

## Section 7: Reimagining a sustainable future for everyone

Health Creation is the only long-term solution for reducing health inequity, improving population health and for the sustainability of our health and social care system. It will also create a healthier, more equitable and more sustainable future for everyone.



### Better for people

Shifting the focus from transactions, internal patient flows and treatments to connections that build confidence enabling people to take control, which enhances their health and wellbeing, will make life better for patients, for the health and care workforce and for other services too. Because preventable illness due to inequity is expensive; it drains our national resources and is a shared problem for the whole of society to address together. Citizens' Advice reports a 1671% increase in social prescribing-related activity from 2018 to 2023; in the first four months of 2024 Citizens' Advice Bureaux have conducted almost double the amount of social prescribing activity compared to the whole of 2019. This is not, then, a matter of displacement, shifting the demand from one part of the system to another, but of mutual gain as the overall burden is reduced across many service areas.

Working together, investing in communities and playing to strengths is an investment that benefits the whole of society. It is not only efficient, as capacity across the wider ecosystem is used in the most appropriate way, but it is also enlivening for everyone. If we do this, we should expect greater productivity from the UK workforce as their health and wellbeing, and levels of optimism and energy, are enhanced.

### Better for our planet

Health of people and the environment are closely inter-twined. Indeed, climate change has been identified as the most important health threat of the century, but it is also the greatest opportunity to redefine the social and environmental determinants of health.<sup>45</sup> In the UK, it is estimated that the average surface temperature has risen by 1.2°C resulting in greater risk of heatwaves, flooding, drought, impact on physical and mental health, and risks to people's social systems including livelihood loss, rising prices of food and fuel, supply chain disruption and further pressure on health and care services, further risking ill-health, and creating a negative vicious spiral.

Positive action towards Health Creation has the potential to have the opposite effect. For example, over 12 million people in UK have lung disease, and over 60 million inhalers are prescribed as treatment annually. NHS England have shown a case study demonstrating poor inhaler technique resulted in poor outcomes and avoidable deaths, in addition to environmental impact associated with the inhaler manufacture and use. Inhalers account for 3% of the NHS carbon footprint.<sup>46</sup> Helping people to take a more health creating approach helps not only to reduce symptoms through better management of their lung condition but benefits the environmental agenda also. Similarly, there is evidence that more green spaces, greater social connection and community resilience, improved agency through increased levels of choice and control enables people to better use the assets that already exist, enhancing environmental sustainability in the process.





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## Reimagining and leading for a better future together

Some of the social injustices that cause preventable illness are ‘baked in’ to the way our economy, society and decision-making work. It might seem an impossible ask to influence how our economies operate or the way national policies are set to enable further shifts to a better place. And were it not for the fact of our imaginations and our latent collective agency, there would be little most of us can do about it. But by reimagining the possibilities and working together – communicating, connecting and organising across divides – we can be much stronger; we can influence more than we think working collectively towards a different, more equal and healthier future for our people, places and planet.

In this manifesto we have shared some of our own thoughts, experiences and learnings – as a membership movement – to show how the green shoots of a health creating approach might connect and grow to reshape the way our health and care systems work to serve people far better. However, there are many gaps remaining where we have not even scratched the surface.

We are inviting you to continue to [join the movement](#), reimagine with us what is possible and to take up the challenge of leading towards that future.

Through 2024/25, we will publish a series of articles, blogs and videos from members of THCAe; people who are reimagining a healthier, happier, more equitable and sustainable future for everyone. If you are a member and have thoughts about what needs to be done, feel free to get in touch with your idea for an informal conversation. Contact [neil@thehealthcreationalliance.org](mailto:neil@thehealthcreationalliance.org)





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