

## Optimising the quality and utility of existing publicly accessible open space around public and private housing



A rapid scoping study by greenspace scotland  
for the Central Scotland Green Network Partnership Board

January 2013



## Executive Summary

The Central Scotland Green Network Partnership Board has identified concerns about the quality and utility of publicly accessible open space around public and private housing. They commissioned greenspace scotland to undertake a short study to investigate whether there is evidence that this is an issue, looking at any trends over time and identifying current activity in this area.

A review of evidence from Scottish research and surveys indicates that whilst Scots are generally satisfied with their local area or neighbourhood, below average levels of satisfaction are associated with feeling bad about the 'availability of green and pleasant places to walk or sit'. Social renters, people living in flats and areas of deprivation are more likely to be dissatisfied with the quality of their local greenspaces and neighbourhood. Trend data is very limited and only available from the greenspace scotland surveys. These indicate general improvements in satisfaction ratings for local greenspace between 2004 and 2011; followed by significant decreases in the 2011 results.

The stakeholders interviewed were unanimous in their view that there are significant problems with the quality and utility of open space around housing. Some indicated that whilst this was previously seen as a problem associated with social housing, there are now increasing issues on private and mixed developments. Issues were highlighted with the planning, design and management of open space, factoring and financial arrangements - with problems being exacerbated by the economic downturn.

An extensive evidence base demonstrates that the quality and utility of accessible open space around housing does matter – it impacts on people's health and wellbeing, sense of place and community. Scottish surveys highlight that being satisfied with the quality of your local greenspace is associated with better self-assessed health, higher life satisfaction, greater social trust and a higher sense of community cohesion

There is a supportive policy framework with housing, regeneration and planning policies recognising the importance of attractive local environments and high quality neighbourhood spaces. The need for effective partnership working and involving local residents and communities is highlighted. Recent proposals for a Scottish Neighbourhood Quality Framework could increase the priority given to the quality and utility of open space around housing.

There are a limited number of published case studies documenting good practice in the management of open space around housing. Stakeholders generally expressed the view that current practice is mixed but were able to provide some examples that they viewed as good practice. As a follow-up to this study, these could be reviewed to identify best practice management models, key success factors and good practice. There are also opportunities to learn from the partnership working and activities of the English Neighbourhoods Green initiative.

Recommendations for next steps to take forward action to address the issues of lack of utility and poor quality of open space around housing include: an 'expert seminar' to bring together key stakeholders and develop an action plan, exploring the potential for a Scottish Neighbourhoods Green Partnership, developing and promoting case studies of 'practice that works'.

## Contents

	Page
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Evidence: publicly accessible open space around public and private housing – is there a problem?</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Scottish Social Attitude Survey	4
2.2 Scottish Household Surveys	5
2.3 Greenspace Use and Attitude Surveys	5
2.4 Good Places Better Health	6
2.5 Regional information: GoWell – Glasgow	6
2.6 Local authority open space audits	7
2.7 Information from outwith Scotland	7
2.8 Evidence from the Greenbelt Action Group	8
2.9 Views of Scottish stakeholders	9
2.10 Summary	10
<b>3. Evidence: openspace around housing – does it matter?</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1 Satisfaction with greenspace, health and quality of life	13
3.2 Greenspace satisfaction and rating of local area	13
3.3 Community Green: using local spaces to tackle inequality and improve health	14
3.4 Summary	14
<b>4. Policies relating to publicly accessible open space</b>	<b>15</b>
4.1 Homes Fit for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century	15
4.2 The Scottish Social Housing Charter	15
4.3 The Property Factors (Scotland) Act 2011	16
4.4 Achieving a Sustainable Future: Regeneration Strategy	16
4.5 Scottish Planning Policy	16
4.6 Proposal for a Scottish Neighbourhood Quality Framework	17
4.7 Summary	17
<b>5. Current practice relating to publicly accessible open space</b>	<b>18</b>
5.1 Scottish examples	18
5.2 Recent and current Scottish initiatives	19
5.3 UK examples	21
5.4 Summary	24
<b>6. What needs to happen? Views from stakeholders</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>7. Conclusions and recommendations for future action</b>	<b>27</b>
References	29
Annex 1:Stakeholders interviewed	31

## 1. Introduction

The Central Scotland Green Network Partnership Board has identified concerns about the quality and utility of publicly accessible open space around public and private housing. They commissioned greenspace scotland to undertake a short study to determine:

- what evidence (beyond our own experiences/anecdotally) is there that there is an issue?
- what's the trend over the last 5-10 years in this area?
- who is currently doing what in this area?

In this desk-based, rapid scoping study greenspace scotland has:

- reviewed evidence from Scottish and UK surveys relating to public perceptions of quality of open space around housing and identifying, where possible, any variations relating to tenure, geography and deprivation  
⇒ *is there a problem?*
- summarised published research evidence on the influence of 'doorstep open space' on people, place and quality of life; and identified key policies  
⇒ *why does it matter?*
- collated and summarised information about published projects and programmes to provide an overview of activity in Scotland and the UK  
⇒ *what's happening?*
- made recommendations on short-term actions  
⇒ *what needs to happen?*

The desk-based research was supplemented by short telephone interviews with a small number of stakeholders including housing associations, local authority housing staff, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, Homes for Scotland and Chartered Institute of Housing.

## **2. Evidence: publicly accessible open space around public and private housing – is there a problem?**

This section provides a summary of published research and surveys to enable an assessment to be made about whether there is sufficient evidence to indicate that there are issues relating to the quality and utility of publicly accessible open space around housing. Where possible, any identifiable trends relating to tenure, geography and deprivation have been identified.

A short telephone survey of a small number of stakeholders was also undertaken to elicit views from the different sectors that have an interest in open space and housing. A list of the interviewees is included at Annex 1 and a summary of their comments is included at relevant points throughout the report.

### **2.1 Scottish Social Attitude Survey 2009**

The Scottish Social Attitudes (SSA) survey involves circa 1500 interviews annually. The 2009 survey included questions which explored public perceptions of their local area and greenspace. Key findings relevant to open space around housing include:

- Over half (56%) of people in Scotland rated their level of satisfaction with their local area as 8 or above (on a scale of 0 to 10). Below average levels of satisfaction were associated (independently of deprivation and income) with feeling that an area is not nice to walk around in and feeling bad about the 'availability of green and pleasant places to walk or sit'.
- Social renters are less likely to be very satisfied with their local greenspace (23% of social renters compared with 37% of private renters and 35% of owners) and more likely to be fairly or very dissatisfied (15% of social renters compared with 6% of private renters).
- People living in flats are less likely to be very satisfied with their local greenspace than people living in houses: 24% of people living in flats are very satisfied compared with 36% of people living in houses
- Area deprivation is also strongly associated with satisfaction with local greenspaces. People in the least deprived areas are almost twice as likely as those in the most deprived areas to be very satisfied with their local greenspace: 37% of people in the least deprived areas compared with 19% of people in the most deprived areas. People in the most deprived areas are the most likely to be fairly or very dissatisfied, 17% compared with 5% of people in the least deprived areas.
- Feeling disempowered, unable to do much about improving things in the local area, is linked to feeling dissatisfied with the local area: 39% of those who agreed that it is difficult for them to improve their area were dissatisfied with their area compared with only 15% of those who disagreed. Those who feel disempowered to make changes to their local areas were more likely to be young or old (rather than middle-aged), to have low levels of trust of others, to be social renters and not to be qualified to degree level.

The question module on neighbourhood attributes and greenspace has not been included in subsequent Scottish Social Attitude surveys and so it is not possible to identify any trends.

Source: *Scottish Government (2010) Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2009: Sustainable Places and Greenspace* <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/07/02134238/0>

## 2.2 Scottish Household Surveys

The Scottish Household Survey (SHS) is a continuous survey based on a sample of the general population in private residences in Scotland. Questions about greenspace were first included in 2007/8. The Annual Reports provide information on: availability of greenspace; frequency of use; association between access to greenspace and rating of neighbourhood as a good place to live; and, relationship between use of greenspace and self-reported health.

The surveys show that availability of, and satisfaction with, local greenspace contributes to people's overall rating of their neighbourhood as a good place to live. Most people rate their neighbourhood as a very, or fairly, good place to live. There are, however, area-based differences in relation to the level of deprivation, with the proportion rating their neighbourhood as very good decreasing as deprivation increases.

Whilst tenure and accommodation type are recorded for all respondents, the Annual Reports do not provide an analysis of satisfaction with greenspace (or neighbourhood) by housing tenure. In 2006, the Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland carried out an analysis of the 2003/4 SHS results; they found:

- 64% of outright owners and 55% of those buying their home with the help of a mortgage rate their area as 'very good'
- only 35% of those renting from a local authority and 33% of those renting from a housing association or co-operative say their area is 'very good'

CIH do not routinely carry out this analysis of SHS data. It may be possible to undertake further analysis of the greenspace results in relation to housing tenure; however, this was not possible within the resources available for this study.

*Source: Scottish Government (2009-2012) Scotland's People: Scottish Household Survey Annual reports <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/16002/PublicationAnnual#a2>*

*Source: Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland (2006) Discussion Paper: Improving the Neighbourhood – A Community Environment Standard for Scotland?*

## 2.3 Greenspace Use and Attitude Surveys

Since 2004 greenspace scotland has commissioned four surveys (2004, 2007, 2009 and 2011) of public opinion on urban greenspace. Each survey interviewed circa 1000 adults living in urban Scottish settlements as part of an omnibus survey. The surveys have examined use of greenspace, public attitudes of greenspace and perceptions of local spaces.

Whilst it is not possible to extract findings specifically for open space around housing, the surveys provide information on general trends in relation to perceptions of greenspace quality which may be relevant to this study.

The surveys reveal a consistent belief that greenspaces should be good places for play, physical activity and relaxation. People also believe that greenspaces should be attractive and make places 'a great place to live'. For example, in 2011, 78% of respondents strongly agreed that 'good quality greenspaces make an area a great place to live'.

Despite these positive expectations about greenspaces in general, most people report that their local greenspaces perform less well. For example, in 2011, 51% of urban Scots strongly agreed that 'my local greenspace makes the area a great place to live' (down from 57% in 2009).

## Trends over time

The 2011 survey found significant falls in people's rating (strongly agree) of their local greenspaces as:

- safe places for physical activity (60% in 2009 down to 49% in 2011)
- places where you can relax and unwind (63% down to 50%)
- attractive places (57% down to 48%)
- good places for children to play (59% down to 52%)

These results were surprising because the previous surveys had shown clear upward trends with people increasingly agreeing strongly that their local greenspaces were good places for play, physical activity, relaxation, etc. This had suggested that improvements were being made to the quality of local greenspaces.

## Regional variations

The 2011 survey provides results for respondents in the CSGN area and three sub-regions of Ayrshire; Edinburgh, Lothians & Fife; Glasgow & Clyde Valley; and Forth Valley. The 2009 results have also been re-analysed to provide results at the CSGN and sub-regional level. The CSGN area results generally mirror the Scottish results; although compared to urban Scotland, CSGN residents are less likely to agree the quality of their local greenspace is declining. There are very few significant differences between the CSGN sub-regions.

### 15% most deprived areas

As with urban Scotland, there are significant differences between people's expectations of greenspace and their perceptions of their local greenspace; this gap is greater for people living in the 15% most deprived areas. The ratings of local greenspaces by respondents living in the 15% most deprived areas are generally lower than those for urban Scotland and the CSGN area.

Source: *greenspace scotland/Progressive (2005-2011) Omnibus Surveys*  
<http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/1greenspace-survey-2011.aspx>

## 2.4 Good Places Better Health / EDPHiS

Research to inform the work of the Good Places Better Health for Children Evaluation Group found that maintenance of neighbourhood public spaces in disadvantaged areas is often lower than elsewhere. It also noted that children are more likely to be residents of these areas and they were found to be some of the neighbourhood's 'fiercest critics' of lack of upkeep.

Source: *Hiscock, R and Mitchell, R (2011) What is needed to deliver places that provide good health to children? Available on [www.edphis.org](http://www.edphis.org)*

## 2.5 Regional information: GoWell - Glasgow

GoWell is a ten-year research and learning programme that aims to investigate the impact of investment in housing, regeneration and neighbourhood renewal on the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities. It is a mixed methods study focusing on 15 disadvantaged neighbourhoods experiencing regeneration in Glasgow. It has a number of different research components including four repeat cross sectional surveys held at two or three year intervals and a longitudinal study of residents.

The '*Progress for People and Places*' report found that over the period 2006-2008, residents' ratings of parks, open spaces, and children's play areas, improved in all types of study area.

The report on the '*Regeneration Challenge in Transformation Areas*' noted that in 2006, residents' ratings of the attractiveness of their neighbourhoods were far lower in Regeneration Areas than elsewhere, and by 2008 they had declined even further as redevelopment processes got underway with clearance and demolition.

Wave 3 of the GoWell research is currently being written up and publication is planned for March 2013. This will contain an update on neighbourhood environment and its impacts. It will be useful to see how ratings have changed since 2008 and whether any trends are emerging.

Source: <http://www.gowellonline.com/>

## 2.6 Local authority open space audits

All 19 local authorities within the CSGN area have completed or are currently working on quality audits of their open space. They have adopted a range of different methods for assessing quality (e.g. Green Flag, greenspace scotland/GCVGNP quality guide) and different approaches (e.g. assessing a sample of sites or specific typologies). Generally, amenity greenspace<sup>1</sup> often has a low quality rating because it lacks a clear function.

Information from the quality audits is not collated centrally and so contact would be needed with all 18 Councils. This was not possible as part of this study but would be a useful action.

At this time, it is unlikely that any trend data will be available because most Councils have only just completed their first quality audit, but in future years, these audits might provide useful information on trends.

Source: greenspace scotland (2010) *Open Space Audits and Strategies: Review of Practice in Scotland* <http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/audits-and-strategies.aspx>

## 2.7 Information from outwith Scotland

### • **Urban Green Nation: building the evidence base (England)**

The CABE Space Urban Green Nation report draws on over 70 major data sources and an inventory of more than 16,000 individual greenspaces to begin to gauge the state of England's urban greenspace. It looks at quantity, quality, frequency of use, proximity and access, management and maintenance.

The assessment of quality draws on information from the biennial BVPI (Best Value Performance Indicators), now called the *Place* survey, which collects information about satisfaction with neighbourhood quality and includes questions about local greenspace. The report highlights regional patterns in the quality of provision, but of more interest to this study is the finding that quality is systematically worse in deprived areas and better in less deprived areas. It also found that quality is worse in areas with high levels of social renting. This report provides a baseline and so there is no information about trends over time, although the importance of gathering longitudinal data is noted.

Source: CABE Space (2010) *Urban green nation: building the evidence base* <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/urban-green-nation>

---

<sup>1</sup> amenity greenspace is the PAN65 greenspace type which is typically used to classify areas of open space around housing

- **Community Green: using local spaces to tackle inequality and improve health (England)**

The Community Green study investigated the inter-relationships between urban greenspace, inequality, ethnicity, health and wellbeing. Whilst the study focused on six deprived and ethnically diverse study areas (in Greater Manchester, West Midlands and London), the report notes that the lessons are applicable to all neighbourhoods. The study found that less than 1% of those living in social housing reported using the greenspace on their own estates and the biggest barriers were fear about personal safety, lack of facilities and poor quality.

Source: CABE Space (2010) *Community green: using local spaces to tackle inequality and improve health*

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/community-green>

- **HouseMark Estate Services Benchmarking**

HouseMark was set up by the Chartered Institute of Housing and the National Housing Federation to support the development of good practice and benchmarking in grounds maintenance. The fourth annual report covers the financial year 2011/12 and provides data for 48 members (no Scottish members submitted information for this report). A summary report is available online (the full report is available only to members). Key findings include:

- satisfaction with estate services was high - over four in five residents were satisfied with estate services overall and the overall appearance of the neighbourhood
- over three-quarters of residents were satisfied with their grounds maintenance
- the type of landlord made no significant difference to satisfaction levels
- 76% of landlords levied service charges for estate services - landlords were much more likely to use variable service charges for leaseholders (72% landlords) than for their tenants (52%)
- on average, residents paid £3.97 in service charges per week for estate services - for individual services, the median amounts per week were £1.53 for grounds maintenance
- grounds maintenance was the service most likely to be outsourced - the median cost per unit receiving a grounds maintenance service (including tree management) was £63.44
- for the organisations included in this year's analysis, housing associations paid considerably more for grounds maintenance (both including and excluding tree management) than arms-length management organisations (ALMOs) / local authorities

Summary reports for previous years are not publicly available and so identification of any trends has not been possible.

Source: HouseMark (2012) *Estate Services Benchmarking Summary report 2011/12*

<http://www.housemark.co.uk/hmkb2.nsf/2/9808422444A7C1EF80257A77002CEC57?opendocument>

## **2.8 Evidence from the Greenbelt Group Action**

The Greenbelt Group Action was set up in 2007. It is a campaign group made up of homeowners from estates across the UK to tackle problems with land-owning land maintenance companies. Blogs on the website list a catalogue of open space maintenance problems on housing estates across Scotland.

In their submission to the Scottish Government's Local Government and Communities Committee in 2010, they noted that they were in touch with around 150 estates across the UK (mostly in Scotland) that have reported problems. They estimated that up to 50,000 homes in Scotland are caught up in the single model of ownership scenario and that this number is growing. The householders' relationship with these land-owning land maintenance

companies is governed by burdens inserted into Title Deeds by developers that mandate householders to pay a particular land-owning maintenance company (and only that company) in perpetuity, the sum of its choosing for maintaining public open spaces and other key pieces of the public infrastructure such as SUDs ponds, forests and flood defence systems. The Group alleged that these companies typically charge many times over the market rate and systematically fail to deliver services to the standards outlined in the Title Deeds, but homeowners have no rights in law to replace them.

Complaints to MSPs about such arrangements was one factor which led to the introduction of a private members bill on Property Factors (see section 4.3)

Source: <http://www.spanglefish.com/greenbeltgroupaction/questbook.asp>

## **2.9 Views of Scottish stakeholders**

The stakeholders interviewed were not able to identify any other evidence from surveys or research; however, they were unanimous in their views that there are significant problems with the quality and utility of open space around housing. Some expressed the view that this was previously considered to be primarily an issue with social housing but that generally areas around social housing have been getting better and private housing getting worse - this was largely attributed to the economic downturn. It was noted that housing associations are getting better at working with communities and are able to use more flexible and responsive maintenance arrangements.

Issues highlighted included:

### **Location, design and planning**

- open space in developments is generally the bits that can't be built on rather than an integral part of the development – a way of using up the 'bad land'
- spaces rarely used or managed as the designers intended
- where parking is restricted, people park on the greenspace
- planning system requires fully specified/designed landscapes but this doesn't allow spaces to be flexible and responsive to local needs
- landscape proposals are generally treated in planning conditions rather than being integral to design – they are an add-on, not integral to place
- designers/landscape architects are too often seen as the 'experts' in creating housing open space but they can lack creativity and understanding of community needs
- swathes of land designated for housing development but in reality will never be developed
- increasing pressure to get more units into developments and planners are not demanding quality, integrated and functional open space
  - view from developers that the planning systems drives this pressure by treating roads, paths, SUDS, open space separately instead of holistically
  - view that some developers look to deliver the absolute minimum in terms of both quantity and quality

## **Maintenance**

- whilst there are important issues around getting it 'right' for new developments, the bigger issue is the legacy of huge areas of 'green deserts' where there has been no improvement in their function or quality
- maintenance is generally poor or patchy
- lack of stewardship – generally no system has worked well since local authorities stepped back from adopting open space
- challenges of shared spaces (e.g. backcourts) in multiple ownership and areas where maintenance charged for open space across whole development
- factoring problems – in particular, factoring works less well in suburban areas because residents don't understand why they should pay for upkeep of communal space which may be at some distance from their house (this is even more difficult in partly/fully owner-occupied developments)
- feudal reform has had a significant impact on maintenance and upkeep  
Previously there was a 'feudal superior' who had the authority to say what had to happen to the land and enforce maintenance conditions. Now, with no feudal superior, it is down to the owners (in private/semi-private developments, this usually means individual households) to get organised to take action and seek resolution where maintenance and upkeep is an issue. A situation of 'landscape wars' was described on some private developments where arrangements have not been properly made for ongoing maintenance and developers just want to 'move on'
- generally, simplification of spaces and management requirements to reduce maintenance costs leads to spaces without function and lower levels of use

## **Finance**

- requirements for commuted sums for 25 years maintenance 'kills' more innovative projects
- changes in housing grant systems has reduced ability of housing associations to take the lead on local regeneration
- loss of Wider Role grant funding
- anticipation that welfare reform will exacerbate difficulties - housing benefits payments will go to individuals and they may decide not to pay what was previously transferred direct to housing associations for rent (including maintenance payments) and/or they might choose to withhold payment for grounds maintenance if they don't see it as providing a benefit to them

## **Economic downturn**

- delayed completion of housing schemes leaving a small number of occupied houses surrounded by empty houses, half-built houses and building plots with amenity spaces not completed and factoring arrangements not started because of scheme delays
- increase in temporary or stalled spaces in residential areas due to stalling of regeneration and development schemes

## **2.10 Summary**

Evidence from Scottish research and surveys indicates that Scots are generally satisfied with their local area or neighbourhood. Below average levels of satisfaction are associated with feeling bad about the 'availability of green and pleasant places to walk or sit'.

Social renters are less likely to be satisfied with their local greenspaces than private renters and owner occupiers. Similarly, people living in flats are less satisfied than people living in houses. There is a strong association between area deprivation and dissatisfaction with local spaces.

No information was found to indicate any regional variations, although areas undergoing regeneration have lower (and, in some cases, declining) ratings of neighbourhood attractiveness.

Trend data is very limited and only available from the greenspace scotland surveys. These indicate general improvements in satisfaction ratings for local greenspace between 2004 and 2011; with significant decreases in the 2011 results.

Similar patterns are seen across the UK, with lower satisfaction ratings for neighbourhood and local greenspace quality associated with areas of deprivation and high levels of social renting.

The stakeholders interviewed were unanimous in their views that there are significant problems with the quality and utility of open space around housing. Issues were highlighted with the planning, design and management of open space, factoring and financial arrangements - with problems being exacerbated by the economic downturn. Whilst the challenge of 'getting it right' in new developments was highlighted, the bigger issue is the legacy of extensive areas of 'green deserts' where there has been no improvement in their function or quality.

### 3. Evidence: publicly accessible open space around public and private housing – does it matter?

*“The quality of open space near to where people live can impact significantly on how places are perceived and valued locally. Well designed and well managed greenspaces are safe for people to access and enjoy. They can be used for play, recreation, socialising and relaxing. They also provide environments which enhance biodiversity and support climate change adaptation. Positive uses of open space bring people together, build stronger communities and contribute to a healthier society.”*

David Orr, Chief Executive, National Housing Federation  
in Foreword to Greener Neighbourhoods

There are a number of critical literature reviews which summarise the evidence of the positive impact of quality greenspace on people’s health and wellbeing, sense of place, community cohesion.<sup>2</sup>

Whilst it is not considered necessary to reproduce summaries of that evidence here, the following extract from the Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) briefing paper *‘It’s More Than Just the Park: Facilitators and Barriers to the Use of Urban Greenspace’* provides a brief and comprehensive overview:

“Evidence also suggests that accessible and safe greenspace has a positive influence on health. In addition urban greenspace does more than offer opportunities to exercise, it offers opportunities for engagement with and observation of nature, as well as opportunities for social interaction, thus enhancing individuals’ sense of well-being. Open spaces with a range of attractive attributes (such as trees, lakes, landscaped features) encourage higher levels of walking (Giles-Corti, 2005), and walking in such spaces may be associated with the restorative qualities of nature, and more than simple exercise. Studies have demonstrated that living in areas with walkable greenspaces positively influenced the longevity (Takano et al, 2002) and stress levels of older people (Orsega-Smith et al, 2004) in urban areas. Krenichyn (2004) showed how the presence of others in greenspaces promoted feelings of safety and enjoyment for women undertaking physical activity in an urban park, as well as providing opportunities for social interaction and support for undertaking physical activity. Gill and Simeoni (1995) used qualitative methods to explore the impact of enhancing a community park in a run down urban area and reported improved opportunities for physical activity, aesthetic and environmental benefits, and a greater sense of community “congeniality” with the park acting as a source of pride for local residents.”

Source: Glasgow Centre for Population Health (2008) *It’s more than just the park. Facilitators and barriers to the use of urban greenspace*

[http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/0393/GCPH\\_briefing\\_paper\\_FS\\_17\\_web.pdf](http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/0393/GCPH_briefing_paper_FS_17_web.pdf)

The University of Sheffield was commissioned to produce a report *‘Living Green: Evidence to support the provision of greenspace around social housing’*. This unpublished report by Helen Woolley and Alison Somerset-Ward (Department of Landscape, University of Sheffield) is cited in a range of Neighbourhoods Green publications and presentations. It provides evidence under three broad themes of people, biodiversity and climate change.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> For example, greenspace scotland (2008) Greenspace and quality of life: a critical literature review <http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=133&mid=129&fileid=95> and greenspace scotland (2007) The links between greenspace and health: a critical literature review <http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=133&mid=129&fileid=96>

<sup>3</sup> A summary is available in this presentation <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/files/embrace-key-activities.pdf>

The report notes that there is very little research in England and recommends that case studies are prepared for different types of housing space.

The following sections highlight findings from Scottish (and one English) surveys on the influence of the quality of 'doorstep open space' on people, place and quality of life.

### **3.1 Satisfaction with greenspace, health and quality of life**

The Scottish Household Surveys (2007/8 – 2011) show that adults who live less than a five minute walk from useable greenspace are more likely to use it every day or several times a week than those who live more than a ten minute walk from useable greenspace. The Surveys also report that in urban areas people were more likely to rate their health as good if there is a 'safe and pleasant greenspace' in their neighbourhood.

The Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2009 (SSA2009) also found that being very satisfied with the quality of your local greenspace is associated with better self-assessed health, higher life satisfaction, greater social trust and a higher sense of community cohesion. 43% of those who are very satisfied with their local greenspace say their health is very good compared with 26% of those who are neither satisfied or dissatisfied or fairly or very dissatisfied.

SSA2009 reports that people who are very satisfied with their local greenspace are, not surprisingly, more likely to visit it every day or several times a week (45%, compared with 6% of those who are fairly or very dissatisfied). This suggests that poor quality greenspace impacts on frequency of use of greenspace which in turn reduces people's possibility of gaining the physical and mental health benefits of greenspace.

The Scottish Environmental Attitudes and Behaviours Survey (SEABS) 2008 also highlights links between use of greenspace and wellbeing. People who said they visited greenspace everyday, at least once a week or at least sometimes, were more likely than those who never did so to say they were satisfied with life (82%, 77%, and 78% respectively versus 68%). Conversely, those who never visited greenspace were nearly twice as likely as those who did so every day to say they were dissatisfied with life (27% versus 14%).

### **3.2 Greenspace satisfaction and rating of local area**

The Scottish Household Surveys report an association between access to greenspace and how people rate their neighbourhood as a place to live. In the 2011 survey, three fifths (59%) of adults who rate their neighbourhood as a very good place to live say they have access to useable greenspace within a five minute walk, compared to less than half (46%) of those rating their neighbourhood as poor.

The Scottish Social Attitude Survey 2009 found that feeling their area is not nice to walk around in, feeling bad about the 'availability of green and pleasant places to walk or sit' locally, and having regular experience of graffiti and vandalism or noise from neighbours and low levels of trust in other people were associated with below average ratings of the local area. The report concludes that this highlights the importance of paying attention to the more 'qualitative' aspects of the local environment – providing local greenspace and other areas that feel pleasant and safe to walk around in – as well as dealing with problems of low-level noise and anti-social behaviour.

### **3.3 Community Green: using local spaces to tackle inequality and improve health**

CABESpace's Community Green study asked people how important access to greenspace is to a good living environment. The importance was compared to seven other factors tested: suitability of housing, area safety and security, air quality, noise pollution, shopping facilities, public transport and waste disposal. Access to greenspace contributed around 10% towards what made an area a good place to live. Overall, area safety and security were considered most important, contributing 16%.

The survey used questions developed as part of a European-wide research programme ([www.plurel.net/](http://www.plurel.net/)). In the wider dataset which included data from six European regions, access to greenspace also contributed 10%, indicating that this is a consistent attribute in making an area a good place to live regardless of individual differences such as income level, ethnicity and country of residence.

*Source: CABE Space (2010) Community green: using local spaces to tackle inequality and improve health*

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/community-green>

### **3.4 Summary**

The quality and utility of accessible open space around housing does matter – it impacts on people's health and wellbeing, sense of place and community. These impacts are documented in an extensive, and growing, evidence base. Scottish surveys highlight that being satisfied with the quality of your local greenspace is associated with better self-assessed health, higher life satisfaction, greater social trust and a higher sense of community cohesion.

## 4. Policies relating to publicly accessible open space around public and private housing

This section provides an outline of key housing, regeneration and planning policies which relate to the provision and management of publicly accessible open space around housing. It does not include reference to the many other policies (e.g. health, early years, sustainable development, biodiversity) which highlight the importance of quality greenspace.

**National outcome:** *we live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need*

### 4.1 Homes Fit for the 21st Century: The Scottish Government's Strategy and Action Plan for Housing in the Next Decade: 2011-2020

The Housing Strategy notes that *“accessible, affordable housing and attractive local environments can contribute significantly to our wider aims to tackle poverty and health inequalities and to build confidence and capacity in communities. High quality housing and its surrounding environment helps to give our children the best start in life”*.

The section on 'Building sustainable places and neighbourhoods' highlights that *“the quality of our everyday environment is determined not just by the individual buildings that we occupy, but by the spaces and streets that link them together. The success or failure of housing developments often depends on whether a neighbourhood feels like a “place” rather than simply a collection of roads and buildings.”*

The Action Plan includes commitments to:

- develop a Strategy for Sustainable Housing in Scotland to put people at the heart of how we create sustainable communities for the long-term and meet our climate change targets
- promote excellence in the design of new housing which contributes to the creation of sustainable places and neighbourhoods which are low carbon and energy efficient, and provide a safe and stimulating environment for young people to grow up in

Source: Scottish Government (2011) *Homes Fit for the 21st Century: The Scottish Government's Strategy and Action Plan for Housing in the Next Decade: 2011-2020*  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/02/03132933/0>

### 4.2 The Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Scottish Social Housing Charter sets the standards and outcomes that all social landlords should aim to achieve when performing their housing activities. It came into effect from 1 April 2012.

In the section on 'Neighbourhood and Community', outcome 6 states that:

*“Social landlords, working in partnership with other agencies, help to ensure that: tenants and other customers live in well-maintained neighbourhoods where they feel safe”*

The Scottish Housing Regulator is responsible for monitoring, assessing and reporting on how well social landlords, individually and collectively, achieve the Charter's outcomes.

Source: Scottish Government (2012) *The Scottish Social Housing Charter*  
<http://housingcharter.scotland.gov.uk/media/34241/the%20scottish%20social%20housing%20charter.pdf>

### 4.3 The Property Factors (Scotland) Act 2011

The Act aims to protect homeowners by providing minimum standards for property factors. All provisions of the Act came into force on 1 October 2012 and apply to all residential property and land managers whether they are private sector businesses, local authorities or housing associations. The Act has three main elements: a compulsory register of all property factors operating in Scotland; a code of conduct that sets out minimum standards of practice with which all registered property factors must comply; and a new route for redress - the Homeowner Housing Panel to which homeowners can apply if they believe that their factor has failed to comply with the code of conduct or otherwise failed to carry out their factoring duties.

Source: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/privateowners/propertyfactors/2011Act#Code>

### 4.4 Achieving a Sustainable Future: Regeneration Strategy

The Regeneration Strategy reaffirms the Scottish Government's commitment to the regeneration of Scotland's most disadvantaged areas and the strengthening of local communities. It sets out a vision of a *'Scotland where our most disadvantaged communities are supported and where all places are sustainable and promote wellbeing'*. It calls for a holistic and coordinated approach; highlighting the importance of putting communities first (involving local residents and empowering communities), focusing on the quality of places and effective partnership working. The Strategy notes that an important aspect of creating health-nurturing environments is ensuring that everyone has access to high quality greenspace.

Source: Scottish Government (2011) *Achieving A Sustainable Future: Regeneration Strategy* <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/364595/0123891.pdf>

### 4.5 Scottish Planning Policy

Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) states that *'open spaces should be accessible, safe, welcoming, appealing, distinctive and well connected'*. It recognises that access to good quality open spaces make an important contribution to a healthier Scotland by encouraging people to be physically active and aiding health and wellbeing. It notes that in settlements, networks of linked, good quality open space are important for their contribution to amenity and their role in nature conservation, biodiversity, recreation and physical activity. The SPP therefore requires planning authorities to support, protect and enhance open space and opportunities for sport and recreation.

The SPP states that local development plans or supplementary guidance should set out specific requirements for the provision of open space as part of new development and make clear how much, of what type and quality and what the accessibility requirements are. On and off site provision should be considered, depending on the specific site circumstances. Planning authorities and developers should aim to create new open spaces which are fit for purpose, maintained and sustainable over the long term. They should be well designed, built to a high standard and capable of adaptation to reflect changes in the needs and requirements of users. Wherever possible, planning authorities and developers should identify opportunities to create and enhance networks between open spaces and avoid fragmentation. Planning authorities and developers should work together to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the long term management of any proposed open space, landscaping and other common facilities.

Source: Scottish Government (2010) *A statement of the Scottish Government's policy on nationally important land use planning matters* <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/02/03132605/0>

#### **4.6 Proposal for a Scottish Neighbourhood Quality Framework**

The Good Places Better Health for Scotland's Children report, prepared by the Evaluation Group of Good Places Better Health, recommended that a Scottish Neighbourhood Quality Standard is developed and used as a standard for neighbourhood asset development. The Group proposed that the standard would be developed nationally with relevant partners and used in a number of localities during an initial test period prior to finalisation and national availability. The proposed Standard would cover: housing; greenspace provision and quality; outdoor space for play; opportunities for contact with nature; presence of children outdoors, local amenities; community safety, social capital within a community; quality, maintenance and cleanliness of streets and public spaces; community facilities and transport.

This proposal draws on earlier work by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) and greenspace scotland, in 2006, which called for a Community Environment Standard. At that time there was a lot of work ongoing around a Housing Quality Standard and the appetite for another standard was low. However, the Evaluation Group considered the topic is worth revisiting as a means of enabling the implementation of neighbourhood assets development.

The concept of a neighbourhood quality standard was also raised by the Glasgow Community Health and Wellbeing Research and Learning Programme (GoWell). In 2011, the Scottish Government undertook some exploratory consultations, including a Neighbourhood Quality Standard Seminar.

The proposal for a Scottish Neighbourhood Quality Framework will be considered at the February 2013 meeting of the Ministerial Taskforce on Health Inequalities.

*Source: Scottish Government (2011) Good Places Better Health for Scotland's Children*  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0039/00398236.pdf>

#### **4.7 Summary**

There is a supportive policy framework with housing, regeneration and planning policies recognising the importance of attractive local environments and high quality neighbourhood spaces. The need for effective partnership working and involving local residents and communities is highlighted. Recent proposals for a Scottish Neighbourhood Quality Framework could increase the priority given to the quality and utility of open space around housing.

## 5. Current practice relating to publicly accessible open space around public and private housing

This section provides an overview of projects highlighted by stakeholders and published studies which highlight recent and current practice in relation to the management of publicly accessible open space around housing.

Information on Scottish projects is brief because there are few published case studies which are relevant and when housing developments are featured as case studies the focus tends to be on the buildings. A range of examples of good practice development and case studies are included from England. These largely date from 2010 and work undertaken by CABESpace, the National Housing Federation and Neighbourhoods Green which focused on how to improve open space in social housing areas.

### 5.1 Scottish examples

Stakeholders generally expressed the view that current practice is mixed and highlighted that some housing associations and private developments have good reputations for delivering quality developments and this extends to the design and management arrangements for the associated open space.

Some housing association stakeholders expressed the view that housing associations generally develop better quality housing and landscaping than private developers. It was suggested that housing associations provide a good model because they are able to coordinate resources and action across all of their services. It was further noted that examples of good management from housing associations are often where they have direct labour organisations.

The following projects were highlighted by stakeholders as examples of good practice:

- Stewart Milne development in Milngavie which integrates a (pre-SUDS) pond with interesting open space
- factoring working well at Mains Estate, Milngavie
- Princess Gate, Margaret Rose Avenue, Edinburgh was highlighted as an interesting example which is dominated by private garden space but seems to work well
- The Drum at Bo'ness divided opinion and was highlighted by different stakeholders as both a good and a poor example of practice - phases 2 and 3 were highlighted as good example which despite having little greenspace in the development connect to a neighbouring public park
- some McTaggart and Mickel schemes, e.g. Bonaly, which still look very good
- scheme next to Anfield Care Home in Stirling
- development of the Backlands in Royston by Copperworks Housing Association was noted as a good example of community involvement in transforming a large backgreen which had been left untouched during an extensive refurbishment of the housing stock <http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/project-royston-backlands.aspx?Organisation=Copperworks+Housing+Co-operative>
- Kincardine re-development masterplan which included wider community activities and projects such as a history art trail, bench art project and worked closely with the community council, local groups and schools
- Ruchazie placemaking project which raised local aspirations and drew landowners together around an agreed action plan

- Glasgow City Council stalled spaces programme
- Toryglen integrated green infrastructure project with Glasgow Housing Association working with Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership to integrate water management and create multi-functional spaces
- regeneration of Mill Park and other greenspaces around housing in Haldene, West Dunbartonshire  
<http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/project-mill-park,-haldene---a-vision-for-a-great-park-at-the-heart-of-the-neighbourhood.aspx?Organisation=Environment+Trust>
- Forehill, South Ayrshire – a new development which should complete in 2013
- open space improvements in Port Glasgow by Link Group
- Kingdom Housing Associations work to engage and develop community action, provide training and skills opportunities, and support food growing on open space in housing areas

Within the time constraints of this study it was not possible to follow up these case studies to produce brief summaries and identify key success factors and good practice drivers.

## 5.2 Recent and current Scottish initiatives

- **Proposal for development of a Scottish Neighbourhood Quality Standard**  
– see section 4.6

- **Pride in Place**

The Carnegie UK Trust has recently published a report on environmental incivilities. It highlights how local environmental problems like vandalism, litter, graffiti and dog fouling can have a serious and long-lasting impact on wellbeing and quality of life for individuals and communities. Through a series of case studies ‘success factors’ for community-led approaches are identified which inform recommendations for environmental organisations, government and funders. Following a roundtable discussion with a number of NGOs in December 2012, a six-point Scottish agenda is being prepared – this includes action to tackle environmental incivilities and improve the management of neighbourhood greenspaces.

*Source: Carnegie UK Trust (2012) Pride in Place: Tackling Environmental Incivilities*  
<http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/getattachment/2ccfd58-24fc-4acf-beb5-c35e427d6cf0/Pride-in-Place--Tackling-Environmental-Incivilitie.aspx>

- **Housing and health**

The Scottish Health and Inequalities Impact Network is updating its guide to the impacts of housing interventions. The guide, which will be published in February 2013, is based on a systematic review published by the Medical Research Councils’ Social and Public Health Science Unit. It will provide evidence on the links between housing, neighbourhoods and health, and guidance on how that evidence can be applied in health impact assessments.

- **Scotland’s Housing Expo 2010**

Scotland’s Housing Expo in 2010 was the first of its kind in Scotland and the UK. It was based on similar projects found across mainland Europe. The Expo was about promoting new ideas in architecture, sustainable living in terms of the energy we use or re-use, living in an urban setting, giving residents the space both inside and outside for comfortable living in the 21st century. The Expo site, near Inverness, created a composition “of terrace, avenue, square and a village green [which] creates a real feeling of community and a sense of

place". Stakeholders have indicated that the Expo had high expectations about public open space and there was considerable debate and discussion about the open space areas and the related difficulties but this is not reflected in the Expo report. It was suggested there may be opportunities to revisit the Expo process to capture the open space issues and experience, and to review how the open spaces are working now.

Source: *Scottish Government (2011) Scotland's Housing Expo 2010*

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/03/25110122/39>

- **Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative**

The Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative (SSCI) was launched in June 2008 to encourage the creation of places, designed and built to last, where a high quality of life can be achieved. Local authorities, landowners, the development industry and others were invited to submit proposals which demonstrated ambition in addressing a number of principles. The Initiative is about creating places which are ambitious and inspiring, raising standards and developing skills in design, architecture and sustainable construction. It is also about taking a long term view and is concerned with outcomes and delivery. Eleven proposals were awarded recognition that they are working towards "Creating a Scottish Sustainable Community". These exemplar projects were selected as best capable of demonstrating how sustainable communities can be delivered. Summaries of the projects are available online.

In the section on 'Creating a sense of place', the 'Two Years On' report notes that greenspace and green networks were incorporated into some of the schemes and that the development of a strategy for greenspace offered an opportunity to explore possible links with other organisations for whom greenspace can provide special value. A number of schemes demonstrated the value of strategic open spaces to enhancing the legibility of settlement layouts, as well as provide improved quality of life. Links to the development of SUDS strategies and a focus on the benefits of multi-functional use was also highlighted.

It would be useful to look at the arrangements for the management of the open space and landscape elements of these projects and to assess how well these are working. This is not addressed in the published reports reviewing the Initiative.

Source: *Scottish Government (2011) Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative - 2 years on* <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/345635/0115038.pdf>

## 5.3 UK examples

### 5.3.1 Good practice case studies

- **Green Spaces for People**

Places for People manage over 62,000 homes nationally and estimate that 40% of the land they own is open, accessible community space. The Group's vision is to provide aspirational homes and inspirational places. This means not only building and managing homes but also investing in the greenspaces that surround local neighbourhoods. To support delivery of this vision, the Group established a national partnership with fellow housing providers, The Riverside Group and Peabody, to deliver the award winning Big Lottery funded Green Spaces for People Portfolio. With £15.6m from BIG's Changing Spaces programme they are regenerating over 70 open spaces in social housing areas across England; they have involved over 41,000 people in consultation and community activities, and regenerated 85 acres of redundant open space with community facilities and improved biodiversity.

The Lottery funded programme gave rise to a strong business case for a comprehensive strategy for all of the Group's greenspaces. In neighbourhoods which benefited from both greenspace investment and other social and economic interventions, the Group identified that repairs expenditure fell by 44%, property re-let times improved significantly and customer satisfaction with the neighbourhood increased.

*Source: National Housing Federation (2011) Greener Neighbourhoods: A good practice guide to managing green space*

[http://www.housing.org.uk/publications/find\\_a\\_publication/housing\\_management/greener\\_neighbourhoods\\_reside.aspx](http://www.housing.org.uk/publications/find_a_publication/housing_management/greener_neighbourhoods_reside.aspx)

- **Natural Estates – London**

The Natural Estates project is a partnership between London Wildlife Trust, Groundwork London and eight social landlords in London. The project is funded through Big Lottery Access to Nature grant programme and has the active involvement of Natural England.

Three London Wildlife Trust project officers are working with residents on nine estates to support them in enhancing and maintaining their common greenspaces, improving their physical and emotional health, social cohesion and promoting active citizenship. Each estate has a programme of activity-based interventions that aims to enhance the greenspace by increasing its wildlife and biodiversity and contribute to improving the green infrastructure of London. The resident engagement programme includes creating designated areas where children can grow wildlife attracting plants, encouraging and nurturing wildlife through making and installing bird boxes/feeders and holding wildlife talks and walks. The project also offers local people a programme of visits and training on nature reserves managed by the London Wildlife Trust.

A training and capacity building programme is being delivered alongside the projects on the ground to support housing practitioners in managing housing greenspace better for wildlife and residents. This is to ensure that improvements become embedded in the operational delivery of the organisation and are sustained beyond the lifetime of the project.

*Source: <http://www.neighbourhoodsgreen.org.uk/about/naturalestates>*

- **Peabody Trust – IMPROVE programme**

Peabody Trust houses over 50,000 people, in over 19,000 dwellings, spread over about 100 estates and other scattered properties across 26 London boroughs. The Trust has always endeavoured to manage its open spaces effectively, cost-efficiently, sympathetically and to reflect the needs of residents but until 2003 a strategic approach to this work was not

embedded. A Best Value Review of grounds maintenance in 2001/2 enabled the Trust to take stock of the service and put in place procedures for the future; this included the development of an overarching Open Space Strategy.

Peabody's Sustainability Strategy includes the objective *'to increase access to well-managed and biodiverse open spaces to improve the wellbeing of residents'*. The IMPROVE programme involves working through estate-based management plans to meet the agreed Quality Assessment Standard.

Source: Case study in *Neighbourhoods Green (2005) Decent homes, decent spaces* and <http://www.peabody.org.uk/>

- **The Green Estate, Sheffield**

The Manor and Castle area of Sheffield is a large predominantly 1930s-built housing estate described in 1996 as "the worst estate in England". Two years later the Sheffield Wildlife Trust (SWT) established the Green Estate Partnership with the Manor & Castle Development Trust. Since then the Programme has been working to deliver an integrated environmental regeneration programme, linking skills training, local employment, community participation, greenspace creation and restoration, social enterprise and sustainable environmental management to turn what was a management liability into a productive asset.

The regeneration programme is built around an integrated area environmental plan, developed following an extensive series of audits, consultations and pilot projects. Key features of the programme include: training programme, pocket parks, pictorial meadows, food and health (included allotment restoration, school farms, commercial urban dairy, social enterprise producing and selling 'Sheffield Brie') and productive land use (temporary crop areas on brownfield land ear-marked for future house building and a tree nursery).

Source: Case study in *Neighbourhoods Green (2005) Decent homes, decent spaces* and <http://www.greenestate.org.uk/>

### 5.3.2 Developing and promoting good practice

- **Neighbourhoods Green**

Neighbourhoods Green is a partnership initiative which highlights the importance of open space for residents of social housing and works with social landlords to raise the quality of their design, management and safe use. The project started at a conference in London in 2003 when Peabody and Notting Hill Housing Group came together to explore the challenges and opportunities for improving housing greenspace. It is currently supported by supported by the Design Council Cobe, Groundwork, Green Flag Plus Partnership, Landscape Institute, National Housing Federation, Natural England, Royal Horticultural Society and the Wildlife Trusts. The partnership provides guidance, support, practice case studies and tools.

The aims of the Neighbourhoods Green partnership are to:

1. develop and coordinate a national Neighbourhoods Green partnership project which champions good quality design, management and use of social housing greenspace
2. establish local and regional housing/greenspace networks supported through Neighbourhoods Green to deliver practical green space initiatives
3. develop and maintain the Neighbourhoods Green website and manage communications through the e-newsletter to support social landlords in the improvement of greenspaces
4. champion good practice and create opportunities for practitioners to share learning and expertise on the design and management of greenspace on housing estates

5. build a robust evidence base from which to advocate the role of greenspace in placemaking and to influence relevant government departments and agencies to encourage policy and strategy that acknowledges the role of greenspace in social housing

Source: [www.neighbourhoodsgreen.org.uk](http://www.neighbourhoodsgreen.org.uk)

- **Decent homes need decent spaces – action plan**

In 2010, CABE and the National Housing Federation in partnership with Neighbourhoods Green and over 30 social landlords, produced '*Decent homes need decent spaces*'. This provides an action plan on how to improve open spaces in social housing areas. It focuses on how social landlords can provide more opportunities for people to enjoy the space on their doorsteps, whether they want to relax, experience nature, grow vegetables, play, compete in sport, or just chat with their neighbours. The action plan sets out 10 priorities for change:

- 1. Commit to quality**

Make a commitment to good quality green and open spaces at the highest level possible within your organisation.

- 2. Involve residents**

Encourage local residents of all ages to play an active role in deciding what their open spaces should be like, how they should be used and how they should be looked after.

- 3. Know the bigger picture**

Take a strategic approach when planning and improving open spaces.

- 4. Make the best use of funding**

Secure and coordinate different sources of funding by making the most of partnerships.

- 5. Design for local people**

Make neighbourhoods greener, improve the layout of streets and provide facilities through better design procurement and project delivery.

- 6. Develop training and skills**

Motivate residents and staff through open space training opportunities.

- 7. Maintain high standards**

Ensure that maintenance and long-term care of gardens and open spaces are treated as essential.

- 8. Make places feel safe**

Improve the character and design of places to change user behaviour and improve personal safety.

- 9. Promote healthy living**

Encourage people to be more active by providing attractive and well maintained open spaces.

- 10. Prepare for climate change**

Provide increased protection for residents against flooding and heat waves through urban greening programmes.

Source: CABE Space (2010) *Decent homes need decent spaces: An action plan to improve open spaces in social housing areas*

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/decent-homes-need-decent-spaces>

- **HouseMark Estate Services Benchmarking**

HouseMark was set up by the Chartered Institute of Housing and the National Housing Federation to support the development of good practice and benchmarking in grounds maintenance. It runs the Estate Services Club which meets three times a year and currently has 130 members (with 20 Scottish members).

Source: *HouseMark (2012) Estate Services Benchmarking Summary report 2011/12*  
<http://www.housemark.co.uk/hmkb2.nsf/2/9808422444A7C1EF80257A77002CEC57?opendocument>

- **It's Your Neighbourhood**

The Royal Horticultural Society's 'It's Your Neighbourhood' campaign supports local community groups in cleaning up and greening up their immediate local environment - whether it's the street they live in or a small patch of communal land needing a revamp. Groups are supported in their activities with advice and guidance, and receive annual feedback from expert IYN assessors, who provide tips on how further improvements can be made. More than 1,000 groups are registered around the UK.

Source: <http://www.rhs.org.uk/Gardening/Community-gardening/It-s-Your-Neighbourhood>

## **5.4 Summary**

There are a limited number of published case studies documenting good practice in the management of open space around housing.

Stakeholders generally expressed the view that current practice is mixed but were able to provide some examples that they viewed as good practice. It was not possible to follow up these case studies, within the time constraints of this study, but there is an opportunity to produce brief summaries and identify key success factors and good practice drivers from these and the SSCI projects.

The most extensive collection of case studies comes from the Neighbourhoods Green Initiative in England, with examples including the Peabody Trust, Places for People and the Green Estate in Sheffield. These will be familiar to people working in this field because they are the examples most frequently cited in the literature and conference presentations. Common themes for success can be drawn including: the importance of adopting a strategic approach to open space management; involving local residents; connecting open space improvement programmes with wider activities and initiatives, e.g. skills and training; and significant injections of cash from the Big Lottery Fund (Changing Spaces and Access to Nature programmes).

There are opportunities to learn from the partnership working and activities of the Neighbourhoods Green initiative.

## 6. What needs to happen? Views from stakeholders

Whilst views were sought from only a small number of stakeholders, there are some themes emerging from their reflections on what action is needed to address the issue of poor quality spaces around housing:

### Management and maintenance

- research into people's attitudes to open space in their estates/neighbourhoods and its function, management and maintenance
- a review of open space in residential developments and how it is managed to identify practice models (including factoring arrangements) - but need to be aware that the environment that we work in now is not the same as it was i.e. changes in policy, regulation and practice
- exploring the potential for housing associations to provide grounds maintenance services to other areas/developments
- more detailed information from housing organisations to really understand where the problems of poor quality and functional housing space are - i.e. is there a geographical focus, is this an urban or rural issue, does it relate to age of houses, tenure etc?

### Strategic focus

- need a clear and practical vision for sustainability priorities for towns and cities - a bigger ambition for what a place will look like in 20 years to sit alongside more immediate goals
- open space strategies to provide a more strategic approach to the planning, development and management of open spaces
- the process of developing open space strategies needs to include all relevant stakeholders – housing providers are often missing

### Planning

- planning needs to focus more on how people use spaces and on finding ways to allow this use to evolve
- open space provision should be an integral part of a holistic view of the developments and incorporated with streets, parking, play, etc.
- SUDS should be a multi-functional and usable element of open space – currently a combination of planning regulations and adoption criteria for Scottish Water lead to poor schemes and wasted opportunities
- stronger planning policy and guidance for development management planners to give them the confidence to ask for more from developers

### Community involvement

- residents need to have more say in how their local spaces are managed
- a community development approach is required to interest and engage residents, involve them in decision-making and explore options for community ownership and management
- developing the local/community voice in different ways - nurturing and supporting community champions
- but there still need to be effective management systems in areas where communities are not (and/or don't want to be) involved

**Training, learning, skills development and social enterprise**

- opportunity for training, volunteering and skills development through the management of open space around housing
- a sustainability academy focusing on environmental regeneration
- development of community enterprises (and apprentice schemes) for grounds maintenance
- new uses for functionless spaces e.g. horticultural social enterprises

**Funding**

- funding to support environmental action by housing providers

All of the stakeholders interviewed expressed a willingness to contribute further to any studies or projects which are developed on this agenda.

## **7. Conclusions and recommendations for future action**

### **7.1 Conclusions**

Evidence from surveys, research and stakeholders confirms that there are concerns about the quality and utility of publicly accessible open space around public and private housing.

Whilst most Scots are generally satisfied with their local area or neighbourhood, below average levels of satisfaction are associated with feeling bad about 'the availability of green and pleasant places to walk or sit'. Social renters, people living in flats and areas of deprivation are more likely to be dissatisfied with the quality of their local greenspaces and neighbourhood.

The stakeholders interviewed were unanimous in their view that there are problems with open space around housing. Some indicated that whilst this was previously seen as a problem associated with social housing, there are now increasing issues on private and mixed developments. Issues were highlighted with the planning, design and management of open space, factoring and financial arrangements, and problems being exacerbated by the economic downturn, for example, stalled sites and partially completed developments.

There are a limited number of published case studies documenting good practice in the management of open space around housing. Stakeholders generally expressed the view that current practice is mixed. In some areas action on the ground is clearly not meeting the ambition of national policy where housing, regeneration and planning policies recognise the importance of attractive local environments and high quality neighbourhood spaces. Current proposals for a Scottish Neighbourhood Quality Framework could increase the priority given to the quality and utility of open space around housing.

In 2010, CABEsapce focused attention on the problems (in England) of open space around social housing and in partnership with other organisations, e.g. through Neighbourhoods Green, traction was gained around this issue. Whilst it seems that momentum was lost with the demise of CABEsapce, there are lessons that can be drawn for Scotland.

The willingness of stakeholders interviewed during this study to contribute to future action indicates that there is potential for a collaborative approach to future action drawing on the support and intelligence of a range of partners.

### **7.2 Recommendations**

Based on the information gathered during this study, we would recommend the following short-term actions:

#### **Strengthening the evidence base**

- further analysis of Scottish Household Survey data to identify any trends over time and by tenure in relation to satisfaction with local greenspace and neighbourhood
- collation and review of information from local authority quality audits about amenity greenspace

#### **Identifying practice that works**

- preparation of short case studies for the examples of good practice identified by stakeholders (and the SCCI projects) to draw out details of the open space management arrangements, key success factors and good practice drivers
- 'seeing is believing' visits with mixed groups of stakeholders to review and share practice from sites across Scotland (UK and Europe)

### **Developing consensus and preparing an action plan**

- hosting an 'expert seminar' to bring together key individuals and organisations to scope out the issues, barriers and challenges, practice that works and identify future actions  
key stakeholders include: Chartered Institute for Housing, Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, Homes for Scotland, housing associations, house builders and developers, local authorities (housing, greenspace and land services), Architecture+Design Scotland, Scottish Government
- exploring the potential for an expanded Scottish version of the Neighbourhoods Green partnership/initiative embracing public, private and social housing

greenspace scotland would be happy to discuss how we could assist the Central Scotland Green Network Partnership Board to take forward these actions.

## References

CABE Space (2010) Community green: using local spaces to tackle inequality and improve health

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/community-green>

CABE Space (2010) *Decent homes need decent spaces: An action plan to improve open spaces in social housing areas*

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/decent-homes-need-decent-spaces>

CABE Space (2010) Urban green nation: building the evidence base

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/urban-green-nation>

Carnegie UK Trust (2012) Pride in Place: Tackling Environmental Incivilities

<http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/getattachment/2ccfd58-24fc-4acf-beb5-c35e427d6cf0/Pride-in-Place--Tackling-Environmental-Incivilitie.aspx>

Chartered Institute of Housing (2006) Discussion Paper: Improving the Neighbourhood – A Community Environment Standard for Scotland

Chartered Institute of Housing (2008) Action Plan for a Community Engagement Standard (downloadable pdf no longer available from [www.cih.org](http://www.cih.org) because licence for some images has expired)

Glasgow Centre for Population Health (2008) It's more than just the park. Facilitators and barriers to the use of urban greenspace

[http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/0393/GCPH\\_briefing\\_paper\\_FS\\_17\\_web.pdf](http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/0393/GCPH_briefing_paper_FS_17_web.pdf)

GoWell (2010) Progress for People and Places

[http://www.gowellonline.com/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=cat\\_view&gid=20&limit=10&limitstart=0&order=name&dir=DESC&Itemid=218](http://www.gowellonline.com/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=20&limit=10&limitstart=0&order=name&dir=DESC&Itemid=218)

GoWell (2007) Regeneration Challenge in Transformation Areas

[http://www.gowellonline.com/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=cat\\_view&gid=20&limit=10&limitstart=0&order=name&dir=DESC&Itemid=218](http://www.gowellonline.com/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=20&limit=10&limitstart=0&order=name&dir=DESC&Itemid=218)

greenspace scotland (2008) Greenspace and quality of life: a critical literature review

<http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=133&mid=129&fileid=95>

greenspace scotland (2005) Omnibus Survey

<http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=133&mid=129&fileid=91>

greenspace scotland (2007) Omnibus Survey

<http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=133&mid=129&fileid=92>

greenspace scotland (2009) Omnibus Survey

<http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=133&mid=129&fileid=90>

greenspace scotland (2011) Omnibus Survey

<http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=131&mid=127&fileid=270>

greenspace scotland (2010) Open Space Audits and Strategies: Review of Practice in Scotland <http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/audits-and-strategies.aspx>

greenspace scotland (2007) The links between greenspace and health: a critical literature review  
<http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/SharedFiles/Download.aspx?pageid=133&mid=129&fileid=96>

Hiscock, R and Mitchell, R (2011) What is needed to deliver places that provide good health to children? Available on [www.edphis.org](http://www.edphis.org)

HouseMark (2012) Estate Services Benchmarking Summary report 2011/12  
<http://www.housemark.co.uk/hmkb2.nsf/2/9808422444A7C1EF80257A77002CEC57?opendocument>

National Housing Federation (2011) Greener Neighbourhoods: A good practice guide to managing green space  
[http://www.housing.org.uk/publications/find\\_a\\_publication/housing\\_management/greener\\_neighbourhoods\\_reside.aspx](http://www.housing.org.uk/publications/find_a_publication/housing_management/greener_neighbourhoods_reside.aspx)

Neighbourhoods Green (2005) Decent homes, decent spaces  
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110118095356/http://www.cabe.org.uk/publications/decent-homes-need-decent-spaces>

Scottish Government (2010) A statement of the Scottish Government's policy on nationally important land use planning matters  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/02/03132605/0>

Scottish Government (2011) Achieving A Sustainable Future: Regeneration Strategy  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/364595/0123891.pdf>

Scottish Government (2011) Good Places Better Health for Scotland's Children  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0039/00398236.pdf>

Scottish Government (2011) Homes Fit for the 21st Century: The Scottish Government's Strategy and Action Plan for Housing in the Next Decade: 2011-2020  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/02/03132933/0>

Scottish Government (2011) Scotland's Housing Expo 2010  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/03/25110122/39>

Scottish Government (2009) Scotland's People: Annual report: results from 2007/2008 Scottish Household Survey <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/09/01114213/0>

Scottish Government (2010) Scotland's People: Annual report: results from 2009 Scottish Household Survey <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/08/25092046/0>

Scottish Government (2010) Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2009: Sustainable Places and Greenspace <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/07/02134238/0>

Scottish Government (2011) Scotland's People: Annual report: results from 2009/2010 Scottish Household Survey <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/08/17093111/0>

Scottish Government (2011) Good Places Better Health for Scotland's Children  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0039/00398236.pdf>

Scottish Government (2012) Scotland's People: Annual report: results from 2011 Scottish Household Survey <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2012/08/5277/downloads>

Scottish Government (2009) Scottish Environmental Attitudes and Behaviours Survey 2008  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/08/03100422/0>

Scottish Government (2011) Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative - 2 years on  
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/345635/0115038.pdf>

Scottish Government (2012) The Scottish Social Housing Charter  
<http://housingcharter.scotland.gov.uk/media/34241/the%20scottish%20social%20housing%20charter.pdf>

## **Annex 1: Stakeholders interviewed in short telephone survey**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Allan Lundmark	Homes for Scotland
Ally Corbett	Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network Partnership
Andrew McDaniel	Kingdom Housing Association
Bill Nicol	Ruchazie Housing Association
Colin Reid	Glasgow Housing Association
David Burns	South Ayrshire Council
Jenny Coyle	GoWell
Russell McLarty	Chance to Thrive
Sheila Maxwell	Link Group
Steven Tolson	Ogilvie Group and RICS
Sue Shone	Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland
Susan Torrance	Scottish Federation of Housing Associations