

East London health impact assessment toolkit ... work in progress

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Aim

This project is part of the HAZ initiative. It will enhance capacity for health impact assessment (HIA) in East London. The project will develop a 'toolkit' of HIA techniques which can usefully be applied in East London. The focus is especially on HIA methods for urban regeneration schemes. The use of the HIA toolkit will be illustrated by applying it to selected demonstration projects working to achieve urban regeneration in East London.

This toolkit will be of interest to:

- regeneration partnerships;
- regeneration professionals;
- Training and Enterprise Councils (to become Learning and Skills Councils);
- health authorities;
- local authorities;
- voluntary sector organisations.

Introduction

HIA has been defined as ...

*"Any combination of procedures or methods by which a **proposed** policy or programme may be judged as to the effects it **may** have on the health of a population"¹.*

HIA can be applied to a policy, programme or project. In this toolkit we consider applying HIA to regeneration projects.

HIA will clarify the potential for public health benefits which is inherent in regeneration projects. It will also identify any potentially negative impacts on health.

We will demonstrate the use of the toolkit on regeneration schemes that target the wider determinants of health, e.g. housing and employment.

We will not evaluate the changes to NHS healthcare which result from health service development. Major capital development in the NHS has significant potential for social and economic impacts beyond their effects on health service provision. We will consider the application of HIA to the wider regeneration effects of large NHS capital projects.

There are three types of health impact assessment (HIA)

- **prospective:**
looks at a project that is not yet implemented and attempts to predict the health consequences (both negative and positive) - the aim is to adapt the project's development in ways that minimise health damage and maximise health benefit
- **retrospective:**
looks at the nature and magnitude of effects on health of a project that has taken place
- **concurrent:**
audit, risk assessment and monitoring of the health impact of a project as it is carried out.

Box 1**Lessons from Sweden*****What can HIA do?***

HIA helps to highlight the consequences of proposed policy decisions. These consequences can then be weighed against impacts on other interests before a decision is made. HIA can be a signpost that points the way to healthier decision making.

Targets

Health impacts should be considered within the context of local and regional objectives.

Priorities

Some groups in the community have poorer health than others. It is important to establish whether there are particular groups whose health has been, or is being, disproportionately affected by health hazards.

When should an HIA be done?

The earlier that the health impacts of a policy proposal are discussed the greater will be the opportunities to affect the final decision.. HIA is best considered during planning and early implementation of a project.

Who does HIA?

Health is influenced by a wide variety of causes so cross-sectoral work is important.

source: Federation of Swedish County Councils²

There are 5 stages to an HIA

- screening,
- scoping,
- risk assessment,
- decision-making and
- implementation and monitoring

The toolkit will illustrate elements of the screening and the scoping stages of rapid prospective health impact appraisal (see Box 2)

Box 2**Screening, scoping and rapid assessment*****Screening***

A quick estimation of the potential links between the project and different aspects of health

Scoping

Collecting further information about the aims of, and stakeholders in, the project

Rapid prospective health impact appraisal

A systematic assessment of the health impact of a project by a number of experts, decision makers and representatives of those who may be affected by the project. It is based on an exchange of the existing knowledge of the participants involved, including knowledge gained from previous similar exercises and research.

Source: Lester et al⁵

HIA and evaluation

HIA as a form of appraisal is distinct from monitoring and evaluation. However, HIA can identify the expected health outcomes of a project. This will help to develop milestones for monitoring or evaluating the actual public health impact as the project goes forward.

Outputs and outcomes

HIA needs to be informed by an evidence base. A major role of rapid and prospective HIA techniques is to clarify the theoretical and empirical evidence for health change that may be expected to flow from urban regeneration.

This toolkit will present the public health evidence in a format which is useful to SRB schemes, New Commitment Pathfinders and other regeneration projects (*see Presenting the evidence-base below*).

These projects are increasingly expected to evaluate more than immediate process outputs. The emphasis is on broader outcome measures which evaluate the wider effects, or impact, the projects have on the areas and groups on which they are targeted^{3,4}.

Our toolkit will show how HIA can help to anticipate the likely health related outcomes and how they might be measured as the project proceeds.

Determinants of health affected by urban regeneration

We have based our screening on the seven aims of the SRB Challenge Fund⁶. These will act on the determinants of health. They are to ...

- Promote equality of opportunity through enhancing the employment prospects, education, & skills of local people, especially the young and the most disadvantaged.
- Encourage sustainable economic growth and wealth creation by improving the competitiveness of the local economy and including support for existing and new businesses.
- Protect and improve the environment and infrastructure and promote good design.
- Improve housing and housing conditions for local people, through physical improvements, better maintenance, improved management and greater choice and diversity
- Promote initiatives to benefit ethnic minorities
- Tackle crime and improve community safety
- Enhance the quality of life of local people, including their health and cultural and sports opportunities

Screening ... choice of demonstration sites

Screening may involve two types of activity:

- **deciding which projects require HIA**
selecting what kinds of policies, programmes or projects to subject to HIA and making a first judgement of whether or not a policy or programme may have any potential health impact and deciding if HIA should be done;
- **deciding what sorts of health impact will need to be considered**
judging the kinds of health impacts that may be expected, either positive or negative.

Our toolkit illustrates these steps in screening.

We first examined a summary of the 50 regeneration projects which are currently live in East London. This was based on information from the Government Office for London.

Prospective HIA is best introduced at an early stage. We therefore concentrated on SRB5 projects, assuming they would be operational but not too far advanced. We also considered other projects such as the New Deal schemes in East London and some HAZ projects and PFI projects. In total we identified twenty-six projects which might be appropriate for HIA.

The most common emphasis in the regeneration activity across all the 50 projects was on:

- education, employment and training;
- housing and environmental conditions;
- social capital and social support networks.

Ten projects showed a strong focus on the determinants of health listed above. We therefore decided to select our demonstration projects from these.

We obtained the original bid documents for each of these 10 projects to map the interventions in more detail. From this analysis we identified three projects for demonstration sites.

As well as information on the type of intervention proposed for these projects, factors influencing our choice of demonstration sites were:

- timing – is the project at a stage where HIA could make a contribution?
- capacity – does the project have the capacity to work on an HIA?

Selected demonstration sites

We decided through the screening process to approach the following projects who have agreed to let us work with them:

- “Building Sustainable Communities: Forest Gate and Plaistow” a comprehensive regeneration SRB5 project in Newham which has a strong focus on housing, education and tackling social exclusion;
- “Safe Routes to School: Safe Roots for Communities” a pilot project operating in Hackney (and in Hammersmith & Fulham) that is exploring how to develop an all-agency approach to safe, attractive, healthy and educational routes to school for young children;
- “The Development of Services at the Royal London Hospital Whitechapel and St Bartholomew’s West Smithfield” a PFI scheme and a major capital development in the NHS, with potential for social and economic impact in East London, beyond the changes expected in health service provision.

Process of scoping for a rapid prospective HIA

We are now in the process of scoping for HIA of the three demonstration sites. This is involving the following activities that we will describe in our toolkit:

- Work in consultation with stakeholders to examine the rationale behind the projects, in terms of the impacts the project is expected to have on the determinants of health and possibly on health itself. This involves interviews and other consultation methods with a range of stakeholders.
- Review of the available evidence, both theoretical and empirical, for the likely health impact of expected changes in the health determinants. This involves preparing reviews of the published evidence.

Presenting the evidence base

This section will present, in an accessible format, the existing evidence of the relationships between the determinants of health and health itself.

It will enable the user to anticipate the likely health impact of the project.

It is envisaged that the evidence will be presented in diagrammatic form to show:

- the types of health effect which may be expected from the changes produced by the project *eg* mental, physical, psychosocial impacts;
- the nature of the associations *e.g.* risk to health, beneficial to health, two-way effect;
- which population groups are likely to be affected;
- mediating factors.

This information can be used for

- project design;
- bidding for funding for projects;
- detailed amendment to project plans as the projects are implemented;
- the design of monitoring and evaluation.

Using the results of HIA

HIA results need to be fed into the planning and implementation of regeneration schemes we will include material in our toolkit to illustrate how this may be done by:

- Suggesting ways to monitor:
 - the processes that are expected to influence the determinants of health;
 - the expected changes in the determinants of health;
 - health changes (which may be measured in the longer term);
- Identifying key policy relevant findings from the project and advise on methods to monitor the uptake of these by policy-forming groups.

Personnel involved

- Ben Cave: full time
- Sarah Curtis, Marilyn Aviles and Adam Coutts: contributing as relevant

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