

Policy Committee

17 December 2025



Reading
Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	Health in All Policies Framework
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Executive Director/ Statutory Officer Commissioning Report	Melissa Wise, Executive Director for Communities and Adult Social Care
Report author	Matt Pearce, Director of Public Health
Lead Councillor	Councillor Rachel Eden - Lead Councillor for Education & Public Health
Council priority	Safeguard & support the health & wellbeing of Reading's adults & children
Recommendations	1. That Policy Committee adopts the Health in All Policies Framework as detailed in Appendix 1 and endorses its implementation.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The Health and Social Care Act 2012, enshrines the role of local government in improving health and reducing health inequalities. Since the move of Public Health responsibilities to local government, as part of these reforms, there has been a long-standing ambition from the Council to maximise the opportunities of addressing the social determinants of health, or building blocks of life, which are important drivers of health outcomes and health inequalities.
- 1.2. This paper introduces the principle of embedding a Health in All Policies (HiAP) approach across the Council; outlines a proposed framework and actions for embedding the approach.
- 1.3. The HiAP Framework is a collaborative approach that aims to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of Reading residents by embedding the consideration of health, equity and sustainability into Council policy and decision-making processes, across the work of all Council directorates¹.
- 1.4. The Council has already made good progress in seeking to embed health in all policies across the Council and this document sets out our ambition to go further and ensure that the impact on health and reducing health inequalities is at the heart of all decision making across the Council.
- 1.5. Over the last 12-months the Council has taken a series of steps to inform the HiAP Framework with the intention of developing a systematic approach. This has included workshops facilitated by the Local Government Association with the Senior Leadership Team and Lead Councillors, greater investment into the public health team, the

¹ [Health in all policies: a manual for local government](#) (LGA, 2016)

production of a State of the Borough Report and the creation of a HiAP Fund to help Council departments address public health needs.

- 1.6. HiAP embraces the complexity of seeking long term outcomes through sustained coordinated actions across directorates, agencies, and professional silos. The HiAP Framework sets out a change management approach and engagement plan that will provide a systematic process that engages leadership and all staff in preparing for change, communicating the vision, implementing the change, embedding it into daily operations, and reviewing the outcomes.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. Reading Borough Council has a statutory duty to improve the health of residents. Under the Health and Social Care Act 2012, local councils in England are legally responsible for delivering public health services. They are required to take appropriate actions to improve the health and wellbeing of their local populations. Section 2B of the NHS Act 2006 imposes a duty for all upper-tier and unitary local authorities in England to take appropriate steps to improve the health of the people who live in their areas. Also, the Social Care Act 2014 imposes a duty on local authorities 'to prevent or delay the development of care and support needs, promoting independence and wellbeing for individuals.'
- 2.2. These duties are partly carried forward through the Council Plan 'Investing in Reading's Future' 2025-2028. Specifically, under the priority to Promote more equal communities in Reading and the objective to *'reduce inequalities in health and life expectancy through our Public Health Service' by developing approaches to ensure that health and wellbeing is considered across all policy areas.'*
- 2.3. This statement of intent helps to drive the establishment of HiAP across the Council with the aim of:
 - Achieving improved health outcomes for everyone, with fastest improvement amongst those at greatest risk of exposure to deprivation.
 - Strengthening evidence-based policy decisions.
 - Providing training in relevant knowledge and skills for members and officers.
 - Improving health outcomes and associated economic benefits for everyone in Reading.
- 2.4. HiAP is defined by the World Health Organisation as: "an approach to public policies across sectors that systematically takes into account the health implications of decisions, seeks synergies, and avoids harmful health impacts in order to improve population health and health equity². HiAP supports improved health and social outcomes and reduces inequity through collaboration between all those who have a responsibility to protect and improve public health across all sectors
- 2.5. Central to adopting a HiAP approach is the recognition that our greatest health challenges for example, non-communicable diseases, health inequities and inequalities, climate change and spiralling health and social care costs are complex and often linked through the social determinants of health or building blocks in life.
- 2.6. Research has long shown that the social determinants of health, the wider social, economic, environmental, cultural, and political factors, alongside behavioural risk factors which often cluster in the population, account for up to 85% of the impacts on a person's health across the life course. Health care typically makes up a much smaller percentage.

² <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/what-you-need-to-know-about-health-in-all-policies--key-messages>

- 2.7. The adoption of a HiAP approach enables preventative action upon these wider determinants. The Council has it within its power and its range of statutory duties to positively influence the Building Blocks of Life and to drive the necessary changes supported by a HiAP approach. An example of this, is the recently amended Healthier Food Advertising Policy.
- 2.8. The HiAP Framework (Appendix 1) has been developed with officers from across all Directorates with the aim of establishing a shared understanding and embedding structural and procedural changes that prioritise the prevention and reduction of health inequalities.
- 2.9. Over the past year the Council has undertaken several pieces of work to inform and support the ambitions of the HiAP Framework. This includes:
- Two workshops facilitated by the Local Government Association with the Councils Senior Leadership Team and Lead Councillors.
 - A commitment to increase investment in the public health team as a proportion of the public health grant, leading to a service restructure that allows for greater alignment with Council directorates to influence the 'building blocks of health'.
 - The production of a State of the Borough Report and ongoing review of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, to enable the council and its partners to become data and intelligence led that leads to evidence informed decision making.
 - Introduced a 'HiAP fund' to support Council departments in identifying innovative approaches to improve local public health outcomes.
 - Commenced the development of whole system approach to healthy weight to inform a Healthy Weight Strategy using a test and learn approach.
- 2.10 From our work to date we have identified actions that will ensure that the impact on health and wellbeing is a central consideration at the heart of all policy and decision-making processes.
- 2.11 The HiAP framework aims to work across all aspects of Council Policy and councillors and officers to strengthen the work the Council is already doing to maintain the building blocks of health: the local environment; housing; transport; worthwhile employment and access to nutritious, sustainable food.
- 2.12 Whilst the overall health of Reading compares favourably to the national average across a number of indicators, there are some significant health challenges which has been highlighted in the recent 'State of the Borough Report.' This shows that while some health indicators for Reading have improved, there remain health indicators based on the wider determinants of health that are significantly worse than the Southeast and England averages.
- 2.13 The proposed HiAP Framework will strengthen and support the implementation of several local and national strategic intentions including the Council Plan, Culture and Heritage Strategy, The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy, Local Transport Plan, The Economic Development Framework and many more.
- 2.14 By embedding health considerations into housing, transport, education and economic policy, it has the potential to extend healthy lives, reduce pressure on public services, and contribute to greater economic and social prosperity. The financial benefits of a HiAP approach and interventions are well evidenced. Correct implementation of mitigations and enhancements is often a win-win for both the Council and residents. It encourages and/or allows for healthier lifestyles and reduces avoidable costs in health and social care services or reductions in productivity or economic output.

- 2.15 It is proposed that the Council agrees to embed a HiAP approach based around the eight strategic steps below, drawn from Local Government Association guidance³:
- a) Establish formal structures and governance
 - b) Build capacity across the Council
 - c) Integrate Health into Policy and Planning
 - d) Foster Cross-Directorate Collaboration
 - e) Pilot and Scale Initiatives
 - f) Secure Resources and Sustainability
 - g) Promote Accountability and Transparency
 - h) Encourage Cultural and Systemic Change
- 2.16 One of the key aspects of the HiAP framework will be the introduction of Health Impact Assessments (HIA), which will offer a flexible and evidence-based mechanism to assess how policies affect health and inequalities before they are implemented. Consideration of how HIA will be embedded is ongoing, albeit it will likely include a training programme for relevant Council staff to equip them with the skills and knowledge to use health and wellbeing data, undertake equity analysis and use evidence to support the promotion of health and wellbeing.
- 2.17 The implementation of the HiAP framework will be overseen by the Council's Public Health Board, which is an internal board made up of senior officers from across the council. It is proposed that progress will be reported on an annual basis to Policy Committee.

3. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 3.1. This proposal supports the Council's strategic aims to promote more equal communities in Reading and to safeguard the health and wellbeing of Reading's residents.
- 3.2. The implementation of the HiAP Framework will strengthen the role of the Council as a 'public health organisation.' It will facilitate closer collaboration between Directorates and Services across the Council to positively influence policy making and decisions that influence the building blocks of life such as worthwhile employment, transportation, land use, secure tenancies, public safety, lifelong education, and community connectedness.

4. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 4.1. There are no direct environmental or climate implications arising from this proposal. However, the HiAP approach will maximise the connection between health and climate change, with actions that benefit both the environment and human health.

5. Community Engagement

- 5.1. Not applicable at this stage. The focus is on strengthening internal decision-making processes and promotion and awareness raising amongst communities can be achieved through the public health communications strategy.

6. Equality Implications

- 6.1. There are no direct impacts from this report, however it is anticipated that through the adoption of Health Impact Assessments, alongside Equality Impact Assessment, this would strengthen how the Council effectively identifies inequalities and how they can be effectively addressed.

³ [Health in all policies: a manual for local government](#) (LGA, 2016)

7. Other Relevant Considerations

7.1. None.

8. Legal Implications

8.1. The Council has a legal duty under legislation, including the Health and Social Care Act 2012 and the National Health Act 2006 to take appropriate actions to improve the health and wellbeing of their local populations and reduce health inequalities. The adoption of a HiAP framework approach as set out in the Recommendations is consistent with these legal duties. The Social Care Act 2014 also imposes a duty on local authorities 'to prevent or delay the development of care and support needs, promoting independence and wellbeing for individuals.'

9. Financial Implications

9.1 There are no direct financial implications from this report, and it is anticipated that HiAP will largely be embedded as part of business as usual. However, where additional resources are required e.g. training, it is envisaged that this would be supported through the Public Health Ringfence Grant.

9.2 Research has consistently show that the building blocks of life - income, housing, education, employment, transport and environment - are the major drivers of health, and that that improving these conditions could yield long-term gains in productivity, social cohesion and reduced demand on public services.

10. Timetable for Implementation

10.1 The proposed timetable for implementation of the HiAP Framework is from January 2025 to December 2027. This includes the following milestones:

Date	Milestone
December 2026	HiAP Framework approved
April 2026	Development of a Health Impact Assessment Process to be considered as part of all decision making. To include staff awareness and training.
June 2026	Publication of a Healthy Weight Strategy (which is being developed through a HiAP approach)
July 2026	Explore options with Workforce Development team for wider HiAP training. This will include opportunities for HiAP training as part of the RBC Managers induction programme and targeted e-learning for relevant roles.
January 2026 – December 2027	Monitoring and Evaluation

11. Background Papers

11.1. There are none.

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Reading Health in All Policies Framework (November 2025)