

# Trees and Health in The Mersey Forest

## Developing partnerships and calling it a consortium!

Paul Nolan - Director, Mersey Forest



# The Mersey Forest

- 1,370 km<sup>2</sup>
- 1.7 million people



Our vision is to get “more from trees” to help make Merseyside and North Cheshire one of the best places in the country to live.



We will work with partners, communities and landowners across rural and urban areas, to plant trees and woodlands, improve their management, and complement other habitats. This will increase woodland cover to 20% of the area. We will revitalise a woodland culture, and bring economic and social benefits through our transformed environment.

# Policies

## Who

1. Partnership working
2. Empowering communities
3. Advising and supporting landowners

## What

4. Planting and design
5. Long term management

## How

6. Strategies, plans, policies, programmes and initiatives
7. Funding
8. Monitoring and evaluation
9. Research, evidence and mapping
10. Communications

## Why

11. The economy and tourism
12. Woodfuel, timber and forest industries
13. Wildlife, biodiversity and ecosystems
14. Climate change
15. Flood alleviation and water management
16. Access, recreation and sustainable travel
17. Health and wellbeing
18. Natural play and education
19. Life-long learning, training, skills and jobs
20. Culture, heritage and landscape

## Where

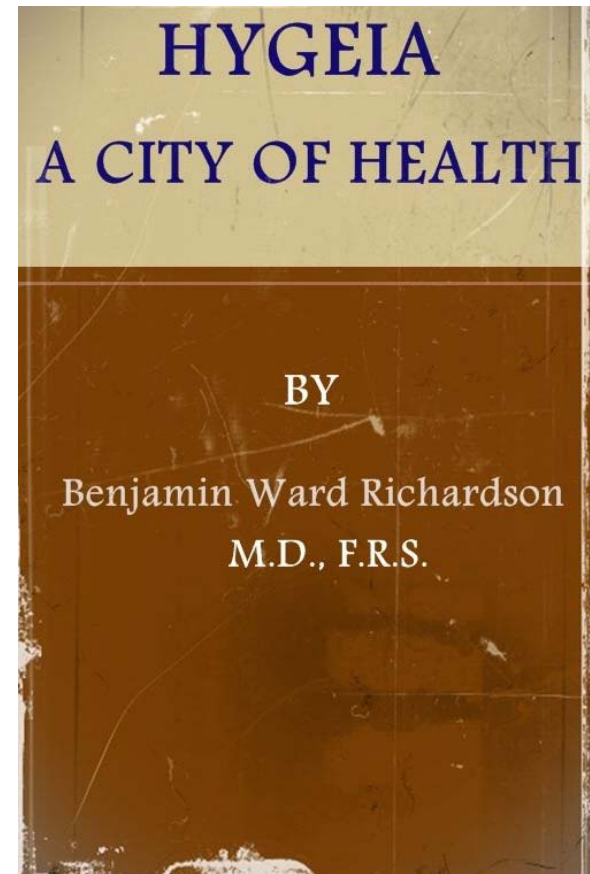
Cheshire West and Chester  
Halton  
Knowsley  
Liverpool  
Sefton  
St.Helens  
Warrington

# Policy 17. Health and Wellbeing

We will promote the health and wellbeing benefits of trees and woodlands, for individual health as well as the wider wellbeing of our communities. We will make use of the maturing woodland resource to help support the five ways to wellbeing. We will work with health professionals to maximise the use of woodlands, from increased day to day use through to GP referrals..

# Urban Public Health as a Focus of Concern

- Physician **Benjamin Ward Richardson** wrote Hygeia, City of Health (1876) envisioning:
  - air pollution control
  - water purification
  - sewage handling
  - public laundries
  - public health inspectors
- such concerns motivated the **Parks Movement**

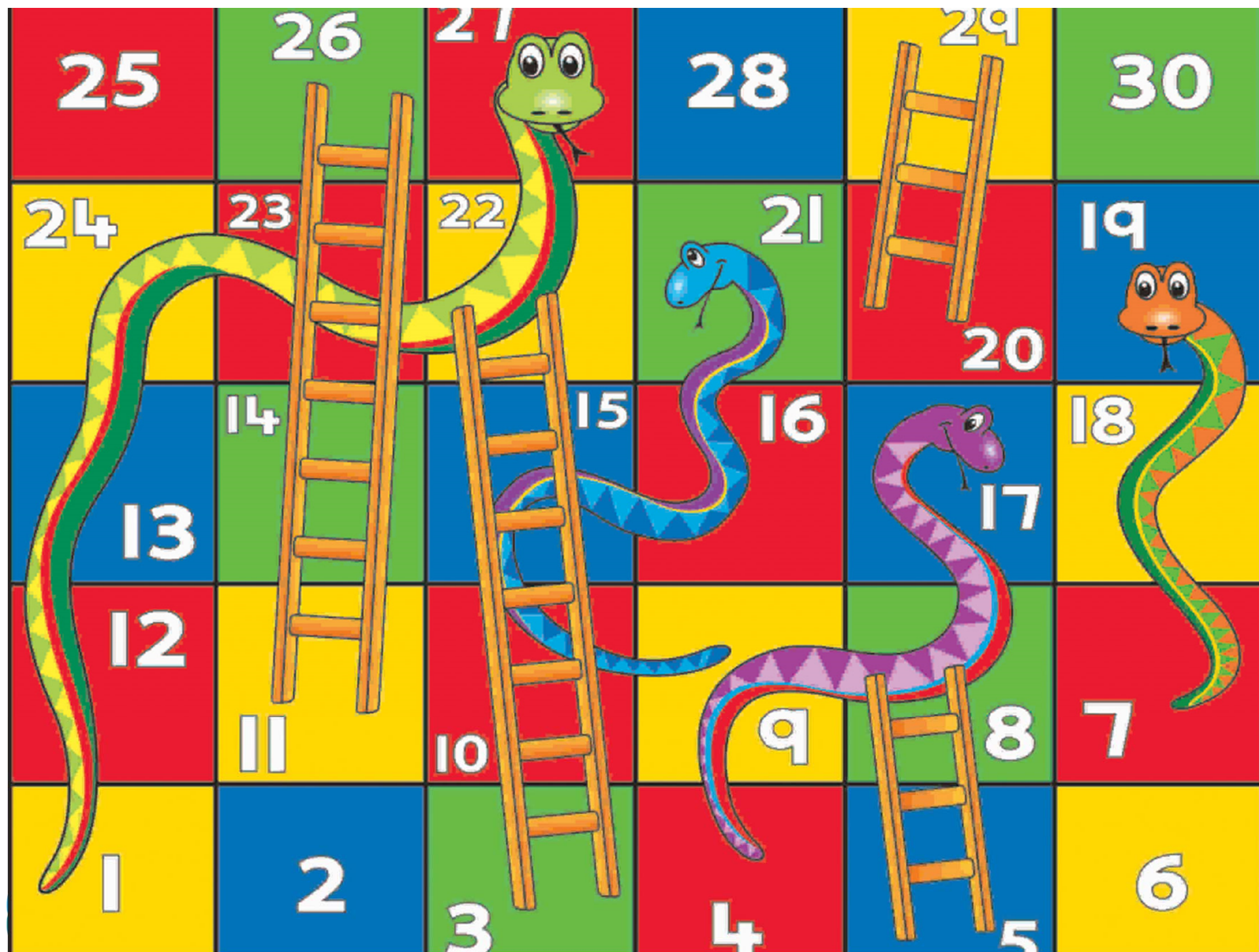


- During the 19th and early 20th centuries, the synergies between urban planning and public health were evident in at least three areas:
  - creation of green space to promote physical activity, social integration, and better mental health;
  - prevention of infectious diseases through community infrastructure, such as drinking water and sewage systems; and
  - protection of persons from hazardous industrial exposures and injury risks through land-use and zoning ordinances.

# Why?

- *“Our city faces some of the greatest health challenges in the country. It has some of the highest levels of deprivation and lowest levels of life expectancy. It has a high burden of disease and a relatively low take up of healthy lifestyles.”*





# Or

- Joined up approach
- Business like
  - WWGD!
- Shared experience
- Avoid duplication

## Natural Health Service



The **Natural Health Service** provides a single contact point to well-developed services in the natural environment, proven to tackle a range of health and wellbeing issues.

"Green spaces and natural environments provide a break from our busy lives - a great place to get some fresh air, reduce stress, exercise or play - a place to go and relax."

The Natural Health Service is a new way of linking people, their health and wellbeing and the natural environment through coordinated management with many partners and health focused organisations.

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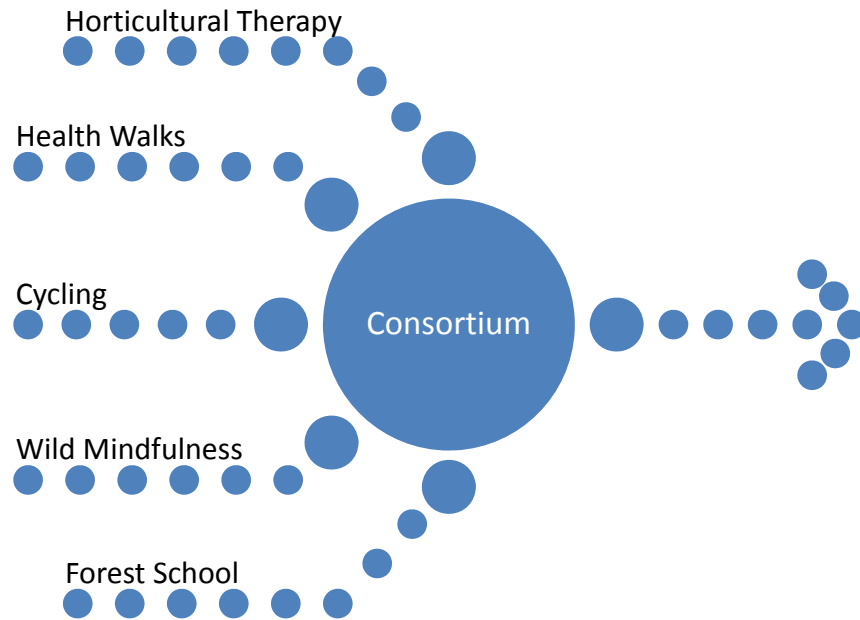
### Halton Natural Health Service

The Natural Health Service in Halton, Merseyside, will offer fifteen free services from early September to just before Christmas this December, taking advantage of the area's wealth of green spaces and natural places.

[www.naturalhealthservice.org.uk](http://www.naturalhealthservice.org.uk)

# Our Consortium

- Why a consortium?
  - Involved in too many partnerships
  - Sounded more business-like
  - So not really good reasons



# MR.COMMISSIONER

by Seven Hundred



# Natural Health Service

## Consortium Health Products 2013

### Product Sheets

The following product sheets provide an overview of the products that are being offered by the Natural Health Service. They provide an overview of the product; identify the client group and outcomes from delivery, the evidence base and links to case studies.

They are updatable and adaptable to local circumstances and developing evidence. Product Sheets are provided for:

1. Horticultural Therapy
2. Walking for Health
3. Cycling for Health
4. Forest School
5. Green Gym

### P

#### Product Sheet

#### Forest School

Forest School is an innovative approach to outdoor play and learning, inspiring individuals of any age through positive outdoor experiences.

By participating in engaging, motivating and achievable tasks and activities, in a woodland environment, each participant has an opportunity to develop intrinsic motivation, sound emotional and social skills.

Forest Schools have demonstrated success with children of all ages who visit the same local woodlands on a regular basis and through play have the opportunity to learn about the natural environment, how to handle risks and most importantly to use their own initiative to solve problems and co-operate with others. Forest schools help develop children's confidence, social skills, an interest in nature and the natural world, and their knowledge and understanding of the environment.

#### Target Client Groups and outcomes

| Client Group           | Outcomes  |
|------------------------|---|
| Young People           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evidence for restorative health benefits in young people</li></ul>  |
| Families               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Time spent in natural environments linked to enhanced emotional well-being, reduced stress, and, in certain situations, improved health</li></ul> |
| Local Community Groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evidence of links to reduction in BMI from regular exercise</li></ul>   |
| Socially isolated      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Social integration improved mental health</li></ul>   |

### Evidence

#### ESRC/Forestry Commission review

Forest school: evidence for restorative health benefits in young people based on research by Jenny Roe, Peter Aspinall and Catharine Ward Thompson (Edinburgh College of Art), available from:

[http://www.openspace.eca.ac.uk/pdf/appendixf/OPENspacewebsite\\_APPENDIX\\_F\\_resource\\_36.pdf](http://www.openspace.eca.ac.uk/pdf/appendixf/OPENspacewebsite_APPENDIX_F_resource_36.pdf)

#### Towards Forest Schools in Birmingham

A report on a pilot study in Birmingham entitled Towards Forest Schools in Birmingham:

[http://www.brumforestschoools.org.uk/files/towards\\_forest\\_schools\\_download\\_version.pdf](http://www.brumforestschoools.org.uk/files/towards_forest_schools_download_version.pdf)

### Case Study links

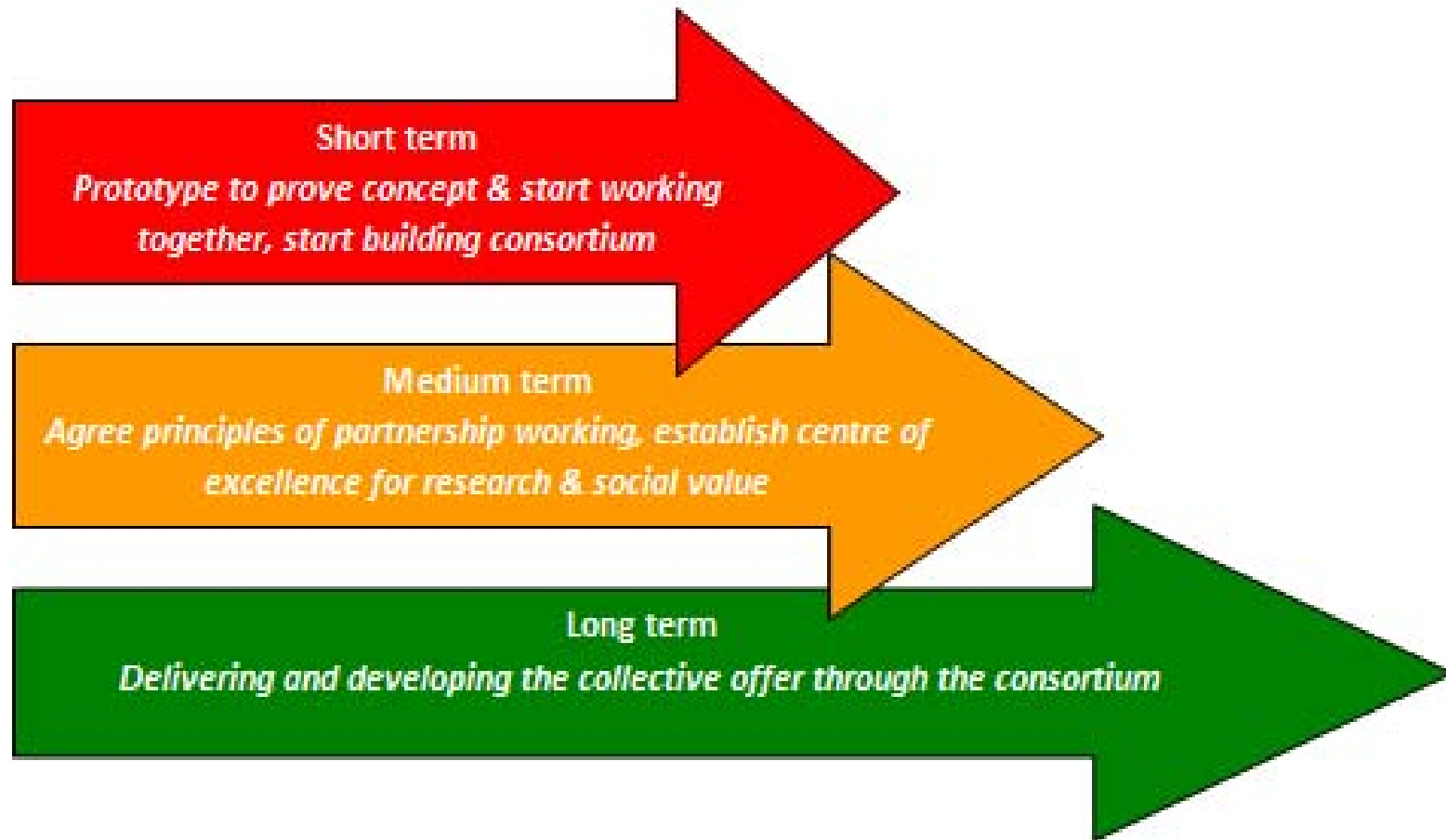
Details of The Forest School Experience, Nature workshops and the Norwood Forest School Southport's experience with Forest schools at

[Forest Schools in Merseyside](#)

#### About The Natural Health Service

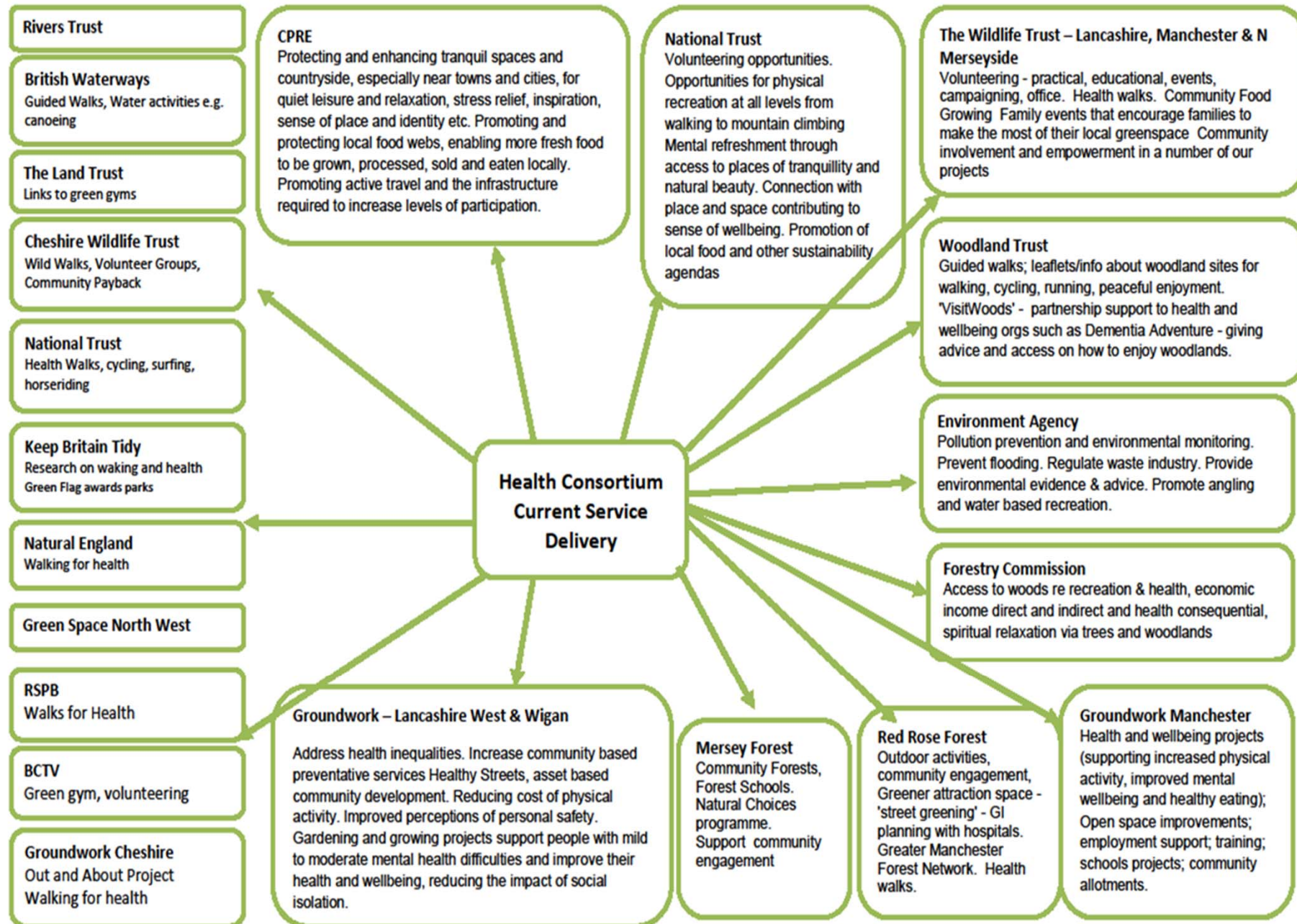
##### Natural Health Service

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[www.naturalhealthservice.org.uk](http://www.naturalhealthservice.org.uk)





## Investment Forum – Health Consortium







ARE WE THERE YET?



# Some example of what we are up to!

- **Natural Choices**
- **Mindfulness and Forestry**

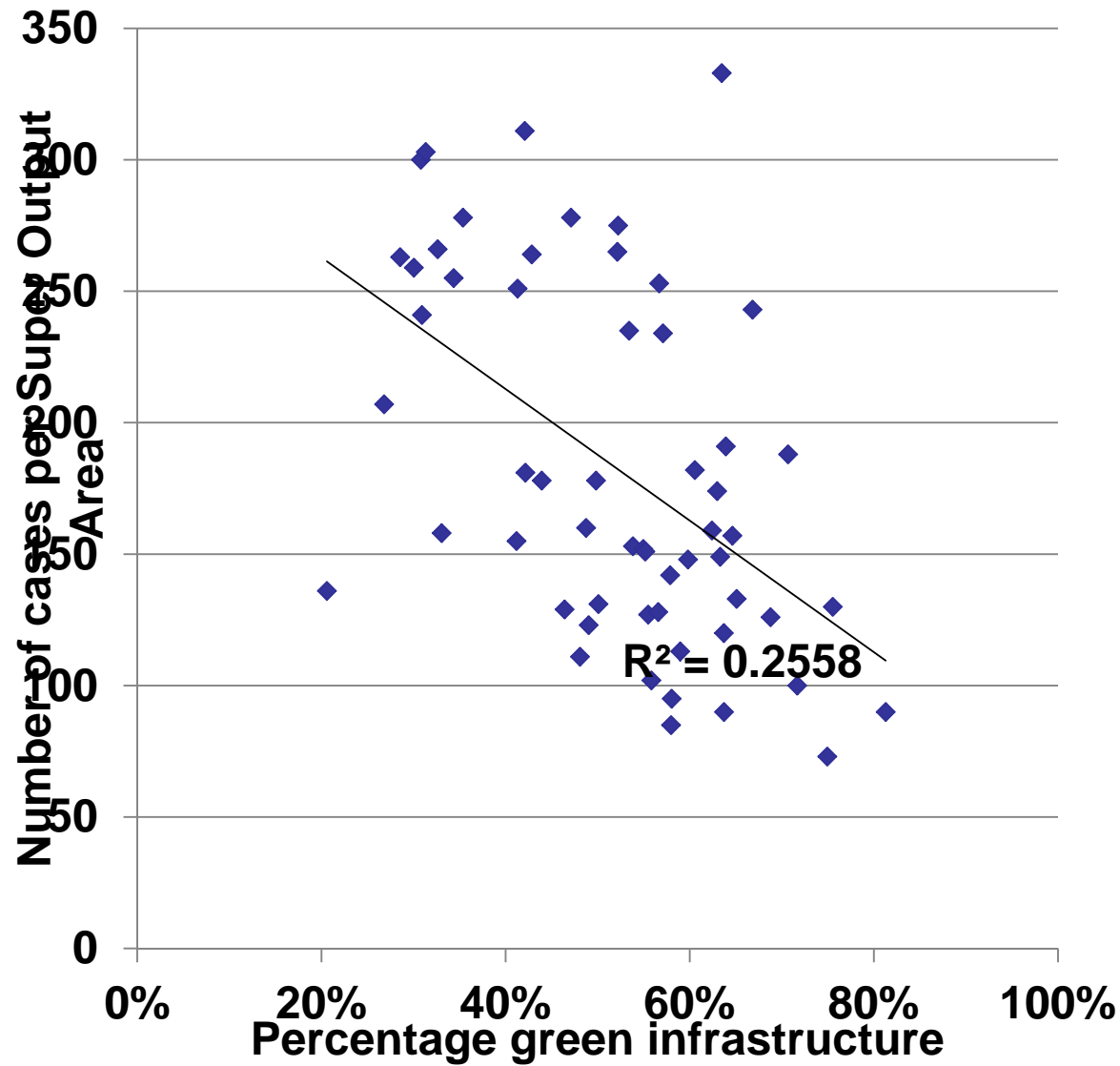


# “A city providing natural choices for health”

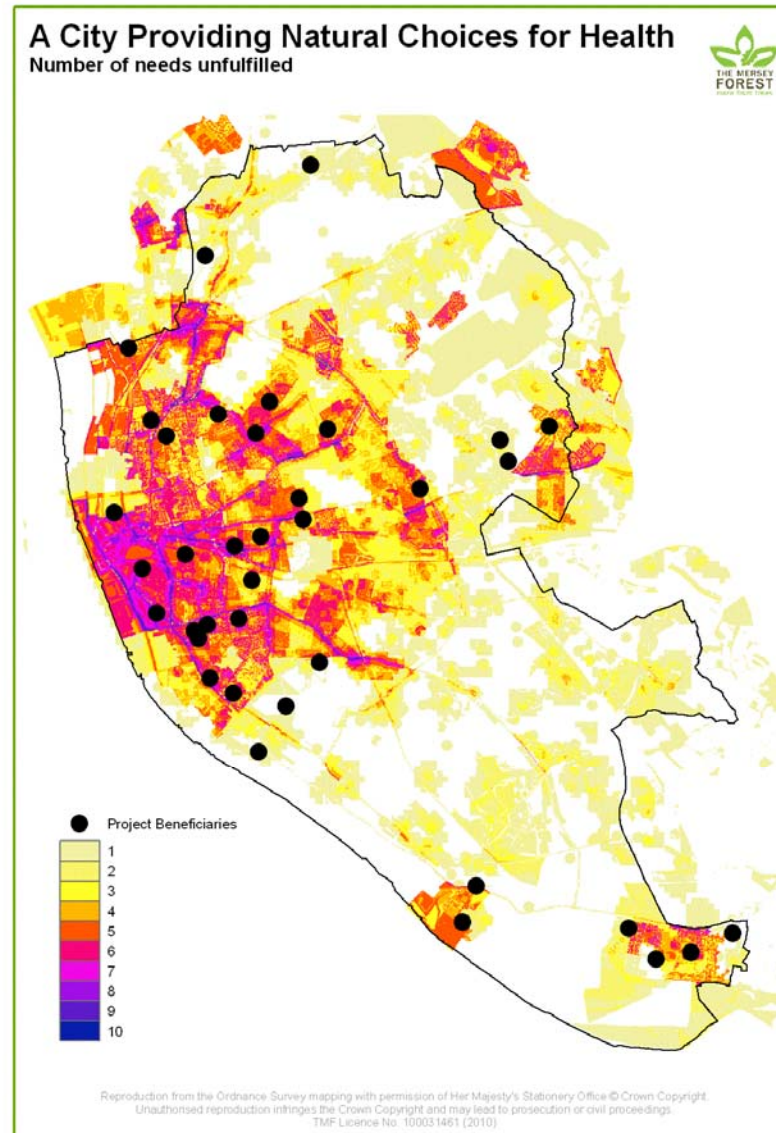


- £296, 000 funds from Liverpool PCT (as was)
- 38 projects delivered
- Cost £2.35/person/week

# MENTAL HEALTH



# Target interventions to help increase physical activity and improve wellbeing in Liverpool.

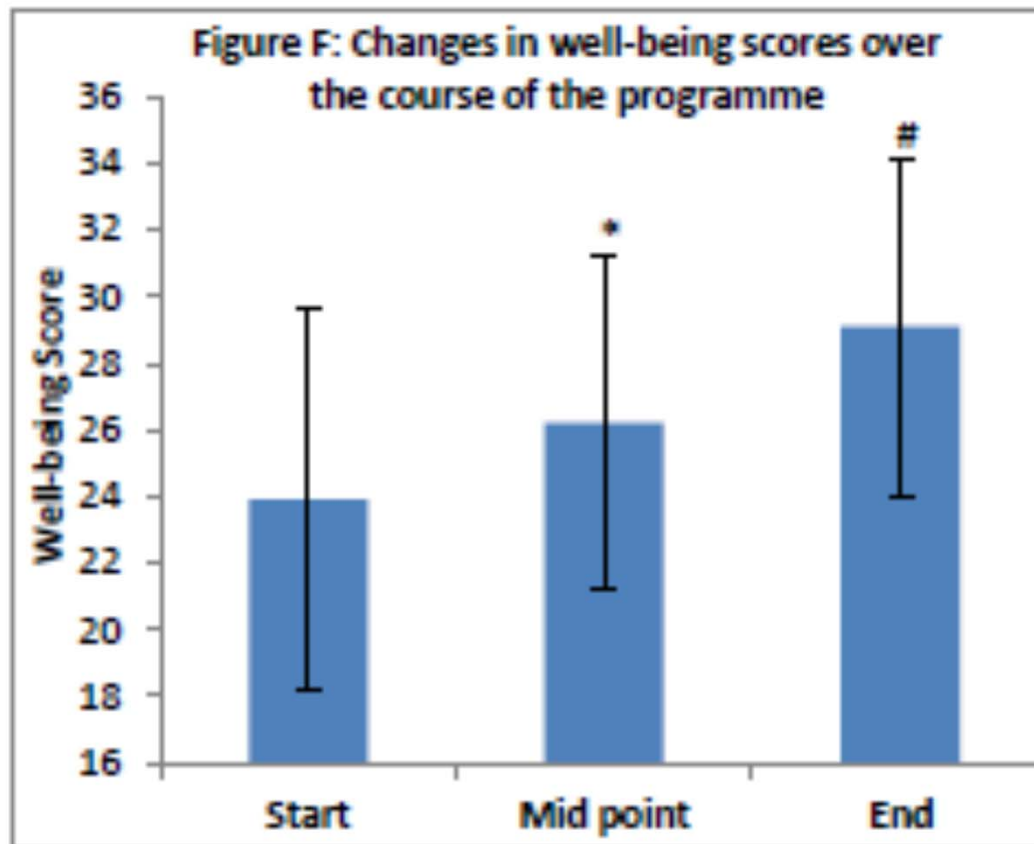




**“The best lesson we have ever had”**

***“children are outside and engaged...doing something practical and that in itself can be therapeutic...caring for plants and watching them grow has a better effect psychologically than anything that we could teach in lessons or that circle-time could deliver...”***





(\*indicates a significant difference between start and mid point scores ( $P < 0.01$ ), # indicates a significant difference between start and end, and start and mid point scores ( $P < 0.001$ )).

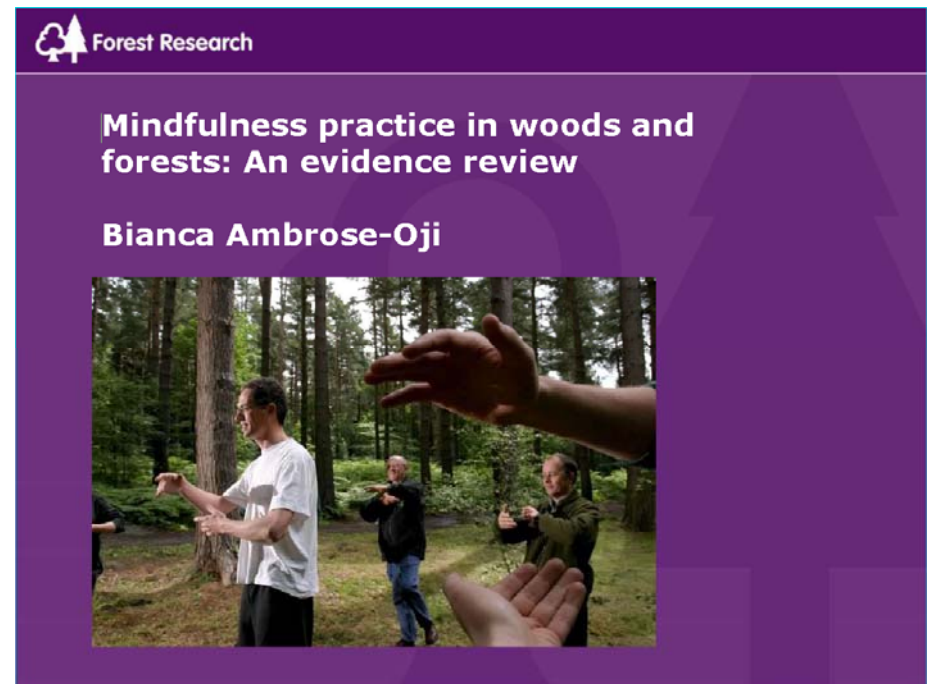
**Wellbeing scores of those involved improved by 18% from start to finish**

**A greater proportion of participants had a 'high' well-being score by the end of the programme, whilst fewer had a 'low' well-being score.**

**Cost £2.35/person/week**

# Mindfulness and Forestry

- According to WHO we are now entering an era where health professionals are concentrating on chronic and non-communicable diseases rather than infectious diseases as the main causes of mortality and morbidity  
([Hägerhäll, 2010](#))





Natural Health Service

feel better outside





27 March 2014 Last updated at 01:25



## Councils diverting public health cash, says journal



Measures to tackle smoking and drinking come under the public health remit

**Councils in England are using public health budgets to fund other services, the British Medical Journal has said.**

Local councils in England took over responsibility - and funding - for public health last April.

The BMJ says Freedom of Information requests reveal a third have stopped at least one public health service, with money being spent on other services such as parks and leisure instead.

But the Local Government Association said the report was "scaremongering".

### Related Stories

[Cash to help keep libraries open](#)

[Inactivity 'pandemic' in poor areas](#)

[Councils 'face 10% funding cut'](#)

# Thank You



**THE MERSEY  
FOREST**  
more from trees

