Trees and Health in The Mersey Forest

Developing partnerships and calling it a consortium!

Paul Nolan - Director, Mersey Forest
The Mersey Forest

- 1,370 km²
- 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

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

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

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.”
What can we do?

• Snakes and Ladders
Or

• Joined up approach

• Business like
  – WWGD!

• Shared experience

• Avoid duplication

www.naturalhealthservice.org.uk
Our Consortium

• Why a consortium?
  – Involved in too many partnerships
  – Sounded more business-like

  – So not really good reasons
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 identity, the client group and outcomes from delivery, the evidence base and links to case studies. They are updated 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. Swan Sing

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 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client Group</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young People</td>
<td>• Evidence for restorative health benefits in young people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>• Time spent in natural environments linked to enhanced emotional well-being, reduced stress, and, in certain situations, improved health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Community Groups</td>
<td>• Evidence of links to resolution in BMI from regular exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially isolated</td>
<td>• Social integration improved mental health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Evidence

EURO/Forestry Commission review
Forest school: evidence for restorative health benefits in young people based on research by Jenny Roe, Peter Agar and Catherine Ward Thompson (Edinburgh College of Art), available from:
http://www.ed.ac.uk/pdf/approach/DES_PSA/ Certs/ASHغن/APPENDIX_F1 رسومات.pdf

Towards Forest Schools in Birmingham
A report on a pilot study in Birmingham entitled Towards Forest Schools in Birmingham.
http://www.learnforestschools.org.uk/file/296a11_forest_schools_downloa
d_version.pdf

Case Study Links

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

About The Natural Health Service

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www.naturalhealthservice.org.uk
Short term
Prototype to prove concept & start working together, start building consortium

Medium term
Agree principles of partnership working, establish centre of excellence for research & social value

Long term
Delivering and developing the collective offer through the consortium
Investment Forum – Health Consortium

**Health Consortium Current Service Delivery**

**Rivers Trust**
Guided Walks, Water activities e.g. canoeing

**British Waterways**

**The Land Trust**
Links to green gyms

**Cheshire Wildlife Trust**
Wild Walks, Volunteer Groups, Community Payback

**National Trust**
Health Walks, cycling, surfing, horseriding

**Keep Britain Tidy**
Research on walking and health
Green Flag awards parks

**Natural England**
Walking for health

**Green Space North West**

**RSPB**
Walks for Health

**BCTV**
Green gym, volunteering

**Groundwork Cheshire**
Out and About Project
Walking for health

**Groundwork – Lancashire West & Wigan**
Address health inequalities. Increase community based preventative services Healthy Streets, asset based community development. Reducing cost of physical activity. Improved perceptions of personal safety.
Gardening and growing projects support people with mild to moderate mental health difficulties and improve their health and wellbeing, reducing the impact of social isolation.

**CPRE**
Protecting and enhancing tranquil spaces and countryside, especially near towns and cities, for quiet leisure and relaxation, stress relief, inspiration, sense of place and identity etc. Promoting and protecting local food webs, enabling more fresh food to be grown, processed, sold and eaten locally. Promoting active travel and the infrastructure required to increase levels of participation.

**National Trust**
Volunteering opportunities. Opportunities for physical recreation at all levels from walking to mountain climbing. Mental refreshment through access to places of tranquility and natural beauty. Connection with place and space contributing to sense of wellbeing. Promotion of local food and other sustainability agendas.

**The Wildlife Trust – Lancashire, Manchester & N Merseyside**
Volunteering - practical, educational, events, campaigning, office. Health walks. Community Food Growing. Family events that encourage families to make the most of their local greenspace. Community involvement and empowerment in a number of our projects

**Woodland Trust**
Guided walks; leaflets/info about woodland sites for walking, cycling, running, peaceful enjoyment. ‘VisitWoods’ - partnership support to health and wellbeing orgs such as Dementia Adventure - giving advice and access on how to enjoy woodlands.

**Environment Agency**
Pollution prevention and environmental monitoring.

**Forestry Commission**
Access to woods re recreation & health, economic income direct and indirect and health consequential, spiritual relaxation via trees and woodlands

**Mersey Forest**
Community Forests, Forest Schools, Natural Choices programme. Support community engagement

**Red Rose Forest**
Outdoor activities, community engagement, Greener attraction space - street greening - GI planning with hospitals. Greater Manchester Forest Network. Health walks.

**Groundwork Manchester**
Health and wellbeing projects (supporting increased physical activity, improved mental wellbeing and healthy eating);
Open space improvements; employment support; training; schools projects; community allotments.
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

\[ R^2 = 0.2558 \]

Number of cases per Super Output Area vs. Percentage green infrastructure.

\[ R^2 = 0.2558 \]
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...”
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
Councillors diverting public health cash, says journal

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

Councillors 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". 
Thank You