

The Importance of Place in Public Health: Healthy Stadia

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Public health is a major priority for the governments of developed and developing nations. In a bid to advance methods to engage with population groups rather than individuals, a settings-based approach to promoting public health has been implemented in a number of locations where populations interact and gather.

These settings include hospitals (i.e., Healthy Hospitals), schools (i.e., Healthy Schools), prisons (i.e., Healthy Prison programmes) and workplaces (i.e., Healthy Cities).

With settings-based approaches to health promotion now reflected in policies and declarations by international stakeholders (e.g. WHO, United Nations), there has also been increased recognition of how sports venues can be developed as a setting to deliver public health outcomes. Stadium and club-based initiatives which promote improved health and wellbeing are discussed in this chapter under the banner of 'healthy stadia'.

Healthy stadia initiatives were developed in the mid-2000s and emphasised the potential of health promotion in sports venues, across three themes: (i) healthier stadium environments for fans and non-match day visitors (e.g. smoke-free environments); (ii) healthier club workforces (e.g. bike to work schemes); and (iii) healthier populations in local communities (e.g., child obesity interventions). The working definition of a healthy stadium is:

"those which promote the health of visitors, fans, players, employees and the surrounding community ... places where people can go to have a positive healthy experience playing or watching sport."

Healthy Stadia is considered a spearhead in advocating for sports stadia, clubs and governing bodies of sport to develop health-promoting sports settings. Healthy stadia practices, policies and research have grown over the last decade across a wide number of different sports and European settings. Such growth includes population-level approaches to improving public health (e.g. smoke-free stadia at sports mega events such as UEFA EURO, Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup), and targeted interventions attempting to change the individual behaviours of target groups (e.g. addressing low levels of physical activity and sedentary behaviour in male football fans).

It is apparent that clubs, governing bodies of sport, league operators and – perhaps most importantly – outside of sport, agencies commissioning public health interventions, are beginning to recognise that sports settings offer a unique opportunity for health promotion.

The above is an overview of, *Healthy Stadia: A settings based approach to health promotion* (Daniel Parnell, Kathryn Curran and Matthew Philpott), a chapter of the newly published, *Sport and Health: The Current State of Play*. Routledge: London (Daniel Parnell and Peter Krstrup (eds.) 2017)

Book details: <https://www.routledge.com/Sport-and-Health-Exploring-the-Current-State-of-Play/Parnell-Krstrup/p/book/9781138290228> (Chapter 12, p238-250)

This chapter provides an overview of healthy stadia activities, examples of recent research and public health outcomes of healthy stadia initiatives. You can read more about healthy stadia activities here: [European Healthy Stadia Network](#). You can also read recent research surrounding the healthy stadia agenda in a special [collection of papers](#) published in 2016, edited by Parnell, Curran and Philpott.

