Handout 6

**Equal Access to Green Spaces Fact Sheet[[1]](#footnote-1)**

People exposed to poor quality environments are more likely to experience poorer health outcomes than people who enjoy good quality environments.

There are lower rates of mortality across all groups with greater exposure to green space.

More generally, open space provides a platform for community activities, social interaction, physical activity and recreation, as well as reducing social isolation, improving community cohesion and positively affecting the wider determinants of health. For example, there is evidence of an association between social capital – such as volunteering, community trust and local safety – and health, including protective factors against dementia and cognitive decline in over-65s linked to social participation and community empowerment.

Evidence on the health benefits associated with use of green spaces is wide-ranging including positive associations with general health, health benefits associated with higher levels of physical activity, improved mental health and wellbeing as well as positive physiological effects of better quality environments.

Green space helps contribute to a healthier living environment overall, which is likely to have a positive impact on health. Research indicates that green space can improve the environmental quality of an area with consequential health benefits: improved air and water quality, and noise absorption are some of the environmental benefits that green spaces can provide. Additionally, green spaces can improve absorption of excessive rainwater, as vegetation intercepts rainfall leading to more evapotranspiration, reducing surface run-off and thereby the likelihood of flooding and sewage overflow, while protecting biodiversity and enhancing ecosystems.

1. **Source**: UCL Institute of Health Equity <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/improving-access-to-green-spaces> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)