

Nature Premium submission to Change NHS

Our NHS is broken, but not beaten. Together we can fix it.

Background: We would like to see the Government introduce a Nature Premium *that would guarantee ALL children and young people regular and ongoing nature experiences with additional funding for those who need it most.* The Nature Premium is an ambitious idea that would help those children from disadvantaged ethnic communities, and deprived families and still be fair to all children. [Government research shows](#) that **87% of children** have stated that being in nature makes them '**very happy**'. Connecting with nature improves mental and physical health as well as educational, emotional and personal development. In a recent [Natural England report](#), the forecast Social Return on Investment (SROI) for schools that have embedded learning outside the classroom in natural environments as a whole school approach is **£4.32 for every £1 invested**. In addition, research shows that a close relationship with nature is [4 times more important](#) than your purchasing power for **generating feelings that your life is worthwhile**. We believe that the Nature Premium will:

- enable children and young people to learn how to manage their own mental and physical wellbeing through connecting with nature.
- give them agency to deal with the climate emergency and loss of biodiversity.
- Support them to 'grow up greener' and contribute to a sustainable economy.

The [Why Society Needs Nature Report](#) (2021), stated that green and natural spaces are seen as places that should encourage mental health and exercise by 89% of people in England, and in Scotland 70% of people reported mental health benefits from enjoying nature. Unfortunately, socio-economic factors play an important role in who is visiting natural spaces, with adults on lower incomes, with lower education, the unemployed and those living in the most deprived areas making fewer visits into nature. This illustrates that there is an inequity of access to nature between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. This inequity of access to nature was 'brought to light' and exacerbated by the 2020/21 Lockdowns resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

- [71% of children](#) from **ethnic minority** backgrounds reported spending less time outside since the pandemic, compared with 57% of white children.
- Three-quarters (73%) of children from households with annual income below £17,000 spent less time outdoors, compared with 57% from households with an annual income above £17,000.

The socio-economic status of parents should not:

- dictate how often their children access nature.
- Mean that children miss out on the associated benefits of spending time in nature.
- Stop children learning how to manage their own mental and physical wellbeing.
- Stop children 'growing up greener' to thrive in the 21st century.

[Research](#) shows that connecting children with nature is **equigenic** in that it disrupts the usual relationship between economic disadvantage and a poor health outcome. The Nature Premium would be fair to all AND provide **a greater** benefit to children from ethnic minority communities and lower economic status groups.

The idea: A Nature Premium guaranteeing regular and ongoing nature experiences for all children and young people, apart from improving their engagement with education, would include an understanding of:

- how to manage their own mental wellbeing.
- how to live a sustainable life and develop their love of nature.
- the potential skills and career opportunities in traditional and innovative green economies.
- how to develop agency to address the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis.
- How to safely explore the countryside and respect other adventurers.

There is an urgent need to get children into nature. The Nature Premium Campaign has been working to present a practical and workable proposal. Our proposal would be quick to set up and roll out over the next few years and would have an immediate positive impact on both children and staff. Healthier children who understand how to manage their mental and physical wellbeing will save the NHS budgets for others.

For more information and to discuss our proposal further please contact:

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