
Appendix 23.1

Health Policy Context

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National Policy

National Planning Framework

The NPF states that “*Good access to a range of quality education and health services, relative to the scale of a region, city, town, neighbourhood or community is a defining characteristic of attractive, successful and competitive places. Compact, smart growth in urban areas and strong and stable rural communities will enable the enhanced and effective provision of a range of accessible services*” (p.15).

Healthy Lifestyles

From National Policy Objective 6:

The NPF states that “*one of the principal benefits of more compact urban development is that it will reduce harmful impacts on the environment by [...] Enhancing public health by encouraging and facilitating more active lifestyles by creating a more walkable and cycling friendly urban environment*” (p.57).

“*Sustainable models of urban development can deliver quality and maximise the advantages and opportunities of more compact growth, based on increased population and employment density. Quality of design is critical for making places attractive and distinctive. Architectural quality and well-designed spaces can help to enhance our urban areas and create desirable places in which people want to live, work or visit and contribute to ongoing quality of life and well-being.*” (p.57)

From National Policy Objective 9:

National Policy Objective (NPO) 9 relates to some settlements that may be identified for significant population growth at regional and local planning stages. NPO 9 states that as regional spatial and economic strategies address the “*potential of towns and catchments in conjunction with consideration of growth targets for cities and rural areas*”, they shall apply a tailored approach to urban development, that can be linked to the Rural and Urban Regeneration and Development Fund, key considerations further to NPO 7 will include [...] The extent to which trips may be made by sustainable modes of travel, i.e. walking, cycling or public transport, and the scale of planned investment in such.” (p.63)

From Chapter 6: People, Homes and Communities:

The introduction in Chapter 6 states that the NPF can effect change in some dimensions that contribute to quality of life, most importantly the natural and living environment: “*This is why place is intrinsic to achieving good quality of life - the quality of our immediate environment, our ability to access services and amenities, such as education and healthcare, shops and parks, the leisure and social interactions available to us and the prospect of securing employment, all combine to make a real difference to people’s lives.*” (p.81)

From Chapter 6, Section 6.2: Healthy Communities:

This Section sets out the links between the way communities are designed and physical and mental health:

It notes that “Decisions made regarding land use and the built environment, including transportation, affect these health risks in a variety of ways, for example through influencing air and water quality, traffic safety, opportunities for physical activity and social interactions as well as access to workplace, education, healthcare and other facilities and services such as food and alcohol outlets” (p.82).

It recognises that the “places in which we live, work, and play can affect both our physical and mental well-being. Communities that are designed in a way that supports physical activity, e.g. generously sized footpaths, safe cycle lanes, safe attractive stairways and accessible recreation areas, all encourage residents to make healthy choices and live healthier lives. Countries with extensive cycle infrastructure report higher levels of cycling and lower rates of obesity” (p.82).

Section 6.2 contains two policy objectives which relate to healthy lifestyles:

- NPO 26: “Support the objectives of public health policy including Healthy Ireland and the National Physical Activity Plan, though integrating such policies, where appropriate and at the applicable scale, with planning policy” (p.82).
- NPO 27: “Ensure the integration of safe and convenient alternatives to the car into the design of our communities, by prioritising walking and cycling accessibility to both existing and proposed developments, and integrating physical activity facilities for all ages” (p.82).

Environmental Conditions

From Section 9.1 Environmental and Sustainability Goals:

The NPF recognises that a “Key national environmental challenges include the need to accelerate action on climate change, health risks to drinking water, treating urban wastewater, protecting important and vulnerable habitats as well as diminishing wild countryside and dealing with air quality problems in urban areas” (p.116).

A Clean Environment for a Healthy Society:

An overarching aim of the NPF is “Creating a clean environment for a healthy society” this includes through the objectives of:

- “Promoting Cleaner Air - Addressing air quality problems in urban and rural areas through better planning and design.”
- “Noise Management - Incorporating consistent measures to avoid, mitigate and minimise or promote the pro-active management of noise” (p.117).

Air Quality

“Air pollution can have negative implications for the health of our citizens and the attractiveness of cities and towns. Measures which seek a reduction in fossil fuel based energy sources will further reduce air pollution” (p.128).

National Policy Objective 64 addresses air quality:

NPO 64: “Improve air quality and help prevent people being exposed to unacceptable levels of pollution in our urban and rural areas through integrated land use and spatial planning that supports public transport, walking and cycling as more favourable modes of transport to the private car....” (p.129).

Noise

National Policy Objective 65 addresses noise:

NPO 65: “Promote the pro-active management of noise where it is likely to have significant adverse impacts on health and quality of life and support the aims of the Environmental Noise Regulations through national planning guidance and Noise Action Plans” (p.129).

Safe and Cohesive Communities

From Section 6.3 Diverse and Inclusive Ireland:

“Planning affords an opportunity to facilitate and deliver a more socially inclusive society through better integration and greater accessibility at all stages of the life cycle. Housing, education, health and transport are four key areas where social inclusion can be improved; ... The National Planning Framework supports continued progress towards achieving a more inclusive society that supports our citizen’s basic human rights and assists in helping people to gain access to a better quality of life.” (p.84).

Section 6.4 Age Friendly Communities:

“As people get older they are likely to have increasingly complex healthcare needs, with a requirement for services and facilities to support provision of suitable and necessary care (p.86).

“Government policy is to support older people to live with dignity and independence in their own homes and communities for as long as possible. In providing ... a built environment that is attractive, accessible and safe, older people will be supported and motivated to enjoy more active, healthy and connected lives and to age confidently and comfortably in their community” (p.86).

NPO 30 addresses the ageing population:

- NPO 30: “Local planning, housing, transport/accessibility and leisure policies will be developed with a focus on meeting the needs and opportunities of an ageing population along with the inclusion of specific projections, supported by clear proposals in respect of ageing communities as part of the core strategy of city and county development plans” (p.86).

National Strategic Outcome 4: Sustainable Mobility.

The NPF recognises that Dublin and other cities and major urban areas are too heavily dependent road and private, car-based transport and that there is a need to provide well-functioning, integrated public transport system. The following goals are included as part of NSO 4:

- “Expand attractive public transport alternatives to car transport to reduce congestion and emissions and enable the transport sector to cater for the demands associated with longer term population and employment growth in a sustainable manner through the following measures;
- Deliver the key public transport objectives of the Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area 2016-2035 by investing in projects such as New Metro Link, DART Expansion Programme, BusConnects in Dublin and key bus-based projects in the other cities and towns;
- Provide public transport infrastructure and services to meet the needs of smaller towns, villages and rural areas; and

- *Develop a comprehensive network of safe cycling routes in metropolitan areas to address travel needs and to provide similar facilities in towns and villages where appropriate” (p.142).*

National Development Plan

Wider Societal Benefits

The National Development Plan (NDP) states that improving “energy efficiency will also realise benefits for air quality, health, social inclusion, business competitiveness and better public services, all of which will make a real and positive impact on people’s lives” (p.77).

Smarter Travel - A Sustainable Transport Future (2009-2020)

The document states “... the Government believes that, to achieve the vision of a sustainable transport system, individual lifestyles will have to change and collectively we will have to work progressively on a range of solutions which deal with apparently conflicting goals: economic growth, reduced emissions, less use of motorised transport and better accessibility. Achieving the vision will lead to a better quality of life, not just in terms of economic competitiveness, greater social inclusion and a healthier population, but also through an improved urban landscape, which will be enhanced through traffic calming and other measures.”

National Investment Framework for Transport in Ireland (2021)

“Transport supports liveable communities and connects families and friends. Investing in transport allows people to travel around the island, accessing amenities, employment and key public services such as **healthcare** and education.”

“Tackling congestion through the provision of sustainable mobility also lessens the amount of time people spend commuting each day and leads to improvements in public health.”

Health Ireland Framework (2019-2025)

Healthy Lifestyles

The document states that “many health and wellbeing indicators are affected by individuals’ personal lifestyle choices. For example, the World Health Organisation attributes 60% of the disease burden in Europe to seven leading risk factors: hypertension, tobacco use, alcohol misuse, high cholesterol, being overweight, low fruit and vegetable intake and physical inactivity. The effects of these risk factors can be minimised if individuals can be motivated and supported to make healthier choices. To be effective, action to control the determinants of health must include developing understanding and skills, and promoting informed health choices” (p.14).

Action 2.11 is to “Develop a plan to promote increased physical activity levels across the population, as an exemplar of how Healthy Ireland will work. The Healthy Ireland Council will be key in developing linkages with and between partners and advising on priorities” (p.23).

Action 3.10: “In creating ‘activity friendly’ environments: cycle lanes, playgrounds, well-lit paths, etc, local authorities will engage with local communities, schools and other stakeholders to plan facilities that are appropriate to the needs of the community” (p.25).

Healthy Ireland Goals.

Goal 1 is to increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life. Goal 1 has several performance indicators and targets, including, *inter alia*:

- Physical activity: Increase by 20% proportion of the population undertaking regular physical activity.

Health Inequalities

Goal 2 of the HIF: Reduce Health Inequalities. This will need solutions reaching “*across sectors and create economic, social cultural and physical environments that foster healthy living, supported by socially targeted interventions that address the specific needs of at-risk groups*” (p.15).

Local Link Rural Transport Programme Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022

Safe and Cohesive Communities

Priority Area 2 of the Plan is to identify opportunities for improvement or expansion of existing services to ensure “*more direct access to workplaces, tourist destinations, health services, shops and educational establishments*” (p.22).

Priority Area 7 (Children and Young People) includes to “*Provide for the transport needs of young people in rural areas accessing higher education and further education and training opportunities*” (p.30).

Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020-2025

The introduction states that “*Education, health, housing, employment and social integration (i.e. a person’s sense of ‘connectedness’ with their community) are all factors that contribute to a person’s overall sense of well-being or welfare*” (p.10).

Health and Social Care Services

With regards to supporting families on low incomes, the document states that low-income families (on the NMW) need “*subsidised or free access to high quality services such as housing, education, early learning and care and health services that would otherwise be outside of their reach*” (p.34).

Regional Policy

Eastern and Midland Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy (2019-2031)

The strategy states that “*Transport can affect **health and wellbeing** both directly, for example through traffic accidents, commuter stress, or accessibility to employment and health services and indirectly, for example through higher rates of diseases and ill health as a result of pollution or sedentary lifestyles. Increasing traffic is a health hazard that predominantly effects the more socially disadvantaged and deprived. In contrast the provision of good public transport, greenways and cycleways can enhance areas, contributing to liveable places and creating opportunities to be physically active. There is a need to overcome barriers to better mobility be they political, economic or physical such as poverty, disability, affordability or gender.*”

The vision is “*To create a sustainable and competitive Region that supports the **health and wellbeing** of our people and places, from urban to rural, with access to quality housing, travel and employment opportunities for all*”.

One of the three key principles is “*Healthy Placemaking, to promote people’s quality of life through the creation of healthy and attractive places to live, work, visit, invest and study in.*”

Regional Strategic Objective four is “*Healthy Communities, Protect and enhance the quality of our built and natural environment to support active lifestyles including walking and cycling, ensure clean air and water for all and quality healthcare and services that support human **health**.*”

Regional Policy Objective 9.10 Healthy Placemaking, “*In planning for the creation of **healthy** and attractive places, there is a need to provide alternatives to the car and to prioritise and promote cycling and walking in the design of streets and public spaces...*”.

Transport Strategy for the Greater Dublin Area (2016-2035)

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) concluded that “*The Strategy facilitates significant improvements in sustainable mobility and associated positive effects relating to energy usage, emissions to air (including greenhouse gas emissions and noise) and human health...*”

Dublin City Development Plan (2016-2022)

“*Transport has an important contribution to make towards achieving a sustainable city. Less dependency on the private car for routine trips and replacement by public transport, walking and cycling will result in a reduction in consumption of non-renewable resources and CO2 emissions, helping to meet national emission reduction targets. It will also bring **health** benefits.*”

“*Increased levels of cycling and walking are encouraged, as they are both more sustainable modes than private car use and can form part of sustainable journeys in conjunction with public transport use. Active travel can also contribute to healthy lifestyles.*”

South Dublin County Development Plan (2022-2028)

Vision: *“In 2028 South Dublin will be a place that our communities are proud of, that our businesses can thrive in and that will help us to live greener and healthier lives.”*

“A key element of healthy placemaking is the provision of a movement network that enables people to choose public transport and active travel measures as their first choice. We must proactively support the delivery of a transport network that offers people healthier modes of transport, modes that will help to reduce carbon emissions and reduce congestion. Streets should be designed for people to move and enjoy, where the space is shared by all users. This approach will play a key role in delivering more attractive places and creating opportunities to be physically active and reduce the negative consequences of car-based commuting.”

Quality Design and Healthy Placemaking Objective: *“To deliver successful and sustainable neighbourhoods that are attractive, connected, vibrant and well-functioning through high quality design and healthy placemaking in a manner which reduces the need to travel, facilitates a mix of uses and the efficient use of land and infrastructure...”*

Local Policy

The Draft Kildare County Development Plan (2023-2029)

Strategic Vision: *“To build on the strengths of the county in order to improve the quality of life of all residents, through the creation of high-quality job opportunities, by the provision of high-quality residential development supported by adequate community infrastructure, through the provision of a high-quality sustainable transport network, by healthy placemaking and transformational regeneration, by supporting the transition to a low carbon climate resilient environment, by embracing inclusiveness and by enhancing our natural and built environment for future generations.”*

The *“draft County Development Plan (CDP) contains a series of sustainable transport goals, policies and objectives for healthy placemaking and sustainable movement that, over time, will achieve an increase in walking, cycling and use of public transport and a decrease in the use of the private car.”*

“The Council recognises the overall benefits of sustainable modes of transport, which include: ... Improved physical and mental health of population ...”

The Council’s aim is *“To create an environment characterised by high quality infrastructure networks and environmental services that complement the overall settlement and economic strategy and ensures the health and wellbeing of those who live and work in the County, also securing the economic future of the County.”*