

Indicators of success for nature-based public health interventions

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¹ NIHR- HPRU in Environmental Change and Health



Introduction

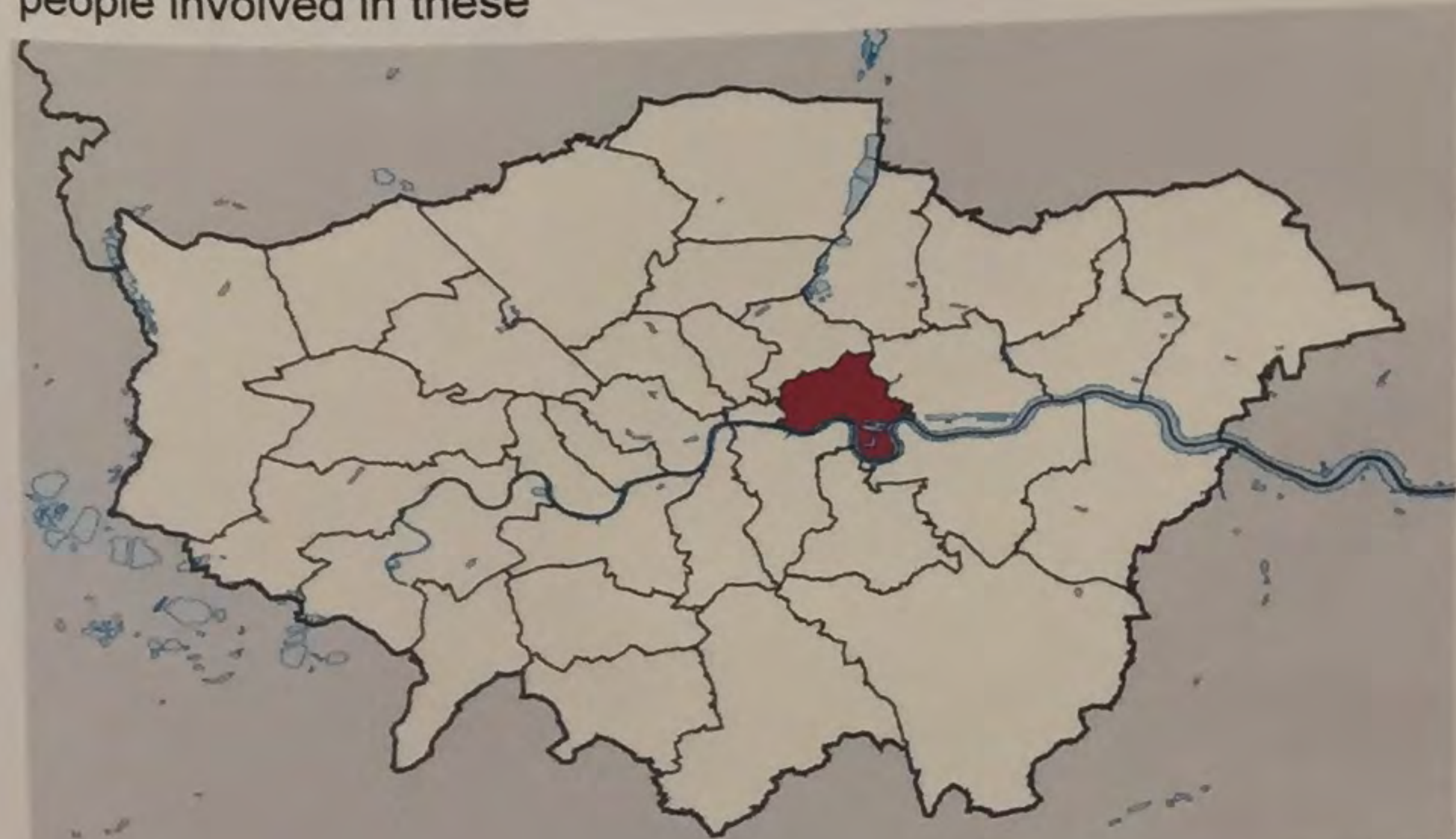
It is widely recognised that access to the natural environment has multiple benefits to human health. There is a growing interest in 'nature-based interventions for non-clinical needs linked to the promotion of public health such as improved physical activity and reduced social isolation. However, gaps remain regarding the evidence for the effectiveness of nature-based solutions to support public health interventions.

Objectives

1. To map out the network of organisations involved in public health commissioning, coordination and delivery of nature-based interventions (NBIs) in Tower Hamlets (see map below).
2. To explore where the barriers to delivery of nature-based interventions are and what is the nature of these barriers
3. To explore how evidence is understood and used according to who within the public health network is utilising it
4. To explore the extent to which nature based interventions are being evaluated in Tower Hamlets
5. To identify ways to improve the coordination and production of evidence that can be used by key national health organisations to fund nature-based public health interventions

Methods

Placement involved interviews and field visits with a range of people who represented the Tower Hamlet's network from clinical commissioning groups to local community groups (12 in total). Interviews were conducted over the phone, face to face and sometimes in groups. Visits were also made to community groups, city farms and local gardening groups. Observations were made of nature-based interventions first hand and talking to some of the people involved in these



Results

- No acceptable standards therefore no way to properly evaluate NBI's
- No agreed set of standards for NBIs that work across different clinical needs
- No co-ordinated standards for NBIs that can be recognised, understood and used across public health
- Very different views on 'evidence' amongst organisations
- Biodiverse environments are not essential to NBIs in urban settings
- NBI's are primarily carried out by voluntary or community groups
- NBI's are only a small part of broader social prescription landscape. Mainly gardening, food growing or city farms
- NBI's require 'champions' to ensure their continuation

Discussion

- No consistent gathering and evaluation of evidence combined with a lack of clear and consistent standards undermines the work going into NBIs in Tower Hamlets
- Under-resourcing of community groups in Tower Hamlets undermines the work being done on NBIs
- Multiple networks rather than a single, integrated network in Tower Hamlets. Lack of coordination amongst organisations working on NBIs
- Multiple barriers to NBIs - resources, continuity, time, knowledge and the 'medical model. No obvious way to overcome these.
- One of the key VN objectives is to, 'Improve our understanding of the role biodiversity and ecosystem processes play in human health and wellbeing'. This placement has to some extent challenged the idea that biodiverse environments are important in this objective.
- The placement highlighted that biodiversity and ecosystem processes may not be the most important focus for NBIs. Rather, environments that are safe, accessible and familiar seem more important in the urban context of this placement.
- Can VN program broaden its notion of the *environment* and *nature* to look at its health and wellbeing value without emphasising biodiversity?

