

Case study: Alternative ways to deliver care and care services

Beds RCC Green Wellbeing Directory

The Issue

Beds RCC (Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity) began a programme of green social prescribing in 2022 – promoting nature-based group activities to support health and wellbeing. This included raising awareness among the environment sector and health care sector about the potential of nature connection activities to support general health and wellbeing.

Today there is growing evidence that green social prescribing can support mental health and wellbeing*. Outdoor group activities can also activate the Five Ways to Wellbeing: Be Active, Connect, Learn, Take Notice and Give**.

Across Bedfordshire there are a number of opportunities for people to engage in nature-based activities. During the initial phase of this work, it became clear that a barrier to the uptake of these activities was lack of information about local opportunities.

A Solution

Beds RCC put together a directory of activities in Bedfordshire to help people find groups in their local area. The link is <https://yourwellbeingbedfordshire.org.uk/green-wellbeing/green-wellbeing-directory/>

There are currently around 100 activities on the directory, which include Wellbeing Walks, community gardens and conservation groups. The groups that offer these activities range from small voluntary community groups to larger organisations.

Activities can be searched for by filtering by activity type, or by zooming in on a map. Those interested in activities can then make contact with the group directly to check details.

Benefits

We expect the Green Wellbeing Directory has benefited health and sustainability in the following ways:

- Enabling healthcare professionals, including social prescribers, to signpost to outdoor opportunities to support general wellbeing.
- Increasing the reach of nature-based activities and their associated benefits to more people.
- Providing a new way for community based groups to find volunteers to support their work in improving the local environment - such as conservation groups that support local biodiversity and food growing projects.

Lessons

We currently don't measure data about the outcomes of using the directory. However, the directory has been positively received and regularly used by our social prescribing team.

*<https://socialprescribingacademy.org.uk/resources/green-social-prescribing-improves-your-mental-health/>

***Five Ways to Wellbeing* - <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/five-steps-to-mental-wellbeing/>

In the main, the activities and groups that are listed are community-based, often volunteer-led and open to all. Though in some cases, groups are staffed and set up purposely to support people with particular conditions. A further area of development we're looking at is to better indicate this distinction to users of the directory.

We recognise that there are a number of potential barriers between people receiving information about groups and regularly engaging with them, which is a further area of focus for Beds RCC's green social prescribing programme.

For more information, please contact Nicola Scholfield, Beds RCC's Green Social Prescribing Officer – nicola.scholfield@bedsrcc.org.uk

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