

Air Pollution and Health

A national [report](#) produced by the Royal Colleges of Physicians and of Paediatrics and Child Health in February 2016 outlines the current understanding about the effects of air pollution on health and recommendations on how to reduce air pollution and its impacts.

Its **key findings** reiterate those of previous reports by the [Department for Rural Affairs \(Defra\)](#) and the [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#) :

Each year...



40,000 deaths in the UK are attributable to **outdoor air pollution**

(e.g. nitrogen dioxide and particle matter from diesel vehicles)

with **more linked to indoor pollutants** (e.g. radon and cigarette smoke).



Air pollution can cause, or contribute to, **low birth weight, pre-term births, cancer, asthma, stroke and heart disease, diabetes, obesity**, and changes linked to **dementia**.

Damage occurs across a lifetime, and is either the result of high-level acute exposure or prolonged low-level exposure.

Air pollution is harmful to everyone. However, there are factors that make some people **more vulnerable**:

Developing foetus



Age



Existing medical conditions



Obesity

Living, learning or working near busy roads



These vulnerabilities can also be heightened in **lower income communities**.

In the UK the **costs of health problems** resulting from air pollution to society, business, health services, and people who suffer from illness and premature death, add up to **more than £20bn a year**.

The local picture ...

Local research in 2014 was unable to determine the extent to which air pollution in B&NES contributes to health problems locally because it was not possible to separate it from other factors such as age, lifestyle, deprivation and air pollution exposure from elsewhere.

Given the quantity of national and international research linking poor air quality to ill-health, there is no reason to believe that this is any different in B&NES, and so it is likely air pollution will continue to have an impact on local residents.

For more information see the [Air Quality](#) section of the **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment**.

Ref - Royal College of Physicians, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (2016) Every breath we take. The lifelong impact of air pollution. Report of a working party, February 2016,
<https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/every-breath-we-take-lifelong-impact-air-pollution>