Green infrastructure and the Health and wellbeing Influences on an Ageing population

Understanding the benefits and values of urban green infrastructure to older people and how green infrastructure attributes and interventions can best support healthy ageing in urban areas

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Co-creating evidence

How can urban green infrastructure be best designed, enhanced, managed and promoted to support its use as part of preventative and restorative therapies, and other health & wellbeing related activities?

- 6 interconnected Work Packages cover multi-disciplinary themes
- 3 cross-cutting evidence strands
- Case studies for different types of green & blue spaces around Greater Manchester, e.g. parks, gardens, rivers & canals

GI Engagement Impact
Identifying older people’s motivations for engaging with GI

GI Benefits Impact
Evidencing how GI influences older people's health and wellbeing

GI Values Impact
Developing mixed methodologies to communicate the non-monetary value of GI

Identifying the opportunities and barriers for engagement in GI within diverse groups

Demonstrating opportunities for wellbeing interventions and their relevance to health and social care devolution

Encouraging more holistic approaches to valuation and its relevance to policy and practice
Who has the most urban green & blue space?

- People on high incomes
- Older people

Neighbourhoods with older residents on high incomes are the greenest – by far.

What are the links between health and green infrastructure for older people?

- Better health in neighbourhoods with more, better quality and closer green and blue spaces.

- Older, high income neighbourhoods
  - Positive associations with many different elements of green infrastructure.

- Older low income neighbourhoods
  - Proximity to local green and blue spaces (within 100m) is the only statistically significant association.
  - Improving the quality of public parks & recreation areas could bring further benefits.

Dennis, M, Cook, P.A, Wheater, C. P. , James, P and Lindley, S J (under review) Health outcomes for different age groups are predicted by the size, quality and proximity of urban green infrastructure, BMC Public Health
How do older people themselves value green space for their health and wellbeing?

Everyone of us has different needs, histories and interests underpinning what gives us a good life.

Wellbeing – what people can be and do with their lives.

Green and blue spaces are valued as places that:
- Embody personal and social memories.
- Present opportunities to connect with nature and volunteer with others.
- Present opportunities for active outdoor activity and adventure.
- Present opportunities for social relationships, independence and personal growth.

What can we learn from assessing interventions?

- Even **small scale interventions** can have an impact for some elements of wellbeing.
- A natural experiment study showed **no statistically significant change in older adults’ physical activity**, or observable wellbeing indicators
  - Small, existing green area, past interventions
  - Differences in perceptions
    - “This is their little island, isn’t it?”
- Physical activity not universally relevant to any GI intervention.
- Other presentations in C2 cover
  - Dementia walks as a H&W intervention
  - GI as an intervention for UFP moderation

Why do we need participatory creative practice?

- Creative practice is a vital companion to other research methods.
- Loneliness and social isolation are **challenging topic** to be addressed directly.
- **Visual expression** is especially important for people who speak English as a second language, and with experiences of trauma and exclusion.
- **Deeper understanding** of barriers to and opportunities for engagement.

What motivates people to engage more with urban GI in later life?

We can’t assume that health and wellbeing benefits are the primary motivator, so what does attract older people?

Individual factors
- Emotional & personal connections to particular places.
- Opportunity for personal achievement
- Opportunity for variety and change
- Having time

Social factors
- Opportunity to meet new people
- Opportunity to share knowledge and skills
- Availability of a older place-makers and organisations to which different individuals can relate

Environmental factors
- Quality - Character of particular places – interesting plants or wildlife and particular colours, shapes, scent & movement.
- Accessibility and facilities

Many excellent examples of positive interventions and some bold visions for increasing and enhancing urban green infrastructure in the future.

But there are also losses.

We must also consider the negative impact of losing spaces and ‘wild places’ valued by and cared for by communities.

This can lead to negative health and wellbeing outcomes unless carefully managed.
Take-Homes

Tools

Online interactive map-based tools *see Gina Cavan’s talk on Tue!
- Extract
- Value
- Explore

MOHAWk: a validated tool for assessing physical activity (Sedentary, Walking, Vigorous) & two other wellbeing behaviours (Take Notice: awareness of the environment; Connect: social interaction) in urban spaces


Methodologies

- GI mapping methodology
- Non-monetary valuation manual
- Creative practice models
- Handling scale in H&W assessments
- And more….

Dissemination Event for practitioners

Jan 9th 2020
Whitworth Art Gallery

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