DEVELOPMENT OF A QUALITY ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR 'DOORSTEP' GREEN SPACE IN DEPRIVED URBAN COMMUNITIES

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Background and Aims: Green space is a fundamental aspect of health-promoting neighbourhood environments. Despite evidence that the potential health benefits of green space are greatest for those in deprived and urban areas, in the UK, the most accessible local or 'doorstep' green space in these communities tends to be neglected and underused. As quality is a necessary precursor to use (and associated health benefits), it is important to understand relevant quality characteristics. We describe the development of a green space audit tool for use in 'doorstep' green space in deprived urban areas.
Methods: An existing tool (Foster et al. 2006) was adapted in two phases. A pilot phase in a deprived neighbourhood in Stoke-on-Trent, UK, used focus groups (35 adults; 23 children) and a postal survey (n=170) to capture key facilitators and barriers to using green space. The original items and scoring protocols were adapted and piloted in nine green spaces in deprived neighbourhoods (recreation areas; ≥2 hectares; unrestricted public access) to test protocols, utility and scoring. The second phase (ongoing) involved onsite user surveys to finalise items and appropriate domain weights to reflect the relative importance of different green space characteristics.
Results: Pilot work indicated that antisocial behaviour (and associated markers/'incivilities') and inadequate facilities were the greatest barriers to use. The piloted tool comprised six domains weighted on the basis of preliminary analysis: Access (10%), Recreation facilities (25%), Amenities (15%), Incivilities (25%), Usage (10%) and Overall impression (15%). Ongoing surveys and re-analysis of pilot data will verify these domain weights, with subsequent testing in further deprived urban areas (n~20 sites) to test feasibility, content validity, and inter-rater reliability.
Conclusions: The final audit tool and development process will be presented and made available for further testing in other areas of the UK and Europe.

References:
Foster, C., Hillsdon, M., Jones, A. and Panter, J. Assessing the relationship between the quality of the urban green space and physical activity, 2006. London: CABE.
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