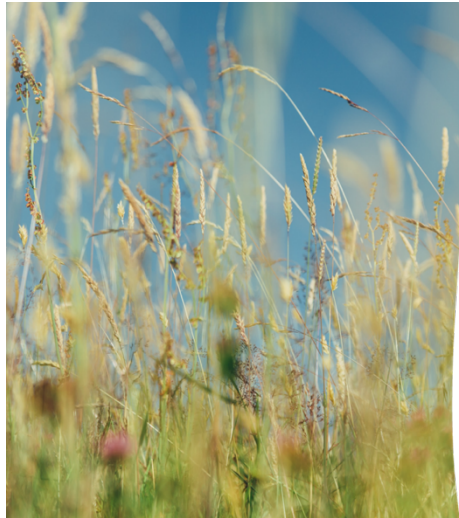


The Impact of a Multi-agency Partnership to Improve Green Infrastructure on Community Health and Wellbeing



The [Gwent Green Grid Partnership](#) (GGGP) aims to improve and develop the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect the villages, towns and cities of Gwent. This case study presents the findings of an [Integrated Health Impact Assessment](#) (iHIA) undertaken to understand how the GGGP can maximise impact on the health and wellbeing of the population of Gwent.

“The process of undertaking an iHIA has helped us as a partnership to identify how our work impacts the health of people in our communities. The iHIA has given us a lot to think about, as we plan our future work, in terms of reaching wider and more diverse groups.”

Key findings

Consider Health Inequalities: ‘The “hardest to reach” are often the ones we need to reach most.’

Those groups of people experiencing the greatest health inequalities are the ones most likely to benefit from access to the natural environment. Therefore, increasing access for all, but with a focus on how to increase engagement for at risk groups, is an important consideration for the GGGP. These include children and young people, socio-economic status (SES), older people, BAME communities, people with physical and mental health long-term health conditions, people with disabilities.

Increase access to green space and the natural environment: Access to green space and nature has been strongly linked good physical and mental health. Therefore, increasing opportunities for people to engage with nature and the natural environment is an important health consideration. The ability of the GGGP to work strategically and collaboratively across local authorities to ensure that green space is accessible, well managed and protected is an important feature of the partnership.

Identify the impact of the GGGP on climate change: There was a general consensus that collectively, GGGP and all its workstreams were likely to contribute towards addressing climate change, however currently there is no measurement/acknowledgement of the impact.

Address eco-anxiety: Uncertainty, unpredictability and lack of control are all important factors in eco-anxiety. The GGGP has the potential to increase or decrease the communities ‘eco anxiety’ depending on how it raises awareness and understanding about climate change and offer opportunity for people to take action.

Increase social connection: Green space can support positive health and wellbeing outcomes through facilitating social interactions which promote social cohesion. The ability of the GGGP to enable people to come together in nature is likely to have a positive impact on social connections.

Support Volunteering: Volunteering is an important element in sustaining the projects and green space improvements made by the GGGP. It is associated with a sense of achievement, social connectedness and improved eudemonic wellbeing and therefore likely to be an important contributor the wellbeing of the volunteer themselves.

Facilitate healthy lifestyles through behavior change: The recent pandemic lockdowns increased awareness about access to green spaces. However, after the lifting of the second lockdown the usage has almost dropped back to pre-pandemic levels. Hence, there's a need to understand sustainable behaviour change to encourage continued access and use of green spaces.

Build capacity and sustainability: A key element of working in a sustainable way is supporting and building capacity in existing community-based groups and projects. The Regional Officer roles were considered an important part of this, and consideration should be given to how they can be sustained.

Develop and sustain partnerships: The natural environment is not bound by local authority boundaries and therefore requires a collaborative way of working across the region combining high-level strategy alongside tailored and targeted on-the-ground activity and an ability to share good practice and resources.

Influence strategy and policy: Providing a regional and strategic approach to Green Infrastructure that increases the profile of the natural environment and its impact on health and wellbeing can enable a stronger position in corporate and community plans and strategies.

What happened as a result?

The GGGP used the report findings to inform the delivery of existing and new projects, as a result:

- The GGGP and associated projects have a greater focus on tackling health inequalities
- All new GGGP projects undertake a rapid assessment using iHIA checklist to ensure maximum impact on health and wellbeing
- Applicants to the GGGP small grants programme are required to identify how to address key health impacts identified in the iHIA
- Wellbeing Checklists have been incorporated into events planning
- Monitoring and evaluation of GGGP projects has been amended to capture health impacts
- GGGP has a greater focus on identifying its impact on tackling climate change
- The iHIA was used to support applications for future grant funding

Further Information:

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