**Facts & figures**

Research in 2010 showed: *“ 87% of people have used their park or green space in the past year, more than any other public service, and 95% of people thought it was very or fairly important to have green spaces near to where they live.”* . *“ if people are satisfied with their local park they tend to be satisfied with their council.”*[[1]](#footnote-1)

* Obesity and inactivity are impairing & shortening the lives of millions of people in Britain. Almost 25% of British adults are clinically obese with a further 40%[[2]](#footnote-2) overweight and in danger of becoming obese. 18.9% of 10–11 year olds are obese[[3]](#footnote-3) - if not tackled this will be a drain on the NHS for years to come.
* Obese and overweight patients cost the NHS £4.2bn per year with a further £11.6bn lost to the economy[[4]](#footnote-4) through lost work days etc. A major cause of obesity, and other health problems, is inactivity - 23% of adults are classified as inactive, reducing this to 22% would save the NHS an estimated £1.44bn[[5]](#footnote-5). A brisk walk every day, in a local park, can reduce the risk of heart attacks by 50%, strokes by 50%, diabetes by 50%, fracture of the femur by 30%, colon cancer by 30%, breast cancer by 30% and Alzheimer‘s by 25%[[6]](#footnote-6).
* Almost 25% of Britons are classified as obese - compared with a European average of 16.7%.[[7]](#footnote-7)
* Type 2 diabetes accounted for less than 3% of all diabetes cases in adolescents in 1990, but that share had risen to 45% in 2005[[8]](#footnote-8).
* Physical inactivity affects 60–70% of the adult population and increases the risk of obesity, type II diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, hypertension and overall bad health[[9]](#footnote-9).
* MIND recommends that green exercise be seen as a clinically valid treatment for mental distress[[10]](#footnote-10). The treatment of mental illness in England requires annual NHS expenditure of £3.8 billion[[11]](#footnote-11).
* Simply being outside in a green space can promote mental well-being, relieve stress, overcome isolation, improve social cohesion and alleviate physical problems[[12]](#footnote-12).
* Unlike antidepressant drugs that cost £750 million a year, green exercise is free and does not carry the potential for negative side effects[[13]](#footnote-13).
1. CABE Space 2010, Urban Green Nation: Building the Evidence. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
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3. Government Office for Science. (2007). Foresight: Tackling Obesities: Future Choices - Project Report. 2nd Edition [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Lifestyle statistics team, Health and Social Care Information Centre (2013) National Child Measurement Programme: England, 2012/13 school year. London: HSCIC [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The Forestry Commission. (2005). Economic Benefits of Accessible Green Spaces for Physical and Mental Health    [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Bird, W. (2002). Green Space and our Health; paper to London Greenspace conference [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. OECD/European Union (2014), “Overweight and obesity among adults”, in Health at a Glance: Europe 2014, OECD Publishing. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/health\_glance\_eur-2014-23-en [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. O. Pinhas-Hamiel and P. Zeitler, “The global spread of type 2 diabetes mellitus in children and adolescents,” Journal of Pediatrics, v. 146, 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Department of Health (2010) 2009 Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. MIND. 2007. Ecotherapy: the green agenda for mental health. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The Department of Health. 2004. At least five a week: Evidence on the impact of physical activity and its’ relationship to health. A report from the Chief Medical Officer [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. CABE. (2009). Future Health: Sustainable places for health and well-being [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Mind. (2007). Get outdoors, get active: Openmind Issue 145, May/June 2007 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)