

Assignment 2

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1. Introduction

Health and wellbeing extend beyond the absence of disease, encompassing physical, mental and social wellbeing (World Health Organization, 2025a). Health is also shaped by wider social determinants, including income, housing, education, employment and the environment, which contribute to health inequalities (World Health Organization, 2025b). The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by United Nations Member States in 2015, provide a global framework for addressing interconnected social, economic and environmental challenges and promoting sustainable development by 2030 (United Nations, 2015). This report examines Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing) and Sustainable Development Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), alongside national and local initiatives to improve health, wellbeing and sustainability.

2. Sustainable Development Goal 3: Good Health and Wellbeing

Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3) aims to “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages” and forms part of the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2025). Its targets address maternal and child

health, communicable diseases, non-communicable diseases (NCDs), mental health, substance misuse, road traffic injuries and universal health coverage (UHC). Importantly, SDG 3 emphasises prevention as well as treatment, including vaccination, screening, healthier lifestyles and reducing tobacco and alcohol use. This preventative approach can improve quality of life while reducing avoidable illness and pressure on healthcare services.

Physical health is a significant component of SDG 3 because NCDs, including cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases, represent a major global health burden (World Health Organization, 2024). Prevention through physical activity, healthy diets, screening and reducing tobacco and alcohol consumption can reduce risk factors and enable earlier identification of disease. However, encouraging healthier individual behaviours alone may be insufficient where people experience social and economic barriers to healthy living. Consequently, SDG 3 requires action that considers the wider circumstances influencing health. Mental health is also explicitly recognised within Target 3.4, which seeks to promote mental health and wellbeing alongside reducing premature mortality from NCDs (United Nations, 2025). Poor mental health can affect physical health, education, employment, relationships and quality of life. SDG 3 therefore encourages improved access to mental healthcare, reduced stigma, increased investment and integration of mental health support into primary healthcare (World Health Organization, 2025a). Nevertheless, access to appropriate mental health support remains inadequate for many populations, demonstrating the continuing challenge of translating the goal into equitable outcomes.

Furthermore, Target 3.8 seeks to achieve universal health coverage, ensuring access to essential healthcare services without financial hardship (World Health Organization, 2023). UHC can improve access to prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, palliative care, medicines and vaccines. However, equal access to healthcare does not necessarily result in equal health outcomes. Disadvantaged populations can experience poorer health because of wider determinants such as income, housing, education and employment (World Health Organization, 2025b). Therefore, healthcare provision alone cannot eliminate health inequalities.

Overall, SDG 3 provides a comprehensive framework combining prevention, treatment, mental health and universal healthcare. However, its effectiveness is constrained by inequalities, limited resources and differences in healthcare capacity. Its success is therefore dependent on action beyond healthcare, including addressing social, economic and environmental determinants and progressing other interconnected SDGs. This demonstrates that achieving sustainable health and wellbeing requires coordinated action across multiple sectors rather than relying solely on healthcare systems.

3. Sustainable Development Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities

Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11) aims to “make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” (United Nations, 2025a). Its targets include access to adequate and affordable housing, sustainable transport, inclusive urban planning, improved air quality and accessible green and public spaces (United Nations, 2025a). These areas are important to health because the environments in which people live can influence both physical and mental wellbeing. Consequently, SDG 11 complements SDG 3 by addressing environmental and social conditions that can either support or undermine good health.

Housing is a significant determinant of health. The World Health Organization (WHO) identifies poor housing conditions as a risk to physical and mental wellbeing, while dampness and mould can contribute to respiratory problems (World Health Organization, 2018). Cold and overcrowded housing can also contribute to physical illness, stress and reduced quality of life. Shaw (2004) further demonstrates the relationship between housing conditions and public health. Therefore, SDG 11’s focus on adequate, safe and affordable housing can contribute to reducing illness and health inequalities. However, improving housing alone cannot address inequalities where people continue to experience poverty or insecure employment.

Sustainable transport can also support health and wellbeing. SDG 11 promotes safe, accessible and sustainable transport and improved road safety (United Nations, 2025a). Reducing reliance on private vehicles can potentially reduce exposure to air pollution, while walking and cycling can increase opportunities for physical activity. Air pollution is associated with conditions including respiratory and cardiovascular disease, demonstrating how urban transport policies can have direct health consequences (World Health Organization, 2025). Safer and more accessible transport can additionally improve access to essential services and reduce social isolation, particularly among vulnerable populations.

Green and public spaces represent another important aspect of SDG 11. Accessible parks can encourage physical activity and provide opportunities for social interaction, while exposure to green spaces has been associated with improved physical and mental health outcomes (World Health Organization, 2016; Twohig-Bennett and Jones, 2018). However, the existence of green spaces does not guarantee equal access or benefit. Disability barriers, safety concerns, inadequate lighting and poor transport links can prevent some communities from using them. Furthermore, disadvantaged neighbourhoods may experience poorer housing, higher pollution and fewer accessible green spaces.

Overall, SDG 11 provides an important framework for creating healthier and more sustainable communities. Nevertheless, its effectiveness depends on adequate funding, political commitment, long-term planning and equitable implementation. Sustainable urban development can also create unintended consequences, such as increased housing costs and displacement through regeneration. Therefore, SDG 11 should be implemented alongside SDG 3 and other goals addressing poverty and inequality to ensure that improvements in cities translate into health benefits for all communities.

4. National Wellbeing Initiatives

NHS Health Check Programme

The NHS Health Check is a preventative programme for eligible adults aged 40–74 in England, designed to identify risks associated with cardiovascular disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, kidney disease and dementia (Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, 2026). It supports SDG 3 by identifying health risks before serious illness develops, allowing individuals to receive advice, treatment or referral where appropriate. Evidence from a large national evaluation found that 52.6% of people offered a Health Check took it up, although uptake varied considerably between local authorities (Robson *et al.*, 2015). A later review found that the programme increased the detection of cardiovascular risk factors and conditions, but highlighted differences in uptake between population groups (Usher-Smith *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, its effectiveness is constrained by unequal participation. Targeted outreach, opportunistic invitations and improved follow-up could increase participation and help ensure that identifying health risks results in sustained preventative action.

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) establishes the government's planning policies for England and guides local authorities when preparing plans and making planning decisions (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2024). It supports sustainable development through policies relating to housing, sustainable transport, green infrastructure and healthy communities, aligning closely with SDG 11. Planning can influence health by shaping access to services, opportunities for physical activity, environmental quality and community facilities. However, the effectiveness of the framework depends on how policies are implemented locally, with resources and competing planning priorities potentially affecting outcomes. Current proposed planning reforms also emphasise creating places that encourage healthy lives, inclusion and social connection (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2026). Stronger Health Impact Assessments, greater involvement of public health professionals and monitoring of longer-term health outcomes could therefore help ensure that planning decisions contribute more consistently to health and wellbeing.

5. Local Wellbeing Initiatives

Haringey School Streets

Haringey School Streets temporarily restrict motor vehicle access on roads outside participating schools during drop-off and collection periods, prioritising walking, cycling and wheeling (Haringey Council, 2026a). The initiative forms part of Haringey's wider approach to creating healthier and greener neighbourhoods and supports Sustainable

Development Goal 11 (SDG 11) by promoting safer, more inclusive and sustainable urban environments (Haringey Council, 2025a). By reducing vehicle movements around schools, the scheme aims to create safer and more pleasant environments for children and families while encouraging active travel.

The programme has substantial local reach. Haringey Council reports that hundreds of children are benefiting from School Streets, demonstrating the potential of the initiative to influence children's daily journeys and the environments surrounding schools (Haringey Council, 2025b). Reducing traffic can encourage walking, cycling and wheeling, increasing opportunities for physical activity while potentially reducing children's exposure to traffic-related air pollution. Fewer vehicles around school entrances may also reduce road-safety risks and create more welcoming spaces for social interaction. School Streets therefore contribute to several aspects of SDG 11, including sustainable transport, safer communities and reduced environmental impacts.

However, the initiative has limitations. Restricting vehicles around schools could displace traffic onto neighbouring roads rather than eliminating it, potentially transferring congestion and pollution to surrounding communities. Enforcement also requires resources, while residents and parents with disabilities, caring responsibilities or other legitimate transport needs may require appropriate exemptions. Furthermore, School Streets may have limited long-term influence on travel behaviour if safe walking and cycling infrastructure is unavailable beyond the restricted areas. Haringey should therefore continue monitoring traffic and air quality, improve connections with walking and cycling infrastructure and maintain meaningful consultation with residents and affected communities. The council's continued consultation on School Streets provides an opportunity to identify accessibility concerns and improve implementation (Haringey Council, 2026b).

Haringey Parks and Greenspace Strategy

Haringey's Parks and Greenspace Strategy, adopted in 2024, provides a 15-year framework for improving the borough's parks and green spaces. Its priorities include biodiversity, climate change, inclusion, accessibility and community participation (Haringey Council, 2024). The strategy strongly supports SDG 11 Target 11.7, which promotes universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible green and public spaces. It also demonstrates how local environmental policies can contribute to health and wellbeing by treating parks as important community assets rather than simply recreational facilities.

Accessible, good-quality green spaces can provide opportunities for walking, exercise, children's play and outdoor recreation, supporting physical health. They can also facilitate relaxation and social interaction, potentially supporting mental wellbeing and reducing social isolation. Research provides further support for these benefits, with a systematic review and meta-analysis finding that exposure to green space is associated with improvements in physical and mental health outcomes (Twohig-Bennett and Jones,

2018). Haringey's investment in parks and greenspaces therefore has the potential to contribute to both SDG 11 and SDG 3 by improving the environments in which residents live, work and spend their leisure time.

Nevertheless, the benefits may not be experienced equally across Haringey. Differences in park quality, accessibility, safety and maintenance can influence whether residents use green spaces. Disabled and older residents may encounter physical barriers, while inadequate lighting or concerns about personal safety can discourage use. Long-term maintenance also requires sustained financial investment. Haringey's commitment to significant investment in its parks and green spaces demonstrates an effort to address these challenges (Haringey Council, 2025c). However, investment should prioritise underserved communities and areas experiencing greater disadvantage to reduce rather than reproduce existing health inequalities. Improving accessibility, safety and community involvement, alongside monitoring park usage and wellbeing outcomes, could help determine whether improvements produce equitable health benefits.

6. Conclusion

Overall, SDG 3 and SDG 11 demonstrate that improving health and wellbeing requires action across healthcare, social and environmental settings. While SDG 3 focuses on prevention, treatment and access to healthcare, SDG 11 addresses wider conditions such as housing, transport and access to green spaces. The NHS Health Check and National Planning Policy Framework demonstrate how national approaches can support these goals, while Haringey's School Streets and Parks and Greenspace Strategy show how they can be applied locally. However, inequalities in access, implementation and resources may limit their effectiveness. Therefore, coordinated and inclusive action is essential to ensure that improvements in health, wellbeing and sustainability benefit all communities.

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