



INHERIT

POLICY ROUNDTABLE

Urban Open Spaces: enabling activities to maximise positive impacts on environmental sustainability, health and equity



**FACULTY OF
PUBLIC HEALTH**



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Background

On 10th October 2019, the Institute of Health Equity (IHE) at University College London (UCL) hosted a policy roundtable dialogue in the context of the EU funded Horizon 2020 research project INHERIT (2016-2019). This roundtable discussion focussed on how urban spaces can be used to maximise positive impacts on health, equity and environmental sustainability i.e. the 'triple-win' aims of the INHERIT project. The policy roundtable was a joint initiative between the [IHE](#), the UK [Faculty of Public Health](#) (FPH) and the [INHERIT](#) project.

A total of 14 participants with expert knowledge and experience in the topic under discussion and from various different UK organisations were in attendance (Annex 1). Specifically, there were representatives from: the Soil Association, Natural England, Groundwork, the Parks Alliance Parks Action Group, the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare, the National Health Service (NHS), the London Green Spaces Commission, the University of Staffordshire, the FPH, the FPH Food Specialist Interest Group, the FPH Sustainable Development Specialist Interest group, the University of Sheffield, EuroHealthNet and the IHE.

The predominant aim of this dialogue was to gather insights and opinions from experts on what is required to support and encourage relevant stakeholders, such as community organisations, governments, public health practitioners and non-government organisations, to improve urban open spaces, in ways which serve to simultaneously improve health, equity and environmental sustainability. The roundtable also sought to understand what is needed to create policies which can foster a 'triple-win' approach. The outcome of the debate will feed into the development of INHERIT policy recommendations, which will be published in December 2019.

This report provides a general overview of what was discussed in the dialogue, followed by a more detailed account of the key points addressed. The points reported are not attributed to particular participants, and do not necessarily represent the perspective of all participants.

Discussion overview

Prior to the policy dialogue, participants were provided with a briefing document which contained background information on INHERIT. Specific information in this document included; the project aims, duration, partners involved and details of the agenda. Further information about the INHERIT project is available at www.inherit.eu.

The policy roundtable began with a presentation from members of the UCL INHERIT team, who provided an overview of some of the work carried out under the INHERIT project, including examples of triple-win case studies relating to the use of green spaces. The specific case studies presented included:

- The Malvik Path (Norway): construction of a recreational path along a former railway line to connect two communities,
- Thinking Fadura (Spain): making a formerly restricted green space more accessible to the general public,



- Restructuring of Green Space (Netherlands): restructuring the green spaces in two low-income communities, in order to improve the attractiveness and facilities of these areas and thus increase their use,
- Restructuring Residential Outdoor Area (Sweden): restructuring and upgrading outdoor space in an underprivileged residential area in Stockholm,
- Gardening with Green Gym and Meat Free Mondays (United Kingdom): introducing gardening activities to children in a primary school and promoting a meat free day per week.

In addition to outlining what was involved in these interventions, the key findings of these case studies were highlighted. Further information on these case studies can be found at <https://inherit.eu/implementing-triple-win-case-studies/>.

Taking into account this presentation, participants were asked to discuss the opportunities and limiting factors relating to how the 'triple-win' aim of the INHERIT project can be achieved in the context of green spaces.

Specific questions included:

- a. How can the NHS be a good 'corporate citizen' in terms of asset development and management?
- b. What are the key elements of an effective local authority 'Green Space Strategy'?
- c. How can communities be supported to develop their own local assets, including the use of green spaces?
- d. How can health equity be built in and maintained within the UK policy context?

The key points emerging from the discussion are outlined below.

Detailed account of the discussion

Key points of the discussion relating to how the 'triple-win' can be achieved in the context of green spaces and taking into account all of the questions detailed above, are organised as follows:

1. How to get things done - key elements of effective Green Space policies
2. The role of the NHS
3. Potential challenges



How to get things done – key elements of effective Green Space policies

Much of the discussion was focused on the factors required to create and maintain effective green space policies and strategies. These included:

Community engagement

Community members should be at the centre of any strategy directed towards improving the use of local green spaces. They can provide valuable insights into what is needed in their local environments. Understanding this is integral in planning effective strategies. To do this, the community needs to be empowered, enabled and engaged meaningfully through systems which are inclusive and supportive. Using data as means of empowering people and investing time in facilitation can also aid in effectively engaging the community.

Other channels

Besides the NHS, various groups and organisations have the potential to make a difference in improving availability, quality and use of green space, for example schools, community groups, local authorities and private sector organisations, because these groups essentially are the gateways to the community. Local action can be amplified through these gateways.

Good standards for measuring outcomes

Often, what gets measured gets done. Yet despite this, there are a lack of standards for measuring the effects of strategies and policies. As such, there is a need to formulate good standards and indicators for measuring outcomes.

Visionary leadership

Having visionary leadership within the groups and organisations who are well positioned to effectively bring about positive changes is key. Essentially, having an effective and enthusiastic leader can serve to empower others to change their behaviours to more sustainable practices, for example, to engage more with green spaces.

Strategic funding mechanisms

Often, significant funding is required to ensure the sustained investment in resources. However, funding is often limited. Therefore, strategic funding mechanisms which take into account how resources can be reinvested or redistributed in ways which promote healthy lifestyles and engagement with green spaces need to be established.

Policies need to have clarity of purpose

Having clarity of purpose is important, in order to stimulate local action. The plastic bag levy is one policy which had a clear message and purpose, was easy to communicate and was effective in changing behaviours. Therefore, it should be considered whether the 'triple win' is easy for the public to understand.



The role of the NHS

The role that the NHS can play in incorporating the 'triple win' into their asset development and management was also a prominent topic of discussion.

- The NHS is one of the biggest landowners in the UK. Therefore, the NHS is in a good position to bring about positive changes with regard to the use of green spaces and promoting environmental sustainability. This also means that the NHS has significant potential to indirectly contribute to promoting health and equity, beyond that of their direct purpose of delivering health care. Establishing the importance of 'social value' by considering all aspects of how the system works, is central to this.
- How the resources available within the NHS can best be invested to use the urban open spaces available to them to improve health and equity, and promote environmental sustainability needs to be considered. For example, policies to reduce the high motor vehicle use within the NHS (5% of road traffic is attributable to the NHS) could be implemented as a way of improving air quality.
- There are measures which have been already planned or instigated within the NHS which illustrate how the 'triple win' approach can be implemented. Examples of such measures include: NHS Forest which plans to plant 1.3 million trees across NHS land, the use of sustainable local foods in hospitals, and the creation of community gardening on health service land.

Potential challenges

The policy dialogue also served to highlight some of the potential challenges which may impact on how the 'triple win' can be integrated into policies. Such challenges include:

- **Time and resources:** The time and resources available within systems are often limited. For example, in schools, there is not enough time currently allocated in the curriculum to instigate programmes which promote the engagement with green spaces, such as outdoor education programmes.
- **Barriers to access:** People of higher socioeconomic status typically engage with green spaces more than those in more disadvantaged groups. This is often due to accessibility, with green spaces often being too far from the residential location of those of lower socioeconomic status. Improving local infrastructure could assist with reducing these inequalities. In order to do this, the needs and motivations of the community need to be understood.
- **Establishing and maintaining community engagement:** Community engagement with green spaces is not just about access and exposure, it is also about connection, which is essentially linked to experience. Generally, more disadvantaged populations are less connected. As such, taking time to understand the social mechanisms influencing the use of green spaces and the needs of the community is important. This is in order to guide the development of effective measures for improving community engagement with green spaces. Factors which could be considered as part of this include: creating stability in resources and infrastructure, ensuring good accessibility to green spaces for all community members and 'normalising' the use of green spaces.
- **Inadequate time spent on planning:** The common expectation that outcomes need to be achieved immediately can restrict the time spent on the planning of effective strategies and policies. However, the design and planning stages are fundamentally the most important stages in 'getting it right' and ensuring successful outcomes. Therefore, adequate time, attention and funding need to be invested into this phase of the process.



Annex 1

INHERIT Policy Round Table 10 October 2019 - List of participants

Tim Pope	Member London Green Spaces Commission	Mayor of London (GLA)
Ian Nutt	Associate Director Food for Life Programme	Soil Association
Jon Fairburn	Professor of Sustainable Development	University of Staffordshire
Rachel Stancliffe	Founder and Director	Centre for Sustainable Healthcare (NHS Forest)
Kristin Bash	Co-chair Core Member Honorary Lecturer in Public Health	Food Specialist Interest Group (FPH) Sustainable Development Specialist Interest Group (FPH) Sheffield University
Graham Duxbury	CEO Member of board	Groundwork Parks Alliance Parks Action Group
Jim Burt	Principal Advisor - Outdoor Learning	Natural England
Alba Godfrey	Project Officer	EuroHealthNet
David Pencheon	Honorary Professor, Health and Sustainable Development Former Director	(not present - written contribution) University of Exeter Sustainable Development Unit for NHS England and Public Health England
Patrick Saunders	Visiting Professor of Public Health Associate Director Public Health Specialist Consultant	University of Staffordshire WHO Collaborating Centre Faculty of Public Health (FPH) Medact/RCP
Michael Marmot	Director / Professor	UCL Institute of Health Equity
Ruth Bell	Senior Advisor Principal Research Fellow	UCL Institute of Health Equity
Matluba Khan	Research Associate in Evaluation Research and Public Health	UCL Institute of Health Equity
Eleanor Herd	Research Assistant	UCL Institute of Health Equity



This report was prepared by Eleanor Herd and Ruth Bell

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