

**Physical Activity and Environment
Programme Guidance**

FIELDWORK REPORT

NICE Public Health Collaborating Centre – Physical activity

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Executive summary

Background

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence ('NICE' or 'the Institute') has been asked by the Department of Health (DH) to develop guidance on a public health programme aimed at modifying the environmental factors that promote physical activity.

This report deals with the fieldwork phase of the guidance development process.

Objectives of the fieldwork

- To examine the relevance, utility and implementability with practitioners, of NICE programme guidance concerned with physical activity and environment.
- To answer the following questions:
 - What are the views of practitioners on the relevance and usefulness of the guidance to their current practice; and potential consequences for improving health and tackling health inequalities?
 - What factors, for instance service configuration, could either help or hinder the effective implementation and delivery of the guidance as part of current practice?
 - What is the potential impact of the recommendations on service provision and current practice generally?
 - Which of the recommendations are feasible?
 - Which of them are likely to make a difference to practice?
 - What would be the relative priority of each of the recommendations for the different practitioner groups involved?

Methodology

We undertook this research using qualitative research methods, combining focus groups and one-to-one interviews.

A key informant 'snowball' sampling technique was used, identifying and contacting key people from each professional group, and asking them to recommend others who may be appropriate participants for this research.

Seventy-nine people were interviewed in eight focus groups and three one-to-one interviews.

Research participants came from the following professional groups:

- Architects
- Transport
- Environment
- Planning
- Public health

Research was conducted in four locations across England

Main findings – general

Reactions to this guidance

- Generally the recommendations were well received and perceived to be relevant to the work of study participants
- The recommendations need to ‘work’ at a policy level to be effective
- There are other competing priorities that may detract from the implementation of the recommendations

Perceptions of NICE

- NICE was very much seen to be a new player in the field of planning and the built environment, but most thought it was highly appropriate that NICE should issue guidance on physical activity and the environment
- Most participants thought that NICE’s reputation and authority would enhance the status of this guidance and maximise its impact
- A small minority however noted that NICE has received a lot of negative publicity and this may reduce the impact of the recommendations

The role of NICE guidance

- Many participants voiced the concern that they were overwhelmed with guidance on how to do their jobs, and that this guidance may not add a great deal beyond being a simple endorsement of their work from the health sector
- More specifically, there was a very strong feeling among the participants that many of the recommendations were ‘statements of the obvious’ and were not linked to existing policy or legislation

Links to legislation and existing policy

- Many participants pointed out that NICE guidance is unlikely to have much impact compared to the ‘must do’s’ such as Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) which is seen as compulsory
- It was suggested that NICE would have greater impact if it worked more on influencing policy and connecting their work to existing and new policy and legislation

The challenge of influencing beyond the health sector

- The main target audiences for this guidance are not from the health sector. It remains a significant challenge for the guidance to be written (and publicised) in such a way as to maximise the influence it has on non health sector agencies.
- The draft guidance may also have overlooked the role that it might have in influencing the health sector to work in partnership with planners and other target audiences.

Main findings - by recommendation

Recommendation one (strategies policies and plans)

- Most respondents felt the recommendation was relevant to their work
- It was generally thought that the recommendation will reinforce existing policy, by providing health as a rationale for planning decisions
- However, it was thought that the recommendations will need to have greater influence at policy level to be relevant, and to be linked more strongly and explicitly to existing policy
- The recommendation will also be useful in helping to bring different stakeholders together, especially from transport and health disciplines

Recommendation two (transport)

- Respondents generally felt the recommendations were relevant to their work
- While overall the recommendation was seen to be useful, the transport respondents were likely to see these as replicating existing transport guidance: notably in Local Transport plan guidance and Manual for Streets
- This recommendation will be considerably strengthened if it makes clear reference to the existing policy guidance framework, and presents itself as an evidence-based health endorsement of existing guidance
- There are real, practical and significant barriers to translating this guidance into reality at a local level

Recommendation three (transport)

- Most participants felt the recommendation was relevant and in some cases replicating their current work
- Some acknowledge the relevance of the recommendation but have issues about the implementation
- The main use for this recommendation was seen to be as a health endorsement of existing guidance
- There are a number of interest groups, particularly motorists, who may oppose the recommendation

Recommendation four (public open spaces)

- The recommendation was generally thought to be relevant, if a little basic, and replicating existing guidance from other sources
- Some participants thought the recommendation was helpful in highlighting the importance of physical activity overall. This was sometimes overlooked in the desire to cater for specific needs, such as cyclists, or sports facilities for young people
- The recommendation was seen to be useful mainly in supporting existing policy initiatives. These links could be made more explicit, especially to Rights of Way Improvement Plans and Local Development Frameworks
- There were seen to be many barriers to implementing this recommendation. The main barrier was a lack of investment in parks and green space - especially for maintenance

Recommendation five (buildings; walking and cycling)

- The recommendation was viewed as relevant to the work of most participants
- One transport planner suggested that while the recommendation was good in principle, the existing walking and cycling infrastructure is limited
- The recommendation was considered useful in providing a health-related rationale for the work of the transport planners
- Participants identified significant practical issues and competing interests that may challenge implication of the recommendation

Recommendation six (buildings; campus sites)

- The recommendation was only directly relevant to a minority of participants
- The recommendation was thought to be relevant to the stated target audience, though it could be seen to replicate some existing guidance
- The recommendation would be most useful if it targeted specific bodies
- The involvement of NICE in setting recommendations provides a catalyst to discuss active travel

Recommendation seven buildings (stairs)

- A number of participants queried why this recommendation was so specific about staircases
- The main usefulness of this recommendation was in its focus on the health-promoting aspects of stairs, which may have been lost in the drive towards greater accessibility within buildings
- While overall this recommendation was seen to be useful, some participants felt that a focus on stairs drew attention away from other larger issues relating to unhealthy environments
- It was pointed out that there may be some conflict between this recommendation and existing guidance, notably building and health and safety legislation, and the Disability Discrimination Act

Recommendation eight (schools)

- A number of participants asked why the recommendation focused only on primary school playgrounds
- Others identified an overlap with other initiatives such as healthy schools
- Many participants were surprised that the recommendation was so specific and focused when others had been very broad and strategic
- The recommendation might be useful in developing partnerships with other health agencies to attract funding, and to support discussions with planners

Key Recommendations from this research

- The recommendations from NICE should be much more explicitly linked to the existing policy framework. They should show clearly how they are linked to current legislation; policy and guidance. In particular:
 - Planning Policy Guidance 13 (Transport)
 - Planning Policy Guidance 17 (open space, sport and recreation)
 - Dept for Transport Manual for Streets
 - Dept for Transport guidance on full Local Transport Plans
 - Local development frameworks
 - Community strategies
 - Regional Spatial Strategies
 - Building regulations
 - Disability Discrimination Act
- The guidance should make it clearer that the recommendations are based on reviews of the available evidence of effectiveness, and should acknowledge that this may lead to re-statement (or endorsement) of existing knowledge and the existing policy framework. This should lead to the guidance being positioned more as NICE's evidence-based endorsement of the existing policy framework.
- The links between the evidence statements and guidance recommendations need to be clarified.
- The guidance (or accompanying implementation guide) should be much clearer about *how* to implement the recommendations. Much of this may be signposting to existing policy documents.
- The 'level' of recommendation may need to be re-considered, as some participants noted recommendations ranged from broad strategic issues to specific detailed points.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background to the development of guidance on physical activity and the environment

The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence ('NICE' or 'the Institute') has been asked by the Department of Health (DH) to develop guidance on a public health programme aimed at modifying the environmental factors that promote physical activity.

The consideration of evidence and construction of draft and final recommendations is carried out by a committee (the Programme Development Group – PDG) assembled for the purpose by NICE. Guidance production by NICE consists of a number of stages. These are:

- Publication of a draft scope, public consultation and development of a final scope for the work. The scope defines exactly what the guidance will (and will not) examine, and what the guidance developers will consider. The scope is based on the referral from the Department of Health.
- Reviews of evidence of effectiveness relating to the scope.
- Review of the economic literature relevant to the work and development of economic modelling to inform the development of recommendations
- Consultation on the evidence and models
- Development of draft recommendations from the evidence
- Consultation on the draft recommendations. This involves publication of the draft recommendations and inviting comments from all registered stakeholders

- Fieldwork on the draft recommendations. At the same time as comments are requested from stakeholders, the recommendations are subjected to fieldwork (the topic of this brief)
- Following consultation and fieldwork, the draft recommendations are refined into final recommendations.

This report deals with the fieldwork phase of the guidance development process.

1.2. *Background to the fieldwork*

The original referral from the Department of health for NICE guidance on the environment and physical activity specified the target audiences as ‘those working for the Highways Agency, local authorities, the NHS, education and workplaces’. The guidance addresses a number of broad areas where changes to working practices may help to create conditions where people are better able to be physically active as part of their daily life. The draft guidance covers the following broad areas:

- Strategies, policies and plans
- Transport
- Public open spaces
- Buildings
- Schools

The full list of draft recommendations is at Appendix One.

Following discussions within the Programme Development Group, the target audiences for the guidance were more carefully defined as:

- Those responsible for developing new towns, urban extensions, major regeneration projects, the siting or closure of local services and all other strategies, policies and plans which involve environmental change.
- Local transport authorities, transport planners and local authorities.
- Transport and urban planners and local transport authorities.
- Designers and managers of public open spaces.
- Architects, designers, developers, planners and employers.
- Architects, designers and facility managers of public buildings (including workplaces and schools).
- Children's services, school sports partnerships, school governing bodies and primary school head teachers.

These are new audiences for NICE, and the content of the draft guidance covers many issues that are unfamiliar territory for public health practitioners. It is therefore important that the views of these target audiences were sought in advance of the final guidance being issued by NICE.

1.3. Objectives of the fieldwork

- To examine the relevance, utility and implementability with practitioners, of NICE programme guidance concerned with physical activity and environment.
- To answer the following questions:
 - What are the views of practitioners on the relevance and usefulness of the guidance to their current practice; and potential consequences for improving health and tackling health inequalities?

- What factors, for instance service configuration, could either help or hinder the effective implementation and delivery of the guidance as part of current practice?
- What is the potential impact of the recommendations on service provision and current practice generally?
- Which of the recommendations are feasible?
- Which of them are likely to make a difference to practice?
- What would be the relative priority of each of the recommendations for the different practitioner groups involved?

1.4. *Research team*

This research has been carried out by a team from the Public Health Collaborating Centre (CC) for Physical Activity. The Collaborating Centre is an alliance between the British Heart Foundation Health Promotion Research Group (University of Oxford) and the British Heart Foundation National Centre for Physical Activity and Health (Loughborough University). The lead researchers were Steve Allender and Nick Cavill.

1.5. *Methodology*

1.5.1. *Data collection*

We undertook this research using qualitative research methods. A qualitative approach was essential to explore the thoughts and opinions of the target audiences regarding the guidance in great depth. As opposed to quantitative methods, which allow for categorical responses from a large number of participants, qualitative methods provide a means to gain a deeper understanding from research participants. Additionally, qualitative methods are more flexible and do not rely on a priori understanding or expectations of researchers on behalf of participants in the way that quantitative research

methods do. In this way we are able to check the stakeholders comprehension of the recommendations and consider their detail, complexity and implications thoroughly.

The main data collection method was the focus group. Groups were preferred as they allow group interaction and enable people to trade opinions, and are thought to enhance depth of responses (Kitzinger, 1995). Groups contained between 7 and 12 participants, and lasted between 90 minutes and two hours. Groups contained people from broadly homogenous professions to help simulate discussion. All focus groups considered all recommendations although some focus groups focussed more on transport issues and others more on environment and planning. The final sample is shown in Table 1.

The groups were convened by a facilitator who, where possible, was independent of the physical activity collaborating centre team. A member of the collaborating centre team was also present to introduce the session, and a member of the research team attended all groups to ensure that the main issues were being covered.

Each focus group followed a discussion guide (Appendix two) that took participants through the recommendations one at a time, focusing on the three main themes of relevance, utility and implementation. The group discussions were recorded, and written consent to recording obtained in advance from each participant (appendix four). It was explained that the report will not identify people by name, and that identities will only be known to the NICE collaborating centre team and people working on this project. This encouraged people to speak freely during the groups and to express their personal opinions.

The option of a one-to-one interview was offered to participants who may find it difficult to attend focus groups, and were kept 'in reserve' to target specific groups who might be under-represented in the final sample. In the end only three of these were conducted as the groups contained sufficient participants from the key professional groups.

1.5.2. Recruitment

A key informant 'snowball' sampling technique was used for this research. This means identifying and contacting key people from each professional grouping, and asking them to recommend others who may be appropriate participants for this research. In this way the list of participants 'snowballs' from the initial list of key informants to a wide range of key informants. Contact was made by phone or email using a standard wording (see Appendix One). Initial contacts were identified through the main professional organisations working in this area; through personal and team contacts, and through contacts from NICE's Programme Development Group.

The sample was constructed with the aim of ensuring good coverage of people according to the following criteria:

- Job category
- Location
- Level of seniority

We continued to run groups until we had passed the point of 'data saturation'. Data saturation is reached when there is no new information is being gleaned from subsequent focus groups (Pope et al, 2000). At this point it is thought unlikely that further data collection will uncover new perspectives (Bryman & Burgess, 1993).

Examples of the job title within each category are given in Appendix five.

1.5.3. Sample achieved

Seventy-six people were interviewed in eight focus groups. In addition we conducted one-to-one interviews with the following individuals:

- A senior staff member from the Highways Agency (as they had been specifically mentioned in the DH referral).
- Two architects (to obtain specific additional information about recommendations 5, 6 and 7)

The spread of job category by location is seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Achieved sample by location and job category

Job Category	Focus Groups									Grand Total
	Bristol AM	Bristol PM	London AM	London PM	Manchester AM	Manchester PM	York AM	York PM	one-to-one	
Architects	1				1		1		2	5
Environment	4		4	3	3	1	1	1		17
Planning	2	2	2		3	3	5	1		18
Public health	1	3	1		1	1	1	2		10
Transport		2		4		7		7	1	21
Other		1	2				4	1		8
Grand Total	8	8	9	7	8	12	12	12	3	79

Seventeen people (22% of the sample) were categorised as being ‘senior’ in responsibility: either having regional responsibility; being a director or above; or having a role in strategic policy making.

It should be acknowledged that there is some selection bias inherent in a sample such as this as the people who are willing to attend a focus group meeting or complete a one-to-one interview may have more positive opinions (to NICE, or to the topic of physical activity and the environment). This potential bias was limited as far as possible by reassuring people during recruitment that ‘negative’ opinions were welcome; and by extending the sample beyond the public health community. It should be remembered that the purpose of qualitative research is not to generate generalisable findings, but rather to gain a deeper understanding of the thoughts and opinions of a small group of people with some interest in the topic under consideration: in this case those likely to be charged with implementing the NICE recommendations.

1.5.4. Analysis

The recordings were transcribed in full and checked against original recording for accuracy. Transcripts 'cleaned' in this way were then analysed using the qualitative analysis software Nvivo 7. A coding schema was developed by the research team based on the brief developed by NICE. Text could be coded under more than one category but also under themes that emerged from the data. The *a priori* primary codes were:

- Relevance
- Utility
- Feasibility
- Barriers
- Replication
- Gaps

In addition a number of codes were developed in response to initial reading of transcripts. These codes were:

- NICE
- Interesting
- Community involvement

Clean transcripts were independently reviewed and coded by two researchers (NC and SA). Where there was disagreement over the coding of texts the researchers conferred and agreed on a code. The coding was done in such a way that responses could be stratified by individual recommendation; job category; or location of respondent. These categories form the basis of the data presented in this report although in the event this was not informative. Categories were collapsed into the following codes for presentation in the results section of this paper:

- Relevance
- Usefulness
- Feasibility
- Suggested modifications to the recommendation
- Other

The references for each code resulting from analysis of the full body of data (70 people in 8 focus groups and 3 one-to-one interviews) are set out in Table 2.

Table 2 Coding references by recommendation and coding node

	Relevance	Usefulness	Feasibility	Suggested modifications	Other	Total
Rec 1	19	45	42	21	3	130
Rec 2	6	13	19	12	1	51
Rec 3	8	18	17	19	5	67
Rec 4	6	10	7	14	3	40
Rec 5	5	6	4	4	0	19
Rec 6	5	13	9	16	0	43
Rec 7	8	6	13	8	0	35
Rec 8	9	16	14	23	3	65
Total	66	127	125	117	15	450

2. Findings – general

Most of the fieldwork sessions were focused on discussing the specific recommendations one by one. However there were a number of other more general issues that emerged.

Reactions to this guidance

- Generally the recommendations were well received and perceived to be relevant to the work of study participants
- The recommendations need to ‘work’ at a policy level to be effective
- There are other competing priorities that may detract from the implementation of the recommendations

Perceptions of NICE

- NICE was very much seen to be a new player in the field of planning and the built environment, but most thought it was highly appropriate that NICE should issue guidance on physical activity and the environment
- Most participants thought that NICE’s reputation and authority would enhance the status of this guidance and maximise its impact
- A small minority however noted that NICE has received a lot of negative publicity and this may reduce the impact of the recommendations

But I think the other good thing is it is a bit of guidance from a strange organisation called NICE, that’s going to make planners sit up and think. It is coming from a different source of credibility – it deals with drugs.
Transport planner; focus group.

I was just going to say I don’t think there is anything particularly new but what is interesting...is that it’s coming from the health sector.
Environment policy-maker; focus group.

I think one disadvantage that NICE has got is what's perceived as your background and it's attracted quite a lot of negative publicity a lot of the time, unfortunately, in the choices that the organisation has to make. So somewhere along the line I think they need to positively publicise themselves and really put something behind this initiative or else it will just disappear along with all the other initiatives that have occurred over the years.

Transport planner; focus group.

The role of NICE guidance

- Many participants voiced the concern that they were overwhelmed with guidance on how to do their jobs, and that this guidance may not add a great deal beyond being a simple endorsement of their work from the health sector
- More specifically, there was a very strong feeling among the participants that many of the recommendations were 'statements of the obvious' and were not linked to existing policy or legislation

As transport planners we're being absolutely bombarded with all this helpful advice and information. But it's how we can actually make best use of that to help us to achieve our aims.

Transport planner; focus group.

...a lot of this is mother and apple pie. I think this is fantastic stuff, I have got no issues with it at all, but if you just place it alongside that one and that one and that one, my projector would be slightly higher every time I give a presentation, there would be another document to lift it up a bit. But what's the added value of it, that's what I am trying to get?

Town planner; focus group.

... NICE's role and its interventions strikes me as very very important because in the area that I work in, the National Institute of Clinical Excellence has not been on the scene. They're terribly important obviously to advising the NHS itself but the NHS is almost entirely about medicine and medical treatments and the treatment of ill health and not the promotion of good health. What I don't want to see out of this exercise is NICE box itself into a set of bland statements of the bleeding obvious! It's worth – if NICE are to be involved at all it's worth more than that.

Environment policy maker; focus group.

Links to legislation and existing policy

- Many participants pointed out that NICE guidance is unlikely to have much impact compared to the 'must do's' such as Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) which is seen as compulsory
- It was suggested that NICE would have greater impact if it worked more on influencing policy and connecting their work to existing and new policy and legislation

...is this going to be a stand alone thing or is it going to be integrated into PPG 17 etc? Otherwise it's almost a throwaway guidance whereas if it's through PPG 17 it actually has the authority and people take much greater due regard to that when they're making planning decisions.

Environment policy maker; focus group.

The challenge of influencing beyond the health sector

- The main target audiences for this guidance are not from the health sector. It remains a significant challenge for the guidance to be written (and publicised) in such a way as to maximise the influence it has on non health sector agencies.
- The draft guidance may also have overlooked the role that it might have in influencing the health sector to work in partnership with planners and other target audiences.

... a NICE document is surely likely to influence people in the health sector rather than the transport sector and I think we should concentrate on that aspect of things and I'm sure the transport people can make use of it but the real strength of it is if we can use it as a mechanism to lever support of the health sector in the partnership type working and to generate this sort of material so that people in the health sector can bring the sort of things that you've been talking about to the table and we can generate that information and everyone will be able to answer the questions we're talking about.

Transport planner; focus group.

Findings for each recommendation

2.1. *Recommendation one: strategies policies and plans*

2.1.1. What the recommendation says

Who should take action?

Those responsible for developing new towns, urban extensions, major regeneration projects, the siting or closure of local services and all other strategies, policies and plans which involve environmental change.

What action should they take?

- Involve local communities and experts at all stages of the development to ensure the potential for physical activity is maximised. This includes ensuring people can easily access local facilities and services on foot, by bicycle or by another form of 'active travel'. It also includes ensuring that children can participate in physically active play.
- Ensure planning applications for new developments always prioritise the need for people to lead physically active lives. This includes ensuring people can easily access local facilities and services on foot, by bicycle or by another form of 'active travel'. It also includes ensuring that children can participate in physically active play.
- Assess in advance what impact (both intended and unintended) the proposals are likely to have on physical activity levels. (For example, will local services be accessible on foot, by bicycle or by another form of 'active travel'?) Existing impact assessment tools could be used. Make the results of these assessments publicly available.

2.1.2. What we found

Relevance

- Most respondents felt the recommendation was relevant to their work
- It was generally thought that the recommendation will reinforce existing policy, by providing health as a rationale for planning decisions
- However, it was thought that the recommendations will need to have greater influence at policy level to be relevant, and to be linked more strongly and explicitly to existing policy
- There were some concerns that the recommendations will compete with other priorities in urban design; and that the recommendation was trying to cover too many areas at once

I think this particular recommendation is very helpful to us...as part of our work to minimise the impact of new developments.

Town planner; One-to-one interview.

...the way these recommendations are framed... need to influence how policies will be written in councils local development frameworks, if they're going to have real teeth or they have to be incorporated in national planning policy guidance. Otherwise they'll sit on the shelf.

Town planner; focus group.

Usefulness

- The main use of the recommendation will be to provide a health-based rationale for planning decisions
- The recommendation will also be useful in helping to bring different stakeholders together, especially from transport and health disciplines
- The evidence supporting the recommendations will increase the likelihood of them being followed
- The recommendations and evidence statements will be useful for public consultation or to make a case for funding

... so if we've got somebody like NICE saying, 'and by the way it's a darn sight healthier as well, you can gain health benefits as well as congestion and air quality...' it's yet another piece of evidence for making the business case.

Transport policy-maker; focus group.

That's probably where it will be most useful to us: it doesn't necessarily tell us that we need to do anything different: it just puts us in the same framework as everybody else.

Environment policy-maker; focus group.

As transport planners we're... being absolutely bombarded with all this helpful advice and information. But it's how we can actually make best use of that to help us to achieve our aims. If you're telling us that, that you've got statistical evidence that will tell us, that will encourage I don't know, so many thousands more people to walk or to cycle by encouraging people to use those modes, then it might have a bit more weight.

Transport planner; focus group

Feasibility

- Some participants felt the recommendation would be more feasible if it was more specific
- There is a risk that the recommendation may get lost among all the other things that professionals have to consider in their work
- There may be an imbalance between the needs of the community and the recommendation that may lead to conflicting policy agendas. Examples of potential conflicts include: promoting greater school choice may increase distances for the school run; or providing green space may lead to increase in anti-social behaviour.
- These recommendations could be linked into other agendas such as global warming and environmental sustainability
- It may be difficult to engage with all the key stakeholders who should be informed and involved in the support and implementation of these recommendations

...it needs to be a little bit more specific. For example, one of the things I saw was 'can easy access local facilities and services' - what sorts of facilities and services are you talking about, which are the priorities? I know in terms of our accessibility work it is health, education, employment, food retail - they are the big ones that the Government focuses on and it is just whether that more specific definition would be really helpful I would have thought, in terms of us on the ground trying to make sure a development accords with this.

Strategic planner; focus group.

...we need to make sure there's no conflict between encouraging people to be physically active and a desire to get facilities more local. The guidance might say to get people physically active so you put a school two miles away, you only provide a cycle way to it rather than providing it local. So there's a balance there...

Town planner; focus group

We have had instances where green spaces have been perceived as a threat in terms of abandoned vehicles, crime issues, people congregating, causing anti-social behaviour and sometimes as an authority we are under pressure to actually get rid of the green space to displace that problem somewhere else.

Outdoor recreation manager; focus group

Suggested modifications to the recommendation

- Many participants suggested that recommendations should reference and provide links to existing and parallel legislation and guidance
- Some mentioned that the recommendation needs to be more explicit in the changes required, and the practical steps to be taken
- The recommendation should be more explicit about 'retrofitting' to existing developments, as well as planning for new developments
- The recommendations should include detail on the cost benefit and resource requirements
- Combining audit into the recommendations may strengthen them in the eyes of decision makers

- Other gaps identified included; adding reference to increasing use of public transport; the inclusion of a 'quality' element into the recommendations; and presenting the recommendations as a whole of infrastructure intervention

... is this going to be a stand alone thing or is it going to be integrated into PPG 17 etc? Otherwise it's almost a throwaway guidance whereas if it's through PPG 17 it actually has the authority and people take much greater due regard to that when they're making planning decisions.

Environment policy maker; focus group.

...the recommendation in principle are absolutely sound, the issue is how, how will this be achieved? The principle with any of this is how do we ensure the planning applications make provision for a walking, cycling, electric transport for example? I am sure we all have lots of different answers, lots of different views around the table how you do that, but that's the part of it that's missing.

Transport policy maker; focus group.

2.2. Recommendation two: transport

2.2.1. What the recommendation says

Who should take action?

Local transport authorities, transport planners and local authorities.

What action should they take?

Ensure the needs of pedestrians and cyclists are given priority when developing or maintaining streets and roads. Use one or more of the following methods:

- restrict motor vehicle access (for example, by closing or narrowing roads to reduce capacity)
- re-allocate road space to cyclists and pedestrians (for example, by widening pavements and introducing cycle lanes)
- consider selective road-user charging schemes
- introduce traffic calming schemes
- create safe routes to school (for example, via traffic-calming measures near schools and by creating walking and cycle routes to schools).

2.2.2. What we found

Relevance

- Respondents generally felt the recommendations were relevant to their work
- Health sector respondents tended to see this recommendation as supportive of their work to promote cycling and walking

...it's about the health sector and helping them to understand how it links in to planning structures then I think it will be very useful and we could have a better understanding of the key documents that are driving planning. So is it a roundabout way of campaigning through health to ensure that these actions are taken

Health promotion specialist; focus group

I think these are all very positive measures,
Policy maker; focus group

Usefulness

- While overall the recommendation was seen to be useful, the transport respondents were likely to see these as replicating existing transport guidance: notably in Local Transport plan guidance and Manual for Streets
- The main usefulness of this recommendation was therefore seen as reinforcing existing guidance such as Manual for Streets, and ensuring that it reached different audiences
- This recommendation will be considerably strengthened if it makes clear reference to the existing policy guidance framework, and presents itself as an evidence-based health endorsement of existing guidance

It's Manual for Streets... I mean NICE presumably should have had input to Manual for Streets... all these recommendations are - I am sure the road user charging is in there but about creating safer routes for schools, restricting access, reallocating space, designing new cycle ways, footpaths, it's now... the Bible for designing streets, is the Manual for Streets.

Planner; Focus group

...if this document is going to reach different sectors of the professional community then this is a great opportunity for cross reference, and perhaps getting other literature that not all sectors are aware of as a cross reference

Urban designer; focus group.

Feasibility

- There are real, practical and significant barriers to translating this guidance into reality at a local level
- The recommendation may be weakened by not taking the broader transport context into account

- The recommendation would be more useful if it were part of an overall transport strategy and made more explicit links to existing government guidance

What this recommendation talks about is priority and we don't actually give priority to people like cyclists and walkers. We put them in the same vicinity and it's frightening. ... if we are going to do that you're actually talking about saying... 'let's close these roads and give them back to the cyclists and the walkers'. ...I don't know. I think very challenging is the short answer because I think giving priorities suggests one side or the other and I think that's... the issue we've got to overcome. We've got to be bold.

Planning policy maker; focus group

...it can very often get wrapped up in local politics and get very awkward indeed and get blocked, because the decision makers don't always see that wider benefit, that strategic benefit of what you are trying to do.

Transport policy maker; focus group

...they need to hang together as part of an overall transport strategy or being related to it, because clearly if you are altering road space arrangements you need to be looking at the higher level in terms of modal shift and try to influence travel cultures at that level, rather than just individual physical measures in local areas, because they come over as being quite rounded otherwise.

Planning policy maker; focus group

Suggested modifications to the recommendation

- Providing links to other similar guidance with a statutory weight would add strength to the recommendations
- A number of participants suggested that the recommendation should emphasise the development of partnerships between the various stakeholders
- A quantifiable benefit to the recommended changes would strengthen the recommendations

- There were some contradictory responses: some participants felt that the recommendation should be shorter and clearer while others felt examples would be useful
- One respondent suggested that the recommendation should provide a targets for the government

And I think that is also important as well if this perhaps doesn't have a statutory weight to it but it can point you in the direction of documents that might give you more backing when you come to make some decisions then I think that's important as well.

Urban designer; focus group

Could we not talk about - into the future take action, could we not reiterate around the partnership, developing partnerships between transport planners, local authorities and health? Rather than just should we take action because that's already statutory, but I think we should really emphasise that point, that whichever you put it health works with those or transport planners work with health. That should be stated and served up rather than it just being that the transport

Physical Activity & Health Development Manager; focus group.

2.3. Recommendation three transport

2.3.1. What the recommendation says

Who should take action?

Transport and urban planners and local transport authorities.

What action should they take?

Plan and provide walking and cycling routes that offer convenient, safe and attractive access to schools and other public facilities, workplaces, shops and social destinations. Ensure these routes are maintained to a high standard and form part of a comprehensive network offering multiple options.

2.3.2. What we found

Relevance

- Most participants felt the recommendation was relevant and in some cases replicating their current work
- Some acknowledge the relevance of the recommendation but have issues about the implementation
- One participant pointed out that health was not considered relevant in current planning guidance and that additional guidance such as this would fall on deaf ears
- Others felt the scope was too narrow and could be expanded further than the physical environment

It's disingenuous isn't it to present it as if it was new if you know in fact it was being said in guidance already?

Environment policy-maker; focus group

Under the new Local Transport Plan 2 which we're now coming into for the next five years, health doesn't feature and there's no targets for walking. There are targets for increasing cycling use but there's no direct target to encourage cycling. We're already now at the stage where we have an obligation – not just a recommendation – but we have an obligation to do a sustainable school strategy and say how we're going to improve sustainable access to schools and already the local transport plan team are saying 'we've already got our strategy, you can't have any more. We're set, we've got the way of evaluating schemes. You can't come to us with another strategy because we've already fixed on this new LTP2 which means we must prioritise congestion, air quality, accessibility and safety and we can't go outside of those and we've got best value targets and all the rest of it.

Transport planner; focus group.

Usefulness

- As before, the main use for this recommendation was seen to be as a health endorsement of existing guidance
- This recommendation might be used in a general context (to make the case for walking or cycling policies) or in more specific situations such as public consultations on specific proposals

If you have a wide variety of professionals and a whole host of angles looking at this type of document then perhaps it is beneficial to actually put examples in...you may get someone from a different field who'd never even thought about reallocating road space. And it might just cause them to make the link.

Cycling/ walking officer; focus group.

...if you can sell them a health benefit rather than just, well 'you know you've got... green credentials', it's actually a stronger argument.

Transport planner; focus group

Feasibility

- There are a number of interest groups, particularly motorists, who may oppose the recommendation
- The practicalities of implementing the recommendation were another issue raised by participants
- A further issue was the need for a critical mass of people who agreed with the general rationale of promoting health to ensure the recommendation is implemented successfully

... if I could go to a consultation and say to a motorist "This is going to benefit your health. You may feel it's going to inconvenience you. It might add a few minutes onto your journey. But it's going to improve your quality of life because of the ... environment. It's going to improve your health 'cos you'll be getting more exercise". And he'd probably still laugh in my face

Transport planner; focus group.

I don't think you would find anyone that could dispute plans about walking and cycling routes that offer convenient, safe and attractive access, but it is almost like what does that mean? How do we do it? Tell us, because what works in one place might not work somewhere else. What factors should we be taking into account? How do you consult everyone, the old lady who has got the views on the cyclists and the walkers and that they promised that they won't fight with each other. So I think it is great and I would love to take it away and do it now, it is just that I think 'OK, how?'

Senior Sport & Active Leisure Officer; focus group

Suggested modifications to the recommendation

- As before, the main modification should be to relate this recommendation to existing statutory guidance
- Participants suggested that public transport and public rights of way were missing from the recommendation
- One participant suggested consultants should be included in the list of people who should take action

To reiterate another point that public transport isn't mentioned here, which needs to be in I would have thought in the transport planning and also with the limitations on transport planners.

Public health specialist; focus group.

...there isn't any reference to the public rights of way network.

Town planner; focus group.

On the 'who should take action?', I think it should also include consultants because they're doing an awful lot of work now for local authorities either through framework agreements.

Cycling/ walking officer; focus group.

2.4. Recommendation four: public open spaces

2.4.1. What the recommendation says

Who should take action?

Designers and managers of public open spaces.

What action should they take?

- Develop and maintain public open spaces that are safe and accessible on foot, by bicycle and via public transport.
- Ensure public open spaces, including public parks and both coastal and forest paths, encourage people to be physically active.

2.4.2. What we found

Relevance

- The recommendation was generally thought to be relevant, if a little basic, and replicating existing guidance from other sources
- Some participants thought the recommendation was helpful in highlighting the importance of physical activity overall. This was sometimes overlooked in the desire to cater for specific needs, such as cyclists, or sports facilities for young people
- The inclusion of public transport was thought to be helpful by one participant
- One participant thought the focus on walking and cycling in open space was unhelpful - as this may encourage driving to open space.

it is important that as part of the recommendation...the issue of reconciling conflict and managing the various of the different recreation users is in there. That's very important to ensure that you get a balance of activity on site, it isn't just purely sports pitches or purely play ...

Planner; focus group.

I think we need to avoid getting into the trap of is this thinking that it is public open space is the right place for people to walking and cycling. If we just think of public open space as some sort of enclosure where you can walk and cycle, then that's a bit worrying because what I am thinking of there is – what I see very often is people driving to a public park, for example, with a bike on a rack on the back, they congest the roads and cause problems in the roads around the park, take the bike off, cycle it round the park and then put it back on the back of the car and off they go again

Transport policy maker; focus group.

Usefulness

- The recommendation was seen to be useful mainly in supporting existing policy initiatives.
- These links could be made more explicit, especially to Rights of Way Improvement Plans and Local Development Frameworks
- One participant thought it would be useful in helping to define open space to include open space in town centres

I think this – rights of way improvement, these principles need to be adopted within the rights of way improvement plans.

Planner; focus group.

This could be a really good opportunity to use this recommendation to talk about the definition of public open space and all the points about inner city redevelopment that we all still have and we've all got our blocks of flats and things but then we've all got our courtyards with bistro bars and all the rest of it

Senior sport and active leisure officer; focus group.

Feasibility

- There were seen to be many barriers to implementing this recommendation. The main barrier was a lack of investment in parks and green space - especially for maintenance
- The potential for conflict between different groups of park users was highlighted by some participants as a significant barrier

- One participant highlighted that cycling is currently banned in many parks and that this recommendation may help to encourage a re-think

Well let me put it this way, any Government that simultaneously presides over a £40 billion a year increase in the National Health Service which is almost entirely medical services, whilst at the same time presiding over a decline in the funding of parks and green spaces maintenance by 35%, is an idiot.

Environment policy maker; focus group.

The guidelines should be about that open spaces should be for multi use, because at the moment it is saying people frown on horse riders, they frown on bikers, they frown – they pretty much frown on anybody who goes into a park – they frown on children – no ball games we have got, no this, no that, no the other, don't paddle in the water, don't do this, don't do that – they put too many restrictions on our open spaces, whereas what we should be doing is actually, I suppose, engineering our open spaces to accommodate everybody's physical activity.

Health promotion specialist; focus group.

Yes, it is just the irony of it, where we try and develop on and off road schemes and yet the majority of our parks in our Borough don't allow cyclists, which not only are a safe, convenient and useful place to teach to bike or even if you are just generally leisure cycling, but they also provide and important, strategic link in the wider cycle network as well.

Transport planner; focus group.

Suggested modifications to the recommendation

- The recommendation should be clarified to ensure that it is clear that it covers all open space (not just green space)
- The examples of coasts and forest paths should be expanded to include waterways, canals, and rivers
- One participant wanted a focus on quality of open space
- Some participants thought that allotments should be explicitly mentioned
- The target audiences should be broadened to include planners of open spaces and policy makers

- One participant suggested adding the word “welcoming” to “safe and accessible”

I think the recommendation needs to be around saying to people how to use all forms of open space to encourage people to be active and not focus on the existing parks but to say, you know, the space between two office blocks, that's a piece of public open space. How are we going to use it to encourage people to be active?

Senior Sport & Active Leisure Officer; focus group.

So I think somewhere the work ‘consistency’ would be useful and I think the word ‘quality’ would be useful because I don’t just think it’s a case of providing green space at a certain frequency or size or whatever, it’s public perceptions that it must be attractive and it must be safe and then it will get used

Environment policy maker; focus group

I would like to see it expanded as well, because I think it is focuses on open spaces, we are thinking of green spaces, we are forgetting canals, we are forgetting allotments, we are forgetting garden plots, we are forgetting river ways, lands that often becomes waste ways and becomes dumping grounds within towns and cities and yet could have a major supporting structure to physical activity.

Health promotion specialist; focus group

2.5. Recommendation five: buildings (walking and cycling)

2.5.1. What the recommendation says

Who should take action?

Architects, designers, developers, planners and employers.

What action should they take?

Ensure new workplaces are linked to walking and cycling networks. Where possible, these links should improve the existing walking and cycling infrastructure.

2.5.2. What we found

Relevance

- The recommendation was viewed as relevant to the work of most participants
- One transport planner suggested that while the recommendation was good in principle, the existing walking and cycling infrastructure is limited
- A number of participants pointed out the practicalities of the recommendation, notably facilities at the workplaces themselves

I think it is very aspirational, it is a matter of what you consider to be walking and cycling networks, because if you go out here there is a walking network on both sides of the road, therefore everything links into that network. The cycling network is the carriageway, everything links into that, but what I think you are really trying to get at is networks that are away from the roads and they are, in most towns and cities, unless you go to somewhere Harlow or Telford or somewhere, those are few and far between. You are going to struggle to get something into the non-highway walking and cycling networks, because the networks are so sparse.

Transport planner; focus group.

It's all very well and good producing a route that you've got to take you five miles to the office but if you haven't got a shower at the other end or somewhere to park your bike, what's the point of having the route if you're not going to use it?

Town planner; focus group.

Usefulness

- The recommendation was considered useful in providing a health-related rationale for the work of the transport planners

It supports the arguments about stuff we have all been trying to do, but not the reasons, it makes that case stronger and makes people aware that we are not just doing it because the highway engineers say you should do it, we are doing it for other reasons. Now that's going to get it through the planning process better.

Transport planner; focus group.

I think stressing that to encourage developers and architects is really important because I think they can miss out on that. They're thinking of security for the site, how they're going to maximise their profit and make these office blocks for the people who are going to use them but they don't think about the community benefits around them.

Environment policy maker; focus group.

Feasibility

- Participants identified significant practical issues and competing interests that may challenge implication of the recommendation
- The recommendation needs to be placed in a broader context and not viewed in isolation

From my own experience from industrial parks on the outside of town, at the development control stage they are supposed to put in cycle ways around the estate, but then once they get them in all the cycle ways stop and they are back out onto the road, on to the footpath – so I think it needs more of a strategic, broader view of where future links should be and then these more awful links – kind of do your best for people for where they want to go.

Town planner; focus group.

... we were speaking different languages. We, when we were working with them were talking about accessibility for the site and they were thinking about the people who were going to come and drive or cycle to the site and park and use the offices, not accessibility across the site for the existing community that surrounded it. I think it was just a difference of language really.

Environment policy maker; focus group.

Suggested modifications to the recommendation

- The recommendations should link to existing guidance
- One participant pointed out the recommendation is inconsistent in its use of the phrase 'where possible'

Much as [name] mentioned earlier about transport assessments - another tool that we want to plug this principle into – are the design and access statements.

Town planner; focus group.

Well I would hope that certain... key important elements would actually start coming out in planning directives.

Town planner; focus group.

I was just wondering why in the 'what action should we take?' we've added 'where possible'? With all the other recommendations we've said the evidence suggests you should be doing this and it's like why would it not be possible – if you're providing new links how can it ever not improve the existing network?

Senior Sport & Active Leisure Officer; focus group.

2.6. Recommendation six: buildings (campus sites)

2.6.1. What the recommendation says

Who should take action?

Architects, designers, developers, planners and employers.

What action should they take?

- Those involved with campus sites should ensure different parts of the site are linked by appropriate walking and cycling routes.
- Those involved with other sites should ensure the layout is designed to encourage physical activity, including walking, cycling and other forms of 'active travel'.

2.6.2. What we found

Relevance

- The recommendation was only directly relevant to a minority of participants
- The recommendation was thought to be relevant to the stated target audience, though it could be seen to replicate some existing guidance
- Some participants felt the recommendation was relevant but needed to be stronger

...a lot of this is very much in the right direction and very much what people are already doing along planning lines or promoting cycling but sometimes it's done with an element of tokenism where you get one bike rack outside a supermarket and there's a real opportunity here by some of the specific issues to actually set the bar a bit higher and to provide some challenge about, you know, are we talking secure covered bike parking and put some of that in the recommendations. It does stretch existing practice and move it on a bit. No-one is going to question that coming from a health perspective but they might if they come from the transport perspective, so I think there is a challenge to be a bit more ambitious.

Strategic planner; focus group.

Usefulness

- The recommendation would be most useful if it targeted specific bodies
- The involvement of NICE in setting recommendations provides a catalyst to discuss active travel
- Others identified practicalities that may make the recommendation difficult to use and that it needed to be more specific
- Case studies would be useful in describing the benefits of following this recommendation

I am just thinking that initially everything you've got in here, all of the recommendations, it's the sort of things that the, the planning authority needs to take on board, particularly the district authority when they're preparing their local developed frameworks... the recommendations from this report need to go directly into that kind of document in order for it to make a real difference.

Transport planner; focus group.

I think written like this it allows you to do a tick box exercise without thinking about the practical realities of delivering it because it's not that specific. So this issue about the work place and the issue about where do you put your bike when you get home, where does that fit into all this? ... You don't want to make things too explicit because then there's no flexibility is there? The balance has got to be right but I think this is too general.

Environment policy maker; focus group.

Feasibility

- As before, it was noted that the recommendation needed to link to the statutory guidance and planning legislation, to have more authority
- One participant identified there may be competing recommendations

Planning authorities have the power to impose planning conditions which ensure that these objectives...are actually built in.

Transport planner; focus group.

There might be disability issues for example. All of those should be flagged up as little caveats as well like if there is a disability and discrimination act, installation of fire hazards and health and safety.

Planning policy maker; focus group.

2.7. Recommendation seven: buildings (stairs)

2.7.1. What the recommendation says

Who should take action?

Architects, designers and facility managers of public buildings (including workplaces and schools).

What action should they take?

- During building design or refurbishment, ensure staircases are designed and positioned to encourage people to use them.
- Ensure staircases are clearly signposted and are attractive to use. For example, they should be well-lit and well-decorated (and possibly carpeted, where regulations allow).

2.7.2. What we found

Relevance

- A number of participants queried why this recommendation was so specific about staircases

...why staircases in particular? More generally it's the internal layout of a building that's the issue. What we're talking about in terms of that building, I wondered why staircases has been picked out of buildings as being the issue?

Planner; focus group.

Usefulness

- The main usefulness of this recommendation was in its focus on the health-promoting aspects of stairs, which may have been lost in the drive towards greater accessibility within buildings
- While overall this recommendation was seen to be useful, some participants felt that a focus on stairs drew attention away from other larger issues relating to unhealthy environments

I think it might redress the balance because we're lobbied very heavily by disability group because the legislation as well suggests that you've got to provide a common facility, you shouldn't be providing an alternative.

Architect; focus group.

I was only wondering, would it be unfair to say that what happens inside a building as far as making it less obesogenic is really the small change of this argument? It's whether children are able to walk to school and cycle to school which is the issue and whether they can play in the playground is much more significant than whether they can actually move up and down stairs inside the building. I just got the feeling that buildings are small change.

Environment policy maker; focus group.

Feasibility

- It was pointed out that there may be some conflict between this recommendation and existing guidance, notably building and health and safety legislation, and the Disability Discrimination Act
- There are also cultural and financial barriers to encouraging a shift back to greater prominence for stairs

I think if we were being responsible we would be recommending things to the client...but there again you put a staircase in it has to comply to the building regulations that relate to that so the stairs would then have to comply with part M [of the DDA] again which just unfortunately has to be a low riser...they're not nice stairs for normal people to walk up. You and I would probably take them two at a time.

Architect; one-to-one

NICE need to understand the constraints round building design. Often you see the staircases and lifts are designed – staircases wrap around lifts

in core areas of buildings because it's efficient designing buildings that way.

Town planner; Focus group

...at the end of the day I think it will be cost – it is cost isn't it, it is the retail square footage and where they position stairs and things like that will be relative to the cost of that square footage and if it is right in the front door off the main High Street, that's big, high premium retail space, so you have got to really do a sales job to convince an architect or indeed the person who owns the building that that's the right place to put the lift, but I think it is for cultural change, you can undoubtedly, there are some magnificent buildings that attract people in by virtue of their design. So it is a sales job that's got to be done.

Environment policy maker; focus group

2.8. Recommendation eight: schools

2.8.1. What the recommendation says

Who should take action?

Children's services, school sports partnerships, school governing bodies and primary school head teachers.

What action should they take?

Ensure primary school playgrounds encourage varied, physically active play by creating zones for different types of activity such as traditional (and other) individual and team games. The zones could be created using colourful markings.

2.8.2. What we found

Relevance

- A number of participants asked why the recommendation focused only on primary school playgrounds
- Others identified an overlap with other initiatives such as healthy schools
- One participant thought the recommendation would help in attracting project funding
- Another participant suggested that it may help make the health effects of planning decisions more visible to planners

In terms of the healthy schools one of the key criteria is to increase the opportunity for physical activity and this is obviously a prime way of doing it

School travel officer; focus group.

So I think it's perfectly reasonable to provide something which is going to help people plan for health and that's a very important issue and at the moment – certainly I'm with planners the whole time and I just don't get any sense that they feel it's important, or if they do, how to plan for health.

Strategic planner; focus group.

Usefulness

- Many participants were surprised that the recommendation was so specific and focused when others had been very broad and strategic
- The recommendation might be useful in developing partnerships with other health agencies to attract funding, and to support discussions with planners

...if we're going to be prescriptive then we have to include everything. If not then keep it fairly general and put some examples perhaps at another place where you can use best practice.

Strategic health advisor; focus group.

I would be going to the PCT - to say 'look, somebody such as NICE are saying this is something you should be involved in' whereas at the moment what would happen is they would go to the local authority and say 'well it's a school. What do I want to put money into it for?'. So that's the thing for me, the added lever to bring in partners... At the moment I'm using your guidance for the obesity stuff and because of the way it's set out it makes it quite clear it's got local authorities recommendations, PCT recommendations, schools recommendations and so for me I look to my bit and then if I'm going to see a partner I look at their bit, so I know what I'm going to talk to them about.

School traffic officer; focus group.

Feasibility

- The recommendation may not be used directly but rather as a first point of reference

I can't see it is going to have any kind of particular statutory weight, but what it might have is particular interest that practitioners think 'well that's a great document, I am going to look at that because it maybe of interest to me, because it seems to have been successful by results' or whatever ...

Transport planner; focus group.

Suggested modifications to the recommendation

- A number of suggestions were made about what could be included in the recommendation including green outside play areas and sensory gardens,
- One participant suggested a cost benefit analysis would strengthen the recommendation

- The recommendation could mention health benefits other than increased physical activity such as improved mental health, improved academic performance, etc.
- The recommendation could extend to travel between home and school
- The recommendation should include reference to indoor spaces due to the often inclement weather
- One participant suggested that the recommendation should be specific about the need to change the markings frequently

I think it is essential that they are varied but also they are changed because children get bored and I think that's what's happened with the playground that I was aware of in Preston that it is all good and well having these markings, but they need to be changed at a regular basis because the children don't participate if they get bored.

Physical activity and health development manager; focus group.

3. Conclusions

The fieldwork set out to answer the following questions:

What are the views of practitioners on the relevance and usefulness of the guidance to their current practice; and potential consequences for improving health and tackling health inequalities.

The practitioners were generally positive about the recommendations and felt they would be relevant and useful to their work. Participants felt the recommendations would be useful in supporting planning decisions based on improving active transport, in making requests for funding and in fostering interdisciplinary working. There was general agreement that the recommendations could impact on health particularly in supporting existing guidance which aims to develop healthy transport and public policy.

What factors, for instance service configuration, could either help or hinder the effective implementation and delivery of the guidance as part of current practice.

There are significant factors that may hinder implementation of these recommendations. The most significant is the limited budget available for changes to the environment. Linked to this is the issue of competing priorities: improving physical activity is not top of the list of local authority priorities. In addition, participants identified the competing priorities of the car lobby, public safety and crime reduction initiatives as hindering the effective implementation and delivery of the guidance.

What is the potential impact of the recommendations on service provision and current practice generally?

The greatest potential impact of the recommendations was seen to be supporting current practice, and adding the 'voice of public health' to much of the existing guidance on planning and transport.

Which of the recommendations are feasible?

All recommendations were seen as feasible although participants queried the range in specificity of the various recommendations. They also identified gaps in the recommendations where the evidence did not support guidance which the participants felt was self-evident.

Which of them are likely to make a difference to practice?

Rather than make a radical alteration to current practice the recommendations are more likely to support those trying to improve conditions for physical activity. In particular they will help in bringing together interested parties and in adding weight to the need for policy and planning which promotes active transport.

What would be the relative priority of each of the recommendations for the different practitioner groups involved?

Participants naturally viewed the importance of the recommendations from their own professional perspectives (so the transport people tended to favour the transport recommendations and so on.) Recommendation 1 was generally thought to be the most important. After that, recommendations were quite equally weighted with the exception of Recommendation 7 (stairs) and Recommendation 8 (school playgrounds) which were seen as somewhat peripheral.

4. Key Recommendations from this research

Detailed recommendations for changes to each draft recommendation can be found in the preceding sections. This section brings together recommendations that apply to the whole guidance document.

- The recommendations from NICE should be much more explicitly linked to the existing policy framework. They should show clearly how they are linked to current legislation; policy and guidance. In particular:
 - Planning Policy Guidance 13 (Transport)
 - Planning Policy Guidance 17 (open space, sport and recreation)
 - Dept for Transport Manual for Streets
 - Dept for Transport guidance on full Local Transport Plans
 - Local development frameworks
 - Community strategies
 - Regional Spatial Strategies
 - Building regulations
 - Disability Discrimination Act
- The guidance should make it clearer that the recommendations are based on reviews of the available evidence of effectiveness, and should acknowledge that this may lead to re-statement (or endorsement) of existing knowledge and the existing policy framework. This should lead to the guidance being positioned more as NICE's evidence-based endorsement of the existing policy framework.

- The links between the evidence statements and guidance recommendations need to be clarified.
- The guidance (or accompanying implementation guide) should be much clearer about *how* to implement the recommendations. Much of this may be signposting to existing policy documents.
- The 'level' of recommendation may need to be re-considered, as some participants noted recommendations ranged from broad strategic issues to specific detailed points.

APPENDIX ONE

Recruitment email copy

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE).

Forthcoming guidance on the promotion and creation of physical environments that support increased levels of physical activity

I am writing to ask for your help in nominating colleagues who may be willing to contribute to the development of forthcoming NICE guidance on physical activity and the environment.

The guidance is for NHS and non-NHS professionals who have a direct or indirect role in – and responsibility for – the environment. This includes those working in: local authorities and the education, community, voluntary and private sectors.

NICE has conducted a number of systematic reviews of the evidence for the effectiveness (and cost effectiveness) of interventions that have changed the environment and may have helped to influence levels of physical activity. This includes topics such as strategic planning, urban policy, urban planning; transport; and the design of cities; parks, open spaces and buildings.

NICE has asked its Physical Activity Collaborating Centre (a collaboration between Oxford and Loughborough Universities) to conduct fieldwork among relevant professional audiences to test the draft guidance. This will aim to make sure that the final guidance is relevant to the end users, and has the greatest possible impact.

The fieldwork meetings will take half a day and will be held in Manchester (3rd July); York (4th July); Bristol (19th July) and London (24th July). We will be inviting people who are from the target audiences for this guidance. These include people such as:

- Transport planners
- Town planners
- Architects
- Urban designers
- Facility managers
- Park managers
- Local education authorities

If you would like to attend a meeting, and contribute to this important guidance, please reply to this email with your name job title and contact details.

Also please let us know the contact details of people who work in this field who you think we should contact. Thanks for your help

APPENDIX TWO

Discussion guide

Discussion guide

Final Draft

Nick introduction

Welcome

Before handing over to Mike...

Collaborating centre intro

Why NICE?

NICE role in public health

PDG – systematic reviews – evidence into guidance

Now we need YOUR OPINIONS

Recommendations are evidence-based: some might appear obvious; some people may think things are missing – in general this is probably due to a lack of evidence in certain areas.

Hand over – intro Mike & Steve

Mike Introduction

Welcome

Any housekeeping

Introduction to physical activity and environment guidance development

The process today: focus group, to find out what you think.

Main aims: to test the relevance, usefulness and the feasibility of implementing NICE's recommendations on physical activity and the environment

We want to know what you think of the guidance; how relevant it is; how useful it will be to you in your work; and how feasible the recommendations are. Overall, we want to know how to make sure the guidance has as much impact as possible.

You have been specifically invited as the potential audience for these recommendations. Your views are important.

You should have filled in a form at registration:

Consent to tape recording.

Confidentiality: your identity will only be known to people on the team producing the reports for NICE. Report will be anonymised.

Speak one at a time (to help tape recording) through the chair

Speak freely – we are interested in criticism as well as positive comments

Go round briefly each person introduce – for the tape as much as for each other.

Introduction to the guidance

You were sent the draft guidance by email...

We will focus on each specific recommendation one by one.

NOT comment on evidence OR the rest of the guidance draft doc

First: any comments in general on the draft guidance?

Specific guidance points.

Group to be provided with clear printout of recommendations

What do you think of this recommendation?

How relevant is it to you?

How useful will it be to you in your work?

How feasible is this?

Will you do this?

If not why not?

What factors might stop this from happening?

Probe: service configuration? (NICE-speak)

working culture?

Time?

Money?

How onerous will this be to your work? Is it extra work?

Does this happen anyway?

Will it make a difference?

To what extent does this recommendation reinforce aspects of existing government policy?

To what extent do you think this recommendation will help in improving health and tackling health inequalities?

Do you have suggestions for amendments to the recommendation to maximise its potential impact?

'Are there any other comments or thoughts you would like to add about this particular recommendation?'

Summary

WHAT IS MISSING?

WHAT IS IMPORTANT?

Go round group to mention their top priority recommendations for potential impact

Thanks and leave notes if you want

Appendix Three

Draft recommendations

Strategies, policies and plans

Recommendation 1

Who should take action?

Those responsible for developing new towns, urban extensions, major regeneration projects, the siting or closure of local services and all other strategies, policies and plans which involve environmental change.

What action should they take?

- Involve local communities and experts at all stages of the development to ensure the potential for physical activity is maximised. This includes ensuring people can easily access local facilities and services on foot, by bicycle or by another form of 'active travel'. It also includes ensuring that children can participate in physically active play.
- Ensure planning applications for new developments always prioritise the need for people to lead physically active lives. This includes ensuring people can easily access local facilities and services on foot, by bicycle or by another form of 'active travel'. It also includes ensuring that children can participate in physically active play.
- Assess in advance what impact (both intended and unintended) the proposals are likely to have on physical activity levels. (For example, will local services be accessible on foot, by bicycle or by another form of 'active travel'?) Existing impact assessment tools could be used. Make the results of these assessments publicly available.

Transport

Recommendation 2

Who should take action?

Local transport authorities, transport planners and local authorities.

What action should they take?

Ensure the needs of pedestrians and cyclists are given priority when developing or maintaining streets and roads. Use one or more of the following methods:

- restrict motor vehicle access (for example, by closing or narrowing roads to reduce capacity)
- re-allocate road space to cyclists and pedestrians (for example, by widening pavements and introducing cycle lanes)
- consider selective road-user charging schemes
- introduce traffic calming schemes
- create safe routes to school (for example, via traffic-calming measures near schools and by creating walking and cycle routes to schools).

Recommendation 3

Who should take action?

Transport and urban planners and local transport authorities.

What action should they take?

Plan and provide walking and cycling routes that offer convenient, safe and attractive access to schools and other public facilities, workplaces, shops and social destinations. Ensure these routes are maintained to a high standard and form part of a comprehensive network offering multiple options.

Public open spaces

Recommendation 4

Who should take action?

Designers and managers of public open spaces.

What action should they take?

- Develop and maintain public open spaces that are safe and accessible on foot, by bicycle and via public transport.
- Ensure public open spaces, including public parks and both coastal and forest paths, encourage people to be physically active.

Buildings

Recommendation 5

Who should take action?

Architects, designers, developers, planners and employers.

What action should they take?

Ensure new workplaces are linked to walking and cycling networks. Where possible, these links should improve the existing walking and cycling infrastructure.

Recommendation 6

Who should take action?

Architects, designers, developers, planners and employers.

What action should they take?

- Those involved with campus sites should ensure different parts of the site are linked by appropriate walking and cycling routes.
- Those involved with other sites should ensure the layout is designed to encourage physical activity, including walking, cycling and other forms of 'active travel'.

Recommendation 7

Who should take action?

Architects, designers and facility managers of public buildings (including workplaces and schools).

What action should they take?

- During building design or refurbishment, ensure staircases are designed and positioned to encourage people to use them.
- Ensure staircases are clearly signposted and are attractive to use. For example, they should be well-lit and well-decorated (and possibly carpeted, where regulations allow).

Schools

Recommendation 8

Who should take action?

Children's services, school sports partnerships, school governing bodies and primary school head teachers.

What action should they take?

Ensure primary school playgrounds encourage varied, physically active play by creating zones for different types of activity such as traditional (and other) individual and team games. The zones could be created using colourful markings.

Appendix Four: consent form



National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)

Physical activity collaborating centre

Physical Activity and the Environment Focus Groups

Consent Form

PLEASE NOTE: The focus groups will be tape recorded, and the transcripts used as the basis for a report to NICE. This report will not identify people by name. Identities will only be known to the NICE collaborating centre team and people working on this project.

I HEREBY GIVE CONSENT TO THE RECORDING AND TRANSCRIPTION OF THE FOCUS GROUP SESSION.

Name (including title)	
Job title	
Organisation	
Address	

Telephone number	
Email	
Date of Focus Group	
Location of focus group	

Can we contact you after the day if we have any additional questions and queries?

yes / No

SIGNED	
DATE	

Appendix Five

Examples of participants' job titles by assigned category

Job Category	Example Job Title
Architect	Architect Landscape Architect
Environment	Commissioner Head of Parks & Open Spaces Chief Executive Health Policy Advisor Recreation & Public Affairs Support Health & Environment Specialist Countryside Manager
Planning	Planner Planning Officer Asst Executive Director Regional Director Regional Planning Manager Urban Designer Head of Planning & Economic Policy Strategic Implementation Officer (Strategic Planning)
Public health	Health & Fitness Co-ordinator Health Inequalities Officer Senior Health Promotion Specialist (Housing, Environment & Self Care) Walking & Cycling for Health Development Worker Public Health Development Manager Physical Activity Manager Walking for Health Coordinator
Transport	Transport Planner Transportation Policy Manager Chief Policy Officer Principal Transport Officer (Policy) Policy Officer (Cycling) Senior Officer - Travel Awareness Travel Awareness Officer Bike It Officer

Group Engineer Local Transport Plan
Policy Advisor (Transport)

Other

Councillor
Regional Coordinator
Regional Healthy Schools Co-ordinator
Senior Sport & Active Leisure Officer

References

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Kitzinger J. 1995. 'Introducing focus groups'. British Medical Journal; 311:299-302.

Pope C, Ziebland S, Mays N. 2000. Qualitative research in health care. Analysing qualitative data. British Medical Journal. 320(7227):114-6.