



# **Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP)**

## 2022 Annual Report

UK had a network of BC/EC monitors but limited UFP monitoring. COMEAP considered that increased UFP monitoring would deliver several benefits, for example, improved knowledge of population exposure and the facilitation of epidemiological studies.

[COMEAP statement: response to publication of the World Health Organization air quality guidelines 2021](#)

## Advice note 'Fine particulate air pollution (PM<sub>2.5</sub>): setting targets - update'

COMEAP members provided advice to Defra on the health evidence relevant to setting PM<sub>2.5</sub> targets in July 2021. In the light of revised WHO Air Quality Guidelines published in September 2021, members issued an updated advice note.

COMEAP noted that the revised Air Quality Guideline for PM<sub>2.5</sub> (5µg/m<sup>3</sup> as an annual average) confirmed its previous advice that the more recent evidence indicated that PM<sub>2.5</sub> had harmful effects on people's health at lower concentrations than had been studied previously. Members therefore strongly support a reduction of PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentrations, ideally to (or below) the WHO guideline value of 5µg/m<sup>3</sup>. However, they noted that the new guidelines may be challenging to meet immediately and recognised that Government needed to balance health benefits of policies and interventions against costs.

WHO had noted that the burden of air pollution-related diseases was unevenly distributed. COMEAP had previously advised Defra that reducing exposure of a whole population would achieve greatest overall public health benefit. Nonetheless, it had recommended that Defra should investigate whether proposed or implemented interventions reduced inequalities in exposure or had undesirable consequences for inequalities and this advice remained unchanged.

[Fine particulate air pollution \(PM<sub>2.5</sub>\): setting targets](#)

## Advice note 'in response to Defra's May 2022 evidence report and impact analysis to inform the public consultation on Environment Act PM<sub>2.5</sub> targets'

Defra introduced stricter targets for PM<sub>2.5</sub> in 2022. These targets focused on the requirement in the Environment Act 2021 for PM<sub>2.5</sub> targets to be set. This note raised specific points on the evidence provided by Defra on how the targets were developed and provided some recommendations to Defra.

It was recommended that Defra should consider the role of local authorities and others in continuing to improve air quality, even where legally binding targets were met. Defra were also encouraged by COMEAP to publish the interim PM<sub>2.5</sub> targets, as members thought they would play an important role in progress to maximise health benefits.