



RTPI

mediation of space · making of place

Health and Spatial Planning: RTPI Policy Statement

Planning and public health have a long and illustrious shared history. John Snow's discovery of contaminated water sources in 19th century London led to the Sanitation Reforms and the beginnings of a sewer system still in use today. At the same time, early planning efforts were directed at overcoming the health problems associated with slum housing. Health and the built environment are inextricably linked.

While Planning, Health Care and Environmental Health may have gone their separate ways there are an increasing number of policy drivers that are once again pointing to an explicit role for public health in spatial planning and vice versa.

Although resources are an issue, many of the difficulties (such as poor appreciation of respective procedures, capabilities and interests) can be addressed by a greater clarity and understanding of the issues, roles and responsibilities of the different professions and institutions. By integrating public health into the planning and development processes, the planning profession can help promote well-being by delivery healthy and sustainable neighbourhoods. This in turn will assist in the management of health service demands and budgets. Health professionals can also assist by engaging in with spatial planning to enhance the understanding of the effects of planning on the health and well-being of the community. Such engagement should also deliver enhanced health services in response to changes in the number of households in its area.

Although the planning and medical professions are not used to working with each other, the Environmental Health colleagues have a potentially important role. They currently combine responsibilities for public health, including air and noise management, within local authorities and are thus well placed to translate planning issues into health issues and vice versa.

While the health and environmental health communities may operate to short-term horizons, the planning community has to deal with long term issues in its role of mediating the use of space and shaping future development. As a result planners need to have the vision to integrate future health matters into their day-to-day considerations.

The RTPI recognises these challenges and calls upon the Institution of Environmental Health Officers, Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management and the Faculty of Public Health and other interested bodies to work together and prepare a joint agenda for the improved consideration of health in planning. This work should look broadly at the issues and establish a series of recommendations for Government and others to consider. These revolve around processes of engagement of health professionals in spatial planning, development control and the development of health care facilities. A further thread will be to address the academic and professional training needs of the three communities building upon the work of the East of England Public Health Group report. Part of this work included a report titled 'Reuniting health and planning-a training needs analysis' by Bond et al. Recommendations included that EEPHG/DH "influence

current revision of EIA guidance” to ensure health is included in environmental assessment at the project level.

The RTPI is asked to establish the following policy: ***The RTPI recognises the importance of understanding public health in furthering the human health and well-being of people as part of delivering sustainable communities. In meeting this need two dimensions must be addressed: a) health care provision, services and premises and the knock-on implications that has for housing and the health care workforce; and b) creating healthy environments that promote health and well-being. Both dimensions need planners and health professionals to work more closely together.***

To establish an understanding of the implications of spatial planning, transport planning and development control decisions upon health determinants, the RTPI calls upon allied professional institutions, the NHS and the responsible Government departments to make a commitment towards improved consideration of these issues. It also calls upon the professions and government to promote examples of good practice throughout the UK.

While the RTPI supports the systematic and rigorous consideration of health issues in planning decisions such consideration ought to take place within a system of integrated assessment, building on EIA, SEA and SA rather than creating a new layer of health impact assessment. Thus it is necessary for spatial and transport planners to consider the short and long term implications of their proposals upon not just health services but also the well-being of the affected communities.