AIR QUALITY CONVERSATIONS



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SIX PRINCIPLES FOR PUBLIC COMMUNICATION ABOUT AIR POLLUTION



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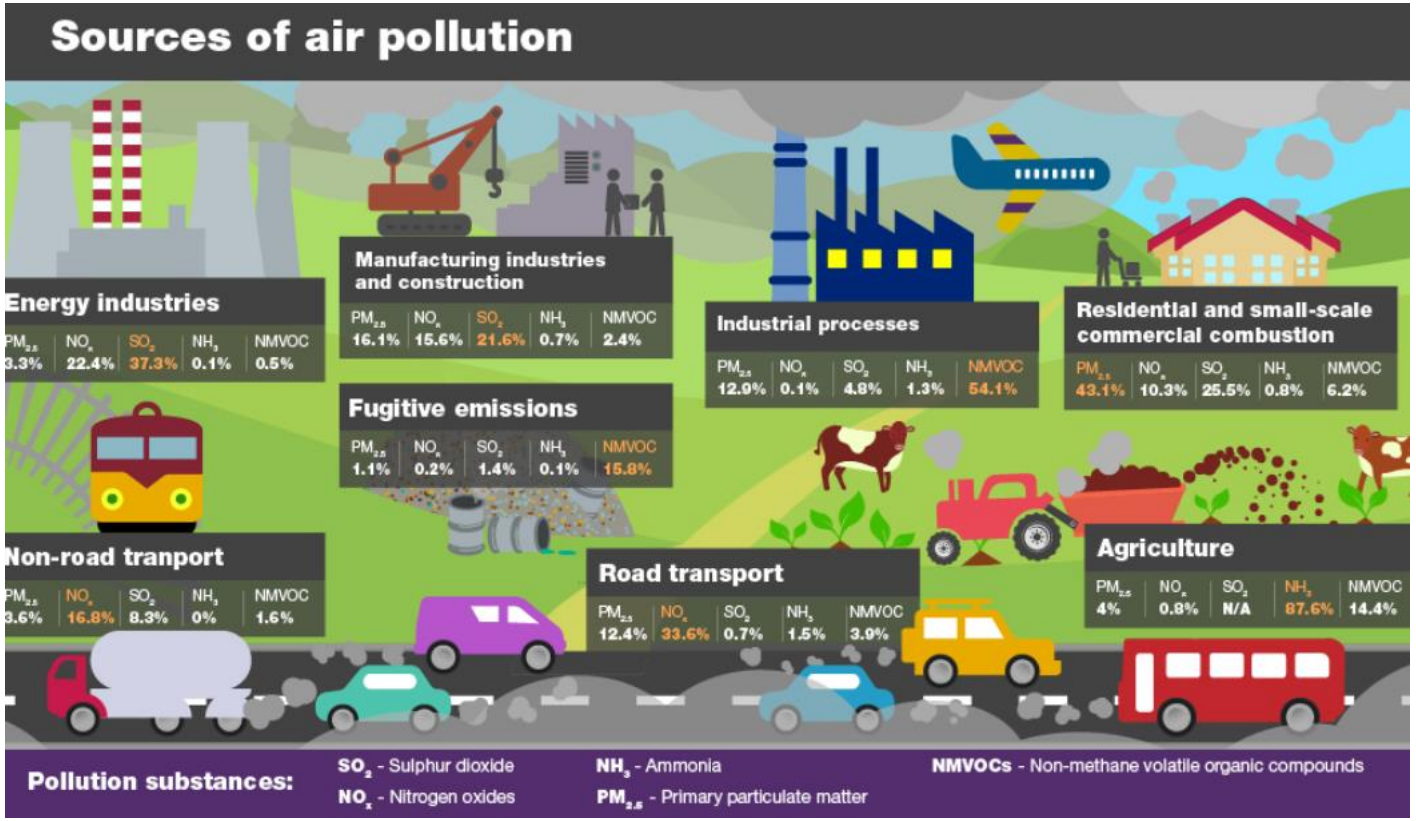
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PRINCIPLE #1: EXPLAIN WHAT AIR POLLUTION IS

Use information about what particulate matter, and other air pollutants are made of and where people can find air pollution data.



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PRINCIPLE #2: HELP PEOPLE UNDERSTAND HOW THEY CAN PROTECT THEMSELVES

Don’t raise public concern about air pollution unless you can at the same time satisfy people’s desire to do something to reduce their exposure.



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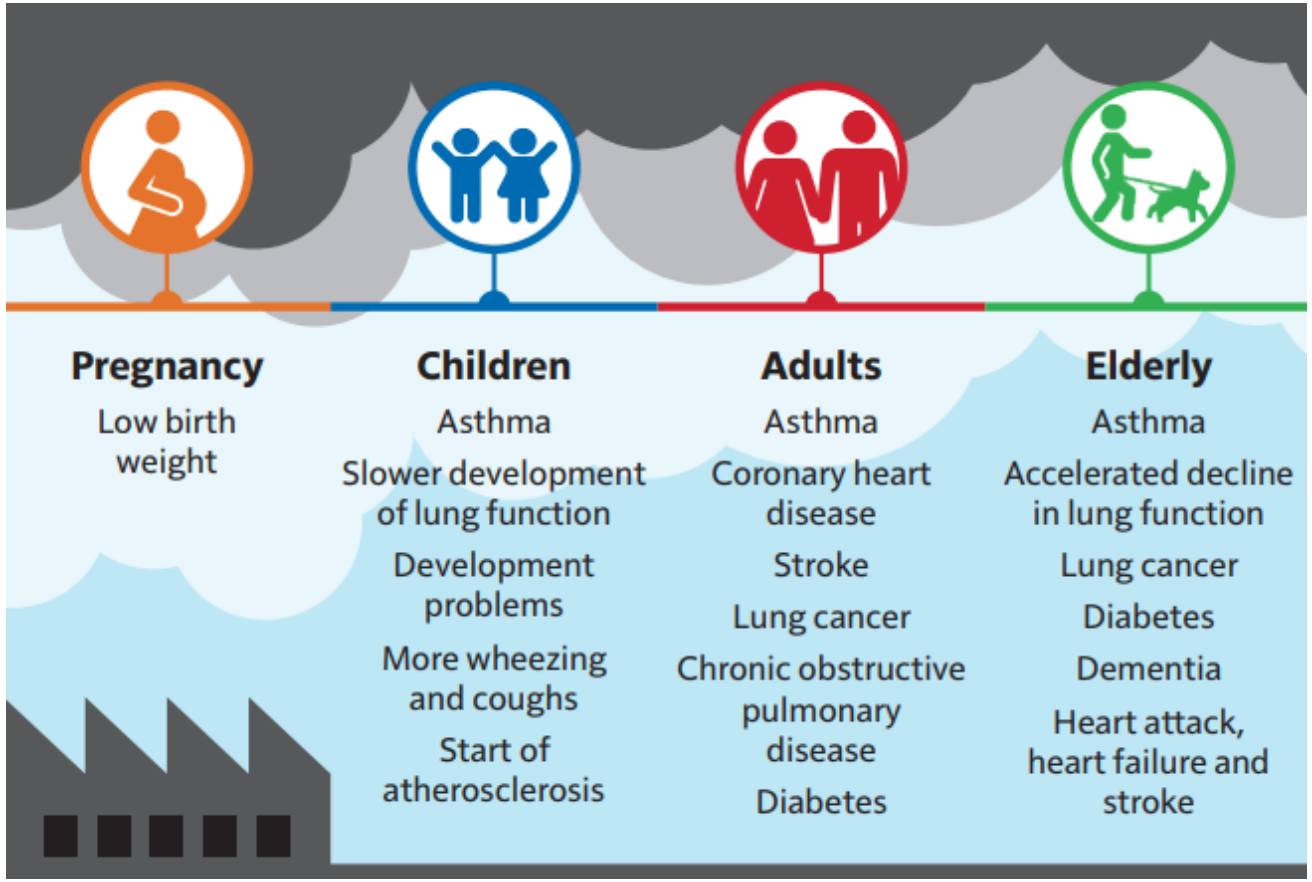
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PRINCIPLE #3: EXPLAIN THE HEALTH IMPACTS

Focus on what is known for certain about the health consequences of air pollution.

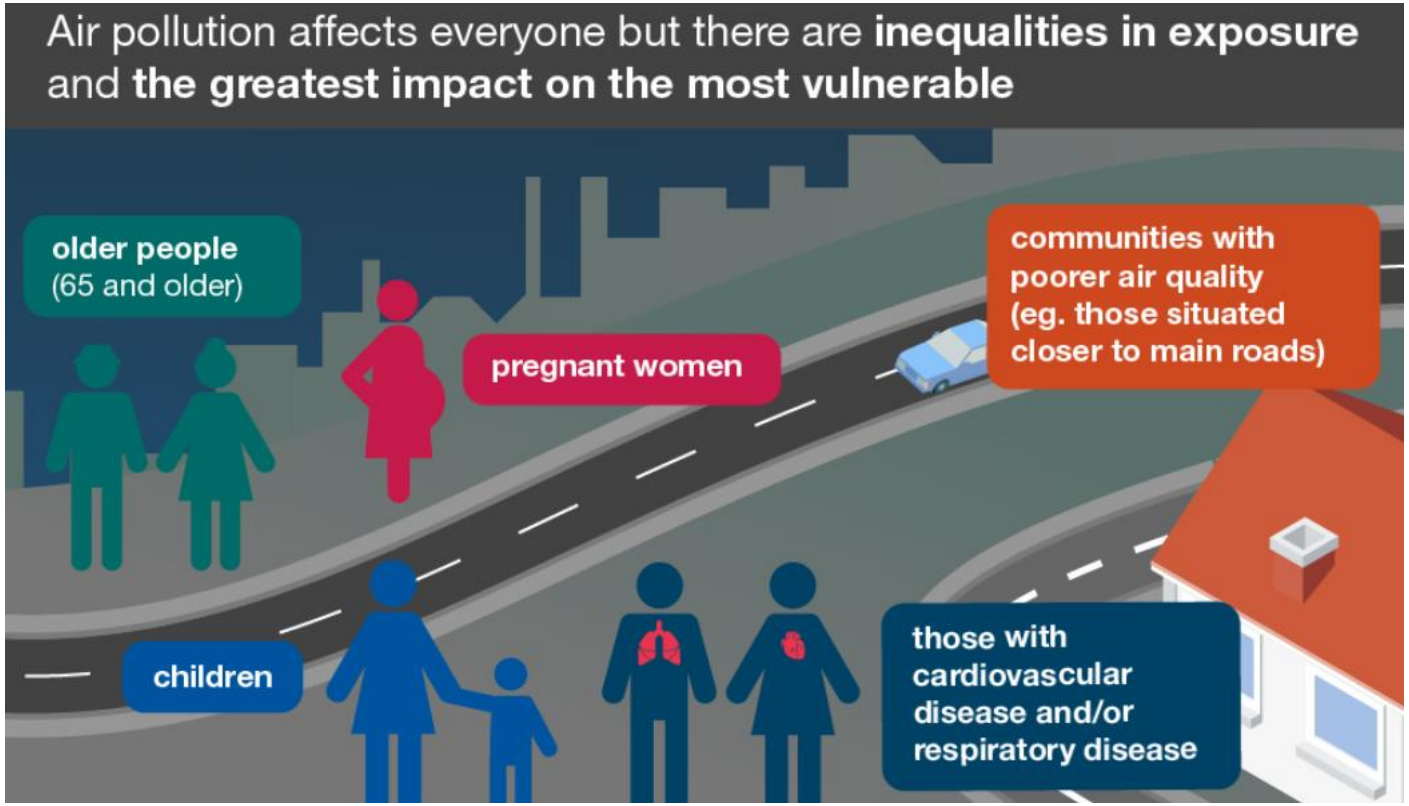


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PRINCIPLE #4: MAKE IT LOCAL

Talk about air pollution as a problem linked to specific places – and not as a general problem of the atmosphere.

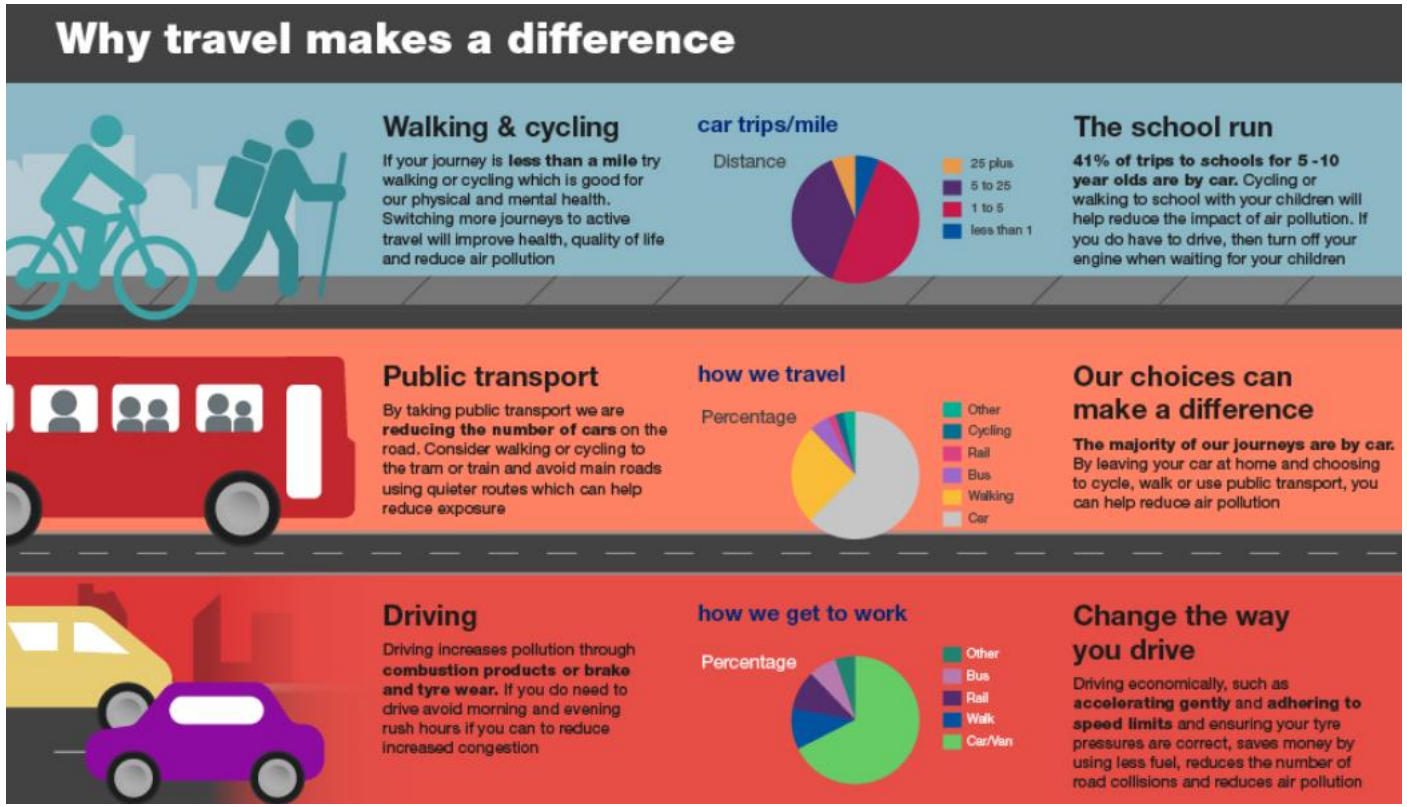


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PRINCIPLE #5: EXPLAIN HOW INDIVIDUALS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Keep the focus on practical improvements – not long-term solutions.



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PRINCIPLE #6: BE THE CHANGE

Demonstrate leadership and empower communities, instead of simply expecting individuals to change their behaviour.



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EXPLAINING CONTEMPORARY AIR POLLUTION

The phrase ‘air pollution’ can still bring to mind for some people the smog of the early twentieth century, or of modern-day Beijing. It is important to give people the facts about contemporary air pollution in the UK and correct some common myths.

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AIR POLLUTION IS A SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM IN THE UK

TRUE: In the UK, the Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP) estimated the burden of particulate air pollution in the UK in 2008 to be equivalent between 29,000 to 36,000 deaths and an associated loss of population life of 340,000 life years lost.

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AIR POLLUTION ONLY CAUSES SHORT-TERM SYMPTOMS FOR PEOPLE WITH RESPIRATORY CONDITIONS

FALSE: Everyone can be affected by air pollution – although it is true that some are more vulnerable and/or exposed. Exposure to air pollution contributes to the development of cardiovascular disease (including heart disease and stroke), and lung cancer, as well as exacerbating respiratory diseases such as asthma. In the short term, individuals with cardiovascular disease (as well as those with respiratory conditions) may be affected by episodes of high pollution, with increased risk of becoming ill and needing treatment. Adults and children with asthma may notice that they need to increase their use of inhaled reliever medication on days when levels of air pollution are higher than average.

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THERE ARE LOTS OF ACTIONS THAT PEOPLE CAN TAKE TO PROTECT THEMSELVES FROM AIR POLLUTION

TRUE: People can take steps to reduce their exposure – for instance, by choosing to walk or cycle routes that avoid pollution hotspots. Exposure to air pollution inside vehicles can be as high, or higher, particularly in slow moving traffic. Therefore, walking or cycling is a good way to reduce exposure and gain wider benefits.

Reducing the use of wood and coal, switching to a cleaner modern wood stove, and burning quality wood or smokeless fuels on open fires instead of wet/green wood or house coal will reduce exposure to particulate matter.

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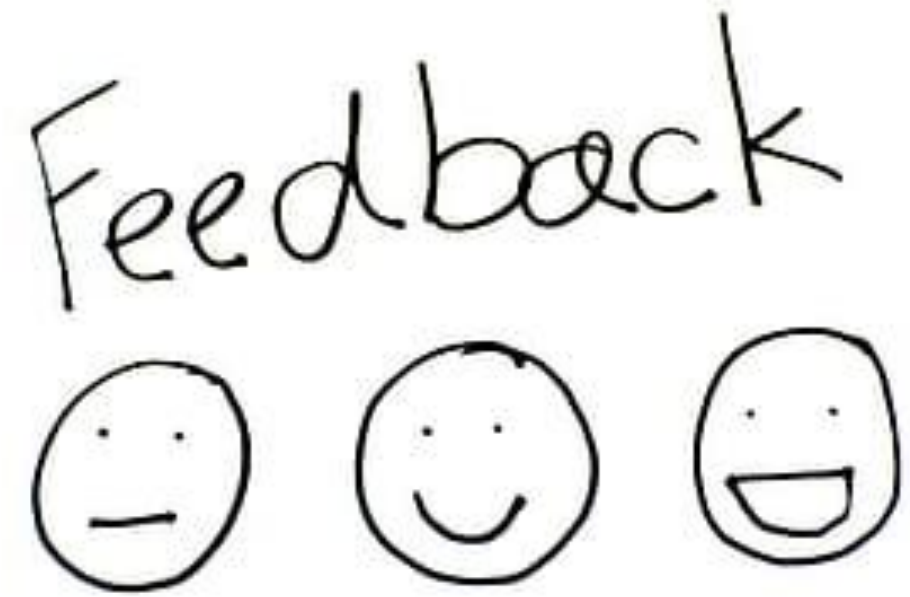
AIR QUALITY IS BAD IN CITIES AND GOOD IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

FALSE: The amount of air pollution can vary over very small distances and does not just come from transport. For example, open fires emit dangerous particles of soot and dust (particulates). As air pollution is so localised, many rural areas have pollution ‘hotspots’ around busy road junctions or industrial sources.

AIR POLLUTION IS PRIMARILY CAUSED BY ROAD VEHICLES

TRUE: Transport is the most important source of pollution, especially in urban hotspots around roads. But there are many pollutants and many other sources including biomass, domestic wood burning, agriculture and industry.

THANK YOU…



Feel free to contact us at:

airqualitywebtool@hackney.gov.uk

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