are too hot](#) (or too cold). They are also more likely to be impacted indirectly by even more extreme weather conditions abroad, with emotional and financial impacts resulting from extended family members experiencing extreme weather events or from the conflict that is often caused by weather related scarcity.

Children living with multiple deprivation are also at greater risk from heat and heavy rain when they are at home, making it all the more important that schools remain open and that there are suitable conditions for learning and play during periods of extreme weather. Extreme weather increases pupil absence, and school or classroom closure due to flood damage or unsuitable classroom conditions is a significant risk – in 2007 there were over 400,000 lost school days as a result of flooding, much of this in Yorkshire.

## The impacts of extreme weather on educational settings

In addition to the risks of extreme weather to education and children, there are risks and costs for educational settings. Damage from flooding can be costly – at the most extreme, the 2007 floods cost over £12m in flood damage to schools. Staff wellbeing and health can suffer, worsening performance and leading to absence and additional costs of supply staff.

## Taking action

Preparation for a changing climate and planning for the response to, and recovery from, severe weather events is vital. This not only protects the safety, learning potential and wellbeing of children and staff, but offers a wide range of additional benefits to health, biodiversity, the environment, and learning and play opportunities that all contribute to a vibrant and resilient community.

- Extreme weather risks should be included in risk registers
- Settings should conduct regular flood and heat risk assessments to identify vulnerabilities and develop mitigation strategies

In many cases, settings at high risk from climate change also experience other challenges and the actions that can help adapt to the changing climate can also help improve these challenges by improving the setting environment.

## Identifying climate vulnerability

If your setting has been identified as being particularly vulnerable to the changing climate, this may not be a surprise to you – you may well have already experienced overheating or flooding, or at least you should be aware of your setting's flood risk from the [Environment Agency's flood maps](#).

We have used a combination of factors to identify climate vulnerability including:

- Neighbourhood flood risk using the Environment Agency maps and Climate Just's assessment of capacity of local communities to recover from flood
- Neighbourhood heat risk using Climate Just's assessment of the local community's ability to respond to heat stress, and tree equity scoring



- School overheating risk using Met Office analysis incorporating neighbourhood overheating risk, school building age and pupil ages
- Pupil demographics – children experiencing multiple deprivation, obesity and special educational needs are at increased risk.

We are not planning to proactively publish climate vulnerability rankings, but will share these with Let's Go Zero for the purpose of action planning, and can share findings with individual settings joining the Build for Change network on request.