



# Planning, Transport and Health

## Vision

To plan for and create a sustainable environment in the West Midlands where people can live, work and enjoy themselves and which is able to enhance their health, well-being and lifestyle choices.



## West Midlands Priorities for Action

- Encourage regional and local stakeholders involved in job creation, transport, access to services and education to proactively consider the health implications of their policies and how they can contribute to reducing health inequalities
- Promote health and well-being as an integral part of the social, environmental and physical regeneration of our towns, cities and rural areas, and evaluate the benefits
- Encourage the health sector, local government and other major employers to use their influence as service providers, property developers and employers to support the creation of more sustainable communities where services are appropriate and accessible to those they serve. Depending on circumstances, this may mean putting facilities in accessible places, or bringing services to people; employing and training local people to fill jobs; and making sure that buildings add to their surroundings and minimise their impact on the environment
- Reduce social exclusion and promote independence by improving transport links and the layout and design of new developments
- Proactively encourage workplaces to have active travel plans, which promote walking, cycling and the use of public transport
- Promote partnership working to encourage 'designing for health' where new developments incorporate open space to encourage recreation, create accessibility to necessary services and promote the benefits of healthy transport choices.

## Key Facts: In the West Midlands

- In April 2006, there were 181,095 Income Support claimants in the West Midlands, of which 23% had a dependant child under five and 38% were lone parents<sup>1</sup>
- The proportion of older people in the West Midlands has steadily increased and is projected to continue to increase. The number of people over 75 will rise from 7.7% of the total population now to 9.8% by 2021 and over 60s will rise from 22% to 25% over the same period<sup>2</sup>
- For children aged 5-14 years, pedestrian injuries are the most frequent type of injury causing death<sup>3</sup>
- For adolescents aged 15-19 years, injuries as vehicle occupants are the most frequent type of injury causing death<sup>4</sup>
- It is estimated that within the West Midlands conurbation 150,000 people with a disability rely on public transport, be it conventional services or accessible door-to-door transport<sup>5</sup>
- Many people without a car are restricted in where they can buy their food, finding it difficult to get to places where they can buy quality foods at affordable prices<sup>6</sup>.

## Planning and Transport in the West Midlands

The origins of the town and country planning system arose over concerns about poor public health and unsanitary living conditions. These concerns have carried through to the modern day where, among other things, planning aims to improve the health of the population and to narrow health inequalities.

Current planning involves more than simply deciding where to put new buildings. At its best it links economic, social and environmental issues with the strategies and programmes of public agencies and service providers and private sector investment to create attractive, sustainable places that help improve peoples' quality of life and the well being of individuals and communities.

The Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) provides the overarching framework for planning in the West Midlands and aims to stimulate urban and rural renaissance across the Region, including recognising transport as a catalyst of regeneration and the interconnected nature of places in and around the Region. Ultimately the location of development and facilities should provide people with a choice of high quality and attractive places in which to live and access to the job opportunities and facilities and services they need. It is important that the health impacts of these policies are monitored, in particular how they affect health inequalities.

Linking with the local community strategies, local authority Local Development Frameworks (LDF) bring forward specific policies and proposals for development in each local authority area.



Local planning can help to improve prosperity and job opportunities which can positively influence health by:

- Creating sustainable communities which allow greater access to job opportunities, including provision of additional support for vulnerable/ disadvantaged groups
- Identifying sites on which to build health and education facilities where people can gain life skills to make better, and healthier choices and gain employment
- Assisting local business to use their influence as a deliverer of services, developer of facilities and major employers to support the creation of more sustainable communities. Maximising investment, working with developers and utilising planning agreements for infrastructure agreement.

The RSS includes the Regional Transport Strategy and focuses heavily on enhancing transport links and promoting good access throughout the Region. Transport policy can considerably affect how people live and the services and facilities they can reach. It is often considered that there are distinct inequalities between groups who own cars and those

who don't. Often, in the past, development has occurred in places which are only easily accessible by car and has damaged the environment through noise, pollution or increased the risk of accidents for other people. Now, it is recognised that transport and land-use policy must aim to assist social inclusion and provide benefits for those without cars and who may have difficulties in travelling and accessing services.

## Planning and Transport

### Transport and Accessibility

Transport policies and interventions can have far reaching effects on the health, economy, environment and social fabric of an area through its effects on air pollution, noise, injuries and climatic changes. Transport has the potential to create safe conditions for physical activity such as walking and cycling and to reduce social isolation of vulnerable people. Once people are given the possibility of accessing necessary and complimentary services, jobs and open space, their physical/mental health and general well-being can improve considerably. Accessibility is an important consideration for investors. An integrated Regional Transport Network will make places more attractive to developers and so provide more job opportunities for local people.



### Social Inclusion and Accessibility

Few if any places are self contained, providing all the things people need within a short physical distance. Jobs, education, training as well as services, shops and social and leisure facilities can be widely spread. This means travel has an important role to play in determining a good quality of life and in increasing social inclusion. If transport is poor this can disproportionately affect some individuals such as those who do not have access to cars; and it may affect some communities such as those in some rural areas.

Having a good job and a full and active life are important aspects of health and well being. Improved accessibility helps to:

- Support economic regeneration
- Facilitate the transition from welfare to work
- Improve participation and attendance in education
- Improve people's general physical health

A good transport system and well located and designed development can therefore positively influence health by:

- Connecting people to jobs and services
- Encouraging engagement in the community
- Reducing social isolation
- Promoting equality
- Encouraging physical activity and recreation by having access to green open spaces
- Improving walking and cycling routes which aid in tackling health problems and improve mental well-being

Groups most affected by accessibility problems include those with mental health problems or mobility problems, older people and people without English as their first language. For many, physical access is not the main barrier, travel information may be difficult to understand and people have concerns about personal safety.

Local transport authorities have a major role in improving accessibility through:

- Their transport strategies, policies and programs
- Transport schemes and initiatives specifically designed to improve accessibility
- Influencing the authorities corporate and individual policy areas and delivery
- Influencing the location of new facilities and retention of existing ones
- Influencing the decisions of external bodies on location and delivery of other services and opportunities
- Encourage workplaces to have active travel plans, which promote walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

Others have equally important roles and can benefit significantly from improved accessibility e.g. Local Planning Authorities, Primary Care Trusts and Local Education Authorities.

## Alternative Transport

Active travel like walking and cycling can contribute to a healthy lifestyle, tackle obesity and improve mental well-being for all ages. Furthermore, the use of public transport, including park and ride schemes can encourage social interaction and a healthier approach to travel whilst improving air quality.



## Road Accidents

British child pedestrian accidents are amongst the worst in Europe. Road accidents have huge financial implications for the NHS the police and other public services. Many injuries result in long-term treatment and the inability of the victim to work or have a full and active social life. A child from a low income family is five times more likely to be killed in a traffic accident than a child from a high income family<sup>7</sup>. Traffic calming strategies will result in safer communities for all but especially for children, young people and older people.

## Air Pollution/Noise

The Regional Transport Strategy and the Region's Local Transport Plans set out strategies and actions that reduce the need to travel long distances, tackle congestion and improve road safety and air quality. These plans will also address greenhouse gas emissions and noise. Having nearby services, open space, jobs and play areas/centres reduces the need to travel, improves air quality and so helps improve and prevent respiratory conditions from developing.

## **The Built and Natural Environment**

The quality of the built and natural environment, are key determinants of public health. The RSS is vital in delivering and enhancing a sustainable and healthy environment. Ensuring a combination of good quality housing including affordable ones, safer streets, accessible open space, well designed public areas, clean air and land free from contamination, can all positively affect mental health and well-being. Furthermore, buildings can reflect the local heritage and bring the benefits of natural resources into local ownership and protection.



Where significant new developments are to take place, it is important health, fire, ambulance and police services take this into account in their forward service planning so that people's safety is not threatened. As well as being aware of the effect this might have on the number and characteristics of the population and their implication for services, the road layout, location and density of new development will affect levels of congestion and possibly affect emergency service response times.

An improved environment can positively influence health:

- Providing places for home, work and play which are well-designed, provide safe access to facilities and open green space and a sense of identity, creating communities of which local people can be proud of
- Good design and the enhancement of the built and natural environment in local communities reduces crime and enables both young and old to actively participate in community activities
- Environmental enhancements to transport networks directly improves air quality and the natural environment can be positively influenced by the reuse of brownfield land for regeneration and the protection of the greenbelt
- Maintaining and enhancing open, green spaces can encourage formal and informal physical activities
- Improving the quality of people's homes, such as making them more energy efficient and warmer will help to improve people's mental and physical health
- A high quality environment will attract investment to sustain jobs, leisure and cultural facilities
- The provision of integrated services for communities to include health centres, libraries, council services, play areas, leisure and culture facilities, will aid in creating inclusive, robust, sustainable communities where young and old will want to live, invest and interact.

## **Community Participation and Partnership Working**

Community participation and partnership working will enhance the mental health and well-being of communities. This is incorporated within the vision of the RSS and within the new planning system which prioritises the involvement of local people in decision-making for their localities. At the local level, Local Strategic Partnerships, including the voluntary sector, may provide a more general platform to enhance engagement.

Partnership working can positively influence health by:

- Sharing learning of effective partnership working and best practice
- Gearing renewal strategies towards reducing health inequalities and promoting urban and rural renaissance.

- Community projects eg. 'Friends of Parks' actively encouraging inter-generational activity and promote a sense of place and pride, which are essential for sustainable communities
- Integrating community participation in developing local plans for their areas will promote community ownership and enhance contributions from all sectors including the old, young and ethnic minority groups and other disadvantaged/excluded groups.

## Case Study: Studdert Kennedy House, Worcester

This joint project between the County Council and Worcestershire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust, is designed to bring together the whole of the Worcester Mental Health team to one sustainable central location, alongside outpatient and day hospital facilities for patients. A green travel plan has been developed and accessibility improved by the central location. The building is extremely energy efficient and faces onto a secluded landscaped garden in the heart of the city.



## Main Partners and Related Strategies

WMLGA	WMRA Partnerships
NHS West Midlands	Local Authorities
NHS Trusts	GOWM
AWM	Sport England
Crime and Disorder Partnerships	Health Protection Agency
CSIP	Environment Agency
Voluntary and Community Sector	Private Businesses
Chambers of Commerce	

## Weblinks

<http://www.wmra.gov.uk>  
<http://www.nhs.uk>  
<http://www.nhs.uk/England/AuthoritiesTrusts/Pct/list.aspx>  
<http://www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=49>  
<http://www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=63>  
<http://www.advantagewm.co.uk/downloads/west-midlands-economic-strategy.html>  
<http://www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=68>  
<http://www.wmra.gov.uk/page.asp?id=16>  
<http://www.culturewm.org.uk/cwmjisp/rcs.jsp>  
<http://www.westmidlandsltp.gov.uk>  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1143804>  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144066>  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1144014>  
<http://www.dudley.gov.uk/index.asp?pgid=10752>  
<http://www.dudley.gov.uk/index.asp?pgid=13679>  
<http://www.urbanliving.org.uk/>  
<http://www.dudley.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/parks-and-open-spaces/friends-of-the-parks>