

The NHS Forest Conference 2019

Anchor Institutions and their Role in Engaging Communities in Green Space



Background

The [NHS Forest](#) is a charitable project coordinated by the [Centre for Sustainable Healthcare](#) (CSH). The project's central aims are to:

- improve the health and wellbeing of staff, patients and communities through increasing access to green space on or near NHS land
- encourage greater social cohesion between NHS sites and their local communities
- highlight innovative ideas to encourage the use of green space for therapeutic purposes and to spark projects to use new and existing woodland for art, food crops, reflection and exercise and to encourage biodiversity.

The 2019 NHS Forest Conference

The 2019 NHS Forest conference took place on October 11th 2019 at Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool – the site where the first tree was planted in the NHS Forest 10 years previously. The event served two key purposes:

- The conference focused on the role of health sites as anchor institutions.
- It celebrated ten years of the NHS Forest and green space network – an alliance of 190 healthcare centres working to make the most of their outdoor space for patients, staff and the wider community.

The 80+ delegates included clinicians, estate managers, conservation workers, artists and researchers. The conference was sponsored by the [Innovation Agency](#) (the Academic Health Science Network serving the North West Coast) as part of their commitment to the [Liverpool City Region Year of the Environment](#), in partnership with [Mersey Forest](#) and [Liverpool and Sefton Health Partnership](#). This report was supported by an award from the Health Foundation as a record of the conference.

The role of the NHS as an anchor institution

The concept of anchor institutions originates from the USA in the 1960s, emerging as an attempt to structure the role and responsibility that place-based organisations hold with respect to their local community.¹ The Health Foundation's report, '[Building healthier communities: the role of the NHS as an anchor institution](#)' posits anchor institutions as large, public sector organisations that are unlikely to relocate and have a significant stake in a geographical area. The size, scale and reach of the NHS means it influences the health and wellbeing of communities by being a local employer, a model for behaviour and by its physical presence.

The NHS Forest conference specifically focused on the use of NHS land and green spaces for increasing sustainability and improving wellbeing. Space around NHS properties is generally under-used and under-appreciated but represents a significant public land asset and a potential community green health asset. Managed and used more effectively, the NHS outdoor estate is a resource for promoting better health and wellbeing for staff, patients, visitors and the wider community.

Through this estate there is potential to manage and deliver a range of green infrastructure and ecosystem services, for example, sustainable urban drainage, improved biodiversity, green network connections including active travel routes, energy generation and storage. The conference explored many of the anchor activities already taking place across the sector on which the NHS can build.

The NHS Forest 2019 Conference: Anchor Institutions and their Role in Engaging Communities in Green Space

By virtue of their scale and connection to the locality, anchor institutions (including healthcare organisations) are influential in the health and wellbeing of their communities.ⁱⁱ This conference explored the implications of this in relation to outdoor space. In particular, delegates considered:

- How can those managing NHS estates and facilities go beyond their traditional remit to unlock the potential of NHS land as a resource for the wider area?
- How can health providers draw on the benefits of their sites to improve the health of local people?
- How can NHS sites best use green space to tackle health inequalities?
- What can be done to improve biodiversity, capture carbon and increase local amenity?
- What are the benefits of planting trees, sowing meadows, growing food, providing therapeutic gardens or forging links in the local cycling and walking networks?
- What support is needed to enable those working within the NHS to use their green space more effectively for their communities?
- What practical and institutional barriers make this difficult?
- How can these be addressed and what opportunities might this open?

The conference also highlighted the growing evidence base concerning the importance of local green space for health. It has been found that living in greener environments is associated with reduced mortality, and that health inequalities in mortality are lower for populations living in the greenest areas.ⁱⁱⁱ Studies have shown that exposure to nature has a positive impact on heart rates and blood pressure^{iv} and is associated with lower levels of cortisol – the body’s main stress hormone.^v Other research has identified the role of green space in facilitating social contact and combatting loneliness.^{vi} All of this points to the value of factoring green space into strategies for health and wellbeing. Green space at NHS sites is an often neglected resource, but one which offers a huge opportunity for NHS institutions to lead by example.



This conference explored how such opportunities can be met in the context of the anchor institution approach. The event brought this prospect into focus with contributions from relevant speakers and workshops led by NHS practitioners. It allowed delegates to share ideas through networking opportunities and to take home resources from marketplace stands, including information from the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare, the Innovation Exchange and the Health Foundation.

The Conference Event

The conference agenda included:

Time	Programme	Speaker	Twitter Handle
09.30	Arrival and Refreshments		
10.00	Introduction from Chair	Gideon Ben-Tovim OBE	@innovationwc
10.15	Keynote speaker- the value of green space for healthcare	Pam Warhurst, CBE, Incredible Edible, Todmorden	@incredibleible @WarhurstPamela
10.35	NHS Forest-10 years of the NHS Forest: Looking back and looking forward	Sarah Dandy and Carey Newson, The Centre for Sustainable Healthcare	@SusHealthcare @nhsforest
10.55	Anchor institutions and the role of green space	Laura Wallace, The Health Foundation	@HealthFdn
11.15	Community engagement, green space and anchor institutions	Ian Stenton, Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust	@RoyalLpoolHosps @ianstenton
11.35	Coffee and Tea		
12.00	Workshop Key Question: How do we engage with the local community to enable a healthcare site to be an anchor institution?	Run by the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare	@SusHealthcare @nhsforest
12.45	Feedback from workshop		
13:00	Lunch		
14.00	Alder Hey's experience of engaging children in green space	Carl Dutton, Mental Health Practitioner and Psychotherapist and Louise Hickey, Mental Health Practitioner and Drama Therapist, FRESH Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service at Alder Hey Children's Hospital	@AlderHey @FreshCAMHS @FoSPLiverpool @LivCAMHSFYI
14.20	Award Ceremony		
14.45	Site Walk Over	David Houghton, Alder Hey Children's Hospital	@AlderHey
15.30	Conference Close		

The event was staged at Alder Hey Hospital and consisted of speaker presentations, a workshop on anchor institutions, an award ceremony for NHS sites exemplifying anchor institution principles and a visit with commentary to Alder Hey's community parkland. Delegates were encouraged to use social media throughout the event, which resulted in wide-ranging Twitter comments.

The Presentations



Gideon Ben-Tovim, OBE, welcomed delegates to the conference as chair of the hosting body, the Innovation Agency. This organisation is the Academic Health Science Network serving the North West Coast and their remit is to bring together organisations and individuals to overcome barriers to improving health and achieving economic growth. Gideon also referred to his other related roles as chair of Nature Connected, the Liverpool City Region Local Nature Partnership. Gideon is honorary adviser on the natural environment to the Liverpool City Region metro mayor and in 2019 he chaired the Liverpool City Region Year of the Environment Steering Group. He introduced this year's theme: anchor institutions and their role in engaging communities in green space.

Pam Warhurst, CBE, from Incredible Edible Todmorden gave a [keynote speech](#) on the value of green space for healthcare. Delegates fed back that they found Pam's talk truly inspirational. She explained how the movement has grown from a committed group with a single idea in the small town of Todmorden to covering around 1,000 groups globally. She outlined how a local food growing project has morphed into a social movement. Pam conveyed how Incredible Edible balances three local considerations at each of their project sites: community, learning and business.



She argued that a grassroots movement such as Incredible Edible can influence decision-makers and policy by bringing together community members with bodies having community impact – such as NHS organisations. Pam's speech highlighted some important aspects of her project relevant to the NHS as anchor institutions, including:

- How each hospital and health centre could start a community food-growing project
- How healthcare establishments can feature community kitchens
- How the NHS can use more locally sourced food.

“Plant trees and fruit bushes across our health estate from hospitals to doctors’ surgery and let’s see the power of nature do its thing. Stop talking, start acting” Pam Warhurst



Pam's speech was followed by [Carey Newson and Sarah Dandy from the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare](#) who gave a talk about the NHS Forest and Green Space programme. Carey explained how CSH is researching green space use in relation to workforce wellbeing at three NHS hospitals as part of a project supported by the Health Foundation and shared a list of studies and resources highlighting the health benefits of nature.

Their presentation also showed how the charity has supported 190+ NHS sites to make use of their green space via community-based activities, such as:

- Tree planting with school children, community fairs, selling produce, yoga classes
- Health walks for NHS staff at lunchtimes
- Gardens designed for patients who have specific conditions, including dementia
- Outdoor physiotherapy sessions
- Providing training and employment opportunities related to green space
- Encouraging communities to walk in local green spaces by creating Green Health Routes
- Establishing 'bee borders' at GP surgeries and hospitals, tended by community volunteers.

Carey explained the UK Committee on Climate Change has said we need to plant 1.5 billion new trees toward limiting the effects that gas emissions have on the atmosphere and climate change. NHS sites together with other public sector organisations should be part of that effort. As anchor institutions hospitals have the power to lead by example. In the next 10 years the NHS Forest and green space programme aims to:

- Plant a tree for every member of NHS staff
- Sign up every hospital in the country to our network, and encourage all health centres to assess their green space and identify opportunities for recreational access and tree planting
- Develop beacon demonstration sites – e.g. for growing food, meadows, orchards, and for arts, rehabilitation and reflection
- Mainstream the use of green space for physical and mental health and wellbeing and ensure that long-term patients especially have access to green space.

Laura Wallace from the Health Foundation followed this with a presentation entitled 'The NHS as an anchor institution', which outlined some of the key facets of anchor institutions and analysed some NHS case histories that illustrate the concept. This linked to the Health Foundation's report, [Building healthier communities – the role of the NHS as an anchor institution](#), which Laura shared copies of at the event. Her presentation highlighted several ways in which NHS organisations can act as anchors for their communities in the context of environmental sustainability. Below are some examples shared, more details on case studies can be found within the report.

- Purchasing more locally and for social benefit. One case study showed how North Bristol NHS Trust had successfully switched to an increased level of local food procurement.
- Using NHS buildings and spaces to support communities. Laura gave examples of how the NHS has enabled community access to green space and forged partnerships with local charities to create community-based health projects.
- Making a difference locally by reducing its environmental impact. A case study explained how University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust have installed solar panels on its estate and invested the recouped savings in Beat the Cold, an initiative which tackles cold-related sickness and fuel poverty – so reducing winter-related hospital readmissions; another case study outlined how Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust have introduced sustainability criteria and metrics into their tendering process, in order to cut the carbon emissions of their suppliers and to create a flagship programme to highlight sustainability wider in the Trust.
- Partnering with local organisations and other anchor institutions.

Ian Stenton, Head of Sustainability at Liverpool University Hospitals, built on these with a presentation featuring how [Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust](#) has delivered its vision of the NHS as an anchor institution. Ian was involved in the Health Foundation's anchor

institutions' research as a member of the expert advisory group for the project. He described how his organisation has used the Health Foundation report to formulate plans for a sustainability strategy, linking it to other local, national and international drivers like the Liverpool City Region Local Industrial Strategy, WHO Economic & Social Impacts of Health Systems report and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

He covered the specifics of some of the work that the NHS Trust is doing to support anchor institution delivery linked to green space. His role was created to support the sustainable communities programme for the construction of the new Royal Liverpool Hospital which covers many aspects of the anchor institution model, including utilising local labour for the construction workforce, supporting local supply chains and engaging with the local community.



The Trust is now working on the third phase of the project, which includes a park – a 'green heart'. They have already started to identify local organisations and residents to support development of this space. Their community engagement involved working with schools, and a fund to support local charities and community groups. Projects included food planting at a community centre in the shadow of the construction project and creating a small garden. The construction contractor planted an avenue of 50 cherry trees, which have been registered with the NHS Forest.

Broadgreen Hospital has involved community members at the hospital site by establishing a 'men's shed' in partnership with Macmillan and the hospital's Complex Rehabilitation team. They plan to build their engagement with the local community in 2020 by enhancing their site's green spaces. This includes providing growing areas for local groups and encouraging community members onto the site to use the outdoor gym (see picture).



Ian stressed some valuable learning from the Trust's experience of developing an anchor institution approach, including:

- Contractors are great sources of help – they can be used to underpin local partnerships
- Staff understand the benefits to patients – staff 'buy in' to changes can be secured this way

- Initial funding and kick-start projects are needed to get early changes underway successfully
- Someone needs to manage the project – coordination and communication needs resourcing.

The next presentation was from Carl Dutton, Mental Health Practitioner and Psychotherapist, and Louise Hickey, Mental Health Practitioner and Drama Therapist, FRESH Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service at [Alder Hey Children’s Hospital](#). (Molly Toal from Lancashire Wildlife Trust also contributed to the presentation but was unable to attend.) This presentation focused on ‘Using a Forest School approach to support mental health and wellbeing with children and young people’. They outlined what a Forest School approach is and how it can be used as part of a green space experience in the context of the NHS as an anchor institution.



David Houghton, Project Manager at Alder Hey in the Park explained the vision for the Alder Hey site before leading delegates on a tour.

“The NHS Forest Conference is an amazing opportunity to hear about the brilliant ways in which different healthcare organisations are using their green spaces for the benefits of patients, staff and local communities. There’s so much best practice out there, it’s inspiring to hear direct from project leads and to make connections with other people trying to bring about positive change”

Ian Stenton

The Workshops: Discussions and Insights

Delegates divided into eight groups to debate and discuss a set list of questions. Each group included a person with experience of NHS estates or facilities as well as a person with clinical background. These individuals were briefed beforehand to ensure that both perspectives could be properly represented in the group discussion and feedback.

The key question considered by each group was, ‘How do we engage with the local community to enable a healthcare site to be an anchor institution?’ This central consideration was fleshed out with supplementary questions, covering the types of initiatives taking place at each health site and wider community interaction. This also allowed delegates to consider the barriers and constraints anchor institutions face when trying to engage staff, patients and the public in the use of green space.

The supplementary questions discussed included:

- What are the main green space initiatives you or others have taken forward at your health site?
- In what ways have these initiatives engaged with the wider community?
- What are the principles of being an anchor institution and how can they fit into the running of a hospital?
- How might health facilities put the concept of an anchor institution into practice in relation to their outdoor spaces?
- What are the benefits of this approach?
- What are the barriers/constraints and how can these be overcome?
 - What are the opportunities to find funding?
 - What partners could help in supporting your green space work?



“Ideas, challenges, partnerships ... conversations fizzing” Feedback on Twitter

Feedback was gathered from the groups which indicated a consensus around the main challenges, including:

- Bureaucracy: Delegates felt that there is an institutionalised culture within the NHS that is resistant to change; participants felt it was easier to say no to new ideas.
- Risk aversion: delegates felt that risks associated with innovative projects were over amplified in most parts of the health system, and that this prevented staff from translating ideas into action.
- Lack of coordination: There is no management or coordination system in place (at each site and across the NHS) to provide an overview of green health activities. This leads to missed opportunities to signpost service users and community members to green health activities and providers.

- Lack of an overview: Coupled with inadequate funding and resources, this 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 many examples of good practice, there are also many significant gaps in provision.
- Awareness and communication: NHS staff, health service users and the general public are often not aware of the range of green health activities that are available. People need to have more information about where to go on-site, e.g. maps and signed/waymarked routes to help them find their way. There is no single, freely available, source of information to support green health referrals and pathways. A green space management and green health plan should be prepared for each site.
- Short-term funding: Funding for green health projects is usually short-term and project-focused. Delegates reported finding 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, which makes the provision precarious. A linked consideration is that it takes time to build relationships, trust and confidence with clinical staff. The majority of the green health projects and activities recorded are provided by third sector organisations, outside the NHS, so this factor is especially relevant.
- Accessibility and time: NHS staff typically have two 30-minute breaks per day and so, for staff accessing green space during these breaks, green space needs to be accessible (no more than a 10-minute walk). In addition, some staff cannot leave the NHS site in uniform and so some adjacent green spaces, whilst physically close, are inaccessible due to this constraint. Staffing numbers on wards means that it can often be difficult to accompany patients off the ward to visit green spaces, whilst ensuring adequate on-ward cover. There also needs to be access to tools, resources, storage, facilities if the visit entails specific activities.
- Volunteers: Many of the current projects rely on volunteers to operate them. A reliable pool of willing volunteers who are well-supported and appreciated is necessary and takes resource and time to support.
- Proving success: There is a lack of clear outcomes or outlines for data collection for monitoring and evaluation green space access and activities. For widespread green space use there needs to be an evidence base of its effectiveness on both health and community cohesion and a degree of replicability – respecting regional differences. Exploiting the full potential of a new idea requires successful replication at scale – and this takes time, skill, resources and collaboration.
- Behaviour change: People develop behavioural patterns, which can initially be difficult to shift. Daily life is characterised by repetition and the consistency of everyday life establishes habits, or behavioural dispositions to repeat well-practiced actions. Encouraging a break in routine and trying something new can be challenging. For example, the Mersey Forest funded a Health Ranger to work at a specific hospital. They were employed for two years and responsible for getting hospital staff into the nearby green space. Reportedly, it was extremely difficult to engage staff by shifting people through a cycle of change as their habits were ingrained.
- Physical environment: Interaction and engagement with the green space (and each other) is shaped by the physical environment. Sites may have minimal green space or it may be

perceived as unwelcoming. Today, cities are often built with a clear definition between public and private space. A feature of modern urban planning is the creation of highly specialised, overly disciplined and narrowly controlled places. Hospitals and healthcare facilities have the potential to be the hub of community life but are seen as highly specialised places with private grounds. They do not generally invite exploration.



NHS Forest delegates in Alder Hey's woodland

Recommendations collated from the conference

The following recommendations are a result of information shared during presentations, insights from participants (during and after workshops) and post conference reflection and synthesis carried out by the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare. It also reflects knowledge gained through the NHS Forest project, which has been working with NHS sites for over a decade. To act as anchor institutions in promoting sustainability and greenspaces for wellbeing, NHS organisations must consider:

- 1. Green space NHS leadership** to encourage the development of NHS green space for community use, leadership is needed from NHS Improvement, backed by targeted funding and resources. Green space initiatives require management and coordination, and this requires dedicated time from relevant staff such as community engagement leads, sustainability leads, and estate managers.
- 2. Green space assessments** to embrace their role as anchor institutions, NHS organisations should carry out an assessment of green space at their sites and identify how they can use this as a resource for the health and wellbeing of the communities they serve. This could mean making recreational space available to the wider community with signage, benches and other amenities; realising opportunities within the site to improve local active travel networks with cycle ways and footpaths; affording space for community groups to grow fruit and vegetables; encouraging biodiversity with wildlife rich environments such as meadows; and increasing tree cover, both for better amenity and as a means of capturing carbon.
- 3. Engaging key partners** in developing their green space for community use, NHS organisations need to pro-actively engage relevant partners. This could mean working with local schools, community groups, third sector organisations and businesses. It is recommended that NHS organisations also seek to approach these issues in partnership with other local sustainability and health networks, for example engaging with Clinical Commissioning Groups and those leading NHS sustainability and transformation plans.

4. Links to social prescribing NHS land can offer green space for social prescribing activities, and it is recommended that NHS Trusts work in collaboration with GPs, Primary Care Networks and third sector organisations to realise these opportunities.

5. Green space development strategies NHS organisations embarking on new builds and re-development projects should ensure that their sites have a green space strategy in which green space is developed as a community asset enhancing opportunities for recreation, amenity and active travel in the surrounding area. Key partners include the local planning authority, the highway authority, landscape architects and construction contractors.

6. Create funded pilots and demonstrations The NHS should offer a Green Space Challenge Fund to stimulate innovation through local pilot projects designed to open new opportunities for the wider community to benefit from NHS green space. Such projects should be monitored and evaluated to build the evidence base on the benefits of green space and to guide future good practice.

7. Create funded support networks Funding is also needed to provide support networks, such as the NHS Forest network, to capture and champion good practice and enable those taking forward green space-based community initiatives to share experience and learn from each other.

8. Invest in sustainable travel The provision of green space is often in conflict with demand for car parking. NHS Trusts should work closely with local transport providers and the local authority to improve the quality of bus services and walking and cycling access to their sites. They should provide state-of-the-art and site-specific travel information, designed to positively encourage sustainable choices and presented above parking information and directions for driving on hospital websites. A link to a generic travel information website is not enough.

The NHS Forest Awards – pioneering examples of NHS sites promoting green space for health

Rachel Stancliffe, Director of the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare, presented the NHS Forest Awards.

Award for the largest number of trees planted since 2018



Winner: Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust, for planting 438 trees at Guild Lodge, a secure mental health hospital on the edge of Preston. With plenty of on-site greenery and set in rural

surroundings, the health facility has developed several green space initiatives for the benefit of patients, staff and community members, as well as planting trees across their site.

Runner Up: Torbay Hospital, in Torquay, run by Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust, for planting 138 trees.

Award for the most innovative site

Winner: Southmead Hospital in Bristol, run by North Bristol NHS Trust. Since 2014, the hospital has striven to improve biodiversity, with shrubs, trees, a rooftop garden, a meadow, a pond and an orchard. They are working with Avon Wildlife Trust and other partners to create a ‘Wild Hospital’ with bird and bat boxes, log piles and insect hotels. Further activities include a weekly farmer’s market selling organic vegetables, lunchtime health walks for staff and allotments for staff and patients.



Runner Up: Alder Hey Children’s Hospital, run by Alder Hey Children’s NHS Foundation Trust.

Award for the best community engagement



Winner: The Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust for the Broadgreen Therapy Garden at Broadgreen Hospital, Liverpool developed by staff from the Complex Rehabilitation Ward in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support. Volunteers from Veolia Energy and Avrenim Facilities Management helped in constructing a garden cabin to create an informal and relaxed environment for engaging with patients, including Macmillan clients.

Runner Up: Hywel Dda University Health Board.

The Site Walk around the Alder Hey Health Park

The NHS Forest Conferences always include a walk around the green space at the hospital hosting the event. This year, the delegates were able to enjoy the grounds at Alder Hey Children's Hospital which have been laid out as a Health Park.



Left: the first tree in the NHS Forest was replanted 10 years after it was first planted by the late Ken Dodd in the grounds of Alder Hey Children's Hospital.



Above: The new hospital buildings have been designed so that children in the wards and their visitors can access garden space. Viewing areas ensure that children who are unable to go outdoors can have sight of green space. Some of the walls of the buildings are also living walls, incorporating plants and greenery.



Above right: the Health Park also includes information boards relating to the natural environment. Here, a sign features a poem written by a young relative of a patient explaining how the staff at the hospital are helping her poorly sibling whilst, in similar fashion, the trees outside are helping all of us to stay healthy.



Above left: The park is accessible to the community with paths lined by established trees.

Above right: delegates follow the woodland walks and sculpture trails.

What next?

The idea of health sites as anchor institutions offers a new way to think about the role of NHS centres in providing health. This starts with the realisation that as major employers, traffic generators, procurers and land holders, health facilities have substantial influence on the health and wellbeing of the communities around them. In short, the NHS can help to prevent illness in ways that are quite independent of its medical treatment.

Our conference asked what this means for those working to develop green space at health sites for patients, staff and communities. For the last ten years the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare has worked with NHS Trusts to nurture the growth of the NHS Forest in a vigorous national campaign to grow trees. Trees lock up carbon, prevent floods, provide shade and are increasingly recognised as a natural climate solution. We have also nurtured the NHS Forest partnership as a good practice network. By championing the efforts of our member sites, we offer support and inspiration for those keen to realise the potential of the natural environment for rest and recovery. As always, our conference brought together delegates with a wide range of interests and perspectives, among them public health specialists, estate managers, occupational therapists, artists and conservationists, though all with a common appreciation of the connections between green space and health.

Our speakers and delegates demonstrate that there are many NHS sites which already view their green space as a valuable resource for their communities and have reached out to involve them more closely. Liverpool's Alder Hey Hospital, which hosted our conference, is a great example. The first hospital to be built in a park, it has forged relationships with local schools that make use of its woodland for outdoor education. Southmead Hospital in Bristol, which won our 2019 award as most innovative site, has worked with community partners to improve its biodiversity, and hosts a weekly farmers' market in its grounds.

Our conference provides a forum for sharing ideas and is also an opportunity for debate and dialogue. In our workshop, delegates identified many of the barriers that make innovative partnership work on green space difficult. Most of these point to the need for clearer leadership from within the NHS to support and fund the use of its green space for health. As was observed in one group, hospitals and healthcare facilities are seen as highly specialised places with private grounds and do not generally invite exploration. Yet they have the potential to provide green recreation for their communities while mitigating climate change and promoting biodiversity.

Looking back on our celebratory ten-year conference now, from the COVID-19 lockdown of 2020, the opportunity to meet freely in person and share ideas seems especially valuable. The last months have also shown how crucial local green space is for the mental and physical wellbeing of all of us. We have heard too of intensive care units where staff wheeled COVID patients outdoors to aid their recovery. As we emerge from the pandemic there is fresh urgency to take new routes to a more sustainable future. We call on NHS leaders to recognise the benefits of their own estates for both planetary and community health and to work with us for a health service that is literally greener.

Acknowledgements

The Centre for Sustainable Healthcare would like to thank the Innovation Agency for sponsoring the NHS Forest Conference. This conference report was produced with support from the Health Foundation. The Health Foundation is an independent charity committed to bringing about better health and healthcare for people in the UK.

Centre for Sustainable Healthcare, July 2020

Appendix

This 'taster' invitation was shared via Twitter to publicise the Conference.



The image is a promotional poster for the NHS Forest Conference 2019. It features the NHS Forest logo at the top left, which includes a tree icon and the text 'growing forests for health'. Below the logo, the conference details are listed: 'NHS FOREST CONFERENCE 2019', 'FRIDAY 11 OCTOBER', and 'ALDER HEY IN THE PARK, LIVERPOOL'. A horizontal line separates this from the keynote speaker information: 'KEYNOTE SPEAKER: THE VALUE OF GREEN SPACE FOR HEALTHCARE'. Below this, the sponsors are listed: 'Sponsors: CENTRE for SUSTAINABLE HEALTHCARE' and 'INNOVATION AGENCY Academic Health Science Network for the North West Coast'. On the right side, there is a circular portrait of Pam Warhurst, identified as 'Pam Warhurst, Incredible Edible Todmorden'. Next to her portrait is a quote in a speech bubble: 'The environment we live in, our sense of belonging, and the food we eat have been demonstrated over the decades to be key determinants of our public and our planets' health. ... Plant trees and fruit bushes across our health estate from hospital to doctors' surgery and let's see the power of nature do its thing. Stop talking, start acting.'

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