

Mental health and wellbeing plan

Response from the Landscape Institute

For Department of Health and Social Care

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Background for members

As part of its commitment to improving health outcomes across the country, the UK Government is developing a cross-government, 10-year mental health and wellbeing plan for England. Its aim to improve outcomes for people who experience worse mental health than the general population and to contribute to the 'levelling up' agenda by addressing regional inequalities.

In April, the government launched a discussion paper and call for evidence to guide the development of the new plan.

Recognising the range of health and wellbeing benefits that access to nature provides, the Landscape Institute (LI) chose to respond to this consultation. In this response, we make the case that landscape and green infrastructure have a key part to play in supporting better mental health outcomes for communities everywhere.

Landscape Institute response

The consultation comprises six broad chapters, as well as a section on next steps and development. It focuses on:

- *How can we all promote positive mental wellbeing?* (Chapter 1)
- *How can we all prevent the onset of mental ill-health?* (Chapter 2)
- *How can we all intervene earlier when people need support with their mental health?* (Chapter 3)
- *How can we improve the quality and effectiveness of treatment for mental health conditions?* (Chapter 4)
- *How can we all support people living with mental health conditions to live well?* (Chapter 5)
- *How can we all improve support for people in crisis?* (Chapter 6)
- Developing a mental health plan
- Locally owned and driven mental health plans
- Cross-cutting data priorities

Summary

- Access to green spaces and nature is a demonstrably effective tool to manage and prevent poor mental health, as well as to promote physical health and wellbeing.
- The level of access to nature in urban areas varies, with disadvantaged communities generally less able to access high-quality green spaces.
- The landscape sector can support the development of urban green and blue spaces and increase accessibility to nature.
- Green social prescribing is a welcome addition to the NHS approach, and there is scope to develop NHS estates to support the roll-out of programmes and activities.
- We need a whole-system, holistic approach to achieve better mental health outcomes, with multi-agency working and coordination and the ability to share data and best practice.
- There is an opportunity through the development of small-scale, local community green projects to innovate and test new approaches.
- We need long-term funding models with flexible procurement to support the roll-out of green health models, with projects strategically managed to enable better outcomes.

Chapter one: How can we all promote positive mental wellbeing?

1. How can we help people to improve their own wellbeing?

We have integrated the response to this question into question 2 which covers a more general approach across the population.

2. Do you have any suggestions for how we can improve the population's wellbeing?

Evidence shows that living in areas with more green space, as well as having better access to natural environments is linked with a lower level of mental ill health and overall higher levels of wellbeing in both adults and children. Health benefits include lower levels of stress, fatigue, anxiety, and depression and are positively associated with an increase in the amount of green space in the living environment and/or the amount of time spent in nature. The same benefits apply to outdoor blue spaces such as lakes, rivers, canals, etc... Additionally, it has been demonstrated that when disadvantaged groups have good access to high quality green and blue spaces that there is a narrower gap in mental health inequality when compared to those with less access (Green Social Prescribing Call for Ideas – case for Change ¹).

Access to high quality green spaces in urban areas are varied, with disadvantaged communities generally having less access to these. A recent report by Groundwork UK ² highlighted that 2.69 million people do not live within 10 minutes of green space and that one in eight households across the UK do not have access to a private or shared garden, with black and ethnic minority groups as well as low-income households less likely to have access to green space. Evidence presented by Groundwork also suggests that disabled people and people with long-term conditions have additional barriers to accessing nature, including urban green and blue spaces which are often not accessible. Additionally, deprived areas can be subject to issues such as disrepair, littering and fly-tipping which makes local spaces less appealing to visit.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-social-prescribing-call-for-expressions-of-interest/green-social-prescribing-call-for-expressions-of-interest>

² <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Out-of-Bounds-equity-in-access-to-urban-nature.pdf>

Inadequate provision of green and blue space, alongside poor maintenance of the spaces that do exist in urban areas are key barriers in enabling local people to access the health and wellbeing benefits that they offer. Disadvantaged and minority groups have also been shown to visit natural areas surrounding towns and cities less often due to a variety of barriers, such as the distance and cost required to travel, lack of access to transportation, accessibility considerations, attitudes and perceptions and safety concerns.

It is these groups who are also unfortunately more likely to develop mental health problems. For example, the Mental Health Foundation ³ highlights that children and adults living in households in the lowest 20% income bracket in Great Britain are two to three times more likely to develop mental health problems than those in the highest income bracket. There is therefore an opportunity to increase access to urban green and blue space to contribute to the wellbeing and mental health of the general population, but also to tackle the health inequalities faced by disadvantaged and minority groups where mental health problems are more prevalent.

The landscape sector has a key role to play in the development of high-quality spaces and in using their expertise to ensure that spaces are designed to achieve the maximum benefits to health and wellbeing, as well as providing spaces that make the best use of resources, are accessible, sustainable, aesthetically pleasing, environmentally friendly, safe, and easy to maintain. Recent research on the approach to urban green spaces highlighted that the characteristics of green spaces can have a direct impact on the level of mental health benefits achieved, for example with mixed native planting perceived as providing more benefits than other landscape scenarios both by being more aesthetically pleasing, but also “creating a sense of place, belonging and connectedness”. ⁴ It is therefore not only about “any” green space, but about the attention to detail that is included in high quality design and planning.

We welcome the new Green Infrastructure Standards being developed by Natural England and the recognition that the type, amount, proximity, and quality of green and blue infrastructure are key elements of achieving positive health and wellbeing outcomes. By using a multifunctional place-making approach to the development of green and blue infrastructure there is also the opportunity to draw on the unique nature

³ <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/explore-mental-health/statistics/poverty-statistics>

⁴ DO PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES SUPPORT AN SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS APPROACH TO URBAN GREEN SPACES? Laura Jane McCarthy

of places and communities, taking a locally informed approach based on community engagement, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach which is less likely to be successful.

As an ancillary benefit, as well as improving mental health outcomes, careful planning and design can also support biodiversity and climate change objectives, for example by the retrofitting of disused space and addressing water management through the development of sustainable urban drainage systems when developing new spaces.

The Landscape Institute also support the concept of green social prescribing which uses nature-based interventions and activities to support people's mental health. This again focuses on green and blue resources and there is scope for development of local health walking schemes, dementia walks, community gardens, conservation volunteering, green gyms, and high-quality outdoor play areas. DEFRA's 'Preventing and Tackling Mental Ill Health through Green Social Prescribing' project is welcomed by the Landscape Institute and again there is a key role for landscape professionals to play in developing spaces that are inclusive and welcoming, creating places that are sustainable, restorative and that will support the wellbeing of communities over many years. Green social prescribing is a key tool to improve health and wellbeing, through enabling physical health and promoting good mental health, as well as by supporting social connections through creating spaces for community activities, exercise, and volunteering.

As this mental health and wellbeing plan will provide a foundation for improving the mental health across England, there should also be a mechanism to share best practice across the country, to enable planners and designers of green and blue infrastructure to share successful projects and to learn from what has worked well across different communities. Again, it is important to follow a community engagement model, engaging with the general public, but also with people who may come from disadvantaged backgrounds or who have been impacted by poor mental health.

3. How can we support different sectors within local areas to work together, and with people within their local communities, to improve population wellbeing?

There are increased opportunities for partnership working between the UK government and, local councils, third sector organisations and environmental / landscape organisations to work together to coordinate better access to green spaces, and green social prescribing projects. The development of nature-based interventions and green infrastructure is often complex and requires a multi-agency approach. Strategic management is needed, potentially through the appointment of a coordinator role,

either within local councils or through an independently funded position to bring together key stakeholders and ensure a more seamless approach to the planning and roll-out of projects and developments.

We believe those involved in creating healthy places should champion the role landscape plays in improving health outcomes and that public health professionals, planners and landscape architects should promote and act upon the idea that high quality landscape increases wellbeing. The Health and Social Care Act (2012) and the adoption of the National Planning Policy Framework was welcomed as a means to refocus the public health agenda, but there are still wider opportunities for planning departments and public health professionals to work together, and to embed health and wellbeing in local policy. Additionally, we strongly support a community engagement approach to determining what is needed at a local level and engaging with local communities to design developments and incentives that meet their needs. This also creates local connections and a sense of purpose / pride of place for local residents which in itself is a tool to support good mental health and wellbeing.

The use of landscape improves people's physical and mental health and there is an important role for well-planned and designed landscapes in improving public health, with more investment needed in this area to prevent ill health before it has the chance to occur. Investment is needed at both a national and local level, with a flexible approach to procurement, robust funding models, long term funding opportunities and joined up partnership working between national and local governments, as well as with local partners from the private and third sector. This approach to funding will support the successful roll-out of projects and incentives, enable high quality development, and ensure that projects are sustainable over time. At a local level, landscape should be recognised as an asset in promoting health and wellbeing and should be a central consideration.

The Ignition Project ⁵ that was carried out in Greater Manchester is a good example of an innovative approach to financing solutions for investment in natural environments. The project developed a wide range of resources, evidence, and tools to help businesses, local authorities, landowners, communities, and others better understand and implement nature-based solutions. The project was focused on increasing the city's

⁵ <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/natural-environment/ignition/>

resilience to climate change but demonstrated how nature solutions can also support the health and wellbeing of a population.

Chapter two: How can we all prevent the onset of mental ill-health?

1. What is the most important thing we need to address in order to reduce the numbers of people who experience mental ill-health?

Approximately one in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year and rebuilding a connection with nature can help provide a strong foundation for reducing the impact of mental health issues and increase overall wellbeing. This was highlighted during the COVID-19 crisis, where it was shown that spending time in green spaces and in nature was a useful tool in supporting mental health. The World Health Organisation ⁶ highlights the role of urban green space in improving health and wellbeing, as well as in improving relaxation and the recent DEFRA ⁷ review highlights the use of green spaces and nature to improve mental health, promote stress reduction and improve cognitive function. The NHS have recognised the need to connect with nature and are now using a green social prescribing programme for those experiencing mental and physical health issues, estimated to save significant costs in alternative therapies. There are opportunities to promote nature as a tool to manage mental health, not only to those suffering from poor mental health, but also to the wider population in order to take a proactive approach to managing mental health before problems develop.

Limited access to or connection with nature has a negative effect on mental health and nature-based interventions can support wellbeing. People living in areas of deprivation are more likely to be affected by poor air quality, environmental issues, and noise pollution, as well as having less access to natural spaces. The UN sustainable goal ten ⁸ states the need to - “Reduce inequalities within and among countries” and we believe that increasing access to nature and improving the provision of green and blue urban spaces, can address at least part of the inequality that is a precursor to poor mental health. Additionally, well designed spaces that take account of the need to address

⁶ <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/342931/9789289055666-eng.pdf>

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/904439/Improving_access_to Greenspace_2020_review.pdf

⁸ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

climate change, the biodiversity crisis, sustainable water management and air and soil quality can also contribute to addressing the inequalities faced by deprived communities that over time also have a negative impact on physical and mental health.

The Landscape Institute⁹ published a 2013 report on Public Health and Landscape: Creating Healthy Places – This report highlighted the restorative, healing effect that healthy places can have on both physical and mental health conditions and that providing access to plants, gardens and nature enhances healing when people are ill or recovering from ill health, as well as providing restorative effects for people on a day-to-day basis. It was recognised that places do not have to be remote, but that local green and blue spaces such as gardens, parks, riverbanks, canals, and woodland can add to people’s sense of tranquillity and wellbeing. It was also highlighted that healthy places make people feel comfortable and at ease, increase social interaction and reduce antisocial behaviour, isolation, and stress and that there is a positive link between the provision of green space and people’s ability to relax and interact with others. There is a compelling case therefore for emphasising the therapeutic benefits of landscape in all design and management projects, and in supporting the role out of local nature interventions to improve the mental health of communities.

2. Do you have ideas for how employers can support and protect the mental health of their employees?

There is an opportunity for employers to enrich working environments through the development of green and blue infrastructure in their places of work and improving their estates. Access to green space and nature is evidenced to lower stress, improve cognitive function, and improve mental health and as such there is a business case for developing natural spaces that are accessible to employees as this has potential for improving performance, reducing absence levels, increasing staff retention, and supporting the mental health and wellbeing of staff. As breaks are generally short and tend to be no more than thirty minutes or an hour, it is essential for green spaces to be nearby.

Additionally social cohesion is important to the health and wellbeing of people in a community, including workplace communities. Development of green spaces in workplaces could create opportunities for improved and increased interactions between

⁹ https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2013/11/Public-Health-and-Landscape_FINAL_single-page.pdf

colleagues. The effect of social isolation on mental health was highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, and as more employers are switching to a hybrid model, with employees spending less time in the office and potentially more time alone, creating spaces at work for social interaction is increasingly important.

Large employers such as Google ¹⁰ are already making headway in introducing green and blue infrastructure into their workplaces, including building new developments that are designed with green and blue infrastructure at their core, there is however scope to develop green spaces on a smaller scale, for example by adding window boxes, downpipe planters and wildlife corridors, planting trees, converting existing green areas with more biodiverse planting and introducing Sustainable drainage systems through cellular grass paving. Introducing these elements into the work environment have been shown to not only improve the mental health and wellbeing of employees but will also support resilience to climate change through nature-based solutions.

3. What is the most important thing we need to address in order to prevent suicide?

The Landscape Institute did not provide a response to this question.

Chapter 3: how can we all intervene earlier when people need support with their mental health?

1. Where would you prefer to get early support for your mental health if you were struggling?

The Landscape Institute did not provide a response to this question.

¹⁰ <https://www.architectureanddesign.com.au/sustainability-awards/google-is-changing-the-sustainable-office-game>

2. What more can the NHS do to help people struggling with their mental health to access support early?

There is currently a huge gap in mental health services offered in the NHS for people who are struggling with their mental health, especially at the mild to moderate range of mental health issues. There are long waiting lists to access counselling and psychology services, and even when people have entered a treatment pathway, sessions are often limited. Medication such as anti-depressants are often prescribed to support mental health however are not without their side-effects and are not always effective.

Nature based solutions create an opportunity for early interventions and in taking a proactive approach to managing mental health before issues escalate. We welcome the move towards green social prescribing and the role of link workers in GP surgeries to direct people towards nature nature-based interventions and activities, such as local walking for health schemes, community gardening and food-growing projects. It is encouraging to see this being rolled out by the NHS and we believe there are opportunities for this to be extended and supported by the landscape sector.

Creating spaces for recreation, connecting with others, and connecting with nature can play a significant role in supporting mental health. Making these spaces accessible and in close proximity to local communities, as well as to people accessing mental health services is crucial. There is a need to focus on addressing social inequalities as part of the Levelling Up programme, and access to nature is a key part of this. People who are socially disadvantaged often have more barriers to accessing green spaces (Living in built up urban areas, no private transport, lack of funds to travel, physical disabilities etc...), and the development of accessible green spaces could address many of these barriers.

The NHS are a major landowner across the country, often with parts of existing sites being disused or underused, or in need of refurbishment. There is there an opportunity to make use of existing NHS outdoor estates to create green spaces and green and blue infrastructure within NHS grounds. This could include the development of therapeutic gardens, growing places, outdoor gyms, greenspace walks and green infrastructure links with nature. Having these facilities in local health care settings would not only support patients, but also be beneficial to the wellbeing of staff and visitors, as well as creating visually attractive landscapes that can be accessed by the general public. Additionally, by drawing on the expertise of landscape professionals and planners, there are opportunities to retrofit underused facilities and make best use of existing resources to ensure that carbon emissions are minimised. Additionally, new developments offer

opportunities to increase the biodiversity of estates and to introduce ecosystem services such as sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) that will contribute to managing the effects of climate change.

We would welcome a community and patient engagement approach to creating new green spaces to ensure that they meet local needs. Additionally, we would recommend a joined-up approach with more support and training to help frontline health and care professionals embed activity in green and blue spaces into the service they provide to their clients.

3. Do you have any suggestions for how the rest of society can better identify and respond to signs of mental ill-health? If so, please share your ideas.

The Landscape Institute did not provide a response to this question.

4. How can we ensure that people with wider health problems get appropriate mental health support at an early stage if they are struggling?

You might want to consider barriers faced by individuals, as well as how health and social care services engage with those people

Statistics show that people who have disabilities or chronic health conditions can find it more difficult to access nature and green spaces. Groundwork¹¹ published the 'Out of Bounds: Equity in Access to Urban Nature' report in May 2021 which highlighted that although the importance of accessing nature regularly was recognised by people from all backgrounds, that not all places and spaces are equal in what they can offer local communities. The report evidenced that while only 5% of adults did not find access to nature as being a key factor in supporting their mental health, 29% of people living with a long-term illness or disability had not visited a natural space in the previous month.

Some of the barriers identified in accessing natural environments included lack of information about accessibility, physical constraints such as obstacles, access to toilets and parking arrangements. There are also a whole host of barriers depending on the impairment or condition a person is living with such as issues with using a bike as a mobility aid in areas where cycling is prohibited, and issues faced by people with visual

¹¹ <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Out-of-Bounds-equity-in-access-to-urban-nature.pdf>

impairment such as navigating public transport links and having to walk along busy roads or cross large open areas.

We would welcome increased investment in supporting people with disabilities and health issues to be more able to access nature, not only in countryside settings, but also in urban green spaces which are often also not accessible. Additionally, by increasing the development of green and blue infrastructure in urban, local, and community-based settings, this can remove some of the barriers to visiting green spaces by having them in closer proximity. From a landscape perspective, it is important that spaces are designed to be accessible and inclusive as possible for example by considering lighting, structural considerations, the use of hypoallergenic plant breeds etc...

Visiting health care settings can be a stressful experience and again, we also support the repurposing of NHS estates to be developed to include therapeutic green spaces which can also provide facilities for patients to access green spaces when they are visiting services for any health condition. Additionally, this would contribute to increasing the amount of green space available in communities that can be accessed by all.

Chapter 4: how can we improve the quality and effectiveness of treatment for mental health conditions?

1. What needs to happen to ensure the best care and treatment is more widely available within the NHS?

The Landscape Institute did not provide a response to this question.

2. What is the NHS currently doing well and should continue to support people with their mental health?

The Landscape Institute did not provide a response to this question.

3. What should be our priorities for future research, innovation and data improvements over the coming decade to drive better treatment outcomes?

A whole system approach is needed to support better mental health and to drive better treatment outcomes. This would be a system that links services together and takes a

holistic approach to managing mental health, bringing together professionals and services in mental health and well-being, physical activity, early years, and services for older people etc... alongside professionals from the third and private sectors to support investment and add additional service provision.

We believe that there is not a one size fits all approach to supporting mental health and there is space for innovation through the development of small scale, community-based interventions and projects that can adapt to the needs of communities and groups. Convincing evidence from WHO and Defra supports the use of green and natural spaces to improve mental health, reduce stress and support dementia care by decreasing anxiety, as well as in mitigating socio-economic inequalities. While green social prescribing on a national scale is welcomed, there is also space to try out different approaches to nature-based solutions to support mental health and wellbeing in local community settings, and to address some of the barriers faced by different groups of people in these communities.

There are many challenges to overcome in implementing green health programmes, such as funding issues, lack of coordination, the capacity of staff and green health pathways and referral management. Focus is needed on successfully developing, commissioning, and resourcing green health activities and there is also a need to ensure that green spaces and green health land is managed properly. There is a role for landscape professionals to be involved in ensuring that new developments are sustainable over time and that maintenance plans are in place, and we would recommend the appointment of managers or coordinators to bring together professionals from across the various sectors, to ensure that green health programmes are strategically managed to drive better outcomes to maximum effect. There is also an opportunity to develop data sharing tools to ensure that information on services and best practice examples can be shared across sectors.

4. What should inpatient mental health care look like in 10 years' time, and what needs to change in order to realise that vision?

The Landscape Institute did not provide a response to this question.

Chapter Five: how can we all support people living with mental health conditions to live well?

1. What do we (as a society) need to do or change in order to improve the lives of people living with mental health conditions?

You might want to consider priorities at national and local government, wider public services such as social care and education settings, and the private and voluntary and community sectors

We believe that using nature-based solutions and tools to support mental health can support society to recognise the concept of “mental health” rather than just focusing on mental illness. Everyone in society has their own level of mental health and well-being and access to nature and green spaces provides part of a proactive approach to managing this. There is an opportunity to remove the stigma of mental illness by taking a social approach to mental health, rather than focusing on the medical model which can set those with mental illness apart from others.

Connection with others and healthy relationships form part of the foundation for maintaining good mental health, and green incentives such as health walks and therapeutic outdoor activities create opportunities to connect with others and promote a feeling of inclusion. Nature based activities can also bring together marginalised groups in society and invoke a sense of purpose and inclusion. An example of this can be seen from a small project which engaged service users on Aspire Oxford’s ex-offenders’ pathway and used plants partly sourced from a local mental health charity to establish a nature-based ecological landscape. Participants worked together to restore a piece of wasteland into a more natural and biodiverse habitat for wildlife, as well as somewhere that was aesthetically attractive. Feedback demonstrated an increased sense of purpose, confidence, and connection, with one participant commenting that *“The brightening up of so many ignored and often abused areas of land would encourage others to appreciate and take care of the natural world around them which has many psychological benefits.”*¹²

¹² DO PEOPLE’S PERCEPTIONS OF ECOSYSTEM SERVICES SUPPORT AN SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL SYSTEMS APPROACH TO URBAN GREEN SPACES? Laura Jane McCarthy

This project highlights the role that communities and small enterprises can take to improve local green spaces through the creation of small landscape projects, community gardens, and cleaning up polluted spaces, and in doing so improve the mental health of the local community and groups within it.

2. What things have the biggest influence on your mental health and influence your quality of life?

The Landscape Institute did not provide a response to this question.

3. What more can we do to improve the physical health of people living with mental health conditions?

Improving access to green spaces for people living with mental health issues provides not just support for their mental health but also their physical health. As part of social prescribing, there is scope to refer people to take part in accessible urban walking groups as well as signposting and supporting them to become more physically active, for example by using green gyms. Additionally, taking part in community activities such as food growing projects and community gardening, brings not just mental health benefits but also physical benefits.

It has been demonstrated that visiting green spaces has significant physical health effects such as lowering blood pressure and cortisol levels, as well as promoting a sense of well-being. The 2013 report by the Landscape Institute¹³: Public Health and Landscape, Creating Healthy Places demonstrated that green spaces could help overcome health inequalities and promote healthy lifestyles. Among the benefits recognised are that having access to green environments and nature can support people to maintain a healthy weight and live more active lifestyles, this in turn reduces a person's chance of developing a range of serious diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, and cancers. We therefore again welcome the introduction of green social prescribing not only in tackling mental health issues, but also in helping people with existing mental health issues to live healthier lives.

¹³ https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2013/11/Public-Health-and-Landscape_FINAL_single-page.pdf

4. How can we support sectors to work together to improve the quality of life of people living with mental health conditions?

In terms of the development of green health projects and of increasing access to green and blue spaces to support mental health, there is a need to rebalance power and build better partnerships. To do this, there must be effective policies and structures in place at a national level, as well as flexible, long term and stable funding mechanisms and incentives to support the development and management these.

There is a need for organisations to work together more effectively and for a strong community engagement model to be at the core of the planning and design of natural solutions to supporting mental health. It is important to engage with those who would benefit most from natural spaces and to have joined up partnership working across local areas with a funding model that prevents organisations having to compete for funding, which often results for example from a restricted payments by results model. It is important to put the people who will use services at the heart of planning and design, engaging people from diverse backgrounds to ensure they have a say in what happens in their local area.

There is a role for communities to take their own initiative to improve their local green spaces and in turn create facilities and incentives that can support people with mental health issues as well as improving the local environment. Flexible access to council or government funded incentives could enable this, for example funds that could be easily accessed that would allow the creation of small local landscape projects, community gardens, cleaning up polluted green spaces in urban areas etc...

We need to integrate urban nature solutions fully into efforts to tackle health inequalities, climate change and biodiversity loss, following a whole system approach to ensure that mental health moves away from medical model and becomes a societal responsibility.

Chapter 6: how can we all improve support for people in crisis?

1. What can we do to improve the immediate help available to people in crisis?

The Landscape Institute have no comments.

2. How can we improve the support offer for people after they experience a mental health crisis?

There is an opportunity to offer increased training to NHS staff, support workers, link workers etc... to include guidance and support around green social prescribing and on promoting the benefits of accessing nature as part of the recovery plan, as well as practical advice and signposting on how to do this. By introducing the benefits of nature as part of the recovery process, this could support patients to maintain their own mental health as part of their toolkit as they move to self-management of their recovery.

There is also an opportunity to develop new peer support groups and community groups to help others to access and benefit from access to green spaces (For example through walking groups, including “Walk and talk” groups) and for these to be promoted during the recovery process. Going through a mental health crisis can be isolating and managing the day-to-day difficulties in living with poor mental health can be a key barrier in people connecting with others. Creating therapeutic spaces (Including within NHS estates) and using these to bring together people who have gone through similar experiences, as well as supporting a person to access these in the early stages of recovery can provide a source of connection and inclusion that can be key to moving on from a mental health crisis.

There is a business case for these services and associated upskilling / training costs to receive public funding due to the potential for a reduced burden of health costs and demonstratable cost benefits. Accessing nature not only improves physical and mental health, but also reduces long term dependence on medication and medical interventions, as well as providing a lifelong coping strategy which can potentially reduce the risk of experiencing another mental health crisis in the future.

3. What would enable local services to work together better to improve support for people during and after an experience of mental health crisis?

The Landscape Institute have no comments.

Next steps and implementation: Developing a national mental health plan

1. What do you think are the most important issues that a new, 10-year national mental health plan needs to address?

There is a need to de-stigmatise and normalise conversations around mental health, shifting the focus to well-being and to taking a proactive approach to managing this. Using nature as toolkit to manage mental health can support the move away from the medicalised model of mental illness and encourage people to take time out for their own wellbeing.

Access to nature and green spaces should be available to all, regardless of their socio-economic level, disability, sex etc... and there is a responsibility to reduce barriers to accessing nature and to ensure the development of new, accessible, and high-quality green / blue spaces to support the mental health of populations.

There is a key role for landscape professionals to support the UK government in achieving better health outcomes and breaking down barriers to accessing nature; through contributing to the development of high quality green and blue urban green spaces, sharing their expertise in the development of green social prescribing initiatives, and working in partnership with UK government, health professionals, councils, and local communities to ensure joined up partnership working with landscape at the heart of mental health policy.

A whole system, holistic approach is needed to achieve better mental health outcomes, with multi-agency working and coordination and ability to share data and best practice.

Better funding mechanisms are required to support the development and management of new green and blue spaces, green social prescribing incentives and to improve access to existing green spaces. Funding should be longer term, accessible, flexible and follow a model that allows successful partnership working.

Green social prescribing is a welcome addition to the NHS approach and there is scope to support the role out of programmes and activities through funding the training and upskilling of staff, as well as the creation of new green spaces (Including within NHS estates).

There is an opportunity for innovation and testing new approaches through the development of small scale, local community green projects based on a robust community engagement model which is inclusive and puts local communities at the heart of planning and design.

2. Please explain your choice

We have included the explanation in the previous answer.

3. What 'values' or 'principles' should underpin the plan as a whole?

Inclusivity and listening to the views of diverse groups in society is key to developing a health plan that works for all. Those who use services and can benefit most from interventions are often best placed to decide what would be most useful in the design and delivery of new incentives and facilities. There should be a strong community engagement approach in planning the future of mental health services and from a landscape perspective, in helping to shape green and blue spaces in the areas where they live and work.

Recognising the value of working in partnership is crucial and supportive policies and funding mechanisms should be put in place to allow a "bottom-up" approach to improving health outcomes and to create a solid foundation for people and organisations to work together.

We would welcome a shift from the medical approach to mental illness, to recognising the societal value of working together to create better mental health for all. Using green interventions and tools to connect with nature and others could help remove the stigma of mental illness, and to reduce the isolation of those suffering from mental health issues.

We support the value of natural capital and the concept that every place has value – The European Landscape Convention ¹⁴ believes that every landscape has value, whether it is a designated beauty spot or a piece of derelict land. All landscapes form the setting for the lives of local people, and the quality of those landscapes can affect everyone's lives. In terms of green prescribing and local community landscape projects, there are opportunities to bring people together to improve their mental and physical

¹⁴ <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/policy/13732-2/>

wellbeing, while at the same time increasing the value of the natural environment and the places where they live.

Next steps and implementation: Locally owned and driven mental health plans

1. **How can we support local systems to develop and implement effective mental health plans for their local populations?**

The Landscape Institute did not provide a response to this question.

Next steps and implementation: Cross-cutting data priorities

1. **How can we improve data collection and sharing to help plan, implement and monitor improvements to mental health and wellbeing?**

The Landscape Institute did not provide a response to this question.

About the Landscape Institute

The Landscape Institute (LI) is the chartered body for the landscape profession. We are an educational charity that promotes the art and science of landscape practice.

The LI's aim, through the work of our members, is to protect, conserve, and enhance the natural and built environment for the public benefit.

The LI provides a professional home for all landscape practitioners including landscape architects, landscape managers, landscape planners, landscape scientists, and urban designers.

About LI policy and research

The LI undertakes research, builds networks, and provides policy advice to local and national policymakers, regulators, and stakeholders. We seek to demonstrate how landscape and green infrastructure can deliver maximum benefits for society, the environment, and the economy.

The work of the LI policy team is overseen by the LI Policy and Communications Committee (PCC), one of three standing committees that report to the LI's Board of Trustees.

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