# Uk care homes, schools and offices face urgent crisis from rising heat waves and climate hazards



The UK's educational institutions, care homes, and office buildings are alarmingly unprepared for the escalating impacts of global heating, facing extended periods of extreme heat even under optimistic climate scenarios. This stark warning comes from a comprehensive report produced by the UK Green Building Council after two years of analysis, which also highlights the looming threats of flooding, drought, wildfires, and storms to towns such as Peterborough and Fairbourne, projected to become uninhabitable by the century's end.

The report's thermodynamic modelling reveals that schools across London and the south-east of England could experience up to ten weeks annually with temperatures exceeding 28°C, even in a low-warming scenario capped at 2°C above pre-industrial levels. This scenario is increasingly optimistic given the world is currently on track for approximately 2.7°C of warming. Similarly, around six million homes in these regions could face at least three weeks per year of such extreme heat, impacting the health and productivity of vulnerable populations, including the elderly and workers. Care homes are particularly at risk, with projections indicating they could endure four weeks of temperatures above 28°C each year, risking severe health consequences for residents who are especially susceptible to heat-related illnesses.

Adding to these concerns, the report identifies that modern office buildings may be more vulnerable to overheating than older structures due to their design features, such as large glass areas and lightweight construction. This presents a significant threat to worker productivity and economic performance unless immediate adaptive measures are taken. The proposed solutions prioritise passive adaptations like solar shading and the installation of solar glass, which can moderate internal temperatures without the energy demands associated with air conditioning, which paradoxically can contribute to climate problems.

Experts stress that climate resilience must be recognised as a national emergency. The report advocates for governmental action, including the appointment of a minister for resilience and legislative reforms to embed climate safety in all planning decisions. Additional calls include adopting a more ambitious future homes standard to guard against overheating, flooding, and water scarcity, alongside a comprehensive retrofit programme to climate-proof existing buildings. Green infrastructure such as trees, parks, and ponds are also emphasised as crucial to protecting communities.

Despite the urgency, recent government planning initiatives have faced criticism for prioritising developmental growth over green infrastructure and comprehensive climate resilience. Current policies do not mandate the adaptation of buildings to withstand the full spectrum of climate hazards, leaving millions of structures vulnerable.

London emerges as the city most at risk from wildfires, drought, and flooding, with other major cities such as Birmingham and Manchester also facing significant threats. Towns like Peterborough and Fairbourne are projected to become unlivable due to the impacts of flooding and sea-level rise, underscoring the dire need for planned climate adaptation.

Compounding the challenges of climate resilience is the already inadequate state of many British school facilities. Investigations have shown that one in six schoolchildren in England attend schools in poor or deteriorating conditions, many requiring significant refurbishment. The situation is particularly acute in the Midlands, where nearly 30% of schools face substantial safety issues, ageing infrastructure, or a high number of defects. The widespread use of structurally unsound materials, such as reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete, which has prompted the closure of over 100 buildings, highlights the broader neglect that exacerbates the vulnerability of these institutions to climate impacts.

The UK Green Building Council's chief executive, Simon McWhirter, emphasises that the country is ill-prepared for the extreme weather events already occurring and the increasingly volatile climate ahead. He insists that buildings critical to societal function, such as homes, schools, hospitals, and offices, must be radically rethought and adapted to ensure safety, comfort, and resilience for all.

Overall, this roadmap serves as a clarion call for urgent, coordinated action to safeguard the wellbeing of the population and the structural sustainability of the nation’s built environment amid a rapidly changing climate.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jun/26/uk-care-homes-schools-and-offices-not-equipped-to-deal-with-global-heating), [[3]](https://ukgbc.org/news/ukgbc-develops-the-first-roadmap-for-climate-change-resilience-in-the-uk-built-environment/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jun/26/uk-care-homes-schools-and-offices-not-equipped-to-deal-with-global-heating), [[3]](https://ukgbc.org/news/ukgbc-develops-the-first-roadmap-for-climate-change-resilience-in-the-uk-built-environment/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jun/26/uk-care-homes-schools-and-offices-not-equipped-to-deal-with-global-heating), [[3]](https://ukgbc.org/news/ukgbc-develops-the-first-roadmap-for-climate-change-resilience-in-the-uk-built-environment/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jun/26/uk-care-homes-schools-and-offices-not-equipped-to-deal-with-global-heating), [[3]](https://ukgbc.org/news/ukgbc-develops-the-first-roadmap-for-climate-change-resilience-in-the-uk-built-environment/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jun/26/uk-care-homes-schools-and-offices-not-equipped-to-deal-with-global-heating), [[2]](https://ukgbc.org/news/climate-resilience-policy-analysis/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jun/26/uk-care-homes-schools-and-offices-not-equipped-to-deal-with-global-heating)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jun/26/uk-care-homes-schools-and-offices-not-equipped-to-deal-with-global-heating), [[4]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/dec/27/revealed-children-in-england-studying-in-unfit-school-buildings-crumbling-infrastructure), [[5]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/dec/27/revealed-children-in-england-studying-in-unfit-school-buildings-crumbling-infrastructure), [[6]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/dec/27/revealed-children-in-england-studying-in-unfit-school-buildings-crumbling-infrastructure), [[7]](https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/dec/27/revealed-children-in-england-studying-in-unfit-school-buildings-crumbling-infrastructure)
* Paragraph 8 – [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jun/26/uk-care-homes-schools-and-offices-not-equipped-to-deal-with-global-heating)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/jun/26/uk-care-homes-schools-and-offices-not-equipped-to-deal-with-global-heating> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://ukgbc.org/news/climate-resilience-policy-analysis/> - The UK Green Building Council (UKGBC) has analysed the UK's Third National Adaptation Programme (NAP3) and found that on five out of seven critical climate resilience priorities, government policies are insufficient, flawed, or missing. This places millions of homes and buildings at serious risk of damage from climate-related disasters. The analysis highlights the need for a credible, fully-funded retrofit programme to adapt buildings to more frequent and severe overheating, and addresses critical gaps in technical skills, industry delivery, and public understanding of risks and mitigation strategies.
3. <https://ukgbc.org/news/ukgbc-develops-the-first-roadmap-for-climate-change-resilience-in-the-uk-built-environment/> - The UK Green Building Council (UKGBC) is developing a roadmap to support achieving a climate-resilient built environment by 2050. This evidence-based pathway aims to map how the built environment should adapt to and be prepared for a changing climate, including protecting people and the buildings, communities, towns, and cities we inhabit from the impacts. The roadmap addresses the current lack of climate resilience standards at national, local, or sectoral levels and uses cutting-edge insights from the industry to develop science-driven targets and catalyse urgent action across the built environment and with government and policymakers.
4. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/dec/27/revealed-children-in-england-studying-in-unfit-school-buildings-crumbling-infrastructure> - An investigation by The Guardian revealed that one in six schoolchildren in England are studying in schools that either need major work or are in a relatively poor condition. Almost half of these schools are deemed unsafe or ageing and in need of major refurbishment. The findings suggest that issues like reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC), which led to the closure of more than 100 school buildings last year, are merely the tip of the iceberg. The problem is most severe in the Midlands, where 30% of schools are found to be either unsafe, ageing, or blighted by a large number of defects relative to their size.
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