

GREEN WAYS TO HEALTH

GARTNAVEL HOSPITALS

“Site users love what they discover when they turn a corner or peer through a door.”

CHALLENGES

The western part of the site offers large areas of high quality green space, and the new path network makes it easily accessible from the eastern side too. But it is difficult to spread the word about the opportunities it provides with a site the size of Gartnavel, where many different units operate more or less independently. A later phase of the project will address this by installing murals inspired by the natural environment in the entrance lobbies of individual units, together with a walking leaflet and map boards showing the grounds and path network.

The environmental improvements can also bring challenges for the way the grounds are maintained. It can take persuasion for estate maintenance teams to leave wildflower areas uncut for the summer, or to accept that the trees and woods need active management, rather than only reacting to emergencies such as broken branches and diseased trees. A greener approach to managing the NHS estate means a shift in perspective to see hospital grounds not simply as a space to be maintained with as little effort as possible, but as an important asset that provides a positive physical environment for health and wellbeing.



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CASE STUDY



ATTRACTIVE BUT UNDER-USED

Research among healthcare professionals, patients and visitors showed that people who knew of the parkland around Gartnavel Royal thought it was attractive, but only about half of them used the space regularly. People who reached the hospitals by car were less aware of the designed landscape.

The project created new routes to increase access to the parkland, as well as providing high quality surfaces on existing desire lines.

Those who did use the grounds for walks and breaks said the green space helped them “de-stress, relax and unwind”, or that it made them feel “energised and revitalised”. But lack of time was a common barrier to spending time outdoors. People also said that having more seating would encourage them to use the space.

GREENER APPROACHES

A master plan developed by a landscape architect aimed to create more green space around the buildings of Gartnavel General, especially along the main approach routes, and to develop an integrated network of paths across the campus as a whole. New fruit trees and wildflower areas add diversity to the landscape. Paving and seats at key path intersections give them an identity, and other seating encourages staff, patients and visitors to take breaks without needing to go far from the hospital buildings.

Trail names were chosen through consultation with healthcare staff, and signpost materials are indeliberate contrast to the standard hospital signs.



CASE STUDY

GROWING SPACES



The project also worked with an existing initiative, Art in the Gart, through which third sector organisations have developed therapeutic work, arts projects and links with the local community. A beautiful walled garden outside the former Physician Superintendent's house was opened up and has been re-planted by volunteers, many of them from commercial businesses such as banks that are keen to extend their social responsibility work.

Before the project, the walled garden outside the 19th century Superintendent's house was boarded up and neglected.

An intriguing six-sided summerhouse has been restored for use as a greenhouse for gardening therapy work at Gartnavel Royal, as well as a multi-purpose space for arts workshops and 'meet the neighbours' events, welcoming local residents to the site. The summerhouse operates as a hub for therapeutic activity and provides a shelter in inclement weather, allowing people to use the space all year round.

Art in the Gart already ran a small garden plot where patients grow vegetables and flowers: the project extended this so it is now used by a nursery and the local community as well.

Volunteers re-planted the garden to create a peaceful space that's open to all.

In many ways, the developments at Gartnavel are a return to 19th century ideals of linking health care to exercise and contact with the natural environment, fresh air and sunshine. Even small scale interventions, such as the planting and seating on entrance routes, make a big difference to the way people experience the hospital. The project has created more user-friendly outdoor spaces, allowing people to get away from clinical areas and waiting rooms to enjoy a break or short walk in the hospital grounds.



CASE STUDY

Gartnavel General and Gartnavel Royal hospitals share a large campus in the west of Glasgow, together with general hospital services and office accommodation for many staff from NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. The campus is the base for specialist units such as the Brownlee Centre for communicable diseases, a Maggie's cancer support centre, and the Beatson, the west of Scotland cancer care centre. Patients at Gartnavel General often have to visit regularly, for example for cancer treatment, and may stay for extended periods of time.

Gartnavel Royal is an in-patient psychiatric care unit with 187 beds and an active programme of occupational therapy. The Kershaw Addictions Unit has 20 beds and Claythorn House, with 12 beds, provides services for people with learning disabilities. Most of these units are in the west part of the campus, which was developed in 1843 as a designed landscape around the Glasgow Royal Lunatic Asylum. The area is a mix of open parkland and trees, including a lime avenue leading to the former Physician Superintendent's house. Many of the original buildings are category A listed, and although some are currently unused they are still a strong part of the site's character.

Gartnavel General, on the east of the site, has been developed in a piecemeal way at different times, leaving the area dominated by large buildings, roads and car parks. However, independent units such as the Maggie's centre and the Homeopathic Hospital have been designed to provide high quality surroundings

and to offer links to the natural environment. The Green Exercise Partnership project aimed to extend this philosophy to the rest of the site as much as possible, and to improve access to the green spaces around Gartnavel Royal by clear signposting to outdoor destinations and walking routes.



KEY LEARNING POINTS

- The hospital campus was an under-used asset for health and wellbeing until the Greening the NHS Estate programme.
- Consultations with staff and patients are a valuable part of developing a site master plan.
- Think about how you can promote the opportunities the site offers, including any original landscape design features.
- Tell people they are welcome to use and have permission to explore the hospital grounds and growing spaces
- Improve access infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists and provide more rest areas and seating in hospital grounds.
- Provide attractive greenspace and seating as close as possible to work places – hospital staff get just one 30-minute and two 15-minute breaks during the day.
- Involve estate and grounds maintenance staff in adopting long-term greenspace maintenance and management plans. As well as bringing health benefits, this promotes biodiversity and helps wildlife on the campus.
- Work with partners such as third-sector organisations that can help facilitate access and coordinate activities in growing spaces.

THE GREEN EXERCISE PARTNERSHIP is a joint venture between Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and Health Scotland (the health improvement board of the National Health Service in Scotland). The Partnership aims to build links between the health and environment sectors, following growing evidence that public health can be improved by getting people engaged with the natural environment.

Through its Greening the NHS Estate programme, the Partnership aims to establish at least one project in each of the eleven mainland Area Health Boards. The projects aim to show the health benefits that flow from positive investment in and management of the NHS estate – the greenspace around hospitals and healthcare centres.

