

# Health & Wellbeing and Parks Policy crossover and work scoping

## Introduction

The aim of this document is to highlight the areas of common policy between Public Health and the parks and green spaces policies. The document will show how access to green spaces are integral to the public's mental and physical health (see fig 1), with park activities highlighted in line with the council's Sport and Physical Activity Strategy. Parks are important to public health and the aim is to reposition the parks service to enable parks and green spaces, in addition to their traditional functions, be seen as public health assets and to work in a system wide way to benefit health. This document is written as a living synthesis document to support embedding Health in All Policies and can be updated and changed as system changes take place.

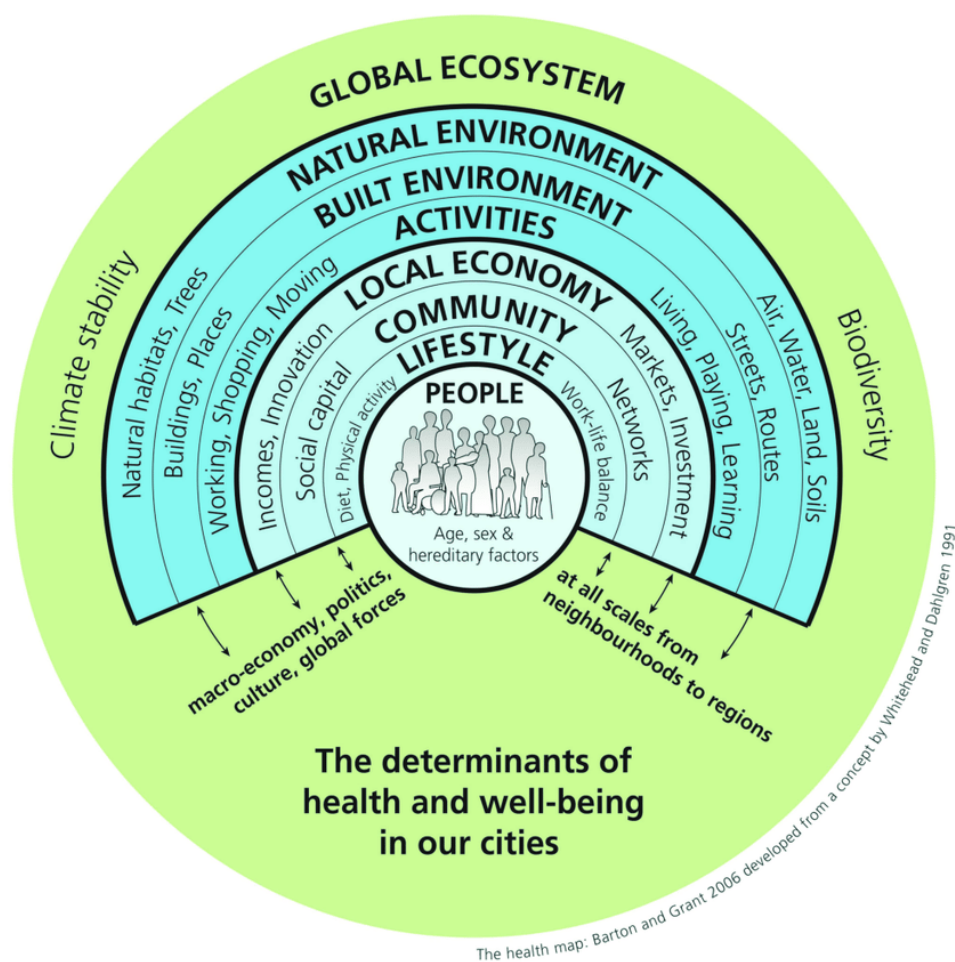


Figure 1: The health map

## National Policy

Both the NHS and other government departments recognise the crucial importance of access to good quality greenspace as a key factor for health. Nationally this is reflected in a wide range of policies across Government including the Childhood Obesity Strategy<sup>(1)</sup>; Everybody Active, Every Day<sup>(2)</sup>; Loneliness Strategy<sup>(3)</sup>; Clean Air Strategy<sup>(4)</sup>; Sporting Future<sup>(5)</sup>; Prevention is Better than Cure<sup>(6)</sup>; Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy<sup>(6)</sup>; 5-year Forward View for Mental Health<sup>(7)</sup>; Integrated Communities Action Plan<sup>(8)</sup>; is reflected in Goal 11 of the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals<sup>(9)</sup>; PHE Strategy<sup>(10)</sup> – spatial planning and health (11); a consensus on healthy aging (12); government response to living with beauty (13); guide to community-centred approaches for health and wellbeing (14) and community development framework<sup>(11)</sup>

## Corporate Objectives

All the work areas between parks and Public Health will support strategic city aims and develop relationships and reporting avenues for this work. A focus to deliver the One City Plan objectives across Environment, Health and Wellbeing, Homes & Communities and Transport will form a thread through this work, to have as great an influence as possible between the two departments on the desired outcomes. Key partners across a variety of organisations will be involved to support making Bristol a fair, healthy and sustainable city. Examples of this including supporting citizens to thrive in a city that supports their physical and mental health<sup>(12)</sup>; Children and Young People target that by 2050 everyone in Bristol will have the best start in life, gaining the support and skills they need to thrive and prosper in adulthood, Bristol's 2030 sustainable food target amongst others.

Work will be undertaken to ensure reporting of initiatives that have an impact upon the One City plan to key boards on an ongoing basis. For example, reporting to the Health and Wellbeing Board on health improvement projects and programmes, the Transport Board for active travel initiatives, Economy Board for employment and training opportunities. Additional links are key with the BNSSG CCG and new developing integrated care system.

This work will also support the key objectives within the Corporate Strategy with scope to nurture opportunities within the following themes:

Theme 1: Empowering and Caring; [...] [increasing] the proportion of people who volunteer in their communities

Theme 2: Fair and Inclusive; help develop balanced communities which are inclusive [...]

Theme 2: Well Connected; increase in the proportion of residents who are happy with their neighbourhood as a place to live

Theme 4: Wellbeing; create healthier and more resilient communities where life expectancy is not determined by wealth or background to “embed health in all our policies to improve physical & mental health and wellbeing, reducing inequalities and the demand for acute services” and “tackle food and fuel poverty”

## Quality of Life Survey Indicators 2020

Outcomes of this work will support and contribute to targets in the Bristol Quality of Life (QoL) Survey<sup>(13)</sup>. For example QoL indicators that can be influenced through parks and green spaces may include:

- improving self-reported wellbeing satisfaction scores (by increasing access to parks);
- increasing the number of people who volunteer in their community 3 times a year with voluntary opportunities in parks;
- percentage of people who visit parks or green space at least once a week
- percentage of people satisfied with the quality of parks and green spaces
- percentage of people who feel safe outdoors during the day

## Parks Health Lens

Recent Natural Capital Accounts produced by Vivid Economics Greenkeeper modelling has identified that there are approximately 17 million visits to the Cities Parks and Greenspaces per year, which provides £385 million benefit to the City of which the health benefit is **£361 million per year (94%)**. This can be broken down into improvements to mental wellbeing (61% of the gross value at £234 million per year), and increases in the quantity and quality of life from physical activity (33% of gross value at £127 million per year ). This Equates to a health and wellbeing value of approximately £22 per visit on average. <sup>1</sup>

Vivid has also ‘modelled’ the value of increasing quality of our parks and green spaces as set out in the green flag standards., through increased physical quality combined with better facilities, more outreach programmes and promotion the model anticipates a 43% increase in annual visits from 17 million to 24 million a year. This equates to additional health and well-being benefits valued up to £156 million per year and would also support the One City objective of “Everyone having access to an excellent quality park or green space within a 10-minute walk from their home [by 2035]”. However in order to achieve this added health benefit significant investment will be required

These significant health and wellbeing values are, in the main, linked to the avoided costs due to ill health and premature deaths, savings realised by other public services such as the NHS and other health and well-being organisations. There is a clear case to attract new forms of investment to unlock the health potential of our parks and green spaces. This investment would increase the quality of our parks and green spaces, making them more attractive to a wider audience, especially those that do not currently use parks but whose health and wellbeing would benefit if they did, and enable the realisation of significant savings to health and well-being sector.

## Sport and Physical Activity

Sport and Physical activity will be a key link between parks and Public Health. There is also strong evidence that access to open spaces and sports facilities is associated with higher levels of physical activity (Coombes et al 2010; Lee and Maheswaran 2010) – source the kings fund.org.uk. Bristol has a Sport and Physical activity strategy that supports developing physical activity opportunities within parks and this supports the one city plan target that citizens thrive in a city that supports their physical health and mental health equally. The new parks licensing scheme aspires to raise standards and awareness of physical activity delivery within our parks. Parks and physical activity team will work together to improve physical activity opportunities and target Quality of Life indicators such as

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<sup>1</sup> The Vivid Natural Capital Accounts suggest that the total value of Bristol’s Parks and Green spaces is £385 million per year. This breaks down at £361 million per year resulting from Health and Wellbeing benefits, (94%) £24 million per year attributed to residential property price uplift and £300K per year attributed to climate regulation through carbon removal.

number of people taking enough exercise and increase number of people in deprived areas doing enough exercise per week. Work will also continue with the playing pitch strategy being refreshed and continuing work on the community asset transfer of appropriate sports facilities.

## Built Environment and Planning

Public Health are working closely with the planning and built environment agenda within the council, the proportion of green and open space is linked to self-reported levels of health and mental health (Barton and Pretty 2010). To support the built environment parks and Public Health will work with wider departments on parks and open space access within new planning applications, food growing opportunities linked to open space and the allotments strategy. The council's new Liveable Neighbourhoods Strategy is a key policy to develop with greater access to green space improved through the strategy. A key consideration of planning supports features known to support health include infrastructure (PHE spatial planning for health 2017) to increase walking and cycling (Links between transport and health 'Essential Evidence': <https://travelwest.info/essentialevidence>).

Joint working on the local plan consultation for Bristol. Public Health Officers work closely with the local plan team and will integrate Parks and Green Space responses within this work. Health impact assessments are being worked through areas of major development and through the regeneration department. As recommended in the PHE Improving Access to public Spaces document (14) it is important to support the 10 minute access target to green space within this work.

## Healthy Weight and Food Inequality

Parks can play a key role with Green/food activity links and mental health, which links to the current BNSSG CCG green social prescribing bid to improve the number and access to green/food projects in the area. Parks and Public Health will work together in a system wide approach with partners to ensure strong links are built with this project to deliver benefits for both physical and mental health. Through this work parks can form stronger links with existing food agencies (I.e. incredible edible) and the wider food agenda including through social prescribing. There are clear benefits for community gardens and food growing projects to engage further in SP, including increase diversity of users, achieving a social mission and increasing capacity (sustainweb.org – food growing on prescription 2019). This work will link in with the developing food equality strategy, Bristol eating better awards and the 2030 sustainable food target. The developing Allotments strategy can be a key driver for food growing in the city, by providing more community and voluntary group growing alongside the current individual hirer availability.

## Active Travel

Parks are and can be developed as links for active travel as well as destinations for physical activity. Active travel can be utilised for increasing access to parks and also for wider active travel. People living in deprived neighbourhoods in England usually have poorer access to parks and green spaces. Even where these neighbourhoods have better access to green spaces, these are usually poor in quality and have safety concerns (Jones, 2009; Mears et al., 2019). Parks and Public Health working with active travel programmes and initiatives can increase the access to green spaces, increasing access to parks and open spaces could reduce NHS costs of treating obesity by more than £2 billion (Groundwork 2011). Specific work in deprived neighbourhoods can start to address access issues with active travel and the wider built environment work to encourage walking and cycling access to parks. Work will be developed with the upcoming liveable neighbourhoods strategy and link work with the WECCA regional developments to support this agenda.

## Social Prescribing & Mental Health

Social Prescribing has been identified as a key opportunity for joint working between parks and Public Health. Exposure to parks and green spaces also improves mental health by reducing risks to depression and anxiety (Cohen-Cline, Turkheimer and Duncan, 2015; Cox et al., 2017; McEachan et al., 2016). Parks and Public Health will link with the Social prescribing network to develop strategic links with social prescribing, alongside work with the BNSSG CCG on the developing green social prescribing project. These links will be developed to include programmes specifically for mental health, ensuring positive mental health is integrated into parks delivery and the opportunity. Access to green space can reduce mental health admissions too, resulting in additional savings for the NHS (Wheater et al 2007a, b). The food agenda and Bristol's Going4Gold work can also be developed in parks with the allotments strategy and social prescribing for food growing. Parks will be a provider of these services.

## Communities

Working with communities is a key element of the success of these programmes. This work will link closely with the BCC Communities Team and research suggests social wellbeing outcomes such as social cohesion is achieved through interactions within parks and green spaces (Shanahan et al., 2016). Through park-based health activities appropriate to the community this work can contribute to the quality of life indicator of increasing the number of people who feel they belong to their neighbourhood. Future work will ensure that appropriate levels of community engagement through parks and the Communities Team is carried out to create effective opportunities for the community surrounding Bristol's parks. An example of current work being undertaken includes expressions of interest from the community on supporting sites and sports facilities, which will support the quality of life target of increasing levels of volunteering in the community.

Growing the power of communities programme.

## Drugs and Alcohol

The Bristol Drug and alcohol Strategy 2020-2024 has highlighted parks as an opportunity to support prevention and early intervention. For example work on "including through changes to the environment and contexts where alcohol and other drugs are used". Research showed that during lockdown the number of people agreeing they had consumed more alcohol increased by 28% (Alcoholchangeuk – drinkingintheukduringlockdownandbeyond 2020), supports the need for initiatives such as alcohol-free areas. The strategy highlights the natural environment design to create public places and spaces which support healthy behaviours and reduce harms, this is a key area for future work between PH drugs and alcohol work and Bristol parks.

## Children and Young People

Children growing up in more deprived areas often experience disadvantages throughout their lives, including fewer safe, high quality outdoor spaces to play and socialise in which can affect physical and mental wellbeing. Greener communities and improved access to good quality green spaces have been identified as a protective factor, making a child less likely to experience poor outcomes even when risk factors are present (PHE, 2020). The NHS Digital (2020) Mental Health of Children and Young people in England report indicates that both rates and likelihood of probable mental disorder in children and young people has increased since 2017, and identified correlation between no outdoor exercise and increased likelihood of having disordered mental health, further underscoring the importance of the ameliorating benefits of accessing green space.

Belonging strategy – access to good quality outdoor space is priority for children & young people’s board. From the strategy priorities “Promote and protect the right of every child to play and enjoy their childhood, including ensuring that all children can access safe outdoor space for play near their home” “Ensure that Bristol offers a healthy built environment for families, including equitable access to high-quality green space, opportunities to exercise and have fun as a family, clean air and active travel”(15)

The Safer Option Strategy (16) encourages the Early intervention service working with the Park Service to gather and respond to local intelligence on safeguarding issues in Parks. Making neighbourhood safe for CYP.

Women and exercise link to domestic abuse strategy – increase PA to tackle gender stereotypes. LGBT feedback on safe spaces to meet. The mayors report on domestic abuse (17) recommendation 26 “Design campaigns to raise awareness about domestic abuse that are inclusive and relevant for diverse communities across Bristol (particularly residents disproportionately affected by Covid 19)”. Parks can play a role in this in promoting parks as space places for groups to meet and can form part of a communications strategy.

Breast feeding link and promotion – creating safe spaces for breast feeding in deprived wards – “Promote breastfeeding and provide high-quality breastfeeding support, aiming to increase the number of women who breastfeed, particularly in areas with low breastfeeding rates”

Working with Bristol’s Children’s Centres to provide access to more open space.

Mayoral commission report on Domestic Abuse 2021 provided recommendations that parks can support: recommendation 25 “Work across the whole city to spread the message of zero tolerance, promote healthy gender norms, and help people in every community to take action if they experience domestic abuse and sexual violence and to challenge abusive behaviour wherever they encounter it”. This can be supported by training of parks staff to feel confident to support this idea and communications to support the messaging.

## Links to the NHS, health providers and Primary Care

Links need to be established with the NHS providers near parks, these can be identified through public health contracts and the shape atlas tool. Links to the Primary care networks provide a good opportunity to establish these links. The Bristol Green social prescribing linking food and nature within the BNSSG area can be created. New officers are being recruited and developing links with the manager and Public Health officer who will have a mental health focus. Links have also been suggested with the Family Nurse Partnerships, to use parks as potential meeting spaces for clients.

## Economy

Employment opportunities can be developed and link to the economies board. This can include apprenticeships within the parks department, paid opportunities with community key organisations and voluntary positions with third sector organisations.

## Evaluation and outcomes

Developing work between Public Health and parks will need to build on the initial literature review completed by UWE. Health Based outcomes measurement will need to be embedded within future work to support collaborative working and future funding bids. This will help support

## Work to support the links between parks and health:

The areas identified as opportunities for closer working have been identified above and going forwards these need to be delivered within the parks and green space strategy. A list below shows some key ideas to support the collaborative working:

### Governance and partnerships

- Support to project for governance clarification through the One City and council democratic routes, including the Health and wellbeing board, Economy board and the CCG.
- Establishing links with the NHS, Primary Care networks and Bristol Green social prescribing team.
- Establish and develop links with Public Health teams to maximise work between the two departments.
- Establish health working through the new parks and green space strategy.

### Workforce

- Upskilling and increasing awareness of parks staff to wider determinants of health.
- Link with the new co-ordinator being recruited to Future Parks to connect activities to wider programmes.
- Support any opportunities to have a parks based link worker who is embedded permanently in the parks team.

### Communications strategy

- Develop a Communications and marketing strategy – Increasing awareness through internal and external channels to promote health opportunities in the parks.

### Communities working

- Provide support through the communities' team to tailoring the park offer to the needs of the community, existing infrastructure and available resources, as outlined by the UWE literature review.

## Summary

These areas of work linking parks and Public Health and the wider health system should build the foundation for improving health for the citizens of Bristol. These areas provide a platform for collaborative working across the council for health benefits and parks outcomes to develop. The one city plan approach must be a key thread through this work and supporting quality of life targets as previously highlighted. Increasing accessibility to parks is important as well as the activities within parks as the proportion of green and open space is linked to self-reported levels of health and mental health (Barton and Pretty 2010). Ongoing work will ensure links with key city agencies including a

variety One city boards, the local Clinical Commissioning group, third sector organisations e.g feeding Bristol, social prescribing and physical activity programmes.



## References

### Policy/Report Links

- (1) [Childhood obesity: a plan for action, chapter 2 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- (2) [Everybody active, every day: framework for physical activity - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- (3) [A connected society: a strategy for tackling loneliness - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- (4) [Clean Air Strategy 2019 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- (5) [Prevention is better than cure: our vision to help you live well for longer - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- (6) [Cycling and walking investment strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- (7) [The Five Year Forward View for Mental Health \(england.nhs.uk\)](#)
- (8) [Integrated Communities Action Plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- (9) [Goal 11 | Department of Economic and Social Affairs \(un.org\)](#)
- (10) [PHE Strategy 2020-25 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- (11) [Spatial Planning and Health: Getting Research into Practice \(GRIP\) - study report \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- (12) [A consensus on healthy ageing \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- (13) [Government response to the Living with Beauty report \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- (14) [A guide to community-centered approaches for health and wellbeing \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- (15) [Community development framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- (16) [The One City Approach - Bristol One City](#)
- (17) [The quality of life in Bristol - bristol.gov.uk](#)
- (18) Public Health England (2020) Improving access to greenspace. A new review for 2020. Gateway number GW-1158: Public Health England Publications.
- (19) Belonging strategy – link added when published
- (20) Safer option strategy - [Keeping Bristol Safe - bristol.gov.uk](#)
- (21) Mayoral report on domestic abuse - [Mayoral Commission Domestic Abuse \(bristol.gov.uk\)](#)

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sustainweb.org – food growing on prescription 2019) [Food growing on prescription | Sustain \(sustainweb.org\)](#) Online

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(Groundwork 2011) – source [Access to green and open spaces and the role of leisure services | The King's Fund](#) Online

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(Wheater et al 2007a, b) – source [Access to green and open spaces and the role of leisure services | The King's Fund](#) Online

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