

Outdoors and Health Network

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VC Roundtable Discussion – 29th April, 2009

Speakers: Professor Richard Mitchell, Professor Jane Farmer, Mags Currie and Frances Hines

Participants: Dr Sarah-Anne Munoz, Prof Steve Cummins, John Watkins, Prof Andrew Church

Nine OHN members took part in the first video conference with four presenting a brief overview of their work to the rest of the members. Jane and Mags talked about their research interests which have a very practical/policy orientated focus, Frances discussed her work within NHS Highland as the research and development manager, and Richard described his research background and highlighted some projects he has worked on which are linked to the OHN.

After each presentation, there was time for discussion between participants. This allowed for the exchange of ideas and for OHN members to start making connections between their work and interests. Some interesting points emerged through the discussion:

- There is a need to gather causal evidence on the relationship between the outdoors and health. Could the OHN look for opportunities to conduct and carry out experimental studies? Possibly examining situations such as new woodland being planted or new paths laid?
- Is there a public sector obsession with beautifying greenspace? Could this be off-putting to children who want to build huts or just simply play amongst the woods? Do people really want to see flowers and neat gardens; does this affect their use of the greenspace?
- What are the effects on the health of people who choose to work in the outdoors or grew up in the outdoors/rural areas as opposed to urban?
- The idea of looking at ethnicity; it is a factor in the use of the outdoors in urban areas, what about the whole of the UK?
- What are the main influences on peoples' access to greenspace? Is distance key to accessibility when thinking about the use of the outdoors?