



SECTION 4

Towards sustainable services

Guide for services and paths
to improvement for:

COMMUNITY

HEALTH

Sustainable Development at the service level

The Local Government in Scotland Act (2003) established Sustainable Development as a statutory duty within the Best Value regime. The Best Value regime requires all local authorities to continuously improve their performance and secure services of the highest quality at a cost that is acceptable to their local communities. **Sustainable development is an integral part of local authorities' efforts to deliver Best Value.**

'A local authority which secures Best Value will be able to demonstrate a contribution to sustainable development — consideration of the social, economic and environmental impacts of activities and decisions both in the shorter and longer term.'

As well as being a corporate aim, sustainable development should be part of every service's plans and operations. This chapter aims to answer the question **"what would a sustainable development approach to community health look like?"**

As Chapter 7 of the Best Value guidance states, "2. Contributing to the achievement of sustainable development (should be) reflected in the authority's objectives and highlighted in all strategies and plans at corporate and service level"

This chapter provides a **self-assessment questionnaire** outlining **Paths to Improvement**. This is designed to enable you to **assess your current position**. It also sets a framework within which you may, step by step, progressively engage more fully with sustainable development.

On the right hand side of each 'Paths to Improvement' table are three columns headed **'Policy'**, **'Being Implemented'**, and **'Outcomes'**. These stages enable the authority to assess whether they have reached the stage of policy; or progressed to implementation; or have moved on to reach outcomes.

The stages are defined below:

Policy	The Council has considered the topic, then adopted a policy to address it. There is a commitment and decision to seek change and improvement ; and outcomes are being set.
Being Implemented	The Council is implementing policy ; this is reflected in financial allocations ; revenue and/or capital allocations; plans and strategies for the topic; agreement with relevant partner agencies; staff responsibilities and job descriptions. Resources and procedures are in place to secure change and improvement.
Outcomes	The outcomes of the policy are being measured, and there are measurable deliverables. Change and improvement is being achieved, and is being monitored and reported.

It must be stressed that the process of continuous improvement is not prescriptive:

- **If this chapter does not pose the right questions for you please adapt the questionnaire accordingly.** Many local authorities have done this, to great effect.
- **It is also not intended that the questionnaire should be used solely as a checklist with 'yes' or 'no' answers.** Please add detail, such as – what evidence do you have to show that policy is being implemented? Who is responsible for this?



Towards sustainable services: Community Health

Health too is an integral part of the concept of sustainable development. It was at the heart of the original Rio Declaration but, unlike climate change and energy, it has tended to become separated in the minds of those who are devising and implementing strategies to achieve both (CIEH, 2003). There are signs that the gap is closing, reflected in the chapter on well-being in *Choosing Our Future*.

Guidance from Ministers is clear that the 3 core elements of the 2003 Act – **the power to advance well-being, community planning and Best Value should be seen as inter-related**, and all are required to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Guidance on well-being is explicit that alongside economic, social and environmental matters it may include “*health related factors such as the promotion of good physical, social and mental health and developing and promoting policies which have a positive impact on health outcomes, especially on health inequalities.*” Well being, leading to self confidence and higher self esteem, should be part of achieving sustainable development, along with the economic, social and environmental facets. **Human health implications are also amongst the matters required to be considered in Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA).** This has a direct bearing on all local authority plans and strategies within the scope of the SEA requirements, which include all public

sector strategies plans and programmes, as well as development plans and local transport strategies.

However, the approach is far from being just top down. **Councils are responsible for the delivery of a wide range of services which impact directly on public health** and well-being - from social care, housing, education and community safety to environmental health, transport, and leisure and recreation. Health authorities have been amongst the most active community planning partners, and there has been recognition of the mutual responsibility with local authorities for the well-being of people in their area. The relationship grows from the **role of councils in supporting health** – for example the provision of accessible leisure, recreation and sports facilities, and through diet and nutrition – and reducing sources of harm such as pollutants. Conversely health authorities contribute to sustainable development (as well as health care) through the location and accessibility of facilities, and their procurement and estate management policies. From starting points of this kind, the process of mutual support is growing.

There is also a role for practical steps such as **linking hospital chest clinics to social services to stop the ‘cycle’ of patients**; or alerting social services when a patient is in hospital so that homes can be improved before or when they return home.

Paths to improvement include:	Policy	Being Implemented	Outcomes
Is there partnership working with community plan partners to address health inequalities ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there partnership working with health authorities to improve the co-ordination of social care activities, with localised and integrated services , closer to the user in their communities and in their homes where appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there development of joint premises containing integrated health and social care services in accessible one stop shops?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do the provision and location of health care facilities take into account transport , including public transport availability, and their potential role in or adjacent to town centres supporting renewal as well as a walk-in catchment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are sources of pollution (indoor and outdoor air quality, water quality, contaminated land etc) that damage or jeopardise human health being identified, including through SEA and planning processes, and then tackled?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
See also child transport (under education)			
See also fuel poverty (under climate change and energy)			
See also provision of accessible leisure and recreation facilities, including paths and greenspaces (under leisure, sport, recreation and culture)			
See also diet and nutrition (under both education and social services)			

This chapter is part of the **Sustainable Scotland Network's Best Value & Sustainable Development Toolkit**. To view the complete toolkit, go to www.sustainable-scotland.net/bestvalue