

HIA & Sustainability Appraisal: comparing & contrasting the two methodologies

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Health Warning

The information in this presentation:

- **is *not* the result of research**
- **is based on my practice in HIA and other impact assessments (IAs) or appraisals**

Tool design and development

General

- Principles on which a tool is based
- Structure of the tool
- Content of the tool, including user interpretation
- Outputs of the tool
- User-friendliness/usability of the tool
- Usefulness of the tool

Specific: how does it deal with health?

**“Real education begins with a question in
the life of the learner” - Tolstoy**

Why is HIA not being used?

“Point Zero”: reasons why HIA is not used

- **HIA is not a statutory requirement**
- **Already using EIA, SEA, sustainability appraisal, social IA, etc.**
- **Overburdened with impact assessments – HIA does not add anything**
- **Looking at integrated impact assessment tools – “this is the future”**
- **Scepticism**
- **Cynicism**
- **Misunderstanding**
- **HIA results seen as negative contribution**
- **Lack of resources**
- **Lack of capacity**

Sustainability Appraisal

- **Basic mechanism of appraisal: assessing the direction of change, either towards or away from sustainability, using a set of objectives as the baseline**
- **Other mechanisms involved: e.g. assessing whether certain aspects of proposal are internally contradictory, or in conflict with other proposals**

HIA vs Sustainability Appraisal

Reflections based on three pieces of work:

- Advice on Sustainability Appraisal tool developed by Entech for South East England Development Agency (SEEDA)**
- Analysis completed for discussion by WHO European Healthy Cities Sub-Network in HIA**
- Analysis of Aylesbury Vale District Council sustainability appraisal tool to assist development of HIA on proposed urban extensions to Aylesbury**

HIA vs Sustainability Appraisal: Analysis for Aylesbury District Council

- Public Health Resource Unit (PHRU) commissioned to do HIA on urban extensions to Aylesbury by Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC)**
- EI acted as HIA Adviser on project**
- EI analysed AVDC's sustainability appraisal (SA) tool to align HIA with AVDC's existing practice in SA**

HIA vs Sustainability Appraisal: Analysis for Aylesbury District Council

Tool design

- **“Open” structure**

Approach to health and health-related issues

- **No explicit mention
of health**
- **No explicit mention
of a “determinants
of health” approach**

HIA vs Sustainability Appraisal: Analysis for SEEDA

- **SEEDA commissioned Sustainability Appraisal tool from Entech**
- **Health Development Agency (HDA) in the South East recommended increasing the profile of health and health-related issues in the tool**
- **EI commissioned by HDA to assist in tool development with respect to health issues**

HIA vs Sustainability Appraisal: Analysis for SEEDA

Tool design

- SA is an objectives-based tool – poor-quality objectives will give poor-quality results (also applies to SEA)
- There was no mechanism to interrogate or address increasing sustainability in one domain that might decrease sustainability in another

Approach to health and health-related issues

- If health is not made explicit in the base objectives, health is not a component of the results
- If users of the tool lack knowledge of the determinants of health then impacts on health will be under-played and some may be missed

HIA vs Sustainability Appraisal: Analysis for WHO EHCN Sub-Network in HIA

- **WHO EHCN developing guidance for cities on how to integrate health or HIA into EIA, SEA, SA, social IA (human IA) and Equality or Equity IA**
- **EI had already completed HIA for MKSM Sub-Region (commissioned by Office of the Deputy Prime Minister), then did SA on same proposal and compared results**
- **Two specialist registrars doing Continuing Professional Development in HIA – Viv Speller & Frances Chinemama – did HIA & SA on same proposal & compared results (to control for any bias)**
- **Proposal was planning application for an urban extension to Corby (first of 4-5)**
- **Both comparisons used same HIA tool and same SA tool (SPECTRUM – Hugh Barton at UWE)**

HIA vs Sustainability Appraisal: Analysis for WHO EHCN Sub-Network in HIA

Tool design

- **Colour coding (a spectrum) of results allowed recognition of meaning rapidly (EI)**
- **SPECTRUM scoring criteria could facilitate collaborative decision-making more easily than suggestions generated by HIA process (VS & FC)**
- **Content does not include some of key determinants of health (EI; VS & FC) & there was no mechanism to translate “health” into or link health to the sustainability criteria (EI)**
- **No mechanism to address the nature or characteristics of health impacts (EI)**
- **No capacity to describe differential impacts on health for different groups in the community (EI)**
- **No explicit way to define communities affected by the proposal who are not the target group for the proposal**

Approach to health and health-related issues

- **No explicit mention of health (EI)**
- **Planner’s understanding of determinants of health (EI)**
- **No explicit mention of health inequalities (EI)**

HIA vs Sustainability Appraisal: Analysis for WHO EHCN Sub-Network in HIA

Conclusions by Speller & Chinemama

- **Some suggestions arising out of the HIA not covered at all by SPECTRUM (particular deficit was access to services and facilities)**
- **Suggestions from HIA do not give a way of measuring progress towards sustainability (although sustainability is a core value for HIA – EI)**

Tool principles: concept of sustainability

Common perception

Sustainability, particularly sustainable development, can neglect health or regard it as an add-on – situation for some SA tools

“Other world” view

Health is fundamental to sustainability, whether looking at:

- **Economic sustainability**
- **Social sustainability**
- **Environmental sustainability**

Tool characteristics & use: sustainability appraisal

- **May not be intersectoral**
- **May lack input from broad range of disciplines**
- **Unlikely to be participatory**
- **Tends to be used by officers or technicians within an organisation**

What brought HIA to “Point Zero”?

- Did we claim too much then?
- Do we apologise too much now?
- Did we learn from other IA practitioners (their tools and experiences)?
- Have we been blind to the needs of the users of results (decision-makers)? – “Values trump evidence” (Muir Gray)
- Are the values underpinning HIA those of the users of the results?

But if we never did HIA again what would we lose?

If we never did HIA again what would we lose?

- **Focus on health and other inequalities, and the mechanism we use to highlight this – capacity in tool to identify differential effects**
- **Capacity to address specific contexts and communities**
- **Some proposals which are being (or have been) assessed would never be assessed and enhanced for health gain**

The value of HIA

- **It can be conducted on any level of proposal**
- **It allows users to address fundamental issues around inequality and health**
- **It provides a framework to bring together different types of information to inform or support decision-making – moving away from hierarchies of evidence to typologies of evidence in public health**
- **Flexibility - Elasticity**
- **Specificity**
- **Potential for inclusivity**

A personal note: the added value of HIA?

In HIA, I can draw on:

- the power of “evidence”**
- the power of previous work (mine and colleagues)**
- the power of statistics**
- the power of stories**

It gives me the power to find meaning on many levels (depths) about health and well-being and how we can promote it, which is fundamental to the life of individuals, communities and nations