

Thrive LDN's Climate, Environment, and Mental Health Action Forum

11:00 am – 12.30 pm, Wednesday 30th July 2025

Location: Microsoft Teams

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Welcome and introductions

Ben and Joe introduced [Thrive LDN](#): a citywide public mental health partnership to ensure all Londoners have an equal opportunity for good mental health and wellbeing.

Ben introduced the refreshed aims of this Forum:

- Connect people across London working on and/ or interested climate, nature, mental health and/ or social justice, in order to raise awareness of the co-benefits of climate and mental health action.
- Platform the voices of people from marginalised, excluded and vulnerable groups.
- Create a supportive platform that helps members to learn from collective efforts and share intelligence and best practice.

Ben shared [a link](#) to our Forum webpage, with notes and associated resources for all previous meetings.

Speed networking activity

Joe randomly assigned people to 1:1 breakout rooms for 5-minute introductory conversations between people, running two rounds with different combinations of people, with different conversation prompts. Many people made connections with each other and shared contact details.

Some people were unable to join breakout rooms, so introduced themselves in the main room:

- Gregory Cohn ([Seeds for Growth](#)): Runs social prescribing programmes for community gardens (30 in London, aiming for 100/year).
- [Toby Peach](#) (Games Designer and Theatre-maker): Creates playable experiences for youth mental health and climate action (worked with NHS/Greenpeace).
- Maia Nurse & Matthew Ashton ([Peer Outreach Workers at the Greater London Authority](#)): Advocate for young Londoners – including about green spaces and mental health – and advise the Mayor of London.
- Shuo Zhang (Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist and [Nature Matters Co-Lead at the Royal College of Psychiatrists](#)): Researches equitable access to mental health services and promotes nature-based interventions.
- Kay Michael (CEO & Creative Director, [Letters to the Earth](#)): Uses creative workshops to address climate anxiety and foster agency.

Sharing caring tasks across communities

Led by Joe

Introduction & context-setting

A whole range of cross-sector stakeholders are interested in addressing the poor mental health of society and are looking for new approaches, as mental health services are overwhelmed by demand, particularly from young people. A full scale move to prevention will require huge funding, which is not currently available politically, but this type of approach provides a gradual shift to prevention.

“Task sharing” is a new evidence-based public health approach to changing mental health care, so that the skills of care are decentralised across society, rather than limited to mental health professionals. This is particularly important in the context of climate change: we need mental health skills to be distributed across society so that communities are resilient in the face of the mental health impacts of climate change. Equity is crucial here, so that task sharing also addresses the social determinants of poor mental health.

The challenge is how to implement this type of approach in London. This activity aimed to give a range of non-mental health related activities a framing in terms of mental health benefits. The outcome could be a ‘task sharing network’ in which the skills of mental health care are distributed across communities, in a structured but flexible way that can be scaled.

Joe explained how community gardening could be developing to incorporate task-sharing:

- You're connecting with others and nature. You might take a mindful approach, have conversations that build connection, or benefit from the quiet space. To develop this further:
 - Be more intentional: go with others and create times for quiet and connection together.
 - Share what works: pass on the mental health benefits you've discovered.
 - Extend the approach: learn what else could help mental health in the garden setting.

Ben shared two examples of task-sharing in action:

- London: GLA-funded and Communities Prepared-led [Climate Connected Communities programme](#): Climate emergencies and extreme weather events are increasing, impacting communities across London. By equipping community representatives with the skills and connections to navigate these challenges, the programme aims to create stronger, more resilient communities that can respond effectively to crises.
- New Orleans: REACH NOLA (now C-LEARN) started in 2006 in New Orleans in response to Hurricane Katrina as a multi-pronged community strengthening partnership including widespread sharing of mental health skills across the community. They engage all sectors to better understand and strengthen resilience in neighbourhoods threatened by floods and weather events associated with climate change (taken from COP2's [Roadmap for Care and Change](#)).

Shuo Zhang:

- As a Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, Shuo reflected that many effective mental health interventions don't require specialist skills but rather focus on building meaningful relationships and community empowerment. Shuo noted the importance of fostering resilience within communities rather than creating dependency on experts.
- Shuo referenced a book titled [Where There Is No Child Psychiatrist: A mental healthcare manual](#), emphasising its relevance in thinking about sustainable, community-led approaches to mental health support.

Reflecting on questions

Joe asked everyone to reflect on the following questions on their own for 2 minutes, before discussing them with 4-5 others in a breakout room:

- Raising awareness: How are existing climate-related activities already having mental health benefits or putting mental health skills into practice?
- Honing skills: How might those activities be honed, improved or developed?
- Sharing learning: How could you share the ways your activities bring mental health tasks out into communities?

- Learning: What could you benefit from learning from others about how they've putting mental health skills into practice?

Next, a person from each breakout room shared some thoughts from their discussions with everyone in the main room. The discussion is summarised below.

Flora Hastings raised an important question about potential risks in expanding mental healthcare into non-specialist settings:

- "What do you think the kind of negative repercussions of expanding mental healthcare into less specialised areas could be? I'm someone who would be really interested in honing my skills as a university educator in mental health support, but I'm also wary that I might be kind of making mistakes. It's really interesting as we shift from a big state that supports mental health interventions to decentralising it. What are the risks that could come with that? As a way for me to kind of think through that as I hone my own skills."

Responses to Flora:

- Joe acknowledged the risks of expanding mental health support into non-specialist settings, stressing that effective signposting systems are essential to ensure people can access appropriate care. He noted the current lack of clarity about available support across London, though work is underway to improve this infrastructure.
- Daniella Watson (Research Associate, [Climate Cares Centre](#)), drew from her direct experience with [The Resilience Project's](#) youth facilitator program. She raised the crucial question "who supports them when they're overwhelmed?" about their trained peer supporters. To address this, she described their implemented solutions: rotating facilitator roles to distribute emotional labour, establishing formal partnerships with NHS services for backup support, and maintaining regular debrief sessions to process challenging experiences.

Hannah Hooper, Programmes Manager at [Force of Nature](#), focused on how to create an effective ecosystem of support for young people navigating climate emotions:

- Shared how Force of Nature's climate emotion workshops help young people process eco-anxiety through values identification exercises, peer-to-peer facilitation, and action-oriented framing.
- Explained the challenge of moving beyond superficial partnerships between organisations, psychologists, researchers and facilitators, wanting instead to build "a really robust partnership and ecosystem" that creates "a holistic journey" for youth.
- Difficult to make these collaborations meaningful rather than just token referrals between programmes. She emphasised how this work currently happens despite funding limitations, stating "we're not funded enough in this space" and "we're at capacity." This creates tension between the desire to build strong networks and the risk of "burning out and adding loads of extra work onto our plate."
- Hannah wants others to share practical examples or solutions, to learn which partnership models have worked well despite resource constraints.

Drashti Shah (Project and Comms Officer, [London Arts and Health](#)) highlighted a tension between creating structured frameworks to share best practices and maintaining the responsive, community-led nature of their work:

- While developing clear models could help scale initiatives, much of their impact comes from real-time, contextual adaptation to community needs. This creates challenges when trying to simultaneously refine methodologies ("honing skills") and expand programmes, as overly rigid frameworks might compromise the flexibility required for meaningful engagement.

Building on Drashti's comment, Zarina Ahmad (Co-Director, [Women's Environmental Network](#)) cautioned against "manufacturing certain outcomes" to fit professional agendas, using an analogy:

- When analysing literature, experts might interpret meaning the author never intended. Similarly, practitioners risk imposing their own frameworks rather than understanding community members' actual experiences. Zarina stressed the need to "hold that carefully" when creating support spaces, acknowledging this complexity requires ongoing discussion.

Adding to Zarina's comments, Abiola Okubango shared insights from frontline work with asylum seekers:

- Speaking about refugee/asylum seeker work, Abiola noted a disconnect between professional perceptions ("we can see they need mental health support") and participants' immediate priorities ("I need a house, not therapy"). She observed that basic survival needs (housing, income, immigration status) dominate, making traditional mental health referrals often irrelevant despite visible trauma from their journeys.
- Successful models embed emotional support within job training programmes, housing assistance initiatives, and community-building activities.

Shuo Zhang (Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist and [Nature Matters Co-Lead at the Royal College of Psychiatrists](#)), made several points in the chat:

- Noted task-shifting/ sharing has long existed across healthcare and referenced [Nigel Crisp's work *Turning the World Upside Down*](#) as relevant reading.
- Suggested framing community work as building "resilience and wellbeing" (foundational elements for good mental health) rather than "providing mental health care" but acknowledged the challenge in navigating these distinctions clearly.
- Highlighted problem-solving as a key component of successful task-sharing models like [The Friendship Bench](#) in Zimbabwe.

Aaliya Aaliya (PhD Student at Duke University) shared a recent policy report:

- '[Integrating Mental Health into Climate Change Adaptation Policies](#)' (2025), published by [United for Global Mental Health](#) with input from Climate Cares, Imperial College London.

Member updates

Ben gave people the floor to share updates, events, or resources, and to connect with fellow members.

Hannah Hooper, Programmes Manager at [Force of Nature](#)

Force of Nature is a youth-led non-profit addressing the intersection of the climate crisis and mental health, empowering young people (16-35) to take action in their communities.

[Becoming a Force of Nature](#)

- A free, 3-session programme delivered by trained young facilitators, helping participants identify their values and passions, and channel concerns into local climate action.
- Engaged 400+ young people in the May 2024 cohort.
- Next cohort launching October 2025

Hannah is looking for partnerships with organisations:

- Working with young people (climate/mental health focus preferred but not required)
- Interested in cross-programme referrals or resource-sharing.
- Keen to build an ecosystem of support for youth.
- "I'd love to connect to learn about your work and explore how we can cross-pollinate programmes. Our programmes are free, and we're open to sharing resources."
- Email hannah@forceofnature.xyz

Zarina Ahmad (Co-Director, [Women's Environmental Network](#))

About the Women's Environmental Network (Wen):

- Founded in 1988, working at the intersection of gender, health, and climate change.
- Evolved from campaigning to grassroots community work, starting in Tower Hamlets
- Now expanding nationally with staff in Ireland, Scotland, and Manchester

[Climate Sisters project](#)

- Launched at COP26 to amplify non-traditional voices (migrants, asylum seekers, diaspora communities)
- Participant-led approach: Women choose climate issues impacting their daily lives (e.g., textiles, plastic)

- Arts-based expression: Mosaics, performances, and collective creations to share stories.
- Key principles: Non-competitive space, collective learning over individualism, mental health benefits are an organic outcome.
- *"It's about collectiveness and coming together... The spaces give [participants] release from thinking about their trauma."*
- 3-year London programme and new 5-year projects in Manchester and Scotland ([funded by National Lottery Community Fund](#)).

Soil Sisters Project

- Therapeutic horticulture for women in refuges
- Directly addresses mental health and climate change.
- Struggling to secure consistent funding for this project.

Shiwei Ooi (MSc student in Public Health at the [London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine](#))

- Taking part in Wen's Climate Siblings project
- Highlighted the project's focus on People of Colour and queer voices.
- Valued the diverse, collaborative space: "It was really nice to have discussions with people from such different backgrounds... learning from each other."
- Final presentation for the project coming up, with plans to further integrate arts, climate, and health.

Zarina is seeking funding support for Soil Sisters and generally open to partnerships to scale the impact of Wen's work.

Tamasin Rhymes (Programme and Impact manager at [Greener and Cleaner](#))

Tamasin shared an update about Greener and Cleaner in-person youth event for 18–25-year-olds in southeast London (they are currently prioritising in-person events over virtual ones):

- Event: 'Connect the Buds: IRL Club'
- Date/Time: 6 August, 5:15–6:45pm
- Location: [The Glades hub in Bromley](#)

Email Amber@greenerandcleaner.co.uk or drop into the hub for more information.

Tamasin offered Greener and Cleaner's southeast London space as a potential pilot site for other projects, noting they're "very happy to be involved" and would "happily try and facilitate" collaborations.

Tamasin also mentioned Greener and Cleaner's new partnership with the [Health Equals](#) campaign – an initiative they're "quite excited about" and encouraged others to explore.

She explained the campaign's core focus: addressing health inequalities by ensuring equal access to both mental and physical health support, regardless of background or location. Key aspects are:

- Challenges disparities like poorer health outcomes in polluted areas
- Aims to equalise life expectancy expectations across communities.
- Connects closely with their work at the intersection of health and climate justice.

Toby Peach (Director, Mod)

Toby shared Mod's innovative work using "play as a way to spark change" through game-based learning experiences for young people. He explained how their approach modifies game systems to help students explore real-world systems change, particularly around climate activism and mental health – "looking at how modifying game systems allows you to explore how you could modify other systems like school systems, and therefore also more general social systems."

After two successful pilots developed with Greenpeace, they're now preparing to scale the project and actively seeking:

- School partnerships for delivery
- Connections to gatekeepers in education
- Collaborators interested in their playful activism methodology.

Toby shared a link to a video about the [Playful Activism Toolbox](#), mentioning adapted versions exist for primary schools too. Toby invited potential partners to email him (toby@modgames.co.uk), particularly those who could help connect them with school groups for the next delivery phase.

Shuo Zhang (Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist and [Nature Matters Co-Lead at the Royal College of Psychiatrists](#))

Shuo shared her positive experience with Circle of Life's nature-based training programs in Sussex, having completed their [two-day course for psychiatrists and GPs](#), she specifically recommended it, noting: "They have expertise in that interface between community projects and the NHS."

The training focuses on incorporating natural environments into therapeutic practice, with different pathways available for both clinicians and non-clinicians. Shuo highlighted its value in bridging formal mental healthcare with community-based approaches.

Kay Michael (CEO & Creative Director, [Letters to the Earth](#))

Kay wanted to know if anyone had “live projects they're developing that they're looking to strengthen or build partnerships for”. She also asked about potential joint funding bids in the climate/ mental health space.

Kay shared her email address: kay@letterstotheearth.com

Rosa Treadwell (Public Health Strategist, [Association of Directors of Public Health London](#)) mentioned she is happy to use ADPH's network share opportunities and link stakeholders, and shared her email address: Rosa.Treadwell@adphlondon.org.uk.

Abiola Okubanjo ([Action on Blood](#))

Abiola shared details about an ongoing University of Nottingham research project exploring climate change perspectives among people of colour. The study is looking for participants:

- 20 individuals from South Asian and Black Caribbean communities
- Older adults (having already engaged younger participants through youth teams)
- No prior climate change knowledge or involvement needed.
- Format: In-depth interviews lasting approximately one hour
- Compensation: £30 Amazon vouchers

She particularly encouraged connections with community groups in Tower Hamlets and invited referrals via email (abiola@me.com). The project aims to broaden understanding of how different communities engage with climate issues beyond typical activist circles.

Drashti Shah (Project and Comms Officer, [London Arts and Health](#))

Drashti shared an upcoming opportunity for artists working at the intersection of arts, mental health and climate action. The initiative aims to showcase creative responses to the climate-mental health connection during Black History Month:

- London Arts and Health are commissioning 6 artists for Black History Month (October)
- Distribution: 3 London-based artists, 3 UK-wide artists
- Application details: Callout coming end of next month via:
 - Instagram: @londonartsandhealth
 - Newsletter (subscribe on [the London Arts and Health website](#))

Shiwei Ooi (MSc student in Public Health at the [London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine](#))

Shiwei introduced their work, which, in partnership with the Greater London Authority, is investigating how extreme heat affects individuals with severe mental illness (including bipolar disorder, psychosis and schizophrenia).

Key aspects of their research include conducting interviews with key informants, identifying structural barriers and protective measures, and developing safeguarding recommendations for this vulnerable group.

“If anyone is interested/would like to have a conversation on this intersection, I'd love to connect.” Email shiwei00198@gmail.com or connect on [LinkedIn](#).

Michael Harvard (recent MSc graduate from the [Centre for Alternative Technology](#)) offered people “fundraising support (trusts and grants)”, asking them to email m_havard@hotmail.com.

Close

Ben and Joe thanked everyone for coming and for a vibrant and interesting discussion that surfaced lots of collaboration opportunities to follow up on.

Thrive LDN don't have a date in the diary for the next Forum session, but plan to hold one in a few months, building towards a big in person event in the New Year – we'll be in touch about this.

Contact benjamin.rossington@nhs.net if you want to share anything with the Forum mailing list or have any questions.