



PUBLIC HEALTH NETWORK CYMRU

— E-BULLETIN —

APRIL 2023

GREEN AND BLUE SPACES FOR HEALTH AND WELL- BEING





Welcome

Welcome to our latest e-bulletin. This month we have a range of articles which highlight research, initiatives and programmes promoting the use of green and blue spaces to improve health and well-being, reduce inequalities and alleviate climate change impacts.

Do you have any projects, research or case studies to share with the wider public health community in Wales? Send your articles to Publichealth.network@wales.nhs.uk or [@PHNetworkCymru](https://twitter.com/PHNetworkCymru)

Let us know what you think of our e-bulletin by answering [two questions](#).

Contact us

Email us

publichealth.network@wales.nhs.uk

Tweet us

[@PHNetworkCymru](https://twitter.com/PHNetworkCymru)



In this issue...

4 Articles

Providing opportunities to connect with nature in woodlands and reserves

*Sue Williams, Team Leader for Health and Education,
Natural Resources Wales*

Can Green and Blue Spaces Improve Our Health?

*Rukun Khalaf, PhD student,
Dr Elly King, Science Communications and Impact Officer
GroundsWell Consortium, University of Liverpool.*

Ramblers Cymru launch partnership with Transport for Wales

Ramblers Cymru

The Psychological, Social, and Physical effects of Walking Football in the Welsh Coalfield areas

*Egan Goodison, Philip Tyson, PhD, Deborah Lancaster, PhD, Lyn Jehu, and Ryan Jones.
University of South Wales, The Coalfields Regeneration Trust,
Knowledge Education Skills Scholarship (KESS)*

Why No Mow May?

*Alison Sheffield, Sarah Collick, Claire O'Neill – Social Farms & Gardens,
Sian-Elin Davies – Cardiff and Vale Local Public Health Team*

Public Health Wales data and knowledge survey

Public Health Wales

13 Videos

14 News & Resources

15 Topics

16 Next Issue

Articles

Practice

Providing opportunities to connect with nature in woodlands and reserves

Sue Williams, Team Leader for Health and Education,
Natural Resources Wales

Natural Resources Wales looks after 14% of the land in Wales, managing the Welsh Woodland Estate on behalf of Welsh Government and National Nature Reserves across Wales. We welcome tens of thousands of visitors every year with the majority of the land open to all, all year round.

There is a growing body of evidence to show the benefits of [connecting](#) to nature and the opportunities being in nature brings to help increase [physical activity](#) and improve [mental health and well-being](#). Many organisations use the [5 ways to well-being](#) to explain how little acts for nature can also benefit the individual by giving, learning, being active, taking notice and connecting.

However, we acknowledge that accessing nature isn't the norm for everyone and some need help, encouragement or just the opportunity to access the natural world through a whole range of activities.



ENABLING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES AT OUR PLACES

Our [permission system](#) supports organisations, clubs and groups to run events and activities in a safe and sustainable way. From horse riding to sponsored walks, bushcraft sessions to gorge walking, adventure education to mindfulness, activities and events take place all year round. Many are intergenerational, provide opportunities for skills development or involve citizen science data collection but all, without doubt, provide the opportunity to connect to nature and gain the benefits that connection provides.

The [Outward Bound Trust](#) provides opportunities for young people predominantly from inner-city environments aiming to unlock their potential through learning and adventure in the wild. Young people kayak across the Dyfi estuary landing at Ynyslas at a designated area to avoid disturbing the nesting birds. From there they explore the nature reserve helping to raise their awareness and concern for the environment.

Goggerdan Day Nursery near Aberystwyth access their local forest on a regular basis using the outdoors as an extension of their indoor provision, immersing the children in nature, exploring and developing friendships in a different environment and increasing confidence in, and a connection to, the natural environment.

Orienteering clubs and off-road biking groups organise events that test participants skills and build stamina. Amateur explorers gain access to caves, supervised by experienced instructors and the Fire Service and RNLI Lifeboat crews access land and water to train and improve their skills for their own health, safety and well-being.



Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru Natural Resources Wales

Many organisations run events where improving health and well-being is the focus such as providing mindfulness by the river, yoga in the woods or a mobility scooter to walk dogs and form friendships.

ENJOYING NATURE RESPONSIBLY

Whatever the activity, we ask everyone to follow the [Countryside Code](#), leave no trace and appreciate that healthy people contribute to a healthy planet. With a declared climate and nature emergency, all small acts for nature are important both for ourselves and the planet.

FIND OUT MORE

[Learn about NRW's health and well-being role on our website](#)

Contact me at: Sue.Williams@cyfoethnaturiolcymru.gov.uk



Research

Can Green and Blue Spaces Improve Our Health?

Rukun Khalaf, PhD student,
Dr Elly King, Science Communications and Impact Officer
GroundsWell Consortium, University of Liverpool.

The [GroundsWell Consortium](#) is a multidisciplinary team of researchers who, in collaboration with local communities and policymakers, are understanding and documenting the role urban green and blue spaces (UGBS) play in the social, economic, environmental, cultural and health systems that make up urban environments. Specifically, Groundswell is identifying how we can use UGBS to prevent ill health and reduce the health inequalities that have emerged in these settings. GroundsWell builds on a wealth of research investigating the effects of green and blue spaces (GBS) on health, but its novelty is in the pooling together of resources from across different systems.

One example GroundsWell is building upon is the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) funded project led by Professor Sarah Rodgers at the University of Liverpool. In this study, researchers aimed to investigate the effects of GBS on individual-level mental health. The study focused on residents living in Wales between 2008 and 2019, and utilised secure and anonymised participant data as part of the project. Researchers measured an individual's access to GBS from their home as well as the surrounding greenness around their residence in order to study its effects on common mental health disorders such as depression.

Interestingly, the project findings highlighted that increasing greenness around an individual's home and access to such spaces is associated with lower odds of experiencing a common mental health disorder, with an adjusted odds ratio of 0.11 (95% CI 0.11 – 0.12) and 0.47 (95% CI 0.46 – 0.48)



respectively. What's more, the most deprived individuals benefited from increasing residential greenness, with a reduced odds of having a common mental health disorder at 0.22 (95% CI 0.20-0.24).

The implications from this study are numerous but chief among them is that green and blue spaces are protective against common mental illness in the Welsh population.

Beyond that, those most socioeconomically deprived stand to gain considerable protection of their mental health from exposure to such spaces. Therefore, from this work, we know natural environments can play a vital role in health but, more importantly, they can function as crucial tools in bettering the mental health of the most vulnerable members in our society.

An extension on this research topic is currently underway as part of a NIHR funded doctoral project led by Rukun Khalaf at the University of Liverpool. Under this new project, as part of the GroundsWell Consortium, investigators aim to understand how GBS affects maternal and infant health. Certain study events that will be monitored include pregnancy-related diabetes, mental illness, and a baby's weight at birth. Similar to its predecessor, the study will investigate the differential effects of GBS on maternal and infant health by deprivation.

Substantial high-quality work has been undertaken in this field but much remains unanswered. Thus, GroundsWell researchers aim to establish scientific findings that can serve as a solid evidence base, across different systems, to better inform public health and environmental planning policy.

For further information please contact: groundswell@qub.ac.uk

References:

Thompson, D. A., Geary, R. S., Rowney, F. M., Fry, R., Watkins, A., Wheeler, B. W., ... & Rodgers, S. E. (2022). Cohort Profile: The Green and Blue Spaces (GBS) and mental health in Wales e-cohort. *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 51(5), e285-e294. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dyaco80>

Thompson, D. A., Fry, R., Watkins, A., Mizen, A., Akbari, A., Garrett, J., . . . Rodgers, S. E. (2021). Exposure to green-blue spaces and mental health: A retrospective e-cohort study in Wales. *The Lancet*, Suppl. Supplement 2, 398 doi: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(21\)02628-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(21)02628-3)

Commentary

Ramblers Cymru launch partnership with Transport for Wales

Ramblers Cymru



Train, talk, walk' will encourage people to use local train services to access new family-friendly walking routes that are being created by Ramblers Cymru, that start and finish from local stations.

In total, 20 walking routes will be developed at 5 stations in south Wales, and 15 in north Wales.

Alongside the newly developed walks, Ramblers Cymru will also be delivering team-building events and activities for Transport for Wales staff, including paths and maps training and hands-on activity days to improve access to the outdoors in local communities.

The Psychological, Social, and Physical effects of Walking Football in the Welsh Coalfield areas

Egan Goodison, Philip Tyson, PhD, Deborah Lancaster, PhD, Lyn Jehu, and Ryan Jones.
University of South Wales, The Coalfields Regeneration Trust,
Knowledge Education Skills Scholarship (KESS)

This program of study is exploring a developing adapted sport, Walking Football, within some of the most deprived areas in the UK, the ex-coalfield regions (Beatty et al., 2019; Cholerton, 2021). Specifically, this project is investigating how Walking Football can benefit the aging population in particular, but with possible benefits to all individuals. In Wales, the activity levels of the older adult in areas of deprivation is 5%, compared to the national average of 34% (Sport Wales, 2019; Sport Wales, 2021). Walking Football has found to been shown to have potential benefits to the physical, social, and psychological wellbeing of participants. However, research in this area is limited to a few small-scale studies, and there is need for larger scale investigations (Corepal et al., 2020).



The current project is a Masters of Research in Psychology, funded by Knowledge Education Skills Scholarship and involving a partnership between the University of South Wales and the Coalfields Regeneration Trust. A mixed method approach was chosen for this research, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods in the form of focus group interviews and a large-scale survey. This also included a systematic literature review of all current Walking Football

research, which revealed a paucity of research in the Welsh Coalfield regions. Our focus group interviews provided unique insight into the benefits of Walking Football, with participants indicating that they felt physical, psychological, and social benefits from being involved in this activity. They recognised an inclusive environment as being pivotal, and that Walking Football had areas to develop, such as expanding geographically, and in terms of those eligible

to participate. These themes were used as the foundations to create a survey that was posted online for Walking Football participants around the entirety of Wales. The survey is currently ongoing, and the data collected will tell us about the perceived benefits of this activity in a range of populations, and will allow a comparison of perspectives between different groups, such as the Welsh Coalfield regions compared to other regions, gender differences, age differences, etc.

The results so far have shown that Walking Football has the potential to provide a variety of benefits, especially for the psychology, social, and physical health of the older adult within the Coalfield regions. Current participation experiences have been extremely positive for these individuals, while the research generally reflects enjoyment, feasibility, and a willingness to engage over the longer term. This research can be used to help Walking Football develop and has the potential to be implemented

as a key physical activity intervention in areas of deprivation.

Walking Football is an adapted sport that is inclusive, accessible, and has a range of potential benefits. It is perceived to be extremely positive amongst current participants, but is still only a growing and developing game, with only, approximately 1500 actively involved within Wales (Welsh Walking Football Federation, 2023). Walking Football is perceived as being

beneficial for individuals, in the Welsh Coalfields, with a host of advantages to their mental health, social lives, physical health, and wellbeing generally. Utilising Walking Football, and other adapted, or Walking Sports as physical activity interventions for a range of populations could be of great value and is worth exploring further.

For further Information please contact: egan.goodison@southwales.ac.uk

References

Beatty, C., Fothergill, S., & Gore, T. (2019). The State of the Coal elds 2019 Economic and social conditions in the former coal elds of England, Scotland and Wales A report commissioned by the Coal elds Regeneration Trust. <https://www.coalfields-regen.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/The-State-of-the-Coalfields-2019.pdf>

Corepal, R., Zhang, J. Y., Grover, S., Hubball, H., & Ashe, M. C. (2020). Walking soccer: A systematic review of a modified sport. *Scandinavian Journal of Medicine & Science in Sports*, 30(12), 2282–2290. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sms.13772>

Rachel Catherine Cholerton. (2021). *Walking Football Initiation and Maintenance in Older Adults*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Sport Wales. (2019). *Sport and Active Lifestyle Survey - Sport Wales*. Sport Wales. <https://www.sport.wales/content-vault/sport-and-active-lifestyles-survey/>

Sport Wales. (2021, January 29). £1m investment to help over 60s be more active. Sport Wales; Sport Wales. <https://www.sport.wales/media-centre/latest-news/new-1m-investment-to-help-over-60s-be-more-active/>

Welsh Walking Football Federation. (2023). *Walking Wales Football*. Waleswalkingfootball.co.uk. <https://www.waleswalkingfootball.co.uk/>

Why No Mow May?

Alison Sheffield, Sarah Collick, Claire O'Neill – Social Farms & Gardens,
Sian-Elin Davies – Cardiff and Vale Local Public Health Team

Social Farms & Gardens, the charity supporting communities to farm, garden and grow together, is working with Gwynedd Council to support communities in the management of verges and other public green spaces (such as parts of community centre grounds or parks) as meadow habitat. Over the past 18 months, we've been empowering and equipping communities to take control of their public green spaces so they are better connected for nature and people.

Check out our simple animation <https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/resilient-green-spaces/greener-corridors-and-spaces> OR <https://youtu.be/gJzrpsXKCIg> to help everyone understand why it's important to let our green spaces grow and how best to manage them for biodiversity and our health. The Spring of 2020 saw 56% fewer dandelion flowers and 40% fewer daisy flowers than previous years, with artificial grass and perfectly preened lawns added to the mix, we need to do everything we can to protect our wildlife. #NoMowMay, #UpToYourThighJuly, what next?!

Naturalist and television presenter, Iolo Williams joined the hosts of people subscribing to the #NoMowMay revolution this year. Stating: 'No Mow May' and 'Let it bloom June' certainly worked wonders for my lawn. With the knapweed still to flower, that's food for pollinators from early spring to autumn.' Abstaining from mowing your lawn between the months of May – August can support 2.1 million - or around 60,000 hives - of honeybees.

Now is a perfect time to get involved in our [Resilient Green Spaces](#), [Greener Spaces & Corridors](#) project to look after and improve meadow habitats in public green spaces. Working in partnership with [Gwynedd Council](#), Social Farms & Gardens empower communities to take control of their public green spaces so they are better connected for nature and people.

Sarah Collick, North Wales Development worker for Social Farms & Gardens said:

"Our 'Please Don't Mow' signs are a great reminder of the great work that we are doing with different groups and organisations in Gwynedd. They also serve as a catalyst for others to join in and help protect and enhance our green spaces for wildlife to flourish."

Throughout the month of May we were encouraging groups and councils to take part in #NoMowMay - campaign research has revealed that mowing your lawn less frequently can provide enough nectar sugar for ten times the amount of bees, butterflies, moths, beetles and other pollinators. 2021's #NoMowMay results showed that gardeners who took part reported up to 250 species of plants, including wild garlic, wild strawberry, declining orchids and the rare meadow flower snakeshead fritillary, flowering within the grasses.

Resilient Green Spaces is a partnership project being led by Social Farms & Gardens to pilot alternative re-localised food systems using communities and their green spaces as a driving force for change across Wales until June 2023. The project is funded through the Welsh Government Rural Communities - Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the Welsh Government and the European Union.

For more information about the wider Resilient Green Spaces project, and for other opportunities for communities as part of the project, please go to the Social Farms & Gardens website: <https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/resilient-green-spaces>

Gynrodd
on Wyn



Peldiwrch â thorri
Please don't mow
Gadewch i ni dyfu
Let us grow



Public Health Wales data and knowledge survey

Public Health Wales

Public Health Wales has launched its annual survey into its data and knowledge outputs.

The survey aims to understand how individuals and organisations are using our work, the impact it's having and what we can do to improve.

Kirsty Little, Consultant lead for knowledge mobilisation, said:

“As an organisation, we aim to inspire impactful public health action by providing high quality, well timed and accessible information. We want to ensure we put our stakeholder's needs at the heart of the knowledge we produce.

“By completing the survey, you can help us understand how well we're doing now and inform what we do in the future. We'd also like to encourage you to share the survey with the colleagues and stakeholders you work with. The more views we gather, the more impact our survey will have.

“Feedback from last year's survey has already been used to shape work on user personas, web development, publication standards and impact framework.

“May I take this opportunity to thank you in advance for your time.

The survey can be accessed through the link below until the end of May and is completely anonymous.

[Public Health Wales User Survey](#)

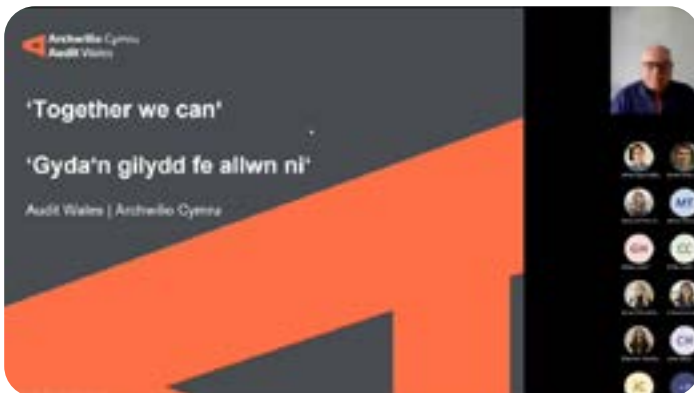
If you have any questions, please contact ruth.davies6@wales.nhs.uk

Videos



Workforce health in Wales PHNC Webinar

Pandemics, recessions, rising levels of ill health and increasing economic inactivity are just some of the challenges facing employers and the workforce in Wales. Whilst making prominent headlines, what does all this mean for workforce health in Wales? What does the latest research tell us? How can we support employees to access fair work and create healthy, thriving workplaces?

[Watch](#)

Community Resilience in Wales PHNC Webinar

At this webinar we heard from Nick Selwyn and Euros Lake from Audit Wales. Against a likely backdrop of further reductions in public spending, local authorities are being challenged to help people who are struggling with increased costs. They shared how community resilience...

[Watch](#)

Why is Equality Better for Everyone? PHNC Webinar

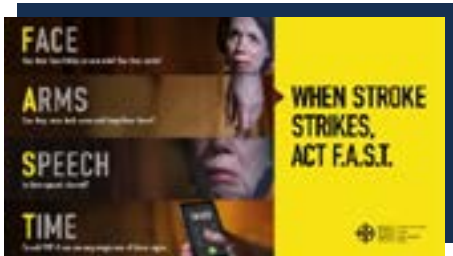
In this webinar Professor Richard Wilkinson, co-author of *The Spirit Level* and *The Inner Level* gave his perspective on why material inequalities make people more antisocial, make status and class divisions more powerful, increase stress, damage physical and mental health and are a barrier to sustainability.

[Watch](#)

Explore our video library
on our website

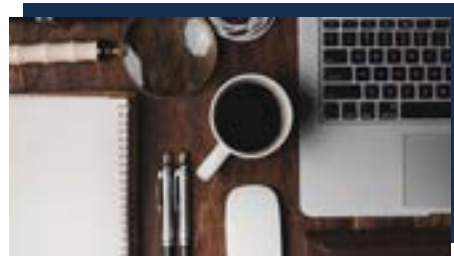
[View all
our videos](#)

News & Resources



[More awareness needed to act F.A.S.T to treat stroke and save lives](#)

27-04-2023



[Scheme aims to help more than 10,500 people into work](#)

25-04-2023



[Call for big business to do more to help consumers tackle climate change](#)

25-04-2023

[All News](#)

[Wales Innovates: Creating a Stronger, Fairer, Greener Wales](#)

Welsh Government

First Published: 27 February 2023

“How we will use innovation to improve the lives of people in Wales.”

[Be the Change – Procurement that doesn’t cost the earth](#)

Public Health Wales

First Published: 24 January 2023

“The e-guide gives advice for anyone buying goods and services on ways we can take action by thinking about what we need, where it comes from, how long it will last and the impact it has on people, nature and planet.”

[All Resources](#)

Topics

Prevention and Improvement in Health and Healthcare

Nursing Now Cymru/Wales

Mental Ill Health

Mental Health Conditions

Suicide and self-harm prevention

Non-communicable Diseases

Diabetes

Communicable disease

Foodborne Communicable Diseases

Influenza (Flu)

Sexually Transmitted Infections

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

People

LGBT+

Gender

Learning, physical and sensory disabilities

Maternal and newborn health

Offenders

Older adults

Ethnicity

Carers

Working age adults

Children and young people

Early years

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Health related behaviours

Psychoactive substances

Alcohol

Food and Nutrition

Healthy Weight

Accident and Injury Prevention

Smoking and vaping

Physical Activity

Oral Health

Sexual health

Mental Wellbeing

Stress and resilience

Arts and health

Spirituality

Wider determinants of health

Poverty

Income and debt

Benefits

Housing

Homelessness

Fuel poverty

Housing quality

Education and Training

Preschool

School

Further, higher and tertiary education

Community

Assets Based Approaches

Social capital

Environment

Climate change

Natural environment

Sustainable development

Built environment

Employment

Unemployment

Precarious work

Good, fair work

Health in all policies

Health Inequalities

Social justice and human rights

Wellbeing of future generations

Approaches and methods in public health practice

Communities4Change Wales

Systems thinking in public health

Evaluation

Behavioural Science

All Topics

Next Issue

WORKFORCE HEALTH IN WALES

We are looking for articles for our next e-bulletin which highlight workplace projects, initiatives, programmes or policy interventions that support people's health and wellbeing. We also welcome articles which focus on increasing participation in fair work, for health, well-being and equity. Workplace health is promoting and managing the health and wellbeing of staff. The Chartered Institute of Professional Development states "Fostering employee wellbeing is good for people and the organisation. Promoting wellbeing can help prevent stress and create positive working environments where

individuals and organisations can thrive. Good health and wellbeing can be a core enabler of employee engagement and organisational performance." ([CIPD, 2022](#))

Fair work is where workers are "fairly rewarded, heard and represented, secure and able to progress in a healthy, inclusive environment where rights are respected" ([Fair Work](#)).

[Contribute](#)

