



Top Tips for a Healthy Planned Environment

leading
improvements
in health and
wellbeing across
cheshire and
merseyside



ChaMPs Public Health Network

Cheshire and Merseyside Partnerships for Health (ChaMPs for Health) is a public health network for primary care trusts, academia, local authorities, NHS trusts and wider organisations.

The network's mission is to be a dynamic, leading edge network, working in partnership to improve and protect public health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities.

Led by the Directors of Public Health, ChaMPs has a professional programme management team to ensure effective delivery of the networks targets and goals.

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Liverpool Public Health Observatory

Liverpool Public Health Observatory is a NHS research and development unit based in, and closely integrated with, the Division of Public Health at the University of Liverpool. The Observatory was founded in 1990 and was the model for the regional public health observatories established across England in 1998. Its staff consists of a part-time director, three researchers, and an administrator.

The principal purpose of the Observatory is the analysis and interpretation of health relevant information for those who make or influence policies affecting public health whether they be in the public, private, or voluntary sectors.

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About this Report

Top Tips for a healthy planned environment is the fifth document in the *Top Tips* series that aims to promote public health. It was commissioned by the ChaMPs Federation of Directors of Public Health from Liverpool Public Health Observatory.

Who should read this?

This research is for local authorities, PCTs and other relevant agencies to enable them to most effectively promote and improve the health and wellbeing of the local population in relation to the internal and external aspects of the planned environment.

In the full report the key topic areas covered are: history, policy, transport, physical activity, environmental sustainability, wellbeing, crime prevention, alcohol, fast food, sunbeds and tobacco. The full report also includes examples of good practice and extensive top tips.

This report will support the integration of the health and planning agendas.

The executive summary and full report of each of the *Top Tips* publications can be found on the ChaMPs website at www.champs-for-health.net/publications and also on the Liverpool Public Health Observatory website at www.liv.ac.uk/PublicHealth/obs

Printed copies can be obtained by contacting Francesca Bailey at the Observatory on 0151 794 5570.



Introduction

Town planning was born out of the public health movement, with a desire to replace slums with well-designed cities and suburbs. It was an answer to infectious diseases such as cholera and tuberculosis caused by poor housing, poor sanitation and overcrowding.

Today we have a greater understanding of the complexities of planned environments and the consequences this has for health and wellbeing. Whilst changes in the planning system seek to create new healthier settlements, we also need to address the historical multiple overlapping burdens unhealthy development has on some of our communities. This coupled with the potential impacts of climate change, pose real challenges in developing sustainable communities. The repositioning of public health leaders more firmly within political governance structures goes some way to amend this, as they can influence how health and wellbeing is 'built in' to planning policies, programmes and projects (for example through good building design, streets and neighbourhoods, parks and green spaces.)

This publication of 'Top Tips for a healthy planned environment' summarises the key topic areas of public health which should be considered and encompassed into all planned environments.

This will help to ensure effective promotion and improvement in the health and wellbeing of local populations and the reduction of health inequalities.



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Legislation and Policy



Top Tips for healthy planning strategies, programmes and plans

The Royal Town Planning Institute's "Delivering Healthy Communities" recommends:

- Spatial and health planning to be integrated in the early stages of developing plans and programmes. This requires joined-up working between practitioners.
- Plans to be developed with the active involvement of all of those likely to be affected, both existing residents and potential incomers. It is important to involve 'hard to reach' groups who may be most vulnerable.
- The impact of proposed developments on human health to be explicitly considered when strategies or schemes are being put forward through Health Impact Assessment (HIA).
- If you are required to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment consider doing a full Health Impact Assessment (HIA).
- Develop local threshold indicators for HIA, as all submitted plans should have a clear statement as to whether there is any possible impact on health inequalities.
- Consider using supplementary planning documents around density of hot food takeaways, location of alcohol premises, healthy design or open spaces.
- Agree a mechanism for informing the NHS when Section 106 agreement (s106) is being prepared so they have the opportunity to comment.
- Ensure community participation in the sustainable community strategy process as the LDF should reflect community priorities and aspirations on health and wellbeing.

Top Tips from report authors

- Within the Local Development Framework (LDF) documents include indications of areas suffering from highest levels of social and economic deprivation and/or ill health.

"Local planning authorities and their Local Development Frameworks can significantly influence and contribute to improvements in health"

"The changes in the planning system offer new opportunities for NHS staff to integrate health into town planning."

For the NHS

Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) will have an opportunity to influence the LDF through their membership of the Local Strategic Partnership and through public consultation. The NHS needs to get involved in the planning system so that it can influence:

- Regional, sub-regional and local policies to improve health and take health inequalities into account.
- The development potential of their own land and buildings (for health service or alternative uses) by having them included within the local policy framework.
- Influence planning decisions, in relation to major planning applications.

For Local Planning Authorities

It is important to ensure that dialogue is encouraged with the NHS, to better understand respective needs in the planning process. This will enable proposed developments to be discussed and their impact assessed on the health and wellbeing of the local population and on existing healthcare provision. Also it will enable consideration to be given on how best to tackle health inequality and regenerate the most deprived areas.

- Make contact with your PCT at the highest level.
- Make sure that the PCT (as well as the Strategic Health Authority) is consulted in the process for producing the LDF and make sure they know the timetable.
- Explain the future pattern of growth in the Borough and the likely population changes to the PCT.
- Put in place sound financial procedures for making use of s106 financial contributions.

A good core strategy is the overarching policy document for the local development framework and the delivery strategy for the Sustainable Community Strategy. Every other local development document is built on the principles it sets out, regarding the use of land in a Local Planning Authority's area.

According to the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) a good core strategy will need to:

- Tell a story of the place, explain how it works and highlight its qualities and distinguishing features.
- Say it clearly: making the core strategy relevant and understandable to a wide audience (use diagrams to inform the text).

"Using Health Impact Assessment in planning can make a positive contribution to health by mitigating potential negative impacts of developments, such as fear of crime and road accidents whilst enhancing positive impacts such as social cohesion and a sense of community identity and belonging."

In addition, a good core strategy should, in accordance with national planning policy:

- Have a time horizon of at least 15 years.
- Be kept up to date.
- Include a monitoring and implementation framework.

Transport and Physical Activity



To promote active travel

It is important that key decision-makers in local authorities act immediately on the following six principles drawn up by an alliance of partners promoting public health. In particular, they should be endorsed in new developments:

- Set ambitious targets for a growth in walking and cycling and ensure they are met.
- Invest at a realistic level: commit 10% of transport budgets to walking and cycling immediately.
- Create safe, attractive walking and cycling conditions.
- Make 20mph or lower speed limits the norm for residential streets and those used by shoppers, tourists, close to schools or public buildings, or important for walking, cycling or children's play.
- Tackle bad driving, through improved driver training and awareness campaigns.
- 'Health check' every transport and land use decision, focusing on the potential impact on levels of walking and cycling and other aspects of health.

Developing the network of streets

Factors to consider at the city level and/or town level scale include:

- The linking of public space to provide more coordinated and better quality local walking and cycling environments.
- Greater allocation for construction and management resources for city centre streets and interchanges as they have greater footfall and higher density occupancy.
- Streets should form an attractive environment for walking and cycling.
- Streets should be considered and managed as the social and environmental space of the city, not just as traffic routes.

"Twice as many trips are made by car as by walking and cycling combined. Yet most car journeys are short enough to be walked or cycled. Better conditions for walking and cycling could make many of these trips health promoting."

Promoting the use of stairs

Climbing stairs is a means of increasing exercise that can be easily fitted into everyday activities. When regularly used stairs can promote fitness.

- Architects should re-consider the place and design of stairs within buildings, creating attractive central stairs, alongside the traditional lift or escalator and fire escape.
- Architects, designers and facility managers responsible for public buildings to ensure that staircases are clearly signposted, well-lit and decorated.
- Stair posters and riser banners on steps can encourage the use of stairs.

Promoting inclusive environments

The Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee has developed the following guidance for the promotion of personal mobility for disabled people.

For local authorities:

- Ensure your staff can demonstrate qualifications and competencies in access issues.
- Ensure you follow recommended guidelines on access.
- Publish information on what you provide for disabled people.
- Ask disabled people what problems they experience using the streets you are responsible for.

The following recommendations are given from the Landscape Trust:

- Where it is proposed to use a different form of separation between the footway and the carriageway (or shared area) other than the recognised kerb or tactile paving, local authorities should be prepared to carry out research before implementation to demonstrate clearly that their design solutions are suitable and effective.
- Local authorities should consult and engage effectively with local disabled people at all stages of street design proposals.

"Places that are relatively dense and well served, with a good mix of facilities and services, attractive buildings, clean and pedestrian friendly streets and green spaces will discourage car use and encourage walking, cycling and socialisation."

Environmental Sustainability



Public Space

The quality of public space plays a major role in the economic, social and environmental sustainability of cities. Directors of service in planning, highway, transport, engineering and parks departments have a key role in public space design and management through the spatial planning of public space across their sectors and disciplines.

- Develop public space strategies to deal holistically with streets, green spaces and civic spaces. These spatial strategies should support cross-departmental and partnership working by involving local strategic partnerships.
- Create public space design and management documents, in the form of local guidelines, strategies and policies that address how both new and existing public space is to be designed and managed.
- Assess the quality and provision of public space by using the methodology of Planning Policy Guideline 17 and its accompanying good practice guide.

Reducing food miles

If food can be produced locally it cuts down on the miles taken in transportation thus reducing carbon emissions. For small towns to be self-sufficient in growing vegetables and orchard fruits, the following are tips from Incredible Edible Todmorden:

- Build schools for the future that have the living edible world at their heart where the school children get actively involved in the green project through a school orchard, raised growing beds etc. For more suggestions visit www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/projects/growing-in-schools
- Plan for food: support local food production through the planning system with all local plans identifying places for growing.
- Tick all the boxes: make growing food a performance indicator for 'wellbeing' for all public services.
- Insist all new homes have ready-to-grow spaces.

"A key area to reduce health inequalities will be action to create healthy and sustainable places and communities."

Green Infrastructure

The CABI 'Grey to Green' campaign is calling for changes in the way that we approach and fund green infrastructure (GI). With particular reference to local authorities:

- Landscape institute accreditations each year. A minimum of 550 new entrants annually on to Landscape Institute accredited courses from 2010 and beyond are required to meet future demand.
- An urban greening champion in every local authority. Each local authority to have a cabinet member with a portfolio commitment to championing an urban greening programme.

"Green infrastructure has a vital role to play in environmental sustainability; cleaning the air, promoting better flood protection, countering the urban heat island effect, support for biodiversity, sustainable waste management and renewable energy."

"Environmental sustainability is the ability to maintain the qualities that are valued in the physical environment that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs."

Sustainable NHS buildings

Healthy Futures: Buildings and Sustainable Development propose that sustainable NHS buildings will:

- Be accessible by public transport, walking and cycling.
- Engage the local community in the planning process – eg through Enquiry by Design and Health Impact Assessment.
- Be a brownfield site location.
- Use environmentally sensitive building materials that are not harmful to health.
- Use local labour and suppliers in construction and service delivery.
- Use resources, such as energy and water, efficiently in its construction and throughout its lifetime.



Wellbeing and Crime Prevention



To ensure attractive and safe green spaces

To provide attractive safe places that the public want to use, CABE Space recommends:

- Ensure all designs are of a high standard, involving relevant professionals (landscape architects and designers) and valuing the contribution of users.
- Involve the community early in the process and continually throughout.
- Ensure that people know how to report damage and incidents.
- Make sure that maintenance budgets are adequate to support after-care.
- Work in partnership. Others may be trying to manage similar problems and be willing to get involved and share resources.

Principles of inclusive design

Inclusive design is about making places that everyone can use. The following principles will help to make an inclusive design:

- Put people at the heart of the design process. Wheelchair and pushchair access should not be an optional extra in public buildings.
- Acknowledge diversity and difference. Identify barriers to inclusion as early as possible. As well as mobility impairments understand the barriers experienced by people with learning difficulties, mental ill health, visual impairments and hearing impairments.
- Provide for flexible use. Understand how the building or space will be used, so places can be designed to be adapted to changing uses and demands.

Building houses fit for purpose

Private house builders, until recently, provided two thirds of new homes and therefore set the standards in a competitive market. Local Authorities (LAs) have the power and the remit to influence space standards, both as funders and through planning policy and development controls. Suggestions to improve this situation are:

- Introduce or apply existing minimum space standards through their planning departments.
- LAs to ensure houses are designed for life by having adaptable/flexible space by promotion of recognised good standards in homes.
- Local Planning Authorities and Registered Social Landlords need to strengthen their working relationships to increase design quality, particularly in terms of layout and place making.

"Crime prevention requires planners, designers and crime prevention practitioners to work together."

Health service building design

Healthcare buildings can be designed to enhance the healing environment. The King's Fund report "Enhancing the healing environment" highlighted the way in which many projects bring a sense of normality to the hospital environment by ensuring that:

- Finding the building and the main entrance is obvious. It should create a good first impression, creating a sense of welcome and reassurance on arrival.
- Providing views of nature and/ or gardens to increase levels of positive feelings.
- Social spaces such as gardens and courtyards have ample seating designed so that they provide dignified and comfortable places for meeting relatives and friends.
- Private spaces provide both sound and visual privacy. Waiting areas and treatment rooms need to reassure patients that their confidentiality and dignity are being respected, whilst offering a calm setting for personal reflection.

From the practical experience of the King's Fund pilot programme focusing on environments for care at the end of life it recommended that all these settings provide:

- A room where the patient and family can be taken for confidential discussions.
- The option of single room accommodation.
- Appropriate places for 'viewing' the deceased. For example a garden or room incorporating stained glass, colour and light to provide a sensitive, quiet and private place.

"Surveys of patients show that works of art and design in hospitals are popular with patients and can reduce stress levels, provide enjoyment and help to distract from immediate worries or medical problems."

Crime prevention

The following attributes should be considered as prompts to thinking about crime prevention and promoting community safety through the planning system in the local context. There are several attributes of sustainable communities that can prevent crime.

- Access and movement: places with well-defined routes, spaces and entrances that provide for convenient movement without compromising security.
- Surveillance: places where all publicly accessible spaces are overlooked.
- Ownership: places that promote a sense of ownership, respect, territorial responsibility and community.
- Management and maintenance: places that are designed with management and maintenance in mind, to discourage crime in the present and the future.

"A place where a person lives can affect a person's reported levels of mental wellbeing. In a recent survey in the North West, satisfaction with the local area increased as mental wellbeing increased and decreased as deprivation of an area increased."

Fast Food



Controlling the availability of fast food outlets

Evidence suggests that regularly eating energy dense, high salt or sugared fast food can have a detrimental effect on health, particularly in neighbourhoods with a high density of fast food outlets.

Learning from good practice:

- Local Authorities to use their planning and licensing controls to limit the number of fast food takeaways.
- Refuse planning permission to fast food takeaways within 400 metres of a school.
- Trading standards could work with fast food restaurants to improve the provision of healthy foods within fast food takeaways.

“Those on low incomes purchase calorie dense, nutrient poor foods because they are cheaper than healthier products. A connection has also been found between proximity to ‘fast food’ restaurants and increased risk of obesity in adults.”

“Research by the Food Commission for the British Heart Foundation shows how healthy living messages can be undermined by the lack of nutritious food options available in venues where children go to get active.”

As a way to make healthier food more available and affordable, research for ObesCities suggests:

- Using land use and planning powers to support supermarkets in poor neighbourhoods.
- Support food co-ops, small grocers, farmer's markets and mobile fruit and vegetable vendors in neighbourhoods where healthy foods are scarce.
- Introduce nutritious, free school meals and incorporate healthy eating into the curriculum.
- Create green jobs that support local and regional food systems.
- Require the recipients of public subsidies to increase shelf space dedicated to healthier food, reduce promotion of unhealthy foods, offer affordable healthy food options and provide living-wage jobs.

Promoting the availability of healthy food in public leisure facilities

To reverse the current trends in the growth of obesity particularly in children, concerted and joined up action is needed on both nutrition and physical activity.

- Vending machines in publicly owned leisure facilities to be stocked with healthy products that fit the School Food Trust criteria of permitted items.
- Publicly owned leisure facilities to sign up for the 'Healthier Food Mark.'

"Fast food is loaded with calories from refined sugar and fats. Trans fat, which is considered the most harmful type of fat, is found abundantly in various fast foods."



Alcohol



"The Licensing Act 2003 has provided Planning with the opportunity to become involved in licensing: licences can be reviewed whereas planning permissions are final."

Developing safer night time environments

The British Medical Association has made the following recommendation to Town Planning and Local Authorities:

- Ensure consideration of local density of on-licensed premises and the surrounding infrastructure when evaluating any planning or licensing application.

Recommendations from *"Developing safer night time environments through effective implementation of planning"* to improve the understanding and involvement of Planning and Regeneration in the NTE:

- Partnership working to be developed much further between Planning, Community Safety, the Police, Licensing and other relevant bodies.
- The PCT to consider organising a workshop with Community Safety, Police teams and Planning officers to share expertise, develop stronger partnership working and establish a shared vision for town centre planning.

- Planning departments to consider whether changes of use for premises from retail to licensed premises are viable by considering the impacts on the local area both in the day and night
- Planning departments to promote a range of culturally diverse activities which encourage a range of populations to use town centres at night.

To develop a sustainable and safer night time environment, planning departments need to consider:

- Appropriate CCTV use.
- Improved lighting and street design.
- Late night transport and venue design.

"In developed countries the harm from alcohol has been ranked third, following tobacco and high blood pressure, among 26 risk factors examined in terms of their contribution to disease, disability or mortality."

Sunbeds



"Sunbed use in the UK is a public health concern because sunbeds emit ultraviolet radiation that is likely to increase the risk of developing skin cancer, a disease that is almost entirely preventable."

Health and safety strategies for sunbed use

In the absence of government legislation many local authorities are implementing strategies to target the health and safety of establishments and to raise awareness with the public of the risks of sunbeds. From these examples, the following top tips for local authorities are provided from the Save our Skins toolkit:

- Ensure that establishments providing sun tanning facilities meet current health and safety requirements.
- Raise awareness with owners and staff of the potential dangers of sunbed usage and of their obligations to ensure customer safety.

- Raise public awareness of the potential dangers of sunbed usage, particularly directed to children and young adults.
- Run advertising campaigns to highlight the potential dangers of sunbed usage.
- Remove sunbeds from LA run premises.
- Develop policies for private companies contracted to manage local authority leisure facilities.

"A comprehensive meta-analysis showed that sunbed use before the age of 35 was associated with an increased relative risk of 75% for developing malignant melanoma."

"51% and 48% of 15-17 year old girls in Liverpool and Sunderland respectively have used sunbeds, with more than 40% using them every week."

Tobacco



"Cigarette filters are not biodegradable. They are composed of cellulose acetate; a form of plastic. Therefore cigarette butts can persist in the environment for as long as other forms of plastic."

Vending machines and retail displays

By October 2011 cigarette vending machines and retail displays of cigarettes will be unlawful, but public bodies can set a good example now in public buildings by:

- Removing all cigarette vending machines.
- Stop displaying cigarettes at point of sale.

Cigarette litter

Cigarette butts, matches, empty packets and wrappers are England's biggest litter problem. Cigarette butts are not biodegradable and the toxic chemicals they contain threaten the quality of aquatic ecosystems and wildlife. They also look unsightly. Councils could follow examples of good practice and:

- Consider conducting anti-cigarette litter campaigns.
- Install clearly marked cigarette bins, particularly in town centres and outside municipal buildings.

Smuggling and counterfeit cigarettes

Local Authority staff play an important role in cutting down on cigarettes being smuggled into the country, and on the sales of counterfeit cigarettes. Trading Standards to work with police to deal with:

- The smuggling and sale of cheap cigarettes brought into the country.
- Counterfeit cigarettes.

"Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body, causing many diseases and reduces quality of life and life expectancy."

"The dangers of breathing in other people's tobacco smoke (known as second hand or passive smoking) are well documented putting people at risk of a number of disorders from minor eye and throat irritation through to heart disease and lung cancer."

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