



GREEN WAYS TO HEALTH

Case study – Woodside and Maryhill Health and Care Centres

The **GREEN EXERCISE PARTNERSHIP** is a joint venture between Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and Health Scotland (the health improvement board of the National Health Service in Scotland). The Partnership aims to build links between the health and environment sectors, following growing evidence that public health can be improved by getting people engaged with the natural environment. Through its 'Greening the NHS Estate' programme, the Partnership aims to establish at least one project in each of the eleven mainland Area Health Boards to show the health benefits that flow from positive investment in and management of the NHS estate – the greenspace around hospitals and healthcare centres.

Green environments are healthy environments. Again and again, healthcare research shows a positive relationship between high quality green space, general and mental health, and a reduction in health inequalities.

The outdoor estate around NHS properties has a lot of potential to promote better health for staff, patients, visitors and the wider community, but could be used far more effectively. The challenge is how to deliver a Health Promoting Health Service consistently across the NHS outdoor estate when there are lots of competing pressures and project teams can see the concept as a low priority.

Within NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Health Board, new Health and Care Centres (H&CCs) are being developed at Woodside, Maryhill, Possilpark, Eastwood, Pollokshields and Gorbals. They are funded through Hub West Scotland, a partnership between the public and private sector introduced by the Scottish Government as the main vehicle for funding capital projects. GEP funding has enabled enhanced landscape settings at Possilpark (see separate case study), Woodside and Eastwood, and supported the design of a therapeutic courtyard and walking links to the nearby canal at Maryhill.

The west of Scotland has profound health challenges. Among patients using both Woodside and Maryhill centres, over half live in areas rated as among the most deprived neighbourhoods in Scotland. The development of the new centres aims to demonstrate in a tangible, high profile way NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde's commitment to working in partnership to tackle health inequalities, improve health, and contribute to social regeneration in areas of deprivation.

“If staff are to encourage service users to have healthier lifestyles, it's helpful if they appreciate for themselves the impact arts and the environment can have on health and wellbeing. They need to be aware of local green space, use it themselves, and encourage their patients to enjoy it.”

Julie Gordon
Health Improvement North West
Glasgow City Community Health
& Care Partnership

DESIGNING FOR HEALTH

The Woodside Health and Care Centre, due for completion in 2017, will occupy a constrained, high density urban site. Finding ways to connect the impressive new building to the local green space, the adjacent canal and the community has been a major challenge. GEP funding has enabled enhancements to the centre's landscape setting, as well as links to the canal. The aim was to make an impact on the surrounding environment, and maximise opportunities to encourage green connections and physical activity – all helping to deliver a Health Promoting Health Service.



The site for the Woodside centre is hemmed in by buildings, but greenspace and the canal are just across the road.

All the new H&CCs have an Arts and Environment group that engages with centre staff, patients and the local community on ideas for the setting and appearance of the new centres. At Woodside, this engagement involved researchers from the University of the Highlands and Islands, and helped to shape the design of the walking routes and signposting from the centre.

At Maryhill, consultation work included an open comments book to gather ideas from current health centre users and staff.



The canal close to the Woodside centre offers an attractive route for walking and jogging, and is next to a Local Nature Reserve.

Proposals for under-lighting of the trees planted along the street, and the idea of strengthening links to the canal to encourage walking, emerged from this process.

The GEP funding at Maryhill also supported the work of ERZ landscape consultants, who looked at how to meet clinical needs in creative ways. The result is a plan for a therapeutic garden that includes a bridge: an attractive feature, but also a practical tool for physiotherapists helping patients with rehabilitation and recovery.

“Pushing the boundaries of a project is really important, going the extra mile, aspiring to the best environment possible for local community and staff, and encouraging voices promoting this to counterbalance all the voices focused on purely clinical need.”

Jackie Sands
Health Improvement Arts Co-ordinator
NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde



Lighting like this will turn trees next to the Maryhill centre into night time as well as day time features.



Creative waymarking and events will encourage people to explore the canal, which offers easy access to green space close to the Maryhill Health and Care Centre.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

Many different parties came together to develop the arts and environment strategy for the Woodside H&CC, and the process has created strong links between them. They included representatives from the Queens Cross Housing Association, the Community Council, local schools, Scottish Canals, local environment groups such as the Friends of Possilpark, and staff from universities and museums. The result is a sense of shared ownership of the new centre, and awareness that health is something everyone can promote and enable.

The strategy focuses on offering and encouraging direct access to the nearby Forth and Clyde canal. Way-finding art commissions will create physical and conceptual connections to the canal and neighbouring green space, which is part of a Local Nature Reserve.

“If we don’t provide opportunities for people to live a healthier lifestyle, then it is really difficult to ask people to work at living more healthily. It usually costs money to go and find somewhere attractive to be outdoors. One way to champion equal access to good health is to provide a good environment within and outside the centre itself.”

May Simpson
Community Engagement North West
Glasgow City Community Health & Care
Partnership

CHALLENGES

The major challenges have involved the management processes for large-scale projects like these. Health Board staff know they need to be involved at an early stage if therapeutic design ideas, developed through an arts and environment strategy, are to be properly integrated into the building design and master planning process. But because the arts and environment strategy for each H&CC has to evolve over time, through a separate community consultation exercise, it is often out of step with the Hub building design and decision-making process.

Different approaches might be possible in the future, but at present there is a disjunction between the very rigid contract procedure involved in the design of the building, and the more fluid, organic process of developing a community-based, site-specific arts and environment strategy. These two very different systems need to embrace each other's way of working, with flexibility to implement enhanced external design opportunities that emerge as the arts and environment strategy develops, without too restrictive contract change cost penalties.

Other projects might offer valuable lessons here: for the new Queen Elizabeth University Hospital in Govan, the design brief asked the lead architect to demonstrate from the outset their capacity and method for integrating an arts strategy into the building design process.

Funding can also be a challenge. Health staff might identify a desired improvement to a project through consultation with service users and the community, but then need to secure funding for the improvements from multiple sources, such as environmental and art sector grants. It can be very difficult to get funding support to enhance the environment within and around an H&CC that fits seamlessly with the Hub process, which is focused on the delivery of known clinical needs, a building and a car park. As a result some enhancements to the environment and buildings can only be implemented as retrofit or post-contract improvements, compromising their quality and their ability to be fully integrated with the centre.



“Working with building professionals, it can be hard to get them to embrace the importance of the art and environment opportunities, but this aspect of the project is how people, the community and staff mostly appreciate and experience the new centre.”

John Thomson
Health Improvement North West
Glasgow City Community Health &
Care Partnership

KEY LEARNING POINTS

- Art and green space is more than “icing on the cake”. They provide significant enhancements to a clinical environment and make it a special place.
- Positive collaboration between the project architect, landscape architect, artists, writers and the community is needed as early as possible to promote art and the environment as part of an integrated therapeutic design approach for new buildings.
- Attitudinal changes are needed for all health and care staff to appreciate the value of green space “on your doorstep”, and the benefits of using it. An awareness of local green space could be part of formal staff induction to new buildings, so they are familiar with what’s available.
- Community influence is really important. Although clinical needs are the focus and priority, it can be difficult to involve service users in decisions about clinical needs at new centres. Developing an arts and environment strategy is a practical approach that engages the local community, and enables everyone to influence the “feel” of a building.
- The new Health and Care Centres’ building principles, often technical and clinical, must be adapted so local groups, schools and so on can understand them and participate in and influence decisions.
- Good design helps to make a Health and Care Centre more than a building and car park. Instead it can be an attractive place to go, encouraging healthier lifestyles and getting users involved in other activities while attending the centre.

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