



Outdoors & Health
Network



OHN – An interdisciplinary exploratory network

Presented by

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Introduction to OHN

- **ESRC/MRC/BBSRC combined call**
- **UIBEN – Understanding Individual Behaviour Exploratory Networks**
- **8 networks funded for 12 months**
- **Pump-priming**
- **Interdisciplinary research central aim**



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Society's relationship with the natural world and the role of the outdoors in health and well-being

- **Lead – UHI Millennium Institute**
- **8 Higher education institutions**
- **17 Co-investigators**
- **Policy partners – another 8 organisations**



Key aspects of a good research network

- **Co-ordination and administration**
- **Facilitating strong communication and networking**
- **Bringing together expertise for a common and clearly defined goal**
- **Creating a sharing culture**
- **Non-academic input**
- **Strategic planning**



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Co-ordination



- Careful selection of partners
- Central point
- Financial control
- Coordination of events etc.
- Link between all the members
- Project tracking
- Driver



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Networking...the purpose

- **Start of the interdisciplinary collaboration process**
- **Sharing knowledge of a common theme but from different research approaches**
- **Learning languages**
- **Learn what gaps can be filled by other disciplines**

Disciplines in the network



- **Medicine**
- **Rural Health**
- **Public Health**
- **Epidemiology**
- **Psychology**
- **Sociology**
- **Human geography**
- **Education**
- **Adventure studies**
- **Leisure**
- **Interpretation**
- **Landscape architecture**
- **Forestry**
- **Ecology**
- **Environment**



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Networking...the vision

Speed dating – breaking down barriers

VC Roundtables – discipline specific perspectives, research interests

Buddying – day in the life...

JISCmail – exchanging interesting information

Website and web forum – sharing with the world plus members area

Workshops – inter-disciplinary discussions

Telephone conferences – keeping in touch, progress updates





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Networking...the reality

Speed dating – good ice-breaker, hard to keep people moving

VC Roundtables – good presentations, got to know where people were coming from, technically difficult

Buddying – really beneficial for early career researchers, difficult to find time in schedules

JISCmail – well used by a few, started discussion on several occasions, needs someone to keep up the momentum

Website – good resource, difficult to keep up-to-date, members not keen to contribute especially to web forum

Workshops – very effective platforms for discussion

Telephone conferences – worked well, good for updates

Project development

Two complimentary pilot projects

- Development of a longitudinal study using questionnaire/ survey to connect social, environmental and medical data
- Exploration of alternative methods for collection of data on outdoor use and health outcomes across the life course



Project development

- **Getting time commitment**
- **Multi-disciplinary cluster or true interdisciplinary work?**
- **Clear leadership without discouraging dialogue and creativity**
- **Defining roles early on**
- **Adapting to every changing scenarios**
- **Sharing culture**

Non-academic partners

Forestry Commission, Natural England,
Scottish Natural Heritage, NHS Highland,
Countryside Council for Wales

- On the ground expertise
- Access to projects and people
- Policy perspective
- Evidence needs



Strategic planning

- **Dissemination outlets**
- **Future projects**
- **Not caught up in day-to-day coordination**
- **Clear goals set**
- **Creating strategic networks**



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Thank you for your attention

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