

In this number

Public health at different levels

In this issue we begin an occasional series on public health at different levels.

For a long time it has been the convention to consider health and health care from the perspective of the District Health System derived from local government administrations and allied public sector organisations. In this thinking the district general hospital has loomed large and to an extent it has been complemented by moving down to primary care and up to the national level. Today's post-modern and global world requires new thinking about health and health care systems that recognises changing demographic and environmental contexts, societal change and a shift in emphasis from all encompassing

structures to looser, more variegated networks. In such networks particular issues need to be addressed at the population and organisational level that most make sense. Subsidiarity and additionality are the key principles when looking at public health from a neighbourhood, community or village level; from that of borough, town or city, conurbation, region, nation state, global region or the world system itself. We begin with two British perspectives from the national level and from the conurbation of Greater London. We would be happy to consider other contributions from other levels and other parts of the world.

JOHN ASHTON, CBE
Editor

The JECH gallery

Contrasts in service provision

In our longitudinal study of two socially contrasting neighbourhoods in Glasgow¹ we have collected a range of information on aspects of the local social and physical environment as well as surveying a sample of residents about their health and life circumstances. In presentations we have frequently used photographs as they can often convey features of the environment more evocatively than tables and graphs. Although we have a wide range of photographs depicting various aspects of the social and physical environment we have selected ones for publication here that we feel are least subject to bias—that is, an example of a publicly provided service (figs 1 and 2). The two buildings and their surrounding environs differ markedly in ways that not only might affect their use, but might also

signal what levels of investment and maintenance are deemed appropriate by service providers for different types of areas.

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We are grateful to David Boyd for taking the photographs and to Geoff Der for pointing out the issue of selection bias in photographing the social and physical environment.

1 Macintyre S, Ellaway A. Ecological approaches: rediscovering the role of the physical and social environment. In: Berkman L, Kawachi I, eds. *Social epidemiology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.



Figure 1 Social Services office in more affluent locality.



Figure 2 Social Services office in more deprived locality.