



Healthy Streets for London

The Mayor of London's Healthy Streets for London plan can play a significant role in improving the health of Londoners. This member briefing looks at some of the detail in the plan and explores what boroughs are doing to achieve healthier streets across the city.

Overview

In London, nearly 1.7 million people are physically inactive¹, while air pollution is estimated to cause the premature deaths of around 9,400 people in London a year.² What is more, childhood obesity levels are high, with around 1 in 10 children in reception (aged 4-5 years) and over 1 in 5 children in year 6 (aged 10-11) classified as obese in London.³ This means that there are over 10,000 obese 4-5 year-olds and 20,000 obese 10-11 year-olds in London.

Analysis

In February 2017, the Mayor of London and Transport for London (TfL) released *Healthy Streets for London: Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport to create a healthy city*, which seeks to address London's 'inactivity crisis' by working to ensure the environment encourages physical activity through walking or cycling, and reduces air pollution. The Healthy Streets Approach, a system of policies and strategies to help Londoners use cars less and walk, cycle and use public transport more, is set out within this document as a key method to achieve this aim.

The Healthy Streets Approach is based on 10 Indicators of a Healthy Street:

- **Pedestrians from all walks of life:** London streets should be welcoming places for everyone to walk, spend time in and engage in community life.
- **People choose to walk, cycle and use public transport:** A successful transport system encourages and enables more people to walk and cycle more often, by reducing the volume and dominance of motor traffic.
- **Clean air:** Improving air quality delivers benefits for everyone and reduces unfair health inequalities.
- **People feel relaxed:** A wider range of people will choose to walk or cycle if streets are not dominated by motorised traffic, and if pavements and cycle paths are not overcrowded, dirty, cluttered or in disrepair.
- **Things to see and do:** A journey that is interesting and stimulating, with attractive views, buildings, planting and street art, and the shops and services within short distances will encourage walking and reduce dependence on driving.
- **People feel safe:** People should not feel worried about road danger or experience

threats to their personal safety.

- **Not too noisy:** Reducing the noise impacts of motor traffic will directly benefit health, improve the ambience of street environments and encourage active travel and human interaction.
- **Places to stop and rest:** A lack of resting places can limit mobility for certain groups of people, which is detrimental to local businesses.
- **Shade and shelter:** Providing shade and shelter from high winds, heavy rain and direct sun enables everybody to use the streets, whatever the weather.
- **Easy to cross:** Making streets easier to cross is important to encourage more walking and to connect communities.

Good performance and improvements against each indicator are intended as steps to ensure that streets are appealing places to walk, cycle and spend time.

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Mayoral strategies

London boroughs manage 95 per cent of streets so they are central to delivering Healthy Streets. The Healthy Streets approach is also part of the Mayor's Transport Strategy and it is included in all the Mayor's statutory strategies, particularly the London Plan. As such, all boroughs are expected to implement the Healthy Streets approach through their Local Implementation Plan. In addition, when boroughs bid for central pots of funding, such as the Liveable Neighbourhoods Fund, they are expected to demonstrate how their proposal is aligned with the Healthy Streets Approach.

Delivering the Healthy Streets Approach requires different teams to work together such as regeneration, transport, planning and environment. As such, it is essential that the boroughs have a clear impression of how the approach will shape local delivery, planning and development. It also acknowledges that there is great diversity between and within London's boroughs - with differing streetscapes and areas of dense and sparse housing settlement. The Healthy Streets Approach is, therefore, not a one-size-fits-all model, instead emphasising the boroughs ability to choose how they use this approach to improve their streets.

What support is there for boroughs?

The Greater London Authority has so far delivered introductory sessions on Healthy Streets to 150 transport officers from across all the London boroughs in 2018. A Healthy Streets Toolkit has also been made available, which includes tools for:

- Quickly reviewing how healthy a street, policy or project is.
- Implementing temporary and light touch changes that can easily be made.
- Health Impact Assessment for a new design.
- Surveying local people about their views on how healthy their street is.

National context

In January 2018, Public Health England (PHE) released *Healthy High Streets: good place making in an urban setting*. Taking the view that high streets occupy a distinctive position within communities and play an important role in influencing the health of local communities, this document provides an assessment of evidence relating to pedestrian-friendly, healthy high streets in urban settings, with specific reference to design interventions and street furniture for local decision makers, built environment professionals and others involved in implementing street design.

Evidence relating to both children and adults is considered, alongside groups who may have specific needs or preferences such as older people, younger people, disabled people (considering specific impairments where relevant) and different ethnic groups.

The review illustrates how, across a broad range of local stakeholders, a greater understanding of how place and people interact could help realise the potential of our high streets and contribute to health and economic gains of our local communities.

London Boroughs - Initiatives in London

Healthy urban environments around schools

As one of the major workstreams for Health Devolution in London, some London boroughs and partners are developing ways to improve the environment around schools by through 400m 'super zones', where the food environment, advertising, gambling, smoking and air quality will be tackled to give children a much healthier environment to learn and live in. Thirteen boroughs are participating as pilot sites, beginning in 2019.⁴

The key principles for the 'superzone' pilots are:

- Flexibility.
- A strong partnership approach is essential: schools, across departments (a corporate approach), local businesses, communities, VCS.
- A blanket approach cannot be taken (i.e. so that the whole of the borough is covered).
- A menu approach is preferred (intervention choice).
- Actions should be mixture of regulation and reward.
- Need to allow room for innovation - Some support to reflect the healthy schools approach i.e. a tiered approach.
- Opportunity to build this into a health in all policies approach.

Mini-Holland schemes

In Waltham Forest, the mini-Holland project adheres to the principles of the Healthy High Street approach. In 2013, all 18 outer London boroughs were invited to apply for funding from the Mayor of London's Mini-Hollands fund and Waltham Forest was one of the three boroughs selected.⁵

With a funding pot of £30 million per borough, Waltham Forest's "Mini-Holland" project is made up of a total of 13 schemes to make the borough safer for walking and cycling. For example, the scheme covering Walthamstow Village seeks to reduce the volume of traffic and noise outside people's homes, as well as improve road safety and make the area safer for people to walk and cycle.

With a process of data gathering and public engagement, information collected within the area suggested that a high proportion of vehicles used Walthamstow Village as a cut through between Hoe Street and Lea Bridge Road. To reduce the number of vehicles cutting through the area while still allowing local access, the council put in a series of trial road closures for two weeks, between 26 September and 13 October 2014. This trial allowed the council to collect live traffic data in order to consider the impact of the closures. Full implementation of the scheme was completed in September 2015 and a subsequent review has shown:

- The number of residents walking and cycling has increased, with 28 per cent saying their primary mode of transport for regular journeys is done by walking.
- On average the number of vehicles on roads within the Village have decreased by 44 per cent, and the majority of residents have noticed that traffic speed and noise has either decreased or stayed the same.

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- The changes made are popular, with 84 per cent of residents surveyed having a positive opinion of the overall scheme.

Commentary

The TfL Healthy Streets Approach represents an important development in the preventative health agenda. Active travel enables Londoners to achieve the recommended physical activity levels to stay healthy (20 minutes a day), and inactivity is responsible for one in five deaths and diseases including type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. Walking is likewise important for children to build their independence and as an opportunity for informal outdoor play. In addition to this, transport contributes to over 60 per cent of emissions in London. Exposure to small particles causes cancers, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and contributes to premature deaths.

By changing the environmental factors effecting health, this approach can radically improve the physical, as well as the mental health of Londoners, encouraging more regular physical activity and improving wellbeing.

At a regional level, through the Devolution MoU local government is showing leadership in this space through the work to implement superzones around schools. What is more, as is demonstrated through the mini-Holland schemes, while there are number of regional strategies in place, the most meaningful action remains local.

However, the approach is becoming an increasingly important and prominent aspect of regional planning in London. While the Healthy Streets Approach demonstrates positive and ambitious thinking from a public health perspective, it is also of immediate significance to London boroughs, as all schemes seeking LIP funding should demonstrate that they meet the Healthy Streets Approach.

The use of the approach as the framework for the Mayor's Transport Strategy and its inclusion in the London Plan has required London boroughs to incorporate it in to their local planning processes. However, while there has been some extensive engagement with boroughs on the approach, there is still much that could be done linking the approach to local public health priorities, as well as the wider determinants of health, such as air pollution.

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Endnotes

¹ <https://www.sportengland.org/media/13563/active-lives-adult-may-17-18-report.pdf>

² https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/hiainlondon_kingsreport_14072015_final.pdf

³ National Child Measurement Programme 2016/17

⁴ The 13 boroughs selected are: Camden, Croydon, Enfield, Haringey, Harrow, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Merton, Greenwich, Southwark, Waltham Forest, Tower Hamlets

⁵ Enfield, Kingston & Waltham Forest

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Links

[Healthy Streets Toolkit](#)

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