

Reuniting Planning and Health

Planning for Healthy Communities resources pack



RESOURCE 4:

OPPORTUNITIES TO CONSIDER HEALTH THROUGH PLANNING IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

A resource for people who want to know more about how health can be considered within the existing and emerging Northern Ireland planning system.



Planning for Healthy Communities resources pack

'The integration of planning, community planning, regeneration, local economic development and local tourism, combined with councils' existing functions, should provide a productive joined up approach that will enhance the role of local government as a natural partner in helping to deliver health improvements and addressing health inequalities at the community level.'

Dr Michael McBride, Chief Medical Officer, Northern Ireland ([Your Health Matters](#), 2013)

Welcome

This set of resources explains how better integration between health and spatial planning can help to create healthier places to live. It explains the opportunities for achieving this in Northern Ireland, and includes suggestions from elsewhere to illustrate potential ways forward.

These resources have been developed primarily for elected members, senior officers in local government, planners and public health practitioners. They will also be useful for community development practitioners and others who want to understand how the planning system can play a part in improving health and wellbeing locally.

Not everyone will want to know the same thing, and users will come with their own existing knowledge. To make the resources as useful as possible they have been written as standalone resources. This means that users can choose the ones they are most interested in, without having to start from the beginning of Resource 1 and work their way through to the end (you are of course welcome to do this too!).

Resource 1 is for people who want to learn more about the links between planning and health. It is a brief overview with lots of links to other more detailed reports and websites to get more information.	Resource 2 is for elected members and senior officers. It focuses on the role of planning corporately, and how a focus on health can help to achieve wider corporate objectives. This is particularly timely as councils consider how they will coordinate and organise their new responsibilities.	Resource 3 is for elected members, planners and public health practitioners. It explains the opportunities and constraints for considering health concerns within the planning process, and includes examples of evidence-based policies. There are lots of links to more information.	Resource 4 is for people who want to know more about how health can be considered within the existing and emerging Northern Ireland planning system.	Resource 5 is for people who want to know more about what integrated health and planning might look like in practice. It showcases examples of places where health has been considered throughout the planning process.
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Resource 4: Opportunities to consider health through planning in Northern Ireland

Introduction

'A healthy community is better able to take advantage of the economic, social and environmental opportunities which are open to it.'

[Regional Development Strategy \(RDS\) 2035](#)

At the time of preparing this resource the Northern Ireland planning system is in a state of flux. From April 2015 Northern Ireland will have 11 new district councils with additional powers, including planning. The [Single Planning Policy Statement](#) (SPPS) (currently in draft) will provide the policy framework for Local Development Frameworks developed by district councils. However, the current position is that until a new Local Development Framework is adopted by a council, the existing suite of [Planning Policy Statements](#) remains in force.

The existing policies provide opportunities for planners and health professionals to take coherent action, although they are not necessarily written using public health terminology. For example [PPS1: General Principles](#) refers to good design, mixed-use development and quality, which are key prerequisites of a healthy environment. Note that the draft [SPPS](#) provides a stronger commitment to improving health and wellbeing as a core planning principle.

Planning for health is something planners already have to do

The statutory duties for public authorities and for planning means that, in practice, improving health and wellbeing is a central objective and should inform the working ethos and culture of public sector organisations.

The central plank of the new plan-led system is the local development plan. In preparing these local plans, councils will need to take into account and have regard to other higher level strategies and plans. Health and wellbeing objectives are included in these higher level documents from across the Northern Ireland Executive, the DoE and other departments. These include but are not limited to the:

- [Sustainable Development Strategy](#)
- [Regional Development Strategy](#)
- [Active Travel Strategy](#) and the [Regional Transport Strategy](#)
- [Public Health Strategy](#)
- National planning policy as set out in the [Planning Policy Statements](#), including:
 - [PPS 3: Access, Movement and Parking](#) – creating accessible environments
 - [PPS 7: Quality Residential Environments](#) – sustainable and quality residential designs
 - [PPS 8: Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation](#) – safeguard and provide access to open space and sporting activities
 - [PPS 12: Housing in Settlements](#) – meet housing need and support balanced and inclusive communities
 - [PPS 13: Transportation and Land Use](#) – promote sustainable and accessible transport options.

Sustainability appraisals and assessments to improve health and wellbeing

In England and elsewhere, some councils are exploring ways to include health as part of existing statutory assessments and appraisals to make the most effective use of existing processes. For example the [Central Lincolnshire Joint Planning Unit](#) has developed an integrated impact assessment (IIA) that expands the scope of a (statutory) sustainability appraisal to include health and equalities impacts.

Another approach is through separate [health impact assessments](#) (HIAs), which are designed to consider the health impacts of a policy or development proposal/ masterplan. The earlier it is commissioned, the more influence it can have. HIAs are not compulsory, but examples across the UK report that they are a good way of getting traction between planning and public health because of their potential to foster better working relationships and a shared understanding. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, and each council should explore the most effective and cost-efficient approach in accordance to its own capacity and resource constraints.

Community plans and health

The local government reforms place a [duty on local authorities to prepare community plans](#), which should drive the priorities of a council across all departments. The community plan will set out objectives and council actions for improving the social, economic and environmental well-being of Belfast and for delivering on sustainable development goals. Examples of priorities could include:

- Strong Safe Communities for everyone by reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and residents feel safe,
- Investing in Children Young people and their Families by preventing ill health and unhealthy lifestyles.
- Healthy and Independent Living by providing better access to local health services.

The legislation on local government reform, which includes the legal framework for community planning, creates a statutory link between the local development plans and community plans.

**This resource is part of a series
Reuniting Planning and Health- Planning for Healthy Communities.**

**All five publications are available to download
at
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