

# **Report of the Strategic Director of Health and Wellbeing to the meeting of Environment and Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2017.**

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## **Subject:**

Utilisation of outdoor space for health reasons

## **Summary statement:**

Good quality outdoor spaces create opportunities for health and wellbeing. This paper seeks to outline the opportunities and challenges across the district, and highlights how utilisation of outdoor spaces is contributing to the district strategic priorities.

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## **Portfolio:**

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## **Overview & Scrutiny Area:**

Environment and Waste Management

## **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Attractive, safe and accessible outdoor spaces contribute positive social, economic and environmental benefits, including improving public health and wellbeing of residents (Landscape Institute, 2013). This paper provides a definition of outdoor space, presents available information on outdoor space across the district, and outlines the case for outdoor space, considering both the benefits and challenges for the district of Bradford.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 *The EWMOSC***

- 2.11 The EWMOSC was updated in March 2015 (background document 1) and March 2016 (background document 2) in regards to the Public Health Outcome Framework (PHOF) indicator 1.16 'utilisation of outdoor space for exercise/health reasons'. In March 2016, the EWMOSC requested that a more in-depth report on the utilisation of outdoor space for health reasons to be presented in the next municipal year. This report seeks to fulfill this request.

### **2.2 *Defining outdoor spaces***

- 2.21 This paper's title was informed by the PHOF indicator 1.16 which reports the 'utilisation of outdoor space for exercise/health reasons' annually for each local authority in England. This indicator provides information on the "proportion of residents in each area taking a visit to the natural environment for health or exercise purposes" as measured by the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) survey. The survey defined the natural environment to include open spaces in and around towns and cities, parks, canals and nature areas; the coast and beaches; and the countryside including farmland, woodland, hills and rivers. This definition included both urban and rural outdoor space; it excluded time spent in the garden and shopping trips from time being outside.
- 2.22 In practice, there is no single accepted definition of outdoor space; most definitions tend to vary and overlap depending on the context and environment. Terms such as 'public space', 'open space', 'urban space' and 'green space' are often used interchangeably. Currently there is no evidence to suggest a certain proximity, amount or type of 'space' produces more benefit over another. For the purpose of this report we will refer to 'green space' as an all-encompassing term for open and outdoor spaces which can be considered of public value.

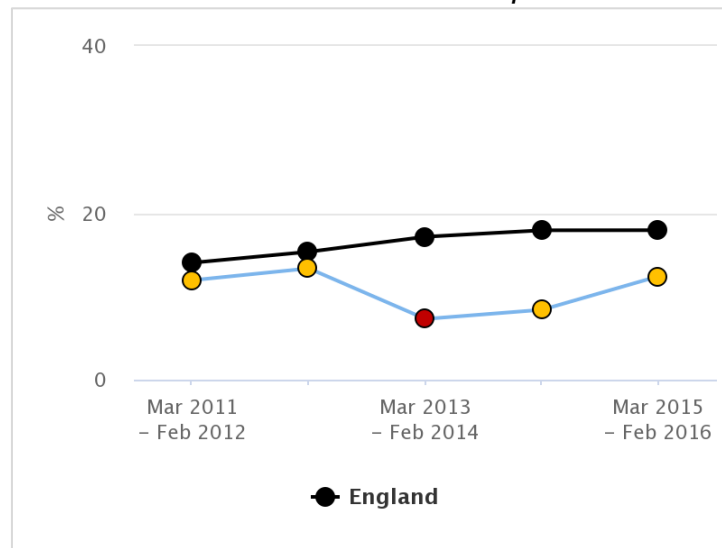
## **3. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

### **3.1 *An update on PHOF Indicator 1.16***

- 3.11 Graph 1 (below) shows the proportion of Bradford residents using outdoor space for exercise/health reasons between 2011 and 2016, via the MENE survey. Graph 1 shows that in Bradford the percentage of people using outdoor space for exercise or health reasons has remained lower than the English average during this time period. However, it is important to note that the data for Bradford has not been statistically significantly different from the English average, apart for the period

2013-2014 (coloured red in the graph). It is unclear why the data for 2013-2014 was statistically significantly lower than the English average.

*Graph 1: PHOF indicator 1.16 utilisation of outdoor space for exercise/health reasons*



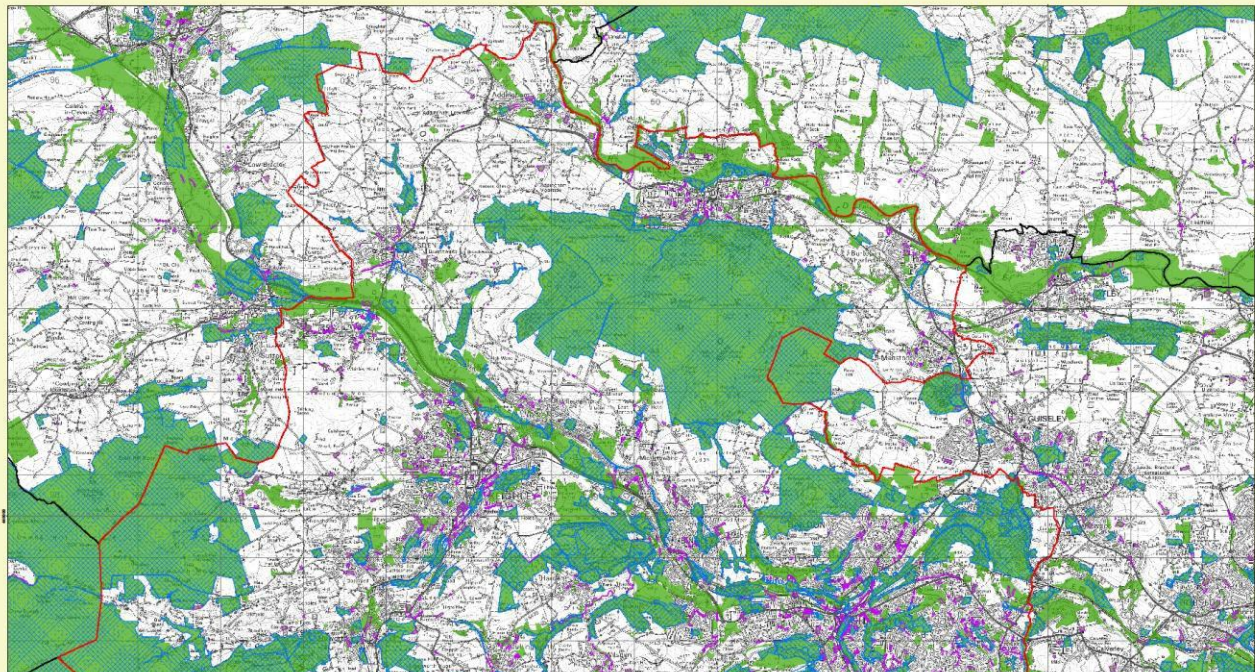
- 3.12 The latest data shows that the percentage of people using outdoor space for exercise or health reasons in 2015-2016 was 12.4% in Bradford. Although this remains lower than the English (17.9%) and regional average (17.5%) for the same time period; positively, the gap between Bradford and these comparators appears to be closing.

### **3.2 Outdoor space across Bradford district**

- 3.21 This section summarises available data sources and maps showcasing the availability of green space across the district of Bradford. Map 1 (below) is provided by Natural England and shows accessible and natural green space across the district. It excludes green-belt or agricultural land that may be accessible on footpaths but is not defined as 'accessible' under the standard. This map highlights the abundance of green space across the district, particularly to the north and west.
- 3.22 'Accessible' green space is considered to be that which is located close to resident's homes, easy to walk to, physically accessible, safe to use, and provides well maintained facilities. Map 2 (below) is also provided by Natural England and shows how the district measures against the Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGSt). In essence, the greener areas indicate that a range of green spaces are easily accessible to residents in the area, whereas yellow/orange/red indicate areas where a reasonably sized local park is not within close proximity (300m). It should be noted that many country footpaths (public footpaths on private land) may not be picked up by the ANGSt criteria. However Map 2 is useful in highlighting that green space is less easy to access in certain parts of Bradford City and to the south of the district, as well as Keighley going north along the A629, Silsden, the A65, and some pockets around Wilsden, Queensbury and Menston.



Map 1: Accessible and Natural Green Space across the Bradford District



**DRAFT**

**Accessible  
Green**

**Brac**

Local/District Auth  
© Ordnance Survey

Greenspace

**Accessible and Nat**

Less than 2 ha

Greater than 2 ha



**DRAFT**

**Accessible and Natural  
Greenspace**

**Bradford**

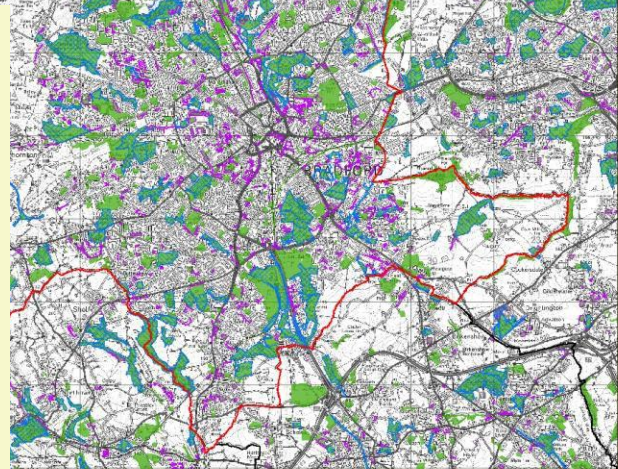
Local/District Authorities (LAU1)  
© Ordnance Survey

Greenspace

**Accessible and Natural Greenspace**

Less than 2 ha

Greater than 2 ha

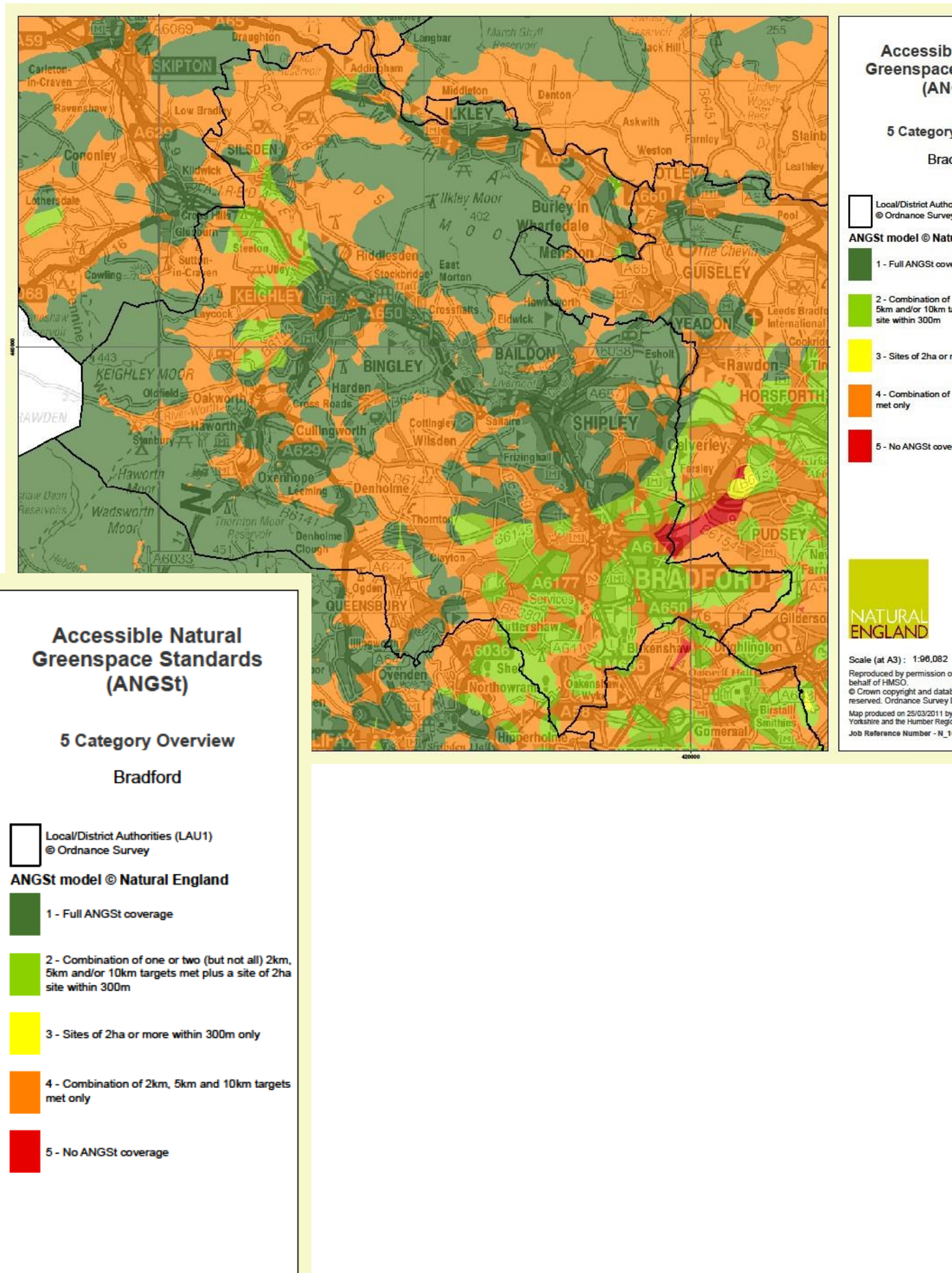


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Map produced on 22/10/2010 by Simon Co  
Humber Regional GIS Unit, Natural England  
Job Reference Number - N\_1000\_0555\_1



Map 2: Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGSt) across the Bradford District



### **3.3    *The benefits of using outdoor space for health***

- 3.31 There is significant and growing evidence on the physical and mental health benefits of outdoor space. Research shows that access to outdoor space is associated with better health outcomes and income-related inequality in health is less pronounced where people have access to outdoor space.
- 3.32 Benefits of access to green space include:
- Improved mental health and wellbeing for children, young people and adults
  - Increased likelihood of physical activity across all age groups
  - Reduced violence and aggression: a reduction in antisocial behaviour and incidence of crime in urban areas with green spaces
  - Reduced health inequalities: significant reductions in mortality and morbidity from all causes and circulatory disease associated with areas of greater green space. This result takes into account effects of income deprivation
  - Improvement in air and noise quality
  - Economic benefits (for more detail, please see background document 4).
- 3.33 Research by Public Health England and UCL Institute of Health Equity (background document 3) has reported:
- Access to outdoor space is not equal across the population of England. Research shows that people living in the most deprived areas are less likely to have access to green areas, and will therefore have less opportunity to gain the health benefits compared to people living in more affluent areas.
  - Increasing the use of good quality green space for all social groups (a universal approach) is likely to improve health outcomes and reducing inequalities. It can also bring other benefits such as greater community cohesion and less social isolation.
  - Proximity to plentiful, good quality outdoor space has an important influence on the health of local people. Furthermore, good quality outdoor space which is accessible is associated with better and more frequent use.
- 3.34 As such, encouraging people to have contact with safe, green spaces can improve a number of aspects of mental and physical health and wellbeing, as well as various social and environmental indicators. Safe, green spaces can increase levels of communal activity across different social groups, as well as increase residents' satisfaction with their local area.
- 3.35 In particular, the benefit of green spaces in helping to promote regular physical activity is significant. Research shows that physical activity can boost self-esteem, mood, sleep quality and energy, as well as reducing the risk of stress, depression, dementia and Alzheimer's disease (NHS Choices website). Current local information about use of green spaces for health reasons is not available for Bradford District (beyond PHOF 1.16). However section 3.71 highlights some of the many examples of green spaces being used for physical activity and health reasons.
- 3.36 Nationally, there has been a significant decline in time spent outside for children and teenagers over a five-year period (see background document 5). Positively,

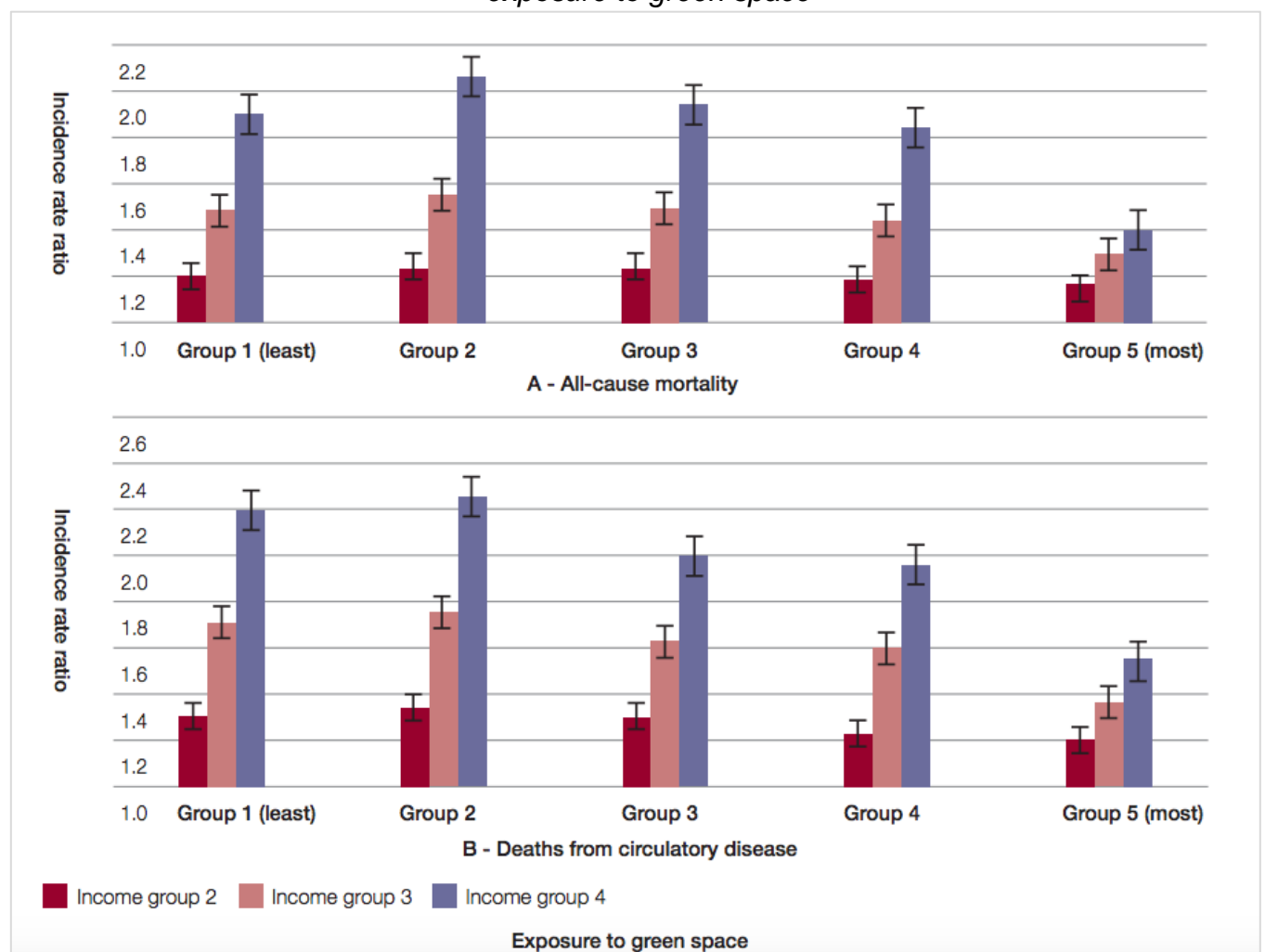
research shows that spending time outside playing is likely to increase the physical activity levels of children. In areas with limited access to green space, research from Play England highlighted that temporary road closures for ‘Street Play’ helped children to meet the daily target of 60 minutes moderate to vigorous physical activity set out in the government’s obesity strategy.

### 3.4 The impact of green space on health and social inequalities

3.41 Access and proximity to green space is not equally distributed across the Bradford population, as highlighted by Maps 1 and 2 above. People living in more deprived neighbourhoods tend to experience less favourable living and environmental conditions compared to people living in more affluent areas. For example, research has shown that nationally the 20% most affluent wards in England have five times the amount of outdoor space compared with the 10% most deprived wards.

3.42 Such inequalities have an impact on accessing the benefits associated with green space, including health outcomes. Graph 2 shows an income-related gradient in all cause and circulatory disease mortality. The graph shows that people who have less exposure to green space are likely to die earlier. This association appears to be stronger for people from lower-income groups.

*Graph 2: income-related gradient in all cause and circulatory disease mortality, and exposure to green space*



3.5.3 The distribution of outdoor space is also related to levels of urbanisation. Living in urban areas can expose people to stressors including noise, pollution, crowding, fear of crime and limited access to good quality outdoor space. Research suggests that those most at risk of poor health are more likely to live in the most deprived environments, which can have a cumulatively negative impact on health.

3.5.4 To reduce inequalities it is important that interventions to improve access to green spaces are available to the whole population (a universal approach), but with a scale and intensity that is proportionate to local need. Integrating principles of sustainability (see section 3.93) will further protect communities and their environments from widening inequalities.

### 3.6 *Motivations and barriers regarding the use of green space*

3.6.1 Analysis of the MENE survey at a national level identified a range of reasons why people were motivated to use outdoor spaces. These included:

- Exercising dogs
- Personal health and exercise
- Relaxation and unwinding
- Enjoying fresh air
- Pleasant weather and scenery

3.6.2 Research from the Health Foundation adds to the evidence that health is influenced by how our surroundings make us feel and the opportunities they provide. Good places, spaces and buildings create opportunities to:



3.6.3 The MENE survey identified several groups who were less likely to visit outdoor spaces than the national average. These included:



- Some minority ethnic groups
- Urban deprived populations
- More disadvantaged socioeconomic groups
- People aged over 65
- Disabled people

3.6.4 A range of reasons were reported by the MENE survey for not using outdoor spaces. These included:

- Being too busy at work
- Poor weather
- Being too busy at home
- Poor health and old age
- As well as no particular reason

3.6.5 Data collected from the MENE survey as part of an intervention that sought to increase green space engagement among 'hard to reach groups' found people unwilling to use outdoor spaces due to poor maintenance of sites, inadequate facilities and personal safety fears.

### ***3.7 Using green space for health reasons across Bradford District***

3.71 Below are some local examples of local green space being used for health reasons across the Bradford District:

- Cycling 4 all initiative in Lister Park (sessions available for students and the public)
- Bradford parkrun (Lister Park), Horton Park parkrun and a junior parkrun in Roberts Park (free weekly events where participants run 5k)
- Walking groups (e.g. dementia friendly walks, voluntary walking groups in parks)
- Daily Mile (daily 15 minute walk for children in participating schools)
- Bradford City Runs (take place in the Autumn)
- Cycle Super Highway (to Leeds)
- GreenLine Mile routes (four available, with a fifth in development)
- Active Travel to School Programme provided by Sustrans (the programme works with schools and children on walking, cycling and scooting)
- Grange Interlink, Thornbury Centre and Keighley Healthy Living Centre provide programmes to increase physical activity, an important element of this is utilising green space and encouraging walking and cycling
- HAPP (Healthy Active Play Partners) for families with overweight children aged 5-11, much of the opportunities that families are encouraged to take up are outdoor programmes, using their local park and play pods
- Community allotments
- Park gyms (e.g. Bowling Park, Lund Park and White Bear Recreation Ground)
- Children's playgrounds
- Bradford City Cycling mass Participation event (takes place in summer)
- HSBC Lets Ride and Social Ride Programme (in partnership with British Cycling)

### **3.8 *Local opportunities to strengthen the use of green spaces for health***

3.81 Although not explicitly mentioned, promoting and using outdoor space for health reasons supports the strategic priorities of the Bradford district:

- The Bradford District Plan (2016-2020)
- The Bradford Council Plan (2016-2020)
- The Core Strategy Development Plan (with particular reference to Green Infrastructure)
- Integrated Early Years Strategy (2015-2018)
- Active Bradford Physical Activity and Sport – strategic framework (2017)
- Bradford Playing Pitch Strategy Assessment Report and Strategy (2014-2021)
- Physical Activity Charter (in development)
- Better Start Bradford funding and activities

3.82 Evidence highlights that in order to reduce inequalities in access to green space, interventions to improve access should be available to the whole population, but with scale and intensity that is proportionate to need. Local authorities are well placed to understand local needs and deliver appropriate action to provide good quality, safe and accessible areas of green space that meet the needs of all their population.

3.83 It is important to consider what motivates local residents to engage with green spaces and venture outside. Doing so may help overcome common barriers that prevent people from accessing and engaging with green spaces, as well as improving community cohesion and action.

3.84 Local community groups can play a part in increasing accessibility, engagement and use of green space and therefore increase local community assets. Action taken by local community groups includes creating play areas and taking part in cleaning up operations.

### **3.9 *Local challenges in using green spaces for health***

3.91 There are limited finances available for initiatives promoting the use of green spaces for health. Although numerous green spaces exist across the district, there are increasing pressures on the options to maintain the upkeep of such assets.

3.92 Local survey findings from Better Start Bradford indicate some perceptions and concern regarding green spaces being unsafe or unsuitable for use. Such perceptions are important as they influence the motivations and behaviours of residents to engage and use their local green spaces.

3.93 A third challenge in promoting the use of green spaces across the district is to integrate principles of sustainability to protect communities and their environments. The five principles of sustainability are considered to include the following:



#### **4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

- 4.1 Tackling public health issues required long term commitment and investment. Much of this already exists and is directed towards activity which will positively influence this indicator. This includes Council investment as well as external funding from central government departments.

#### **5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

- 5.1 None

#### **6. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

- 6.1 Part 1 of the Health and Social Care Act 2012 (the Act) places legal responsibility for Public Health within Bradford Council. Specifically Section 12 of the Act created a new duty requiring Local Authorities to take such steps as they consider appropriate to improve the health of the people in its area. The Public Health department in the Local Authority supports the performance of this duty.
- 6.2 Section 31 of the Act required Local Authorities to pay regards to guidance issued by the Secretary of State for Health when exercising their public health functions and in particular Local Authorities are required to have regard to the Department of Health's Public Health Outcomes Framework.

#### **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

##### **7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

- 7.11 Access to outdoor space is not equal across the population of England. Research shows that people living in the most deprived areas are less likely to have access to green areas, and will therefore have less opportunity to gain the health benefits compared to people living in more affluent areas.

##### **7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**



- 7.21 Provision of green space will be important for future district residents. Demographic, environmental and economic pressures are liable to persist into the mid 21st Century. The report highlights the need to recognise the contribution of green spaces for health outcomes. A sustainability oriented policy approach will ensure that green space is safeguarded for future generations. Green space is being increasingly seen as an important protective and resilient infrastructure to buffer populations against climate impacts. Its value will increase as climate impacts worsen.

### **7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS**

- 7.31 Actions to improve utilisation of green spaces may reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Active travel is a low cost abatement option which, if effective could significantly reduce GHG emissions. Local environmental improvement and social activity to increase active travel are intrinsic to this approach. More broadly, GHGs are embedded in natural assets and degradation will result in emissions.

### **7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.41 In broad terms, perception of safety and security within residential and community environments can be influenced by proximity and access to good quality green space.

### **7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

- 7.51 None

### **7.6 TRADE UNION**

- 7.61 None

### **7.7 WARD IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.71 PHOF indicators are complex and are influenced by differences in economic, cultural and social factors across populations and communities. Across the 30 wards of Bradford, achievement against each of the indicators will vary substantially.

### **7.8 AREA COMMITTEE ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS (for reports to Area Committees only)**

- 7.81 None

## **8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

- 8.1 None

## **9. OPTIONS**

- 9.1 None provided

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 The views of the Environment and Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee are requested.

## **11. APPENDICES**

- 11.1 None

## **12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

1. Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 31 March 2015
2. Minutes of a meeting of the Environment and Waste Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on Tuesday 8 March 2016
3. Public Health England and UCL Institute of Health Equity, Health Equity Evidence Review 8 (September 2014) "Local action on health inequalities: improving access to green spaces"
4. Faculty of Public Health, briefing statement "Great Outdoors: How Our Natural Health Service Uses Green Space to Improve Wellbeing", 2010
5. Cleland et al, Predictors of time spent outdoors among children: 5-year longitudinal findings, Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, Vol64 Issue 5