

Health, place and nature

How outdoor environments influence health and well-being

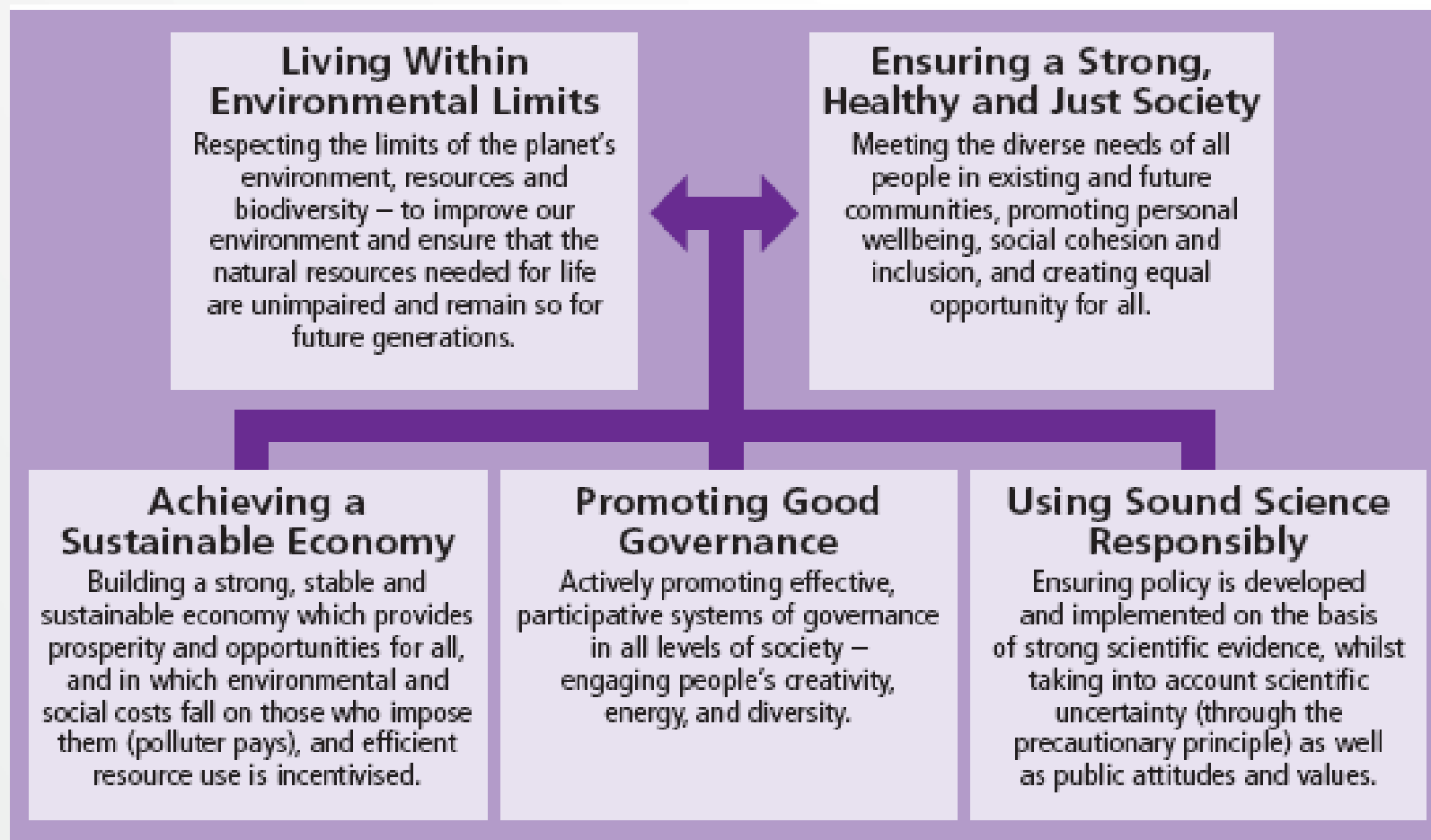


Larissa Lockwood
Sustainable Development Commission

Sustainable Development Commission

- Government's independent **advisor and watchdog** on sustainable development
- Our role: through **advocacy, advice and appraisal** we help to put sustainable development at the core of Government policy
- Reporting to the Prime Minister and First Ministers of Scotland and Wales
- Led by a board of 19 commissioners, chaired by Jonathon Porritt

Principles of sustainable development



Health and sustainable development

ENVIRONMENT: Poor access to greenspaces, heavy road traffic, pollution, extremes of weather, rising sea levels, climate change, drought, famine, homelessness

SOCIETY: Poor housing, dislocated neighbourhoods, dangerous streets, poor access to services and amenities, fear of crime, exclusion, isolation

ECONOMY: Unemployment, poverty, insecurity

GOVERNANCE: Powerlessness, lack of opportunity, inequalities, conflict

Exercise 1

- Draw a healthy urban environment

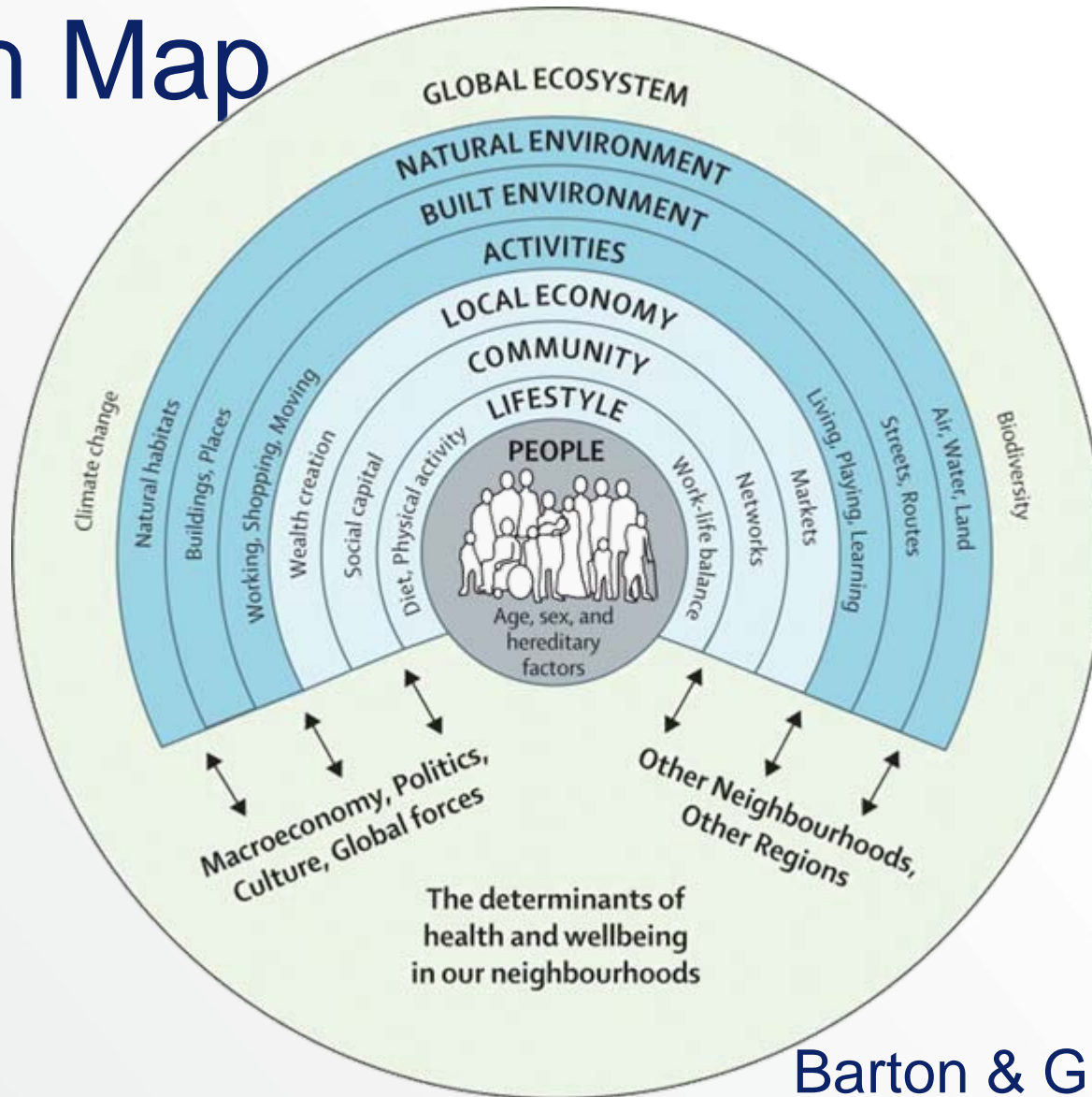


“I don’t want to be a product of my environment. I want my environment to be a product of me.”
Frank Costello
in *The Departed*



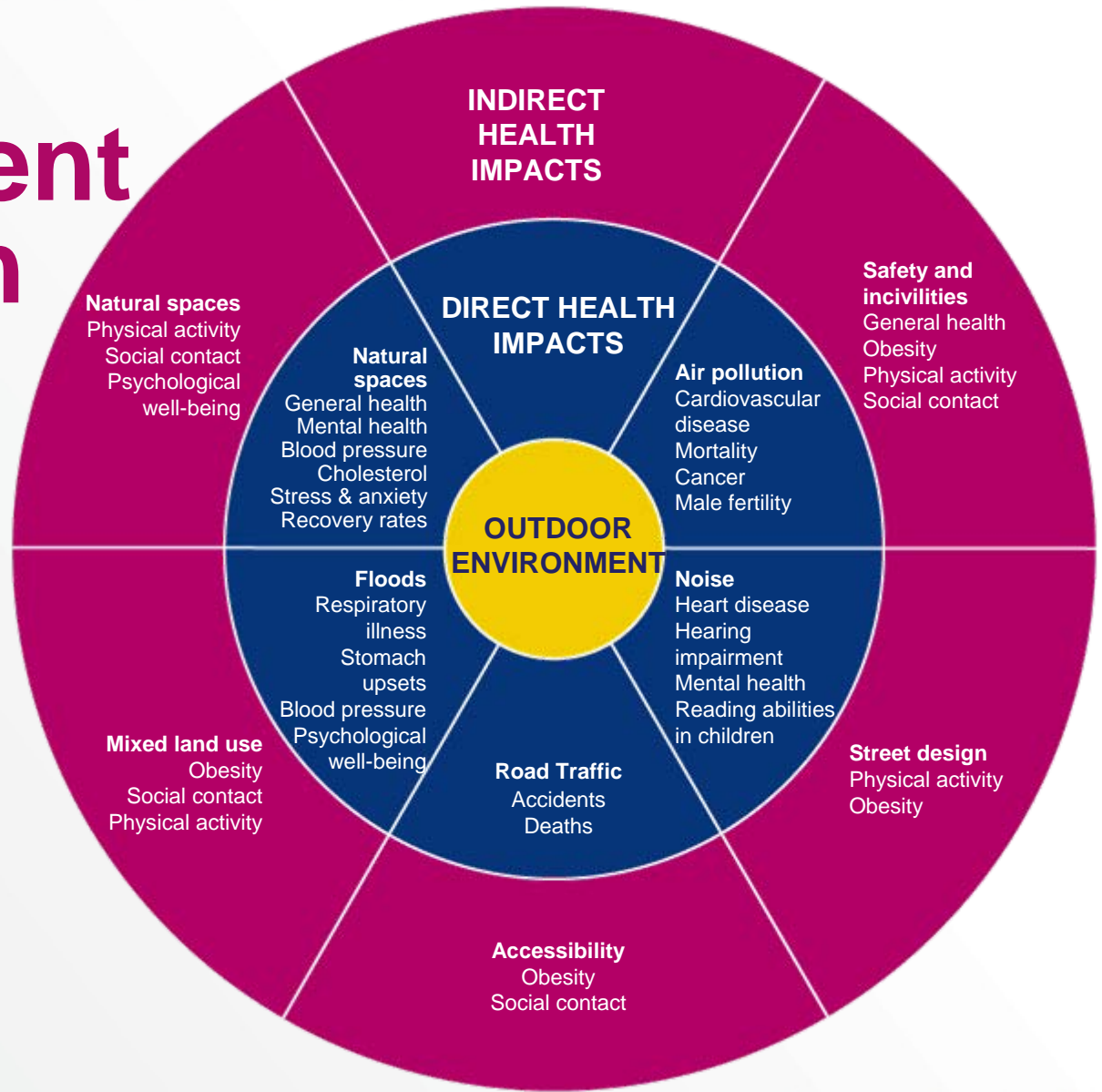


Health Map



Barton & Grant (2006)

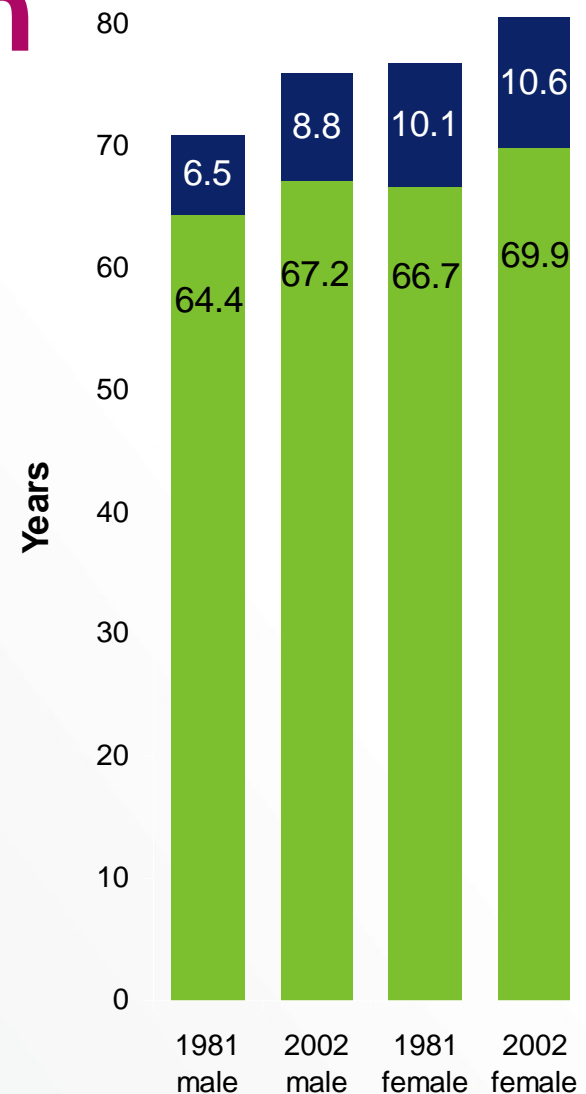
Outdoor environment and health



Challenges to health

- Healthy life expectancy
- Health inequalities are increasing
 - Since 1995-97, the gap in life expectancy between the England average and the poorest areas has increased by 2% for males and 11% for females.

■ Years spent in poor health
■ Healthy Life Expectancy



Challenges to health

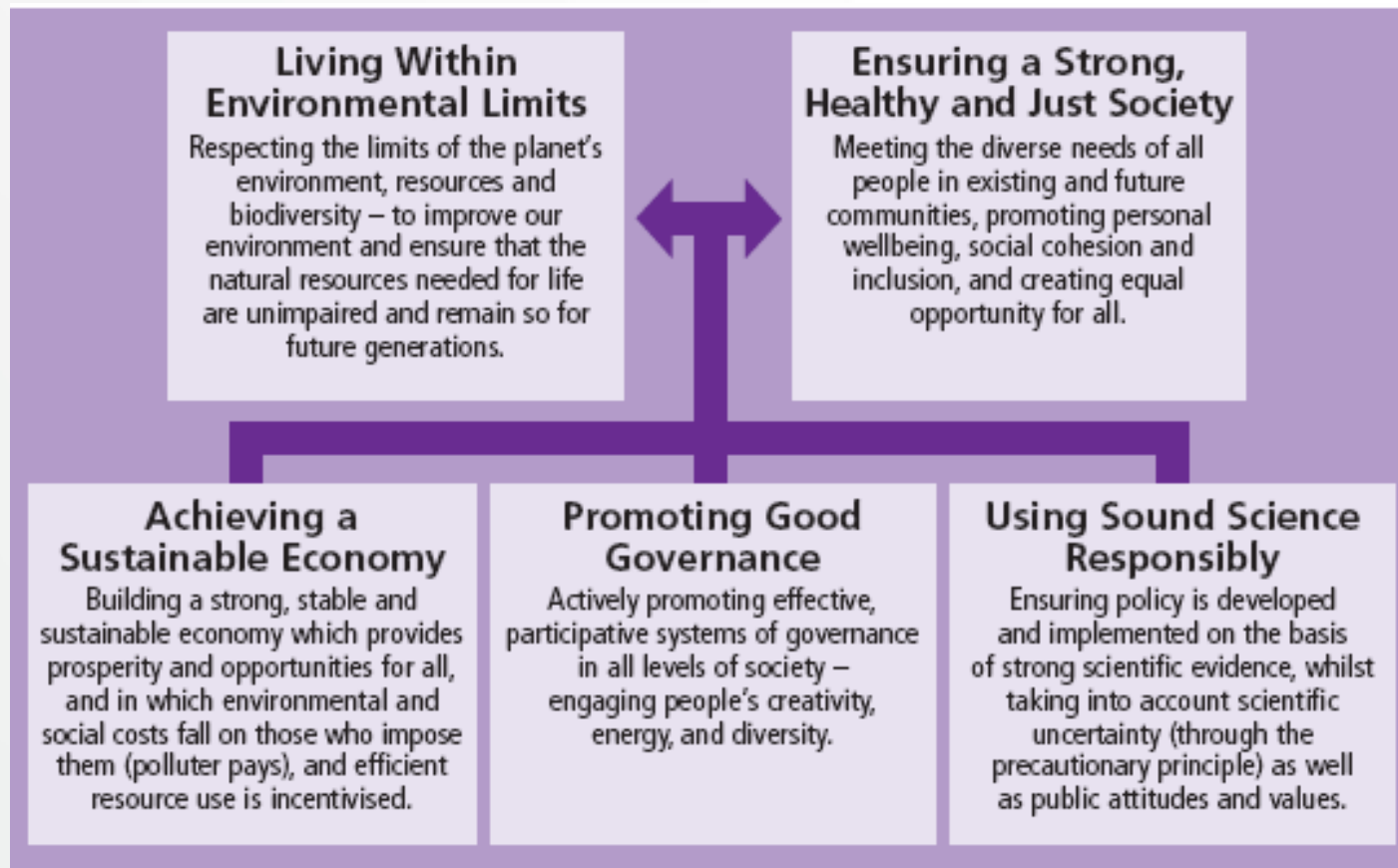
- Incidence of certain diseases are increasing:
 - *Mental illness* - In Great Britain, mental health disorders affect about 1 in 6 of the adult population
 - *Obesity related ill health* - In England in 2005 nearly a quarter of men and women were obese
 - *Diabetes* - Between 1994-2003 in England the prevalence of diabetes in men increased by nearly two-thirds and in women has almost doubled



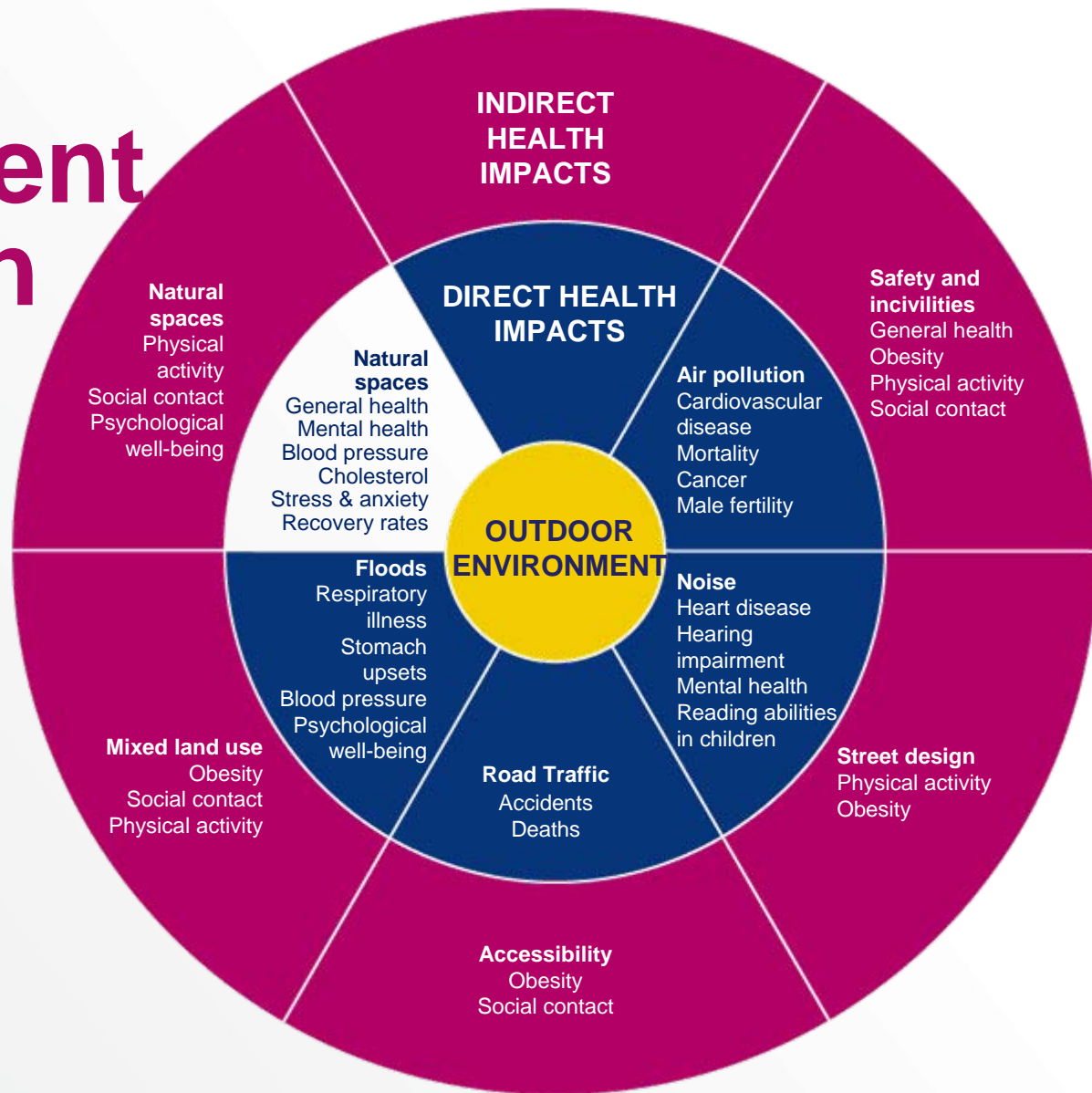
The cost of ill health

| | Health and social care | Wider economy | Total |
|--------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Mental ill health | £12 billion/annum | £64 billion/annum | £76 billion/annum |
| Obesity | >£1 billion/annum | > £2.3 billion/annum | >£3.7 billion/annum |
| Diabetes | £1.3 billion/annum | Unknown | > £1.3 billion/annum |

Principles of sustainable development



Outdoor environment and health

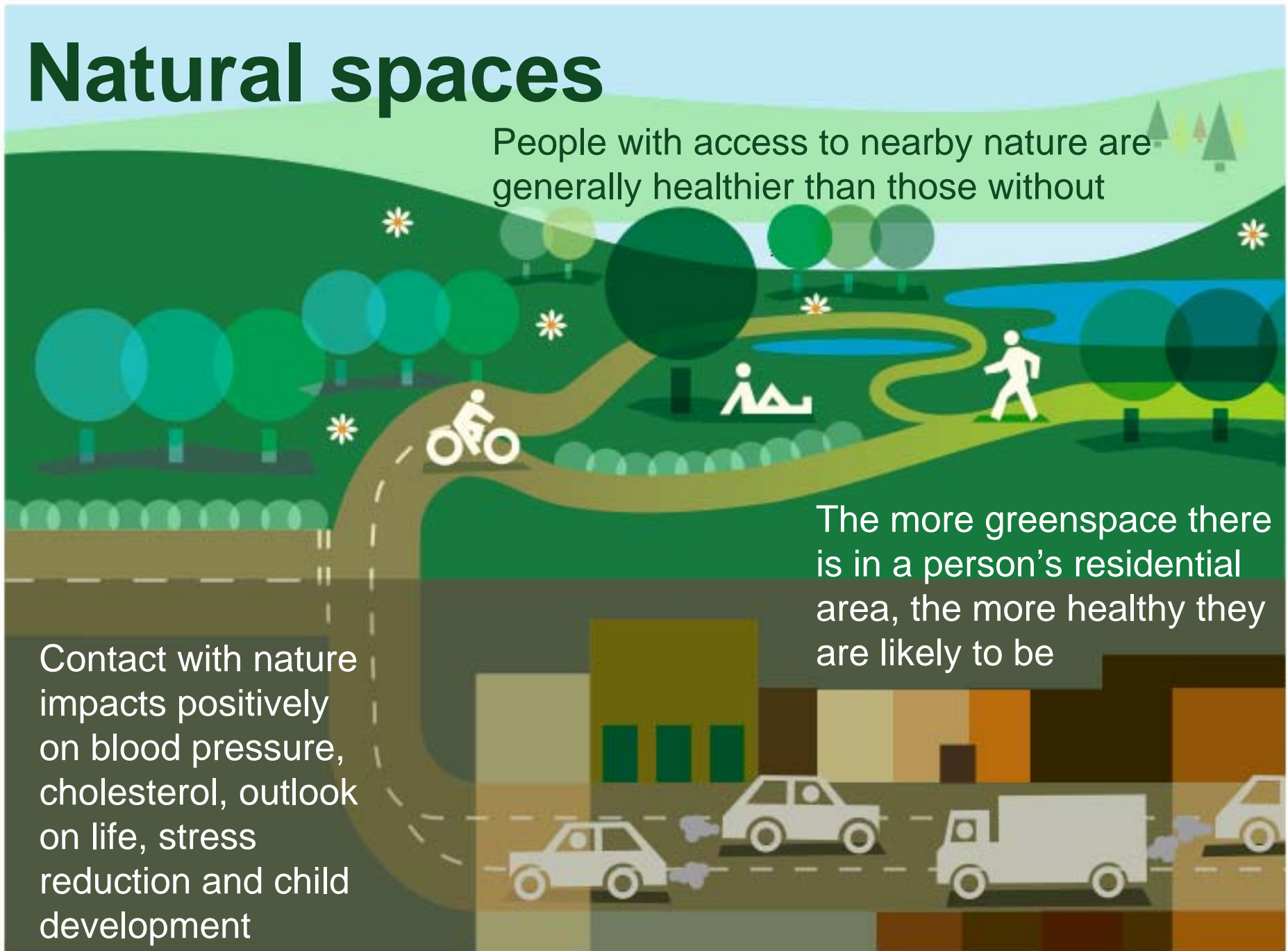


Natural spaces

People with access to nearby nature are generally healthier than those without

The more greenspace there is in a person's residential area, the more healthy they are likely to be

Contact with nature impacts positively on blood pressure, cholesterol, outlook on life, stress reduction and child development

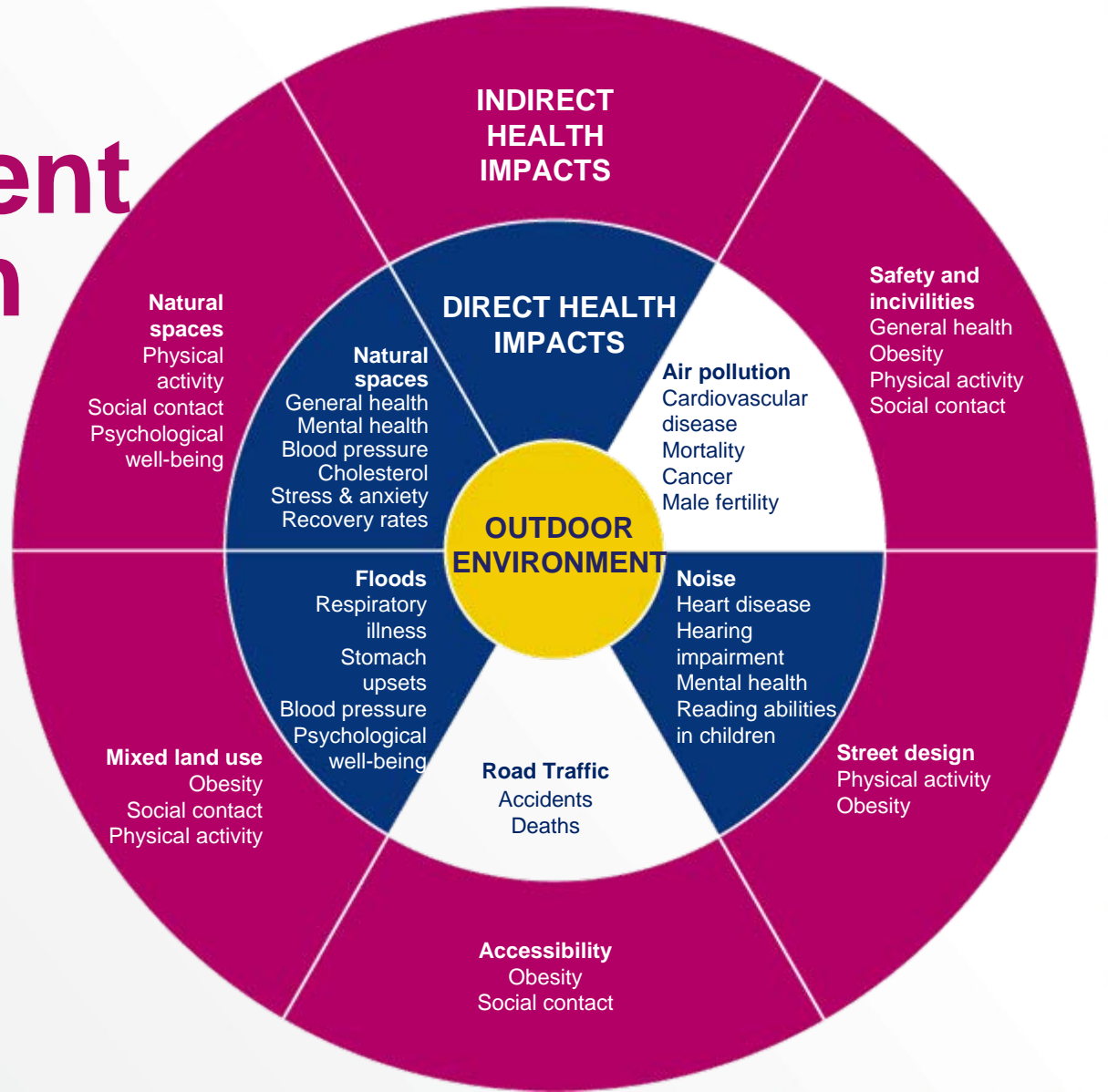


Chicago



Kuo, 2001

Outdoor environment and health



Air pollution and road traffic



Increasing the number of people cycling and walking improves road safety

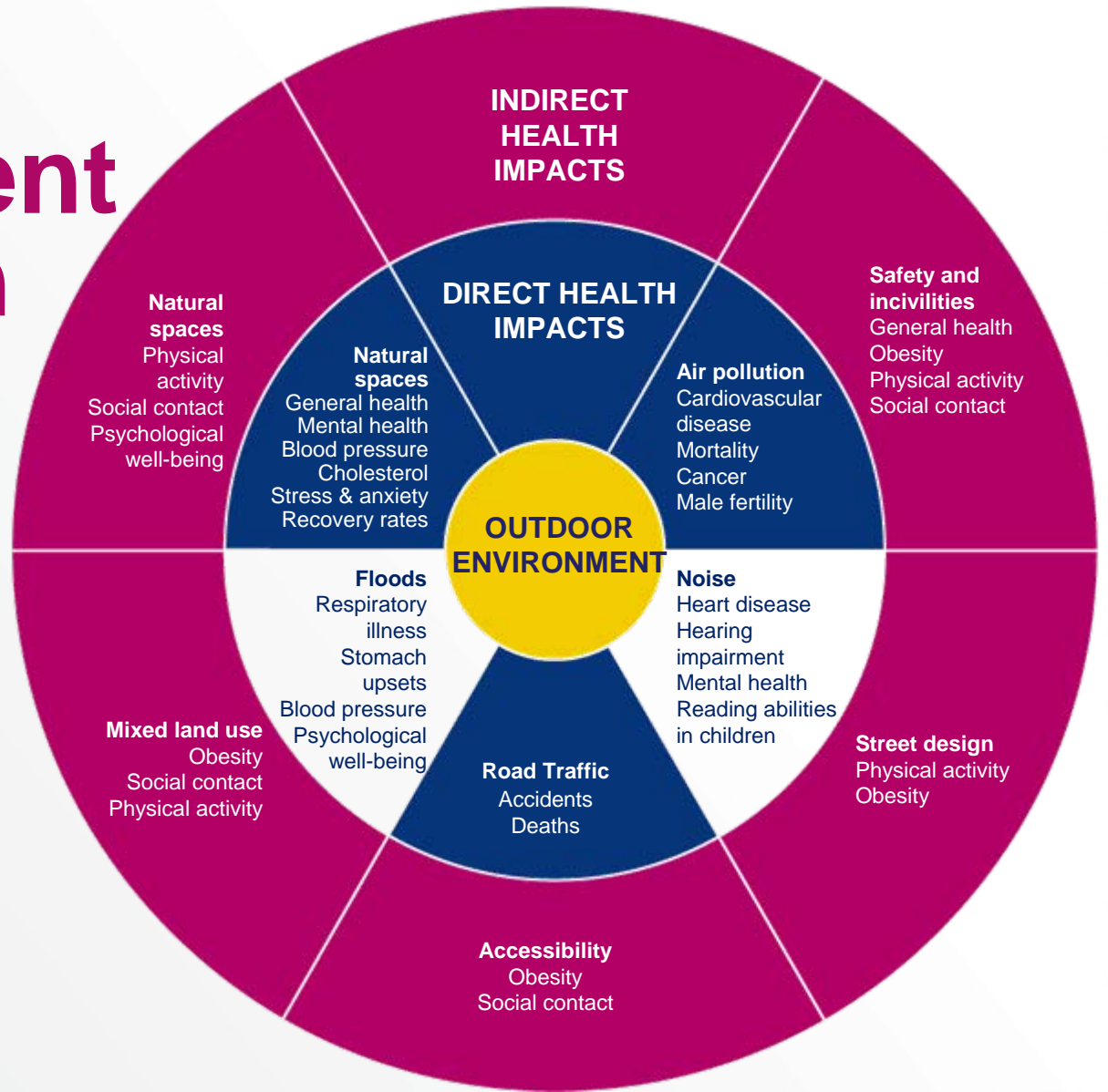
Perceptions of road safety can influence levels of physical activity

In 2006, over 250,000 people were killed or injured in road accidents in the UK

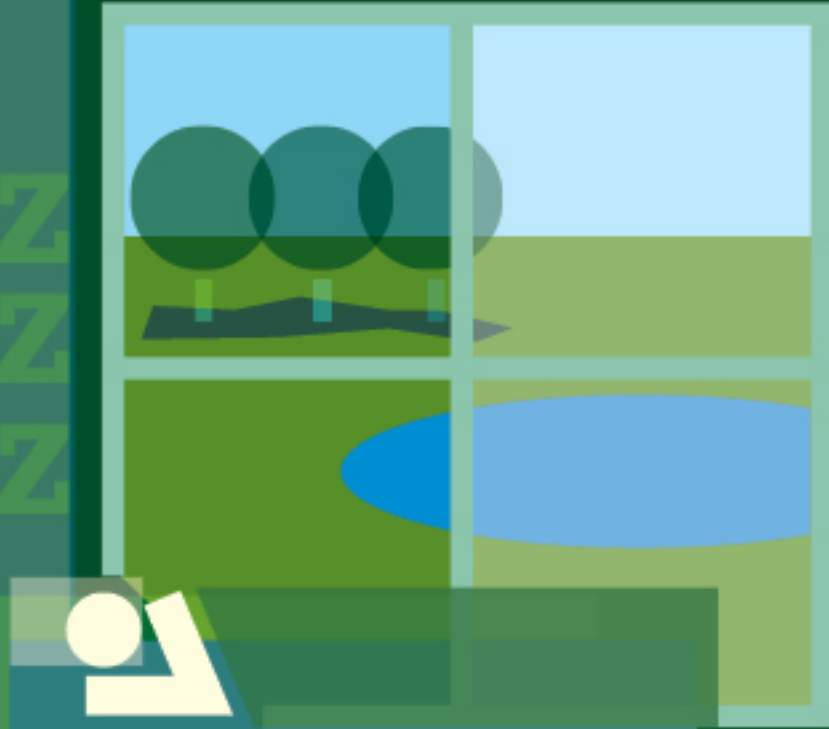
Air pollution reduces life expectancy by 7-8 months and costs up to £20.2 billion/annum

Adverse health effects of air pollution include: mortality, asthma, rhinitis, cardiovascular disease, cancer and lowering of male fertility

Outdoor environment and health

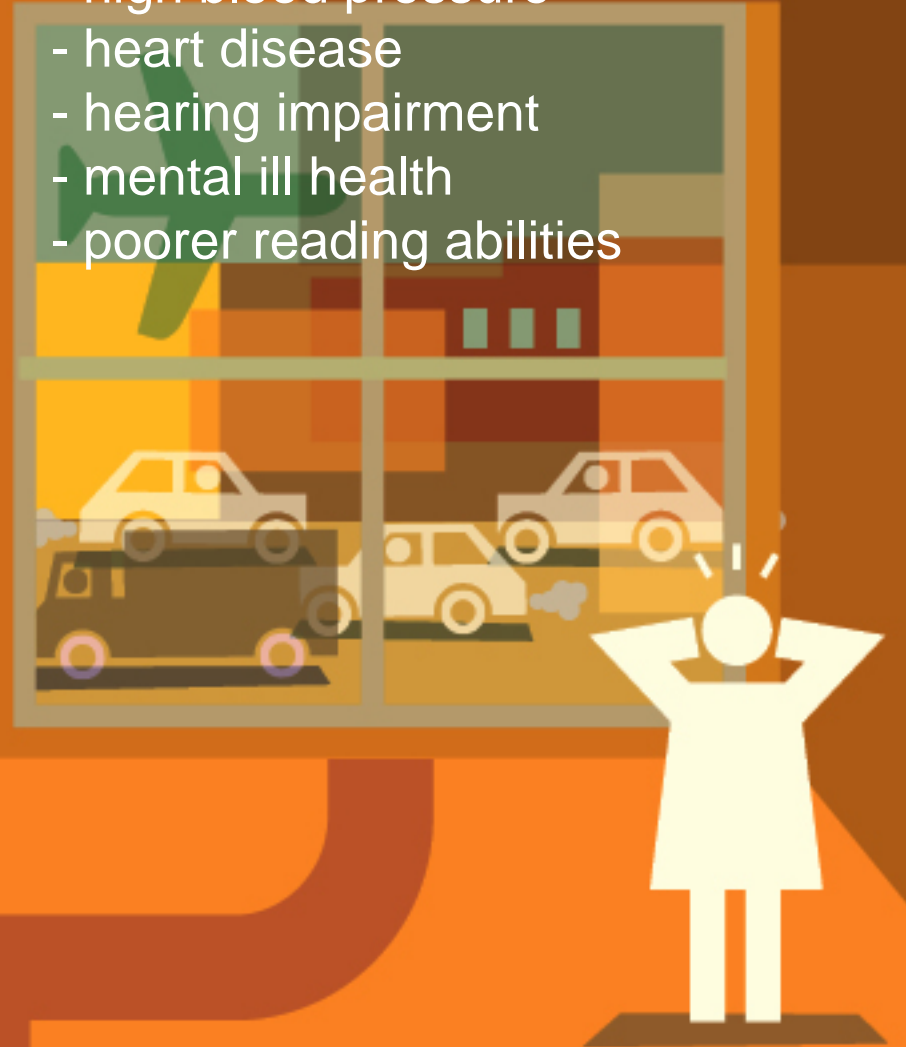


Noise



Adverse health impacts of persistent environmental noise include:

- high blood pressure
- heart disease
- hearing impairment
- mental ill health
- poorer reading abilities



Floods

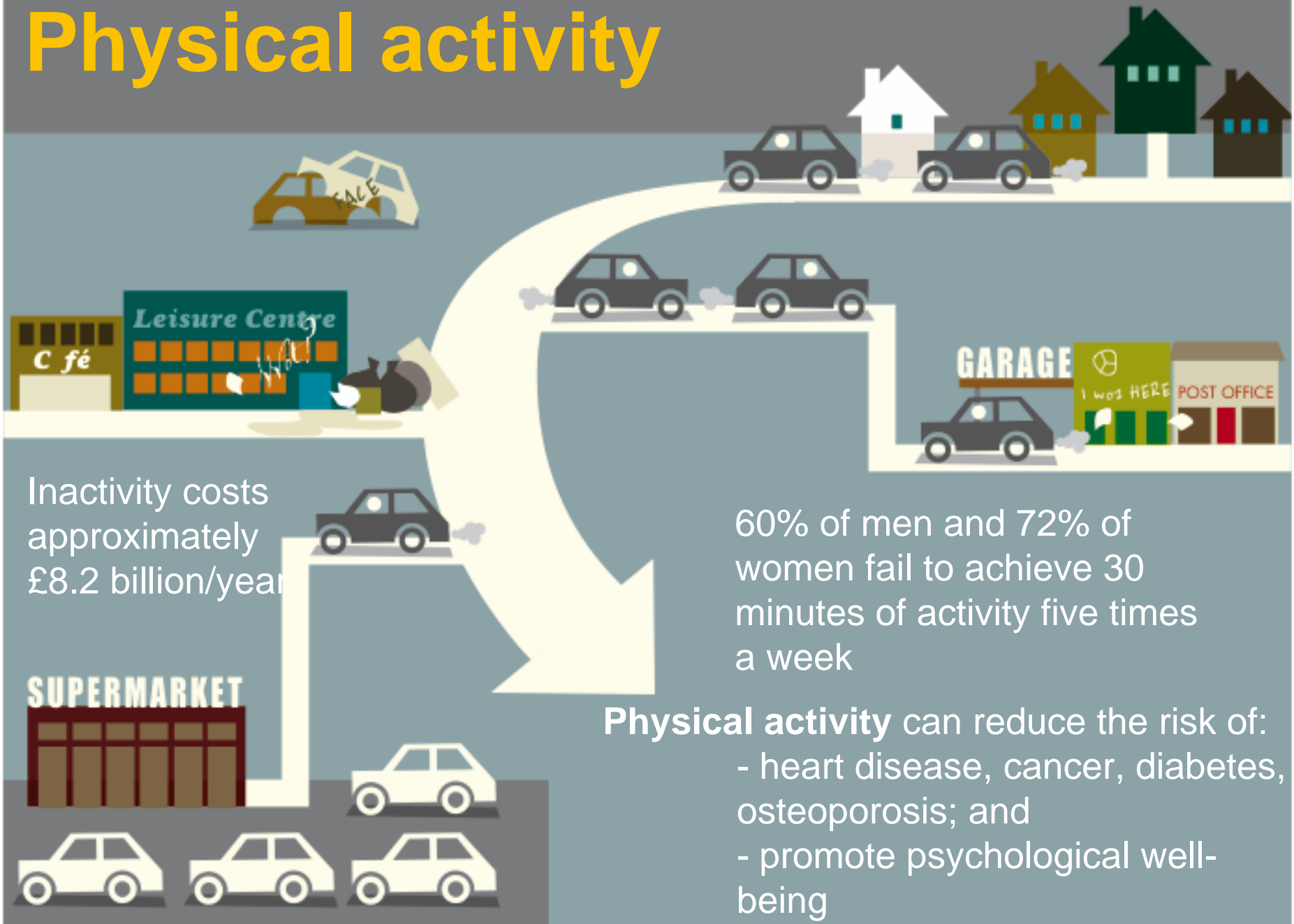
The illustration depicts a landscape with a winding blue river. On the left bank, there are several houses in shades of orange, yellow, and green, surrounded by tall, stylized trees in various colors. A white boat is on the river. On the right bank, there are more houses, some with red roofs, and several round trees. In the background, there are rolling hills in shades of green and blue. The overall style is flat and colorful.

The number of people at high risk from future coastal and river flooding in England and Wales could double from 1.6 million today, to over 3 million by 2080

Adverse health impacts of flooding include:

- respiratory illnesses
- stomach upsets
- high blood pressure
- psychological distress

Physical activity



Social capital

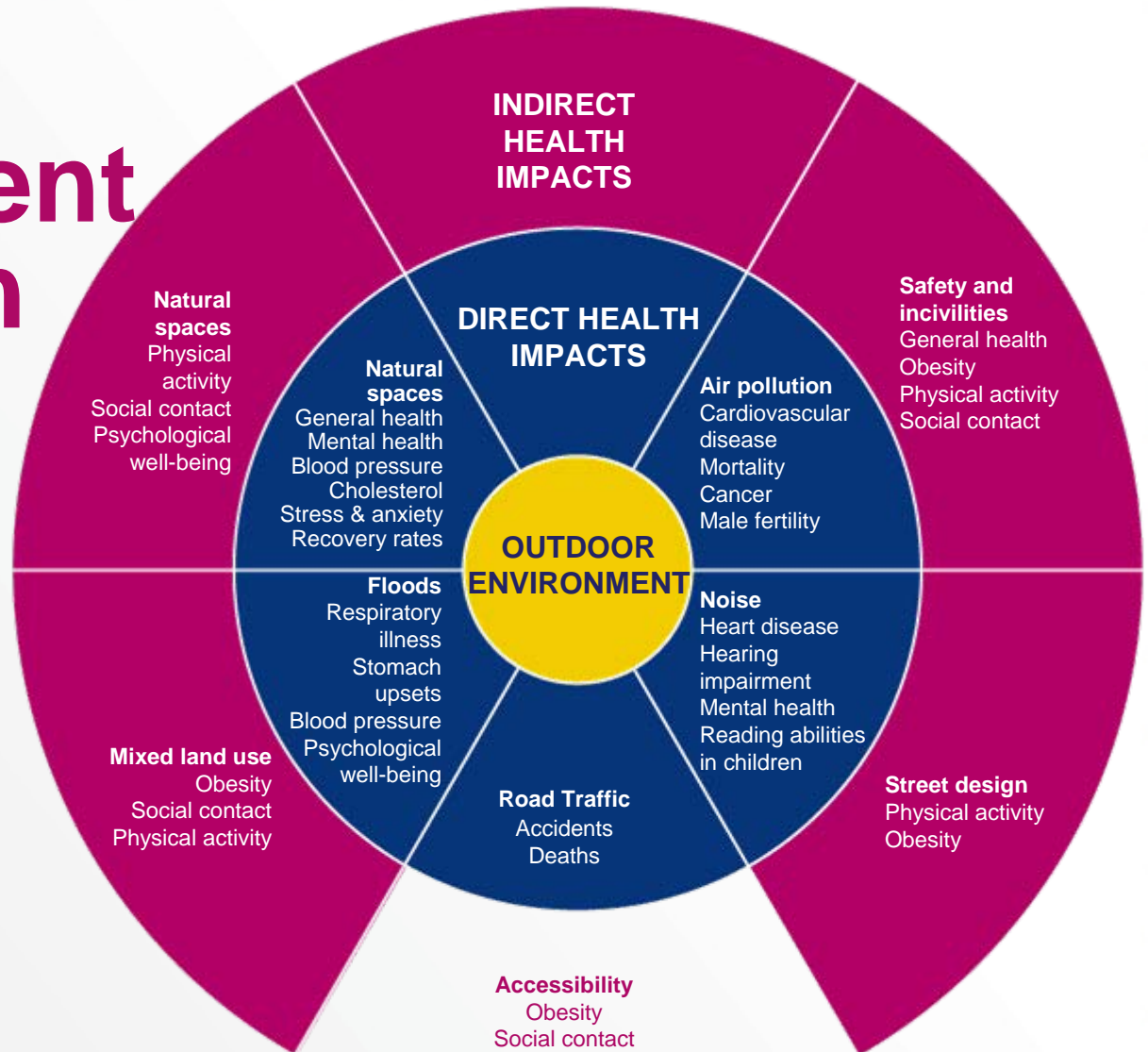


Getting out and meeting people has been shown to help people:

- live longer;
- be healthier physically
- and mentally



Outdoor environment and health



Accessibility

Local facilities create opportunities for social interaction and physical activity



Transport difficulties can jeopardise opportunities:

- 1 in 4 young people have not attended a job interview

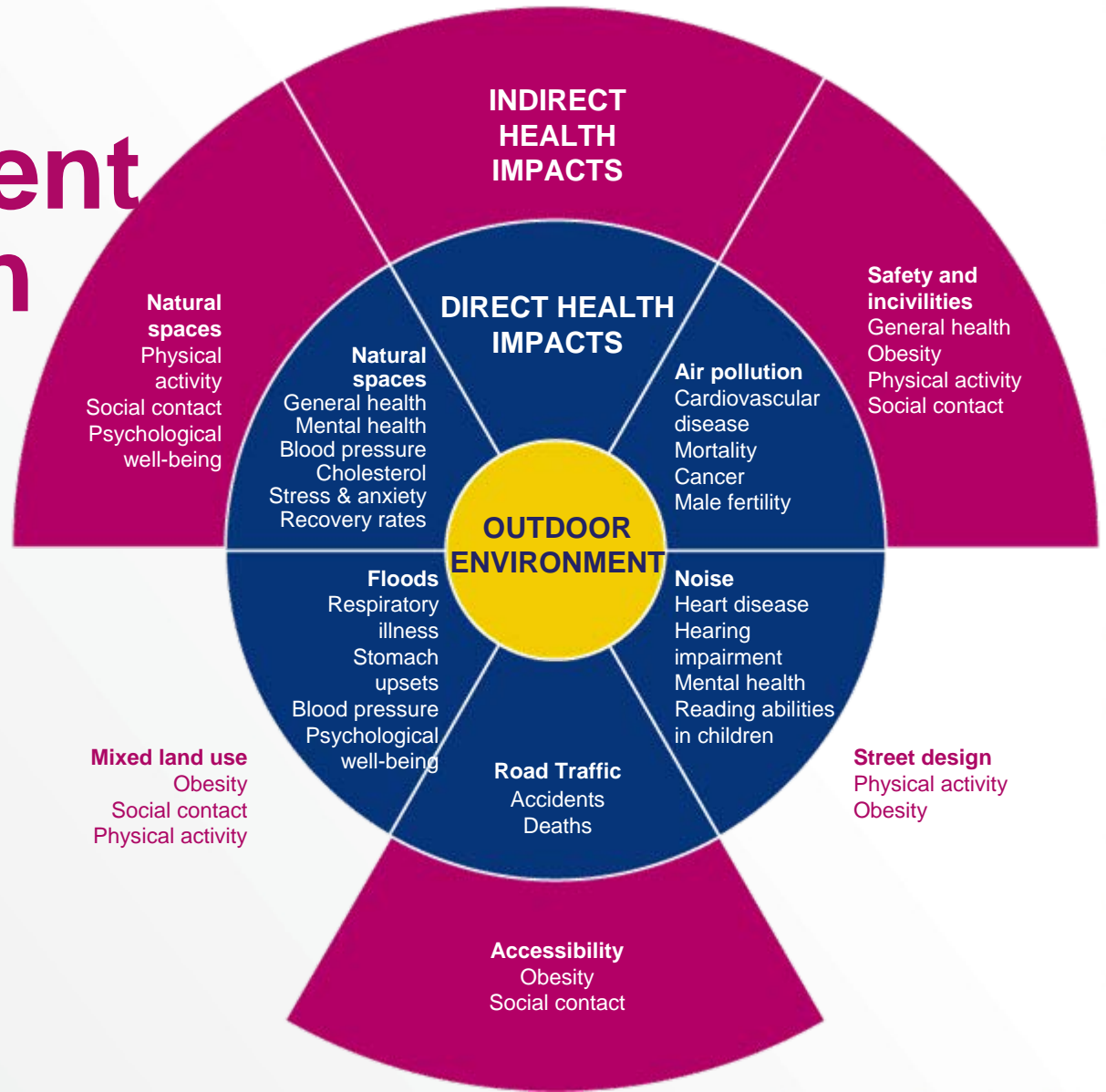


- 1.4 million people missed, turned down or chose not to seek medical help

Housing

Leisure Centre

Outdoor environment and health



Mixed land-use & street design

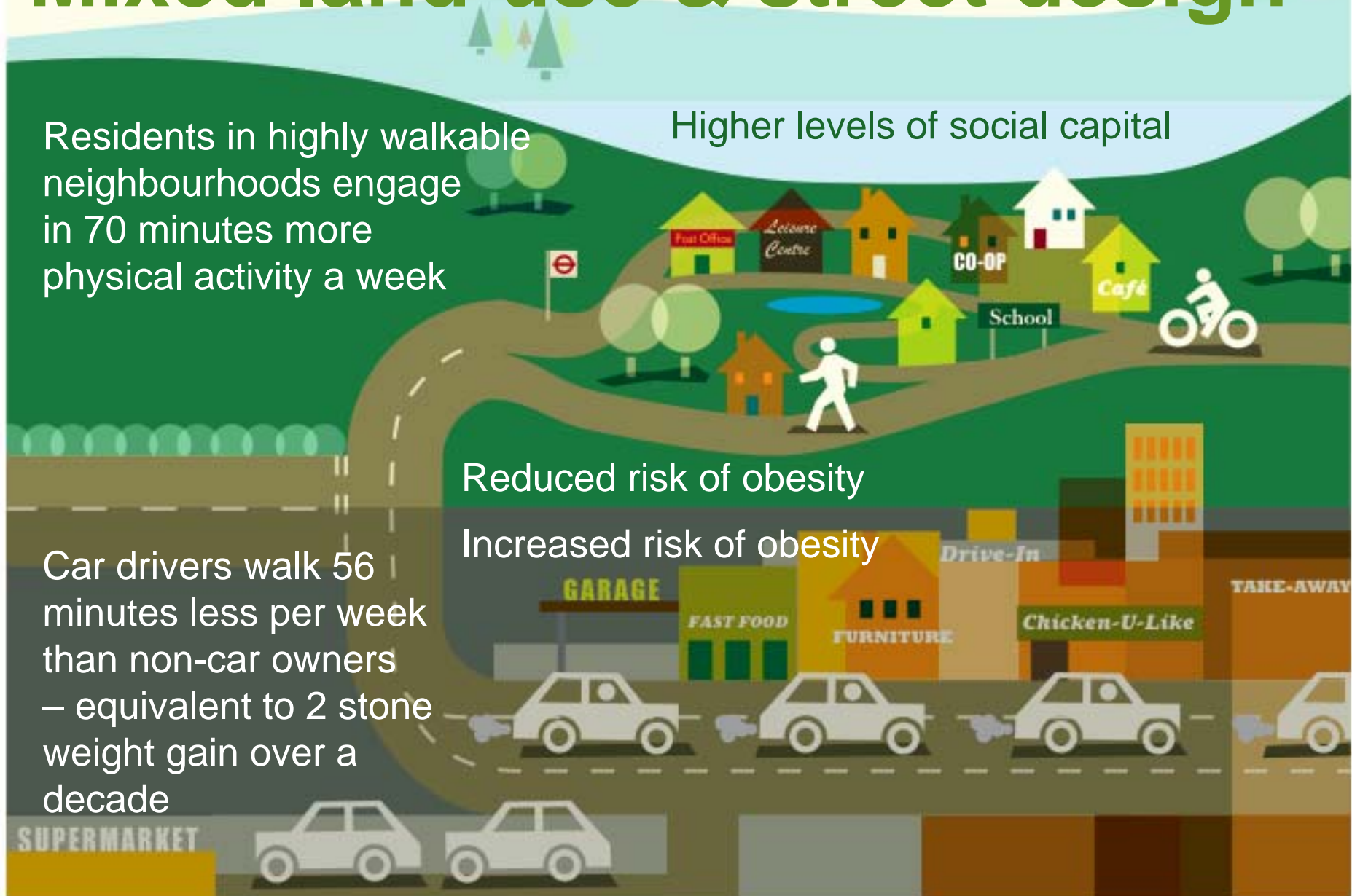
Residents in highly walkable neighbourhoods engage in 70 minutes more physical activity a week

Higher levels of social capital

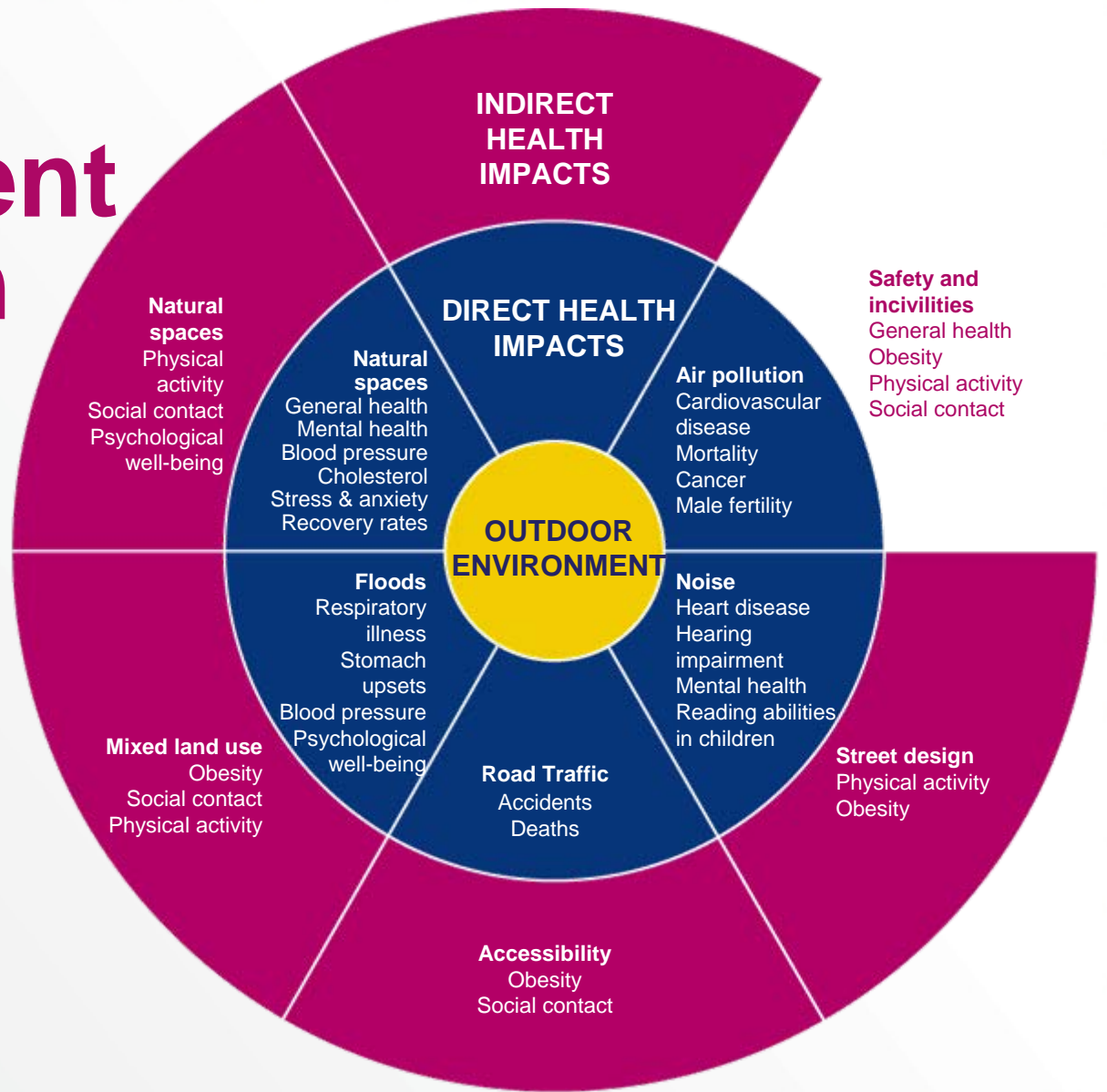
Reduced risk of obesity

Increased risk of obesity

Car drivers walk 56 minutes less per week than non-car owners – equivalent to 2 stone weight gain over a decade



Outdoor environment and health

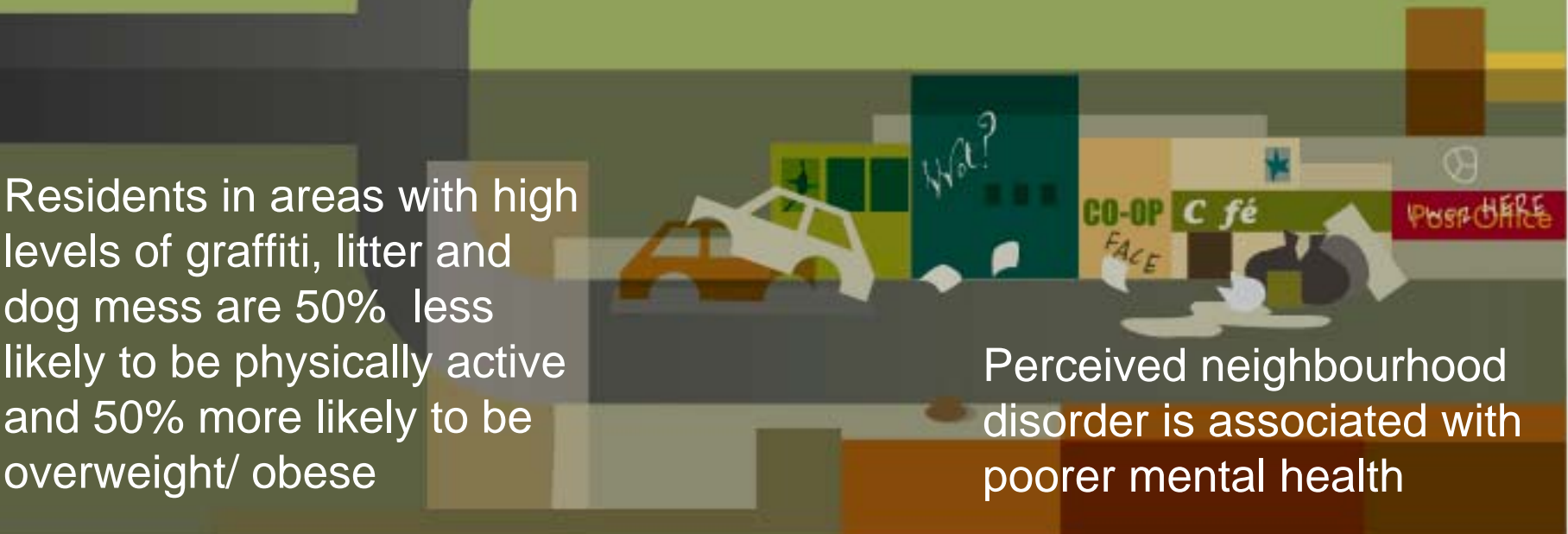


Safety and incivilities

People who feel safe in their neighbourhood are more likely to be physically active

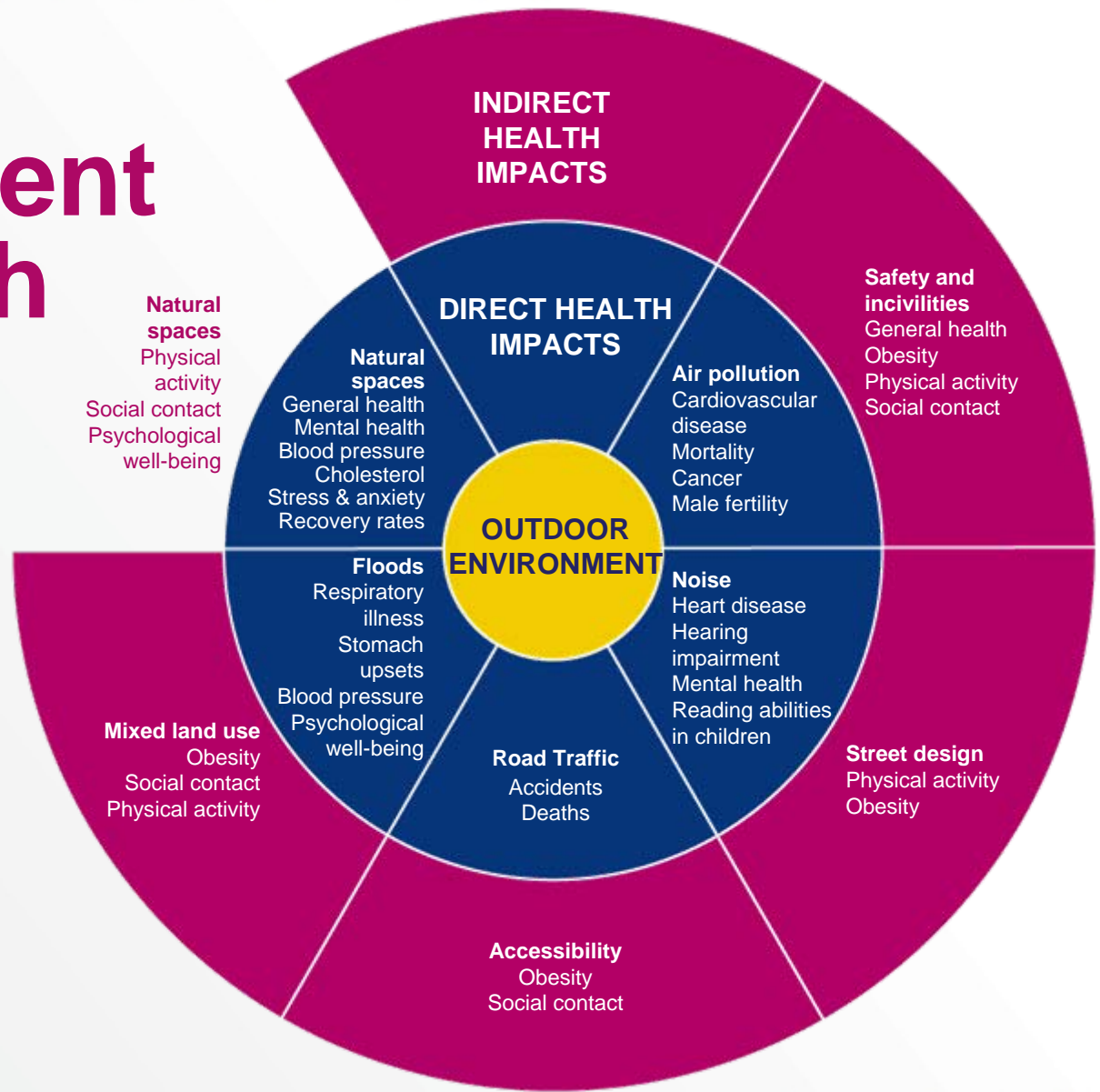


Residents in areas with high levels of graffiti, litter and dog mess are 50% less likely to be physically active and 50% more likely to be overweight/ obese



Perceived neighbourhood disorder is associated with poorer mental health

Outdoor environment and health



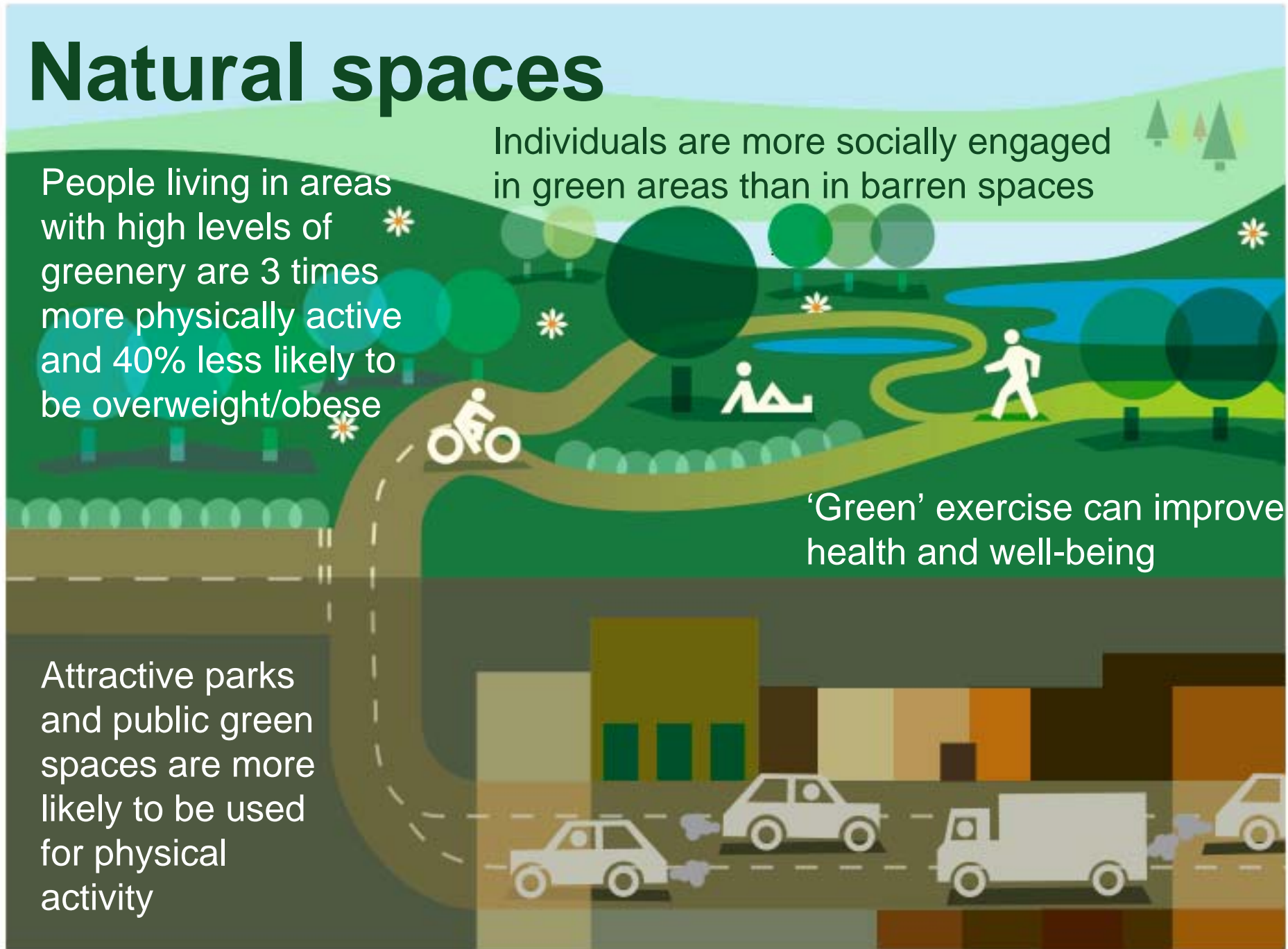
Natural spaces

Individuals are more socially engaged in green areas than in barren spaces

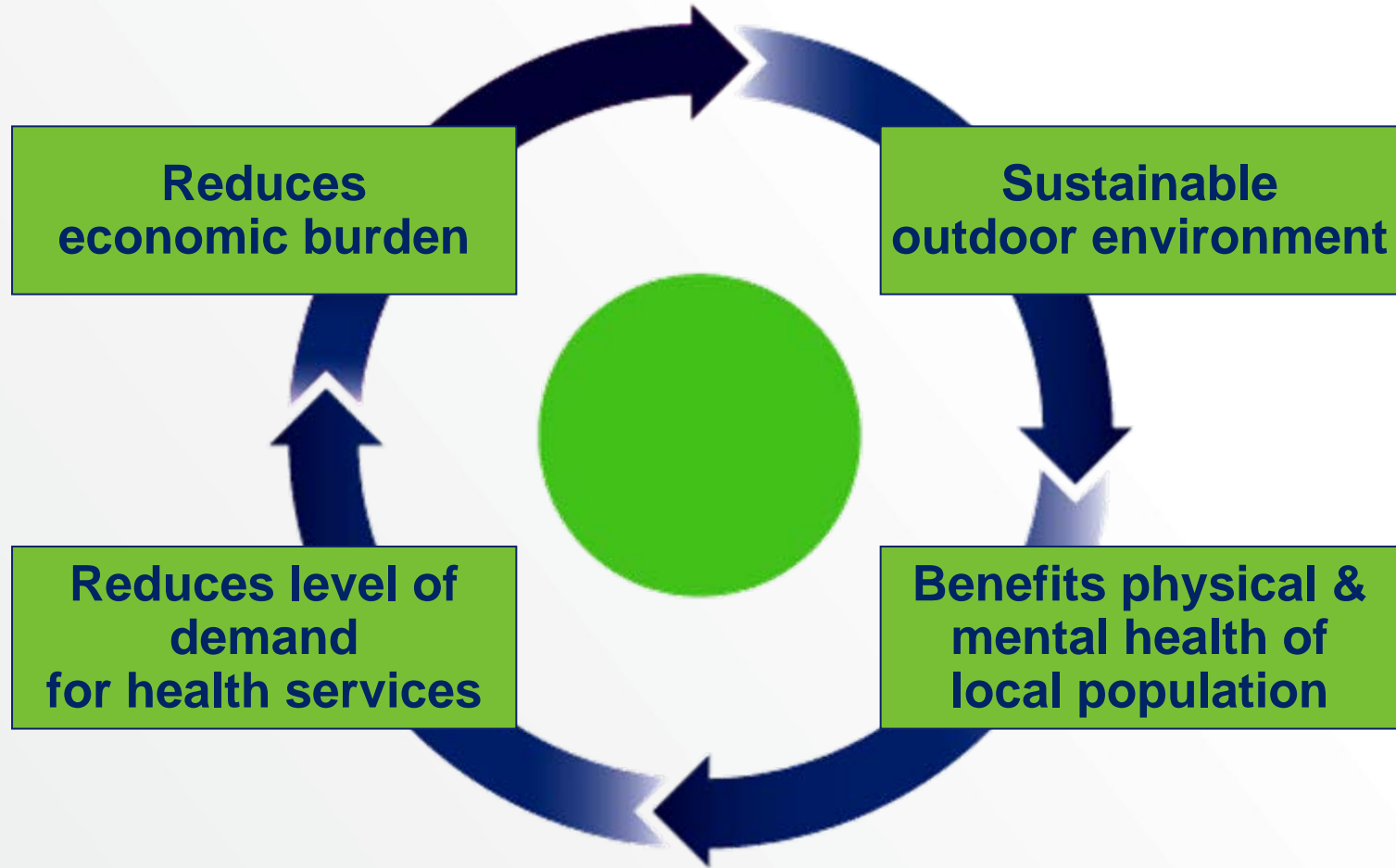
People living in areas with high levels of greenery are 3 times more physically active and 40% less likely to be overweight/obese

'Green' exercise can improve health and well-being

Attractive parks and public green spaces are more likely to be used for physical activity



Virtuous circle





Exercise 2

- 1) Would you change anything about your drawing of a healthy urban environment?
- 2) Who would need to be involved to make this healthy urban environment a reality?
- 3) What would you need to do in your job to help make this place as healthy as possible?



For more information:

larissa.lockwood@sd-commission.gsi.gov.uk

craig.myers@sd-commission.gsi.gov.uk

www.sd-commission.org.uk/health



Thank you

