

This is a repository copy of A toolkit for the use of mapping tools to consider opportunities for health and nature recovery.

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Harrison, Laura Jane orcid.org/0000-0003-3923-7083, Cowie, Catherine Elizabeth, Clarke, Emma et al. (2 more authors) (2025) A toolkit for the use of mapping tools to consider opportunities for health and nature recovery. University of York, York, UK.

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What I saw

Using the worksheet and maps, I could spot areas which had mutiple challenges, such as low access to green space, high deprivation and environmental issues around air pollution and urban heating. I could also see communities with high deprivation who technically had access to quiality greenspace withn 15 minutes of home, but still had high health needs.

Some results were expected, while others were surprising. In either case, seeing this data mapped out visually was incredibly impactful, helping to highlight particular areas that required attention.

What I wanted to find out more about

I wanted to know what kinds of partners were already or could be engaging people with nature, and whether these were in areas with high or low access to nature

I wondered whether the greenspaces on the map were safe and suitable, given feedback from our team about the areas in question. I also wanted to test my ideas for projects, using the map as a visual aid.

How I used the toolkit

I choose the map layers that showed what greenspace was available across the city. I also looked at the access different areas had to nature, and looked at the 'public rights of way', like footpaths, going out into the countryside. I also took a look at the health data, which showed the prevalence of 'limiting long term illnesses' across the city. Lastly, I checked for varous environmental issues, such as flooding and urban heat.

I made screen shots of each map, and used the worksheet to capture my initial thoughts.

What this told me

I could see routes spanning north to south and east to west from the city where public rights of way linked various parks and nature reserves together. Could clever planting along the route support polinators like bees, providing a community activity while making the space more attractive to people. Could signage encourage more people to connect with nature and get involved with nature recovery? And could these nature networks link up with active travel and food growing efforts?

Result

The mapping and worksheet have provided me with a starting point for further conversatoins. This can inform community projects currently being scoped with our partners. I can also point to the evidence I used to inform my decisions and link with a rnage of health and nature policies such as the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for the area. Ultimately, this will help the value for money of the projects, helping us effectively engage with communities to create a thriving city for people and nature.

As a public health professional, I want to understand where in the city area there were health needs, and where we could target action to increase access to nature both closer to home and further afield so we make best use of nature as a community resource to promote the health of people while caring for the environment and linking to our other programmes.

How to use the toolkit

- 1. Review the introduction and information about health, nature and environemtn. Consider what challenges and opportunities you are interested in.
- 2. Click on the journey you want to use site level or area level. Download and save the worksheet, making sure you have it bandy
- 3. Review each section, deciding on an area you want to look at, e.g. a city. You can to zoom in on a particular area later depending on what you find.
- 4. Take screenshots of your mapping as you go and add these to the worksheet.
- 5. Add your thoughts to the worksheet as
- 6. Once finished, reflect on what you have seen. What does this tell you? What do you want to find out mote about?
- 7. This will provide you with initial evidence for further exploration. What do you need to find out more about? Further resources are provided.

You may like to do this in a group of 2-3 people initally.