



Health Concordat 2005

Programmes

We will seek to ensure that pilot schemes, where successful, are mainstreamed into delivery programmes, such as 'Walking the Way to Health'.

We will expand existing programmes where feasible, such as working with the Department of Health to make Step-o-meters available widely throughout the NHS.

We will seek new resources to expand opportunities to improve health through the outdoors.

We will support the use of the Sustainable Development fund by the National Park Authorities to promote sustainable living, including projects to promote sustainable recreation tourism with an emphasis on health benefits.

We will look strategically at all aspects of the outdoors to improve their health potential.

Between the
Countryside Agency,
English Nature,
Forestry Commission England,
Sport England and the
Association of National Park
Authorities



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Better health and the outdoors

Evidence shows that a quality outdoors contributes to good health and well-being. For prevention or treatment contact with the outdoors can make a difference to people's health and well-being through opportunities to;

- Be active
- Relax and enjoy the view
- Spend time with friends and family and meet new people
- Raise spirits and stimulate the senses
- Have fun and enjoyment.

The unique contribution of the outdoors to people's health is that it can offer rewarding experiences that people enjoy, it's mostly free to use and often easy to get to.

We want to encourage and motivate more people, especially children and those socially excluded, to have more contact with and get greater enjoyment from the outdoors.

What is the evidence

There is a growing body of evidence on how a quality outdoors contributes to better health and well-being. The latest summaries can be found on

www.countrysidecreation.org.uk

The Public Health White Paper - *Healthy Choices*, recognised the value of the outdoors in getting people more active.

Our vision for the future

Is one where everybody, regardless of age, gender, race or ability is more informed about opportunities and confident in using the outdoors. Where our organisations have the capacity to develop local initiatives to promote healthy living and where health professionals understand and support the outdoors as an integral part of their work in improving public health and well-being.

Our action

Together we will carry out the following activities from 2005:

Events

We will work with others to ensure that the outdoors is integral to the health messages included in a number of key events. Specifically:

The Social and Economic Benefits of Sport and Recreation in Rural Areas, Sport England, April 2005.

UK Public Health Association seminar: Renewing Public Health - Renaissance and Responsibility, April 2005.

British Heart Foundation Centre for Physical Activity and Health annual seminar, September 2005.

Campaigns

We will promote use and value of the outdoors for health and well-being through our 'Breath of Fresh Air' message. This will be highlighted through the following programmes:

- Active Woods - Forestry Commission;
- Local Nature Reserve celebrations;
- Everyday sport; everybody feels better for it - Sport England;
- CROW open access land, Defra and Countryside Agency; and
- National Parks' Week (22 - 29 July) featuring the opportunities for healthy recreation in all National Parks.

Building health capacity

We will aim to ensure that volunteers or professionals working in the outdoor sector have the opportunity to understand the role they can play in promoting contact with the outdoors for health and well-being, and that they can acquire the skills to make a difference. We will start this by:

- Expanding the Walking the Way to Health training for volunteer walk leaders;
- Undertaking a training needs analysis of staff working in the outdoors.

Piloting and demonstration projects

We will work together to develop innovative projects with the health sector to demonstrate the role of the outdoors in delivering health and well-being. We will start with projects to deliver:

- An analysis of outdoor spaces in relation to health indices in collaboration with the Public Health Observatory (SW) and SW Strategic Health Authority;
- Development of the Conservation Therapy Programme for drug rehabilitation in five English regions.

Research

We will commission joint research to increase knowledge about the role of the outdoors in relation to public health and well-being. This will include:

- Economic modelling of outdoor health intervention benefits to society;
- Evaluations of existing interventions, initiatives and projects to encourage good practice; and
- Understanding of the barriers (physical, cultural and attitudinal) that deter people from using and engaging with the outdoors.

Championing

We will support others with an interest in promoting the outdoors for health by:

- Promoting a consistent message about the role of the outdoors and public health;
- Creating an outdoors health network to share good practice;
- Improving communications between ourselves and health colleagues;
- Contributing to the development of the Government's Physical Activity Delivery Plan; and
- Champion the approach as a vital part of the development of Sustainable Communities.