



Our voices: Climate change

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SPEAKERS

- **RCPCH &Us:** Lowenna, Kirsten, Shreya, Joseph, Noor, Aisling, Clare, Demi
- **Ghana Youth Environment Movement:** Perk, Gloria, Anokyewaa
- **RCPCH Climate Change Working Group** interview: Katy, Shunmay
- **RCPCH Conference Attendees 2022:** Emily, Chrysoula, Ella, Ian, Lucy, Anastasia, Carol

Lowenna 00:08

Welcome to the second podcast from RCPCH & Us. I'm Lowenna and I'm a volunteer with the podcasters project. This episode is all about climate change with international guests. It really shows how we like to collaborate and bring in all of our experiences to support our work and understanding.

Kirsten 00:25

Thanks, Lowenna. Hello, my name is Kirsten, and I'm from the climate changers project. Our guests this time are our RCPCH conference attendees, young people from RCPCH &Us, a youth project in Ghana, and members of the RCPCH Climate Change Working Group, plus some tips. To start with, here is one of the RCPCH &Us podcasters.

Shreya 00:49

Hi, my name is Shreya. Today I'm going to be reading an original poem about climate change for you.

Shreya 00:55

We choke on pollutants.

We gasp for every breath; the dust and smoke obstruct our lungs and swamp our vision.

Yet for some reason, we keep our chins up and we look away.

Our allergies become worse, we sneeze and cough.
Hay fever season leads to summer.
We religiously swallow antihistamines for months of the year, hoping you'll have some tiny effect to relieve some of our symptoms.
And instead of action we keep our chins up and we look away.

The weather becomes more extreme.
We change our jeans for shorts and jumpers for snow coats.
We turn up the heating in winter and open all the windows in summer.
We sweat and faint and drink glasses of water.
We pretend everything is fine and we keep our chins up and we look away.

We see the forests burning, the trees collapsing, we watch as the glows from the fires light up the night sky.
We see a fight with the stars in the move for dominance.
And instead of cycling or walking, we sit in our cars, and we keep our chins up and we look away.

And once, just once I look and stare.
I sit frozen, incredulous, marveling at the way we somehow managed to destroy this planet.
And I silently hope that we can undo it.

Noor 02:10

Thanks for that was a really powerful poem that really made everyone think. I'm Noor from the climate changers project. We were really lucky as part of this episode to get to speak with one young person and two workers from the Ghana Youth Environment Movement about their project on climate change. Have a listen to our first ever international interview.

Perk 02:38

My name is Perk, a freelance graphic designer, by profession and also work with the Ghana Environment movement where I serve as the National Coordinator for the movement. So I got into the climate movement because I want to leave a better future our legacy for my children and generations to come.

Gloria 03:16

My name is Gloria, and I'm working as programme officer. I joined the environmental space to contribute my quota in protecting nature.

Anokyewaa 03:29

My name is Anokyewaa. And I am from GYEM, Ghana Youth Environmental Movement. I am honored to be here as well to talk about climate change affecting health.

Joseph 03:43

So I'm Joseph, I'm 15. I live in London. And I'm interested in climate change because when I'm going to grow up this is the world, I'm going to be living in. And hopefully it's going to be a good place to be.

Joseph 03:55

What do you think are some of the environmental changes you've seen in your local area?

Perk 04:01

Now, usually when it's late evenings, around five, immediately, it begins to get dusk, you begin to see a lot of mosquitoes hovering around. You can't even get to spend 30 minutes outside just enjoying the cool breeze that the evening has to offer, due to loads mosquito insects that you find around. You also wouldn't want to risk it because you are also exposed or prone to malaria, which you do not want. And also, I'm beginning to see a lot of rodents like rats in my community, which five, ten years ago as a child and a young person I never get to see.

Gloria 04:43

Especially coming from an agricultural background is the change in the weather condition in the sense that now we cannot even predict when it will rain, you know, just it rains at very random moments when there is supposed to be harmattan we have rain when is supposed to be, you know, rain, we have harmattan, and all of that. So that is a major change that I've seen regarding my climate here.

Anokyewaa 05:13

The Ghana Meteorological Agency just informed Ghanaians about the changes in the air in Accra. There has been a lot of dust, fog and all that. So we are being informed to put on nose masks, we have been informed to get air purifiers. And so this has been one of the climate changes recently here in Ghana.

Lowenna 05:38

So what does what kind of things does your organisation do and what was the background behind it?

Anokyewaa 05:47

For Ghana, Youth Environmental movement, it's a youth-led environmental organisation which advocates on environmental challenges, addresses global climate changes. And it's good mainly for the young ones, because we are the ones who suffer most from the negative impacts of these climate changes. And so we come together as youth from diverse backgrounds, and we try to contribute our quota to prevent some of these dangers associated with climate changes, and also protect ourselves in our country.

Perk 06:25

Our strategic focus areas are climate, nature and food, and that contributes to the promotion, and also to the safeguarding of our natural forest. Also contributing to climate and also addressing the issue of even food health.

Gloria 06:48

So as an organisation during the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, we developed a post COVID strategy, which stands on three main pillars. That is to empower grassroots activists, that's our first

pillar, and secondly, to co-develop community based resilience projects. And then the third one is to build strategic alliances to address environmental challenges.

Gloria 07:12

And under these three pillars, we've actually developed initiatives, the Ghana young environmentalist project, which actually brought together over 200 young grassroots activists from the 16 regions of Ghana, to empower them with tools to address environmental challenges in their respective regions.

Gloria 07:34

And we also have a project which is under the Co-develop Community based Resilience Project. We have a Kyensu to project. It's a Kyensu project that was established or constructed for community facing severe water poverty issue. And this project is currently dispensing water to over 700 households in the Treba community, which the low income community in Accra, Ghana.

Noor 08:02

Thanks so much for that that was a good, detailed answer. So on to the next one, you've talked a little bit about it already. But why is it important to protect the environment in Ghana and actually make a change?

Anokyewaa 08:16

So as the youth, if we do not protect this environment in the next five to 10 years, 20 years, we are the ones going to suffer. And it is the duty of every citizen, everyone to protect the environment in any way they can.

Lowenna 08:33

What three things do you think your young people would want other people to know about?

Perk 08:40

So I would want them to know about the struggles and sacrifices young people of today's generation are making to save their own future. Young people are going to have a lot of stress, figuring out their education, academic figuring out job life, figuring out love life, family, and having to also carry the burden of protecting and fighting for the safety of their environment. And that's very overwhelming for young people of today.

Gloria 09:21

But then, I want young people all across the world to know that we are actually the people the world has been waiting for. It is our mandate to change the situation.

Gloria 09:33

We can only make it better and relieve the next generation of that stress as well. It's unfortunate we have to meet this but then it is also an opportunity for us to do something to address this so that the next generation will celebrate our efforts.

Anokyewaa 09:54

To other young people, we have to be the change we want- and the change we desire to see. And so we are the ones who are facing the consequences. And in order not for the other generation to also suffer from this, we have to work against these consequences we will have in the future and having now we have to start something, we want change. And so it starts with us so we can have a better environment.

Lowenna 10:25

Just want to say thank you so much for all of your answers - they were really, really informative. And they've given I think, everyone and insight as to what is going on at different points in the world. So yeah, thank you for coming in chatting to us.

Perk, Gloria 10:42

You're welcome. Thank you for having us.

Anokyewaa 10:45

Thank you.

Shreya 10:49

Hi, I'm Shreya from the podcasters project. It was really good to hear that interview. We all felt really inspired by the conversation with GYEM, and we hope to be keeping in touch with them over the coming months. Noor and Kirsten are going to let you know a bit more about the RCPCH &Us climate changers project. Over to you Noor.

Noor 11:09

Hi, I'm Noor and I joined the climate changers group last year. In terms of what we have done, we could sum it up in two words: awareness and insight.

Noor 11:20

Firstly, we wrote an article in the RCPCH &Us milestones magazine, titled *Heal our patients and our planet*, where we discussed our climate change project aim, the importance of the climate crisis, and what we hope to do within the project, which is collecting the voice of children and young people across the UK to find out what is important to them. We were also involved in a number of conferences - we were able to present the work we've done over the past year and listen to paediatricians talk about their experience with the climate crisis in clinics. For example, in the June conference, there were talks about inhalers and the impact of the NHS on the planet.

Noor 12:04

Another key thing we were involved in was the RCPCH &Us podcast, where we interview numerous doctors from conference asking them reflective questions. This increased our knowledge about the matter and gave a strong insight into the impacts of climate change from the viewpoint of a healthcare professional.

Noor 12:25

I'm now going to hand it over to Kirsten to talk about what we are doing now.

Kirsten 12:30

Hi, my name is Kirsten, and I'm from Leeds. I joined the Climate Change Working Group because I wanted to be part of the group of young people learning about how to support young people with health issues related to climate change.

Kirsten 12:43

We've been doing a roadshow to gather information and talk to young people about their thoughts and feelings on climate change. This brought up so many great responses. And I'm going to summarise a few of the key themes for you now. Young people, even primary school aged are very aware of the negative impact's climate change is happening globally, seeing the more frequent news stories on the devastating consequences of extreme weather, and this is really worrying them. Even more anxiety is being generated from what young people are experiencing firsthand how this is affecting both their mental and physical health, such as asthma symptoms worsening, worries of being unprepared and little things like no grass in the parks, meaning there was no escape to nature for some individuals.

Kirsten 13:28

We learned that whilst young people are aware of these problems that climate change is having the same cannot be said for solutions. Well, the odd exception, such as sending all animals to space, but no small, accessible solutions that individuals felt they could take part in were mentioned.

Kirsten 13:46

We want this to change. We want young people to be able to feel they are part of a positive change. That will help reduce their anxiety. They also need to feel that they have a plan and are prepared for how to deal with the impacts of climate change on their health. For this, we need your help. We need your help in preparing and empowering young people. Thank you.

Lowenna 14:08

We also had guests from the RCPCH Climate Change Working Group pop in see us in our virtual podcast studio. They are a group of pediatricians who the RCPCH &Us climate changers project links to. This is what we talked about with them.

Shunmay 14:24

My name is Shunmay, and I am also based in London. I am a consultant paediatrician, and I specialise in infectious disease. I work at St Mary's Hospital.

Katy 14:40

Hi, I'm Katy. I'm a paediatric registrar up in Leeds, mainly working in the emergency department. And thank you so much for inviting us onto the podcast today.

Joseph 14:53

Do you think other pediatricians either locally or globally are doing similar things to you?

Shunmay 15:00

So for the UK, it's the first national health service to have a kind of the net zero goal. And I think that's quite interesting. And I think paediatricians are one of the group of doctors who seem to be particularly active, I think in terms of thinking about climate change and sustainability. And when you talk to paediatricians, something that they feel quite strongly about, and I think they'd be like to like to be doing more.

Shunmay 15:24

Often, we're doing things in our personal life. So you hear kind of paediatricians thinking about their diets, are they are they doing something about how they eat, how they travel, lots of cycle... But then how do you carry this through to our working life, there's a bit more of a challenge. And that's, I think, something that being active in the RCPCH Climate Change Working Group is a really nice way of us actually kind of trying to do something about our work - or actually in our hospitals.

Shunmay 15:57

So for example, I'm working with a junior paediatrician in my department at the moment, and we're trying to do an audit of bins, and seeing what are we doing right and wrong in terms of using bins? Are we chucking things in the recycling bins that shouldn't be recycled, which then means that the whole recycling bin can't be filled with stuff in the recycling bins. I think people are trying to be active in the best way they can.

Lowenna 16:25

Was there one moment where you decided to do things on climate and health, or was there a number of factors that influenced it?

Katy 16:32

So for me, there was no set moment, it's been a snowball effect. And I remember going down to the bottle bank with my mum, and really loving to put the bottles in the recycling and her explaining why that was important to me. She's a scientist - so that may be why even 30 years ago, I would know about these things. And as I grew up, my happy place is being outside and in the countryside. So preservation of that was really important to me.

Katy 17:05

And then as I became a doctor, I started to realise that actually, this was an ever increasing problem. And the commitment from the NHS, coupled with the College asking for people who were interested in this really kind of made my snowball massive. And now this kind of forms a huge part of who I am as a clinician, as well as who I am as a person.

Shunmay 17:32

On the background of this kind of growing personal concern, to actually be able to to join the two things up what I was doing in my personal life, and in my work in terms of as a doctor and as a researcher. Although I'm a paediatrician, my main hat is I'm a professor.. actually in paediatric infectious disease and global health, and how do I join those things up? And so I spoke to one of my colleagues at work - so I work at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine - who is the director of the Centre of Planetary Health. I'm really interested in kind of getting a bit more climate change, and health research

and how do I do it? How to get funding for an interesting project called - oh I'm going to get the order wrong now - Children's cities and climate change. And they were looking to get some more paediatricians involved. And so I I asked to get involved in that. And that represented for me a kind of a step change in terms of actually being able to get involved in a research project, big online survey of children across the world, children and young people, in terms of what how they viewed their cities, and what their concerns were and what their aspirations were for their cities. And then getting involved in the RCPCH working group.

Anokyewaa 18:53

So hi, my name is Anokyewaa, I'm from Ghana, and I am a plastic advocate. I do that in schools and in churches and in my community, for the ban of single use plastics. And my question to you, Katy, is what are you professionals, medical professionals want us to know concerning climate change?

Katy 19:18

That's such a big question. What do I want you to do? I think the thing I most want you to know, is that doctors and people who are older than you care about this passionately. And that we are really, really keen to work alongside you and to listen to you, but also believe in the potential for the world to be an even better place, if we all engage in it together.

Shunmay 19:53

Surprisingly. I completely agree. You and your colleague spoke at the Royal College of Paediatrics conference earlier, last year. One of the most powerful things you said is that is you told us paediatricians that we had, that we had power, and even if we don't feel like we have power. And I thought that was a really, that we have a duty, and I think we do to, to do what we can. And I told colleague what you had told us. And she spoke to her colleagues at Harvard Business School, the fact that we, as adults, and as doctors, and paediatricians want to work with you and listen to you, and kind of, we're all in this together, you guys knowing that is really important.

Anokyewaa 20:38

All right, thank you so much, Katy and Shunmay.

Noor 20:44

Hi, I'm Noor. I'm 16. And I'm from London. And I'm part of the Climate Change group. So my question is, how can we keep motivating and inspiring people to focus on the impact of climate change and child health in general, in challenging times, when it may not really be the focus?

Katy 21:07

These questions are really, really, really fantastic, guys.

Shunmay 21:11

Yeah, yeah, they're quite challenging. It's really challenging times. And there's so many other priorities, we can feel quite powerless. And like, we can't do anything. And I think if everyone does something small, then en masse, it makes a massive difference. And it probably makes more difference than just a couple of people doing loads. So I think there's real power in actually thinking of us as a community all

doing a little bit and actually feeling, I think being connected with other people who actually are trying to do something and do their little bit - is really how we can feel like we can make an impact. I can't change other individuals. But actually, if I'm joining hands, with the people around me, and they're joining hands with people around them make a little bit of difference we can do a lot.

Katy 22:05

I think it's about celebrating small successes. I follow somebody on Twitter - I think it's The Good News Climate Changer or something. And they refuse to post any negativity, they only post good news stories. And they can be really small. And sometimes they're really amazing successes.

Katy 22:28

But I think it's about reflecting on ourselves as well. So I'm a real advocate in kind of positive mental attitude. And every time I remember to put something in a recycling bin, and I've thought about which bit of my bin it needs to go in, I give myself a little tap on the back. And I think when I hear people having done... so just in the staff room at work the other day, I literally said to the nurse, thanks so much for putting that in the recycling bin, because she'd bothered to wash her up her yoghurt pot, and then put it in the right bin. And I just think rather than dwelling on what's going wrong, or where the struggle still might lie, it's about dwelling on the success.

Shunmay 23:06

But I'd love to find more opportunities to actually be able to kind of engage with young people and just sometimes struggle with thinking, what's the best way of doing it? That's my kind of question, I guess.

Noor 23:16

I definitely think it is something that even us as a group actually, sort of think about sometimes and struggle with because, you know, we always think, how can we talk to doctors and get both sides. I can't remember which group it was now, because I'm involved in about three, I think I might have wanted to think of a way to communicate to doctors, for the doctors to communicate to the patients that they can also get involved in our group. But I think honestly, the conferences are our best way of communicating. I think it was Liverpool - but we got to talk to all the doctors about climate change and ask them really interesting questions. And then, you know, make notes about it, and sort of reflect on it by the fact that it was in person, and we got to take control and ask the doctors the questions, I think, really, it was really good. It was really useful. So I definitely think the conferences, but also meetings like this, I think are really beneficial as well.

Lowenna 24:31

I have to agree, Noor, I think conferences and meetings like this definitely. So I think if you're like exposed to things in conferences, then that's when it's going to be like where it's gonna get the most exposure.

Joseph 24:46

Maybe if you're sort of face to face, you could just spring it on them. So if you're talking about something after they're finished, just sort of ask them how could we maybe communicate better with

young people? Just bring it up and over because then people will be talking off the top of their mind, they won't have over thought it too much. They'll just say what they want to and say what they think.

Katy 25:11

I think it's very interesting for me what Noor mentioned that actually, it's a two way street. So it sounds like we'd really love to speak to young people and young people would really love to speak to doctors. So we must think both sides a bit harder about how we have that communication and conversation outside of our clinic room. I do think, guys, doctors do want to hear from you as people, not just as patients. We're going to email Camilla Kingdon and ask for her thoughts too, because I think that's just a really, really interesting dilemma that Noor just brought up. That's really food for my thoughts.

Lowenna 25:53

Thank you so much for coming. It's been really, really interesting to hear your like opinions and views and everything. And yeah, so thank you so much.

Katy 26:04

It's an absolute pleasure. Thank you. It's been such a such a privilege to talk to you all. Thank you so much.

Shunmay 26:10

Yeah, yep, same here. Thanks very much for giving up your evening to this.

Noor 26:15

I was gonna say, really eye opening to see that even the people across the world construct such similar experiences. And just to hear their point of view.

Joseph 26:24

Probably success, because even though we've had all the sort of tech issues, it's gone quite well.

Lowenna 26:31

I say interesting, just like, finding out that everyone's kind of having the same experience and things like that, and how everyone feels about like this one issue that the whole world is facing.

Aisling 26:51

Hi, I'm Aisling, and I'm a member of the Climate Changers project. We wanted to know what other paediatricians and allied health professionals think about climate change, we had the chance to interview some at the RCPCH Conference in Liverpool, and this is what they had said.

Emily 27:08

The RCPCH declared a climate emergency, I think it was in 2019, and have developed we call it CCWG Climate Change Working Group from then. We have, I think, about five different work streams from this, I suppose they're kind of task and finish groups looking at different aspects of what we can do in our College to address the climate emergency.

Emily 27:33

There is one wing looking at the College itself and the building and like the conferences we run and how to make them carbons carbon neutral as possible. There's one wing which is looking at research. Putting that together, there's one international workstream, there's one advocacy work stream, and then the one that I'm chairing is member support. We have developed a resource online for paediatricians and child health professionals and trainees with resources to help people know how to practice in an environmentally sustainable way. And to support young people as well. I spoken I've really enjoyed pushing education side of it so that people are aware of this crisis and the impact on children's health and the future.

Ella 28:22

And I think that kind of enthusiasm and kind of passion that young people bring, and just brand new fresh ideas, things that new ways of thinking or new technologies that we might not have thought about, or kind of digital ways of working that reduce our waste and our impact. I think it's very easy, particularly in an institution like the NHS, which has been doing things a certain way for as long as anyone can remember. And change is incredibly slow, I think often - to have that kind of passion and excitement and energy to actually drive things and drive ideas. And it's something that we really need.

Chrysoula 29:07

And I guess the young people that we come across in hospitals, they're the group of young people that know what's happening with the NHS, so they have a better idea of what we do. And they will certainly have more ideas on how we can change things.

Ella 29:20

Yeah, I think asking those questions, isn't it, if you're in hospital, you're like, why do you do that that way? You know, I've seen those bins emptied six times today. Why is there so much waste? Is there other ways of doing it? Those things that we don't see, because we're doing it every day and don't necessarily take note of?

Chrysoula 29:36

It's a blind spot for us?

Ian 29:40

I don't know how people are actually bringing up that because it's not directly relevant to why they're there or the care or what we're doing that day. What do you think? Do you think young people would like to bring it up more?

Clare 29:51

I think that really, I think it mostly affects young people, you know, especially as with health care, you know, asthma and stuff that's directly affecting them. So I think it's definitely a discussion that should be hard and to be a collaborative process to try and figure out where we can go to make things better.

Demi 30:13

What do you think an eight year old would say about climate change in health services?

Carol 30:21

I probably don't need to ask the question. I might narrow it down a little bit. If I may, to a child, that's got asthma. Think about them questioning me about, well, how can you help me if I live on a main road, and there's a lot of traffic, and there's air pollution right next to the motorway? What can you do? Then it would be up to me to contact the various partners like transport or local authority and ask them, do you measure air pollution? What do you do when traffic calming? So I suppose I'm just picking up, I'm trying to put it in a context of a clinical problem that I might get in clinic, and then what would, what could I do about it?

Carol 31:09

And even if I didn't know who to contact, I would find out how to signpost, who to put me in the right direction to get that information. And use that story. Because that story might be very important, as well.

Demi 31:26

I think that's all of our questions. Thank you for having me for this interview.

Clare 31:32

Could you tell us like what you think about climate change how it's affecting health care for children?

Lucy 31:39

I don't think I know at the moment what the impact of climate change is on child health at this minute. But I'm alarmed that we probably need to act now. So that when 20 years when we see the impacts, we've started to make some change.

Clare 31:50

So do you think that children can work to help with that? And how will they do that?

Anastasia 31:56

I don't have a good grasp on how it's going to affect health. My interest is in global health. So that's obviously it's a bit more obvious how it's affecting children in the developing world. I don't know how it's impacting children in the UK yet, but I'm interested in the fact that a lot of the patients that we see seem to have, they seem to know a lot more about climate change, and much more proactive than I think we are. So it's very interesting speaking to them, and their questions about masks and gloves and aprons, you know, very kind of in the moment, they seem to be asking those questions.

Demi 32:28

What do you think an eight year old would say about climate change? [?]

Lucy 32:34

I'll give you my take, I think Anastasia might have a take from probably asking her own kids this question, I think an eight year old could and should and would say, adults, what on earth are you doing about this? And why haven't you done something already? And I think that's the right question to ask. I don't know what your your kids do have children in that age range.

Anastasia 32:56

I think what's great about them is that they challenge so that you know, from a very early age, this has been a topic there. It's about the type of car we have, or what we buy in the supermarket. And and even as a doctor, you know, why are we what are we doing to reduce the impact? So they seem to be really well informed? I think I'm making the right decision.

Clare 33:20

And do you think that young people with like long term health conditions worry more about climate change?

Lucy 33:29

I imagine the answer is probably yes. Because I think probably if I was a child with asthma, I would be probably more worried about the impact of particulate pollution and the use of cars. I think that would be the right, the right questions to ask. I think it's such a universal problem that I think probably the bigger concept of climate change is probably just as applicable to children who are healthy as children who have long term medical conditions as it is to their parents and their grandparents and the other generations.

Anastasia 33:58

Okay, I agree with that. I think. I think the one you know, children with chronic illness, you know, they live somewhat in the moment that whatever symptoms they're experiencing, if they can attribute that like pollution and respiratory illness, to climate change, that's a big concern for them.

Joseph 34:21

Hello, I'm Joseph from the Podcasters project. We're coming to the end of our podcast now and see if you've worked out with climate change tips we've been sharing on Twitter.

Joseph 34:29

I wanted to find out a bit more about how we could all do something small; they can make a difference and did some research, and I found these tips.

- Charge your device to 85%
- do 30 degrees of washing.
- avoid using your device while charging.
- and the old make do and mend.

Joseph 34:47

We wanted to create a bit of an interactive part to our podcast, which is why I used the Caesar Cipher Code 17 to code them. Hope you enjoyed working them out. There are two that I've left you to decode - the answer is on Twitter in the coming weeks.

Joseph 35:02

Thanks for listening!