

A Needs Assessment relating to the Provision of Natural Greenspace in areas with Low Levels of Physical Activity



Non-technical Summary

20 May 2016

Report to:

Kent Nature Partnership
Health & Nature Subgroup

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with Low Levels of Physical Activity**

Non-technical Summary

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The purpose of this study was to investigate accessibility of greenspace for populations in Kent, particularly those who are considered physically inactive, based on government recommendations for maintaining good health. Indeed, data from the Active People Survey shows that 28% of the Kent population are not active enough for good health.

The term 'greenspace' includes outdoor places that are open to the public (such as parks and nature reserves), parts of the countryside and areas of water, such as rivers and lakes, which provide opportunities for sport and recreation. 'Access to greenspace' refers to a site that can be reached by some form of public right of way. However, this does not necessarily mean that the site is accessible to everyone (such as people who have limited mobility, or prams and pushchairs); assessing the quality of the access route was beyond the scope of this project.

We gathered together information for Kent on the locations of greenspace, footways (including pavements), population characteristics (e.g. age and levels of deprivation) and populations who are considered to be not physically active. We used this information to work out the populations that met the following greenspace accessibility standards:

- a) Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (published by Natural England) which say that every person should have:
 - At least one site of at least 2 hectares (ha) within 300 m of where they live.
 - At least one site of at least 20 ha within 2 km of where they live.
 - At least one site of at least 100 ha within 5 km of where they live.
 - At least one site of at least 500 ha within 10 km of where they live.
- b) A standard set by Dover District Council which states that every person should have at least one site of at least 0.4 ha within 300 m of where they live, within urban locations, or at least one site of at least 2 ha within 1 km of their home in rural locations.

We assessed this by measuring the distances along footpaths from people's homes to entrances to nearby greenspaces. For example, for the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard of at least one site of at least 2 ha within 300 m, postcodes that were less than 300 m along a footpath from an entrance point to a greenspace of at least 2 ha were identified as meeting this standard. Postcodes that were more than 300 m along a

footpath from an entrance point to a greenspace of at least 2 ha were identified as not meeting this standard.

We found that:

- Two-thirds (66%) of the Kent population do not have a greenspace of at least 2 ha (about two full sized football pitches) within 300 m (5 minutes walk) of home. This was the least well met of all the accessibility standards.
- Over a quarter of the Kent population (28%) do not have access to a greenspace of at least 20 ha (18½ football pitches) within 2 km (approximately 30 minutes walking) of home.
- Less than half (44%) of the Kent population do not meet the DDC accessibility standard for greenspace of at least 0.4 ha (about the size of half a full-sized football pitch) within 300 m of home in urban areas and 2 ha within 1 km in rural areas.
- In line with other studies we found that populations in Kent who are not active enough for good health are more likely to have higher levels of deprivation.
- We found that, in general, accessibility was no worse in areas of higher levels of deprivation, and that more deprived populations often had more access to greenspace.

Other studies have shown that being active in greenspace is beneficial to health and that people are more likely to visit greenspace for physical activity if it is nearby. We prioritised all areas across Kent, based on the percentage of the population who have low levels of physical activity, and identified where greenspace provision and/or access could be improved.

- Where accessibility to greenspace is lacking, improving access and/or creating additional greenspace is recommended.
- In areas of Kent where people are not active enough for good health, but where there is a relatively high availability of accessible greenspace, we recommend promoting the use of existing sites for physical activity. Exploring the barriers to using existing greenspace is also necessary as there may be reasons why people do not currently use local greenspace for physical activity (e.g. safety or quality of greenspace).

The next steps will be for the Health and Nature Sub-group of the Kent Nature Partnership to prepare an action plan based on the findings from this study.