

A hand holding a green fern frond in front of a blurred wooden structure, possibly a gazebo or pavilion, with trees in the background. The scene is softly lit, suggesting a natural outdoor setting.

# Nature and Wellbeing in Somerset

“Life doesn’t make any sense without interdependence.

We need each other, and the sooner we learn that the better for us all.”

Erik Erikson

# Nature & Health: A Movement



WHO Collaborating Centre on  
Natural Environments and Health



Convention on  
Biological Diversity



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs



Department  
of Health &  
Social Care



Public Health  
England

NHS England and NHS Improvement



National Academy  
for Social Prescribing



**Naturally  
Somerset**  
Somerset Local Nature partnership



West of England Nature Partnership  
Joining up the dots for nature

Healthier  
Together



Devon  
Local Nature  
Partnership



The Centre for Mental Health modelling predicts that up to 10 million people across England (almost 20% of the population) will need either new or additional mental health support as a direct consequence of the crises we are living...



HM Government

The aims of the nature and wellbeing group link with the Environmental Improvement 2023 Plan's stated intent to focus on:

## **Nature and Wellbeing – connecting with nature as a way of improving physical and mental health**

**Specifically explore options for how best to embed green social prescribing, including across multiple healthcare pathways**





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## NATURE AND WELLBEING IN SOMERSET

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2024 AND BEYOND

Nature and & wellbeing activities in Somerset have been around a long time.  
2021 – Somerset missed out on big national funding opportunity for GSP due to ...poor infrastructure

So last 2 years...

- Co-ordinated approach with lots of opportunity
- Better understanding of providers, gaps and referral routes as well as strong evidence base
- Strengthening provider network, quality assurance
- Strengthening relationship with health, education & social care
- Potential for joint/innovative funding applications

But –

Short-term, sporadic and limited funding  
Gaps in provision

**WE NEED TO CONTINUE TO EMBED A  
COORDINATED COUNTY-WIDE APPROACH FOR THE  
URGENT BENEFIT OF BOTH PEOPLE + PLANET**





**Naturally  
Somerset**  
Somerset Local Nature partnership

## AIMS

### NATURE AND WELLBEING GROUP SLNP

Raise awareness of the benefits of nature-based interventions to promote health and enhanced connection with nature

Promote and support the range of nature-based projects and the green care sector across Somerset

Invest in targeted nature-based approaches to build resilience across Somerset

Influence decision makers to invest in nature-based approaches to health and social care



**Somerset**  
Wildlife Trust

The Balsam Centre



**SOMERSET**  
County Council

Landscapes  
for life  
.org.uk

QUANTOCK HILLS  
BLACKDOWN HILLS  
MENDIP HILLS  
Three of the  
AONB Family

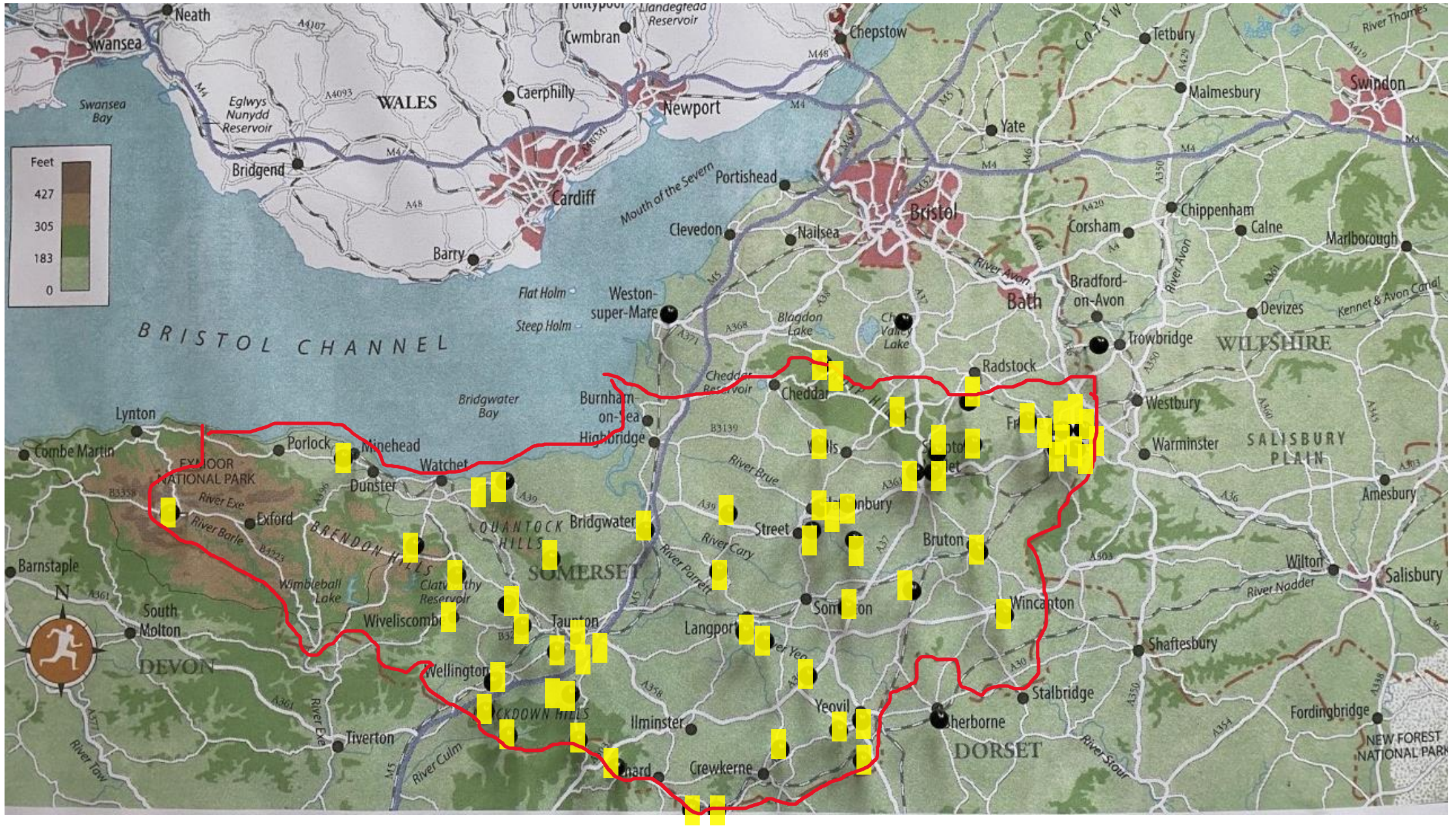
**LiveWest**  
A home for everyone



West of England Nature Partnership  
Joining up the dots for nature









# Somerset Nature Connections



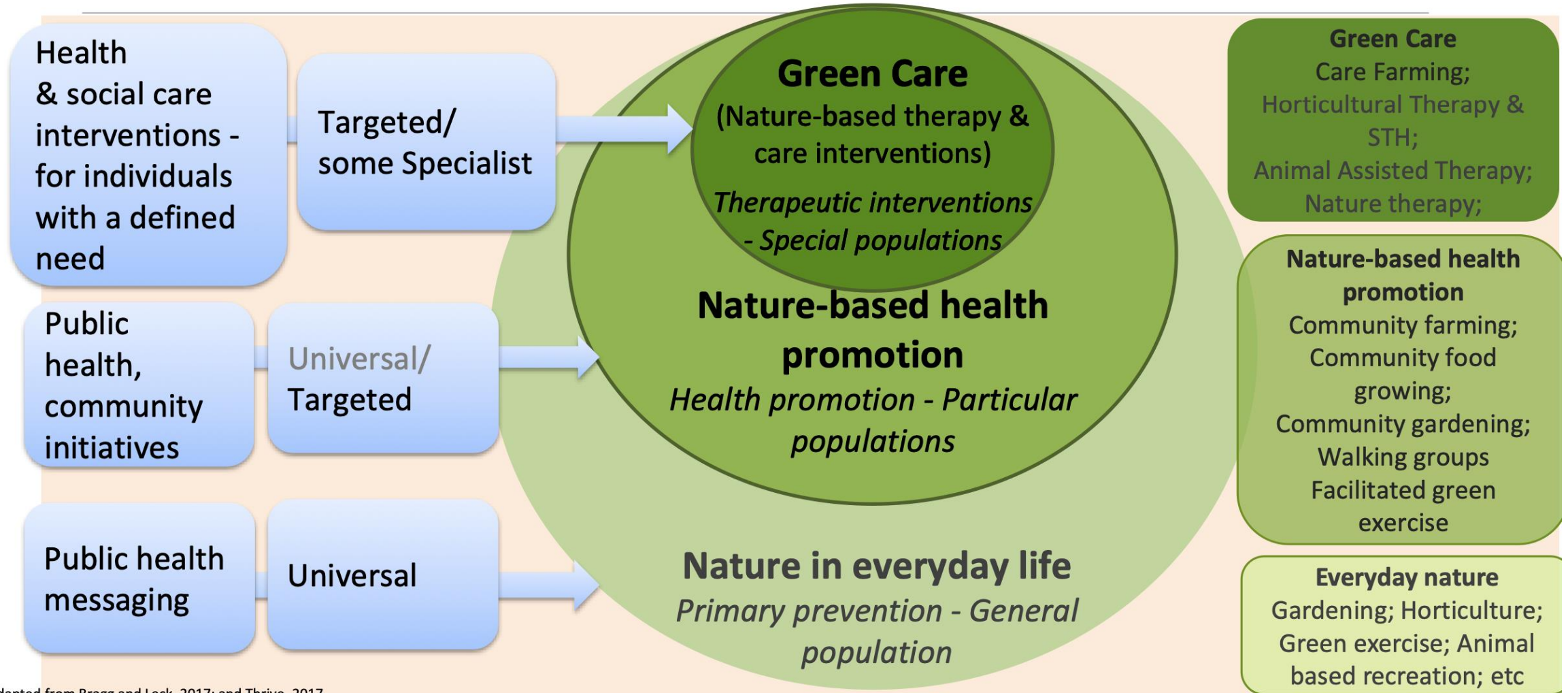
## Somerset Nature Connections

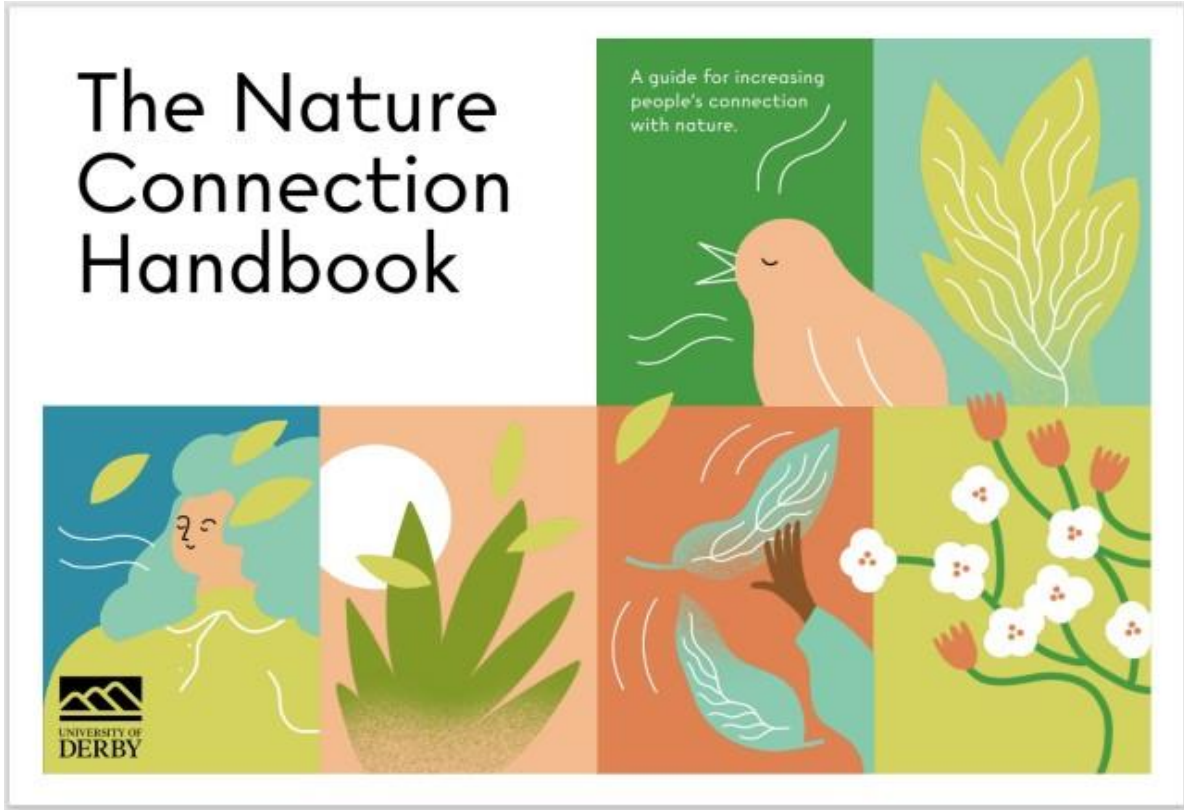
Somerset Nature Connections project aims to tackle some of the barriers that prevent people experiencing the health and wellbeing benefits of Somerset's spectacular natural environment. Somerset Nature Connections helps people to





# Different types of nature-based interventions





**BENEFITS**

Improved mental wellbeing

More pro-environmental behaviours

Greater vitality and happiness

More pro-nature conservation behaviours

More satisfied with life

Greater meaning and purpose in life

Nature Connectedness Research Group was formed at the University of Derby in 2013 and how now released the **Nature Connection Handbook** which was supported and funded by Natural England.



# 5 Pathways to Nature Connection

- 1. Contact** Exploring and experiencing nature through all the senses
- 2. Beauty** Seeking and appreciating the beauty of the natural world
- 3. Meaning** Celebrating and sharing nature's events and stories
- 4. Emotion** Noticing and welcoming the feelings nature inspires
- 5. Compassion** Helping and caring for nature

[5 ways to be closer to nature - May - University of Derby](#)





Department  
of Health &  
Social Care



**IFF Research**

# **Green Social Prescribing: Perceptions and Behaviours of Clinicians and the Public**

An overview of research conducted by IFF Research on behalf of DHSC

**December 2022**



# Clinicians have generic knowledge of GSP and its benefits, but are lacking local awareness

**99%**

had heard  
of social  
prescribing

**76%**

had heard of  
green social  
prescribing

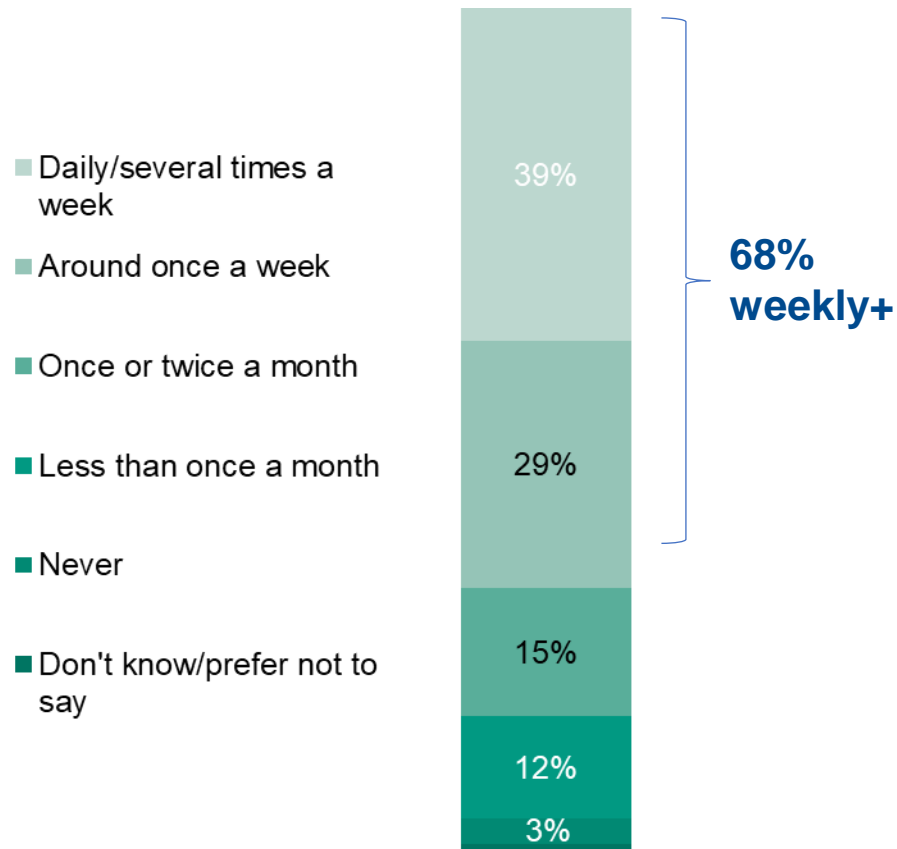
**80%**

had experience  
of social  
prescribing

- Most clinicians felt they would not distinguish between social prescribing as an overall concept and green social prescribing as a *specific form* of social prescribing.
- Most clinicians could generically describe that GSP related to spending time outside e.g. walking, gardening etc. However, many clinicians could not give specific, local examples of activities, irrespective of their perceived knowledge or role.

# Reducing health inequalities – making green care accessible

## Frequency of time in nature



## It is most commonly accessed by more 'privileged' groups

### More likely to spend time in nature 'daily/several times a week'

- South-West (49%)
- Good overall health (46%)
- Over 65 (45%)
- No disability (41%)
- White (40%)

### More likely to 'never' spend time in nature:

- Poor overall health (13%)
- Black, African, Caribbean or Black British (11%)
- No formal qualifications (9%)
- Disabled (8%)
- Income under £15K (7%)

## Qualitative findings showed

- Older and retired people tended to report spending most time in nature (compared to 'time-poor' working-age people).
- Some living in urban areas felt there are limited natural spaces – and parks aren't always felt to be enough

- Patients with disabilities reported having difficulties accessing nature.



# How we are addressing health inequalities in Somerset

- Green space access
- Transport difficulties – factor into funding bids
- LGR opportunities – climate change team
- Somerset Nature Connections working with asylum refugees, displaced persons
- School Wellbeing Framework
- How can we better measure and capture data around health inequalities – SALC? Health Walks SASP demographic data

# Links between natural environments and mental health

October 2022

Natural England Evidence Information Note EIN065

Dr Helen Seers, Dr Rabya Mughal and Professor Helen Chatterjee, National Academy for Social Prescribing, UK.

[www.gov.uk/natural-england](http://www.gov.uk/natural-england)



## Interventions: Saving Public Health Costs Whilst Increasing Life Satisfaction and Happiness

Jules Pretty<sup>1,\*</sup> and Jo Barton<sup>2</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> School of Life Sciences, University of Essex, Colchester CO4 3SQ, UK
  - <sup>2</sup> School of Sport, Rehabilitation and Exercise Sciences, University of Essex, Colchester CO4 3SQ, UK; [jobarton@essex.ac.uk](mailto:jobarton@essex.ac.uk)
- \* Correspondence: [jpretty@essex.ac.uk](mailto:jpretty@essex.ac.uk)

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**Abstract:** A number of countries have begun to adopt prevention pays policies and practices to reduce pressure on health and social care systems. Most affluent countries have seen substantial increases in the incidence and costs of non-communicable diseases. The interest in social models for health has led to the growth in use of social prescribing and psychological therapies. At the same time, there has been growth in application of a variety of nature-based and mind-body interventions (NBIs and MBIs) aimed at improving health and longevity. We assess four NBI/MBI programmes (woodland therapy, therapeutic horticulture, ecotherapy/green care, and tai chi) on life satisfaction/happiness and costs of use of public services. These interventions produce rises in life satisfaction/happiness of 1.00 pts to 7.29 ( $n = 644$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) (for courses or participation >50 h). These increases are greater than many positive life events (e.g., marriage or a new child); few countries or cities see +1 pt increases over a decade. The net present economic benefits per person from reduced public service use are £830–£31,520 (after 1 year) and £6450–£11,980 (after 10 years). We conclude that NBIs and MBIs

# Connection to nature

October 2022

Natural England Evidence Information Note EIN068

Dr Helen Seers, Dr Rabya Mughal and Professor Helen Chatterjee, National Academy for Social Prescribing, UK

Original author EIN015 (2016): Dr Rebecca Lovell, University of Exeter.

[www.gov.uk/natural-england](http://www.gov.uk/natural-england)



Article

## The Cost Effectiveness of Ecotherapy as a Healthcare Intervention, Separating the Wood from the Trees

Sebastian Hinde<sup>1,\*</sup>, Laura Bojke<sup>1</sup> and Peter Coventry<sup>2,3</sup>

- <sup>1</sup> Centre for Health Economics, University of York, York YO10 5DD, UK; [laura.bojke@york.ac.uk](mailto:laura.bojke@york.ac.uk)
  - <sup>2</sup> Department of Health Sciences, University of York, York YO10 5DD, UK; [peter.coventry@york.ac.uk](mailto:peter.coventry@york.ac.uk)
  - <sup>3</sup> York Environmental Sustainability Institute (YESI), University of York, York YO10 5NG, UK
- \* Correspondence: [Sebastian.hinde@york.ac.uk](mailto:Sebastian.hinde@york.ac.uk)

**Abstract:** Internationally, shifts to more urbanised populations, and resultant reductions in engagements with nature, have been a contributing factor to the mental health crisis facing many developed and developing countries. While the COVID-19 pandemic reinforced recent trends in many countries to give access to green spaces more weight in political decision making, nature-based activities as a form of intervention for those with mental health problems constitute a very small part of patient pathways of care. Nature-based interventions, such as ecotherapy, are increasingly used as therapeutic solutions for people with common mental health problems. However, there is little data about the potential costs and benefits of ecotherapy, making it difficult to offer robust assessments of its cost-effectiveness. This paper explores the capacity for ecotherapy to be cost-effective as a healthcare intervention. Using a pragmatic scoping review of the literature to understand where the potential costs and health benefit lie, we applied value of information methodology to identify what research is needed to inform future cost-effectiveness assessments. We show that there is the potential for ecotherapy for people with mild to moderate common mental health problems to be cost-effective but significant further research is required. Furthermore, nature-based interventions such as ecotherapy also confer potential social and wider returns on investment, strengthening the case for further research to better inform robust commissioning.

**Keywords:** ecotherapy; mental health; physical health; greenspace; nature-based intervention; economic evaluation; cost-effective analysis

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### 1. Introduction

The mental health crisis faced by the UK and internationally is well evidenced, with an estimated 1 in 4 adults in the UK experiencing some form of mental health problem in any given year [1]. Mental health problems are estimated to now cost the National Health Service (NHS) in England £14 billion annually [2], and the wider economy up to £100 billion [3], in addition to the enormous human suffering they entail [4]. The prevalence of mental health problems has at least doubled during the COVID-19 pandemic [5], but there has been a reduction in help-seeking and identification of mental health problems in primary care and mental health services [6]. While during the pandemic access to green space has been seen as an important asset to promote wellbeing and prevent mental ill

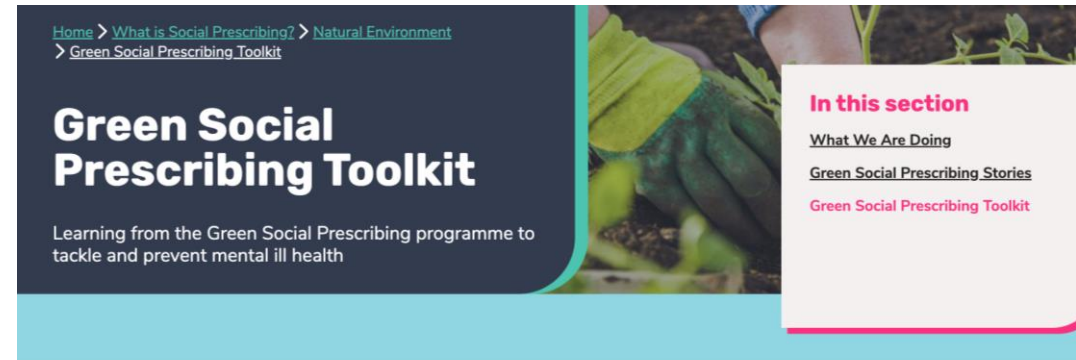
# Evidence Base

We are building and sharing a body of qualitative and quantitative evidence  
We collaborate closely with Natural England DEFRA



# Green Social Prescribing Toolkit

## A Natural Health Service



*The Wildlife Trusts are playing an important role in reducing demand on NHS services*

The research then examined the potential impact if Wild at Heart was delivered at scale, across the country. Reaching a similar demographic of 1.2 million people living with poor mental health would achieve **cost savings to the NHS of £635.6 million**. This from a funding requirement of £534 million.

### Download the toolkit

The **Green Social Prescribing Toolkit** is designed to help communities, organisations and health professionals who are looking to set up green social prescribing programmes that connect with local health systems.

NHS Green Social Prescribing Toolkit →







SLNP created a film 2023 with Here, Now Film to promote the range of nature-based projects in Somerset

5 screening events in 5 weeks! Bringing together over 150 participants across Somerset to have conversations and make meaningful action



**5 events**

**152 registered places**

**115 attendees**

**40+ organisations**

**Feedback ratings:**

**10 out of 10 = 62%**

**9 out of 10 = 19%**

**8 out of 10 = 19%**







## Taster sessions

100% of health and social care staff said they would refer into a nature-based activity after attending sessions – adult social care, mental health, nhs

100% said they were more likely to use nature-based activity to support their own wellbeing





## Give-Take-Away

Notice something in the natural world with  
fresh eyes

Get in touch with

[Kate.Anderson@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:Kate.Anderson@somerset.gov.uk)

[sophie.burns@somersetwildlife.org](mailto:sophie.burns@somersetwildlife.org)

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A close-up photograph of a hand holding a single, vibrant green fern frond. The frond is held vertically, with the hand's fingers visible at the bottom. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene featuring a wooden structure, possibly a gazebo or pavilion, with a dark roof. The lighting is natural, highlighting the texture of the fern's leaves.

Thanks for coming – any questions