



Developing and Implementing Green Social Prescribing in Complex Health Systems

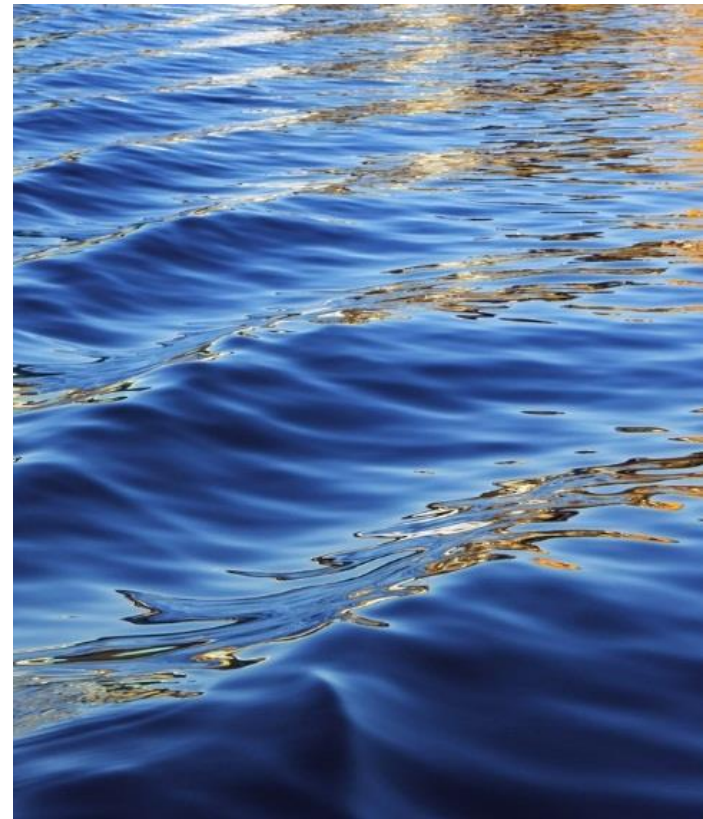
Emergent Learning and Critical Reflections from the National Preventing and Tackling Mental Ill Health through Green Social Prescribing Project

September 2022





Introduction



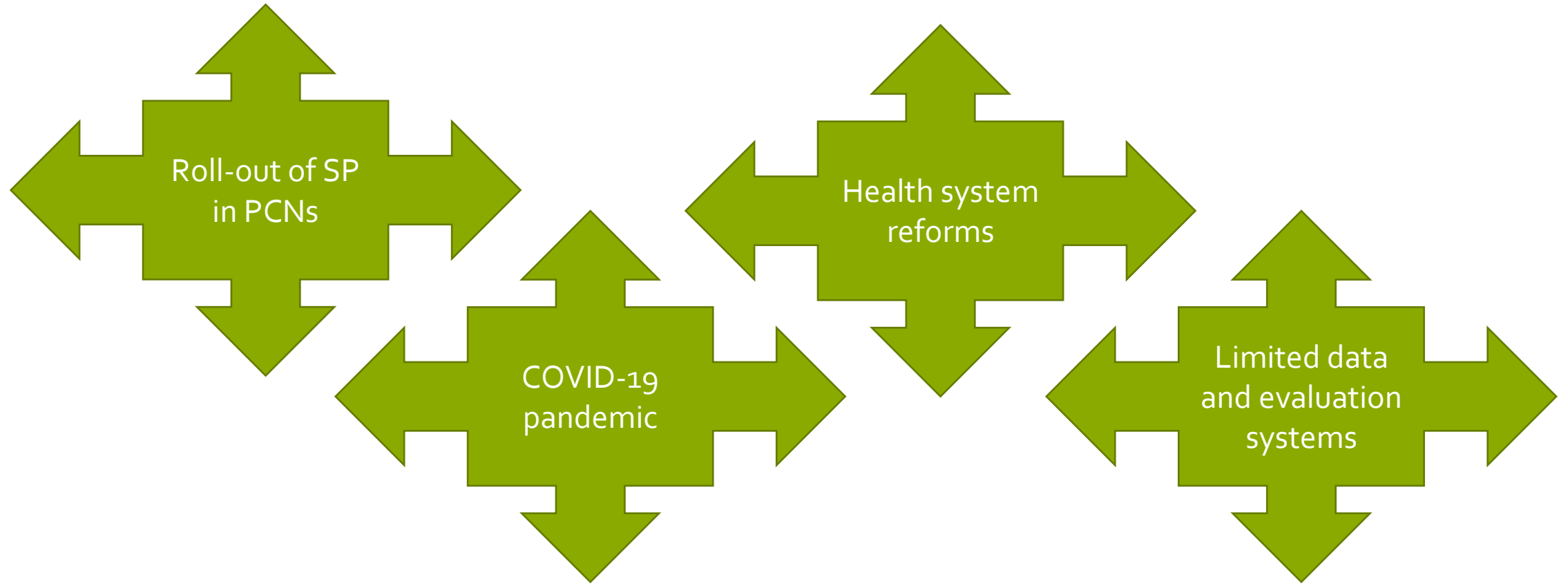
Overview of the National GSP Project

- **'Preventing and tackling mental ill health through green social prescribing'**: £5.77m cross-governmental project (October 2020-April 2023)
- Aims to **increase use and connection to the natural environment** through green and/or blue social prescribing to prevent and tackle mental ill health.
- Key activities:
 - Funding for seven **place-based system level 'test and learn'** projects (mix of urban and more rural areas)
 - Programme of **national evaluation and research**
 - New approach to **joined-up cross-government collaboration and partnership** working

What is GSP?

- Still **contested nationally and locally**, but for this project GSP is:
 - The practice of **supporting people to engage in nature-based interventions and activities**.
 - Link Workers (and other allied roles) **connect people to community groups** for practical and emotional support, based on a '*what matters to you*' conversation.
 - For this project **focus is mental health**, but wider health benefits can also occur
- A **wide range of nature-based activities** that people may reach through a social prescription:
 - Conservation and environmental activities
 - Horticulture, gardening and care farming
 - Walking and other exercise and physical in nature
 - Talking therapies based in the outdoors.

GSP project is being delivered within a complex context



Importance of Whole System Approaches to GSP

- Sites are **working in a whole systems way** to embed GSP . This will enable them to:
 - Harness the power of individual and organisational relationships within a system to achieve change.
 - Generate knowledge about current working, possible problems and how these can be overcome.
 - Solutions may be localised vary from one place or system to the next: role of evaluation is to distil findings that may apply in and across certain contexts.
- Reflecting the complexity in which the GSP project is being delivered, **each site is taking a different approach** to the project.
- They are prioritising **different activities** and focussing on developing relationships and processes in **different parts of their local system** to support the delivery of GSP.



Emergent learning from the National Evaluation



Key features of the test and learn sites:

Vision

- Most sites wish to effect **system wide change**.
- Shared goal to **improve linkages** between existing systems and green/nature-based providers.
- Aim to **connect more people from more diverse populations with nature** and reduce health inequalities – specific foci vary from site to site.
- Acutely aware of the **need to ensure that GSP is sustainable** and focus on increasing **funding and support for nature-based activities** and providers.

Key features of the test and learn sites:

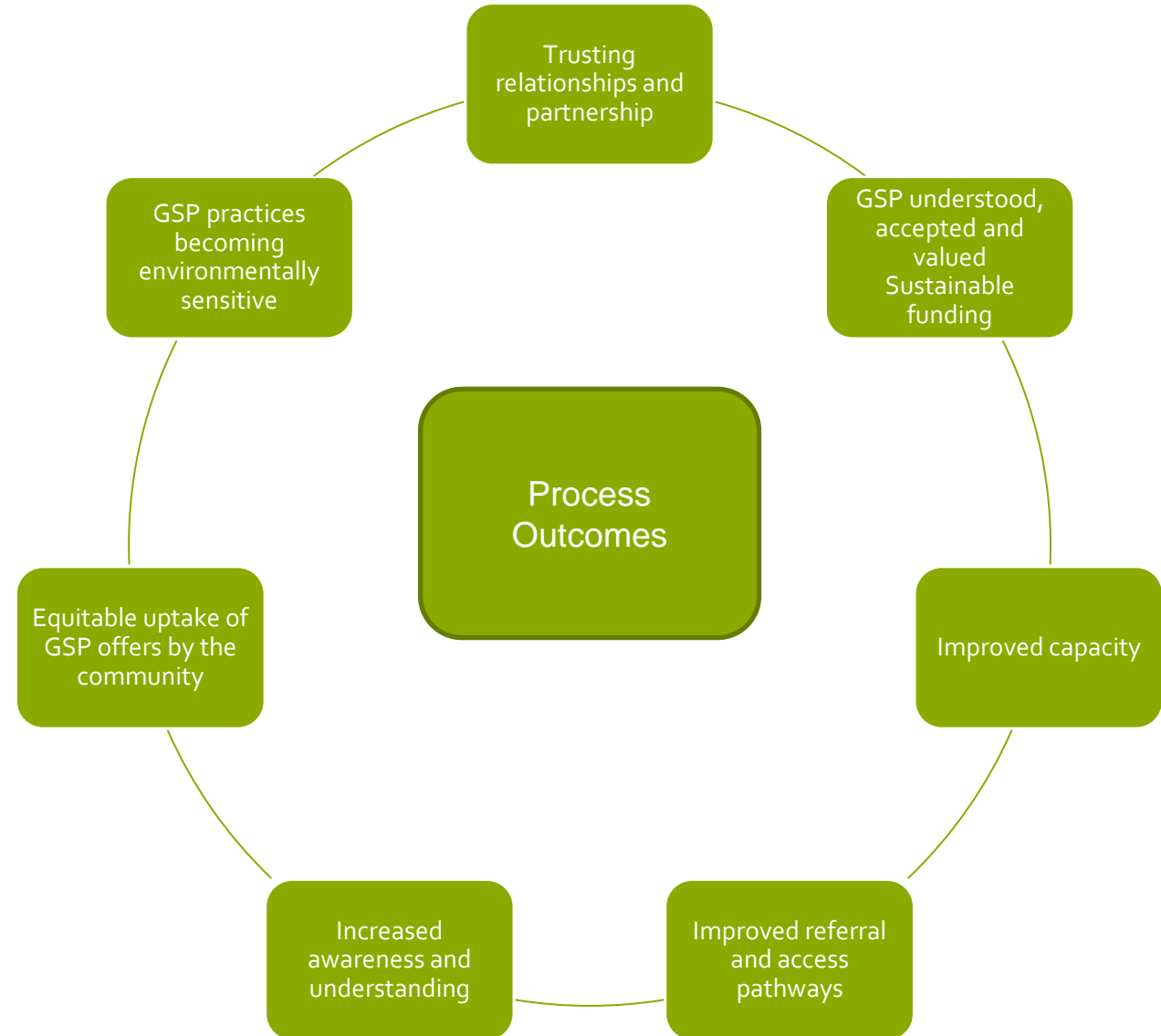
Change

- Each site has identified **the changes they believe are needed** to achieve the necessary systems change:
 - Generating **better evidence** to gain clinician buy in.
 - Building links and **aligning with the broader system**.
 - Developing **clearer referral pathways** and more effective connections and relationships.
 - Increasing **provider capacity**.
 - Raising **awareness of nature-based activities** and their benefits.
 - Ensuring **equitable access to nature** across local populations.

Key features of the test and learn sites:

Outcomes

Longer-term goal:
empowered and
resilient communities
and improved mental
and physical health
outcomes across their
populations.



Key themes of relevance to policy and practice

