



Health Impact Assessment - 'Rhyl Going Forward - Neighbourhood and Places Delivery Plan 2011/12', Denbighshire County Council (DCC)

Introduction

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a process which supports organisations to assess the potential consequences of their decisions on people's health and well-being. The Welsh Government (WG) is committed to developing its use as a key part of its strategy to improve health and reduce inequalities.

Health impact assessment provides a systematic yet flexible and practical framework that can be used to consider the wider effects of local and national policies or initiatives and how they, in turn, may affect people's health. It works best when it involves people and organisations who can contribute different kinds of relevant knowledge and insight. The information is then used to build in measures to maximise opportunities for health and to minimise any risks and it can also identify any 'gaps' that can then be filled. HIA can also provide a way of addressing the inequalities in health that continue to persist in Wales by identifying any groups within the population who may be particularly affected by a policy or plan.

The Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU) was established to support the development of HIA in Wales and is funded by Welsh Government via Cardiff University and Public Health Wales. Its remit is to support, facilitate, train and build capacity in HIA and raise awareness of how the process can support and contribute to improving health and wellbeing.

Background

The North Wales Coast Strategic Regeneration Area (SRA) was designated by the Welsh Government (WG) in October 2008. The aim of this initiative is; 'to transform the SRA into a thriving and vibrant coastal area that is welcoming and friendly and which supports prosperous communities within a locally sustainable economy.' The Welsh Government has allocated significant finance to support the SRA, with the intention that the funding will also be used to draw down European Convergence money and help pump-prime private sector investment where appropriate.

The SRA extends from Prestatyn in the east to Mochdre in the west, and interventions seek to maximise linkages between different strategic sectors and are intended to address the fundamental weaknesses that currently exist within the area's economy, health and social cohesion. Resource allocation within the SRA will be focussed primarily on the issues that can bring about genuine change to the socio-economic profile of the area. The regeneration of the coastal towns of Rhyl and Colwyn Bay is central to this strategy.

Within Rhyl itself, investment in the physical environment predates the establishment of the SRA and has been guided by the Rhyl Going Forward - Strategy and Key Investment Programme submitted to the Welsh Government in April 2004. Since this date a multitude of further studies, feasibilities and strategies have been commissioned which has led to a somewhat confused and fragmented approach to regeneration in the area. To rectify this, consultants were commissioned in October 2010 to pull together all the work to date, undertake some further research and analysis where gaps existed, and to produce a Strategic Regeneration Framework. At the heart of the Strategic Regeneration Framework is the concept of:

- Recreating Rhyl as a place where people choose to live and stay
- Rediscovering Rhyl as a place to visit

Addressing regeneration in a comprehensive way to achieve this aim requires action in three broad areas: the physical, economic and social. In order to deliver this action effectively (given existing and prospective human and financial resources) it has been necessary to prioritise activity. The 'Rhyl Going Forward Neighbourhood and Places Delivery Plan' is one of the three identified main themes Action Plans. The others are Economy and Skills (economic theme) and People and Communities (social theme). It focuses on the physical environmental elements of the Framework and outlines the interventions in Rhyl that are planned in sites, buildings and associated neighbourhood management issues over the next three years. It contains a number of key work streams with differing aims:

- West Rhyl Regeneration Area - this has a particular focus on Homes of Multiple Occupation (HMO's) and the provision of new or restored high quality housing
- Coastal Strip - this focuses on the improving the quality of the coastal strip and the associated experiences of using it for recreation
- Town Centre - aims to strengthen the retail core of the town centre and develop a vibrant and thriving independent sector
- Housing and Neighbourhoods - aims to improve the quality of new and existing homes in Rhyl and try to embed a sense of neighbourhood and community
- Connected and Permeable - focuses on making Rhyl's neighbourhoods, town centre, open spaces and coastal strip better connected and accessible to all.

The Delivery Plan will also be linked to the work of the other themes and their individual Delivery Plans.

The Health Impact Assessment

The health impact assessment built on a variety of evidence that had already been collated by the project team. This aimed to inform the future direction of the Rhyl GF Delivery Plan and supported a number of projects that were contained within it.

Evidence

In putting together the Rhyl GF Delivery Plan, the local authority had consulted with many partner organisations. It used the available local evidence base and knowledge to inform the direction of the Plan and the principle of it ties in with national, regional and local Regeneration strategies (2, 3, 4). This evidence included community information and statistics from local authority and census data (5,6) and supporting research (7,8).

Historically, there have always been links between regeneration, rural and urban planning and health and wellbeing. This included joint initiatives for better, more sanitary housing,

better services and open green spaces in areas for physical and social activity (9). Regeneration has significant potential to improve health, because it targets one or more determinants of health (10). Physical regeneration alone can improve housing stocks and the environment generally; making people living in an area feel better about it and improve their mental health and wellbeing. A more attractive, safer environment also helps people build social networks and become more physically active. Improved economic opportunities can allow people to access jobs and get a higher income, which can significantly boost the choices open to them. Research indicates that the quality of housing and internal and external environments that people live in can have a detrimental or beneficial impact on their health and wellbeing (11,12, 13, 14, 15). Also, Neighbourhood Renewal is an increasingly prevalent policy direction in the UK that emphasises social regeneration, the importance of tackling deprivation and narrowing the health gap. It recognises that people's health, and their opportunities, may be affected by where they live (16).

The Rhyl GF Delivery Plan aims to provide better quality business and leisure facilities for the town of Rhyl, improve its physical environment and to renew and regenerate housing and living conditions for those in identified target areas of the town. This includes areas of Rhyl West which according to the Welsh Multiple Index of Deprivation for Wales (WMID) have been recognised as amongst the most deprived in Wales (7). The Principal HIA Development Officer searched for previous similar projects that had been subject to a HIA via respected and reputable HIA networks (17, 18, 19). Only a handful of HIA's were identified which had been conducted in recent years in the UK. Most of these focussed specifically on the regeneration of a localised area or the redevelopment of housing stock. (20, 21) Others were identified through personal contacts and knowledge (22, 23). Two of the projects contained within the Plan (the Denbighshire Housing Renewal Area Plan and the BRAND Initiative) had already been subject to a HIA involving WHIASU (24, 25).

Therefore, the HIA was mainly qualitative in nature. It was led by Libby Evans, Health and Well-being Programme Manager, NW Coast Regeneration Area Programme and Liz Green, Principal HIA Development Officer from the Wales Health Impact Assessment Support Unit (WHIASU). They were supported by Delyth Wyn Jones, Principal Public Health Officer from Public Health Wales (PHW) regional public health team. It followed the systematic methodology described in the Welsh HIA guidance 'Improving Health and Reducing Inequalities: A Practical Guide to HIA (1) and was held in the Committee Room, Russell House in Rhyl on the March 2nd 2012. A number of local stakeholders were invited to participate in the HIA. Those who attended are listed below.

Attendees

Delyth Jones	Principal Public Health Officer, Public Health Wales
Tom Booty	Rhyl Going Forward Programme Manager, Denbighshire County Council
Rachel Burford-Morris	Performance and Planning Officer, Partnerships and Communities, Denbighshire County Council
Cllr John Bellis	(rep Rhyl Business Group)
Cllr Ian Gunning	(rep Rhyl Town Council)
Sarah Baldwin	Assistant Surveyor, Pennaf Housing group
Joanne Howes	Operations Manager, Rhyl City Strategy
Annette Hennessey	Local Service Board Development Officer, Conwy and Denbighshire Local Service Board
Libby Evans	Welsh Government, Health and Well-being Programme Manager, NW Coast Regeneration Area Programme

Vulnerable Groups and Equity

The HIA aimed to highlight not just potential positive or negative health and wellbeing impacts that the plan may have but also to identify any key local client/vulnerable groups within the population who could be affected by it. These vulnerable groups were identified at the outset, using Appendix 2 of the Welsh guidance.

It was specified that the following groups could be potentially affected more than other population groups in Rhyl:

Age related groups

- Whole community (but particularly children/young people and older people)

Income related groups

- Business sector
- Working families

Groups who suffer discrimination or other social disadvantage

- Mental health
- Dependency issues
- Tourists
- Transient populations (schools and health service provision impact)

Geographical issues

- Geographical advantage /disadvantage

During this session, two key issues were immediately raised - those of the plans for the Royal Alexandra Hospital, Rhyl and the Rhyl Promenade - which includes a partially completed cycle path. The Promenade would be discussed within the framework of the Rhyl GF Delivery Plan. However, the Royal Alexander Hospital plans were to be discussed at a separate Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) workshop on March 29th hosted by the Betsi Cadwaladr University Local Health Board (BCUHB). Details were provided to those who expressed an interest.

After agreement on the above groups, the participants then worked through the wider or social determinants of health in order to assess the potential health and wellbeing impacts of the Plan (as listed in Appendix 1 of the Welsh guidance), identifying if they were positive or negative and if there were any gaps within it or its planned projects.

As other statistical and academic evidence had been considered already, the aim of this workshop was primarily to gather lay, community and organisational knowledge and evidence to identify any potential health impacts of the Delivery Plan. Many positive impacts were identified; a few detrimental were highlighted alongside other potential implications for the delivery of the Plan. These are all summarised in the table below. Mitigation was discussed within the assessment, recommendations proposed and aimed to reduce any possible detrimental effects. It was concluded that current practice, evidence gathered, broad participation and continued learning from stakeholders would inform and ensure the effectiveness of the Plan and associated projects throughout its lifetime.

Lifestyles	
<p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cycle network - promotes physical activity • Promenade - promotes physical activity • Aquatic centre - competitive element needs to be considered alongside/pricing need to be affordable • Developments need to consider healthy eating alongside physical activity • Encouragement of food co-ops as part of development • Green space - function to be developed with the community • Community orchards and allotments - develop with the community • Cycling - infrastructure may need developments ie cycle bridge 	<p>-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction work may at times limit physical activity within the town
Social and community influences on health	
<p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse community attracted to the area • Sense of belonging/social pride/community cohesion (getting people involved in their community) - focus on West Rhyl in particularly • Cultivate a sense of community - rebrand the area. Creation of new green space • Rhyl High School - community sense and involvement - linked to the 	<p>-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to consider community development elements following the construction of the building - not currently reflected in the plan • Need to consider the balance in the population • Divisions caused in the community through 'labelling' and the negativity that is directed towards West Rhyl • Need to consider the number of people living in Homes of

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rhyl Rugby Club • Encourage community engagement and involvement in community projects such as 'The Cut' ie establish a Friends of The Cut' group 	<p>Multiple Occupation (HMO's)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People on benefits/with dependency issues - will they be displaced? Or relocated? Need to consider these.
<p>Living environmental conditions affecting health</p>	
<p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water quality - blue flag • Marine lake - blue flag - triathlon events proposed • Access to beach front for people with mobility issues • Fuel poverty (likely to be addressed if in the right postcode) • Fit trail -linked to play areas to be considered • Events arena - night time economy 	<p>-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood defences - rocks opportunities for injuries • Cycle networks for local areas. Need safe places to store bikes securely • Fuel poverty - plan does not adequately address this across the whole of the area • Events arena - noise pollution directly into town currently rather than out to sea • Disruption - short term when building happens (consider out of season - phasing) • Road hazards/injuries • Dog fouling - needs to be addressed - social elements • The Cut - need to consider how we address this - ensure that all of the path is clear - needs to consider options of how this is maintained • Need to consider secure by design for developments as opposed to alley gating etc. • Need to consider the disturbances created by a night time culture ie anti-social behaviour, crime and substance misuse

Economic conditions affecting health	
<p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Concept: Health and Leisure Zone? potential.... linked to reduced town centre business rates/supplementary planning guidance • New Zone could invest in the town and cater for Older People (bowling green centre etc) • Sustainable year around offer with all developments - events to stretch the season • Whole plan supports this area of work (prioritised also by Conwy & Denbighshire Local Service Board • Beach huts a possibility? • Kite carting - can we maximise on this one? 	<p>-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None identified
Access and quality of services	
<p>+</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School New Build • Toilet facilities at new Bridge 	<p>-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toilets - improvements required - something required at Splash point. Impact on children/young people and older people. • Support required for those individuals who are already business property owners in the town - need to address economic viability and business rate calculations for empty shops

Macro-economic, environmental and sustainability factors

+

- Potential for an Economic Zone?
Ties in with national, regional and local regeneration policies
- Wind Farm - develop an Information Centre

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- Some policies not viable for/applicable to Rhyl

Recommendations

Several recommendations were made throughout the process.

These included the following:

- Continue to encourage physical activity with the extension of cycle paths in Rhyl
- Continue to encourage healthy eating through food co-ops
- Distribute and advertise a leaflet to the population regarding cycle ways and the secure, safe storage and parking for cycles in Rhyl
- Ensure minimal disruption whilst building work is taking place and communicate effectively to all what is happening.
- Recommend to the Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) group that they liaise with the architects who will be designing new buildings/areas in Rhyl in order to take a creative approach to planning and creating a balanced community and built environment
- Promote Rhyl as a place to live, work and visit all year round
- Explore the possibility of establishing Rhyl as a 'Health & Leisure Zone' and use such a designation to secure further investment in health and leisure related facilities. Discuss within the context of the Local Development Plan (LDP)
- Denbighshire County Council to work with the business community in Rhyl to ensure that the business rate burden is fair and reflects current market conditions
- Provision of new toilet facilities in the Town and consider some kind of revenue generation to finance them
- Attempt to enhance community and social capital through community development projects such as 'The Cut' (Community Partnerships/Community Cohesion Officer)
- Consider filling in the flood defences in order to minimise accidents and injuries
- Attempt to minimise any night time disturbance ie noise from events (directed out to sea rather than into the town)
- Attract more families and social networks to live in areas with a high number of HMO's currently

Identification of future health impact assessment work

After the appraisal session, the facilitators asked the participants to identify a number of projects or proposals contained within the GF Delivery Plan to be considered for a future health impact assessment. They were encouraged to discuss this amongst themselves and then write the highlighted initiatives on a flipchart provided for the group.

The projects highlighted by the participants are listed below (in no specific order):

- West Rhyl Regeneration Plan
- Redevelopment of the Royal Alex Hospital (Community Health Facility)*
- Health and Leisure Zone (Enterprise Zone). Encouraging private sector ‘themed’ investment
- Town Centre - issues/impacts on business owners/residents
- Rhyl High School New Build
- Sun Centre/Pavillion Theatre options review
- Rhyl Cut

*This is already subject to an impact assessment as a part of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board’s (BCUHB’s) consultation process for the North Denbighshire Community Healthcare Services Project.

Next Steps

The information and evidence gathered as part of the HIA will be used to inform the Rhyl GF Delivery Plan project planning process throughout summer 2012. The Steering Group for the HIA will meet in order to consider the projects highlighted for future health impact assessments and to discuss the feasibility of conducting them, their context, ability to influence outcomes, any resources needed and timeframes for completion.

There will then be a number of broader rapid HIA participatory stakeholder workshops conducted during the lifetime of the Plan with the aim of improving the health and wellbeing of the population and addressing any health inequalities where possible.

Conclusion

The HIA was found to be highly positive as a process for all the stakeholders who participated. It followed a systematic process and made connections to other policy areas and identified groups within the population who would be affected by the Regeneration Plans. The session took place in a morning and helped inform the authors of the potential positive or negative impacts and highlighted issues for further discussion. The HIA provided a framework for stakeholder dialogue and includes mitigation measures and recommendations to be considered and actioned in future work.

Author

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