



# Biodiversity & Green Space Digital Toolkit

## Using Green Spaces for Health and Wellbeing Benefits

With the NHS having committed to reach Net Zero carbon by 2040, developing green space in healthcare settings is now a key priority to consider. Further to this, mounting evidence shows the value of engaging with nature for patient recovery, staff wellbeing and overall public health. There has never been a better time to explore the huge variety of ways in which green spaces in healthcare settings can benefit the natural environment and community health.

Providing green spaces has a positive impact on public health through improving environmental factors such as biodiversity, air pollution, and noise pollution. It can also benefit health at a population level through providing communities with accessible green space in their local area, contributing to the physical and mental wellbeing improvements associated with spending more time outside in nature.



# Green space for health: the spectrum of activities

## Tree Planting

Planting trees is one of the most important nature-based solutions to the climate crisis. Trees can also benefit patients, improving recovery time and reducing the quantity of pain medication needed when there is a view of green space from hospital beds.



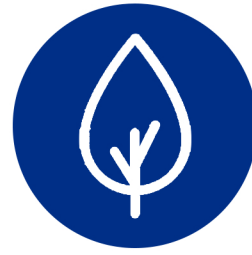
## Green walking

Starting a walking group is a simple way of improving the wellbeing of patients and staff alike. Walking in nature has been shown to improve patients' progress during hospitalisation, recovery and rehabilitation.



## Rooftop terraces

Rooftop gardens can be a private oasis for staff needing privacy during a break who may otherwise not be able to access outdoor space. Planting designs can also support biodiversity, reduce air pollution and contribute to reducing the urban heat island effect.



## Pollinator-friendly flowers

The UK's pollinator diversity is in serious decline, and supporting pollinators such as bees is increasingly important. This can be done on a grand scale in wildflower meadows or simply on windowsills where species such as lavender will help support bees as well as providing a beautiful and sensory experience for people.



## Therapeutic gardens

Therapeutic gardens can be designed to meet the needs of specific patient populations. They provide relief from symptoms, stress reduction, and improvements in overall senses of wellbeing and happiness.



## Grow-your-own projects

Growing food at hospital sites can provide a host of benefits. Simply participating in growing food has been found to provide a similar level of health benefit to more formal horticultural therapy.

The Centre for Sustainable Healthcare inspires and empowers people to transform healthcare for a sustainable future. Our NHS Forest network supports NHS sites in developing their green space for the benefit of patients, staff and the wider community. To find out more visit [www.sustainablehealthcare.org.uk](http://www.sustainablehealthcare.org.uk)