



Northumberland
County Council

Health Impact Assessment for Planning Applications:

Guidance Note

May 2022

Acknowledgement

This guidance note has been adapted from the guidance note developed for the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan with permission.

1. Introduction

Purpose of the Guidance Note

The purpose of this guidance note is to provide advice and guidance on undertaking Health Impact Assessment (HIA) for development proposals within Northumberland, supporting the implementation of Policy STP5: Health and Wellbeing in the Northumberland Local Plan.

HIA is a process which ensures the impact of development on health and wellbeing is considered and responded to during the planning process.

This guidance note aims to support the preparation of HIAs in relation to planning applications for residential and non-residential development proposals in Northumberland. It includes advice on those aspects of the built environment that may impact on health, guidance on undertaking HIAs and how HIAs fit into the planning process.

What is Health and Wellbeing?

Health is defined as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing. As well as access to good quality healthcare services and support to improve lifestyle choices, there are many factors that affect health and wellbeing to an even greater extent. These include the physical and social conditions in which people live: culture, education, housing, transport, employment, crime, income, social networks, leisure and other services. These all influence health in either a positive or negative way, both directly and indirectly. These factors are commonly known as the wider determinants of health. Refer to the Healthy Planning Checklist for a list of the determinants which should be considered as part of a HIA.

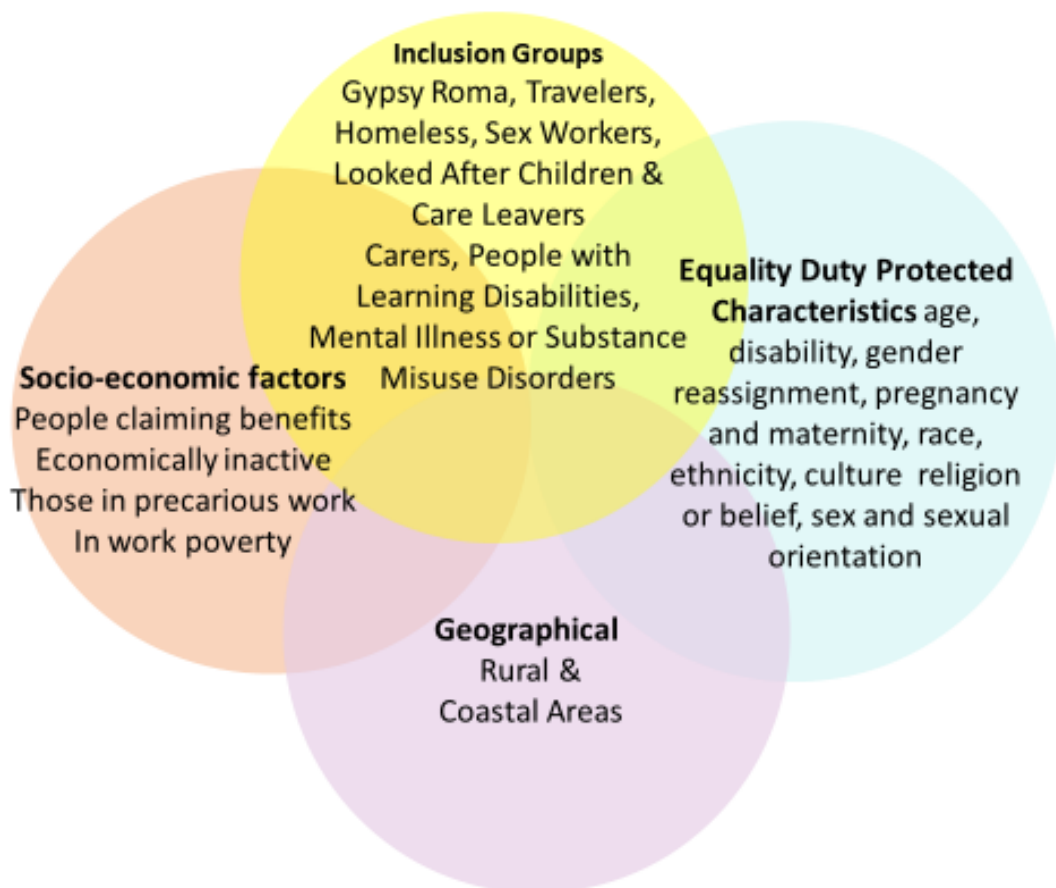
Spatial planning and development proposals have the potential to impact on health and wellbeing. By considering how a proposal may impact on the wider determinants of health and creating health promoting environments, the health and wellbeing of people can be improved and health inequalities can be reduced.

Health profile of Northumberland

Improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities is an important issue within Northumberland. Whilst the health of Northumberland residents is not

significantly different to the national average however, there are variations in the health of the population. For example, there are marked inequalities in life expectancy and healthy life expectancy for both men and women between those living in the most deprived and least deprived areas.

Inequalities have been documented between population groups across at least four dimensions, as illustrated below. It is important to note that these are overlapping dimensions with people often falling into more than one dimension. Notably the groups affected by health inequalities are wider than those protected by the Equality Duty.



Further information regarding the health profile of Northumberland can be found in Appendix 2 Data Sources.

2. Policy Context

National Policy

The *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)* supports the role of planning to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places.¹ The impact of development on human health and wellbeing is therefore a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

The *National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)* also recognises the links between health and planning. It notes that the built and natural environments are major determinants of health and wellbeing.² It encourages Local Planning Authorities to engage with the Director of Public Health on planning applications where there are likely to be health impacts, and maintains that a HIA may be a useful tool to use where there are expected to be significant impacts.

The *Health and Social Care Act (2012)* gave local authorities new duties and responsibilities for health improvement and protection, throughout all their functions, including spatial planning and development management.³ The government's public health strategy *Healthy lives, healthy people*, explicitly recognises that "health considerations are an important part of planning policy".⁴

Local policy

The Northumberland Local Plan Policy STP5 Health and wellbeing (Strategic Policy):

"A Health Impact Assessment Screening will be required to be submitted for all major development proposals to determine whether the potential impact on health resulting from the development warrants any further assessment. Where further assessment is warranted, a proportionate Health Impact Assessment will also be required to be submitted as part of the application process. A Health Impact Assessment will be required to include proposals to mitigate any potential adverse health impacts, maximise potential positive impacts, and help reduce health inequalities."

¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. National Planning Policy Framework. 2021
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1005759/NPPF_July_2021.pdf

² Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. Guidance. Healthy and safe communities. Published: 6th March, 2014. Last updated: 1 November, 2019. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/health-and-wellbeing>

³ HM Government. The Health and Social Care Act (2012).
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/7/contents/enacted>

⁴ HM Government (2010). Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our strategy for public health in England.

The Northumberland Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2018 to 2028)⁵ has four themes:

- Giving children and young people the best start in life.
- Empowering people and communities.
- Tackling some of the wider determinants of health.
- Adopting a whole system approach to health and social care.

3. What is a Health Impact Assessment?

The European Centre for Health Policy (1999) Gothenburg Consensus defines HIA as:

“A combination of procedures, methods and tools by which a policy, programme or project may be judged as to its potential effects on the health of a population, and the distribution of those effects within the population. HIA identifies appropriate actions to manage those effects.”

According to the Society of Practitioners of Health Impact Assessment (SOPHIA), an HIA:⁶

- Is a process used to identify how a project, policy or programme might influence health, *and*
- Uses a combination of procedures, methods and tools to systematically judge the potential, and sometimes unintended, effects of a proposed project, plan or policy on the health of a population and the distribution of those effects within the population, *and*
- Produces recommendations to enhance the health benefits of the project/ policy/ programme and to mitigate potential harms.

A systematic review of the effectiveness of HIAs concluded that many HIAs have a major direct impact on decision making and are useful for promoting health and mitigating adverse impacts of decisions made outside of the health sector.⁷

What type of health impact assessment should be done?

It is commonly recognised that there are three types of Health Impact Assessment:

- A Desktop HIA (or Health Impact Statement) can take hours or a day and can encompass a small number of participants around a table using existing knowledge and evidence to assess a proposal, policy or plan.

⁵ http://committeedocs.northumberland.gov.uk/MeetingDocs/36272_M7982.pdf

⁶ <https://hiasociety.org/What-is-HIA>

⁷ Dannenberg AL. Effectiveness of Health Impact Assessments: A Synthesis of Data From Five Impact Evaluation Reports. *Prev Chronic Dis* 2016;13:150559. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd13.150559>

- A Rapid HIA can take days or weeks and usually includes the establishment of a small steering group and often uses the approach of a participatory stakeholder workshop – it typically involves a brief investigation of health impacts, including a short literature review of quantitative and qualitative evidence and the gathering of knowledge and further evidence from a number of local stakeholders.
- Intermediate and/or Comprehensive ('Full') HIAs are more in-depth and can take months to complete. They may be time intensive, financially costly, require extensive literature searches and the collection of primary data. This type of HIA is more suited to more complex proposals.

For the majority of major development proposals coming forward in Northumberland, a Healthy Planning Checklist will be sufficient to consider the likely health impacts of the proposal. It is also to be used as a screening tool to decide whether a Rapid or Full Health impact Assessment is also required. See section 4 for further details.

A Rapid or even Full Health Impact Assessment will be required for all large-scale major development proposals involving any one or more of the following:

- 100 or more dwellings for residential developments.
- A building or buildings where the floor space to be created by the development is 10,000sqm or more floorspace for non-residential developments.
- The winning and working of minerals or the use of land for mineral-working deposits.
- Waste development.

Such proposals are likely to affect a range of different population groups across a large geographical area because of their size and scale, the fact that they adjoin existing communities, or that they are likely to significant community concerns about any potential health impacts.

In addition, Northumberland County Council will use a tool (see Appendix 1) to determine if a Rapid or Full HIA is required even where the above criteria do not apply.

You can contact Northumberland County Council Public Health through our Development Management team for guidance and advice on the HIA, and the potential health impacts on which to focus. This should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity.

4. How to Undertake a Health Impact Assessment

Healthy Planning Checklist

A Healthy Planning Checklist has been designed to quickly assess the potential health impacts of development proposals and help to identify simple measures to maximise the positive health impacts and minimise or mitigate against the negative health impacts. It is also used as a screening tool to help applicants and Northumberland County Council decide whether a Rapid or Full Health impact Assessment is also required.

The Checklist should be completed at pre-application stage and submitted with a planning application, Outline or Full, for all major development proposals of 10 dwellings (housing units) or on a site of 0.5 hectares or more for residential developments, or a building or buildings where the floor space to be created by the development is 1,000 square metres or more or on a site having an area of 1 hectare or more for non-residential developments. It is intended to be a desktop exercise but the Council expects that the level of detail should be proportionate to the size of the development scheme.

It is essential that HIA screening takes place at the earliest opportunity to allow identification and resolution of health issues and so there is sufficient time to complete a HIA where the need for one is identified. This also ensures that the HIA informs and influences the final proposal that is submitted as a planning application.

Further HIA

If the screening process, through the completion of the Healthy Planning Checklist, identifies the need for a Rapid or Full HIA, it is recommended that applicants agree the need for further HIAs with the Council before formally submitting their planning application. Commissioning or preparing a HIA should be done as part of the pre-application process and is the responsibility of the applicant. The Council can provide advice as to what the HIA should cover as part of the pre-application planning service, using the screening to inform the scope.

The Healthy Planning Checklist and Final HIA Report should be submitted with the planning application. The Planning may use the expertise of the Public Health Team to help assess the quality of HIAs submitted. It will be considered along with all other planning application documentation and consultation responses.

The main stages in preparing a more detailed HIA in relation to a planning application to Northumberland County Council are outlined in Table 1. There is no one agreed methodology for undertaking a HIA; some useful resources are listed in Appendix 2.

Table 1. HIA Stages for Planning Applications

HIA Stage Description	Planning Application	Stage
Stage1. Screening	<p>Establishes whether a proposal is likely to have an impact on health, how it may impact on different population groups and the likely scale of impacts. Identifies whether there is a need for a more detailed assessment (Rapid or Full HIA).</p>	<p>Pre-application. Council can advise on need for further HIA work.</p>
Stage 2. Scoping	<p>Identify and get together the team that will prepare the HIA. Different areas of expertise will be required to undertake the HIA and the team should consist of people with a knowledge of: the specific proposal, the local area and population, and health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Decide what type of HIA is required, how in depth it needs to be and what it will focus on.</p> <p>Consider setting up a steering group and agree roles and responsibilities, including who will manage the HIA and who will undertake the HIA. Identify key stakeholders.</p> <p>Map the causal pathways, prioritise research questions, and identify local data sources and the methods that will be used in the HIA to gather evidence and assess impacts.</p>	<p>Pre-application. Council can advise on what the HIA needs to cover.</p>
Stage 3. Assessment	<p>Gather evidence.</p> <p>Describe and assess the likely health impacts of the proposal, including the nature, likelihood, scale and significance and timing of the impacts and their distribution.</p> <p>Consider the effects of the proposal on different population groups, both new and existing, and in relation key health issues and inequalities in the local area.</p>	<p>Pre-application</p>

	Undertake where appropriate stakeholder and community engagement, via workshops, interviews or focus groups.	
Stage 4. Reporting and Recommendations	Use the findings of the HIA to recommend changes to the proposal to mitigate negative impacts or enhance further positive impacts.	Submission and Validation Healthy Planning Checklist and/or HIA Report to be submitted to the Council as part of the planning application.
Stage 5. Decision Making	Assessment of the quality of the HIA, how the recommendations have been taken into account in the proposal and whether any negative impact on health (after mitigation) are acceptable or not. The Council accepts the HIA or requests further work to be undertaken.	Planning Decision HIA is considered by the Council alongside other material considerations and a decision is made on the application.
Stage 6. Monitoring and evaluation	Monitor the actual health impacts that arise after the implementation of the proposal to ensure negative impacts are being minimised and positive impacts enhanced. Evaluate the HIA process to consider whether and how well the HIA worked and what could be done differently in the future.	Commencement of Development

Quality review of HIA

The Council will evaluate the quality of HIAs submitted to ensure they are 'fit for purpose'. The Council will use the publication *A review package for Health Impact Assessment reports of development projects*⁸ and will take into account the following criteria when forming a view as to the quality of a HIA report and whether further work is needed to address any shortfalls:

Assessment of Impacts

- Has the HIA process and methodology been clearly described?
- Have the potential health impacts been identified, including both positive and negative?
- Has the nature of impacts been considered, for example, are they direct or indirect, permanent or temporary? Has the severity and magnitude of the impacts been considered?
- Have the potential impacts been considered in relation to a population and public health profile? Is there a breakdown of the different population groups potentially affected?
- Have inequalities in the distribution of potential impacts been considered?
- Are the identified impacts supported by evidence/knowledge along with a description of the methods used and any participation undertaken?
- Are cumulative impacts considered?

Reporting and Recommendations

- Is there a description of the proposal and the physical characteristics of the proposed development site and surrounding area?
- Does the report describe the screening and scoping stages and outcomes?
- Is there a description of how quantitative and qualitative evidence was gathered and analysed?
- Is it clear how stakeholder and/or community engagement has influenced the HIA?
- Does the report clearly set out any limitations or constraints encountered in undertaking the HIA?
- Is there a clear and concise discussion of the key recommendations to reduce negative impacts and enhance positive impacts and are the recommendations evidence based?
- Are plans for future monitoring of mitigation measures included?

⁸ Fredsgaard MW, Cave B, Bond A (2009). A review package for health impact assessment reports of development projects. Ben Cave Associates Ltd.
<https://hiasociety.org/resources/Documents/ReviewPackageforHIAreports.pdf>

Appendix 1. Tool to help screen whether a Rapid or Full HIA will be needed

Answers favouring doing a HIA	To your knowledge	Answers favouring not doing a HIA
Health impacts		
Yes / not sure	Does the initiative affect health directly?	No
Yes / not sure	Does the initiative affect health indirectly?	No
Yes / not sure	Are there any potentially serious negative health impacts that you currently know of?	No
Yes / not sure	Is further investigation necessary because more information is required on the potential health impacts?	No
No	Are the potential health impacts well known and is it straightforward to suggest effective ways in which beneficial effects are maximised and harmful effects minimised?	Yes
No	Are the potential health impacts identified judged to be minor?	Yes
Community		
Yes / not sure	Is the population affected by the initiative large?	No
Yes / not sure	Are there any socially excluded, vulnerable, disadvantaged groups likely to be affected?	No
Yes / not sure	Are there any community concerns about any potential health impacts?	No
Initiative		
		No
Yes / not sure	Is the size of the initiative large?	No
Yes / not sure	Is the cost of the initiative high?	No
Yes / not sure	Is the nature and extent of the disruption to the affected population likely to be major?	No
Organisation		
		No
Yes	Is the initiative a high priority/important for the organisation/partnership?	No
Yes	Is there potential to change the proposal?	No
For =	TOTAL	Against =

Appendix 2. Additional resources

Contact Details

Contact can be made via PublicHealth@northumberland.gov.uk

Data Sources

The Northumberland Joint Strategic Needs Assessment is a statutory government assessment that Northumberland County Council and Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) jointly produce and maintain on behalf of the health and wellbeing board. The information aims to provide a shared picture of the health, care and other needs of Northumberland residents.

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Care/JSNA/Health-wellbeing-assessment.aspx>

Office for Health Improvement & Disparities Fingertips Public health data is a web based resource that provides access to a wide range of health related data in thematic profiles, including 'Health Profiles', which provide a snapshot overview of health for each local authority in England, and 'Public Health Outcomes Framework' which includes a wide range of indicators.

<http://fingertips.phe.org.uk/>

Public Health England's Local Health is web-based resource that presents health data at a small area geography, through interactive mapping and reports. Areas can be combined to create bespoke geographies and can be compared to the national average.

<http://www.localhealth.org.uk>

Local statistics Office for National Statistics is a web-based resource which provides data on our population and their health and wellbeing.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/help/localstatistics>

Nomis official labour market statistics is a web-base resource which provides labour market information about Northumberland.

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

Additional websites

Northumberland Public Health, including current and previous Director of Public Health Annual reports and Northumberland Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

<https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Care/Health.aspx#publichealth>

NHS Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group

<https://www.northumberlandccg.nhs.uk/>

Public Health England's Spatial planning for health: evidence review

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spatial-planning-for-health-evidence-review>

Wales HIA Support Unit

<https://phwwhocc.co.uk/whiasu/>

World Health Organization

<https://www.who.int/health-topics/health-impact-assessment>

Society of Practitioners of Health Impact Assessment (SOPHIA)

<https://hiasociety.org/>

Royal Town Planning Institute

<https://www.rtpi.org.uk/policy-and-research/topics/health-and-inclusive-planning/>

Town and Country Planning Association

<https://www.tcpa.org.uk/Pages/Category/health>

Healthy Urban Development Unit

www.healthyurbandevlopment.nhs.uk

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance on Physical activity and the environment

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng90>

Examples of HIAs

<https://phwwhocc.co.uk/whiasu/hia-reports/>