



University of Essex

Green care: An overview



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- So many different 'nature' initiatives
- Being run by and for many different people
- Increasing interest in using nature for health
- But there is sometimes confusion
- Where to start?

How can we make green care a natural part of the health service?

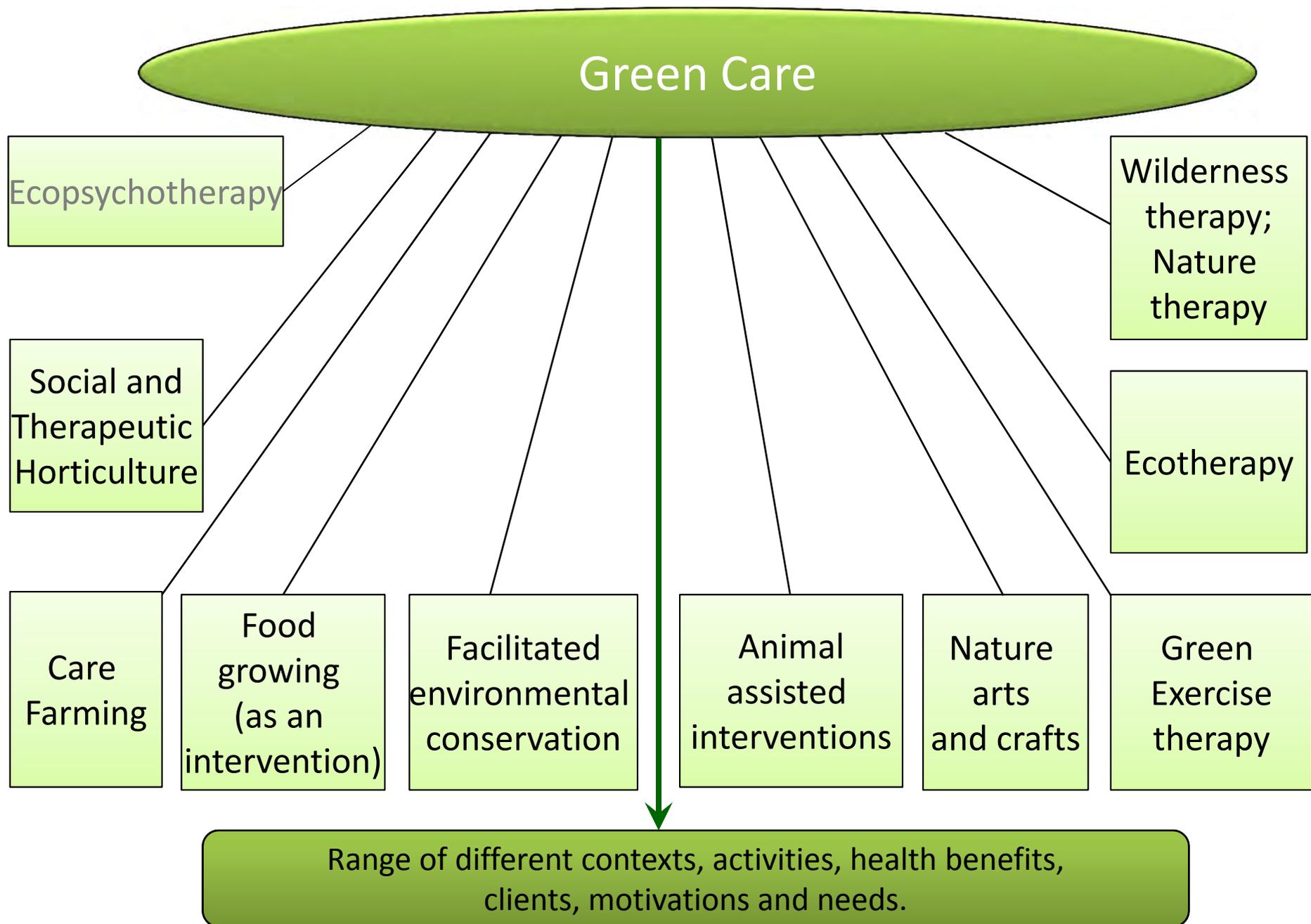


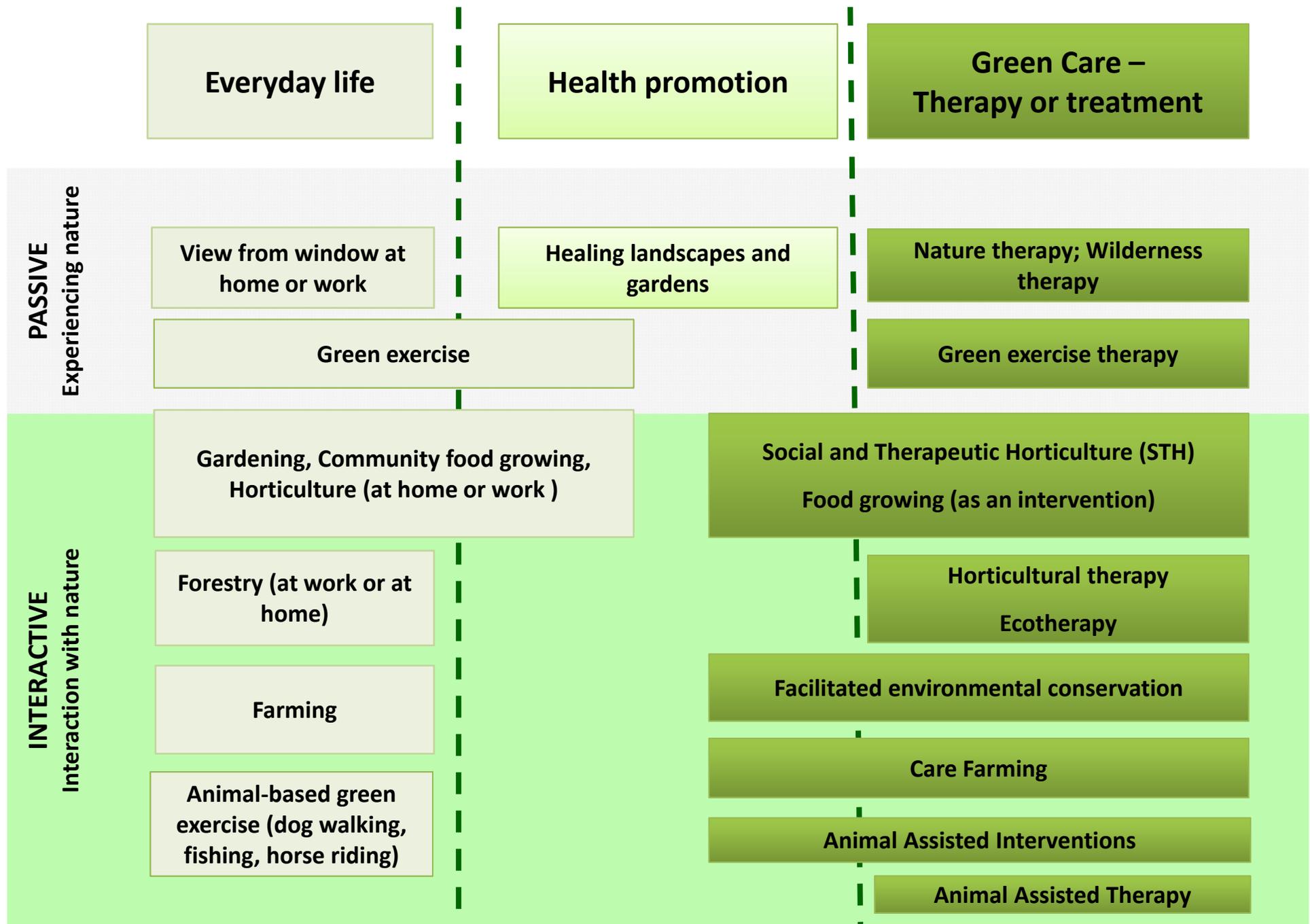
What is green care?

Nature-based interventions or therapy for a variety of vulnerable groups

“Green care utilises plants, animals and landscapes to create interventions to improve health and wellbeing (i.e. it does not represent a casual encounter with nature).” Sempik and Bragg, 2013

A range of different green care interventions available





Differing roles, contexts and engagement levels of green exercise and green care approaches.

Source: Bragg, 2015, 2014; adapted from Haubenhofer et al., 2010; and Sempik and Bragg, 2013.



The benefits of green care.....

Psychological restoration

Increases in:

- social inclusion and social contact
- social and work skills
- empowerment
- social functioning
- coping ability
- social rehabilitation

Improvements in:

- cognitive functioning and wellbeing
- self-efficacy
- self-esteem
- mood
- personal and social identity
- quality of life

Reduction in depression and anxiety related symptoms





Further benefits.....

Where green care involves food growing it can also lead to healthier lifestyles:

- Increases in physical activity
 - contribute to maintaining a healthy weight - reduces the risk of obesity.
- Provides access to locally grown, fresh produce
 - helps increase the consumption of fruit and vegetables,
 - improves attitudes to healthy eating



Green care – wellbeing research

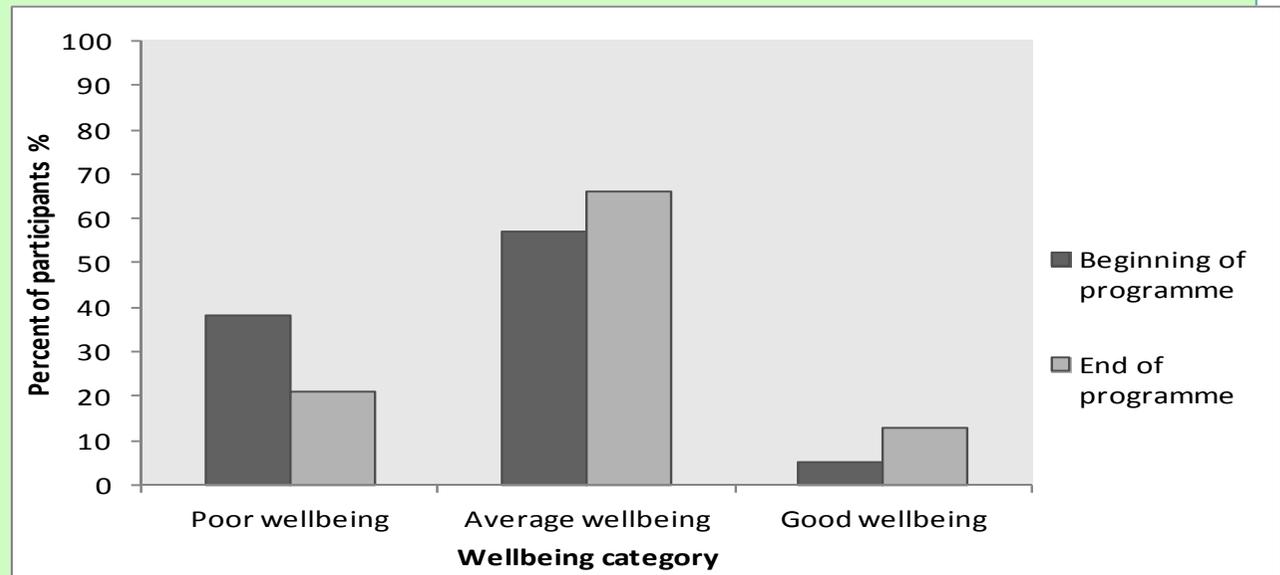
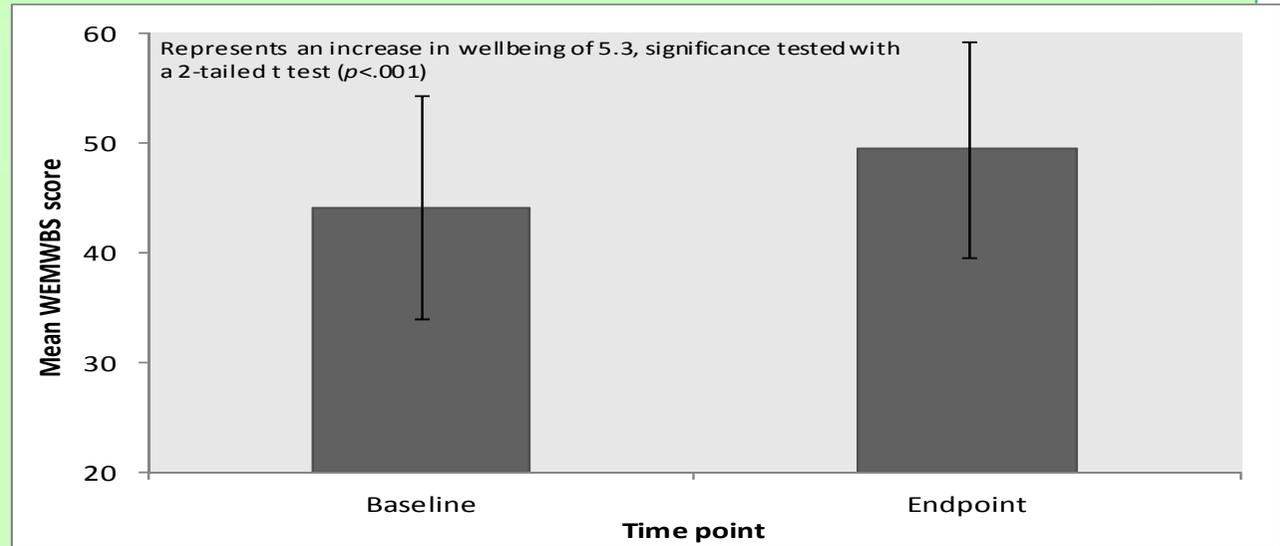
- Ecominds
- First study of different types of green care in the UK
- Longitudinal & acute effect study
- Using both recognised outcome measures and bespoke tools





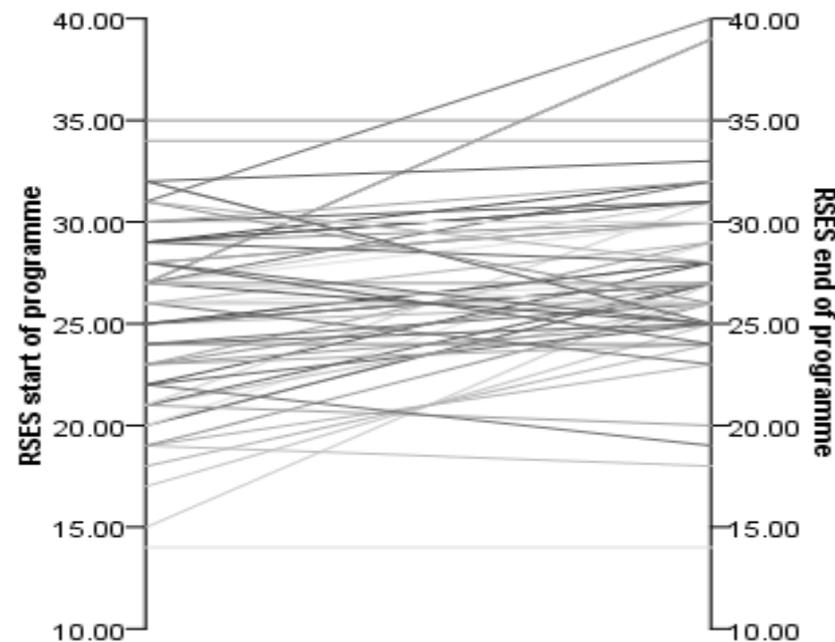
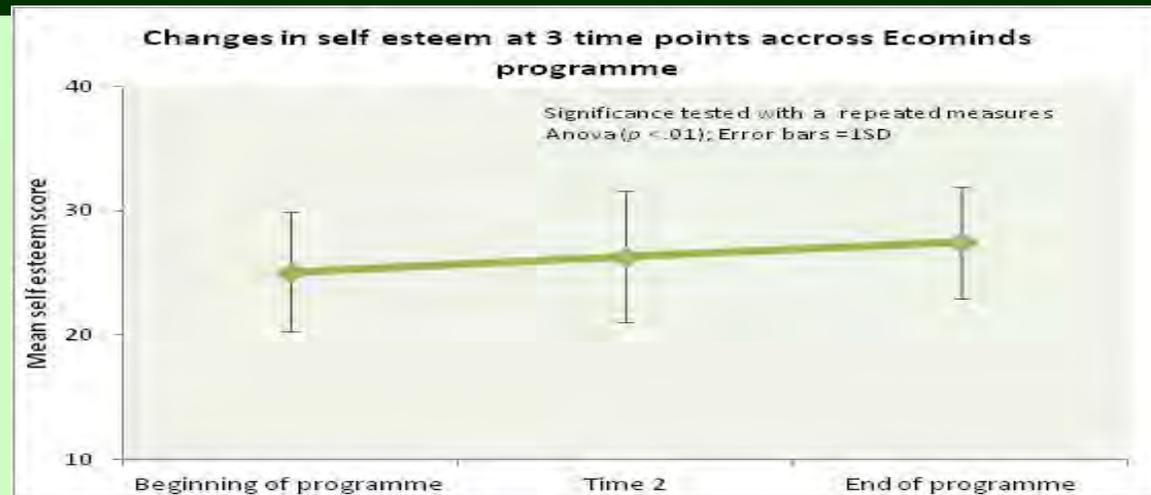
Wellbeing – longitudinal/ trait

- WEMWBS
- Significant increase in participant wellbeing over the course of the programme
- Improvements in the proportion of participants in each wellbeing category after taking part in green care



Self-esteem – Longitudinal/ trait

- RSES (Trait)
- Significant increase in participant self-esteem over the course of the programme
- Change in each participant's RSES score from baseline to endpoint





Some key findings....

- Findings similar for all 3 types of green care
- Wellbeing and self-esteem significantly improved over the course of the green care programmes.
- Increases occurred simultaneously with increases in social engagement, connection to nature and aspects of a healthy lifestyle.
- Social engagement significantly increased from the beginning to the end of the green care programmes.
- Increases in the frequency of participants taking part in community activities were also found.





Implications....

- Links between nature and
 - attention restoration
 - recovery from stress
 - mindfulness
 - wellbeing
- Treatment for those with existing mental health problems
 - Another tool in the tool box for mental healthcare
 - An enjoyable option to help people feel better
 - Leaving the diagnosis at the gate
 - Helps reduce social isolation

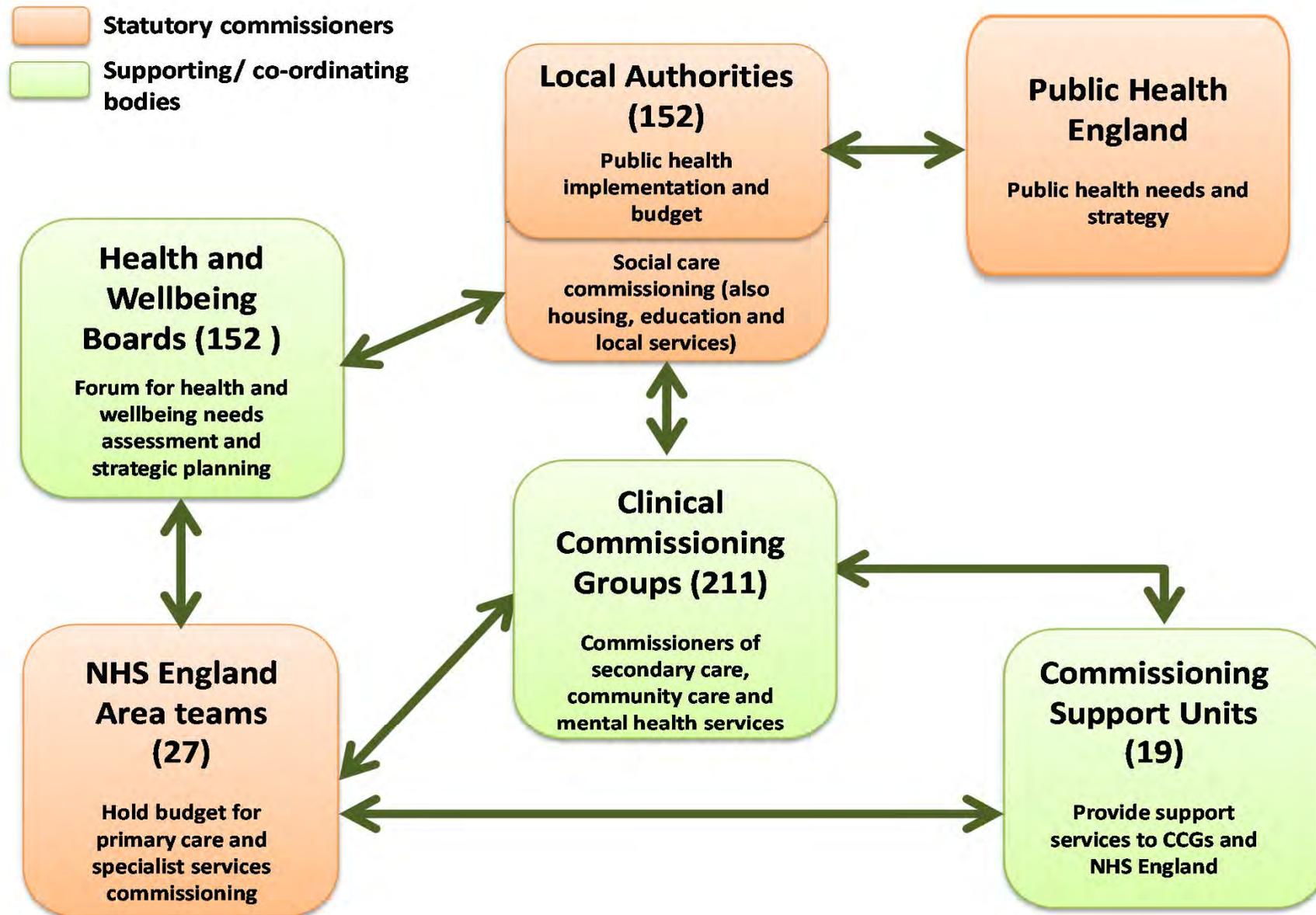




Multiple outcomes

- Multiple outcomes from green care
 - simultaneously produces other positive life outcomes
 - wider than clinical outcomes
 - Is therefore cost-effective
 - Also enjoyable – people go back!
- Need to raise awareness - practitioners and patients alike





Source: Bragg et al, 2014; Adapted from Naylor et al, 2013.



Three main issues

- different types of green care mobilise to collectively promote the sector – *to give a clear message*
 - Collective name – green care, nature-based interventions, ecotherapy
 - But many different settings and contexts under the umbrella
- make a distinction between specifically designed and commissioned interventions for the vulnerable and public health initiatives for the general population
- providers of nature-based interventions should work together to provide a larger 'offer' to commissioners such as CCGs (Clinical Commissioning Groups)



Online Survey for Green Care

- Green care, Ecotherapy or Nature-based interventions? - Your thoughts please!
- There are now numerous local and national organisations offering a range of nature-based interventions (also known as green care)
- We are asking people working in the field of green care for their opinions regarding the development of a common language in order to communicate more effectively with commissioners.
- We would be most grateful if you could spare the time to complete our short questionnaire (only 9 questions), by following the link below:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/VXQ87FB>



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Full references for figures

- Please include short reference underneath the figures *whenever you use them* – many thanks
- Full references are as follows:

Bragg R (2014). Nature-based interventions for mental wellbeing and sustainable behaviour: the potential for green care in the UK. A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Environmental Sciences, University of Essex (unpublished).

Bragg, R., Wood, C. and Barton, J. (2013a) *Ecominds: Effects on Mental Wellbeing*. London: Mind

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Haubehofer, D. K., Elings, M., Hassink, J. and Hine, R. (2010) The development of green care in Western European countries. *Explore*, 6, 106-111.

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Naylor C, Imison C, Addicott R, Buck D, Goodwin N, Harrison T, Ross S, Sonola L, Tian Y and Curry N. (2013b) Transforming our health care system: Ten priorities for commissioners. London: The Kings Fund. Available at:
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Sempik, J. and Bragg, R. (2013). Green Care: origins and activities. In Gallis C. (Eds) 2013. *Green Care: for Human Therapy, Social innovation, Rural economy, and Education*. NOVA Science Publishers, New York.