What is Galway Healthy Cities?

Galway City has been a member of the World Health Organization (WHO) European Healthy Cities Network since 2006. The main goal of the WHO Healthy Cities programme is to put health and wellbeing high on the social, economic, and political agenda of all agencies.

The Galway Healthy Cities team oversees and guides the Galway Healthy Cities Programme, and includes representatives from a range of local agencies, including:

- Galway City Community Network
- HSE
- Galway City Council
- MIT Galway
- Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board
- As Gorta Síochána
- Galway Chamber
- SIPTU

The lead agency of the Programme is HSE Health Promotion and Improvement. A project-coordinator is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the work plan in Galway City.

What is the Healthy Cities approach to health and wellbeing?

Many factors continue to affect our health – things like where we live, our environment, our genetics, our income and education level and our relationships with friends and family. All these things affect our lives and are known as ‘determinants of health’. Most of the factors that shape our health and wellbeing are outside the direct influence of health and social care services. Healthy Cities creates a support structure to address these wider determinants at local level.

Thus, Healthy Cities sets a public health agenda and encourages health and social care services, other community agencies, and the private sector to work together to address determinants of health.

What is the WHO Healthy Cities Network?

A city joins the European Healthy Cities Network based on standards and conditions that are reviewed every five years. Each five-year phase focuses on specific goals and themes to address current issues and priorities.

The current phase, Phase VI (2014-2018), is based on the European health policy framework, Health 2020. The framework focuses on improving health for everyone and on reducing health inequalities through improved leadership and health management.

Healthy Ireland, Ireland’s framework for improved health and wellbeing (2015-2020), in line with the goals of the WHO Healthy Cities Programme. Therefore, being part of the Healthy Cities programme supports the implementation of healthy Ireland.

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What is our vision?

Our vision for the Galway Healthy Cities programme is to create and sustain a city that works together to support the health and wellbeing of all its people.

Our aims are to:

- Promote a whole system approach to planning for health and wellbeing in Galway City;
- Create new ways for people to interact with each other and their environment to improve health and promote wellbeing;
- Encourage co-operation between departments of key city services and promote community participation;
- Raise awareness at local level of issues affecting health and wellbeing and;
- Move health high on the political agenda and contribute to the development of healthy city policies.

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What is a Healthy City?

A healthy city is defined by the way it works to support health and wellbeing. It is conscious of health, and works to improve it through creating and continually improving physical and social environments. A healthy city also develops the community resources that enable people to support each other in living their lives and achieving their potential.

What are the goals of Galway Healthy Cities?

Our aims are to:

- Create a healthy, safe and supportive environment for all; and
- Create strong communities that are supportive environments – for example, healthy urban planning and design, healthy housing and regeneration, and so on.

Healthy Cities creates a support structure to address these wider determinants at local level.

WHO Healthy Cities Goals and Themes

Galway Healthy Cities Actions 2015-2018

1. Improve health for all and reduce health inequalities

- Support the implementation of Galway City Local Economic and Community Plan

2. Improve leadership and participation governance for health and development

- Engage with Strategic Policy Committees, Councillors and the Local Community Development Committee and other structures to support the promotion of health and wellbeing

3. Create and sustain a city that works together to support the health and wellbeing of all its people

- Develop initiatives to promote healthy urban planning in Galway City

4. Tackle public health priorities – for example, health and social care services

- Implement Galway City strategy to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms

5. Strengthen people-centered health services - for example, health and social care services

- Support the implementation of the Galway Age Friendly Strategy

6. Develop health literacy and increase health literacy awareness

- Support Let’s Get Galway Growing (Community Garden Network)

7. Promote healthy eating and physical activity

- Promote healthy eating and physical activity

8. Support the development and implementation of the Healthy Ireland Framework for Galway City

- Support the development and implementation of the Early Years plan for Galway City

9. Engage with Strategic Policy Committees, Councillors and the Local Community Development Committee and other structures to support the promotion of health and wellbeing

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10. Strengthen people-centered health services - for example, health and social care services

- Support the development and implementation of the Galway Age Friendly Strategy

- Support the implementation of the Galway Age Friendly Strategy

11. Strengthen community partnerships - for example, healthy urban planning and design, healthy housing and regeneration, and so on.

- Take part in the national pilot project to be undertaken by the Community Health Needs Assessment in Galway City East, Ballinasloe and Castlegar

- Develop initiatives to promote healthy urban planning in Galway City.
What are the Healthy Cities priority goals and themes for 2015–2018?

As a designated WHO Healthy City, Galway City works to achieve two main goals:

1. To improve health for all and reduce health inequality
2. To improve leadership and health management

Galway Healthy Cities also works according to core themes identified by the WHO for population health and wellbeing. These themes are:

1. Empowering people at all stages and in all situations of life — for example, in early life, later life, in vulnerable situations.
2. Tackling public health priorities — for example, physical activity, nutrition and obesity, alcohol, tobacco and mental wellbeing.
3. Strengthening people-centred health systems — for example, health and social services, other city services and public health services.
4. Creating strong communities and supportive environments — for example, healthy urban planning and design, healthy transport systems.

How was the Galway Healthy Cities plan developed?

Galway Healthy Cities workplan was developed by the key agencies from Galway City. They worked together to make plans and solved problems in a process known as ‘Collective Intelligence’. This was organised and helped by the Whitaker Institute for Innovation and Societal Change at NUI, Galway.

The group identified and prioritised barriers to health and wellbeing. It then decided actions to overcome barriers. These actions formed the basis of the Galway Healthy Cities plan for 2015–2018, and are in line with the goals and themes of the WHO Healthy Cities programme.

How is the plan implemented?

The Galway Healthy Cities Forum acts as a steering group to implement the Healthy Cities project in Galway City. Action plans are developed every year to guide our work, which will help us to identify priorities. At the end of each year, we will send a progress report to the WHO and develop an action plan for the following year. We will also report progress to the Galway Healthy Cities Forum four times a year.

What are the expected outcomes?

We expect the outcomes of implementing the 2015–2018 workplan to be:

• Improved health, wellbeing and quality of life for people living in Galway City
• A more integrated and co-ordinated approach to health and wellbeing in Galway City
• Greater co-operation and working together on local issues, to make best use of resources, knowledge and expertise
• An increased focus on actions to support health and wellbeing in City policies and plans.

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