

Physical activity and the environment

Information for the public
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www.nice.org.uk

Everybody knows that physical activity is good for you but we don't all want to go to the gym or join a sports club and for many of us it isn't practical anyway. In fact, more than a third of adults and 8 out of 10 children and young people are not active enough to protect their health. That's why it's important to make it as easy as possible for people to be more active in their daily lives, for example by leaving the car at home and walking or cycling to local shops, school or work.

The way towns, cities and rural areas are set out can help encourage this. On the downside, poorly designed areas can have the opposite effect – and can make it especially difficult for people with limited mobility to get around.

We want this guideline to help everyone, including those with limited mobility, to be more physically active by making sure:

- the views of pedestrians and cyclists come first when developing or maintaining streets and roads – by asking them what improvements they would like to see
- everyone can get around their local area easily, for example by keeping paths clear of obstructions and putting in the right sort of crossings
- public transport is accessible and easy to use to encourage more people to make journeys that do include some walking
- local areas have attractive, safe and well maintained open spaces that are easy for people to get to
- new and refurbished footpaths and cycle routes are linked in with existing routes, to help people walk or cycle to school, college and work.

Making decisions together

Those who are responsible for planning and development in your area should listen to the views and needs of people who walk, cycle, use public transport or drive locally. They should also talk to people with limited mobility and take their needs into account when designing and improving streets, footpaths and other public spaces, to help them move around safely.

In the news

Read NICE news about how this guideline will help.

Local councils should improve the quality of footpaths so more people can be active, says NICE



NICE is calling on local councils to encourage people to be more physically active by improving routes for pedestrians, cyclists and other users.

[See what NICE says](#)

Where can I find out more?

[NHS Choices](#) has more information about physical activity to stay healthy.

Find your nearest local [Healthwatch](#).

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [Living Streets](#), 0207 377 4900
- [Wheels for wellbeing](#), 0207 346 8482
- [RNIB](#), 0303 123 9999
- [Sustrans](#), 0117 926 8893
- [Cycling UK](#), 0844 736 8450

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

We wrote this guideline with people whose mobility is limited by the environment and a range of experts. The latter includes people who specialise in social care, active travel, physical activity, transport planning and landscape architecture. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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