

How to engage Health Professionals - experience from the Natural England Health Campaign



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Natural England's Health Work



- **Policy**
- **Science**
- **Delivery -**
 - Walking the Way to Health**
 - Step-o-meter (pedometer) work**
 - Green Exercise work**
- **Campaign**
- **Advocacy & Partnerships**

Natural England's Health Campaign



- Aim to help more people access the natural environment more often, close to where they live.
- Focussed on 'Health Professionals' – GPs; Nurses; Public Health professionals; Health Trainers; Pharmacists
- Partnerships with Voluntary Health Groups & Department of Health
- Market Research completed spring 2007
- Studies into 'hard to reach' groups – Gateshead
- National Conference – June 2007
- Conferences – Meeting Health Professionals where they already go
- Publicity & public engagement

Market Research into 'target groups'



- **Overall objective was to explore the attitudes of health professionals to Natural England's forthcoming campaign**
- **Main issues covered:**
 - **Current attitudes to recommending greenspace use**
 - **Types of illnesses / patients for which greenspace use is considered likely to be beneficial**
 - **Interest in finding out more about the campaign**
 - **Preferred channels for contact by Natural England**

Method & Sample



- Combined quantitative / qualitative research study
- Small-scale study designed to provide insights into the attitudes of health professionals in order to inform development of the campaign
- Quantitative element
 - 70 x 15 minute telephone interviews
 - 30 GPs
 - 40 Practice Nurses
 - (10 Directors / Assistant Directors of Public Health being recruited for inclusion in the research)
- Qualitative element
 - 8 x 30-45 minute tele-depths conducted by researchers
 - 4 GPs
 - 4 Practice Nurses
- Equal representation of Metropolitan, Urban / Suburban, Rural areas

Current Practice of Recommending 'Greenspace' use



	<u>Total</u>	<u>Occupation</u>		<u>Location</u>		
		<u>GP</u>	<u>Practice Nurse</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Suburban</u>	<u>Rural</u>
(Base)	70	30	40	27	21	22
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Do currently recommend greenspace use	61	73	52	70	57	55
Do not	39	27	48	30	43	45

Awareness of Local Organised Greenspace Activities



	<u>Total</u>	<u>Occupation</u>		<u>Location</u>		
		<u>GP</u>	<u>Practice Nurse</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>Suburban</u>	<u>Rural</u>
(Base: Those recommending greenspace use)	43	22	21	19	12	12
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Aware of some organised greenspace activities in the local area	54	50	57	53	67	42
Not aware	46	50	43	47	33	58
(Base: Aware of organised activities)	23	11	12	10	8	5
	%	(No.)	(No.)	(No.)	(No.)	(No.)
Walking / organised walks (Unnamed / unknown organiser)	35	(1)	(7)	(4)	(2)	(2)
Local council / PCT guided walks	35	(5)	(3)	(4)	(2)	(2)
Exercise on prescription / Active for Life / Green gym	13	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(-)

Attitudes of Health Professionals and Patients to Recommendations for Greenspace Use



- Issue explored in more depth in qualitative research and main points to emerge were:
 1. Currently very few specific greenspace activities available (as far as health professionals are aware) and therefore only general recommendations are made:
 - “Do more walking”
 - “Get out more”
 - “Take more exercise”
 2. GPs / Nurses are aware that many patients are unlikely to take up this recommendation because they need more guidance about:
 - Where to go
 - What to do when they get there
 - What benefits they should notice
 - How frequently to do this
 - How to vary their activities
 3. Health professionals and patients would benefit from clearer guidance about greenspace use

Frequency of Taking Outdoor Exercise (GPs & Nurses in the survey)



	<u>Walking</u>	<u>Cycling</u>	<u>Gardening</u>
(Base: Those involved in each activity)	55	17	14
	%	%	%
Several times a week	66	47	43
Once a week	31	35	50
Once a month	4	18	7
Once every 2-3 months	-	-	-
Less often	-	-	-

“Walking is man’s best medicine”

Hippocrates

born 460BC



The Outdoor Health Forum



1. The OHF is a NETWORK – to bring together Natural Environment and Health professionals engaged in research and policy work.
2. 20 Core Members with a further 120 Supporters in the Network
3. Research – The OHF can channel money from sponsor organisations into joint research – so adding value!
4. Communications – Conferences & Information - Agreed focus each year
5. Consultations –An ambition that the OHF might bring together consensus and respond on behalf of the sector to policy consultations. Individual Members to still 'do their own thing' but a joint OHF response may also add weight



BTCV Green Gym

- Increasing physical activity and improving health through involving people in practical nature conservation volunteering.
- Concept developed by BTCV - UK's leading practical conservation charity – and Dr. William Bird, in 1997
- 95 Green Gyms in UK and 3 in Australia.
- Green Gyms are set up in partnership with health services and offer sessions at least once a week.
- Conservation activities, such as tree planting, are combined with warm-up and cool-down exercises.



BTCV Green Gym

- Independent evaluation by Oxford Brookes University has shown that:
- Over 60% of participants were new to volunteering and to environmental volunteering
- 99% of participants agreed that involvement in the Green Gym benefited their health and self-confidence.
- On average, the physical health status of Green Gym participants improved significantly, with positive change after 3 months.
- Those who joined with the poorest physical and mental health showed significant improvements.

www.btcv.org/greengym



BTCV Green Gym

www.btcv.org/greengym

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Conclusions:



- Dealing with Health Professionals needs focus & effort
- Need to understand the health objectives
- Natural England has been successful by
 - Employing a prominent doctor (William Bird GP)
 - Leading the coordination within the sector
 - Trying to engage in partnerships
 - Establishing the Outdoor Health Forum
 - Trying to 'grow the market' for health delivery products