

The State of the Union: Reuniting health with planning in promoting healthy communities TCPA Jan 19

Planning for health and wellbeing is strongly embedded in councils' priorities for sustainable development. The revised NPPF (2018) now explicitly states that planning decisions should 'enable and support healthier lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and wellbeing needs'.

However, there are various challenges inherent to the planning system and how it operates that can undermine efforts to secure healthy outcomes from plans and development.

We need to be explicit that:

- Meeting health and wellbeing objectives are an explicit purpose of planning
- Health and wellbeing considerations should be prime
- Need to formalise these expectations using e.g.
 - o A specific health and wellbeing policy in the Local Plan
 - o A Supplementary Planning Guidance Document (SPD) on planning for health on specific topics such as green infrastructure, active travel, restrictions on hot food take-ways
 - o Guidance on health impact assessments supported by a checklist to be submitted as part of a planning application
 - o HIAs carried out on development plan documents
 - o Site or place specific design guidance for health and wellbeing
- Regular monitoring and evaluation of activities and impact is required and could be incorporated through the local planning authority's Authority Monitoring Reports

Key criteria for assessing plan making processes that will promote healthy communities:

1. Does the Local Plan reference the Joint Health & Wellbeing strategy?
2. Does the Local Plan take into account the local health needs set out in the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)? NPPF 2012 requirement
3. Does the Local Plan promote opportunities for active travel?
4. Does the Local Plan require good design in development?
5. Does the Local Plan provide opportunities for open space, play and recreation?
6. Does the Local Plan set out provision for health infrastructure? Type and scale?
7. Does the Local Plan require the use of an HIA when a planning application is submitted?
8. Are there Indicators that can help to monitor health impacts and benefits?

If health considerations are not clearly set out in Local Plan/Local development Plan policies it will be very difficult to refer to them in decisions on individual planning applications. Health should be included as a 'material consideration' in planning decision-making.

Policies need to provide specific detailed guidance to help apply the policy through an SPD.