



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

A Public Health perspective on the future role of outdoor recreation, in improving health and wellbeing outcomes

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Why recreation and health

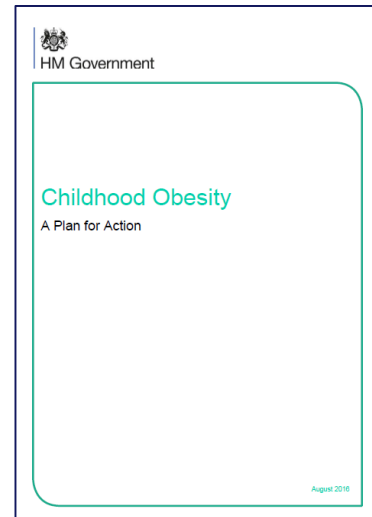
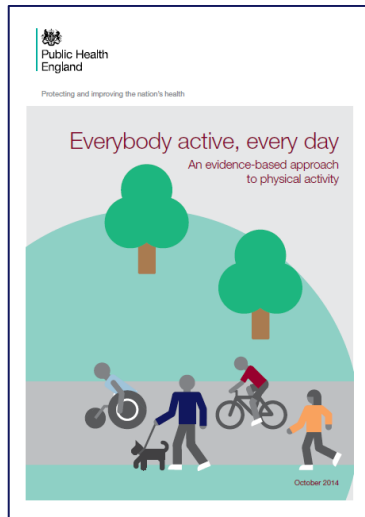
Definitions (Websters 1913):

'The act of recreating, or the state of being recreated; refreshment of the strength and spirits after toil; amusement; diversion; sport; pastime'.

Salutogenesis: According to Antonovsky's original idea it was more important to focus on peoples' resources and capacity to create health than the classic focus on risks, ill health, and disease.

Source: <https://jech.bmj.com/content/59/6/440>

Policy Context



Policy – shaping the environment

- Several key policies provide the canvass on which to paint evidence based interventions
- Outdoor Recreation as a Potential Lever for Health Improvement: A Review of the Health Benefits, Barriers and Opportunities for the Sector <http://oro.open.ac.uk/50661/>
- <https://core.ac.uk/>

25 Year Environment Plan launch



A cleaner
greener
Britain

A cleaner greener Britain

"The environment is something personal to each of us, but it is also something which collectively we hold in trust for the next generation. And we have a responsibility to protect and enhance it"

Theresa May, 11 January 2018

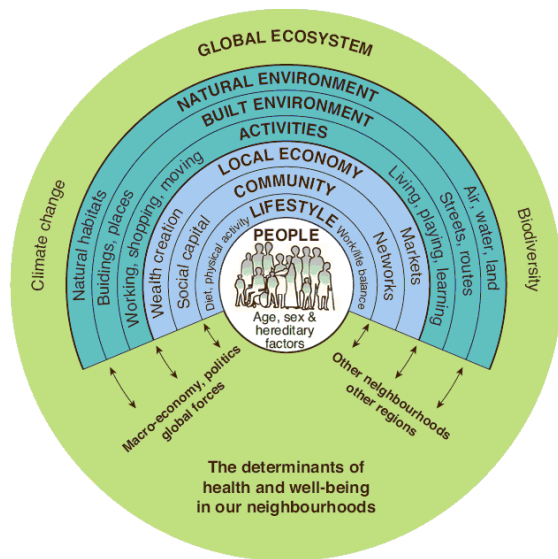
Our long-term health

- There are many factors influencing our long-term health, including the environment we live, work and spend our leisure time.
- Our environment can reduce or improve our chance of living a long and healthy life – people in the least deprived areas live around 20 years longer in good health than those in the most deprived.
- This inequality has a serious impact on the NHS.
- Many illnesses, such as cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, poor mental health and some cancers, could be largely prevented if we lived and worked in places that supported our health.

Our long-term health

- Our physical environment can contribute to ill health in many ways;
- For example the layout of streets and the location of schools, shops, services, homes and workplaces can promote sedentary lifestyles, loneliness and poor diets.
- Conversely, healthy places can support good physical and mental health by encouraging walking and cycling, reducing air pollution, improving access to healthier food and green spaces, and encouraging social connections through well-connected neighbourhoods.

Wider determinants of health



‘Access to good quality air, water, food, sporting, recreational and cultural facilities and green space all contribute to reducing inequalities as well as helping to create sustainable communities.’



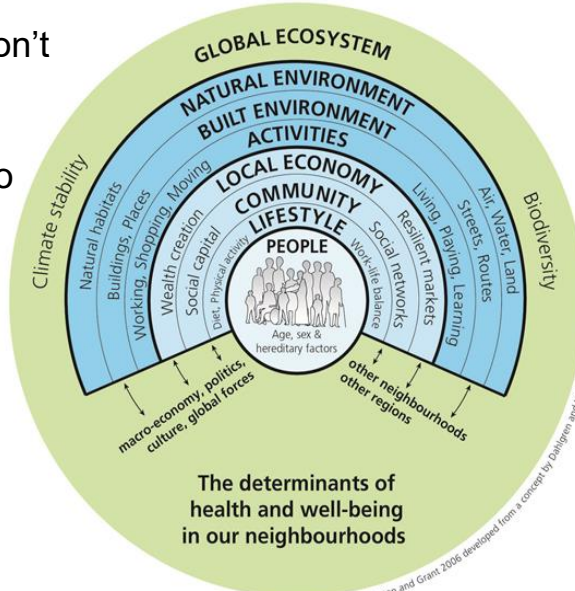
Our health is determined by:

where you don't
live

what you do

who you are

where you live



Health Challenges

- **Ageing Society:** By 2040, nearly one in seven people is projected to be aged over 75. These trends, partially mitigated by migration rates, will have a major effect on the UK
- **Obesity:** More than 1 in 5 children are overweight or obese when they begin school, and 1 in 3 children are overweight or obese by the time they leave primary school. (obesity rates are highest in the most deprived 10% of the population, approximately twice that of the least deprived 10%)

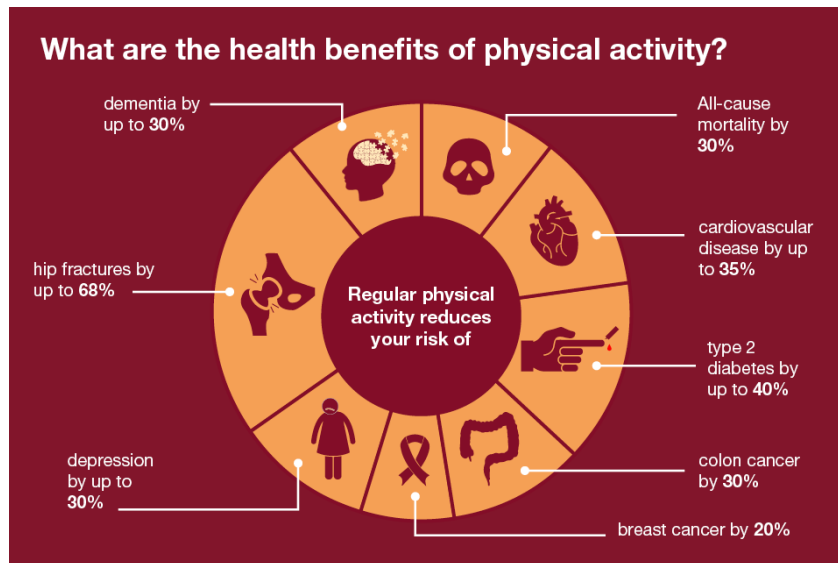
Health Challenges

- Environment and climate emergency: Extreme weather events already have a significant impact on public health through increased deaths and ill health.. (1). If cold-country winters get colder or hot-country summers more (or less) humid, for example, that influences what residents do for leisure and recreation both locally and by traveling. They may shorten or lengthen the season for particular recreational activities
- Sedentary lifestyles: Common examples of sedentary behaviour include watching TV, using a computer, using the car for short journeys and sitting down to read, talk or listen to music.

Health benefits of recreation

- Access to, and engagement with, the natural environment is associated with numerous positive health outcomes.
- There is consistent evidence that having access to recreational infrastructure, such as parks and playgrounds, is associated with reduced risk of obesity among adolescents and increase in physical activity
- A number of systematic reviews have highlighted the role of natural environments in supporting and providing spaces for recreation.

Public Health Benefits



Public Health Benefits

What counts as moderate physical activity

Any physical activity is better than none. It is never too late to get more active to improve health. Activities could include:

walking



gardening



hiking



dancing



cycling



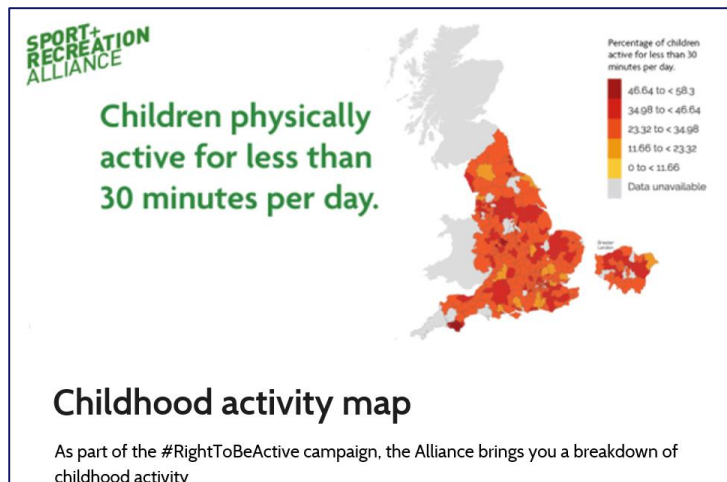
active recreation



swimming

How active are we?

<https://www.sportandrecreation.org.uk/>



Natural environment evidence



Natural and Sust. Env.

Reduce exposure to environmental hazard

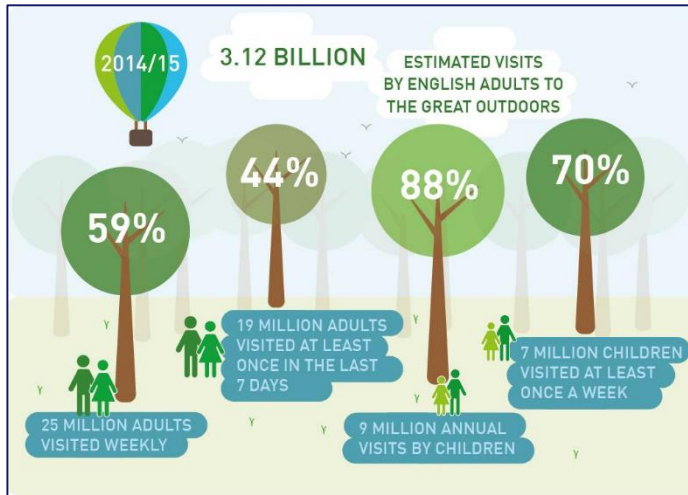
- Improved air quality
- Exposure to air pollution
- Excessive noise
- Impact of flooding

Increase access to and engagement with the natural environment

- Aesthetic park improvements
- Improve access and maximise opportunities for outdoor activities
- Tackle climate change
- Neighbourhood tree planting



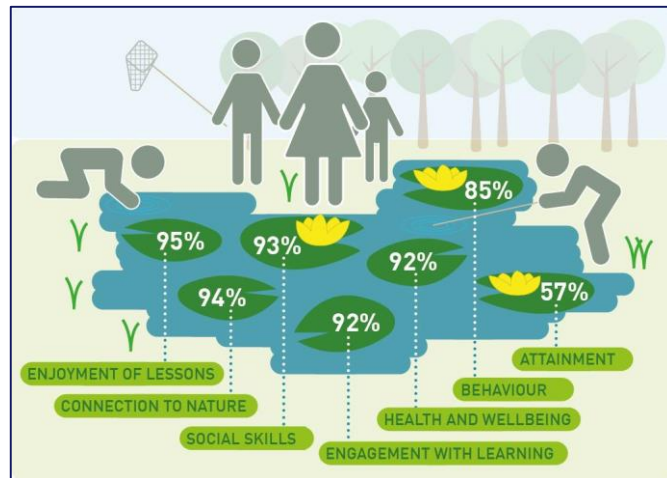
Reconomics – plus



Reconomics Plus sets out the unique value of outdoor recreation

<https://sramedia.s3.amazonaws.com/media/documents/699fec08-3f90-4e00-ac4a-c074b353a38d.pdf>

Reconomics – plus



Access to and engagement



Reasons commonly cited for not participating in outdoors activities

- Too busy with family responsibilities (32%)
- Can't commit regularly (30%)
- Don't have the time (30%)
- Prefer to spend spare time doing other things (29%)
- It's too expensive (24%).

Public Health Benefits with engagement with the Natural Environments

- A review by Thompson Coon et al. found some evidence ***that exercising in natural environments was associated with greater feelings of revitalization and positive engagement, decreases in tension, confusion, anger, and depression, and increased energy compared with indoor exercise.*** There were also more positive perceptions of the activity including greater enjoyment and satisfaction and participants expressed a greater intent to repeat the activity at a later date
- Interesting academic work on a 'dose' of nature, <https://beyondgreenspace.net/2019/06/13/120-minutes-in-nature-the-5-a-day-equivalent/>. There are indications that spending \geq 120mins/wk ***of any kind of recreation, even just sitting, has a benefit.***

Economics

- The work undertaken by Nick Greyson and colleagues at Birmingham City Council does use Natural Capital language to explicitly link and demonstrate the value of the city's natural assets to health, and social and economic wellbeing (see for instance the use of spatial data to illustrate opportunities⁴⁴).
- The Natural Capital Committee concluded that investment in urban Natural Capital 'can provide enormous recreation values, benefiting millions of people in our towns and cities. They also offer significant potential for improvements in physical and mental health which in turn will reduce health expenditures and improve labour productivity. Reduced health treatment costs alone of £2.1 billion have been estimated'

Access to and engagement

- The most recent Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment survey revealed that three in five adults living in England (62%) reported taking visits to the natural environment at least once a week.
- Health and exercise is the main motivation for spending time in natural environments
- Thirty-eight percent of people 'strongly agreed' that spending time out of doors was an important part of their life (a further 49% 'agreed')
- The proportion of people living in most deprived areas who had taken visits increased by 13 percentage points from 38% in 2009/10 to 51% in 2017/18.
- Eighteen percent visited less than once a month or never took visits. Younger people (age 16-24) were the most frequent visitors, compared to other age groups. People aged 65 and over, black, and minority ethnic groups and residents living in the most deprived areas of England were the least frequent visitors.

Access to and engagement

- Research has identified the following key factors affecting under-represented groups participation in outdoors activities, which may contribute to exclusion and result in under-representation.
- **Deprived Communities** – Distances / middle class stigma / confidence / cost / lack of opportunities
- **BAME:** Awareness / Language / Culture / Confidence / Safety / middle class stigma
- **People with physical disabilities;** visual impairments; hearing impairments. Elderly: Distances / Shelter and rest points / Access to information / Safety / Route finding
- **Families:** Time/ Cost / take too long / transport

Access to and engagement

- Just under half of visits were taken to natural places within a town or city while 39% were taken to the countryside and 12% to a beach or other coastal location, parks in towns and cities were the most popular destination type (Natural England, 2018).
- Although the evidence is mixed and occasionally inconsistent, natural environments are associated with and may support higher levels of physical activity, however it appears that physical activity does not explain ALL the apparent health benefits of natural environments

Access to and engagement with the Natural Environments

- Access to, and engagement with, the natural environment is associated with numerous positive health outcomes.
- There is consistent evidence that having access to recreational infrastructure, such as parks and playgrounds, is associated with reduced risk of obesity among adolescents and increase in physical activity
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How to increase recreation

- In urban or periurban landscapes, old mines and quarries are an exceptional opportunity to develop spaces for recreational, sports, and educational activities. (1)
- Old and abandoned railway lines up and down the country offer cycle trails, that are family friendly and off road.
- Enhancing street connectivity via provision of walking and cycling infrastructure and improving access to public transportation, can help reduce perceptions of long distance trips and provide alternative routes for active travel (Hajna et al., 2015) (2)

Can we green our streets?

- Individual knowledge of nature and health / behaviour change
- Health care knowledge and attitude
- Quantity and quality of natural environments
- Multifunctional and systematic approach required
- Spatial planning and development control
- Value of natural and social capital



The Prize

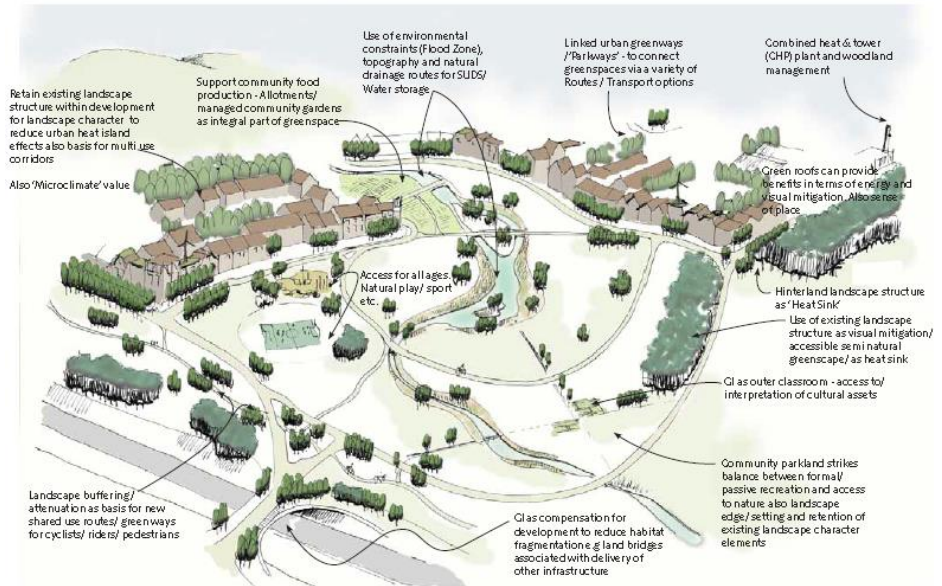


Figure 3.10: Green infrastructure, multifunctionality and place-making – example 2

Greening our streets?



What if streets were not just large car parks?

Woonerf's (Home Zones)

- Creating shared outdoor spaces for people and vehicles



Bicester

Eco Bicester Phase One in Detail



Social Prescribing

- Social prescribing sometimes referred to as community referral is a means of enabling GPs, nurses and other health and care professionals to refer people to a range of local, non-clinical services.

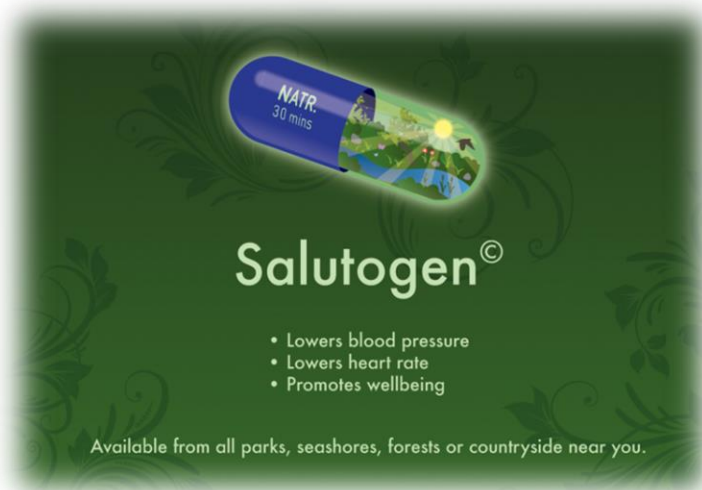


Social Prescribing

- Social prescribing schemes can involve a variety of activities including volunteering, arts activities, group learning, gardening, befriending, cookery, healthy eating advice and a range of sports.
- Social prescribing is designed to support people with a wide range of social, emotional or practical needs, and many schemes are focussed on improving mental health and physical well-being. Those who could benefit from social prescribing schemes include people with mild or long-term mental health problems, vulnerable groups, people who are socially isolated, and those who frequently attend either primary or secondary health care.

Issues to consider

- Benefits of outdoor recreation and wellbeing are well rehearsed
- Challenge is increasing access to suitable outdoor space for health benefit
- Influencing spatial design and planning
- Activity levels continue to vary across the country – do you know your local profile?
- Obesogenic environment - negative impact on access, motivation and opportunities
- Social prescribing set to be an important feature of wellbeing



Source: <https://valuing-nature.net/placements-2016-dan-bloomfield>

a cycle track of the future?

