

**All-party Parliamentary Group on Health & the Natural Environment  
Mental Health & the Natural Environment  
Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2022  
15:00 - 16:30**

**Members in attendance:**

Alexander Stafford MP (Chair)  
Lord Blencathra

Jared Ashe  
Jim Burt  
Ish Ladak - National Academy for Social Prescribing (Secretariat)

**Speakers:**

Dr Ben Plimpton - Mental Health Foundation  
Nicola Gitsham - NHS England & Improvement  
Martin Gilchrist - Natural England

**Apologies:**

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| Lord Best         | Lord Bird                | Baroness Boycott       |
| Ian Byrne MP      | Lord Cormack             | Claire Coutinho MP     |
| Tracey Crouch MP  | Lord Curry               | Lord Dubs              |
| Lord Howarth      | Lord Inglewood           | Baroness Lister        |
| Caroline Lucas MP | Baroness Masham of Ilton | Jerome Mayhew MP       |
| Lord McColl       | Baroness Meacher         | Baroness Parminter     |
| Lord Randall      | Baroness Scott           | The Earl of Shrewsbury |
| Lord Teverson     | Baroness Watkins         |                        |

**External Attendees were also invited to this meeting and participated in the discussion.**

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| 1. | <p><b>Welcome &amp; Introduction</b> - Jim Burt (due to delayed arrival of Chair)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aim of this session - To examine the current mental health provision landscape within the context of using the natural environment to better support people's mental health and wellbeing, to include an update on the Green Social Prescribing pilot.</li> </ul> |
| 2. | <p><b>Strategic Context &amp; Overview - Mental Health &amp; Inequalities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speaker: Dr Ben Plimpton, Project Manager for Empowerment &amp; Later Life, Mental Health Foundation</li> </ul>   |

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|    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation: Prevalence &amp; cost of mental ill health; benefits to mental health of accessing nature; Blue Prescribing; Opportunities - Mental Health &amp; Wellbeing Plan / Promoting Nature Connectedness</li> <li>• Please see presentation slides for further reference.</li> </ul>   |
| 3. | <p><b>Preventing &amp; Tackling Mental Ill Health through Green Social Prescribing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaker: Nicola Gitsham, Head of Healthcare Inequalities &amp; Prevention, NHS England &amp; Improvement</li> <li>• Presentation: Why social prescribing?; Green Social Prescribing; Overview of GSP pilot; Test &amp; Learn site findings &amp; preliminary evaluation; scaling &amp; how APPG can support</li> <li>• Film link available here for further reference: <a href="#">Green Social Prescribing &amp; Mental Health SYB</a></li> <li>• Please see presentation slides for further reference.</li> </ul> <p><b>Q&amp;A + Discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is your biggest challenge both now and to scale this up? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>The sustainable offer from voluntary sector to have availability of SP activities, which is why asking for more strategic approach and to explore shared investment models and to align effort from gov departments to support those areas. Lots of work to do on changing mindset on healthcare professionals, but top challenge is cross governmental challenge</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• In terms of 7 tests, which is the exemplar of them? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>They all bring something - all are doing some things right, and some doing different aspects of model right. Pulling together framework that catches key themes. Site visit coming up in Bristol, Bath and Somerset - encourage people to come along - interesting work on targeting deprivation in green areas in city + redesigning mental health and green mental health offers delivered to black women.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| 5. | <p><b>Children &amp; Nature Programme, Nature Friendly Schools</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaker: Martin Gilchrist, Connecting People with Nature Team, Natural England</li> <li>• Presentation: Children &amp; Nature Programme; Nature Friendly Schools &amp; delivery; feedback gathered from participating schools; learning &amp; next steps</li> <li>• Please see attached slides for further reference.</li> </ul> <p><b>Q&amp;A + Discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many children are involved in the programme already, and the plans to grow it? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Across the programme itself, around 55,000 kids across 300 schools. Hopefully, we're testing effective ways that others can adopt to</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |

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|    | <p style="text-align: center;"><i>roll this out at scale. We want to show what's possible and provide the evidence and drivers that allows everyone to do it.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With our future generations in mind, the commitment to a Natural History GCSE also feels like a vital development, something I know most people here will have championed and we now expect to see a reality - Natural England's evidence shows learning in nature will help boost wellbeing and students will be able to feel more connected to their environment, while developing green skills.</li> <li>• It's great to see opportunities for spending time in nature for children at mainstream schools through the NFS project - the effects and the benefits shown are what we see in care farming for young people with defined needs too and we really need to work together to ensure that all children get these opportunities to benefit their mental health and (re)engage with learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>Opportunities in different schools vary - e.g., urban vs rural schools, but the environments of offered initiatives should be equally available to all, such as farming opportunities.</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Also, there is an expectation to include nature in the school curriculum (beyond the GCSE). So, there is an opportunity here to really build on</li> <li>• DoE funded much of this work. This learning is their learning, so want it to be useful to them. FE proposing new model science curriculum - should provide whole range of opportunities for primary school kids, so that they choose GCSE and other sciences because they've had experiences with nature that are positive that they want to build on.</li> </ul>   |
| 6. | <p><b>General Q&amp;A + Discussion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lord Blencantra - concern that we need to get nature into the youth, e.g., if people must walk more than 200 metres to a green space, they are unlikely to do it. Difficulty in getting children out into nature, so we must make sure it's on their doorstep. Need to make sure in planning applications for housing that green spaces are included.</li> <li>• Ruth Ormston - from the Mindfulness Initiative. Positive thinktank that looks at evidence for mindfulness. <b>Report: Meeting the Climate Crisis Inside Out just published.</b> Have there been any studies on people's environmental behaviours after going through some of these processes? Does Nature Connectedness lead to other pro environmental behaviours? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Martin - Yes, this was one of the aims of the Children and Nature programme. The Independent Evaluation looks at nature connection with randomly selected group of children who participated in programme - report to come hopefully later in the year. Range of evidence that is positive - <b>Martin to circulate links/evidence through Jared.</b></li> <li>○ Rachel Bragg <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="https://findingnature.org.uk/2019/09/16/nature-connectedness-and-pro-nature-behaviours/">https://findingnature.org.uk/2019/09/16/nature-connectedness-and-pro-nature-behaviours/</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/pan3.10117">https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/pan3.10117</a></li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Jim Burt - Evidence shows that people with high NC are twice as likely to participate in pro- environmental/conservation behaviours. Happy to share reports</li> <li>○ Michael Watson - In terms of the tangible benefits it might be</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

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|  | <p>interesting for the APPG to develop a list of what positive practical outcomes for each Government Department that access to the natural environment delivers - I believe an estimate suggested that £1 invested in access to the natural environment reduces burden on NHS by £7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nearby, accessible and reasonably attractive green space is the necessary condition for people to benefit from it. It may not be sufficient for people to get that benefit, which is why we need initiatives to support people's engagement with green space, but the necessary condition is a basic requirement</li></ul> |
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**Next meeting - 5<sup>th</sup> July, 3 - 4.30pm, Arts & Culture.**

**Note this meeting will be held in person (Room O, Portcullis House) - details will be circulated in June**