

Chartered Institution of Highways & Transportation response to the NICE consultation on Physical activity: encouraging activity in the general population

Theo Naidoo, Policy Officer, Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation (CIHT), Tel: 020 7336 1581, Email: Theo.Naidoo@CIHT.org.uk

CIHT is a charity, learned society and membership body with over 14,000 members spread across 12 UK regions and four international groups. We represent and qualify professionals who plan, design, build, manage and operate transport and infrastructure networks. Our vision is for world-class transportation infrastructure and services. Our values are to be Professional, Inclusive, Collaborative and Progressive.

CIHT welcomes NICE's input into active travel as being timely and important. Local authorities across the UK are putting a renewed focus into tackling health crises, improving local high streets and enabling active travel are a necessary part of the puzzle

Further, CIHT believe that transport and infrastructure are a fundamental part of the built environment. The design and management of the public realm, the streets and transport associated with it must support physical activity (behavioural change programmes have a role to play here) and be accessible to all.

Quality statement 2: Travel routes

2.1 Does this draft quality standard accurately reflect the key areas for quality improvement?

CIHT agrees that improved footways, footpaths, cycle routes and public transport connectivity will enable active travel and discourage car use. We would encourage that for Statement 2 'Local authorities develop and maintain connected travel routes that prioritise pedestrians, cyclists and people who use public transport' NICE provide signposting to relevant CIHT documents that provides the underpinning technical advice. The documents include: Manual for Streets, Manual for Streets 2, and Planning for Cycling and Walking, Buses in Urban Developments and Creating Better Streets, to improve the built environment.

Furthermore, CIHT manages the Secretariat for the UK Roads Liaison Group (UKRLG) which produces a variety of guidance that is used by highway authorities. The UKRLG has published guidance including 'Well Managed Highway Infrastructure' 'Asset management guidance for footways and cycle routes: Pavement design and maintenance'; 'Asset management guidance for footways and cycle routes: An approach to risk-based maintenance management'; and 'Cycle service levels and condition assessment – that NICE should consider referencing in that standards also.

Providing for walking and cycling is one of the key issues facing the highways & transportation profession and CIHT. It means not only addressing the issues of footways, cycleways and crossings but also the wider concerns around land use and the quality of our built environment. It is widely established that concerns about the physical environment, especially with regards to safety is a key restrictor in people taking up walking and cycling despite people seeing them as desirable activities.

CIHT would add to the quality statement that it is not just the initial building of infrastructure that requires attention, as the management of the asset including, surface repairs, drainage and cleanliness will all affect long term usage. Poorly maintained local authority highways pose a significant danger to cyclists and deter users of the roads. Carriageway defects can directly cause falling or damage to bikes but can also cause cyclists to take unexpected paths for passing drivers and ultimately create more risk. Therefore, the ongoing asset management of these travel routes must be taken into account as well.

2.2 Are local systems and structures in place to collect data for the proposed quality measures? If not, how feasible would it be for these to be put in place?

CIHT notes that it is not currently mandatory for local highways authority to produce annual data on the lengths, condition or type of dedicated footway and cycletrack infrastructure, so assessing these will require further resources that may not be available. Further the level of detail required to assess travel route quality will likely not be included in the suggested data sources, including local plans and joint strategic needs assessments.

CIHT also understands that current record keeping around slips, trips and falls on footways is irregular and unreliable due to lack of reporting by those involved and limited recognition of the issue by local councils. This can make it difficult to identify footways in poor condition and in turn can have a major impact on the mobility of vulnerable people including the elderly and disabled.

CIHT has queries over three of the defined outcomes “a) Percentage of adults cycling for travel at least three days per week”, “b) Percentage of adults walking for travel at least three days per week and “c) Number of people reported killed or seriously injured casualties”. There is a great deal of variation in these numbers across the country and they are affected by population density, road type and even policing methods of local authority. It may be more relevant to look at direction of travel than the absolute outcomes in terms of improving health.

2.33 Do you think each of the statements in this draft quality standard would be achievable by local services given the net resources needed to deliver them? Please describe any resource requirements that you think would be necessary for any statement. Please describe any potential cost savings or opportunities for disinvestment.

CIHT argues that it is feasible for Planning Authorities and Highways Authorities to implement measures that reallocate road space, reduce through traffic and deliver protected infrastructure however limited resources will prevent large scale change for many authorities. There is also a lack of awareness of how much effective cycling infrastructure can cost, with London’s East-West Cycle Superhighways (CS3) costing £2.2 million/km and most local authorities would balk at the cost.

CIHT suggests that the benefits will not be realised, and negative trends will not be reversed, without improving the UK’s approach to land use planning. Land use planning is fundamental to integrating active travel into daily life, and without a planning system that integrates walking and cycling at every level it will not be possible to achieve the scale of change necessary to improve the nation’s health.

Furthermore, funding constraints within local authorities mean that highway service functions are often under pressure and developing improvements to support walking and cycling are balanced against maintaining a deteriorating asset (see CIHT response to Transport Select Committee hearing 2018).