

## **Ireland 2040 – Submission on behalf of National Healthy Cities and Counties of Ireland Network**

The National Healthy Cities and Counties of Ireland Network welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the discussion on what sort of place should Ireland be in 2040 and what do we need to do to achieve this.

It is very positive that one of the key objectives is to facilitate improvements to people's quality of life and well-being. This is the first objective identified and it is pertinent that this is first as all of the other objectives stated contribute to quality of life and well-being.

To have a specific section that focuses specifically on people's health and wellbeing is, again, very positive. However, with the impact and interdependency of all actions on health, wellbeing and quality of life, a key focus/ outcome of the National Planning Framework needs to be on supporting integrated planning across Departments and agencies. This will support the National Health and Wellbeing Framework – Healthy Ireland (2013 – 2025) which advocates a 'whole of government' and 'whole of society' approach which is also the key focus of the Healthy Cities and Counties of Ireland Network.

Since January 2017 there have been various actions plans and reports developed with a focus on inter departmental connection –Action Plan for Jobs, Action Plan for Rural Development, Creative Ireland which is a positive development. These can and need to be integrated even more with the perception that a new plan is required for each. Actions/ assets at a local level need to be viewed as building blocks that can be moved, interconnected and aligned from the perspective of the issue versus where it is funded or 'housed'. For example community gardens, depending on the perspective promotes healthy eating, physical activity, social connection, mental health, employment skills, increased sustainability and is a community space for gardening, organising a culture event, for mothers and toddlers to meet, for Garda Youth Diversion project and so on.

For systemic issues such as climate change, obesity, flooding, traffic, deforestation etc. which Ireland 2040 plan is concerned with, we require systemic solutions that are highly interconnected and integrated. Requirements for these complex solutions are that (a) actions need to happen concurrently as opposed to sequentially, (b) structures, systems, focus needs to both facilitate and incentivise collaboration and (c) societal innovation is supported and encouraged. Elements which are essential for success include

1. Understanding human nature – need to involve the people and understand barriers and enablers
2. Understanding the context – need to involve people and understand from their perspective and from where they are at
3. Taking a holistic approach – need to encourage integrated planning, actions and delivery to develop 'complete communities'

Therefore, key factors to consider and address in the overall Ireland2040 plan include:

- (i) the pace of change is accelerating so we need to adapt systems and structures, and in particular leadership to reflect this
- (ii) the public want and demand to be more involved so we need to find ways to co-create and develop partnerships with equal power
- (iii) the level of interconnectivity has increased and with that an increase in access to information so we need to ensure that the information provided is accurate and from a reliable source
- (iv) (ii) and (iii) facilitate and contribute to the need and demand for transparency and good governance
- (v) the convergence agenda which reflects the interdependency of actions and issues so we need to focus on integrated planning and systems to facilitate this for example joint budgets

To achieve the vision of Ireland, whatever the final wordings is, there needs to be a focus on societal innovation which involves adapting leadership, involving and empowering people in decisions and supporting collaboration and creative solution as according to Margaret Chan, Director General of the World Health Organization (2012) ‘the challenges we face... have become too numerous and too complex for a business-as-usual approach’.

Submitted by: Fiona Donovan, National Healthy Cities and Counties Coordinator

[Fiona.donovan@hse.ie](mailto:Fiona.donovan@hse.ie)