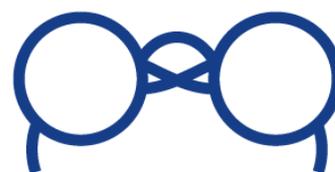


# In focus

## Healthy London Partnership



### The role of cities in improving population health: International insights

15 June 2018 – Source: The King’s Fund

The King’s Fund has released a report which explores the role of cities are playing in improving population health and the conditions needed for success. Drawing on international case studies, the report explores the conditions required for successful health governance in cities and the roles that city governments can play in improving population health.

#### Conditions for successful health governance in cities

Characteristics and enabling conditions	Case study
Bold political <b>leadership</b> and a willingness to invest personal political capital in championing health-promoting policies.	The Mayor of Paris has been vocal about her ambition to reduce air pollution and improve the urban environment by ‘reconquering the public space’ from vehicles. This included changes aimed at cutting the amount of traffic in the city.
Clear <b>governance</b> and decision-making processes, including effective partnership working between city-wide government and more local tiers of government.	Copenhagen’s perceived success as a city was a willingness to collaborate across political parties, levels of government and sectors of society (including innovative public – private partnerships).
Understanding and making full use of regulatory and other <b>powers</b> available at city and local level.	New York’s ‘Board of Health’ has extensive powers to introduce new regulations without going through normal legislative processes. The city’s high-profile public health interventions were introduced using these powers including the ban on trans-fats in restaurant food and mandatory calorie labelling.
The distribution of public health <b>expertise</b> needs to match the wider governance arrangements in a city.	In Barcelona, all public health officers are concentrated in a single organisation, which has staff of around 300 people covering a population of 1.7 million. This reflects the balance of power in the city.
Being <b>connected</b> both internally and with other cities to tackle shared challenges.	In Vienna the Mayor travels with a team of around 30 people for a week twice a year to another city to learn in detail about what they are doing well and what they are struggling with.

## Roles for city governments in population health

Role	Case study
Co-ordinating system-wide action	In Amsterdam co-ordinating activities across organisations has been a crucial component of work on childhood obesity and HIV. The city's success in reducing childhood obesity rates has been attributed to the co-ordinated, whole-system approach it has taken since 2013, supported by a dedicated programme management team.
Promoting innovation	The Laboratorio 'Innovation lab' in Mexico City has played an important role in supporting city governments to tackle social determinants of health in an innovative, people centred way. There are several health-related work programmes including a programme on mobility (focusing on cycling, walking and public transport). It has a multidisciplinary team and a budget of \$1 million.
Using regulatory and legislative levers	As part of the Amsterdam Healthy Weight Programme advertising unhealthy food has been banned on trams and in metro stations since early 2018.
Mobilising the population	The Thrive NYC and Thrive LDN programmes have both used participatory techniques as a ways of seeing to engage local communities in efforts to improve public mental health. For example 'Connections to Care' involves integrating mental health support within community-based organisation by giving non-specialists the skill and knowledge they need to deliver basic mental health interventions.
Using planning powers to create health places	The 'super block' system in Barcelona involves reorganising the road network so that most traffic is challenged on to a smaller number of larger road, radically reducing the amount of traffic on the smaller roads with each block. The intention is to cut out the amount of pollution, congestion and noise in residential areas, improving the quality of the environment for residents and promoting physical activity.

### Learning for London

The key challenge for London is the complex and fragmented governance arrangements which can create problems for co-ordinating activities across the city and for accountability. The report identifies the priorities for London to be:

- Strengthening public health capacity at city level
- Ensuring the new pan-London structures for health and care function effectively and make it easier for boroughs to work in partnership

The opportunities for London include the London devolution agreement as a platform to build on and the Mayor's forthcoming health inequalities strategy (a significant opportunity for London's partners to work collaboratively around a common set of goals).

➔ [The role of cities in improving population health: international insights](#)