



Edinburgh & Lothians  
Health Foundation



## **Greenspace and Health**

Strategic Framework for  
Edinburgh & Lothians

# Longer lives, better lived.

We are increasingly recognising the role and importance of greenspace and therapeutic interventions in greenspace on our health and wellbeing. Indeed, greenspace is often now described as our natural health service.

*"There is compelling evidence that green exercise improves not only our physical health but also our emotional and mental health as well."*

Dr Gregor Smith, Deputy Chief Medical Officer

As a keen runner, cyclist and hillwalker, I've experienced at first-hand the benefits of greenspace on my health and wellbeing.

For several years, the Foundation has provided grants to support therapeutic gardening and the development of community gardens at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital and Midlothian Community Hospital. We have seen the benefits of these projects for patients, staff, visitors and the wider community – and we recognise the potential to achieve much more through a coordinated and strategic approach.

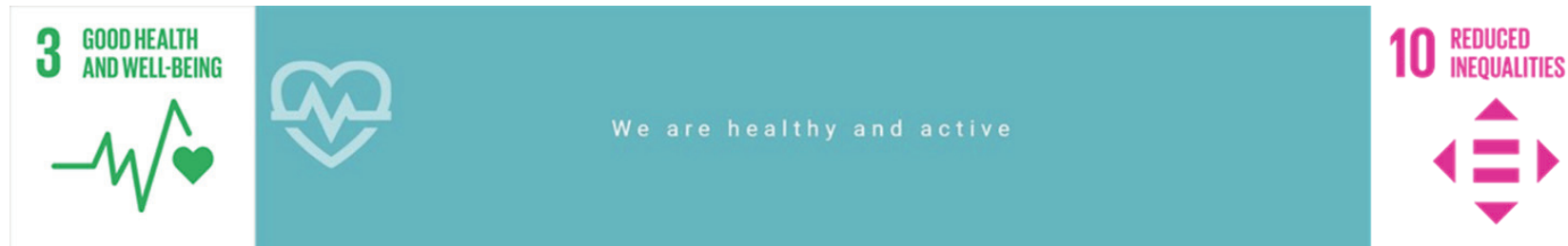
In evidence to the Scottish Parliament Local Government and Communities Committee in May 2018, NHS Health Scotland said: *"Given the significant positive health outcomes associated with greenspace it is clear that investment in greenspace could save the UK health system money and be a cost-effective health intervention."*

GreenSpace is a strategic theme in the Foundation's Grantmaking Strategy 2017-2022. This Greenspace and Health Strategic Framework will play a key role in guiding and shaping our work with partners to realise our vision of Longer Lives, Better Lived through our GreenSpace – Lothian's Natural Health Service.

## Brian Houston

Chair of NHS Lothian Board and Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Edinburgh and Lothian Health Foundation

April 2019



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# Executive summary

The Edinburgh and Lothians Health Foundation and NHS Lothian commissioned greenspace scotland to prepare a Strategic Plan Development for greenspace, community gardens and green exercise activities across NHS Lothian's green estate. As work on the Strategy progressed, the scope expanded to become a Greenspace and Health Strategic Framework for Edinburgh and the Lothians covering also the role of publicly accessible greenspaces and greenspace-based activities in supporting wider community and public health.

The Vision for the Greenspace and Health Strategic Framework is:

## **Longer lives, better lived through our GreenSpace: Lothian's 'natural health service'**

We fully realise the potential of the NHS outdoor estate and community greenspaces as a community health asset benefiting patients, visitors, staff and communities. Green health activities and services are recognised and resourced as vital tools for supporting health and wellbeing. Together, we are achieving the ambition of a health promoting health service.

There is a strong and well-developed policy framework for this Strategic Framework from the UN Sustainable Development Goals through to local strategies and plans. The policy review indicates that the Strategic Framework needs to take a whole system approach with action on the NHS estate and in community settings, covering mental health and wellbeing, physical activity, health inequalities, early years and ageing well. In addition to the focus on patients, visitors and staff, promoting and supporting health and wellbeing at a community and population level is also important.

There is a growing evidence base around connections between green and natural spaces, and health and wellbeing. The evidence synthesis drew on five recent wide-ranging evidence reviews undertaken by reputable organisations including the World Health Organisation and Defra. The strongest evidence concerns the links between contact with greenspaces and mental health and wellbeing, stress reduction and the alleviation of dementia symptoms. For some health outcomes, research has found that greenspaces may help mitigate the health impacts of socio-economic inequality. Generally positive links have been found for outcomes such as cardiovascular disease, mortality, physical activity, social cohesion, pregnancy outcomes and the cognitive development of children. Different population groups may respond differently to greenspace and such responses may also change over the life course.

The evidence was synthesised to develop two logic models (greenspace & health and therapeutic & other interventions in greenspace) to inform and underpin the strategy. These can also be used to support the development of projects, activities and services; to assess applications and proposals for funding; and, to develop a framework for evaluating outcomes and impacts.

Stakeholder surveys, workshops and interviews identified the wide range of green health activities and services currently provided across NHS Lothian. Information has been collated for over 170 sites and activities. This includes 60 health walks, nearly 50 community gardening projects, as well as Green Gyms, Branching Out, Medal Routes and other green health activities. Whilst NHS sites like the Royal Edinburgh Hospital and Midlothian Community Hospital are important locations for community and therapeutic gardens, most of the green health activity takes place outwith the NHS estate. The majority of the green health projects and activities recorded are provided by third sector organisations. The funding for many of these projects (and indeed the organisations themselves) is often short-term and, in some cases, precarious.

There are many examples of good practice, but there are also gaps in provision and opportunities to add value and achieve more. Stakeholders identified many challenges to the effective delivery of green health activities. These include: access to land; short-term and uncertain funding arrangements; lack of coordination and strategic overview; engaging with NHS staff and estates; capacity of ward staff to engage with green health programmes; limited information to support signposting, green health pathways and referrals.

The outdoor estate around NHS properties is generally under-used and under-appreciated but represents a significant public land asset and potential community green health asset. Managed and used more effectively it has the potential to promote better health and wellbeing for staff, patients, visitors and the wider community. The NHS green estate has been mapped and a digital [GIS] Green Health Map developed showing the NHS estate, publicly accessible greenspace, location and type of green health activities, deprivation and health data. This information can be used to target the provision and resourcing of future green health activities.

Key actions identified in the Strategic Framework include the appointment of a Green Health Manager to lead and coordinate delivery of the strategy working with colleagues in NHS Lothian, Councils and key delivery partners; the appointment of a senior-level green health champion; preparation of greenspace management and green health plans for key sites; longer-term and secure funding for anchor green health providers; feasibility studies for new community gardens and expanding the range and reach of other green health activities. There are also a number of quick-win, low-cost actions including raising awareness of Ramblers Medal Routes, replacing missing signposts and waymarks, listing green health activities on ALISS [www.aliss.org](http://www.aliss.org); together with actions for other partners, including improving accessibility and quality of greenspace, particularly in more deprived areas.

Delivery of this Strategy will require coordinated action and investment by a wide range of stakeholders, including NHS Lothian; City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian and West Lothian Councils; Health & Social Care Partnerships; Forestry and Land Scotland; Scottish Natural Heritage; and, a wide range of third sector, voluntary and community-based organisations.

Edinburgh and Lothian Health Foundation trustees have committed to an investment of £100k per year for the period to 2021/22 to support delivery of the Strategy.

# 1. Background

The Edinburgh and Lothians Health Foundation and NHS Lothian commissioned greenspace scotland to prepare a Strategic Plan Development for greenspace, community gardens and green exercise activities across NHS Lothian's outdoor estate.

Initially there were four main areas of interest:

- The NHS green estate
- Community gardens
- Green exercise for hospital communities (walking, gardening, green gyms, outdoor learning, etc.)
- NHS Lothian's contribution to the broader 'natural health service'

As work on the Strategy progressed, drawing on the findings of the research and policy analysis, and in discussion with the Steering Group and stakeholders, the scope expanded to become a Greenspace and Health Strategic Framework for Edinburgh and the Lothians covering also the role of publicly accessible greenspaces and greenspace-based activities in supporting wider community and public health.

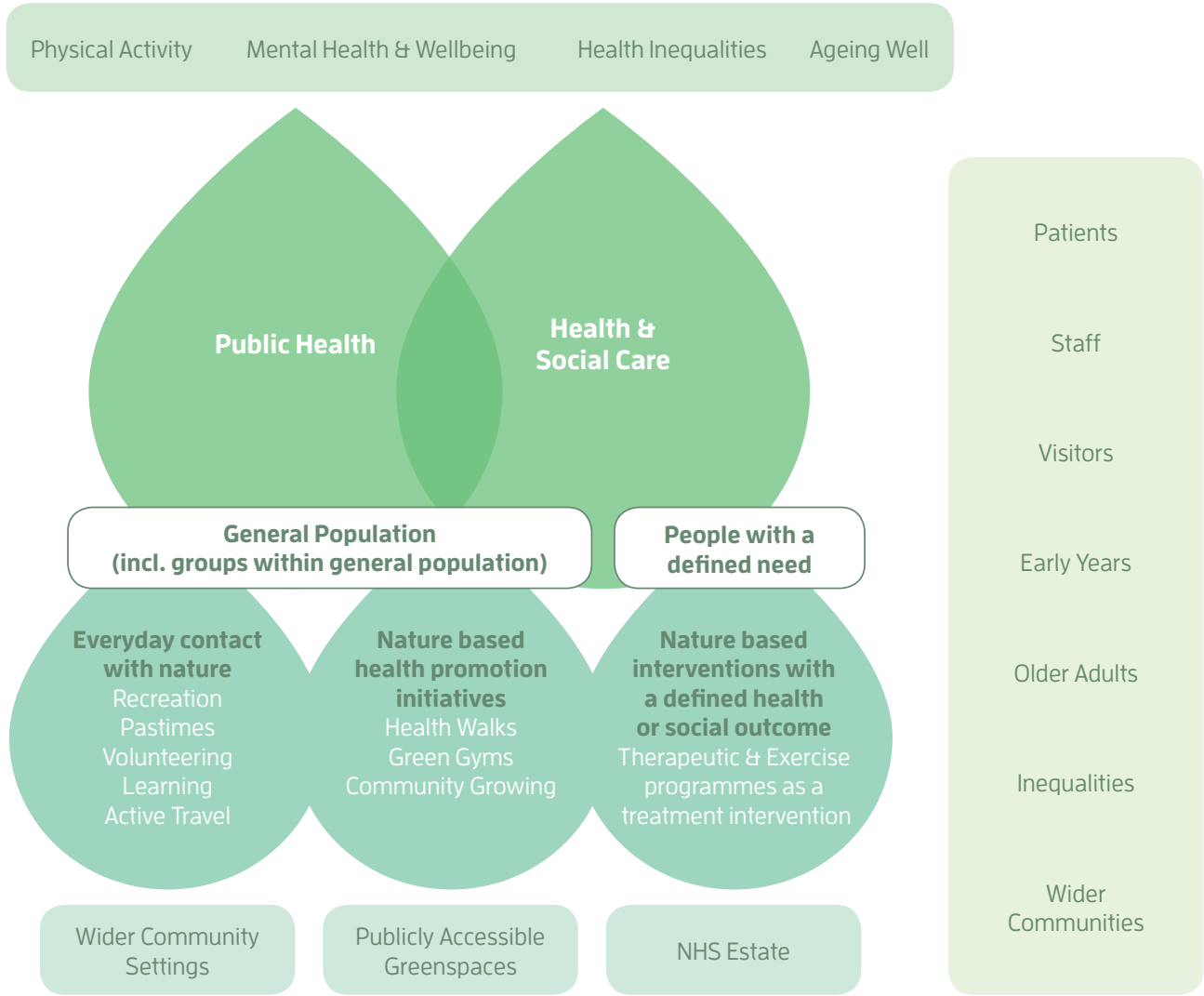
The Strategic Framework aims to cover all the elements illustrated in SNH's 'Our Natural Health Service' infographic (Figure 1)

The purpose of this document is to provide a strategic framework for the Edinburgh & Lothians Health Foundation, NHS Lothian and partners in public, private and third sectors:

- to inform the development, commissioning, resourcing and delivery of green health activities across Edinburgh and the Lothians
- to guide the management and use of the NHS outdoor estate to improve the health of patients, visitors, staff, local community and the environment
- to influence the management and use of wider publicly accessible greenspaces to support better health and wellbeing

The overarching goal being to improve the health and wellbeing of people and communities across Edinburgh and the Lothians.

Figure 1: The scope of Green Health Strategic Framework



(Adapted from SNH's 'Our Natural Health Service')

## 2. Policy overview

There is a strong and well-developed policy framework from the UN Sustainable Development Goals; through to the updated National Performance Framework, The 2020 Vision and the Chief Medical Officer's letters, to the recently published Public Health Priorities for Scotland.

- The **UN Sustainable Development Goals** include: Goal No. 3 '*ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages*' and Goal No. 10 '*reduce inequalities within and among countries*'.
- The **National Performance Framework** identifies the need to take a '*whole system approach to promoting good health and activity*' recognising that our health is dependent on a range of factors and actors.
- Priority 1 in **Public Health Priorities for Scotland** is '*A Scotland where we live in vibrant, healthy and safe places and communities*'. Other priorities focus on flourishing early years, good mental health, eating well, healthy weight and physical activity. It notes that '*wellbeing cannot be created and sustained by the NHS alone*' and so these priorities are not just for the health professionals. It advocates asset-based approaches and the importance of changing the places and environments where people live so that all places support people to be healthy and create wellbeing; strategic approaches to greenspace, community gardens and developing walking and cycling networks are given as examples.
- The **Chief Medical Officer's letters** reaffirm the commitment to a '*health promoting health service*'. Of particular relevance to this Strategy, the 2015 letter includes reference to promoting physical activity opportunities in and around NHS grounds, encouraging active travel, developing and enhancing therapeutic NHS estate greenspaces in relation to the outcomes for patient pathways, staff health and wellbeing, and the hospital environment.

There are a range of specific national policies in relation to physical activity, mental health, early years, dementia and health inequalities, as well as non-health policies which are relevant to this strategy including Community Empowerment Act, Getting it Right for Every Child and Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act in relation to the biodiversity duty on public bodies.

National policies are currently in development in relation to reducing loneliness and isolation; diet, activity and healthy weight; child and adolescent health and wellbeing; Active Scotland delivery plan. The Greenspace and Health Strategic Framework has the potential to support action to deliver on all of these policies.

The **Sustainable Development Strategy for NHS Scotland** includes actions in relation to facilities management (promoting greenspace and the outdoor estate as a healthcare facility), community engagement (engaging local people in the design and use of the outdoor healthcare estate and promoting access to it) and travel (ensuring health services can be accessed by good quality footpaths and cycle routes, and encouraging people to make active and sustainable travel choices).



### Key policies for NHS Lothian are:

- The Strategic Plan 2014–2024: Our Health, Our Care, Our Future

- Greenspace for Health: NHS Lothian Grounds – The Way Forward

This has recently been adopted and aims to *‘maximise use of NHS Lothian’s grounds and gardens for health improvement, healing and increased biodiversity with minimal operating cost’*. It notes that a key aim is to achieve a financial position which is no worse than cost neutral, although there is an expectation that savings will be realised.

The **Central Scotland Green Network** is a national development identified in National Planning Framework 3 which includes Edinburgh and the Lothians. ‘A place to feel good’ captures the CSGN’s ambitions for health and wellbeing: *‘creating an environment which supports healthy lifestyles and good physical and mental well-being’*. Current priorities include active travel and action in disadvantaged communities.

At the local authority level, there are **Health & Social Care Strategies**, **Local Outcome Improvement Plans** and **Open Space Strategies**, with specific priorities for each local authority area (Edinburgh and West Lothian prioritise health inequalities; East Lothian focuses on healthy active ageing; Midlothian prioritises both), as well as specific locality and neighbourhood priorities.

*Annex 1 provides the full policy review and includes a table setting out the key national policies and their main area of relevance.*

The policy review indicates that the Strategic Framework needs to take a whole system approach with action on the NHS estate and in community settings, covering mental health and wellbeing, physical activity, health inequalities, early years and ageing well. In addition to the focus on patients, visitors and staff, promoting and supporting health and wellbeing at a community and population level is also important.

### 3. Evidence and logic models

There is a growing evidence base around connections between green and natural spaces, and health and wellbeing.

Several reputable organisations, including the World Health Organisation, have recently undertaken wide-ranging evidence reviews. The evidence synthesis for this strategy was based on five reviews (see Annex 2). Evidence tables were created to inform the development of two logic models which underpin this strategy, and the evidence from the five reviews was synthesised for each of the elements within the logic models.

The five reviews of the evidence identified a number of **positive health benefits associated with urban greenspace**. These include:

- **Improved mental health, stress reduction and cognitive function** – for which there is strong evidence according to the Defra review
- **Improved immune system and reduction in inflammatory-based disease** – for which there is strong evidence according to Defra review
- **Reduced cardiovascular morbidity** – about which the evidence has been variously described as “extensive and robust” and “mixed”
- **Improved pregnancy outcomes** – evidence of “generally positive links” from mixed evidence sources
- **Reduced overall mortality** – evidence of “generally positive links” from mixed evidence sources

The WHO review identified a number of pathways by which urban greenspace improves health and wellbeing, including: improved relaxation and restoration, improved functioning of the immune system, enhanced physical activity, improved social capital, reduced exposure to air pollution, optimised exposure to sunlight and improved sleep.

The report for Defra states that the evidence supported increasing the quantity and quality of greenspaces to benefit health and prevent ill-health. A number of characteristics of urban greenspaces associated with health benefits were also identified in the WHO report. These included: perceptions of greenspace accessibility, safety and quality; size of greenspace; presence of specific facilities for certain activities; tree cover and canopy density.

There is also emerging evidence that exposure to nature may have therapeutic benefits and so could be used as part of the treatment for some conditions, for instance there is some evidence that such contact can reduce levels of anxiety in dementia patients while they are in the greenspace.

For some health outcomes, research has shown that greenspaces can help mitigate the health impacts of socio-economic inequality. Health inequalities are the unfair and avoidable differences in people’s health across social groups and between different population groups. They represent thousands of unnecessary premature deaths every year in Scotland. Those living in areas of greater deprivation are more likely to be exposed to harmful environmental factors, such as poor air quality, and less likely to have access to beneficial ones, such as greenspace.

It should be noted that much of the evidence is derived from cross-sectional studies which means it can only show association and not causation. All of the reviews make it clear that the evidence base, although growing is, by the standards generally accepted for health (and in particular clinical issues) is weak. It is clearly not possible to use the gold standard for such evidence (the randomised, controlled, double-blind trial) when investigating the influence of greenspace contact and health. Much of the evidence comes from cohort studies, cross-sectional studies and surveys.

The evidence in relation to the impact of greenspace in community and neighbourhood settings, on mental health and wellbeing, physical activity in selected groups, and health inequalities led to the scope of this strategy being extended beyond green health activities on the NHS estate.

*Annex 2 sets out the full evidence review and synthesis.*

### 3.1 LOGIC MODELS

Two logic models have been developed to inform and underpin this strategy:

- **Greenspace and health** (Figure 2 and Annex 3)
- **Therapeutic and other interventions in greenspaces** (Figure 3 and Annex 4)

The models were developed from the review of evidence and refined in the light of intelligence from the strategic group, workshop participants and discussions within the project team. These logic models can be used to inform the development of green health projects and activities; to assess applications and proposals for development and funding; to develop a framework for evaluating outcomes and impacts from projects and activities.

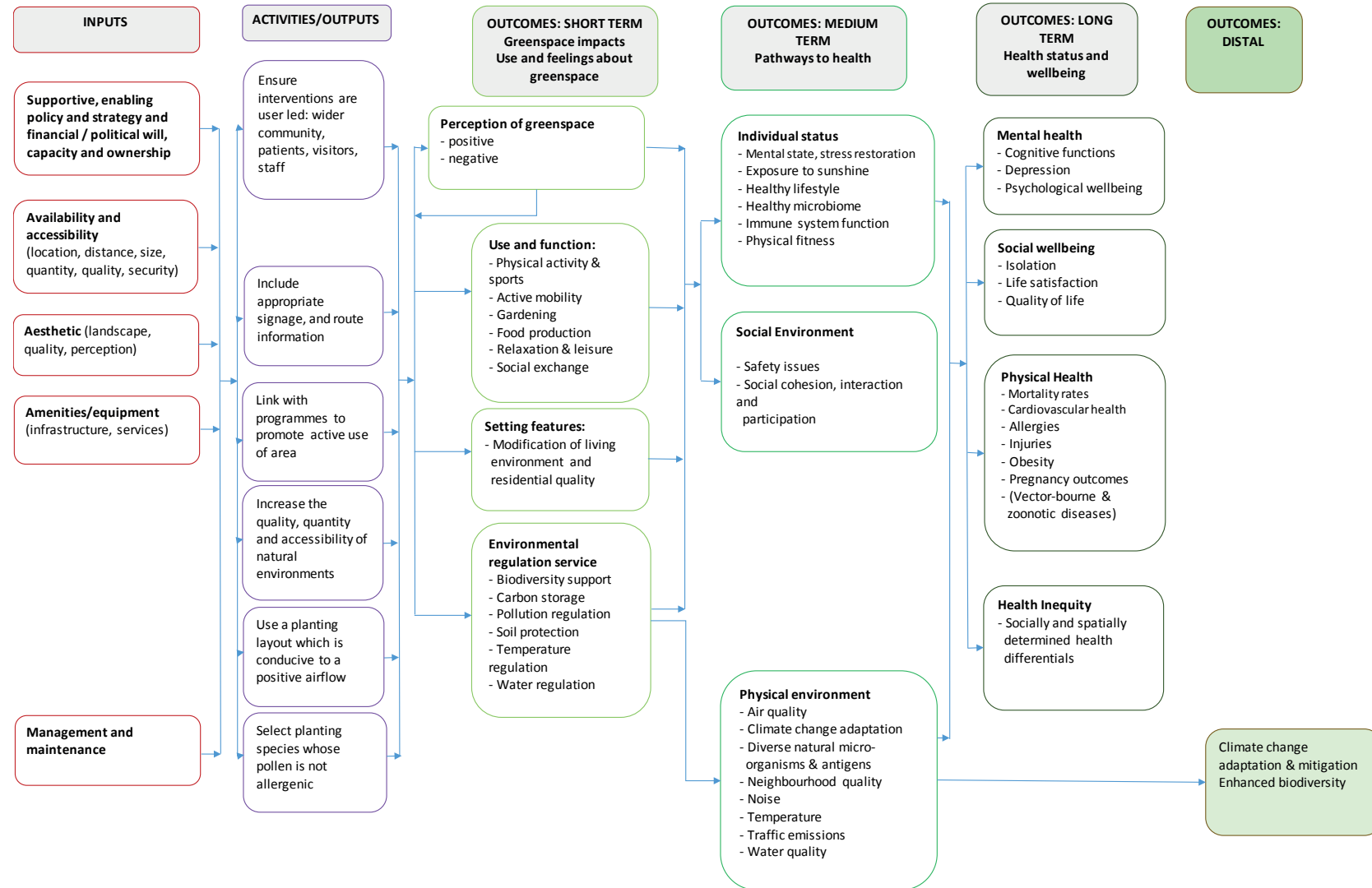
#### About logic models

Logic models provide a visual representation of a project or programme and a useful framework for considering the likely impacts of plans and activities. They show a causal connection between the need that has been identified, what the programme will do (inputs, activities and outputs) and how this makes a difference for individuals and communities (outcomes and impacts).

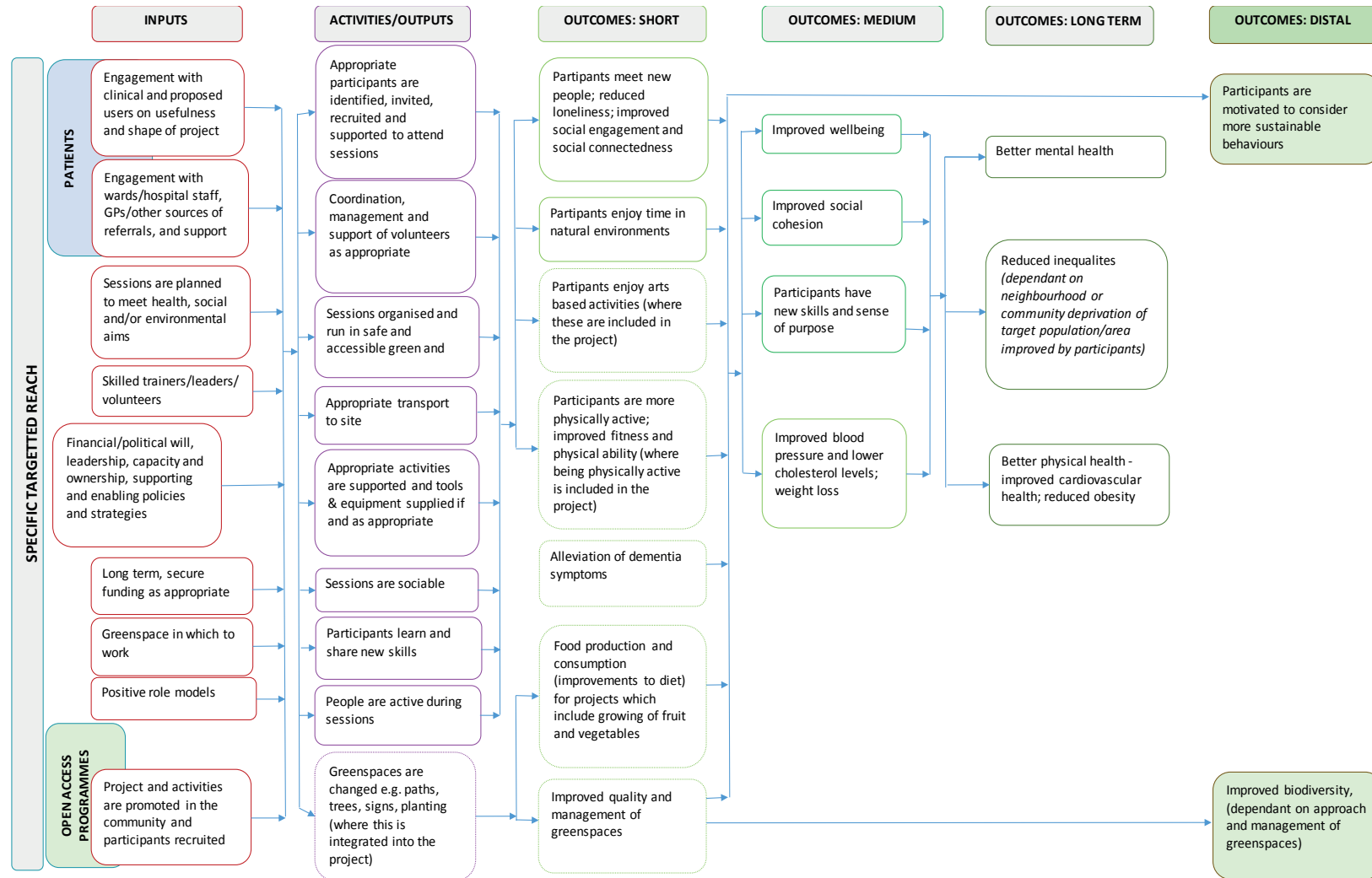
In developing the model, it is usual to start with the desired outcomes (which happen beyond the planned activities) and work back through the outputs (which are produced by the activities), the actions being undertaken and the inputs to the planned activity. Logic models usually consider outcomes in terms of lengthening timescales from the original activity, allowing for a logical sequencing of the possible effects of the activity – thus short, medium and long term outcomes. The logic models developed for this Strategic Framework also include more distal contributions to global ecosystems and climate change.

Logic models are widely used in the NHS and by the public sector in Scotland for programme planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

**Figure 2: Logic model - greenspace and health**



**Figure 3: Logic model - therapeutic and other interventions in greenspace**



## 4. The NHS Estate and wider greenspace resource

NHS Lothian provides services for the second largest residential population in Scotland (circa 850,000 people). The area covered by NHS Lothian is extensive and diverse, covering a wide geographic area and a range of towns and villages, together with the city of Edinburgh.

The NHS estate includes over 100 sites – comprising 21 hospitals, 126 GP practices, 14 care houses, 26 clinics and 25 health centres.

The area of urban greenspace across Edinburgh and the Lothians totals over 220 square kilometres including parks, playing fields, amenity spaces, gardens, woodlands and natural areas. The four local authorities have published Open Space Strategies setting out priorities for improving the provision, quality, access and management of green and open spaces.

To develop a spatial understanding of the NHS estate and wider greenspace resource, a GIS map of the green NHS estate was developed. Using address data for NHS sites and other datasets, the extent of the green NHS estate was plotted. This was overlain with data from the Ordnance Survey MasterMap Greenspace Layer.

Some hospitals, like the Royal Edinburgh Hospital, have extensive greenspace within the site which can be used for community gardens and green exercise activities – and there is scope to expand current provision. Other sites, like St John's Hospital in Livingston, are much denser and compact, with buildings, access roads and parking occupying much of the site, and so there is less greenspace available within the NHS site. The spatial analysis enables the identification of publicly accessible greenspace nearby – for example, in the case of St John's, the adjacent Howden Park.

*Annex 5 provides an illustration of information within the GIS Green Health map and how it can be used to identify spatial priorities and opportunities. The underlying data has been provided to NHS Lothian to allow for further analysis and updating.*

The NHS Lothian Green Health Map has been developed in QGIS – a free and open source Geographic Information System – to provide the potential for the map to be updated, further developed, with additional data layers added, and used by a wider range of partners. Interest has already been expressed, for example, by Nourish about how this could be used to inform and support work on Edible Edinburgh, and Museums Galleries Scotland.

## 4.1 THE NHS ESTATE

The outdoor estate around NHS properties is generally under-used and under-appreciated, but represents a significant public land asset and potential community green health asset. It is interesting to note that Edinburgh's Open Space Audit for 'institutional grounds' indicates that all NHS sites (with the exception of the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary) are not accessible. Managed and used more effectively, the NHS outdoor estate has the potential to promote better health and wellbeing for staff, patients, visitors and the wider community.

The estate also has the potential to be managed to deliver a range of green infrastructure and ecosystem services, for example, sustainable urban drainage, improved biodiversity, green network connections and active travel routes, energy generation and storage.

The Living Landscapes partnership<sup>1</sup> in Edinburgh demonstrates how changes in traditional grassland and estate management can deliver wider benefits at lower cost. There is an opportunity for NHS Lothian to join the Living Landscapes partnership and through changing management regimes realise cost-savings at the same time as improving biodiversity, providing ecosystem services and creating a visually attractive landscape.

With Scottish Government's commitment to the provision of 1140 hours of childcare, and growing interest in providing some of this through outdoor nurseries or nature kindergartens, there is potential for some parts of the NHS estate to provide the location for new outdoor nurseries and forest schools.

A greenspace management and green health plan should be prepared for each site. These should explore opportunities for retrofitting to bring underused land in existing health care facilities into active use to provide therapeutic gardens, growing places, outdoor gyms and nurseries, greenspace walks and green infrastructure links, as well as changing management regimes. NHS Lothian should aim to apply for and secure a Green Flag Award<sup>2</sup> for at least one site within 3 years.

*Annex 6 provides a brief summary description of key NHS Lothian sites with recommendations for site-specific actions and future opportunities.*

1 Edinburgh Living Landscapes <https://edinburghlivinglandscape.org.uk/>

2 Green Flag Awards <http://www.greenflagaward.org.uk/>

## TAKING INSPIRATION FOR CHANGING MANAGEMENT OF THE NHS GREEN ESTATE

### From NHS Greenspace Demonstration Projects

At the Ailsa & Ayr Hospital campus in Ayr, a landscape masterplan was created to better connect the buildings and grounds providing a better environment for people and wildlife. To encourage people to use the grounds, existing paths were improved and new ones created, seating was installed, fruit trees were planted and signage installed. New mowing regimes were identified for different grassland areas to improve biodiversity value and increase visual interest. This freed up staff maintenance time for other activities, such as tree management.

The NHS Greenspace project at Forth Valley Royal Hospital recruited the first hospital ranger in the UK to work directly with patients, medical professionals and local people to deliver outdoor health walks, cardiac rehabilitation and tai chi classes in a woodland setting within the hospital grounds.

Behind the new community health centre at Possilpark in Glasgow, some of the derelict ground has been developed into an urban garden with small "starter plots" that can be adopted by local residents and organisations. The local community health partnership funded a post for a garden coordinator. The space has become a popular feature and local residents now call it "The Back Garden". It offers an enjoyable way for people who may otherwise be socially isolated to meet and make friends, as well as providing the satisfaction of growing vegetables and flowers. It adds the opportunity for healthy, creative activity to the more conventional services offered at the centre, contributing to the ideal of a health promoting health service.

### From the Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

The Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust was the first hospital trust in the UK to receive a Green Flag Award for the management and maintenance of its greenspaces at the Royal Bournemouth Hospital. This was followed in 2017 by Glanrhyd Hospital in Wales. There are currently no NHS sites with Green Flag status in Scotland. With 33 Green Flags, the City of Edinburgh has more Green Flag Award winning parks than any other local authority area in Scotland. There is an opportunity for NHS Lothian to have the first Green Flag Award winning hospital in Scotland.

### From Edinburgh Living Landscapes

The City of Edinburgh Council manages over 1600 hectares of parks and greenspace across the city. As a founder member of the Living Landscapes partnership in Edinburgh, the Council has tested new ways of managing greenspace including naturalisation, wildflower meadows, relaxed management, extended maintenance periods and pollinator projects as part of the process of reducing their costs by 45%. Grass cutting frequencies have been altered across 12% of its 905 hectares of amenity grassland estate to create biologically rich meadows. The Council found they could save money and the changes were acceptable to the public if the resultant meadows are visually attractive and the reasons for change (increasing biodiversity and saving money) are understood. Other innovative approaches to secure more cost-effective management include piloting use of robotic mowers as an international trial partner for wireless auto mowers.

### From greenspace scotland's ParkPower project

Following from feasibility studies in Saughton Park, Edinburgh which demonstrated the potential to generate energy from the park to provide heat and electricity from ground source heat systems and a micro-hydro scheme, greenspace scotland is now developing a strategic approach using OS Greenspace, Scottish Government Heat Map and other data to identify the potential for parks and greenspaces to provide energy services for adjacent facilities, including hospitals, schools and social housing. There is an opportunity to investigate the energy potential from the NHS green estate to reduce on-site energy costs and the NHS's carbon footprint. Ground source heat systems are being used, for example, at the Malvern Community Hospital, Churchill Hospital in Oxford, Kingsmill Hospital in Mansfield, and Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool.



## 5. Green Health activity – an overview of current activity

There is an extensive and diverse range of green health activities currently taking place across Edinburgh and the Lothians – on NHS sites and in other publicly accessible greenspaces. The Edinburgh and Lothian Health Foundation was aware of activities and projects they had funded, but there was no comprehensive overview of the extent and scale of current green health activities.

Engaging with stakeholders, through surveys and workshops, has enabled an overview of current green health activities to be collated. Information was provided for over 170 sites and activities. This includes over 60 health walks, nearly 50 community gardening projects, as well as Green Gym, Branching Out, Medal Routes and other green health activities. These activities are plotted on the Green Health Map.

Whilst NHS sites like the Royal Edinburgh Hospital and Midlothian Community Hospital are important locations for community and therapeutic gardens, most of the green health activity takes place outwith the NHS estate.

The majority of the green health projects and activities recorded are provided by third sector organisations. The funding for many of these projects (and indeed the organisations themselves) is often short-term and, in some cases, precarious.

*Annex 7 provides a series of case studies showcasing current green health activities on and outwith the NHS outdoor estate.*

Workshop sessions and interviews identified the key ingredients for developing and delivering successful green health activities and services (see Table 1 for summary), together with behaviours and actions from NHS Lothian and other partners that help or hinder (see Table 2 for some of the key challenges and barriers identified by stakeholders).

*Annex 9 provides a summary of key outputs from the stakeholder workshop.*

The logic model for therapeutic and other interventions in greenspace (Figure 3 and Annex 4) provide a framework for developing and assessing green health activities.

**Table 1: Ingredients for successful green health activities and programmes**

- Enabling policy and strategy
- Strong and effective partnership between NHS, local community, groups and organisations
- Effective governance and operating structures
- Enthusiastic, knowledgeable, committed and skilled staff
- Meaningful engagement with a broad spectrum of users, clients and stakeholders
- Access to appropriate land/sites with agreements for use
- Access to tools, resources, storage, facilities
- Effective signposting, recruitment and referral of participants
- Flexibility and adaptability to meet needs of users
- Reliable pool of willing volunteers that are well-supported and appreciated
- Longer term funding to provide time and security to deliver
- Social enterprise models to develop sustainability
- Clear outcomes for monitoring and evaluation

**Table 2: Some key challenges and barriers identified by stakeholders**

**Lack of coordination**

- There is no management or coordination system in place (at each site and across NHS Lothian) to provide an overview of the green health activities
- Lack of an overview, coupled with inadequate funding and resources, has led to an ad hoc approach to the provision of green health facilities
- Green health activities and services have developed in an organic way - whilst there are examples of good practice, there are also gaps in provision
- Opportunities are missed to signpost patients and service users between green health activities and providers

**Information**

- People need to have more information about where to go on-site, for example, maps and signed/waymarked routes to help them find their way
- NHS staff, health service users and the general public are often not aware the range of green health activities that are available
- There is no single source of information to support green health referrals and pathways

**Short-term funding**

- Funding for green health projects is usually short-term and project focused – it is difficult to secure funding for core staff time/posts and hard to plan with certainty
- For referrals etc, GPs and NHS staff need to have confidence that the green health activity/service/intervention will be there – this is not possible with short-term funding
- It takes time to build relationships, trust and confidence with clinical staff

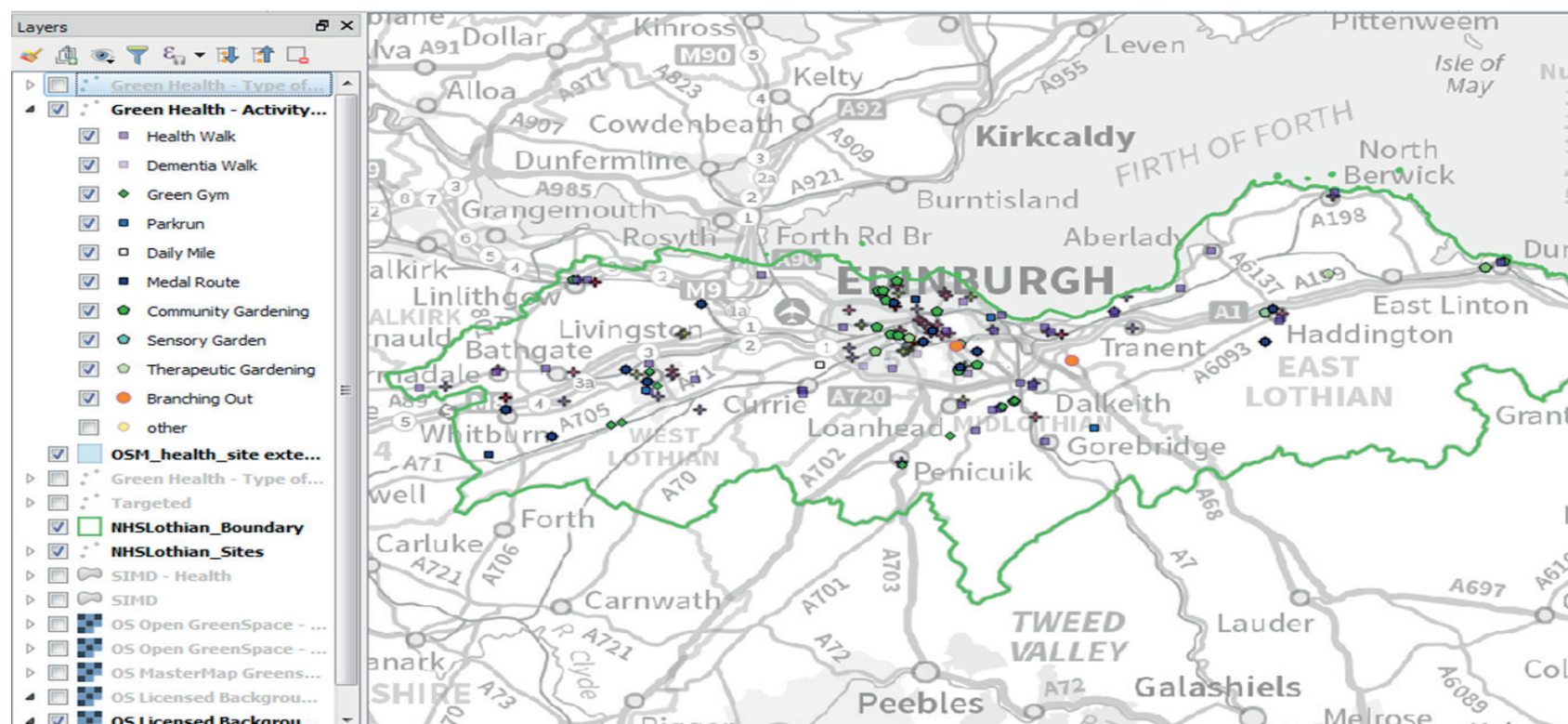
**NHS staff**

- Clinical staff typically have two 30-minute breaks per day and so greenspace needs to be accessible (no more than a 10-minute walk)
- Staff cannot leave the NHS site in uniform and so some adjacent greenspaces whilst physically close are actually inaccessible to staff
- Staffing numbers on wards means that it can often be difficult to accompany patients off the ward, whilst ensuring adequate on-ward cover

## 5.1 USING INFORMATION ON GREEN HEALTH ACTIVITY

The information collated on green health activities has been added as a data layer to the GIS Green Health Map, but it should be noted that this is not a definite or comprehensive catalogue of all green health activity. Plotting the location of green health activities enables them to be viewed alongside the NHS green estate and greenspace layers. This can be used to identify opportunities to extend the geographical range and provision of activities. Adding in further data layers, covering deprivation and health data, enables further analysis to understand how closely the provision of green health activities matches with communities of greatest need from a public health and health promotion perspective. This information can be used to target the provision and resourcing of future green health activities, either on or outwith the NHS outdoor estate.

**Figure 4: Overview green health activity layer**



**Table 3: Overview of green health provision and future opportunities**

### **Health walks**

There is good geographic coverage across Edinburgh and the Lothians, with health walks in most larger settlements and good correlation with areas of deprivation. There is scope to extend provision further to ensure easier local access to a health walk. Whilst Paths for All is the umbrella body for health walks, the walks are delivered by a range of providers – there is potential to provide better coordination, consistency and shared learning through regional coordinator posts (as in West Lothian). Dementia walks are currently only provided in East Lothian and MacMillan Cancer-Friendly walks are only in Edinburgh – there is scope to extend both types of walks across the region.

### **Community Gardens**

The Cyrenians manage community gardens at the Royal Edinburgh and Midlothian Community Hospitals. A new community garden will be developed at the East Lothian Community Hospital. Potential has been identified to develop on (or near) site community gardens at the Astley Ainsley and St John's Hospitals. There is a wide range of community gardens, supported by a variety of organisations, across the region. Some like Bridgend and Redhall Walled Garden have a strong focus on mental health and wellbeing, whilst others are more general community facilities. There are fewer community gardens in West Lothian than the other council areas.

### **Green Gyms**

TCV are currently operating Green Gym groups in Midlothian and West Lothian. These were developed in response to a tender from NHS Lothian's health improvement fund. There is scope to extend their reach in terms of both geography and client group.

### **Branching Out**

There is limited provision of Branching Out in Edinburgh and Midlothian. While this strategy was being prepared, New Caledonian Woodlands, a provider of Branching Out and other services, went into administration. There is potential to explore with Forestry and Land Scotland an expansion of training and provision of Branching Out in the Lothians.

The four local authorities have published Open Space Strategies setting out priorities for improving the provision, quality, access and management of green and open spaces. Information from the Green Health Map can inform the identification of priorities where improvements to publicly accessible greenspace can encourage and support increased use of local greenspaces and the development of green health activities.

## 6. Vision and strategic objectives

### 6.1 VISION

The Vision for this strategic framework is:

#### **Longer lives, better lived through our GreenSpace: Lothian's 'natural health service'**

We fully realise the potential of the NHS outdoor estate and community greenspaces as a community health asset benefiting patients, visitors, staff and communities. Green health activities and services are recognised and resourced as vital tools for supporting health and wellbeing. Together, we are achieving the ambition of a health promoting health service.

### 6.2 OBJECTIVES

- A: To provide leadership, coordination and support for green health activities across Edinburgh and the Lothians
- B: To design and manage the NHS outdoor estate as a health promoting environment and community green health asset
  - 1. To support the development of green health activities across the NHS estate (and adjacent community greenspaces)
  - 2. To encourage and support greater use of the NHS estate by patients, staff and visitors
  - 3. To facilitate and enable increased use of the NHS estate by local communities
  - 4. To develop connections between the NHS estate and community greenspaces
- C: To increase availability of information about green health activities and services
- D: To encourage and support partnership working on a 'natural health service' approach to wider greenspace development and management
- E: To inform and influence the policies, resourcing and practice of other organisations (this includes leading by example)

#### **Underpinning principles:**

There is a presumption in favour of encouraging use of the NHS outdoor estate by patients, staff, visitors and the wider community.

When NHS sites are re-developed or refurbished, the existing range and provision of on-site green health activities should continue in the new development with facilities and access as good as, or better than, those on the existing/old site.

For all new developments, opportunities will be actively sought to maximise use of the outdoor estate for formal and informal green health activities and services, including access and linkages with surrounding greenspaces and green networks.

## 7. Priorities for action

### Key targets and performance indicators include:

#### In 2019:

A Green Health Manager is in post providing leadership and coordination for the development and delivery of green health activities

Green Health advisory group established

The first greenspace and green health management plan has been produced for one NHS hospital site

Feasibility studies have been commissioned for new community gardens at the Astley Ainsley Hospital and St John's Hospital

#### By 2020:

A Green Health champion on NHS Lothian Board

Multi-year funding arrangements are in place for anchor green health providers

Shorter term funding is available to pilot new green health activities and/or engagement with new client groups and communities

NHS Lothian is a member of the Edinburgh Living Landscapes partnership

Annual Green Health Forum established

#### By 2022:

There is a greenspace and green health management plan in place for all key NHS sites

NHS Lothian have secured Green Flag award status for at least one site

Information is readily available about green health activities

Health practitioners are routinely signposting and referring patients to green health activities

More patients are using and benefiting from green health activities provided on and off NHS sites

Pathways are in place to signpost people to and between green health activities and providers

More NHS staff get out into the NHS outdoor estate and surrounding greenspace during breaks and on the journey to/from work

The concept of greenspace as our 'natural health service' is a key strand informing management of public greenspaces

The NHS outdoor estate is recognised and used as part of the community greenspace resource

The quality and accessibility of greenspace in the most deprived areas is being improved

The number of people using local greenspaces, and the frequency of use, is increasing

*Annex 8 sets out the priorities and programme for action.*



## 7.1 DELIVERING THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Delivery of this Strategy will require coordinated action and investment by a wide range of stakeholders, including NHS Lothian; City of Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian and West Lothian Councils; Health & Social Care Partnerships; Forestry and Land Scotland; Scottish Natural Heritage; and a wide range of third sector, voluntary and community-based organisations.

Edinburgh and Lothian Health Foundation trustees have committed to an investment of £100k per year for the period to 2021/22 to support delivery of the Strategy.



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