



Report Summary

Creating spaces for community and patient wellbeing

A research report to get a better understanding of what matters most to communities in terms of the spaces that support their wellbeing, and the process involved in making these spaces available.

Aims of the research

The report was written by The Health Creation Alliance, a national cross-sector network addressing health inequalities through Health Creation. They conducted interviews and surveys with ten community groups to:

- Uncover what it is about spaces, and the processes involved in making the spaces available, that helps or hinders communities (especially underserved communities) to create health.
- Identify some of the common factors that many different communities value about spaces as well as some of the different factors that matter to particular types of communities.

The report highlights eight common themes that matter to these communities in creating and using spaces, and includes ten case studies, one on each community group, so we can better understand the nuances and similarities that exist.

This summary gives a high level overview, but the full report should be read for those looking for more detail and recommendations. You can read the report here.

Who was interviewed?

- Carers
- People with and recovering from drug and alcohol dependency
- Rural communities
- People with a learning disability
- People of Somali origin or heritage
- People with experience of mental ill-health
- People from the LGBTQ+ community
- Women from South Asian origin or heritage
- People with a disability
- People from the Roma community

Common factors that matter to many communities

		The Community									
		Carers	Drugs/Alcohol	Rural	Learning Disabilities	Somali	Mental Health	LGBTQ+	South Asian Women	Disabled	Roma
	Sense of ownership of space	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	
	Flexibility over times they can use the space		✓			✓		✓	✓		✓
	Trust building outreach	✓					✓	✓			✓
	Trained, culturally sensitive, inclusive facilities management	✓			✓		✓	✓		✓	
	Affordable café	✓	✓		✓		✓			✓	
	Welcoming spaces to connect with others outside their 'group'	✓		✓						✓	
	Suitable spaces to connect with others within their (cultural) community					✓		✓	✓		✓
	Transport access	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
	Importance of being multi-purpose (to mix with others and escape stigma)	✓			✓		✓			✓	
	A range of support services/social activities at venue	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Affordable childcare facilities/creche								✓		✓

The big themes

Big theme one



Understanding and overcoming the trust deficit

There are significant levels of wariness, scepticism and distrust of NHS and other statutory services across many groups. There is a desire to have more positive relationships though and groups are willing to engage, as long as services are listening. There were different reasons behind the lack of trust across the communities. These need to be understood, acknowledged and addressed if the NHS is to win back trust.

To build trust, estate owners should make the effort to talk to people on their own turf, like barber shops, parks, temples, mosques etc... not hospitals and GP surgeries.

Big theme two



Greater recognition of community-led and peer-led activity

There is a broad range of community activity that happens outside of formal NHS Social Prescribing and could be supported by NHSPS and other estate owners.

Some communities are quite self-sufficient and will seek support from others in their community before turning to the NHS. They would therefore like to manage facilities in spaces, like cafés and creches, themselves, or even own the whole facility.

Other people look to peers that have gone through similar experiences to help improve their wellbeing and suggested NHSPS and other facilities owners could make spaces available for peers to meet.

'Creating spaces for community wellbeing' would therefore be a more inclusive programme name rather than Social Prescribing and more research should be done to find out how spaces can be used to support all these activities.

Big theme three



What and why; multi-purpose spaces

Multi-purpose spaces can mean the same space being used by multiple communities for different purposes. It can also mean integrating a range of different services within one building so people can access all of them in one visit. Creating these types of spaces allow different people to connect and can promote and encourage services that people otherwise may not have engaged with. 'Connecting activities' that serve many different groups, like an affordable café, a gig night, bbq and wifi help bring people together where they might find wellbeing.

It's important to consider the specific needs of communities with multi-purpose spaces, to make sure they are created in a culturally sensitive way. For example, a Thursday night could be when South Asian women take over the café as they request women-only spaces.

Private rooms and a mix of small and larger spaces are important in multi-purpose buildings.

Big theme four

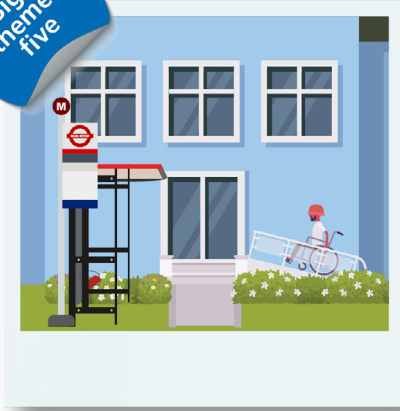


Location of the premises

What constitutes a 'good location' and what to avoid, varies depending on the community group. Rural communities agreed towns and villages are usually the most sensible places for venues due to the dispersed nature of residents and infrequent public transport, but pointed out that flexibility of access to unused NHS buildings in remote areas could unlock opportunities.

Groups asked to be listened to about where to invest and consulted on how investment could help improve the surroundings outside of the building, as they've got past experiences of their advice not being followed in the past and then buildings not being used.

Big theme five



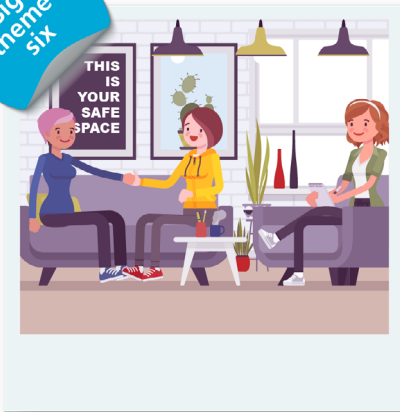
Transport, parking, access and accessibility

While accessibility of buildings themselves was the main theme for the group of disabled people, it was also raised as important by other groups who have older or disabled members and who want to create an accessible environment. Being able to get to venues by public transport, and lack of appropriate parking were big concerns for numerous groups. Transport audits should be undertaken, looking at public transport costs and timetables, and a working group of users and transport managers could discuss the issues and find solutions.

Being able to book venues easily, especially in rural areas, was considered a big factor in how useful a space is. Current room booking systems were seen as awkward and preventative. Several groups asked for keys.

The Disabled group suggested Access Statements were added to websites for every building.

Big theme six



Welcoming environments

Almost all the groups said that a welcoming environment that is safe and comfortable is very important. When this type of environment is created, people are more likely to feel relaxed and more able to talk and connect with others.

Community buildings need to be validating, affirming spaces that allow human beings a space to express themselves. For some groups, this means actively communicating they are welcome and for others, it means feeling safe by having times/spaces that are reserved for them.

A mix of large communal and small private spaces are desirable and having a clean and attractive outside area makes people feel calm and relaxed going into the building.

The potential to host hybrid online/face-to-face meetings through screens in some meeting rooms was seen as welcoming to those who couldn't access the buildings physically.

Big theme seven



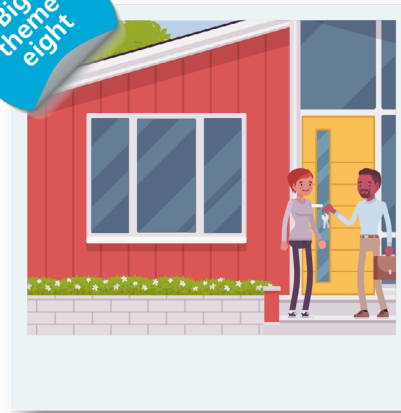
Quality and inclusive culture in facilities management

The quality of facilities management came up frequently in the conversations. Buildings need to be proactively maintained to ensure they remain accessible and good communication about this is vital.

Most groups feel that facilities managers need to be well trained in how to manage premises and foster good relationships in an inclusive fashion. This creates an environment for wellbeing and reduces potential for unconscious discrimination. Ideally, many groups spoke about employing facilities managers with lived

experiences of being part of an underserved community.

Big theme eight



Ownership of or control over the premises and processes

Having more control over access to premises and how they are run – including who owns and controls the buildings – emerged spontaneously in some of the focus groups. While the perspectives and reasons varied, the standard model of leasing to a main tenant who then sublets the premises to a range of community groups, was felt to be too narrow. Giving groups ownership over their own space would make them feel empowered and committed to making sure it is 'right for them'.

Some groups wanted to have access to the building, for example by having keys or key codes, so that they could enter and use the premises out of hours, at times that best suit their community. This increases access to the things that matter to communities that would make their lives better.

