

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee/Panel:	Health and Wellbeing Board
Date:	15 March 2018
Title:	Update from the Hampshire Districts Health and Wellbeing Forum
Report From:	Councillor Anne Crampton, Chair of the District Forum

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1. Recommendation

- 1.1. That the Hampshire Health and Wellbeing Board recognises the value of access to open spaces in local areas and that the Board's member organisations consider the measures in the report to encourage increased usage of open spaces for physical activity.

2. Summary

- 2.1. This report provides an update on the work of the District Health and Wellbeing Forum which was set up as a subgroup of the Hampshire Health and Wellbeing Board. It has been established that there should be better two-way communication between the Forum and its parent Board so that the Forum is properly aligned with and delivering against the Hampshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy priorities and so that the Board can understand how its own members can support delivery of health and health inequalities outcomes at district level.
- 2.2. This report details evidence of the importance of open space for mental and physical health and wellbeing, and highlights a range of approaches for Board members to consider that seek to use open spaces as health assets.

3. Open spaces and health and wellbeing

- 3.1. The Forum met on 21 November 2017, where it considered presentations by HCC Public Health, Energise Me and Hart District Council in relation to open spaces.
- 3.2. There is strong evidence linking contact and exposure to the natural environment with improved health and wellbeing e.g. improved physical and mental health and reduced risk of cardiovascular disease.
- 3.3. 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

- 3.4. Evidence from empirical studies suggest that living in close proximity to green space can improve health, regardless of social class.
- 3.5. There is also emerging evidence that the availability of blue spaces, such as canals, ponds, rivers, and beaches, has a positive association with health
- 3.6. Usage of open space is partly determined by proximity. A study of quantities of open space found within urban areas across Hampshire shows that about 20% of urban Hampshire is made up of accessible green space (with variation across districts of between 13% and 34%).
- 3.7. As well as quantity, the quality of open spaces is important so that areas are considered safe to use, and relevant infrastructure is in place. Research indicates that paved trails in parks are associated with physical activity, and with an ageing population, regular resting places (i.e. seating) can encourage greater levels of gentle and regular exercise. Provision of infrastructure in general should be guided by local consultation with residents. Different groups (men and women, young and old, BME groups, disabled people and residents from relatively deprived communities) have different sets of motivations and barriers to making more use of open spaces.
- 3.8. District Councils are now reviewing the way their Planning Policy and Development Management functions support health objectives, with the help of HCC Public Health team. Viability of development is a challenge, as is the gathering of sufficient evidence to demonstrate health needs; nevertheless there is emerging research and best practice to draw on, and very welcome support from HCC Public Health colleagues.

4. Encouraging greater use of open spaces

- 4.1. While those responsible for planning and managing open spaces (district councils, HCC – for Country Parks, and parish and town councils) can provide, maintain and improve open spaces, there is a wider partnership and commissioning dimension if we are to maximise the use of these health assets to address physical and mental health challenges in Hampshire. A report from the Institute of Health Equity (set up by Sir Michael Marmot) stated:

“There is a need for far greater communication and collaboration between the natural environment and health sectors, which should also make it easier for the public to identify a coherent ‘offer’ around the natural environment.”¹

- 4.2. The current usage of open spaces provides a good opportunity for increasing participation. A Sport England report found that only 27% of people who are deemed Active are active outdoors, which drops further to only 16% of people deemed Regularly Active being active outdoors.

¹ UCL Institute of Health Equity (2012) Natural Solutions for Tackling Health Inequalities

- 4.3. Specific projects to encourage use of open space show a good return on investment in health terms. Green Gyms (woodland and open space maintenance activity run by Conservation Volunteers) have been shown to offer a Quality-Adjusted Life Year (QALY) at a cost of £4,000 (with NICE considering interventions cost effective if they offer QALYs at less than £20,000.) Put another way, Green Gyms save £2.55 in health costs (treatment of illness associated with physical inactivity) for every £1 invested. Walking for Health schemes deliver a similar QALY cost of about £4,000.
- 4.4. The Natural Health Service provides commissionable and evidence-based services which yield a social return on investment of £6.75 for every £1 invested.²
- 4.5. Some evidence suggests that participants in health referral exercise programmes based in outdoor green environments are more likely to continue with their programme than if it is based within a gym or leisure centre. This is consistent with research findings showing that price and distance are barriers to physical activity, and that incorporating exercise into everyday (and local) activity is more likely to yield sustained health benefits.
- 4.6. The Active Parks programme in Birmingham uses technology to track usage of parks and help link NHS funding (for exercise referral) to maintenance and promotion of parks.³
- 4.7. The Forum discussed the way information about local open spaces needs to be provided to a range of partners who have contact with patients/residents so that this can be used in conversations about self-management (tertiary prevention) as well as more general preventive conversations (primary and secondary prevention), and in the MECC ('Make Every Contact Count') programme. GPs and other healthcare providers should make more use of alternatives to medication for mental illness, including advice to spend time and exercise in green spaces – a form of nature-based social prescribing.
- 4.8. To encourage a better link between the natural environment and health sectors CCGs and GPs should consider taking up the Physical Activity Clinical Champions Training Opportunity recently launched by Public Health England.
- 4.9. While it is important that residents can get good local information from trusted clinical and other public servants, increasingly people will look online for information to improve wellbeing. Points of information such as council websites, Get Active Hampshire and Connect-to Support need to be comprehensively populated and kept up to date with information about local opportunities to use open space.
- 4.10. Greater integration between the education and natural environment sectors is urgently required to help address health inequalities, tackle childhood obesity and improve children's well-being and mental health.

² <http://naturalhealthservice.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Natural-Health-Service-four-key-facts.pdf>

³ UCL Institute of Health Equity (2012) Natural Solutions for Tackling Health Inequalities

4.11. The Forum also discussed ways that use of local health assets could be more closely incorporated into health commissioning through service specifications. For example weight management, NHS Healthchecks and mental health service specifications could require service providers to be aware of and promote open spaces that are local to their service users.

5. Finance

5.1. Costs of maintaining and improving open spaces largely fall on district, town and parish councils, and Hampshire County Council in relation to some of the larger country parks. (Some capital improvement costs can be met by contributions from development.) Such revenue spending is increasingly under review and constraint due to reductions in government grant. Details above highlight potential 'invest-to-save' opportunities of various different approaches and savings potentially accruing to NHS budgets from greater usage of open spaces.

6. Equalities

6.1. As highlighted above, equality impact research has revealed differential usage of open space and different barriers and motivations of different groups:

- Over 80% of outdoors participants are white British.
- Men are more likely than women to be active outdoors (65% compared to 35%).
- On average 24% of people in the BME population regularly visit the natural environment, compared to 38% of the rest of the population.
- Under 18s' key reason for participating outdoors is 'to have fun with friends', whereas for over 55s it is 'to enjoy the scenery and be close to nature'.

6.2. Such considerations should be taken into account when planning improvements and attempting to increase usage of open space so as not to increase health inequalities.

7. Future direction

7.1. The issue of open spaces provides a good opportunity for better coordinated partnership collaboration: maximising the use of a key health asset, addressing a significant health and wellbeing challenge for Hampshire (physical inactivity and mental ill health, and health inequalities), appreciating the local and everyday lived experience of patients/residents, using our combined workforce to send consistent and united key messages to promote healthy behaviours.

7.2. As in the Birmingham example, and as previously piloted in parts of Hampshire in the 'Beat the Streets' projects, technology is likely to play a greater part in encouraging use of open space.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Strategic Plan**

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	yes

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

Document

Location

None

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equality Duty

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;

Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;

Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant characteristic connected to that characteristic;

Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic different from the needs of persons who do not share it;

Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

1.2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

1.3. See section in the report relating to equalities.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

2.1. Increased use of open space is associated with reduced violence and aggression in individuals and decreases in antisocial behaviour, brought about by natural surveillance.

3. Climate Change:

Use of open space supports a better appreciation of nature and our natural resources. Active travel (by walking or cycling via open spaces) reduces carbon emissions from motor vehicles.