

**UK-Ireland Planning Research conference 2010:
Diversity and Convergence: Planning in a world of change**

Abstract:

Educating the built environment professions to secure the healthy communities of the future

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The Government's Foresight obesity report and other key documents have identified the built environment as having a significant impact on public health. The RTPI too is identifying this as an important area for planners and launched Good Practice note 5: Delivering Healthy Communities' in 2009. The ability and willingness of the population to be active and reduce the risks of diseases such as obesity and heart disease through using walking and cycling as regular means of travel is determined by availability of suitable connections and environments. Mental health and social inclusion are also affected by our surroundings through the ease of social interaction and availability and attraction of congenial places. Built environment practitioners thus are essential in promoting and securing healthy communities through planning and design of urban areas, their green spaces and connectivity. Education institutions training the planners, architects, landscape and transport professionals of the future need to make these professionals 'health aware'.

The 'Education Network for Healthier Settlements' project has been initially funded by the Department of Health to bring together higher education institutions making the essential connections between health and the built environment for their students. The network is preparing case studies of best practice in education and drawing out key issues and priorities in teaching. It is also helping to make the links between research and policy and fast-tracking these into the classroom. Core members are collating evidence into usable and searchable web-based resources and helping to make relevant material more easily available to a wider teaching audience, with a London conference further developing materials, sharing experiences and expanding the network. This presentation looks at the activity of the network, examples of good practice, the issues and barrier in developing the public health agenda in built environment education and new ideas for education in the future.