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# **Appendix 11.1**

## **Health Policy Context**

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## National Planning Framework (NPF)

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).

Chapter 6: People, Homes and Communities 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)

Chapter 6, Section 6.2: Healthy Communities 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)

National Strategic Outcome (NSO) 3 relates to strengthening rural economies and communities. One of the targets includes: “Invest in maintaining regional and local roads and strategic road improvement projects in rural areas to ensure access to critical services such as education, healthcare and employment” (p.141).

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

- “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)

National Policy Objective 64 addresses air quality, and states: “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, the promotion of energy efficient buildings and homes, heating systems with zero local emissions, green infrastructure planning and innovative design solutions.” (p.129)

National Policy Objective 65 addresses noise, and states: “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)

National Policy Objective 28 addresses social inclusion, and states: “Plan for a more diverse and socially inclusive society that targets equality of opportunity and a better quality of life for all citizens, through improved integration and greater accessibility in the delivery of sustainable communities and the provision of associated services” (p.84)

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One of the goals for rural development under National Strategic Outcome 3: Strengthened Rural Economies and Communities is to “*Invest maintaining regional and local roads and strategic road improvement projects in rural areas to ensure access to critical services such as education, healthcare and employment*” (p.141)

### Healthy Ireland Framework (HIF)

HIF 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).

The four goals of Healthy Ireland are relevant and have informed the assessment:

- Goal 1: Increase the proportion of people who are healthy at all stages of life
- Goal 2: Reduce health inequalities
- Goal 3: Protect the public from threats to health and wellbeing
- Goal 4: Create an environment where every individual and sector of society can play their part in achieving a healthy Ireland

### 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).

### Healthy Meath Plan 2019-2021

The Healthy Meath Plan 2019-2021 (Meath County Council, 2019) has also been reviewed, which sets public health priorities for this population. Five priority areas are listed that have informed the assessment:

- Priority 1: Healthy Planning and Living Environment
  - Healthy Meath aims to build the capacity of people and systems involved in policy making and planning to ensure that healthy communities are factored into all future planning, building and development.
- Priority 2: Community Connectivity
  - Healthy Meath will work to support initiatives in local communities that encourage and promote a healthier lifestyle (physical, social, emotional, cultural) and also help bring people of all ages together to increase community connectivity and cohesiveness.
- Priority 3: Healthy Lifestyle
  - Healthy Meath aims to create a conducive environment for a healthy lifestyle and encourages everyone to take responsibility for healthy changes within their own lives and the lives of their families.
- Priority 4: Education, Information and Awareness
  - Healthy Meath aims to increase awareness and improve health information and education for everyone in the county, with particular attention paid to those who experience health inequalities.
- Priority 5: Working in Partnership
  - Healthy Meath aims to work in partnership with all interested parties at local and national level to help bring about positive change in the health and wellbeing of all the inhabitants in the county.