

The development of Healthy Cities and place-based approaches in the UK: a comparative review

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1. BACKGROUND

The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (1986) introduced the settings approach. Healthy Cities was one of the first applications of this approach. The WHO Healthy Cities UK Network continues today, with member cities currently participating in Phase VII (2019-25).

However, this now co-exists with other approaches to health promotion, including place-based approaches and Marmot Cities (underpinned by the Marmot Principles). This review traces the evolution of **settings-based** and **place-based** approaches in the UK through the lens of **cities**, beginning with Healthy Cities. It aims to illuminate how terminology has changed over time.

2. METHODS

Document analysis was conducted using the READ approach (*Ready the materials, Extract data, Analyse data and Distil findings*) to review eligible **grey literature**: plans, guidelines or frameworks from any health policy-making body in the UK which defines its approach in relation to cities. Grey literature was sourced through searching on Google Scholar. The 'cited by' feature was used to search forwards, and the custom date range feature was used to map terms onto a timeline (Fig. 1). Each term is supported by an illustrative document. Selected documents are listed below.

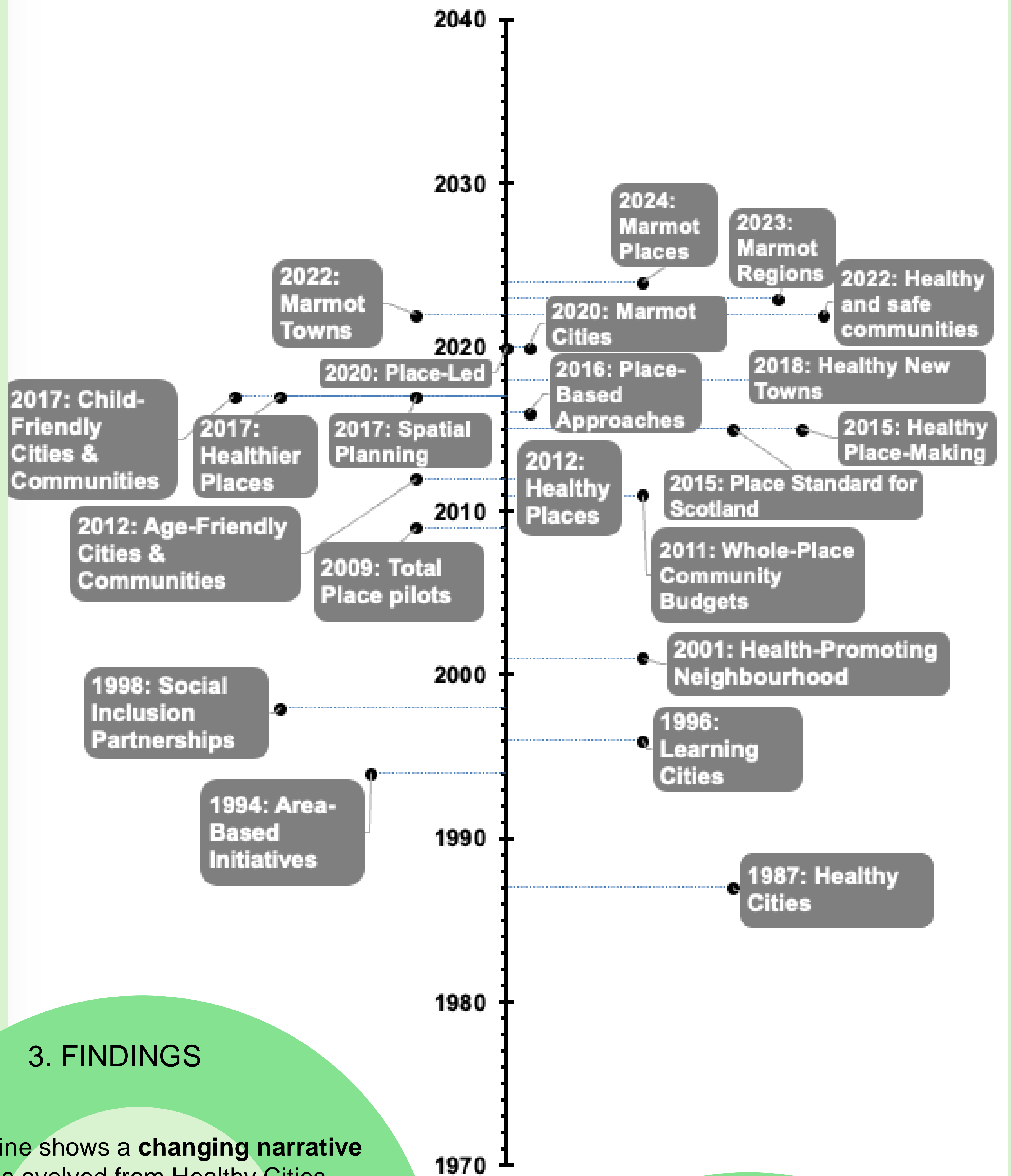
Google Scholar



3. FINDINGS

The timeline shows a **changing narrative** that has evolved from Healthy Cities, spanning several phases: a focus on geographic area in the 1990s; an issues-led focus (e.g. on learning, healthy ageing, children); a focus on values, with an emphasis on how people live together in neighbourhoods; an emerging environmental narrative around cities; and a focus on how cities are governed (including, in the UK, the role of devolved local government).

Figure 1: Timeline of Healthy Cities and place-based approaches in the UK



4. INTERPRETATION

The timeline is a tool for understanding conceptual development in public health chronologically. This chronological approach can help in understanding how concepts are **framed** and how policy develops from such framings. In a context of limited funding in the UK, it is important to ensure that previous learning informs the continuing evolution of public health concepts and policies.

Illustrative documents

Improvement Service (2016) Place-based Approaches to Joint Planning, Resourcing and Delivery: An overview of current practice in Scotland. Livingston. Available from:

https://www.improvementservice.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/10744/place-based-approaches-report.pdf

Kuznetsova, D. (2012) Healthy Places: Councils leading on public health. London: New Local Government Network. Available from:

https://www.manchester.gov.uk/egov_downloads/Circulation_Only_Healthy-Places_FINAL.pdf

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2022) Guidance: Healthy and safe communities, GOV.UK. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/health-and-wellbeing>

NHS England (2018) Putting Health into Place: Introducing NHS England's Healthy New Towns programme. Available from: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/putting-health-into-place-v4.pdf>

Public Health England (2017) Spatial Planning for Health: an evidence resource for planning and designing healthier places. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5b59b090e5274a3ff828c70c/spatial_planning_for_health.pdf

WHESP (2023) Building a Fairer Gwent: Wales' first Marmot Region, Welsh Health Equity Solutions Platform. Available from: <https://solutionsplatform.co.uk/building-a-fairer-gwent-wales-first-marmot-region/>

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Healthy Ireland (2024) Enabling Wellbeing Environments – Encouraging Local Government Leadership. Available from: <https://hilo.gov.ie/resources/enabling-wellbeing-environments-encouraging-local-government-leadership-webinar-recording-available/>

Marks, L., Hunter, D. J., Scalabrini, S., Gray, J., McCafferty, S., Payne, N., Peckham, S., Salway, S. and Thokala, P. (2015) The return of public health to local government in England: changing the parameters of the public health prioritization debate?, *Public Health*, 129 (9), pp. 1194–1203. DOI:10.1016/j.puhe.2015.07.028.

Tsouros, A. D. (1990) World Health Organization Healthy Cities Project: a project becomes a movement: review of progress 1987 to 1990. World Health Organization. Regional Office for Europe. Available from: <https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/345408>.

World Health Organization (1986) The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, WHO. World Health Organization. Available from: <http://www.who.int/healthpromotion/conferences/previous/ottawa/en/>