



# Something on your mind?

We're here to listen.

Umbrella for Wellness is a community of trained volunteers here to help.

Look out for the green umbrellas or find your nearest by downloading the app.



Urban C:Lab

## An age of crisis

The rate of depression in the UK has doubled in the last year, leading to a mental health emergency. No longer in survival mode, the country is now coming to terms with a new way of life and problems will only worsen as protection schemes begin to lift.

The NHS has been invaluable in the coronavirus emergency response but this mental health emergency needs a broader social response. According to medical professionals we spoke with one in five GP appointments are related to mental health issues, overwhelming current services. For many people, all they need is someone to listen.

There needs to be a preventative rather than reactive care service which can:

- help people come to terms with changes in their life
- offer the social interaction that people are missing
- improve self esteem so that people feel they are heard and understood
- give people a chance to explore their thoughts in a confidential/no judgement environment

Soon after lockdown began, designers came together and built hospitals within days to address a physical health crisis. Now we need to turn our attention to the mental health crisis but it needs to be done quickly and at low cost. In creating a unified solution in all parts of the country to tackle this problem, we can help destigmatise mental health, and improve access and awareness for seeking help.

**Umbrellas for Wellness** is a design intervention that will raise awareness of mental health and improve access to support by creating a network of people that are there to listen, identifiable by a green umbrella. This will enable people to have more control over their own mental health and empower communities to help each other.

The umbrella is a symbol of protection and unity and will bring us together to help each other break down the social barriers and stigma of mental health.

## What?

- A service to encourage everyone to visit an open space near them and have a chat about how they are feeling, or what's on their mind.
- Support will be provided by specially trained Listeners who will be easily identifiable by a green umbrella.
- Encouraging everyone to bring an umbrella will help maintain a social distance, whilst providing those using the service with a level of anonymity.
- An app will link trained listeners to people that need to be heard.

## Who?

- Partnering with charities will help mobilise the programme quickly and gain from shared resources.
- Utilising existing trained Mental Health First Aiders (140,000 across the UK), along with new trained volunteers (over 1 million volunteers signed up during the pandemic).

## How?

- The project should be delivered by central government in conjunction with mental health professionals. Funding support could be provided through sensitively selected partnerships.
- To deliver the scheme at scale there will be a need to deliver training - this will require sponsorship or government funding e.g. Public Health England.

The Umbrellas For Wellness app (Adjacent, top to bottom)

1. Select 'I'd like a chat' to speak with a trained volunteers. Select 'I'm here to listen' if you're a volunteer.
2. Options for impromptu 'Walk & Talk', scheduled and group sessions, and links to more info.
3. Select 'Walk & Talk' to see which volunteers are currently available nearby.
4. Select 'Scheduled Session' to book a time that suits you.

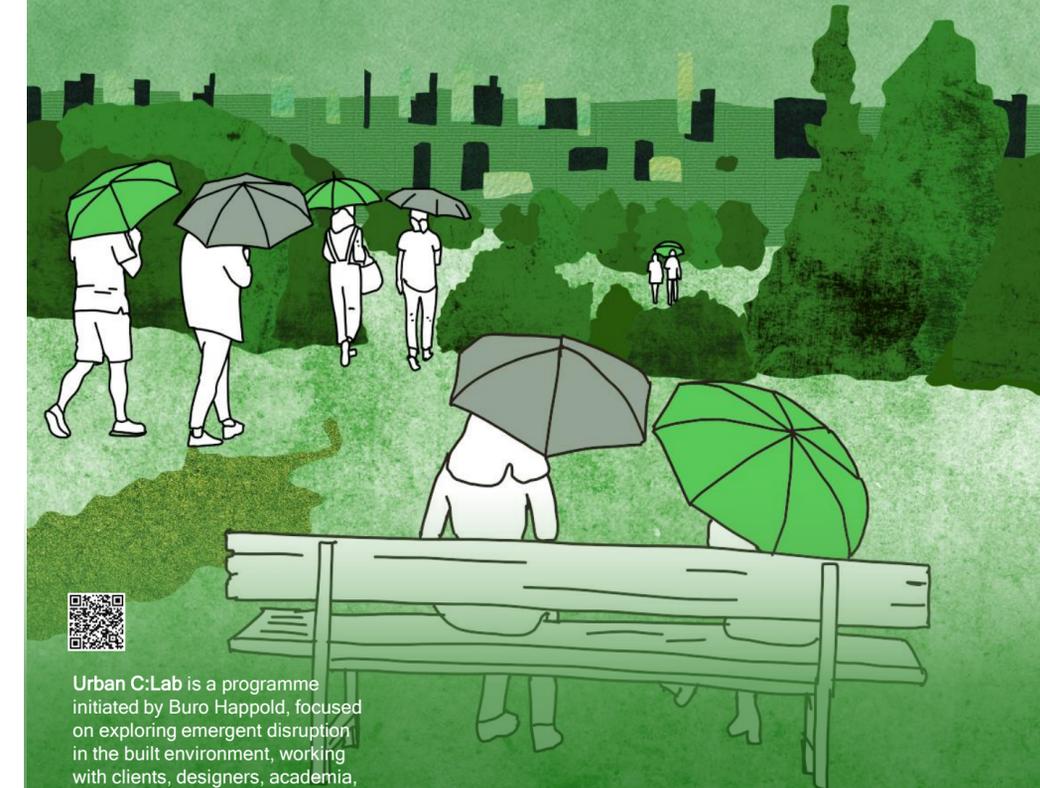


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## Next steps

- A pilot project will initially focus on the worst impacted communities and low income areas, where people are two to three times more likely to develop mental health problems than those in the highest - this could be rolled out within months.
- Promotion via the national Mental Health Awareness week programme and publicised through partner organisations.
- We envisage this will be part of a wider programme that leads to improved long-term infrastructure, destigmatising and improving awareness of mental health and reducing barriers to support services.
- Ultimately we are working towards radically improving our communities' mental health, supporting our recovery from the devastating impacts of Covid-19 and building community resilience.



Urban C:Lab is a programme initiated by Buro Happold, focused on exploring emergent disruption in the built environment, working with clients, designers, academia, think tanks and institutions.