

Planning, Transport and Health

Health and Well-Being Briefing Paper (no. 1 of 8)

Introduction

This briefing paper, on tackling the wider determinants of health in relation to planning, transport and health, is one of a series of briefings aimed at local authorities and other local partners in the West Midlands.

It was developed using best available national and local evidence and guidance,^{1,2} and local case studies are included which demonstrate good and effective current practice in support of the Public Health role of Local Government. The briefing serves as a legacy of the extensive range of work done to date across the West Midlands led by the Regional Public Health Group.

It is cognisant of the needs in the West Midlands and suggests how local areas and Health and Well-Being Boards can work in partnership to tackle local public health issues using innovative and effective approaches in tackling the wider determinants of health and health inequalities. These approaches can help to protect against current and future threats to health and well-being and help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of local partnership working to improve the quality and quantity of people's lives.

Key Facts: West Midlands

- In England, the estimated cost of physical inactivity is £8.2 billion a year including costs of treatment for the major lifestyle-related diseases, and costs caused through sickness absence³
- Transport accounts for a quarter of total CO₂ emissions, 90% of which can be attributed to road transport⁴
- Travel by private car will emit an average 205 grams of CO₂ per passenger km, compared with only 111 by bus, 83 by light rail and 58 by rail⁵
- Public transport users with access to a car but choose to use public transport for their journey are helping to reduce CO₂ emissions by approximately 175 thousand tonnes per year⁶
- Road injuries and deaths rate is 46 per 100,000 in West Midlands compared to the England average of 51.3 per 100,000⁷

Areas for Partnership Action

Health and Well-Being Boards can:

- Encourage key decision makers involved in job creation, transport, access to services and education to proactively consider the health impact of their policies and how they can contribute to reducing health inequalities
- Encourage major employers to use their influence to support the creation of more sustainable communities that are designed for active ageing,⁸ where services are accessible to those they serve
- Encourage employers to have active travel plans, which promote walking, cycling and public transport
- Reduce social exclusion and promote independence by improving safe access to services by providing quality transport networks
- Promote partnership working⁹ to encourage 'designing for health' where new developments incorporate open space to encourage recreation and play, create accessibility to services, promote the benefits of active travel, minimise road traffic accidents¹⁰ and discourage crime and anti-social behaviour
- Promote health and well-being as an integral part of the social, environmental and physical regeneration of our towns, cities and rural areas, including adapting the environment to make healthy choices easier,¹¹ positively promoting health behaviours and lifestyles¹² and evaluating the benefits
- Promote community ownership of and protect green space and improve access to land so people can grow their own food¹³
- Utilise evidence in order to address the wider determinants of health¹⁴ and tackle health inequalities and place Local Government and local communities at the heart of improving health and well-being for their populations¹⁵





Local Planning

Local planning can help to improve prosperity and job opportunities and positively influence health by:

- Creating sustainable communities which allow greater access to job opportunities, including provision of additional support for vulnerable/disadvantaged groups
- Identifying sites to build health and education facilities where people can gain life skills to help them make healthier choices and gain employment
- Assisting local businesses to use their influence as a deliverer of services, developer of facilities and major employer to support the creation of more sustainable communities. Maximising investment, and working with developers to utilise the planning process and gain infrastructure improvements
- Allocating sufficient land for economic development purposes

The Built and Natural Environment

Planning can improve the environment and positively influence health by:

- Making physical activity an attractive option and encouraging it by ensuring places where physical activity can take place such as open green spaces and facilities are well-designed, well-maintained, enhanced, accessible, convenient, safe, are at a high standard and are welcoming¹⁶
- Ensuring that throughout planning processes how physical activity¹⁷ and health equity¹⁸ can be maximised is considered
- Using measures to govern take-aways in proximity to priority premises such as schools and using saturation considerations regarding the number of take-aways permitted in an area

- Designing school playgrounds so they encourage varied, physically active play¹⁹
- Ensuring new developments add to the existing infrastructure of walking and cycle routes, for example by making new through routes²⁰
- Producing a high quality environment that attracts investment to sustain jobs and facilities
- Performing environmental improvements to transport networks as this directly improves air quality and the natural environment. This can be enhanced by the reuse of brownfield land for regeneration and the protection of the greenbelt
- Enhancing the built and natural environment and applying good design in local communities leading to reduced crime and enabling both young and old to actively participate in community activities
- Providing integrated services for communities including health centres, libraries, council services, play areas, leisure and culture facilities, that aid in creating inclusive, sustainable communities where young and old will want to live, invest and interact²¹
- Improving the quality of people's homes, such as improving energy efficiency and warmth, which will help to improve people's mental and physical health
- Positioning staircases so they encourage people to use them and ensuring they are well lit, well signposted and well decorated²²

Air Pollution/Noise

It is necessary to reduce the need to travel long distances, tackle congestion and improve road safety and air quality.²³ This will also address greenhouse gas emissions and noise. Having nearby services, open space, jobs and play areas/centres reduces the need to travel, improves air quality and so helps improve and prevent respiratory conditions from developing and helps to reduce inequalities.²⁴

Transport, Social Inclusion and Accessibility

People with mental health and mobility problems, language barriers, those without cars, older people and those living in rural areas can suffer from social isolation due to physical access to transport and services, access to information and concerns about safety and this can affect quality of life.

Eight areas within the West Midlands have produced their Third Local Transport Plans (LTP3) which aim to support economic growth, reduce carbon emissions, promote equality of opportunity, contribute to better safety, security and health and improve quality of life and a healthy natural environment.²⁵ Local Planning and Transport Authorities have a major role in improving accessibility through their LTP3s, influencing the location of new facilities, and encouraging workplaces to have active travel plans.²⁶

Improved accessibility helps to:

- Support economic regeneration & attract investors
- Facilitate the transition from welfare to work
- Improve participation and attendance in education
- Improve people's general physical health

A good transport system and well located and designed development can positively influence health by:

- Connecting people to jobs, services and affordable, nutritious and sustainable food²⁷
- Encouraging engagement in the community
- Reducing social isolation and promoting equality²⁸
- Encouraging physical activity and recreation by having access to green open spaces, including access through public transport^{29,30}

- Improving walking and cycle routes and creating a comprehensive network that connect together workplaces, homes, schools and other public facilities such as shops and green areas to encourage physical activity, aid in tackling health problems and improve mental well-being^{31,32}

Road Accidents

A child from a low income family is five times more likely to be killed in a traffic accident than a child from a high income family³³ and road accidents have huge implications for the NHS, the police and other public services. Traffic calming strategies will result in safer communities for all but especially for children, young people and older people.³⁴ Education, road design, traffic management and smarter enforcement can be used to enhance road safety and thereby encourage people to use healthier means of transport.³⁵

Community Participation and Partnership Working

Partnership working can positively influence health by:

- Sharing learning of effective partnership working and best practice
- Gearing planning, transport and other development strategies towards collectively reducing health inequalities and promoting urban and rural rejuvenation
- Community projects (eg 'Friends of Parks') actively encouraging inter-generational activity and promoting a sense of place and pride
- The community and experts being involved in planning processes to ensure the potential for physical activity is maximised.³⁶ Integrating community participation in developing local plans for their areas will promote community ownership and enhance contributions from all sectors.³⁷



Case Studies

Stoke-on-Trent Healthy Urban Planning

Stoke-on-Trent suffers some of the most significant and wide-ranging health problems of any English city. The health of the city's population is generally worse than the England average, reflecting the high level of deprivation in Stoke-on-Trent.

In March 2011 a six week public consultation on the Stoke-on-Trent Healthy Urban Planning Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was launched. Further details about this can be found on www.stoke.gov.uk/ldf.

The Healthy Urban Planning SPD is being prepared to reinforce the message that health is a key consideration in the planning process. It will also help to ensure that health issues are given weight in creating policies and in making planning decisions.

A separate Hot Food Takeaways SPD is also being prepared which will follow on from this initial overarching Health SPD. The Health SPD demonstrates this when it states 'Seek to restrict the inappropriate location of fast-food outlets/hot-food take-aways, particularly near to residential properties and routes that children use when travelling to school (guidance will be provided via a separate SPD)'

Stoke-on-Trent have also been out to consultation on their City Centre and Etruria Road Corridor Area Action Plan. This Development Plan Document can include planning policies which are given more weight in the determination of planning applications than an SPD. Policy SS3 Primary and Secondary Shopping Frontages states that no more than two hot food takeaways (A5 Use Class) will be permitted adjacent to each other.

The Area Actions Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents being produced as part of the Local Development Framework and are in accordance with the adopted Core Spatial Strategy, which includes Policy CSP1 - Design Quality where at Criterion 12 it states that new development should also contribute to healthy lifestyles. These planning documents aim to actively improve the health and well-being of the citizens of Stoke-on-Trent.

See reference sheet and the other briefing papers in the series:

Housing and Health
Environment and Health
Economy, Skills and Health
Culture, Leisure and Health
Safer Stronger Communities
Children, Young People and Families
Later Life

Published June 2011



Dudley Healthy Towns Project

The national Healthy Towns project aimed to pilot ways of reducing obesity levels and had £30 million funding available. Areas were selected to be awarded funding using the following criteria:

- the proposals were ambitious and comprehensive
- there was fresh thinking on the changes that could be made to create healthier communities and could provide interesting lessons for towns across England
- the plans were set within a coherent framework that ensures a strategic direction also has clear support of senior officers

Nine areas were selected, including Dudley which saw £4.5 million of investment in the borough. Dudley Healthy Towns Project aims to encourage families to make the most of outdoor areas by transforming five parks and play areas in to 'family health hubs' and links to existing initiatives.

Each of the Healthy Hub sites has a 'Healthy Towns' building, a programme of activities and events, walking routes, signage, an outdoor gym with a range of fantastic equipment that is free for anyone at anytime and toilets.

These hubs connect to people's homes via safe 'active travel corridors' making it easier to cycle and walk safely across the borough. There are also traffic calming measures, cycle storage, footpath and canal tow path improvements, crossing upgrades and Police Community Support Officer involvement. The money targets some service reform and issues such as community safety, public toilets and lighting will also be improved.

The project is being independently evaluated for physical activity levels, park use, perceptions of safety, walking and cycling levels and diet status. Further information is available at: www.dudleyhealthytowns.co.uk.

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References - Health and Well-Being Briefing Papers

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- ² HM Government 2010, Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our Strategy for Public Health in England. Norwich: The Stationary Office
- ³ Department of Health (2004) At least five a week - evidence on the impact of physical activity and its relationship to health—a report from the Chief Medical Officer. London: Department of Health
- ⁴⁻⁶ CENTRO 2010, Annual Statistical Report 2010. Retrieved on May 2 2011 from <http://www.centro.org.uk/corporateinformation/publications.aspx>
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- ¹⁶⁻¹⁷ NICE 2008, NICE Public Health Guidance 8 - Promoting and creating built or natural environments that encourage and support physical activity. London: National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence. Retrieved on 15 March 2011 from <http://www.library.nhs.uk/publichealth/viewResource.aspx?resid=277678>
- ¹⁸ The Marmot Review 2010, Fair Society, Healthy Lives: A Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England Post-2010. The Marmot Review
- ¹⁹⁻²⁰ NICE 2008, Op Cit
- ²¹ The Marmot Review 2010, Op cit
- ²² NICE 2008, Op Cit
- ²³ Fowler, T. 2010, Influencing Third Local Transport Plans. Department of Health
- ²⁴ The Marmot Review 2010, Op cit
- ²⁵⁻²⁶ Fowler, T. 2010, Op Cit
- ²⁷⁻²⁹ The Marmot Review 2010, Op cit
- ³⁰⁻³¹ NICE 2008, Op Cit
- ³² Fowler, T. 2010, Op Cit
- ³³ AA Motoring Trust 2003, Retrieved February 19 2007 from www.iam.org.uk/motoringtrust/childsafety/
- ³⁴ Fowler, T. 2010, Op Cit
- ³⁵ NICE 2008, Op Cit
- ³⁶ NICE 2008, Op Cit
- ³⁷ The Marmot Review 2010, Op cit

Further Information, Organisations and Links

Learning for Public Health www.wmpho.org.uk/lfp
Department of Health www.dh.gov.uk
West Midland Councils www.wmcouncils.gov.uk
West Midlands Public Health Observatory www.wmpho.org.uk
Royal Town Planning Institute www.rtpi.org.uk
Department for Transport www.dft.gov.uk
Department for Communities and Local Government www.communities.gov.uk
National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) www.nice.org.uk
The Marmot Review www.marmotreview.org
Sustrans www.sustrans.org.uk
Sport England www.sportengland.org.uk
Obesity, Physical Activity and Food in the West Midlands www.foodwm.org.uk
Dudley Healthy Towns www.dudleyhealthytowns.co.uk

Acknowledgements

Janet Baker Deputy Regional Director of Public Health, Department of Health West Midlands
Ginder Narle Learning for Public Health Manager, Sandwell Primary Care Trust
Sarah Pullen Project Lead
Allison Orchard Personal Assistant to Deputy Regional Director of Public Health, Department of Health West Midlands
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