

# Health Impact Assessments (HIA) for major applications: guidance and screening



## 1. Introduction

There is an increasingly widespread view that more has to be done to improve health and wellbeing and reduce health inequalities through tackling the root causes of illness and health inequality. This means addressing many issues like poverty, social exclusion, crime and disorder, transport and air pollution, issues which are beyond the control of health services.

Many aspects of planning can have a significant impact on health. In particular: good quality housing; a well-designed public realm, sustainable transport; employment and training opportunities; and access to leisure, cultural activities and green space. These factors are known as the “wider determinants of health”.

Health Impacts Assessments (HIAs) provide a systematic approach for assessing the potential impacts of development on the social, psychological and physical health of communities. Ensuring issues are considered at an early stage in developing planning proposals can lead to improvements in both the physical and mental health of the population. HIAs are designed to consider whether a development proposal might reinforce health inequalities and inadvertently damage people's health, or actually have positive health outcomes for the local community.

The purpose of this guidance is to establish a clear and transparent process for screening a development proposal's possible impacts and identify where a full Health Impact Assessment may be required for major developments.

## 2. Local context

Improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequalities is an important issue within the borough. There is a gap between the health of Islington residents and the national average and there are considerable variations in the health of the population linked to deprivation.

Islington has developed planning policies so that new development can help to improve health and try to address the health inequalities that exist in the borough. This guidance provides the framework for the practical implementation of the following policies:

- Core Strategy Policy CS19: Health Impact Assessments
- Development Management Policy 6.1: Healthy Development

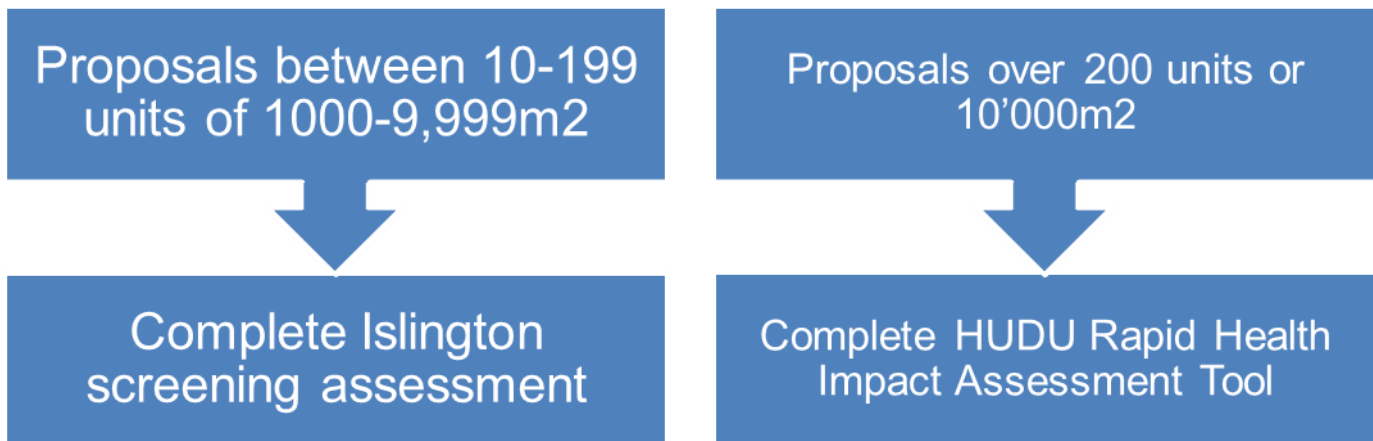
## 3. The process

### **1: Pre-application Screening**

To streamline the process all major proposals will be required to complete a screening assessment at pre-application stage. This will be used to determine whether a full HIA is required.

All planning applications of 10 residential units/1000m<sup>2</sup> or more will require screening for a HIA. The screening stage offers a systematic way of deciding whether a full HIA is required. Screening should identify who is potentially affected by a proposed development, the impact, if any, on health as well as the potential scale of any impacts identified.

Screening should cover potential impacts arising from construction, the potential impacts of the development itself, the impact on residents and workforces neighbouring the site, as well as the development's future residents and/or workforce. There are two types of screening depending on the size of the proposal.



If your proposal is for a major development between 10 -199 residential units or 1000-9,999 m2 you will need to complete [Islington's own screening assessment](#). If your proposal is greater than this threshold you will automatically need to complete the more detailed [Healthy Urban Development Unit \(HUDU\) Rapid Health Impact Assessment toolkit](#).

The screening assessment will generally be proportionate to the size of the development; the larger the development the more detailed the responses to the questions will be expected to be, whereas smaller developments are more likely to provide a brief summary.

The screening assessments will be submitted at pre-application stage. Through this process the need for a more detailed health impact assessment may be identified. It is essential that HIA screening takes place at the earliest opportunity to allow identification and resolution of health issues and so there is sufficient time to complete a HIA where the need for one is indicated. If this is the case, please refer to stage 2 below.

Any changes made to the proposal as a result of the screening process should be recorded and an updated version submitted alongside any future planning application.

## **2: Full Health Impact Assessments**

If a HIA is identified as being needed in the screening assessment, Public Health will provide advice as to what this should address and what should be included. Applicants should agree the HIA process and methodology with the council before the HIA is started, using the screening questionnaire to inform the scope.

HIA is commonly defined as “a combination of procedures, methods, and tools by which a [development] may be judged as to its potential effects on the health of a population, and the distribution of those effects within the population.”<sup>1</sup>

It is important that the applicant leads on the HIA as this is more likely to create ownership of the process as well as raising awareness of health impacts and how they can be mitigated or enhanced at an early stage of the development process.

Whilst HIAs can be conducted prospectively, concurrently or retrospectively, the latter are not able to identify any changes to a proposal that may enhance positive health impacts or mitigate negative impacts. It is recognised that developers have incurred significant costs at the point that a

<sup>1</sup> Gothenburg consensus paper (1999) “Health Impact Assessment: Main Concepts and Suggested Approach” (Brussels: European Centre for Health Policy, WHO Regional Office for Europe, 1999).

planning application is submitted to the council. Early, prospective assessments of a planning proposal are fundamental to ensuring that planning proposals are not advanced to a stage at which it is uneconomical or unrealistic for a developer to modify that proposal. Where a HIA is needed this will be submitted as part of the pre-application documentation so as to allow maximum scope for the health issues to be identified and addressed in the proposed scheme. The timescales for the HIA will be agreed with the case officer.

There is no one definitive methodology for HIA although several “toolkits” have been developed which may be helpful. A useful source for guides, examples of completed HIAs and a directory of HIA practitioners can be found on Public Health England’s HIA gateway site<sup>2</sup>.

The aim of the assessment is to identify all the potential health impacts based on evidence and to recommend measures to enhance positive impacts and mitigate adverse impacts, building on the screening exercise. This will involve examining the key elements of the proposal, considering their relationship to the range of wider determinants of health and inequality, and deciding which impacts might require further assessment.

Proposals may require a HIA that looks at specific potential impacts raised during the screening process or, if there is significant scope for health impacts to arise across a broad spectrum of determinants, a comprehensive HIA may be required.

Where a potentially significant health impact is confirmed detailed actions that will be taken to mitigate adverse impacts should be submitted. Mitigation will only be required where evidence supports a potential and significant adverse impact on health. Public Health will offer support and advice in such instances.

HIA involves an evaluation of the quantitative evidence where it exists but importantly also recognises the importance of qualitative information. This may include the opinions, experience and expectations of those people who are potentially the most directly affected by a development. Thus HIA is not the preserve of any one disciplinary group. Instead, it draws on the experience and expertise of a wide range of “stakeholders”, who are involved throughout the process. These may include professionals with knowledge relevant to the issues being addressed, relevant voluntary organisations and, perhaps most importantly, representatives of the communities whose lives will be affected by the development.

Recommendations arising from the HIA should aim to mitigate any adverse health impacts arising from the proposed development, and enhance any potential beneficial impacts on health. A record of changes made to a development proposal as a result of an HIA should be made in the HIA report.

At application stage a short statement is expected explaining the key health issues identified in the HIA and how they have been addressed. The original screening, and HIA should be appended to this for reference.

In exceptional circumstances where proposed developments have a very large impact on population or the local environment, or where more significant potential impacts are identified, a longitudinal health impact assessment may be required. Such developments will be identified on a case by case basis and funds negotiated as part of S106 or similar arrangement.

Public Health will advise on what is required in these circumstances. All longitudinal methods require baseline data and information to be collected before the development begins. In general, a longitudinal assessment should be designed at the same time as the development itself so that

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.apho.org.uk/default.aspx?QN=P\\_HIA](http://www.apho.org.uk/default.aspx?QN=P_HIA)

anticipated impacts can be identified and anticipated changes can be measured. This will also determine the “end point” for the purpose of measuring an impact, i.e. the duration of the longitudinal assessment.

#### 4. Evidence and guidance

The following links are a brief guide to local evidence. Developers are encouraged to research and apply best practice:

- [Islington's Health Inequalities Strategy](#) has been developed as part of Islington's commitment to reducing inequalities and improving health outcomes for the population as a whole as well as the communities in Islington with the greatest health needs. Section 3 of this strategy is of particular relevance to spatial planning.
- [Islington's Evidence Hub](#) provides useful background information on a variety of subjects including health in the borough. The Health and Wellbeing section contains the most recent analyses of the health status of Islington residents.
- [Building Healthier Communities in London](#): The Healthy Urban Development Unit's provides a detailed evidence base of the links between spatial planning and public health, with case studies exploring how planning can achieve more favorable health outcomes

#### 5. Contacts

For further information and advice about either screening assessments or full HIAs for development proposals please contact Ian Sandford, Public Health Strategist:

[Ian.Sandford@islington.gov.uk](mailto:Ian.Sandford@islington.gov.uk).

## Islington HIA screening

This brief screening assessment should be completed by for all major proposals under 200 units or 10,000m<sup>2</sup> at pre-application stage to assess the likely health impacts of the proposal and whether a full HIA is needed. Please complete all of the sections that are relevant to your proposal. The key questions in this screening tool are intended as prompts, if other health impacts and mitigating actions are identified these should also be included. There may be mitigating actions that are beyond the scope of the development; where these are identified they should be included. As policy areas such as housing and sustainability are covered by detailed policy it is not intended to revisit them here as a policy compliant scheme will generally promote positive health outcomes.

Proposal details (to be completed by applicant)	
Proposal address:	
Pre-application reference number:	
Summary of proposal	

Theme	Health issue(s)	Key questions	Applicant response
<b>Accessibility &amp; inclusive design</b>	Good design means that everyone has the potential to benefit from a building and the environment. Conversely, poor accessibility can exclude many groups, having an impact on physical and mental health.	How will the proposals promote inclusive design to ensure the development is accessible to all (you can cross refer to the design and access statement where relevant)?	
<b>Public services</b>	Although Islington is a small borough and generally has high levels of public transport accessibility, it is the most densely populated place in the country. Population increases associated with new developments will increase pressure on public services which are important for both physical and mental health (e.g. education, health, cultural and leisure services)	<p>Will the proposal have a direct impact on public services (e.g. GP surgeries or schools). If so, which ones and how will this impact be mitigated</p> <p>Could the proposal improve access to local services (e.g. through an improved walking route)?</p> <p>How accessible is the site to public transport?<sup>1</sup></p>	
<b>Physical activity</b>	Regular physical activity has been shown to mitigate the health impacts of obesity as well as reduce the risk of various conditions including cardiovascular disease and some	<p>How will the development promote physical activity (internally and/or externally)?</p> <p>What are the opportunities and/or barriers</p>	

<sup>1</sup> details of the PTAL rating can be accessed at <http://www.webptals.org.uk/>



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	<p>cancers. It has been shown to benefit mental health.</p> <p>Opportunities for physical activity can exist within a building itself, for example welcoming stairways with handrails can offer an alternative to the lift. Good, well lit routes to local shops and services can encourage people to walk or cycle short trips, and connect to other walking routes and cycle lanes. Open space, amenity space and play space are also important in encouraging physical activity and as places of relaxation.</p>	<p>for pedestrians?</p> <p>What facilities for cyclists will be available (including nearby cycle routes as well as cycle storage)?</p> <p>Are there any barriers (physical or economic) to accessing open space, gyms or sports centres locally?</p> <p>What open space/play space/amenity space will be provided on-site?</p>	
<p><b>Air quality, noise and pollution</b></p>	<p>During the construction phase, both air quality and noise are likely to increase which can affect people living or working next to or near the site.</p> <p>Air quality and its effect on health is a concern across much of London. The whole of Islington is an Air Quality Management Area. Developments can maximise the quality of air inside the building (for example, ventilation) and immediately outside (for example, planting trees or bushes).</p> <p>Noise is a recognised nuisance in many circumstances because it can significantly reduce quality of life and interfere with sleep, work or study. Noise may come from many sources: busy roads, railways, near spaces where people gather (particularly licensed premises), etc.</p> <p>Vibration may be a problem, particularly on sites near to railways or roads that are used by</p>	<p>What measures will be put in place to mitigate the adverse impacts of air quality, noise and vibration during demolition/construction? (Sustainable Design and Construction Statements can be cross-referred to where appropriate).</p> <p>What measures will be incorporated to improve air quality and reduce noise and vibration (where relevant) once the building is in use?</p> <p>Are there any land contamination issues associated with the site? If so, please describe what these are and how they will be addressed.</p>	



Theme	Health issue(s)	Key questions	Applicant response
	<p>heavy vehicles, or sites above underground railway tunnels.</p>		
<p><b>Reducing crime</b></p>	<p>Crime, and the fear of crime, can have a huge impact on a victim's or witness' physical and mental wellbeing. Designing out crime can be an effective way of preventing or reducing crime and anti-social behaviour, for example ensuring that streets are well-lit and receive "passive surveillance.</p> <p>Concentrations of certain uses, including drinking establishments, off-licences, restaurants, and betting shops, can promote anti-social behaviour.</p>	<p>How has the development "designed out" crime?</p> <p>How will anti-social behaviour and nuisance be minimised?</p> <p>Will the proposal lead to a concentration of uses in the local area that could give rise to anti-social behaviour?</p> <p>If licensed premises are proposed, is this within an area with a high concentration of licensed premises as defined in the <a href="#">Licensing Policy</a>?</p>	
<p><b>Healthy Food</b></p>	<p>A poor diet, high in saturated fat and low in fruit and vegetables is associated with obesity in younger children, and obesity, chronic illness and early death in adults.</p> <p>Opportunities for food growing, ranging from opportunities on balconies and gardens to the provision of allotments, can promote access to healthy food and can help to improve physical activity and social cohesion.</p> <p>The Council has a policy to resist proposals for fast food takeaways where this would result in a concentration of such uses in one area or within close proximity to schools or other sensitive uses.</p>	<p>In what ways has the development considered providing opportunities for growing food?</p> <p>Have other measures to increase access to healthy food been considered?</p> <p>Will the proposal promote unhealthy eating? How could this be mitigated?</p>	





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<b>Employment and training</b>	<p>Work is good for physical and mental health and wellbeing. Job security and simply having a job can increase health and wellbeing as well as make it easier to pursue a healthy lifestyle. Poverty and health inequalities can be linked to worklessness, therefore maximising opportunities for training and employment for local people can have positive health outcomes.</p>	<p>Will training or apprenticeships for local people be provided?</p> <p>Will construction be offered locally (including through contractors/sub-contractors)?</p> <p>Has the developer/contractor introduced a London Living Wage policy?</p> <p>Will any other measures be taken to increase employment for local people?</p>	
<b>Social inclusion</b>	<p>Inclusive neighbourhoods are those that encourage members of a community to interact with each other. This can reduce social isolation which can be a trigger for depression, anxiety and other conditions. Developments should consider how they can integrate with the existing environment and communities and contribution to social inclusion.</p> <p>Community facilities can be particularly important in promoting social inclusion as well as offering a range of valuable services. If a community facility is proposed to be lost, its impact on the community should be considered</p>	<p>How will the proposal promote the integration of existing and new communities and promote social interaction?</p> <p>Will the proposal result in the loss of a community asset?</p> <p>What alternatives for existing provision exist?</p> <p>How far away is alternative provision, and how accessible is it?</p>	
<b>Climate change adaptation and mitigation</b>	<p>Developments can exacerbate the impacts of climate change for example increasing urban heating or floodrisk. This can have negative health implications for the population, including for the most vulnerable.</p>	<p>Does the proposal consider the influence it can have on the microclimate to ensure it mitigates the impacts of climate change?</p> <p>Is the proposal in a Local Floodrisk Zone, or will it lead to an increase in surface water run-off? If so, how will this be mitigated?</p>	

Conclusion	Applicant	Planning Officer/Public Health
Are there aspects of the proposals which might impact negatively on health and which are not proposed to be mitigated?		
Are any changes proposed to the scheme to improve health outcomes/further mitigate negative impacts?		
Will the proposal require a full Health Impact Assessment?		