

## HEALTHY PLACES MANIFESTO

*“Creating the conditions for people to lead flourishing lives, and thus empowering individuals and communities, is key to reduction in health inequalities.”*

*“What makes these health inequalities unjust is that evidence from round the world shows we know what to do to make them smaller. This new evidence is compelling. It has the potential to change radically the way we think about health, and indeed society.”*

*“I thought that health was a manifestation of the way we organise society, and that by asking about health in society, we’re asking about society itself.”*

**Sir Michael Marmot, Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health, University College London, and author of *Fair Society Healthy Lives (The Marmot Review)* and *The Health Gap: The Challenge of an Unequal World***

## What do we want to achieve? Our Mission Statement

We believe everyone has a right to live and work in a healthy place.

To that end, we will describe – in plain English - and champion the characteristics of healthy places, and the principles that govern their development, maintenance and care. We will communicate and promote these characteristics and principles as widely as possible, and integrate them into our own work.

We call to others to join with us in order to shine a light on these issues, so that the design and usage of buildings and public spaces can have a positive effect on people's health, and so that healthy places become part of people's everyday experience.

## Who is the Manifesto for?

- National government
- Local authorities, especially people working there with responsibility for, or interest in, housing, planning, streets and open spaces
- Local leaders, including community and business leaders alongside local authority officers, councillors and mayors
- People working in, or with an interest in, health services and public health
- Anyone who has an interest in creating places that are healthy and attractive for people to live and work in.

## Why focus on healthy places?

The power of place to affect people's mental and physical health, and thereby their overall wellbeing, has been recognised for many years and is the central tenet of NHS England's *Healthy New Towns* programme. Recent health and wellbeing indicators, and the NHS' own report into variations in health around the country, suggest that in some cases, poor place design and quality are having a detrimental effect. This can be seen in factors such as:

- increases in childhood obesity rates
- the impact of pollution on people's health
- increases in sedentary lifestyles
- inequality of access to healthy/fresh food.

There is compelling evidence that a poor quality built environment and poor quality places can have significant negative impacts for health, wellbeing, prosperity and happiness, and that these, moreover, have quantifiable economic effects. Natural England, for example, has

estimated that if each household in England was provided with equitable access to quality green space, then savings of £2.1bn could be achieved every year in averted health costs. The Building Research Establishment has estimated that the total health cost to the NHS of poor housing is in the region of £1.4 - £2bn per year for England alone. There is also a cost in premature death rates: Public Health England, in a 2014 report, estimated that 5.6% of all deaths in over-25s in England were linked to air pollution.<sup>1</sup>

## Objectives

We believe healthy places are characterised by a mix of homes, shops, businesses, schools and colleges with close enough proximity for people to walk, cycle or take public transport, along unpolluted, attractive and safe streets, and connected to a network of parks. At the same time, care should be given to the streets and spaces between buildings, so that they are safe, attractive places for people to meet and engage in a variety of activities. To that end, we have identified three main objectives:

### 1. To help create healthy places for people, in order to:

- enable people to live longer, healthier and more active lives
- enable people to experience the best that places have to offer and have healthy places as part of their everyday experience
- improve psychological well-being by helping to reduce social isolation and loneliness
- reduce obesity levels in children and adults.
- reduce the levels of pollution in our cities and towns
- reduce the number of GP/hospital visits
- create better access to good food.

### 2. To promote awareness about designing healthy places, through:

- Contributing to the development of the evidence base
- Collaborating with professionals and communities.

### 3. To champion a holistic approach to decision-making, by:

- co-ordinating funding through collaborative and partnership working
- improving leadership and urban/rural management skills
- calling for Champions across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors to promote healthy places.

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from House of Lords' Select Committee on the Built Environment, *Building Better Places*, February 2016 <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201516/ldselect/ldbuilt/100/10002.htm>

## Ten principles underpinning design of healthy places

1. **Have a strategy:** take an overall view of your place from a health and wellbeing perspective, and have an overall strategy for maintaining or improving it. This might include policies around sprawl, spread and air or water pollution, alongside policies to encourage walking rather than car dependency where possible. There is a clear evidence base correlating less walkable cities and the people living in them being more likely to be overweight or obese.

<http://www.worldhealthdesign.com/Walkable-communities-Impacts-on-residents-physical-and-social-health.aspx>

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/center-www/guidelines.pdf>

2. **Involve people and communities in creating healthy places:** There are many things that people living in communities can do to bring about change in their neighbourhood. Aside from any other factors, ensuring that people have equality of opportunity can be a significant factor in improving places. You might start by carrying out a Placecheck <http://www.placecheck.info/> and asking questions like “what’s it like to live here?” or “how healthy do you feel your neighbourhood or street is?”. This is about:

- involving people in shaping the places where they live, work and play
- introducing ideas around healthy places into neighbourhood plans
- identifying areas where more research would help to strengthen the evidence base.

3. **Make it easier for people to make healthy choices:** for example, create choice in the way people can move around a place. There is evidence that if places are designed with a high frequency of connected streets, people can find their way around more easily, encouraging them to walk and cycle. If places are disconnected from each other, people will tend to use a car, even for short distances.

Places which are spatially integrated become cognitively easier for people to find their way around, and such places are more likely to be walkable: see *Manual for Streets*, p16: “Attractive and well-connected permeable street networks encourage more people to walk and cycle to local destinations, improving their health whilst reducing motor traffic, energy use and pollution.”

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/341513/pdfmanforstreets.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/341513/pdfmanforstreets.pdf)

Other policies to consider:

- improving walkability: Make the default speed limit in built-up areas 20 mph - the risk of serious injury or death rises steeply as collision speeds exceed 20 mph. Younger children have limited ability to judge the speed and distance of traffic travelling at higher speeds. Highway authorities owe them a legal duty of care. See, for example: <http://www.20splentyforus.org.uk/>
  - providing programmes to encourage walking and cycling in schools and in the community as a whole: see <https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/cycling/?cid=cycling>.
  - learning from historic places and adapting what is already there and what works, rather than always looking to new development
  - considering street and public transport systems in the round. Adaptive cities are recognised by their loose fit and can easily be extended because the street and public transport systems are open-ended. In spatial terms places arranged so that streets form a grid perform better in terms of their relationship to one another, offering people more choice in moving around: see <http://www.citylab.com/design/2011/09/street-grids/124/>  
<http://www.livability.com/blog/urban-planning/how-our-streets-can-make-us-healthier>
  - having mixed usage: there is a wealth of evidence that mixed-use places are healthier than single-use areas such as housing or industrial estates. Mixed-use places give people access to a variety of services and the social life of streets. Employers also recognise that it is good for employee health and wellbeing, and therefore has a positive effect on productivity:  
<http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/2018-mixed-use-streets.pdf>  
<http://www.healthyplaces.org.au/userfiles/file/Mixed%20Land%20Use%20June09.pdf>
- 4. Make your place greener.** If you're in an urban environment, think about how to bring nature into the place. "The balance of evidence indicates conclusively that knowing and experiencing nature makes us generally happier, healthier people."(Russel, Roly; et al. Annual Review of Environment and Resources, 2013, Vol. 38 )

Nature and green spaces contribute directly to public health by reducing stress and mental disorders, increasing the effect of physical activity, reducing health inequalities, and increasing perception of life quality and self-reported general health. Indirect health effects are conveyed by providing arenas and opportunities for physical activity, increasing satisfaction of living environment and social interactions, and by different modes of recreation.

[http://www.fph.org.uk/uploads/bs\\_great\\_outdoors.pdf](http://www.fph.org.uk/uploads/bs_great_outdoors.pdf)

Trees are the largest living organisms in our towns and cities and have the ability to deliver multiple social, environmental and economic benefits that enhance the resilience and livability of our places. Our towns and cities need to increase urban canopy cover, retain healthy, valuable existing trees and fully ebbed trees into national and local planning policy.

Trees also have a positive impact on the incidence of asthma, skin cancer and stress-related illness by filtering out polluted air; they also reduce smog formation and shade out solar radiation. On the health benefits of green spaces, see:

<http://www.operationgroundwork.org.uk/take-action/media-centre/report-launched-at-rhs-chelsea-flower-show/the-benefits-of-green-space>

Also see the work of Dr Kathy Wolf, University of Washington: Human Dimensions of Urban Greening – [www.naturewithin.info/](http://www.naturewithin.info/); Green Cities: Good Health – [www.greenhealth.washington.edu](http://www.greenhealth.washington.edu); Green Cities Research Alliance – [www.fs.fed.us/pnw/research/gcra](http://www.fs.fed.us/pnw/research/gcra).

5. **Invest in public spaces:** this includes keeping public spaces accessible to the public, especially by improving the quality of streets (streets constitute 80% of public space) by making them easier for people to walk and ride bicycles, reducing pollution, better signing and lighting, ensuring front doors and windows on to the street, animating street frontages will all improve the experiential quality enticing more people to walk and ride. [People attract people]. Having safer streets, and encouraging people's perceptions of streets being safer places to be, encourages more people to walk. The Danish architect Jan Gehl has often described how well-designed and maintained footways, as well as places to sit, are central to encouraging walking. The importance of maintenance is demonstrated in *Place-Keeping: Open Space Management in Practice* (2014), Nicola Dempsey, Mel Burton and Harry Smith (eds), Taylor & Francis: see: <http://www.place-keeping.org/>, [http://issuu.com/gehlarchitects/docs/issuu\\_270\\_london\\_pspl\\_2004](http://issuu.com/gehlarchitects/docs/issuu_270_london_pspl_2004), [http://www.landscapeinstitute.co.uk/PDF/Contribute/PublicHealthandLandscape\\_CreatingHealthyPlaces\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.landscapeinstitute.co.uk/PDF/Contribute/PublicHealthandLandscape_CreatingHealthyPlaces_FINAL.pdf) and [http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/sites/default/files/content/library/Reports/PedestrianPound\\_fullreport\\_web.pdf](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk/sites/default/files/content/library/Reports/PedestrianPound_fullreport_web.pdf).
  
6. **Make healthy food choices easier for people:** this includes promoting education and awareness about access to quality fresh food to schoolchildren as well as developing

culinary and food growing skills: see: <http://www.foodgrowingschools.org/> and <http://www.incredible-edible-todmorden.co.uk/>

Other ways to make it easier for people to make healthier food choices:

- promote awareness and access to healthy food to the public
- promote locally grown food and markets
- collaborate with health and public health organisations to encourage awareness and education about healthy living
- promote active lifestyles, including cultivation of fresh vegetables and fruit.

7. **(Re)-Connect places through public transport:** a high frequency system of public transport with stations within 500 metres walking distance of homes will encourage a majority of people to use the system rather than travel by car. Walking to and from stations at each end of the journey has proven health benefits: see: <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/getting-started-guides/Pages/getting-started-walking.aspx>  
[http://www.apta.com/resources/reportsandpublications/Documents/APTA\\_Health\\_Benefits\\_Litman.pdf](http://www.apta.com/resources/reportsandpublications/Documents/APTA_Health_Benefits_Litman.pdf)

See also the British Medical Association report on healthy transport = healthy lives: <http://bma.org.uk/transport>.

8. **Promote healthy neighbourhoods:** Humans are social beings. Contact with family, friends and social circles is not just pleasurable, it is essential. An individual's very sense of self is shaped and maintained through social life. The quality and quantity of social interaction and sense of belonging strongly influence physical and mental health. In turn, this is affected by the design of homes, front doors and the way in which homes interface with the surrounding streets and open spaces, and connect to local green areas including parks: see [http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/toolkit/planning\\_for\\_health\\_resource\\_guide.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/toolkit/planning_for_health_resource_guide.pdf)
9. **Celebrate cultural well-being:** have a sense of what is historic or locally distinctive about your place, and how it can help foster a sense of well-being. Arrange events, carnivals, festivals, outdoor tai chi, dancing, gymnasias, and sponsored walks. Places should be fun. Create special weekends in cities where people can walk and ride bicycles, or summer streets programmes, encouraging alfresco eating and dining with emphasis on healthy foods. Other examples include pop-up places, artistic events and music concerts.

Healthy places should offer opportunities for fun and enjoyment, and be fully inclusive at all stages of peoples' lives.

<http://www.regentstreetonline.com/Feature-Articles/Summer-Streets.aspx>

<http://www.pps.org/reference/diversityinpublicspaces/>

**10. Champion healthy places and spaces through your leadership and governance:**

- appoint a champion in your community, local authority, government department, private sector body, not-for-profit organisation or school to raise awareness about designing healthy places when new development are being considered
- have a plan to retrofit existing places
- collaborate across service areas at national and local level to put in place cost-effective delivery systems
- Aim to prevent actions being constrained by artificial, bureaucratic or professional boundaries.

[http://www.euro.who.int/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/98257/E91886.pdf](http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/98257/E91886.pdf)

<https://tfl.gov.uk/cdn/static/cms/documents/improving-the-health-of-londoners-transport-action-plan.pdf>

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