

Green and blue spaces have been linked to positive effects on human health and wellbeing: physical, mental and social. The natural environment is considered to be beneficial for all aspects of human health and is often used as a quality of life indicator. Urban green infrastructure provides space for city dwellers to spend time outdoors in natural or semi-natural environments. Access to green infrastructure has a number of human health and wellbeing benefits such as increased levels of physical activity, reduced symptoms of poor mental health and stress, increased levels of communal activity, and greater opportunities for active transport by encouraging walking and cycling.

Box 1: What is Green Infrastructure?

Green infrastructure is a strategic, planned network of natural, semi-natural and artificial plant and water components, designed and managed to deliver a wide range of 'ecosystem services' (benefits to environment and people) and quality of life benefits. In an urban setting, green infrastructure may include parks, woodlands, wetlands, rivers, private gardens, street trees, allotments, playing fields, green roofs and sustainable drainage systems.

Benefits and issues: Green infrastructure and health and wellbeing

Benefits

Physical health: Urban residents face several unique health challenges, including high levels of air pollution and threats due to the urban heat island effect as well as lifestyles with low physical activity. Consistently, evidence shows that urban Green infrastructure exposure increases physical activity and decreases heart rate and mortality. Numerous studies have found increasing green space had a protective effect for some diseases such as coronary

Mental health: Urban environments are associated with higher incidences of anxiety and depression; however, mental ill health is complex and poorly understood, and stigmatization often means that mental health issues are not reported. Evidence consistently shows that exposure to urban green infrastructure improves attention and mood. The accessibility and use of urban green infrastructure has been shown to reduce psychological distress in a deprived urban population.

Social wellbeing: Social cohesion is important to the health and wellbeing of people in a community. Improved and increased interactions between residents can help reduce crime and create a sense of safety. Studies have

