

An Evaluation of the Residential Amenity Space and Place Quality Intervention

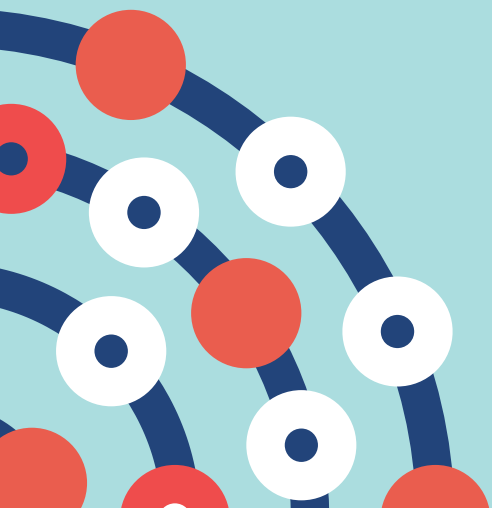
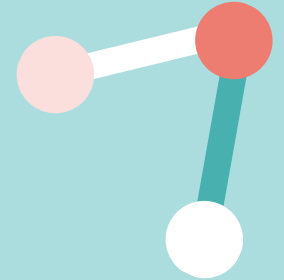


PHIRST Insight & Brent Council



Introduction & Background

What is this about & why is it important?



Background

- Amenity space is shared or private space within developments.
 - E.g. balconies, gardens
 - E.g. shared gardens or lounges
- Place design, including amenity space, is critical to physical, social and mental wellbeing.



The Place Quality Intervention

The intervention has four parts;

1. **Amenity space guidance: Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)**
2. **Amenity Space Quality Statement Template**
3. **Training for Planning Officers**
4. **Community and Quality Review Panels (CRP and QRP)**

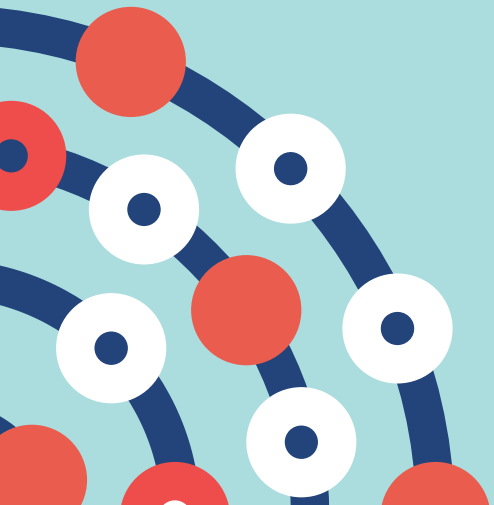
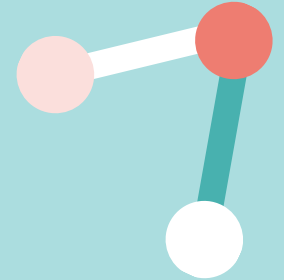


The Place Quality Framework

- The Place Quality Framework provides an overarching reference point for good design.
 - ✓ supporting physical and mental wellbeing
 - ✓ building strong and integrated communities
 - ✓ encouraging vibrancy and intergenerational mixing



Project Aims



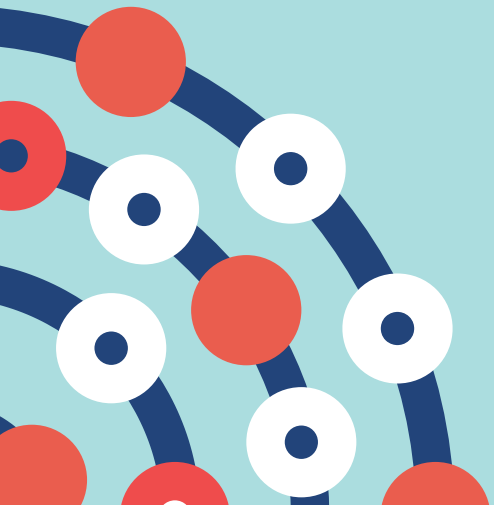
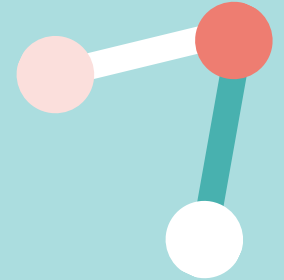
Project Overview – Aims

- The main aim of this evaluation was to **assess the extent to which the new Place Quality Intervention is being integrated into the planning application process.**
- The study also explored **collaboration between health and planning teams** within Brent council.



Methods

How did we do this?



Project Overview - Methods

The study used a range of methods from **July 2024 to February 2025** including:

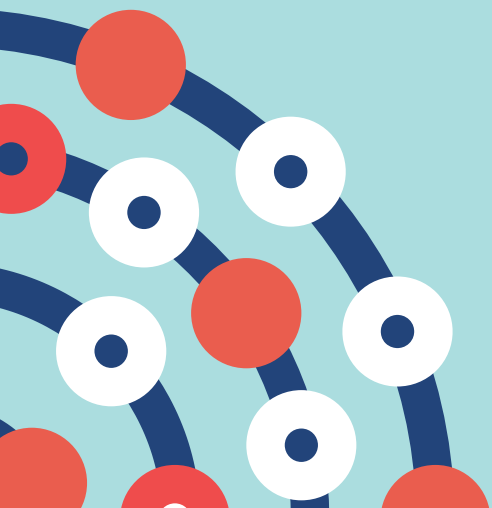
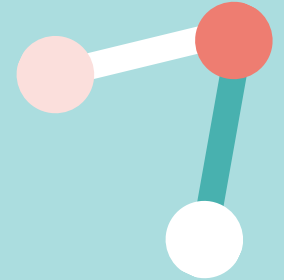
- **observations** of review panels (n=15)
- **document analysis** (n=8)
- assessments of **planning officers' understanding** (x2)
- semi-structured **interviews** (n=43)

We focused on understanding perspectives of different people involved in the planning process.



Key results

What did we find?



Factors that help and hinder use of the guidance

- Factors perceived to **help** were:
 - Positive attitude
 - Common language
 - Provision of a template or checklist

"A form will make a huge difference because I think some developers will read through it and will really respond to everything."

Council Planning Management

Factors that help and hinder use of the guidance

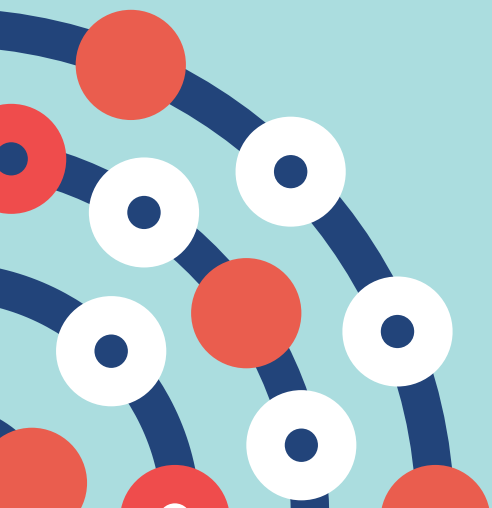
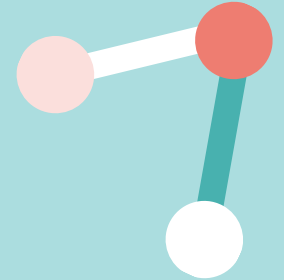
- Factors perceived to **hinder** were:

- Awareness and understanding
- High workload
- Competing priorities
 - Drive for profit
 - Need for affordable housing

“In a constrained site, it is not possible to meet the numerical space requirements as this would eat into profit. (...)”

Applicant

What are the factors perceived to help and hinder collaboration between planning and public health teams?



Collaboration between planning and public health teams

- Factors perceived to **help** the relationship include:
 - Good relationship at senior level
 - Positive past collaboration
 - Shared goals around health and wellbeing

*“...that quickly evolved into a conversation around health and well-being and so, using that piece of guidance as a springboard, **we're now looking ever increasingly at the relationship between public health and placemaking.**”*

Council Planning Management

Collaboration between planning and public health teams

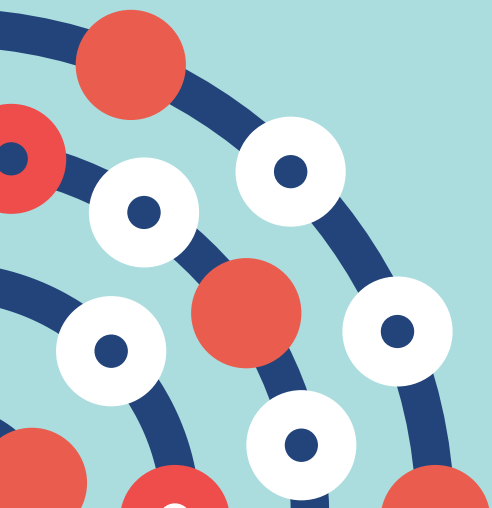
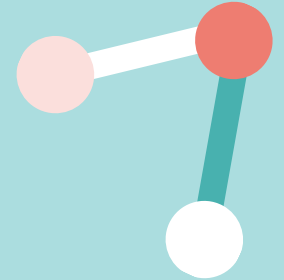
- Factors perceived to **hinder** the relationship include:
 - High staff turnover
 - Lack of formal relationship
 - Limited time and capacity for engagement
 - Lack of shared terminology

*“(...) **everyone has a million and one things to do when you work in the Council** and it’s difficult to sort of, you know, dedicate yourself to one aspect and focus on one aspect as much as you would like.”*

Public Health Officer

Recommendations

What can be done and why?



Recommendations for SPD implementation

- Ongoing training and ‘buddying’ with senior colleagues.
- Support for applicant teams
- Making the guidance template easier to use
- Applying the guidance in a flexible manner

Future ways of working between Planning and Public health

- **What can be done:**
 - Embed collaboration with public health and planning staff into job descriptions
 - Involve public health teams earlier
 - Create a bridging role
 - Engage senior staff
- **Why this is a good idea:** This ensures joint working from the outset and creates greater opportunities for collaboration

Authors and Acknowledgements

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The views expressed are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care