



Wellbeing with Nature Evaluation Report

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**Improving people's health and wellbeing, whilst
caring for the natural environment and deepening
their connection to nature.**

Executive Summary

Avon Wildlife Trust is one of 46 Wildlife Trusts working across the UK. With the invaluable support of our volunteers, members and corporate supporters we manage 30 nature reserves for wildlife and people across the West of England. We also work with other organisations and landowners to protect and connect wildlife sites across the region and inspire local communities and people of all ages to care for wildlife where they live. We are committed to the principle of ‘promoting the crucial and economic benefits’ provided by wildlife and the natural environment to the health and wellbeing of the human population.

The Wellbeing with Nature (WwN) project has developed a unique and established service that improves people’s health and wellbeing and has a positive impact on the environment. Thanks to National Lottery Community Fund, over the last four years we have developed an approach enabling people and wildlife to recover and thrive together.

Our evaluation shows significant improvements to individuals wellbeing, and we have evidence on how this WwN approach demonstrates positive behavioural change to sustained wellbeing, nature connection, and pro-conservation behaviours.

The project provided three levels of engagement in nature:

- 1) **Wellbeing self-care courses** (Green Care)- offering structured nature-based health and wellbeing interventions, through a professional framework with clear health and wellbeing outcomes. The wellbeing self-care courses aimed to support people living with with long term health conditions and those experiencing mental ill health.
- 2) **Community Wellbeing Projects** – (Health Promotion) engaging with communities to improve green spaces and or tailor our wellbeing interventions to specific groups, which reconnect them to nature, boosts their wellbeing and increases social interactions within their community.
- 3) **Wellbeing Awareness and Nature Connection days** – (Health promotion and everyday life) providing opportunities to experience our approach through one-off nature-based activities and messaging the benefits and value of nature.

Over the lifetime of the project, we engaged 1995 people.

Wellbeing Self-Care Courses	154
Community Projects	136
Wellbeing and Nature Connection Days	1705
	1995



Approach

In partnership with Natural Academy, our approach brought together expertise in psychology, health and wellbeing, working with people in nature and the conservation of our wildlife and their habitats. We have developed a person-centred approach that is flexible to participants needs and helps them work towards positive behavioural changes. The approach defined an effective structure that applied green care evidence informed interventions, and patient activation methods to move people towards greater self-care.

The Five Pathways to Nature Connectedness were used to frame each session and participant's journey. Our wellbeing interventions encouraged individuals to explore their interactions with the natural environment providing the time and space to allow them to develop their understanding around:

- Self; reflect on emotional awareness, resourceful thinking, motivation, and purposeful activities.
- Social; share and work with others through group-based tasks.
- Environment; learn how to make a positive difference to the environment.

Throughout the lifetime of the project our service was regularly reviewed and tested strengthening our WwN approach. The depth of learning lead to the development of a six modular delivery model that was applied to six-week and one-day self-care courses. The framework also allowed us to adapt the approach for other audiences including a dementia friendly wildlife gardening group, supported volunteering and adult learning.

This further led to a co-designed facilitator training programme with Natural Academy. We now have a significant offer with benefits for both people and wildlife that is adaptable, flexible, and scalable. Our delivery model is quality assured and can be shared and transferred to the wider community.



I have found this a very useful group to have been a part of and can see how it would be an effective psycho-social intervention for a wide variety of mental health conditions. What I have experienced would certainly fit the current evidence base for both psychological and social/environmental therapies.

Furthermore, Jason and Mhairi are inspiring as practitioners espousing this model of community care and I would be extremely happy to recommend them in almost any capacity to clients looking for a wellbeing group.

Dr Juzer Daudjee, -SpR Psychiatrist, Severn Deanery

Outcomes and Project Impact

The project clearly demonstrated a positive impact across all three levels of engagement. Our courses helped people to resource themselves and move on with strategies they need to self-manage their wellbeing. People continue to engage within their community projects reducing feelings of loneliness and increasing social interactions. Overall, people's awareness of the benefits nature has for wellbeing, nature connection and the need to protect their local wildlife has increased.

Outcomes

Three outcomes were used to shape the project to meet the needs of specific groups, communities and individuals and to report on our activities to the National Lottery Community Fund. These outcomes were then applied to the three engagement levels.

- People from disadvantaged communities have improved health and wellbeing.
- Participants will become more resilient through increased confidence.
- People work together to develop more cohesive communities.

1) Green Care- Wellbeing Self-care course

89% participants had improved health and wellbeing.



Along with the course data collected by the team, we also gained evaluation results from the University of Bath as part of the Wessex Water Collaborative Social Prescribing Pilot Project. The results demonstrated that the mental wellbeing **improved significantly**, and overall satisfaction also showed a **significant improvement**, with anxiety decreasing.

78% participants had increased connections with their community.



Results demonstrated that participants with lower score under 'community' at the start had the made the most significant improvements, with results from the University of Bath stating that loneliness was decreasing.



73% participants have gone onto further purposeful activities.

85 people went onto further activities with 22 people returning to work or secured employment and 32 people involved volunteering.



94% participants increased their connection to nature.

Being a buddy is helping me to give back and to encourage others to have the same improvements I had. It's really rewarding to see people improve and develop themselves.

Longitudinal data

The project collected additional wellbeing data and followed up a proportion of participants six-months to two-years after they had completed the course.

100% of participants sampled **maintained** an improvement to their wellbeing and connection to nature.

I am so grateful to have a space back on the course even though it is short term as I literally find it to be lifesaving. It has taught me skills and techniques to use and did so to help me through lockdown ... which helped with my mood and anxiety levels as I spent the 4 months on my own.

The facilitators are excellent there is very little other places in Bristol that offer this.'

100% of participants sampled developed positive conservation behaviours with 55% 'frequently' to 'always' **taking action for nature.**

The results show that positive behavioural change both to self-care and proactively caring for wildlife has been achieved.

2) Community Projects

97% agreed that their mood was enhanced.

93% agreed that their physical activity increased.

We also gained results from the Bristol Ageing Better as part of the Come on Board project. The analysis stated, 'the project had a statistically **significant impact** on participants **mental wellbeing.**'

Delivery was very effective at combating social isolation. For some participants coming to our sessions was the only time they got outside and made a huge difference to their quality of life. Providing meaningful activities for wildlife provided people with a sense of belonging and achievement.



"I have ideas to take back to my garden to help me continue to connect and promote nature.

Head Injury Unit -staff member

100% learnt something new.

93% agreed that their social interactions increased.

"I always look forward to coming. There's always something different to see and smell and I think that helps everybody, we all have a great time.

It's nice to come for a couple of hours to just forget everything and come and get some fresh air. You meet people you wouldn't normally meet and just have a friendly chat'.

Come on Board Participant.

3) Wellbeing and Nature Connection days

92% agreed that their mood was enhanced and felt they were more aware of the benefits nature has on wellbeing.

The results demonstrate that a day in nature improves mood and offers opportunities for learning and understanding the importance of nature for wellbeing. It also provides a stepping stone to further engagement and for those attending a one-day self-care course, tools such as mindfulness - continued to be undertaken independently.

'It underscored the benefits of mindfulness in nature. I will take this forward and practice daily - even if only from the comfort of my living room observing my favourite tree. However abject your circumstances, you can detach and put crucial distance between oneself and unhelpful emotions'.

Bath City Farm- one-day self-care course participant



Facilitator Training

The depth of learning gathered from our delivery led to the co-development of a facilitator training course with Natural Academy. We piloted this training with Avon Wildlife Trust staff and volunteers before going on to successfully host our first formal facilitator training for Wildlife Trust staff from across the country. The course was very well received and provides the foundation to upscale an approach and delivery model so more people can benefit. Natural Academy now provides Community Connector and Green Care Facilitator training both accredited to OCN level 2.

Dundry Slopes Participant Story

A journey from green care to incorporating nature into their everyday life.

'The course has pretty much saved my life. Before I started, I was homeless and I didn't have any connections to anyone, I was really low. The course has given me connections to people and to nature that I never had before.

It's the first time in my life that any mindfulness practice has worked for me, and I tried for years and years before coming on the course.

I was shielding and I definitely would not have been able to get through lockdown without the resources that the wellbeing team have given me. I am now able to relax and connect to what's around me, I have all the resources I need to survive thanks to what I've learnt.

I'm finally going to university next month and I wouldn't have been able to do that without Avon Wildlife Trust. I'm going to focus on sustainable product design. I'm even choosing to move closer to Dundry Slopes so I can be more involved with volunteering there'.

Key lessons learnt and recommendations.

Development – providing adequate staff time to develop the course, test, review, and gain feedback from participants has been fundamental to the success and impact for people’s health and wellbeing and their connection to nature.

Flexible approach - continuously developing and trialling a variety of one -day and six-week courses, in response to feedback, allowed the team to further test options to meet the needs of participants, organisations and future funders. Offering a delivery model with a variety of options enabled the project to provide structured nature-based interventions that can be adapted to different audiences and community projects.



Communication – continuous promotion is needed to ensure all groups are at full capacity and that participants are attending the course that best meets their needs. This requires better communication with referral agencies, so they fully understand the content of the sessions and who the course is aimed at. Workshops and training for social prescribers throughout the year is recommended.

Enrolment process - a robust process is required, whilst time consuming it is essential to maximise capacity and provide the correct level of support to encourage people to join the course. Understanding that a proportion of participants will disengage with the service, enrolling a greater number of people from the start should be considered. Working in partnership with social prescribers and peer mentor organisations to help people make that first step is also recommended.

Referrals - Our target audience was for those experiencing mild to moderate mental ill health or people living with long term health conditions. Referrals often included those who were dealing with major life changes, who are living with multiple conditions and had a higher level of needs that affect their ability to engage in society people. The team had the support and training to work with this audience, but it should be noted that if green prescribing is to become an integrated model within the NHS, social prescribers should understand the level of engagement each green provider can offer and level of support suitable for their client.

Quality Assured – A full training programme and supervision from Natural Academy was provided for the team that ensured the highest standards of care and support for participants. Mental Health First Aid and safeguarding training was also provided. Two members of staff delivered the self-care courses, the minimum level of staffing required to facilitate the group and continue delivery when individual participants needed additional emotional support. Providing training and emotional support for staff is essential and should be factored into funding applications.



Collaboration and partnerships - working in collaboration and sharing knowledge, skills and resources provides costs benefits and a platform that ensures that a participant's journey is supported through joint signposting. Visiting other projects or inviting experts from other organisations encouraged links to campaigns such as Action for Insects and the ecological emergency and enabled participants to experience similar initiatives and green spaces within the wider community.

Community projects- adequate lead in time to develop and nurture community projects is needed. Factoring in training, guidance and resources for community leaders and follow up support should be considered to ensure the sustainability of those projects or groups into the future.

Facilities - The project was very lucky to have some fantastic sites that included toilet facilities, indoor shelter, and warmth for the wetter and colder months. Many participants had limited mobility or health conditions that prevented them from undertaking a higher level of physical activity which was accommodated with lighter tasks available at each site. Overall, providing facilities enabled delivery to continue all year round, broke down barriers to engagement, provided a safe and accessible green space and helped maintain attendance levels. Provision of such sites should be considered with an adequate budget incorporated into funding applications.



Behaviour change -The 18-week course highlighted significant improvements to nature connection, helped foster community relationships, provided a level of physical activity each week, and allowed time to develop confidence, enabling individuals to move onto other activities. When comparing with the six-week course, nature connection and other determinants also achieved significant improvements, but longitudinal data was not recorded. Following a proportion of participants across all three levels of engagement to gain a greater insight into the effectiveness of interventions over different engagement periods should be considered.

Green Prescribing

Our approach demonstrates a service that provides cost benefits and additional social impacts that can improve the wellbeing of our communities and secure a future rich in wildlife. The project provided the evidence base that strengthened our wellbeing offer, that is quality assured, with a delivery model that can be transferred to the wider community bolstering green prescribing both regionally and nationally.

In December 2020, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Sustainability and Transformation Partnership was one of seven areas in the UK to be awarded funding from the Government to pilot a system wide approach to social prescribing and the provision of 'nature-based services.

Avon Wildlife Trust hope to play a key role in supporting this initiative as a collaborative partnership facilitated by the West of England Nature Partnership to share evidence and learning gathered through Wellbeing with Nature project.

If we can all work collectively, people and wildlife can recover and thrive together.

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1. Introduction

The evidence is clear, connecting to natural spaces and being active in the development and care of these spaces has many benefits for the health and wellbeing of people and the natural environment. Among other things it has been proven to:

- Promote pro-conservation and environmental behaviours¹.
- Reduce stress, fatigue, anxiety and depression.²
- Help boost immune systems and lead to reduction of inflammatory based diseases.²
- Increase physical activity.²
- Combat loneliness and bind communities together.²

Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund (2016-2020), the four year Wellbeing with Nature (WwN) programme aimed to make a difference to people's health and wellbeing, whilst caring for the natural environment and deepening their connection to nature.

Wellbeing with Nature was developed from the experience of Avon Wildlife's Trust's (AWT) Communities and Nature Project (CAN) (2012 – 2015), which delivered nature-based opportunities that promoted health and wellbeing. Building on the success of CAN, the WwN model also included the key lessons learnt:

- The need to engage with participants for a longer period of time to ensure improvements to people's health and wellbeing and their connection to nature can be sustained.
- The need to adapt our language and methodology for health professionals to understand the benefit of our work and to achieve sustainable funding from the health sector in the future.

With the above in mind, we wanted to provide longer term opportunities for up to six months for individuals experiencing mental ill health to ensure the right level of support and sustained improvements to health and wellbeing were to be achieved.

In autumn 2016 we formed a partnership with Natural Academy, a nature and health consultancy and training provider, to support the co-development of a structured programme of activities and wellbeing practices. Our work evolved into the development of a self-care course for people with long term health conditions and those experiencing low mood, anxiety and stress.

1.1 Project Need

There is a major crisis in long term mental and physical health, with more than 15 million people in the UK living with a long-term medical condition that cannot currently be cured. The number is set to rise by 23% over the next 25 years. The NHS, Public Health and Social Care need **new models of care** that actively employ person-centred and community focussed delivery methods. There is also a significant health inequality, which can be related to access to green and natural space and a pressing need to rebalance this.

¹Miles Richardson; et al University of Derby

²Maxwell, Lovell 2017 University of Exeter and DEFRA

There is a major crisis in conservation in the UK. The UK State of Nature (2016) reported the conclusion was stark 'Nature is in Trouble'. Across the UK species are threatened and nature in the UK is faring worse than most on the Biodiversity Intactness Index at the lower end of the scale '189 out of 218. There need to be **new models of conservation** that engage people in different ways and for this to happen at scale. Supporting individuals and communities to access their local green spaces has been proven to positively impact people's health and wellbeing. It also leads to people doing more for wildlife and demonstrates the value of wild places close to where we live.

There is a major '**climate**' crisis. The poorest and most vulnerable in society are hardest hit by climate change and have least access to nature to support their health and wellbeing. Bristol is a city leading in many areas of climate action, but not everyone is yet engaged.³ There need to be **new models that engage those hardest to reach**, whilst encouraging them to take personal actions for the climate and positive pro-environmental behaviours.

Wellbeing through Nature responded to these three crises by developing a **new model of delivery** that is effective for a participant's health and wellbeing as well as having a clear, positive impact on the environment. We sought to find innovative solutions that encouraged positive behavioural change and enhanced people's connection to nature.

During the lifetime of the project the UK was the first country to announce an Environment and Climate Emergency (May 2019) and The Bristol One City Ecological Emergency Strategy was launched this September 2020.

In the final year of the project the globe was hit by the Covid pandemic. The **coronavirus and lockdown** have highlighted health inequalities and seen our mental health worsening, but this experience has also led people to appreciate the difference that nature makes to our lives in a new way. There is an increased awareness of the link between our own health, and that of the planet.

1.2 Background and Context

With the ever-increasing evidence of the positive benefits of nature-based approaches to health and wellbeing there is growing interest and development in the Green Care sector across the UK and the world.

'A review of nature-based interventions for mental health' commissioned by Natural England and published in 2016, looked at the distinctions to between green care and nature-based health promotion⁴ (see appendix A). They identified **3 key levels in which a person may engage with nature**:

1. **Green Care - Nature as a therapeutic intervention** –Green Care is described as nature-based interventions which have been specifically commissioned for an individual with a defined health or social need as part of their care or treatment package. People attending these interventions will follow a facilitated and structured programme on a regular basis and will have defined needs and outcomes.

³ Bristol One City Climate Strategy A strategy for a carbon neutral, climate resilient Bristol by 2030

⁴ BRAGG, R., ATKINS, G. 2016. A review of nature-based interventions for mental health care. Natural England Commissioned Reports, Number204.

2. **Health Promotion - Nature activities as part of healthy lifestyles or ill-health prevention.** This describes initiatives which aim specifically to encourage individuals, communities and disadvantaged groups to benefit from nature-based activities in order to become more active, to have more social contact, and to increase wellbeing. For people who attend on either a regular or ad hoc basis, who may or may not be 'vulnerable'. They will have joined the project on their own volition, or have been advised or suggested to join by a health, social or community worker, by a family member or friend.
3. **Nature as part of everyday life.** Where individuals engage with nature as part of their normal lifestyle, including everyday leisure or work activities. People usually make a conscious choice to incorporate these nature-based activities into their lifestyle and have the ability and opportunity to do so.

The report suggested that these three levels are stages on a continuum. An individual can move on from needing the services of a green care intervention, to maintaining their improved wellbeing state by attending a health promotion initiative, and then to progress further by choosing to incorporate nature-based activities and healthier behaviours into their everyday lives, thus creating a habit for life.

Our WwN project reflected the above three levels of engagement ensuring individuals could engage with the project at the right level that supported them to progress and engage with nature as part of everyday life. We describe our delivery and outputs within the following themes.

- 1) **Wellbeing self-care courses** (Green Care)- offering structured nature-based health and wellbeing interventions, through a professional framework with clear health and wellbeing outcomes.
- 2) **Community Wellbeing Projects** – (Health promotion) Engaging with communities and individuals to promote health and wellbeing for people and nature.
- 3) **Nature Connection days** – (Health promotion and everyday life) messaging the benefits and value of nature.

1.3 Project aim

Wellbeing with Nature aimed to improve people's health and wellbeing through structured programmes of purposeful activities providing opportunities to explore, learn about and take care of nature. We aimed to:

- Re-connect people with nature – by influencing behavioural change and attitudes of participants, their families, friends, communities and health professionals, to understand that nature is of value, and needs protecting, thereby promoting sustainable pro-environmental and conservation behaviours.
- Improve participant's health and wellbeing - by providing positive experiences which deepen people's connection to nature, reduces stress and anxiety, improves mood, and increase knowledge and skills, leading to a greater number of people caring for the environment.

1.4 Project outcomes and indicators

Three outcomes were used to shape the project to meet the needs of specific groups, communities and individuals and to report on our activities to the National Lottery Community Fund. These indicators were then applied to the three engagement levels as outlined in section 1.2.

People from disadvantaged communities have improved health and wellbeing.	
Participants benefit from regular physically based outdoor activities.	Green Care Courses & Community Projects
People experiencing mental ill health or those with learning disabilities report increased mental wellbeing through regular attendance.	Green Care Courses & Community Projects
People indicate enhanced mood and positive feelings from a day of nature activities.	Wellbeing Awareness and Nature Connection Days
Participants will become more resilient through increased confidence.	
Participants increase confidence by learning new skills through regular volunteering.	Green Care Courses & Community Projects
Participants experiencing mental ill health become more resilient progressing to further volunteering, training, social activities or employment.	Green Care Courses
People learn about the benefits nature has for both people and wildlife and feel more confident to use and care for their green space.	Wellbeing Awareness and Nature Connection Days
People work together to develop more cohesive communities.	
People work together to directly enhance and maintain local green spaces.	Green Care Courses & Community Projects
People have increased social interactions within their community.	Wellbeing Awareness and Nature Connection Days

As outlined in the original application we aimed to deliver a three to six-month supported volunteering programme that engaged 300 people recovering from mental health ill health. The anticipated group size ranged from 10 to 12 participants. With the support from Natural Academy, we made changes to this stream of work that widened our target audience to also include people with long term health conditions.

Improvements were also made by developing a structured self-care course of which a group size of eight people was recommended. This also allowed the option for existing participants to undertake a fourth block to become a buddy and support new participants. It was therefore apparent early in the project that reaching a target of 300 people would be difficult. To compensate this more effort would be put into our community project stream and the development and delivery of six and one-day courses see section 3.2 and 3.3.

For our community projects the target was 88 participants and for our wellbeing and nature connections days the target 1168 participants.

2 Programme and Approach

2.1 Programme development

In year one the project focused on the development of the programme, this included:

- Staff recruitment (completed early January 2017).
- Attendance at meetings, conferences and events to promote the project and build relations.
- Set up of budgets and monitoring systems.
- Creation of a webpage and promotional materials.
- Commissioning The Care Forum to develop our evaluation plan and methods to collect wellbeing data.

In partnership with Natural Academy, time was spent developing the course including an operational plan, processes and procedures, health and safety, and a framework for our approach to delivery. A full training programme and supervision from Natural Academy was provided for the team to ensure the highest standards of care and support for our participants.

We also produced a course folder for participants that contained.

- Weekly handouts on the session outcomes
- Wildlife and food growing learning resources
- Wellbeing Outcome Wheel and personal goals.

2.2 Wellbeing with Nature Approach

Our approach brings together expertise in psychology, health and wellbeing to work with people in nature and the conservation of our wildlife and their habitats. We have developed a person-centred approach that is flexible to participants needs and helps them work towards positive behavioural changes.

The Five Ways to Wellbeing⁵ were used to frame each session and participant's journey. In May 2019 we replaced this with the Five Pathways to Nature Connectedness⁶. This fitted neatly into our existing framework and had a stronger correlation with outcomes that promoted pro-conservation behaviours.

Five Pathways to Nature Connectedness

We can find deep wellbeing and insight through our connection to the natural world. This connection goes beyond learning and information 'about' nature to a deepening relationship 'to and within' the natural world. In 2017, the University of Derby undertook a systematic study that looked at routes to nature connectedness and led to the Five Pathways: Contact/sense, beauty, emotion, compassion and meaning. This connectedness is fundamental to our health and wellbeing and our ability to adopt positive environmental and conservation behaviours.

⁵ Five Ways to Wellbeing – Evidence informed actions developed by the New Economics Foundation. A report presented to the Foresight Project on communicating the evidence base for improving people's wellbeing.

⁶ Five Pathways to Nature Connectedness. **Beyond knowing nature:** Contact, emotion, compassion, meaning, and beauty are pathways to nature connection. *Ryan Lumber, Miles Richardson, David Sheffield. May 2017.*

Five Pathways to Nature Connectedness

Contact (senses)	Listening to birdsong, smelling wildflowers, or watching the breeze in the trees.
Beauty	Appreciate the beauty in nature and engaging with it through art, music or in words.
Emotion	Noticing the good things in nature, experiencing the joy and calm they can bring, and sharing feelings about nature with others.
Compassion	What we can do for nature and taking actions that are good for wildlife, such as creating homes for wildlife, supporting conservation charities, and rethinking our shopping habits
Meaning	Exploring how nature appears in songs and stories, poems, and art, or by celebrating the signs and cycles of nature.

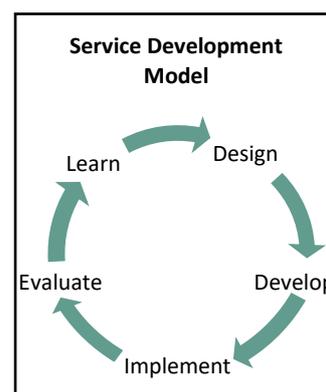
Our wellbeing interventions encouraged individuals to explore their interactions with the natural environment providing the time and space to allow them to develop their understanding around personal, social and environment outcomes.

We continuously gained feedback from participants and carefully reviewed and adapted our methods, interventions, and approach. This guided our processes and in July 2017, led to the development of three intervention themes:

- Resourceful Thinking: Positive thinking and affect interventions, gratitude, self-affirmation, attainable goal setting, positive thoughts, nature-based mindfulness.
- Emotional Awareness: Understanding the four core emotions (joy, sadness, fear and anger), authentic feeling, mood awareness.
- Purpose and Meaning: Finding purposeful activity and occupation, finding simple meaning in life, attainable goals.

These three themes were further tested and reviewed and by January 2018 we had clearly defined an effective structure that applied green care, evidence informed interventions, and patient health activation methods to move people towards greater self-care. We also adapted our delivery framework and outcomes, along with all the schemes of work, session plans and course resources.

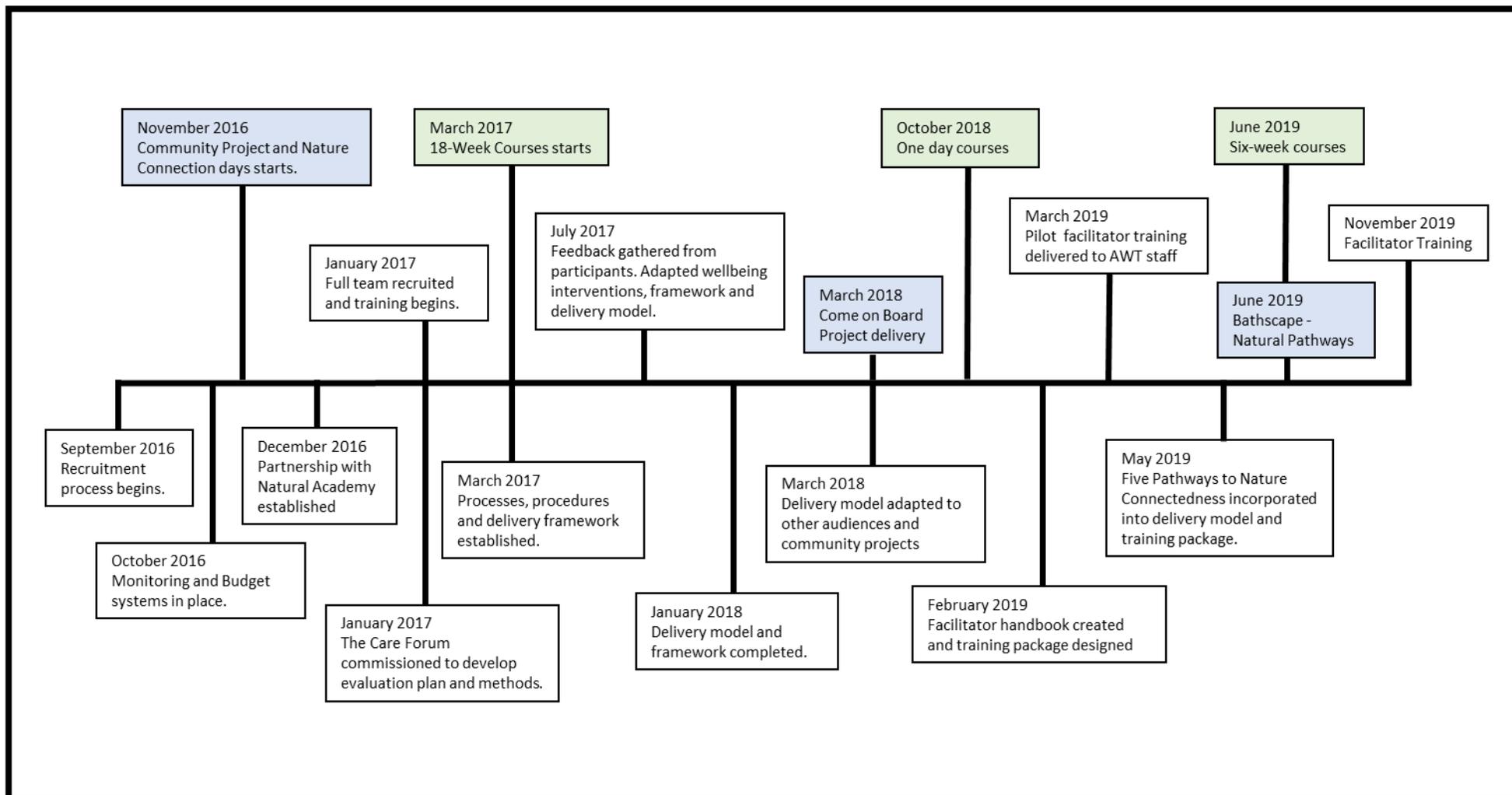
Throughout the lifetime of the project our service was regularly reviewed and tested using a service development model strengthening our WwN approach. The depth of learning lead to the development of a six modular delivery model that was applied to six-week and one-day self-care courses.



The framework allowed us to adapt the approach for other audiences including a dementia-friendly wildlife gardening group, supported volunteering and adult learning. This also led to a co-designed facilitator training programme with Natural Academy (section 5.4). A timeline of programme development and delivery can be seen in section 2.3.



2.3 Programme Development and Delivery Timeline



3 Delivery - Green Care

3.1. Self-care course - 18-weeks

The wellbeing self-care courses aimed to support people with long term health conditions and experiencing mental ill health, often those who are dealing with major life changes, who are living with multiple conditions and have a higher level of needs that affect their ability to engage in society.

As mentioned in section 1.2 self-care sits within Green Care services offering structured nature-based health and wellbeing interventions, with a professional framework and clear outcomes. It was delivered in six-week blocks with up to 18 weeks of engagement for people who require longer term support. Participants were encouraged to complete all three courses to promote sustained positive behaviour change and lasting benefits to their wellbeing. Participants could then become buddies to support others and share their experiences on the course.

Delivered weekly, each day ran from 10.30am-3.00pm, included a morning 'check-in' and end of the day reflection to provide a safe space for people to share their experiences and thoughts. This allowed people to learn from each other and over time empowered them to take charge of their own wellbeing.

The structure of the day included:

- Grounding (nature-based mindfulness)
- Check-in
- Wellbeing intervention
- Practical activities
- Reflection and group discussion.



Our wellbeing interventions encouraged individuals to explore their interactions with the natural environment providing the time and space to allow them to develop their understanding around:

- Self; reflect on emotional awareness, resourceful thinking, motivation and purposeful activities.
- Social; share and work with others through group-based tasks.
- Environment; learn how to make a positive difference to the environment.

Our sites provided a nature-based platform for social engagement. The WwN approach always included some aspect of reciprocity whereby nature was also helped to recover. Our practical activities gave back to the environment or highlighted its value through experience and learning. Tasks were adapted to individual needs and abilities and included conservation tasks, making bird feeders to take home, wildlife walks, natural crafts, and cooking over a fire, ensuring a level of physical activity each week.

We also invited expert tutors to provide a session around biodiversity, e.g, Buglife provided a session on pollinators, and we continued sessions around this theme. We also provided 'take home' activities encouraging further connection to nature outside of sessions.

We provided individual mentoring to support a participant's personal development, their health activation journey and progression onto further activities. By the end of a course participants were better equipped with the resources and tools they needed to continue to care for their wellbeing and their local wildlife.



From March 2017 to March 2020, we delivered 38 x six-week blocks within the 18-week courses at both Grow Wilder and Dundry Slopes; and six x six-week blocks at Bath City Farm. Overall, we delivered 270 sessions. Below illustrates the nature of each site, the activities that were undertaken at each site and the lessons learnt.

Grow Wilder (formally Feed Bristol) is our inspiring six-acre wildlife gardening hub, where people and wildlife thrive in a productive setting. The site contains a wildflower nursery, mixed habitats demonstrating different techniques and a range of innovative community food growing businesses. Run from the Roundhouse, the site provided a safe space for exploration and the group had their own food growing plot.

The group undertook practical activities that supported the site and we worked closely with the Grow Wilder team. Activities included: food growing, seed sowing, and potting on wildflowers at the nursery, habitat maintenance/weeding, wildflower and winter tree identification, bird feeders and pond dipping.

Lesson Learnt

Grow Wilder was a safe space, had good transport links, accessible paths and various undercover areas to undertake activities. The Wildflower Nursery provided activities such as seed sowing and potting on for those with limited mobility. Finding sites such as these are hard to find, and it makes the case for more outdoor local facilities throughout Bristol.

With such a thriving hub, at times the site would host multiple groups which sometimes limited and disrupted quiet periods for mindfulness and reflection activities.

Based at Grow Wilder and working closely with the team enabled the project to signpost many of the participants onto their regular site volunteering opportunities.

'Being a buddy is helping me to give back and to encourage others to have the same improvements I had. It's really rewarding to see people improve and develop themselves.'

Dundry Slopes is a beautiful, wooded hillside connecting Bristol to the rolling hills of North Somerset. With stunning views over the city, the area is rich in wildlife and archaeological interest such as Roman roads, medieval trackways, hedgerows, stone walls, overgrown scrub, limestone grasslands and cropped fields. Based at Heart of BS13 (formally Hartcliffe Health and Environment Action Group) Round House at Bouchier Allotment Gardens, the site provided the quiet space and facilities needed to explore the slopes.

Practical activities and improvements included: coppicing, path clearance, meadow management and scything; creation of a new meadow, an insect hotel and pollinator bed, bee homes and bird feeder construction; tree, butterfly, wildflower, and bird song identification.

Lessons Learnt

The Bouchier Allotments was difficult to find but provided a haven that was so close to the woodlands and wildlife. Dundry slopes had steep inclines and the paths were very slippery in the winter months which made it more difficult to access. This meant that more time was spent finding activities close to the Round House for those with limited mobility.



After the first lockdown the group met on the Slopes, we gave participants secateurs and gloves and provided short sessions to keep paths clear or go for walks. The aim was to build their confidence to meet independently. Many felt they were not confident to organise the walks, and many were still apprehensive of attending in terms of social distancing and with the second lockdown this did not come to fruition. The group did communicate via a WhatsApp group but unfortunately not all had a smart phone, so this was not fully inclusive. It is recommended that more time is required to build confidence with groups to become self-led, with training such as peer group support and additional trained volunteer leaders.

Bath City Farm is situated on a 37-acre plot between two neighbouring areas, Twerton and Whiteway. It is a welcoming non-profit urban farm, building a healthy community rooted in nature, food, farming and each other. The area consists of fields where cattle graze promoting healthy wildflower meadows, hedgerows, community gardens, ponds, building and animal enclosures.

Practical activities and improvements have included: Scrub clearance, hedge laying, scything paths, fixing willow structures, general weeding and maintenance, spatula making, bird song, tree and wildflower Identification, and creating hazel window boxes.

As part of the delivery at Bath City Farm we joined a collaborative pilot public health project facilitated by Wessex Water. Regular meetings were attended with partners including Avon Wildlife Trust, University of Bath, BANES Public Health, Developing Health and Independence My Script Social Prescribing service, Bathscape, Bath City Farm and Time Bank.

The collaborative project aimed to evaluate whether (1) social prescribing, (2) health and wellbeing education and advice, and or (3) Medical waste disposal campaigns are viable options for reducing pharmaceuticals in the aquatic environment and the associated health and cost impacts.

Among other objectives the project would:

- Provide robust evaluation of patient experience, cost and benefits of social prescribing.
- Provide best practice guidance on the use of social prescribing for GP's, public health departments, commissioning bodies and other organisations.

The published report: Social Prescribing – Learning from a pilot trial evaluation in Bath, Dr Scott Watkins, Professor Julie Barnett can be accessed on request and AWT's chapter and results can be found in appendix B.

Lessons Learnt

A very well-known and popular site but unfortunately, we did not have access to a shelter. We met at the community garden but on wet weather days attendance was low. Some of the conservation tasks were quite physically demanding so more focus was on smaller practical activities. The site was not suitable for those with limited mobility as the conservation work was at the other end of the site and could take 20mins to get to.

3.2 Self-care course – six-weeks

In 2019 we wanted to trial the delivery of shorter courses for existing groups to increase the participant numbers not reached through the 18-week course. We designed a six-week course that would allow the project to pilot a more commissionable service. Overall, we provided four, six-week courses to BANES Carer Centre, Genesis Trust (homeless and mental health support charity), residents of Twerton and Whiteway and with Brooklea Health Centre. Natural Academy also delivered a course to charity WHY for people living and recovering from cancer. In Early 2020 we had planned to provide further courses with Outdoor College in Nailsea, Brooklea Health Centre see section 4.2, Changes (a mental health support charity) see section 3.3, and Bristol Autism Support Services (see appendix C). Unfortunately, due to the pandemic these were unable to take place.

Case Study – BANES Carer Centre

BANES Carer Centre is a charity who support both young and adult carers. They provide trusted information, advice and support to carers of all ages enabling them to maintain or improve their health and wellbeing as well as take control of their caring role and stay connected with others. In addition, they work with the wider community to improve recognition and support for unpaid carers.

The course was based at Folly farm. Folly Farm is Avon Wildlife Trust's 250-acre nature reserve located in the beautiful Chew Valley, with views of the Mendip Hills and Chew Valley Lake. Native bluebells adorn the ancient woodlands in spring and rare wildflower meadows burst into colour in summer before autumn colours set in.

The six-week course took place in June 2019 and ran weekly, from 10:30 am till 3:30 pm. The facilitator picked up the group in a minibus from their centre in Bath. Working in partnership with BANES Carer's Centre meant they had existing contacts, so their role was to promote the course and to support people to enrol. Six people participated however, during the course two people had to leave due to personal situations at the time.

Running the six-week course provided many benefits. The highlight for the facilitator was being able to run the various wellbeing interventions and activities in such an amazing landscape that Folly Farm had to offer, with its woodlands, grassland and amazing views. This was also expressed by a participant who said '*Folly Farm is perfect for this type of course*'.

Lessons Learnt

The course content was well received allowing people to connect to nature and to others in a relaxed and calming way. Providing a reflective process supported participants to understand how to find time to care for their own wellbeing.

How the course was promoted and the recruitment process within the organisation needs to be considered. On reflection, two people did drop out which may have been attributed to the lack of awareness of course content and the commitment needed. With this and with our other green care courses, this is something that needs to be addressed as most people are unfamiliar with this type of provision. If capacity allows, providing taster sessions for participants and for referrers should be considered.

Offering a minibus pick up ensured that participants could access the course who otherwise would not be able to. This did however mean that the facilitator did not have time to set up activities prior to the session starting. Recommendations include the need for a second member of staff or volunteer placement to set up or provide the transport. Alternatively ensure that there is a budget for community transport.

3.3 Self-care course - one day

We developed a one-day course that included the three themes of resourceful thinking, emotional awareness, and motivation and purposeful activity. We delivered six sessions using this structure; three sessions were with Changes Bristol; one with Rethink Carers (for those caring for others experiencing mental ill health); one course was based at Bath City Farm and one for our own staff at AWT. The majority of these courses were delivered on the weekend providing an offer for those who could not attend during week.

In 2019 we reviewed our methods and delivery and provided a further eight courses of which included four with Backwell School, and one with young people as joint delivery with AWT's Our Bright Future Team. This process further led the team to offer courses as part of our adult education provision, providing additional income and testing a sustainable offer.

Case Study - Changes

Changes Bristol is a mental health charity that began in 2003 when people with lived experience came together to form a support network for those suffering mental distress. Through the experience of its members the organisation has developed ensuring services meet the needs of communities throughout Bristol and the surrounding area through their peer support model.

Previous contact with Changes had already been established through the promotion of the 18-week course. We worked closely with them to develop the one-day course, we attended meetings ensuring they were fully informed; provided details of our approach of delivery; and helped them to feel confident on what was offered to their members and who it was for. It also allowed us to agree timings, and which preferred day of the week was accessible for their members to attend. Sessions took place in October 2018, April, and May 2019, they were run at the weekend, from 10:00am – 4:00pm at our Grow Wilder site. All days were well attended with eight participants engaged on each course.

Lessons Learnt

Working with Changes was very positive, as they took care to ensure they understood what they were offering their members. This meant that they led on the recruitment and also had a member of staff attend the day.

As this was only a one-day course, it was important that those attending still had support after the session, which was provided by Changes. This collaborative approach to delivery provided a supportive and positive experience for those involved.

With the relationship built with Changes we agreed to provide the six-week course. We started to develop this offer by joining up with one of their key volunteers. Again, they would recruit participants and commit to co-deliver. In return, we would offer a free place on our WwN Facilitator Training enabling them to gain the skills to deliver within their organisation into the future. Unfortunately, we were unable to continue this journey and partnership due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

3.4 Outputs

Overall, the project provided 344 sessions to 491 people under the theme of Green Care, with regular deeper engagement for 152 participants.

The target for regular engagement was 300 participants. With the additional time spent developing the course in year one, and a delayed start of the 18-week course in Twerton, Bath, we were aware that we were behind with our participant numbers. Retention of participants for the 18-week course also affected numbers and is explained in section 11.2.

With the new delivery model applied to six-week and one day courses, we were in the position to offer more self-care courses to increase the participant reach. This involved the removal of the 18-week course at Bath City Farm (due to low uptake) and replaced with six-week and one-day courses for specific groups in Bath and across Avon. As mentioned in section 3.2, unfortunately, due to the pandemic this was unable to be realised.

Table 1. Participant and session outputs – Self-Care Courses

	Individuals	Sessions	People engagements / placements filled
18 -week	117	270	1467
6- week	35	26	103
1-day*	337*	14*	337*
Total	491	344	1907

*For the purposes of the outcomes achieved within the funding application these figures have been included under Nature Connection days (see section 6).

4 Delivery – community projects

These projects promoted healthy lifestyles and ill-health prevention through nature-based activities and tailored wellbeing interventions responding to the aspirations, needs and abilities of specific community groups.

- We worked with community groups to create wildlife improvements and wellbeing spaces. We provided support and resources to empower them to continue to use and maintain the site for their wellbeing and the wellbeing of the wider community.
- We provided nature-based activities to specific groups, who would not be able to access our wellbeing course due to their health condition, age or locality. We tailored our wellbeing interventions to reconnect them to nature, boost their wellbeing, increase social interactions within their community and new ways to stay resilient.

4.1 Targeted Groups

In the first year of the project, we worked with two community groups.

Horizons

We worked with the Horizons group from Hengrove College that supported young people with mild learning disabilities to gain the skills and confidence to engage and work within their community. Based in South Bristol the group undertook activities on Dundry Slopes and at South Street Park to gain their John Muir Award.

Brandon Trust

We also worked with Brandon Trust, an organisation supporting adults with learning disabilities. They undertook activities at our Folly Farm Garden and explored the surrounding nature reserve. Over the first year we built the confidence of the support workers and participants and by September 2017 the group had the skills and resources to continue to use and maintain the site independently.

4.2 Place Based support

Wellspring Healthy Living Centre – Strawberry Lane Allotment

This project supported local residents, in collaboration with the Wellspring Healthy Living Centre (WHLC) in Barton Hill, to create a wellbeing garden space for the whole community in spring 2018. After some initial visits and talking to some volunteers and residents it became evident that there were plenty of ideas and enthusiasm but no clear plan. After consultation, AWT supported the group by producing a garden plan and a steering group was created with local residents, AWT and WHLC to help guide the project.



11 days were undertaken working on site or attending meetings or events. Activities included clearing the site, hedge laying, tree and wildflower planting and creating paths and raised beds. We also engaged with two corporate groups with AWT's People and Wildlife team to help accomplish the work.

The group held a celebration event in July inviting trustees and staff from the Wellspring Centre. Staff were very positive about the site and was looking forward to bringing other supported groups to use the site. Qualitative feedback from WHLC community leader and local resident can be found in appendix D.

Lesson Learnt

Working with existing community groups is an effective way to reach participants, and sessions are supported by community leaders. With this, all the groups mentioned above were able to continue to engage and take care of nature independently.

Head Injury Unit - Frenchay

In early 2018 the Head Injury Unit contacted the Trust as they wished to develop a wellbeing and food growing garden with staff and service users. The design of the space would include physical elements that support the recovery of their patients and a quiet space for family and friends to visit. Ideas included sensory features, landscaping to support physiotherapy and secluded areas for consultations. Initial advice was given, and we supported staff and patients to plant a live willow hedge. It was, however, realised that the project needed more resources for essential landscaping and accessible paths before we could add value to the project.



Lessons Learnt

We continued to give advice, and although no further site input was made by AWT, their staff and volunteers made incredible progress independently. We continued this relationship with the team who referred patients to our self-care courses. In early 2019 we provided a wellbeing day at Grow Wilder for their staff. It was also an opportunity to illustrate our nature-based wellbeing interventions and how they can take this learning for the benefit of their patients. It was also an opportunity to showcase different wildlife habitats and ideas that they could implement themselves and to increase staff engagement with their wellbeing garden.

'I was so inspired by Grow Wilder. I would like to bring my clients and show them the insect hotel and a few other bits you have around the site, as we plan to do one on our wellbeing garden.'

My Wild GP Surgery

The Wellbeing Team joined forces with our People and Wildlife Team to deliver a series of activities from Brooklea Health Centre. Funded by Rolls Royce, activities included colourful wildlife silhouettes printed on the walls in the waiting room; improving the back garden for wildlife and staff; and the design of a self-led wellbeing walking leaflet for Nightingale Valley. In September 2019, the team delivered a self-care course providing two-hour sessions weekly over a six-week period. The surgery agreed that we could use their meeting room as a base to meet participants and as a wet weather contingency, but the majority of the activities were held in Nightingale Valley.



Lessons Learnt

The project took more time to establish than originally planned, therefore it is important to factor in adequate lead in time before planned delivery starts, this could be as much as six to nine months. With the delay, the course did not start until September when the weather was changing. The main barrier on this occasion was disturbing surgery consultations as the windows looked out onto the garden. This meant we could not deliver the course in the garden, so these were provided at Nightingale Valley. Other practical activities were limited to lunchtime and after the surgery closed. Providing plants, framed photographs or a nature table within the waiting room was not permitted due to the cleaning contract in place. There was also some initial delay with the stencil work in the waiting room, as permission had to come from NHS property services rather than the GP surgery.

We have however built a good relationship with both GP surgeries at Brooklea Health Centre. They have appointed two social prescribers and it was our ambition to deliver a series of walks, workshops and another six-week course from spring 2020. Unfortunately, again this was halted due to the pandemic. This project would have demonstrated a case study on how we can engage people at all levels from nature as part of everyday life i.e. campaigns such as 30 Days Wild, workshops and walks as health promotion, leading to deeper engagement of the self-care course.

4.3 Natural Pathways

Natural Pathways provided outdoor supported practical conservation sessions at Bath City Farm. Following on from our engagement with the Farm and the collaborative Wessex Water project, we were invited to tender for some new work as part of BANES Council Bathscape Project.

Natural Pathways was a stepping-stone approach for people to improve their physical health and wellbeing, develop new skills, with the additional support needed to build confidence to join more mainstream conservation volunteering. Sessions included heritage conservation tasks and wildlife friendly activities. Volunteers were encouraged to move onto other Bathscape projects locally or become key volunteers, supporting others.

AWT will continue to deliver Natural Pathways as part of the Bathscape project with funds guaranteed to May 2023. This new delivery method we hope can broaden to other sites or nature reserves going forward.

Lessons Learnt

We continue to have a low take up of participants in the Twerton and Whiteway area. More collaboration with the social prescriber is needed, and clear information highlighting that it is conservation work (and not working with the farm animals which is a common misconception) and not designed for those with learning disabilities. To help with engagement a short video will be produced so the social prescriber can show potential participants the types of activities involved.

4.4 Come on Board Project

In February 2018 we were approached by All-Aboard Watersports to deliver the horticultural section of their collaborative partnership bid to Bristol Aging Better (BAB). The project was called Come on Board and opened up new partnerships with organisations including, Lifecycle, BS3 community, Gloucestershire County Cricket Club, The Exercise Club, Alive and Bristol Community Transport.



Delivery started in June 2018 offering horticultural and nature-based activities for people aged 50+ that: promoted improved physical health and wellbeing, helped build social interactions and supporting local environment improvements by potting up native wildflowers at AWT's Wildflower Nursery ready for sale to local communities.

We provided bi-weekly sessions at our Grow Wilder community hub which is equipped with accessible facilities within a safe wildlife friendly space.

Sessions always started with a check-in activity that evoked memories, sensations and common nature connections within the group. This was followed by a practical activity that could include: helping our wildflower nursery through potting on, seed sowing and consolidation of plants; natural craft activities; wildlife identification and associated games and outdoor cooking.

Participants were given a choice of activities to take part in ensuring we responded to people's interests, skills, abilities and needs. A reflection at the end of the day provided the opportunity for people to stop and reflect on what they achieved over the session and what they enjoyed. This also helped us plan for the next session.

The project was very successful and by March 2019 the group was at full capacity. With this we received additional funding to provide a morning dementia friendly group alongside the over 50's sessions in the afternoon.

Outputs

Overall, we delivered 43 regular sessions to 61 individuals. People either self-referred or were referred by agencies including: - Rosewood House, Begbrook House, Oakhill Mansions, Frenchay House, St Monica's Trust, Age UK, Community Navigators, ACE Neighbours, Southmead Development Trust and NHS Dementia Wellbeing Service.

	Sessions	Individuals	Support workers/ family carers	Total Individuals	Engagements (Session x People)
Bi-weekly sessions	43 (30days)	45	16	61	300
Outreach*	4*	73*	45*	118*	118
	47	118	61	179	418

*(figures represented under Nature Connection Days see section 6)

Additional one-off outreach sessions engaged a further 118 participants at Katherine House Care Home, Contact the Elderly, NHS South Gloucestershire Memory Service at both Patchway and Thornbury. Overall, including both older people and their carers we engaged with 179 people and provided 418 engagements.

My mum, who has dementia and lives in a care home, has always enjoyed the sessions we have at Grow Wilder with Mhairi, who is wonderfully welcoming and kind to her. She had enjoyed every single activity and gains huge amounts of wellbeing from pottering in the garden and learning more about wildlife.

As a former gardener it has enabled her to talk about memories of my dad, their garden and the wild we see. Mum was really taken by the creative things we have done with Mhairi and in fact I have repeated some of them at the care home with other residents. Its fair to say that I love coming too. Family member

Lessons Learnt

Evaluation Forms

The Common Measurement Framework CMF forms (see section 9.4) were time consuming and a challenge for participants to complete due to levels of understanding (dementia, memory loss, learning difficulties) and for some participants very personal and distressing. The project manager stepped in to support participants to complete the forms while the project officer led the rest of the group alone. Additional support should be considered in future funding. No data was collected to understand the impact that the sessions had on carers and family members and would recommend that this was factored into sessions going forward.

Transport

Providing transport has been a key element to accessing people to join the group who would otherwise be bound to their residence. However local transport providers found it difficult to keep up with requests and were not always able to offer suitable times.



To overcome this Come on Board (CoB) decided to use private taxis instead. However, some companies seemed under-trained and/or inexperienced at supporting participants who may need extra emotional or physical help to use their service. COB did find a taxi company that were better trained but the project officer had to organise transport via the lead partner which added additional admin time for both parties. It is important to find a good firm that are consciously aware of the needs of participants and where possible transport should be arranged directly rather than through another partner.

Although we believe that activities should be local, there are very few outdoor accessible green spaces that offer what we do. We understand that providing transport can be costly and there is a need to find more sustainable ways to support people to get out of their homes. We asked the group if they had to arrange their own transport, would they come, and could they afford this. Many said that they would be willing to organise their own transport through the dial-a-ride service and pay the cost (approx. £2.50) but there were also some who said they would struggle. The dial-a-ride service is an option but as above they may not be able to offer suitable times or not at all.

We therefore recommend that a budget for taxis and/or accessible taxis for some participants for the first and second visits would give them the confidence to arrange their own transport going forward. In addition, training a team of volunteers and the hiring of an accessible minibus to collect other members.

4.5 Outputs

Over the lifetime of the project, we engaged with seven community groups providing 69 sessions to 123 people. The project target for community delivery was 88 individuals, we therefore exceeded participant numbers under this theme.

Community Project Outputs

	Groups	Individuals	Sessions	People engagements
Community Projects	7	123	69	618

5 Delivery -wellbeing awareness and nature connection days

Our wellbeing awareness days were provided in a variety of ways to give people a chance to experience our approach. They were delivered to specific beneficiary groups as one-off sessions, to allow them to sample our wellbeing interventions and different nature-based activities. We also attended local community events to present our work, often providing short demonstrations of our activities. Specific taster days were designed for those who were interested in enrolling on our course and provided more in-depth information around our approach and wellbeing interventions. All encouraged people to get outside, be inspired by nature and understand the benefits it can bring to their health and wellbeing.

5.1 Nature Connection Days

Our nature connection days offer beneficiaries an introduction to nature and the Five Pathways to Nature Connectedness as well as promoting our courses. Groups and sessions have included:

Mental Health

- Bike Minded
- Headway
- Adult Carers
- ACE

'Time out doing something creative'.

Learning Disabilities:

- Orchard Vale Trust
- South Bristol College- employability group for young people
- Centre Bristol

'A new wellbeing skill I can practise at home'.

Older People

- Contact the Elderly
- Katherine House Care Home

Other wellbeing sessions

- South Gloucestershire Wellbeing College
- Hartcliffe Job Centre wellbeing workshop
- Dundry Wellbeing Day
- Southmead Wellbeing group
- Wildlife Walk at Carrs wood,
- Wellbeing Walk at Stockwood Open Space
- Public health Lockleaze, taster session
- Taster days on our courses
- Corporate days with Ernst and Young, Triodos Change Makers and Burgess Salmon.
- One-day self-care courses as outlined in section 3.3.



"It took my mind away from current troubles and grievances at home".

5.2 Community Events

Community Events focus on the promotion of the course and/or light activities to beneficiaries demonstrating nature's role in improving wellbeing. Events attended included:

- Henbury and Brentry Wellbeing Day,
- Bath City Farm Fun Day,
- Bath Festival of Nature,
- Learning Disabilities day at the Trinity Centre,
- Callington Road Mental Health Hospital Spring fayre,
- Knowle West Fest,
- Second Step event,
- Hartcliffe Food connection event,
- Come on Board launch at the harbour side.

"I never tried weaving before, I found it very calming and enjoyable".

5.3 Wellbeing Awareness Days

We have also provided wellbeing awareness days for health organisations both for their own wellbeing and to demonstrate our approach to promote the course, these have included:

- Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT), Bristol,
- Occupational Therapy - University of the West of England students,
- Bristol University Medical students,
- Awareness day including promotional talk to health professionals, social prescribers, General Practitioners, and mental health organisations
- Head Injury Unit.



"Giving medical students a chance to come and actively immerse themselves in Avon Wildlife Trust's Wellbeing with Nature project adds incredible value to their thinking and learning for the positive interventions medical practitioners can take. Every year, University of Bristol medical students participating in the sustainable healthcare student choice placement state that their time learning about Wellbeing with Nature, green care and green prescribing was a significant highlight of the course for them."

Meg - Co-ordinator - NUS sustainability course

Continuous promotion and communication for all our delivery is needed therefore other workshops, events and conferences attended include;

- Mental health drop-in session in Hartcliffe,
- Healthy City Week BRI event,
- Making local woods work,
- Regional Social Prescribing Network Annual meeting,
- NHS Forest Conference,
- Social Prescribing Seminar CCG,
- IAPT - Recommissioning NHS event,
- How can non-health charities help reduce health inequalities event,
- Practice resource lead events,
- Evaluating Social Prescribing event,
- Regular Dundry View Health Sub group and Thrive meetings.



5.4 Facilitator training

In spring 2019, we piloted a two- day training course with AWT staff and volunteer placements, with a third day delivered in December 2019. This led to the co-design of a facilitator training package with Natural Academy, to upscale our service to other organisations.

With this depth of learning, we developed a facilitator handbook and held our first facilitator training for other Wildlife Trust staff around the country in November 2019. We had a great turn out with eight people attending, one member affiliated with Natural Academy and members from Somerset, Devon, Cumbria, Lincolnshire and Staffordshire Wildlife Trust’s. The group met again in February 2021, although over a year had passed and delivery was online, the course was well received, and attendees fed back on what they had put into practice from their learning.

“This is A+ training – Thank you, can’t wait to start sharing this.”

“The course was really well structured with experiential opportunities as well as the theory behind it”.

5.5 Outputs

Over the lifetime of the project, we delivered 61 sessions to 1330 people exceeding our target of 1168 individuals.

	Individuals	Sessions	People engagements / placements filled
Wellbeing awareness & Nature Connection Days	1330	61	1420

6 Project Outcomes and Indicators

The below table illustrates the outcomes and indicators in relation to:

- (A) Wellbeing self-care course – **154 people** (original target 300)
- (B) Community projects **-136 people** (original target 88)
- (C) Nature Connection & Awareness days (1330) + one day self-care courses (337)
+ training (38) = **1705 people** (original target 1168)

People from disadvantaged communities will have improved health and wellbeing		
Indicators	Target	How much change has happened
Participants benefit from regular physically based outdoor activities. Measured for self-care course (A) and Community projects (B)	388 people	290 people have regularly attended activities. 64% made an improvement with 26% staying the same and was the third highest score out of the 10 domains.
People indicate enhanced mood and positive feelings from a day of nature activities. Wellbeing Awareness and Nature Connection days (C)	80% by end of project	92% either strongly agreed or agreed that their mood had been enhanced. 1705 people engaged.
People with mental health issues/learning disabilities report increased mental wellbeing through regular attendance (A) & (B)	70% by end of project	89% indicated an overall improvement to their health and wellbeing. 77% indicated increased mood. 78% indicate increased motivation. 290 people
Participants will become more resilient through increased confidence		
Participants increase confidence by learning new skills through regular volunteering. (A) & (B)	388	290 have learnt new skills. 81% indicate increased confidence (Sample size 74)
Participants with mental health issues become more resilient progressing to further volunteering, training social activities or employment. (A)	65% by end of project	73% people have progressed to other purposeful activities. 119 engaged
People learn about the benefits nature has for both people and wildlife and feel more confident to use and care for their green space. (C)	1168	1705 people have received information about Wellbeing through Nature at events and/or experienced how nature can support their wellbeing from taster days, training and 1-day courses.
People work together to develop more cohesive communities		
People work together to directly enhance and maintain local green spaces. (A) & (B)	388	290 regularly work to maintain green spaces /contribute back to nature. 78% indicate increased community connections. 70% improvements in connection to nature.
Participants will have increased social interactions through community nature activities. (C)	1168	1705 people took part in nature activities. 69% indicated increased social interactions
Community leaders report improved community cohesion. (B)	Qualitative	See section 8.2, & 9.3

Overall, we engaged with 1995 people and have exceeded expectations on outcomes. We did not reach anticipated participant's numbers for the self-care course (see section 1.4), but these were compensated within other areas of delivery as the project evolved. A full breakdown of wellbeing data can be found in the following sections.

7 Project Impact –Green Care

7.1 Evaluation - 18-week Self-care Course

The project aimed to measure the impact that ‘nature’ has on improving people’s health and wellbeing and demonstrate the need to deliver nature-based wellbeing services and why it is important for nature’s recovery.

In collaboration with The Care Forum’s* research services and Natural Academy we developed an evaluation method for each individual that was embedded into the design of the course called the Holistic Health and Nature Scale. Our methods offered a more realistic measure and holistic approach to measuring outcomes compared to completing a validated questionnaire purely for evaluation.

*The Care Forum promotes health and wellbeing, challenges inequalities, and enables organisations and individuals to make choices in health and social Care. Due to the pandemic, we were unable to get The Care Forum or anyone else to evaluate our data.

7.2 Methodology

7.2.1 Self-Care Course evaluation methodology

The methodologies selected allowed the project team to collect data that showed evidence on whether outcomes were being met during and after an individuals’ involvement in the project.

Methodology 1 = Holistic Health and Nature Scale (Wellbeing Outcome Wheel).

Methodology 2 = Mentor meetings, goal setting and exit interview.

Methodology 3 = Follow up interview

These approaches created three distinct sets of data.

1. Quantitative data generated by use of the Wellbeing Outcome Wheel, based on the items developed as part of the Holistic Health and Nature Scale (H-Han) to measure participants’ wellbeing and connectivity to nature.
2. Self-reported qualitative data collected during mentor meetings. This included personal goals and feedback from participants involvement in the project, their achievements against these goals, and any ongoing impact from these achievements and resulting new knowledge and/or skills.
3. Qualitative data through a follow up interview to measure if wellbeing and connection to nature had been sustained.

Holistic Health and Nature Scale

Wellbeing Outcome Wheel WildlifeTrust WILDLIFE TRUST

Date: _____ Date: _____ No: _____
 Week: _____ Week: _____

Methodology 1 – H-Han using Wellbeing Outcome Wheel data collection tool.

The H-Han has been developed to capture baseline data, distance travelled and any ongoing impact for project participants across 10 different domains. It can be administered at as many different time points as required to identify participants' progress against each of these domains.

Wherever possible, the domains are measured using an item which has been adopted and/or adapted from a validated scale in order to compare the findings from Wellbeing with Nature against results from other studies. The 10 questions can be found in appendix E.

The H-Han has been developed into a Wellbeing Outcome Wheel to capture this data. These can be used by different target groups and can be completed by participants with or without support from project staff, meaning that the results are generally self-reported, they do not need to be justified or explained further beyond the quantitative data they generate, and can therefore be considered bias-free.

Methodology 2 = Mentor meetings, goal setting and exit interview

These approaches allow participants to guide conversations and the information they share with WtN staff, to encourage them to share as much detail as they feel comfortable to. The initial interviews are structured, in order for participants to identify their personal goals and what they wish to achieve during the course. Mentor meetings and an exit interview allow participants to discuss their progress against these goals as well as any other thoughts or feelings, (skills learnt) they may wish to share.

Methodology 3 = Follow-up interview

This approach, through a set of questions will gather longitudinal data on whether the service provided the tools and resources for participants to continue to sustain their wellbeing and connection to nature. The follow up interviews were due to take place three-six months after attendance

7.2.2 University of Bath Study – Methodology

Along with the self-care course data collected by the team, we also gained evaluation results from Bath University as part of the Wessex Water Collaborative Social Prescribing Pilot Project.

The University of Bath developed an evaluation questionnaire using validated scales including The short version of the Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS), Office for National Statistics (ONS) Wellbeing questions, University of California, Los Angeles Loneliness scale & short environmental identity. Please see Appendix B for a full explanation of each validated scale. To ensure enough data was collected we also used this questionnaire to measure wellbeing data of participants on all three sites along whilst still undertaking our own data collection using the H-Han scale. This gave the project additional data to help inform our work and provide a solid foundation of evidence to promote to funders in the future. An overview of the results can be found in section 7.5 with the full chapter of results from the University of Bath found in appendix B.

7.3 Quantitative Wellbeing Data Analysis

89% of participants had improved health and wellbeing.

The table below illustrates the outcomes achieved from the H-Han Wellbeing Outcome Wheel. The results show that our approach does have a positive impact on people across a broad range of personal and social outcomes as well as helping people connect more to the environment.

	Total	Improvement	Same	Reduced
Overall improvement	74	66	89%	2 3% 6 8%

89% overall health and wellbeing score is calculated by adding an individual's 10 question scores together with a scale range of 10 to 100. If the total score at the end of a participant's engagement is higher than at the beginning, we calculate this as an overall improvement. For example, an individual may have a reduced score of 1 point under the category of relationships but made an increased score of 3 points for physical activity, this equates to an overall score of 2 points.



Analysis of those who did not make an improvement: although committed to attending most sessions, three needed more help than the service could provide; one scored all '10's at the beginning, so could only maintain that score or go down; two had mild learning difficulties, which may have affected the results.

Improvements across the 10 domains

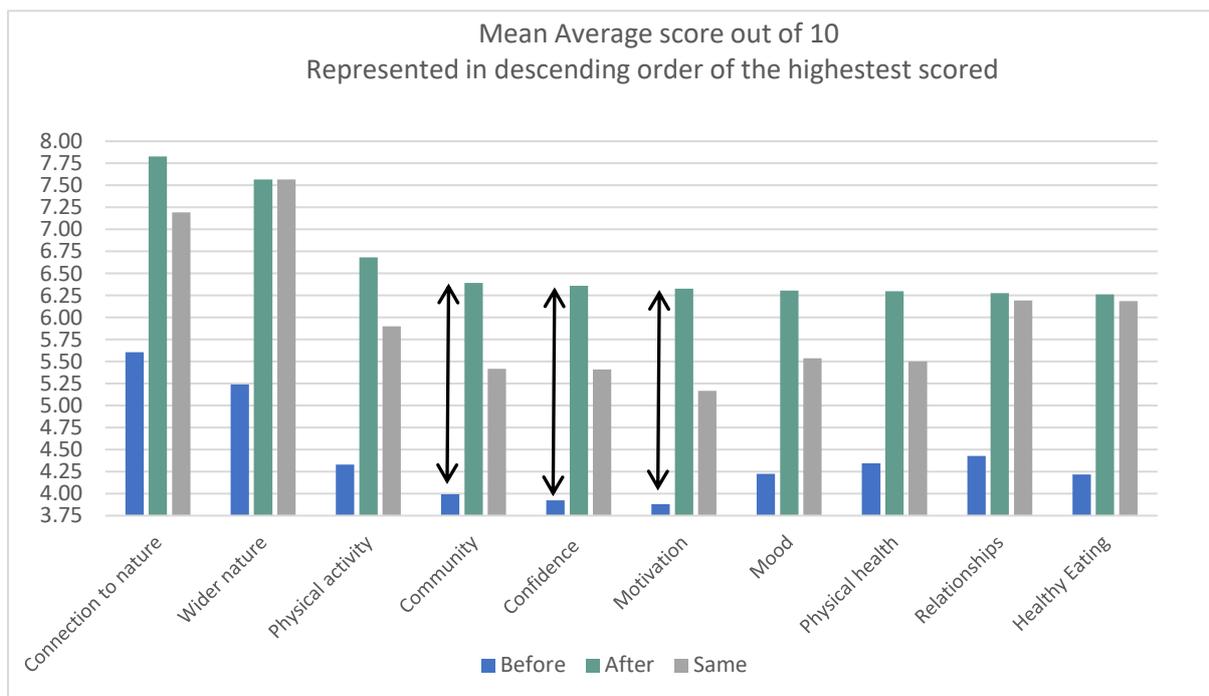
	Improved			Same		Reduced	
Confidence	74	60	81%	11	15%	4	5%
Mood	74	57	77%	13	18%	5	7%
Motivation	74	58	78%	9	12%	7	9%
Physical Health	74	52	70%	15	20%	7	9%
Healthy Eating	74	42	57%	19	26%	13	18%
Physical activity	74	47	64%	15	20%	12	16%
Relationships	74	48	65%	18	24%	8	11%
Community	74	58	78%	12	16%	4	5%
Connection to Nature	74	52	70%	18	24%	4	5%
Wider nature	74	46	62%	22	30%	6	8%

Percentage scores were calculated by counting those that had improved under each category, those that were the same and those that reduced.

Average mean scores before intervention and post intervention (sample size 74 participants)

	Mean average score out of 10				Mean Point Increase
	Before	After	Same		
Connection to nature	5.61	7.83	7.19	Connection to nature	2.22
Wider nature	5.24	7.57	7.57	Wider nature	2.33
Physical activity	4.33	6.68	5.90	Physical activity	2.35
Community	3.99	6.39	5.42	Community	2.40
Confidence	3.92	6.36	5.41	Confidence	2.44
Motivation	3.88	6.33	5.17	Motivation	2.45
Mood	4.22	6.30	5.54	Mood	2.08
Physical health	4.35	6.30	5.50	Physical health	1.95
Relationships	4.43	6.28	6.19	Relationships	1.85
Healthy eating	4.22	6.26	6.18	Healthy eating	2.05

Connection to Nature and Wider nature scored the highest improvement at 7.83 and 7.57 respectively. Those that scored the same also scored above 7. This demonstrates that the interventions clearly connect people to nature with a wider understanding how nature is a part of us and not separate from it.



Physical activity was the third highest (6.68) and fourth highest point increase of 2.35. However only 64% made an improvement with 26% staying the same with a score of at 5.90 and 16% reduced. The other six domains had similar improvement scores ranging from 6.26 to 6.39.

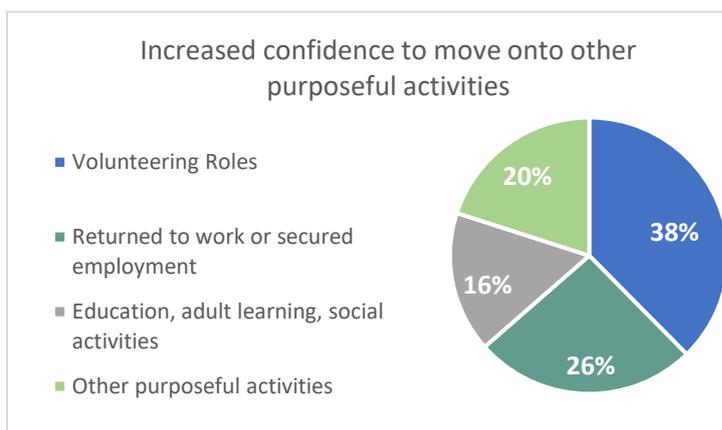
Community, Confidence, and Motivation had a lower score at the start and had the greatest point increase ranging 2.40 to 2.45. This illustrates that those with poorer outcomes pre-intervention made the most significant improvements. The data also demonstrates that Community scored joint second with 78% participants making an improvement.

7.4 Analysis of purposeful activities

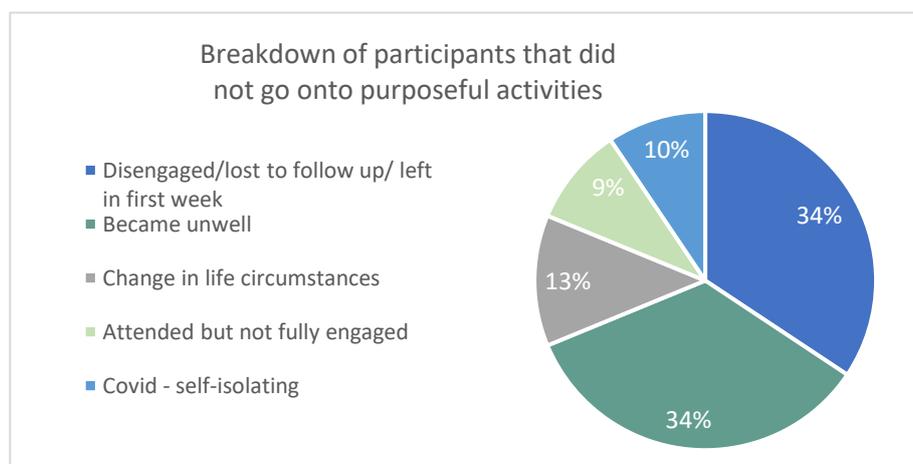
73% participants have gone onto further purposeful activities.

The below table illustrates the type of purposeful activities the participants have gone onto after completing the course. To clarify, other purposeful activities are such things as gardening, nature-based mindfulness or going for walks. These are considered as huge steps for some people especially for those with long term physical conditions and limited mobility and those with complex mental health and social needs.

	Volunteering inc. Buddy Role	Returned to work or secured employment	Education, adult learning, social activities	Other purposeful activities
Grow Wilder	17	9	8	9
Dundry Slopes	11	12	4	7
Bath City Farm	4	1	2	1
	32	22	14	17



The project demonstrates that longer term support provides adequate time for people to progress and leads to positive change with sustainable outcomes.



The table above illustrates the reasons why 27% participants did not go onto further activities. When engaging with people with complex social needs it is anticipated a proportion will disengage with the service.

7.5 Results from the University of Bath Study

Bath University captured data using validated questionnaires, below is an overview of their findings.

‘As all measures result in ordinal data a Wilcoxon’s matched pairs test was used to assess whether post-intervention scores were significantly different from pre-intervention scores. Multiple comparisons were controlled with the Benjamin-Hochberg method. The results demonstrated that the **SWEMWBS improved significantly**, indicating higher overall mental wellbeing following the wellbeing through nature course. Overall satisfaction as measured by the ONS scale also showed a **significant improvement**. Other scores trended in a positive direction (note that lower post scores for anxiety and UCLA represent anxiety and loneliness decreasing). Environmental identity scores remained stable although given how high the scores were at the outset, it was clear **there was a high affinity for nature** and there may well be a ceiling effect.’ Full details of the findings can be found in appendix B.

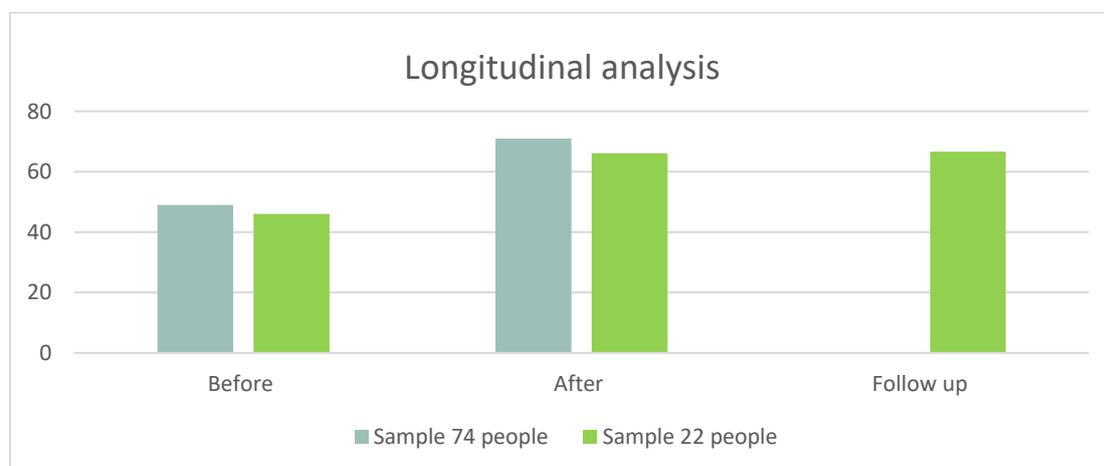
7.6 Longitudinal data analysis

We collected quantitative follow-up data in November and December 2020, later than planned, due to the pandemic. Consequently, we were trying to contact some participants up to two years after their engagement with the project and we were unable to get hold of all those who participated resulting in a sample size of 22 people. The below graph illustrates that 100%* of the 22 people followed-up had maintained an improvement.

We compared data scores before the intervention, after completing the course, and the new follow-up data. We also compared the follow -up data against all 74 participant data sets. The results show similarities to those compared to the 22 follow-up results only. With this we can assume that a high proportion of participants maintained their health and wellbeing even with the COVID pandemic. However, it should be noted that 22 people is not a large sample size.

Some qualitative data was captured between 2017 and 2019 from which three case studies were written up for use in promotional activities (see appendix G). Unfortunately, we found it difficult to find participants who were willing to share their experience on the course.

Overall, this is an excellent demonstration that Wellbeing with Nature effectively enables sustained health and wellbeing and positive behavioural change to self-care.



*95% improved and 5% stayed the same.

7.7 Summary of quantitative data analysis against outcomes

Outcome 1. People from disadvantaged communities will have improved health and wellbeing.

89% participants had improved health and wellbeing.

A comparison of the results from our own data and that of Bath University, clearly demonstrates that the wellbeing self-care courses made significant improvement to participants health and wellbeing.

100% of participants sampled maintained an improvement to their wellbeing six months to two years after completing the course.

Outcome 2. Participants will become more resilient through increased confidence.

73% participants have gone onto further purposeful activities.

Including 22 people who have returned to work or secured employment.

Outcome 3. People work together to develop more cohesive communities.

78% participants had increased connections with their community.

Those that scored lower under 'community' at the start benefitted the most from the course, with results from the University of Bath stating that loneliness was decreasing.

7.8 Pro-conservation behaviour outcomes

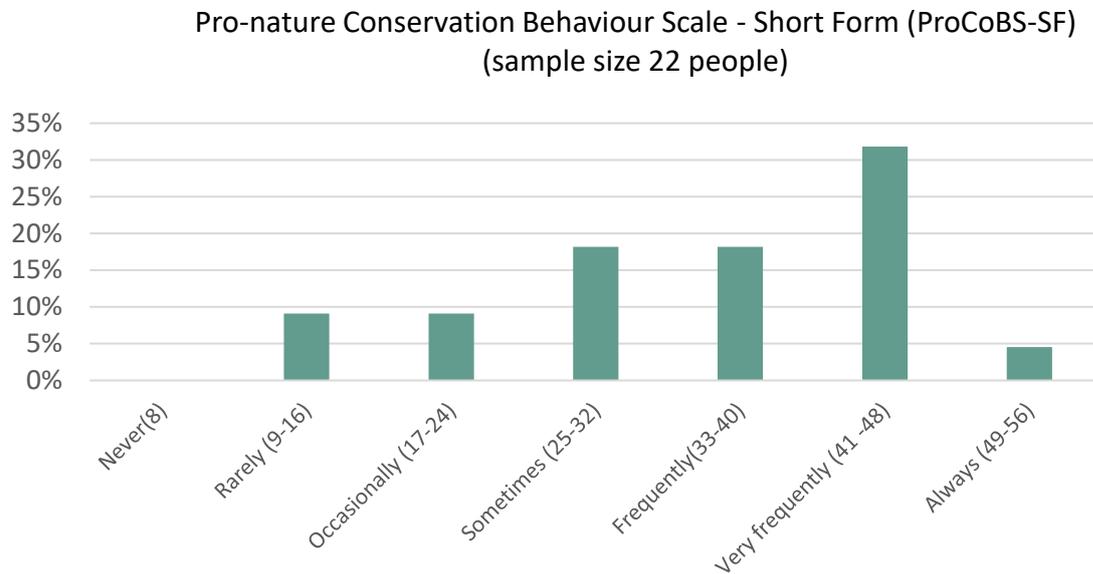
As the project developed and evolved, the addition of the Five Pathways to Nature Connectedness and the research coming through from the University of Derby, we felt it was important to illustrate a fourth outcome in terms of pro-conservation behaviours.

The Pro-Nature Conservation Behaviour Scale

The Pro-Nature Conservation Behaviour Scale (ProCoBS) – *E.J.; Sweet, M.; Schofield, M.B.; Richardson, M. Measuring Actions for Nature— Development and Validation of a Pro-Nature Conservation behaviours.*

ProCoBS is a psychometrically validated scale measuring active behaviours that specifically support the conservation of biodiversity. Pro-conservation behaviours are positive actions which impact on wildlife through improving habitat. Focus is on positive actions people can take to help the recovery of wildlife. Simple changes to domestic gardens have the power to increase native biodiversity, making gardens an important tool for nature conservation. Behaviours regarding political participation (for example) are more widely accessible and can have an important influence on public policy decision-making and social change.

This validated scale was published in June 2020, and we decided to use this to collect additional data when following up on participants. A description of the difference between pro-environmental and pro-conservation behaviours and the questions to the ProCoBs scale can be found in appendix F.



The results clearly demonstrate that all participants have developed positive conservation behaviours with 55% 'frequently' to 'always' taking action for nature.

Feedback from participants and their actions outside of the course demonstrated positive behavioural change. All increased their time and connection to nature, placing a greater value on the environment whether through additional practical action, sharing their experiences with friends and family or adopting pro-environmental and conservation behaviours such as recycling or creating wildlife habitats in their gardens. The self-care course has enabled participants to become buddies and move onto other volunteering opportunities throughout the Trust, with other participants volunteering for other organisations regionally.

"I'm doing different things now that I wasn't interested in before. I started to follow things up in my own time. I did a lot of wildflower identification, bought books and looked out for plants in the garden".

"Since finishing the course I now volunteer at Grow Wilder in their wildflower nursery, there is always an opportunity to keep learning whilst doing something worthwhile. I also volunteer at a local community orchard and more recently I have become a volunteer buddy supporting older people to get out and enjoy nature. I still have good and bad days but overall I am in a better place from when I first joined the course".

“And then once we got going and the activities were introduced, it stimulated my interest and imagination – which is all part of keeping learning. I started to follow things up in my own time. I did a lot of wildflower identification, bought books and looked out for plants in the garden and when I was out. Then I got a small portable greenhouse and began growing lemon balm and rosemary from cuttings I was given here at Grow Wilder – and salad things like tomatoes and rocket. We’d done some planting one week on the course and that’s what led to me doing things like that myself. Next, I’m planning to do an online course on organic gardening and I’m finding out more about foraging and wild food”.

Dundry Slopes Participant Story

A journey from green care to incorporating nature into their everyday life.

‘The course has pretty much saved my life. Before I started, I was homeless and I didn’t have any connections to anyone, I was really low. The course has given me connections to people and to nature that I never had before.

It’s the first time in my life that any mindfulness practice has worked for me, and I tried for years and years before coming on the course.

I was shielding and I definitely would not have been able to get through lockdown without the resources that the wellbeing team have given me. I am now able to relax and connect to what’s around me, I have all the resources I need to survive thanks to what I’ve learnt.

I’m finally going to university next month and I wouldn’t have been able to do that without Avon Wildlife Trust. I’m going to focus on sustainable product design. I’m even choosing to move closer to Dundry Slopes so I can be more involved with volunteering there.’

7.9 Qualitative data analysis

We have collected feedback and case studies throughout the project that showcase the sustained improvements to participants wellbeing and how they continue to engage in outdoor activities. The positive wellbeing data and participants undertaking purposeful activities demonstrates the impact the course has had on people's lives. The word cloud image highlights the words most used from participant feedback.



Below further highlights comments under each outcome. Additional case studies and quotes can be found in appendix G.

Outcome 1

People from disadvantaged communities have improved health and wellbeing.

"You can get isolated very easily when you're depressed, and then you don't see anybody. So to come out and see different people helped. I feel this wellbeing course guides you on how you can use nature to alleviate stress and enables you to cope better with everyday problems that everyone faces. It's something that you can use - at home in the park or outdoors wherever you are."

"Being outside in nature has helped my recovery and rehabilitation with increased physical activity and mental wellbeing, reduced stress and anxiety, giving me a greater awareness of our surroundings and the part that nature plays, I now also 'buddy' for 'Wellbeing with Nature' to try and support those who maybe going through a similar process to show empathy, also act as a Volunteer Ranger (just learning the ropes at the moment) to give something back for the great support that I have had."

"I am more mindful and taking notice a lot more. Working and socialising is good and feels natural as if we have known each other for years. I calm down when connecting to nature, I am less anxious, less panicky than I used to be, for example I was late for the bus today and did not panic like I used to."

Grow Wilder Participant Story

"Before I started the course I was in a very dark place and felt like I didn't have anything to live for. I remember Christmas last year I just shut myself away, not wanting to mix with people or celebrate the festive season.

One year on, I have finished the course and my life has been turned around and coming has really benefited my life. This Christmas I have been buying presents and feeling really good and looking forward to taking part and being with family.

I have also stopped going to the doctors to see the mental health nurse and I have felt that I am now able to start reducing my medication".

"Honestly if I hadn't been on the course my wellbeing level would not have been that high, if I'd just been on my own. And there's no way I would have been able to sustain the better physical health, better mood and increased physical activity."

Outcome 2

Participants will become more resilient through increased confidence.

"The course has increased my confidence and made me realise that there are lots of things I am interested in. I now want to learn more about how nature works, gardening and growing my own food. I am now going on to do another outdoor course. I also want to get out more regularly and keep noticing nature. I want to be out in nature doing volunteering work"

"Being a buddy is helping me to give back and to encourage others to have the same improvements I had. It's really rewarding to see people improve and develop themselves"

Grow Wilder Participant Story

I was interested in the course because I enjoyed being in nature and knew it would be good for my health. There was little else around of this kind of course and I was also drawn to the nature-based mindfulness aspect of the course.

I loved making the food on the campfire when we had our end of celebration for the last session. The community feel was important and helped me to feel less isolated, being with others with similar interests.

The check-in each week was very important so that you have a chance to see where you are at. It also helped with my **confidence** in a group which is something that I found challenging at the start. Grounding helped with time out from the busy world.

The course was helpful in learning from others and hearing their ideas and being inspired on things that have come up for them that have helped their wellbeing.

It was not like other groups where they can be heavy and triggering this course was more about learning the tools and techniques to feel better in nature. I really liked that, it was an upbeat and focused on the positive!

I notice nature more; I get out much more in nature and really appreciated it. I love recycling and think about the future generations and protecting the planet. **It has given me the confidence to move on to volunteering and adult education.**

Outcome 3

People work together to develop more cohesive communities.

When Social prescribing works

Since the start of the project, the WWN team had made strong links with the Care Forum. The Care Forum based in Fishponds provides a free social prescribing service for those over the age of 18 living in the Fishponds area. A key highlight from running the course at Grow Wilder and building these strong links with the Care Forum encouraged positive social/community connections.

For example, those that had come through the Care Forum were also attending other local community groups such as their Coffee mornings in the local café or wellbeing walk. It was always great to hear those attending our course helping and supporting others by suggesting these groups or even arranging to attend together with the common link of coming through the Care Forum.

This was a great example of local social prescribing functioning well. Building resilience in the local community by bringing those isolated and disconnected together and supporting with suitable supportive community groups and services.

"I've made one friend who we've swapped numbers and Christmas cards and stuff. There's quite a few people, we haven't swapped numbers, all of us have our own stuff to deal with so we're nervous about passing on our contact details to other people....but we're comfortable enough with each other here that we can say hello, chat and stuff and that's lovely, that's really, really nice".

"I had six Christmas cards this year. Four of them were from here. I normally only get one or maybe two".

"The course helped me immensely especially with the social side - I was very isolated before. The Roundhouse felt like a safe and cosy space. I miss the laughs and jokes and the tight supportive group – it was a great social time. I now spend time on the Downs, cycling to Leigh Woods and Baddocks Woods".

8 Project Impact - Six-week course

This chapter looks at the data collected for the six-week courses using the H-Han scale and qualitative feedback.

8.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The below table illustrates the outcomes achieved on the holistic H-Han Wellbeing Outcome Wheel for our six-week module courses. The results show that our approach does have a positive impact on people across a broad range of personal and social outcomes as well as increasing participant's connection to nature.

	Improved			Same		Reduced	
Confidence	26	20	77%	5	19%	1	4%
Mood	26	22	85%	4	15%	0	0%
Motivation	26	19	73%	7	27%	0	0%
Physical health	26	14	54%	9	35%	3	12%
Healthy Eating	26	15	58%	9	35%	2	8%
Physical activity	26	16	62%	8	31%	2	8%
Relationships	26	19	73%	6	23%	1	4%
Community	26	17	65%	8	31%	1	4%
Connection to nature	26	17	65%	7	27%	2	8%
Wider nature	26	15	58%	10	38%	1	4%

92% of participants indicated an overall improvement to their health and wellbeing.

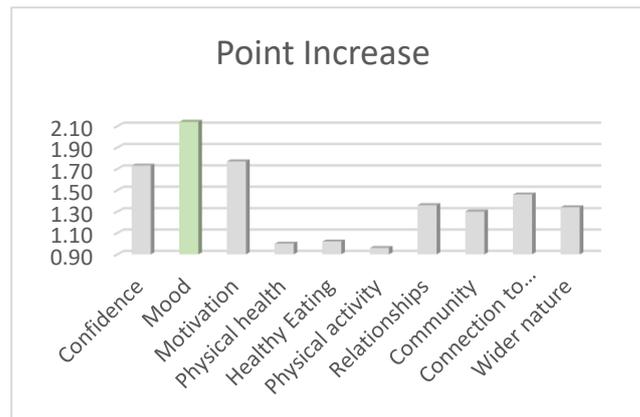
	Total	Improvement	Same	Reduced			
Overall improvement	26	24	92%	2	8%	0	0%

85% of participants indicated improvements to their **Mood**, followed by Confidence (77%) and Motivation (73%). Mood had the greatest change with a point increase of **2.14**.

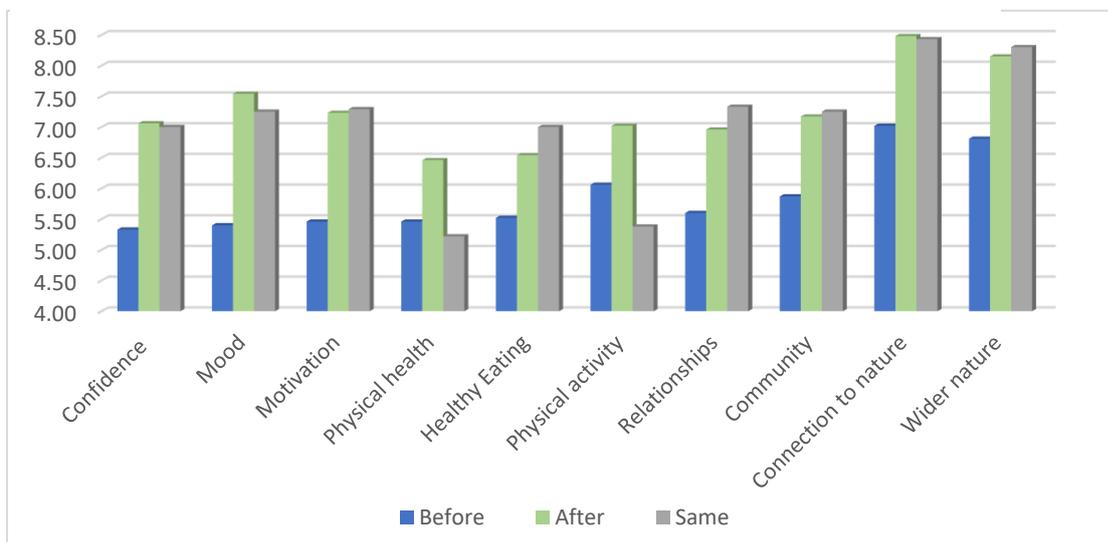
54% of participants indicated improvements to their physical health. This was the lowest percentage and could be attributed the physical health conditions of individual participants.

65% of participants indicated improvements to 'Connection to Nature' with the highest average pre intervention score of **7.02** and post intervention score of **8.48**. 27% of participants stayed 'the same' with an excellent score **8.43**. 'Wider nature' rated the 2nd highest post intervention score of **8.15**.

Point Increase	
Confidence	1.73
Mood	2.14
Motivation	1.77
Physical health	1.00
Healthy Eating	1.02
Physical activity	0.96
Relationships	1.36
Community	1.30
Connection to nature	1.46
Wider nature	1.34



Average participant scores before and after the intervention. Scale from 1-10



When comparing the six-week course to the 18-week course both highlight that nature connection and wider nature have the greatest outcomes. Community scored a 65% improvement which tended lower than those reported for the 18-week course at 78%, highlighting that the 18-week course provides adequate time to foster community relationships. Physical activity scored similar for both courses although the 18-week course provided more time for regular physical activity.

8.2 Qualitative feedback

The project team were unable to follow up participants however some qualitative data shows that that this shorter type of course is also effective at motivating people to continue to self-care and move onto other purposeful activities.

Feedback from BANES Carers centre

“Working at The Wildlife Trust with Jason has been a magical experience. I have learnt so many useful courses, step building, wildflower sowing, weaving and hedge laying etc.-however, learning to listen to our countryside birds and nature, taking in the ambience of the countryside. It has been a real activity for me to make me feel well at heart and for my wellbeing.”

“I found the work that Jason did on the flip chart very interesting & would have liked more of that type of thing before going outside”.

“The ‘homework’ made sure I thought about the course throughout the week, an excellent idea!”

Others also commented on how the course was something they found very beneficial during that specific time in their life.

“The course came just at the right time for, both my adult sons had crisis's during the six-week course. The course gave me time for me, away from the family and phones. I love the outdoors & it is my calm place to be.....”

Feedback from Genesis Trust.

“One client moved on to another course at Bath City Farm and has continued to engage with volunteering there”.

“Another participant would now like to know how to get a qualification enabling her to teach adults and she was wondering what qualification you did? In case it is one she also can look into.”

“We would love to run another course perhaps after Easter if funding is available.”

9 Project Impact - Community Projects

This chapter looks at the impact of our community projects using quantitative and qualitative feedback.

9.1 Evaluation Methodology

It was originally anticipated that the project would use the H-Han scale for community projects but due to the irregularity of different participants joining sessions or for those with learning disabilities we designed a short questionnaire (see below) to capture data for both community projects and one-day sessions. Although it does not measure change over time, it is a useful tool to capture a participant's feelings after a day's session, indicating that the activity contributed to their health and wellbeing. Qualitative data was also collected to demonstrate impact.

The short questionnaire was developed to provide quantitative results in relation to project outcomes. Below illustrates the questions used that are scaled: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither agree or disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree

1. Were you more physically active than you would be on an average day?
2. Was today more sociable for you than an average day?
3. Today's activity has made me feel more relaxed and enhanced my mood.
4. I have learnt something new today.
5. Today's activity has made me feel more aware of the benefits nature has on my wellbeing.

Come on Board and Natural Pathways projects were evaluated separately, results from Come on Board can be found in section 9.4. At the time of writing there was no early data to describe outcomes of Natural Pathways. This was due to a delay in finalising a new evaluation process and methodology within the partnership.

9.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

The below table outlines the results from the short questionnaire with a sample size of 29 people.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Were you more physically active than you would be on an average day?	41%	52%	7%	0%	0%
Was today more sociable for you than an average day?	34%	59%	7%	0%	0%
Today's activity has made me feel more relaxed and enhanced my mood.	42%	55%	3%	0%	0%
I have learnt something new today.	69%	31%	0%	0%	0%
Today's activity has made me feel more aware of the benefits nature has on my wellbeing.	38%	59%	3%	0%	0%

- 100% either strongly agreed or agreed that they learnt something new.
- 97% either strongly agreed or agreed that they felt more aware of the benefits nature has on their wellbeing.
- 97% either strongly agreed or agreed that their mood was enhanced.
- 93% either strongly agreed or agreed that their social interactions increased.
- 93% either strongly agreed or agreed that their physical activity increased.

9.3 Qualitative Data Analysis

Outcome 1

People from disadvantaged communities have improved health and wellbeing.

"I wanted to grow veg but did not want an allotment on my own. I googled "community Garden BS5" and came across the opportunity to grow veg in a group with Wellspring Healthy Living Centre so I volunteered. Nine months later I can honestly say that the growing veg bit is the least important to me. The best bit is being a member of a group of people who share the same interest; the physical activity; having a beautiful place in nature to enjoy (the trees, plants, and the birds) and the pride we have of the new veg beds and plants". Volunteer – Strawberry Lane allotment

"I also developed a strong desire to make the wider community aware of the garden, to encourage the wider community to participate, learn and reap the benefits that I personally have gained on a physical, mental, social and learning level". Volunteer – Strawberry Lane allotment

"I learnt new ways of being with nature that supports my mental wellbeing" Head Injury Unit

"I have never built a bug hotel it made me feel good". Brandon Trust

Outcome 2

Participants will become more resilient through increased confidence.

"We have benefited massively from assistance provided by AWT in the form providing extra help from a corporate group; providing materials and creating new veg beds. We have learnt to grow a variety of produce this season which has provided a much-needed boost. We have learnt what wildflowers benefit pollination and learnt how to lay a hedge".

"The skills and knowledge we have gained through Avon Wildlife trust from hedge-laying to building beds and most of all the overall plans for the development of the garden have been immense".
Volunteer – Strawberry Lane

"I have ideas to take back to my garden to help me continue to connect and promote nature". Head Injury Unit

"It was special as I learnt new things"- Horizons.

"We've done a bit of a litter pick on Hengrove Mounds, and we went down to South Street Park (and Hebron) to see what was growing and flowering to add to the John Muir evidence". Horizons

“Is there the possibility of doing some similar wellbeing work for staff not just for patients? I know it would be hugely valued and we are exploring options on building team resilience”- GP - Brooklea Health Centre.

Outcome 3

People work together to develop more cohesive communities.

“I can categorically say that we would not have got so far had it not been for AWT support. We are a very small but strong core group of seven members who have come together since the beginning of 2018 who are passionate and committed to making the wider community aware of our very special space in nature”. Strawberry Lane Allotment

“We have been developing the garden for the past 1.5 years and the support and help and guidance from Avon Wildlife Trust has been invaluable. We have developed a steering group and a growing number of volunteers are helping out”. Wellspring Centre Staff member

“Thanks for all the hard work on Wednesday! We’re looking forward to seeing what spring brings”. Centre Manager – My Wild GP

“I was so inspired by Grow Wilder I want to show our clients an insect hotel and a few other bits you have around the site, as they plan to do one ourselves on our site”. Head Injury Unit



“I have worked with Brandon Trust in the folly farm garden, they always enjoy coming and get involved in all the activities. I started slowly to give ownership and autonomy to the group and left them a list of tasks to do the following week and reduced the frequency of my visits. The group leaders now have the confidence to take the group without my support and have been doing so ever since. When I spoke to them on the phone they said ‘ we are happy to pool our resources together and continue to support the vegetable kitchen area at the reserve”. WWN Project Officer

Sally Seaman – Horizons Co-ordinator at Hengrove College

Horizons students have developed their confidence, self-esteem, resilience and conservation skills through working with AWT this year. All the young students have Learning Disabilities / Difficulties, and most live in chaotic homes where they have few opportunities to experience nature, areas of beauty, or even their local environment. Their team work has given them fresh experiences, encouraged problem-solving skills, perseverance when the work was tricky or the weather or mud was against them, and allowed the young people to have fun as well. Additionally, they all achieved the Discover level of the John Muir Award.

Thank you to Kelly and Jason for working with us.

9.4 Come on Board Data Analysis

For the duration of the Bristol Aging Better project the Common Measurement Framework (CMF) evaluation forms were used to collect wellbeing data. With this we decided not to use our own evaluation methods as this would be too onerous for the participants. Additional qualitative data was collected via quotes, case studies and a focus group which further demonstrate the impact the sessions had on participants.



The project was effective at engaging the elderly with 52% aged 80 or over within the dementia friendly group. The table below illustrates the age range of the participants. The oldest participant was 95 years old and the youngest was 53 years old with an average age for both groups at 72 years old.

Outcome 1 -People from disadvantaged communities have improved health and wellbeing.

The below results demonstrate that the wildlife gardening sessions have a significant impact on participants mental wellbeing. Details of the Come on Board results produced by Bristol Ageing Better can be found in appendix H.

	50-59	60-69	70-79	80-89	90-99
Dementia friendly group (incl some family members)	12%	24%	12%	28%	24%
Over 50's group	8%	58%	25%	8%	0%

The Bristol Ageing Better report stated:

Between March 2018 and February 2020, the Come on Board project involved 583 participants aged 50+. Of these, 71 were involved with Avon Wildlife Trust.

Unfortunately, the sample size of Avon Wildlife Trust participants was too small to be able to provide meaningful data about the project's outcomes for these participants, separate to the combined data from all Come on Board delivery partners.

Wellbeing data: Combined data from all Come on Board delivery partners

79 of the 583 Come on Board participants completed a wellbeing questionnaire at the start of their involvement with the project and then again, a few months later, forming a 'matched pair'.

The project had a statistically significant impact (i.e. likely to be due to the project's intervention and not occurring by chance) on:

- **Participants' perception of how often they take part in social activities** compared to other people of their age. P = 0.011.
- **Participants' mental wellbeing** (using the SWEMWBS scale). P = 0.011.

Outcome 2 - Participants will become more resilient through increased confidence.



Providing meaningful activities for wildlife has provided people with a sense of belonging and achievement. This has been demonstrated by the amount of participants who've been inspired to do wildlife gardening at home – for example, starting to feed the birds in their gardens.

“Since I’ve been coming I’ve taken plants home and put them on my window sill and I’m buying plants and looking after them and I feel a lot calmer. Before I came, I didn’t have any plants. Now I water them and look after them, do a little bit of weeding and cut them back. It’s something to take my mind off things.” Participant 2

“I saw the poster for these gardening sessions on the noticeboard in my care home and I thought I’ll have a go at that. I used to grow vegetables – both in my own garden and for a friend. It’s always nice to get outside. On the first day we did pond dipping, identifying these creatures – with the names of things I’d never heard of! We found a newt. One of the interesting things was the way you taught us to make bird feeders. It was very satisfying.” Participant 3



Outcome 3 – People work together to develop more cohesive communities

The project has been very effective at combating social isolation. For some participant’s, coming to our sessions was the only time they get outside and makes a huge difference to their quality of life. For one participant it was the first time she had left the house in 15 years. The activities encourage positive memories and connections to nature and provide a common interest between the group that has helped build relationships and friendship.

Fran is a long term Bristolian, having moved to the city as a child, Fran currently lives in a care home of around 60 people. Fran appreciates the free transport as it means that she is able to leave the care home for the afternoon and do something different. *“I like talking to different people from different walks of life, it’s interesting. At the care home people are inclined to talk about their illnesses, I like to hear the good stuff. When I come I feel at peace with myself, that I’ve achieved something different with my day and spent some time outdoors.” Participant 1*



“I always look forward to coming. There’s always something different to see and smell and I think that helps everybody, we all have a great time. It’s nice to come for a couple of hours to just forget everything and come and get some fresh air. You meet people you wouldn’t normally meet and just have a friendly chat.” Participant 2

People living with the dementia, their family member or carer feedback

The family members who attended fed back that the sessions created new positive memories for them, at a time which is difficult for their relationships. Some used what they had learnt and repeated activities with other residents at their care homes. They also benefited from the sessions themselves.

“Coming to your sessions have been some of the highlights of my time spent with Dad over the last few months. Having always been a huge lover of all things outdoors and gardening it's been really special to come to your group and do activities that are so entwined with who he is. Thank you for providing such a safe and welcoming space for us to have created new memories together at a time where Dad's illness has made it difficult to find suitable places and groups to go to. All the best and keep doing such a brilliant job”. Family Carer 1



Maggie, an activities coordinator at one of the care homes involved describes the impact she feels the sessions have on clients.

“They were so happy to do things on their own. For example, today we were chopping veggies like they used to do before going into supported living. It's nice for them to chat about what they are doing, and discuss memories about what they used to grow in their own gardens, or about their childhood. You can see it brings back positive memories. Getting to meet different people as well is, I think, a really beneficial experience.”

Focus group

Many of the participants from the over 50s group experience mental ill-health and other health conditions that prevent them from engaging within their community. They really benefitted from being in a space where the focus was on their wellbeing and not issues, they were having at home. They also really enjoyed the social side as lots of them had felt very isolated before. Feedback can be found in appendix I.

10 Wellbeing Awareness and Nature Connection Days

This chapter looks at the impact of our community projects using quantitative and qualitative feedback as outlined in section 9.1.

10.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

The table below illustrates the results from the one-day questionnaire from a sample size of 113 people.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Were you more physically active than you would be on an average day?	20%	31%	30%	15%	4%
Was today more sociable for you than an average day?	20%	49%	26%	5%	0%
Today's activity has made me feel more relaxed and enhanced my mood.	48%	44%	8%	0%	0%
I have learnt something new today.	59%	39%	2%	0%	0%
Today's activity has made me feel more aware of the benefits nature has on my wellbeing.	48%	46%	4%	2%	1%

98% either strongly agreed or agreed that they learnt something new.

92% either strongly agreed or agreed that their mood had been enhanced.

92% either strongly agreed or agreed that they felt more aware of the benefits nature has on wellbeing.

69% either strongly agreed or agreed that they were more social.

51% either strongly agreed or agreed that they were more physically active.

Those that neither agreed nor disagreed under 'physical activity' reasons can be attributed to light sit down tasks such as a craft activity and mindful interventions. Those that neither agreed nor disagreed under 'sociable' reasons can be attributed to undertaking an activity within an established sociable group. Overall, the results demonstrate a positive impact on people's wellbeing.

10.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Outcome 1

People from disadvantaged communities have improved health and wellbeing.

"It really made me understand the importance of looking after myself - thank you". Rethink

"Lovely atmosphere and excellent company. I have a feeling of wellbeing. Would love to come back in the nice weather". Life Cycle

“Allowed me to reconnect with myself, appreciate nature and remind me to incorporate both mindfulness and nature into my daily life.” Rethink

“Spending time with others who have similar issues was helpful, learning about emotions and feelings which I don't think is something I do enough, but I need to do more. Realise how wonderful nature is.” Changes (Group 2)

Outcome 2

Participants will become more resilient through increased confidence.

“I am so happy to find that this place exists and to see and experience for myself the importance of nature. The world seems too dark at the moment and places like this are such beacons of hope”. Mindfulness and weaving

“I enjoyed the nature walk focusing on mindfulness. Also loved making the bird feeders. Would be interested in other courses”. (South Glos – Staple Hill) Wellbeing College

“It underscored the benefits of mindfulness in nature. I will take this forward and practice daily - even if only from the comfort of my living room observing my favourite tree. However abject your circumstances, you can detach and put crucial distance between oneself and unhelpful emotions”. Bath City Farm (1 day course)

“I enjoyed using the drill to make bee house”. Cintre

Outcome 3

People work together to develop more cohesive communities.

“It's rare to be in such close quarters with nature, and getting to do communal activities/ cooking in nature was amazing as I do not get the opportunity to do this working 9-5 in an office and living in a flat.” Changes

“The work that goes on here is amazing and I feel everyone could greatly benefit from coming here. I wish more people knew about it.” Mindfulness and weaving course

“Meeting new people and being out and about”. ACE Mental Health

“A wonderful place giving us space and time to reflect and take notice. Really enjoyed it and would love to organise more for Changes Bristol - can see the benefits for members (service users), staff, volunteers and trustees.” Changes

The results demonstrate that a day in nature improves mood and offers opportunities for learning and understanding the importance of nature for wellbeing. It also provides a stepping stone to further engagement and for those attending a one-day self-care course, tools such as mindfulness continues to be undertaken independently.

11 Assessment of beneficiaries reached, resources needed and additional outcomes

11.1 Reaching beneficiaries – communications.

The team has used existing contacts and developed new relationships with community development workers, Public Health teams, GP surgeries and social prescribers via regularly attending local meetings and events. Equal opportunities data was collected across the project and can be found in appendix J.

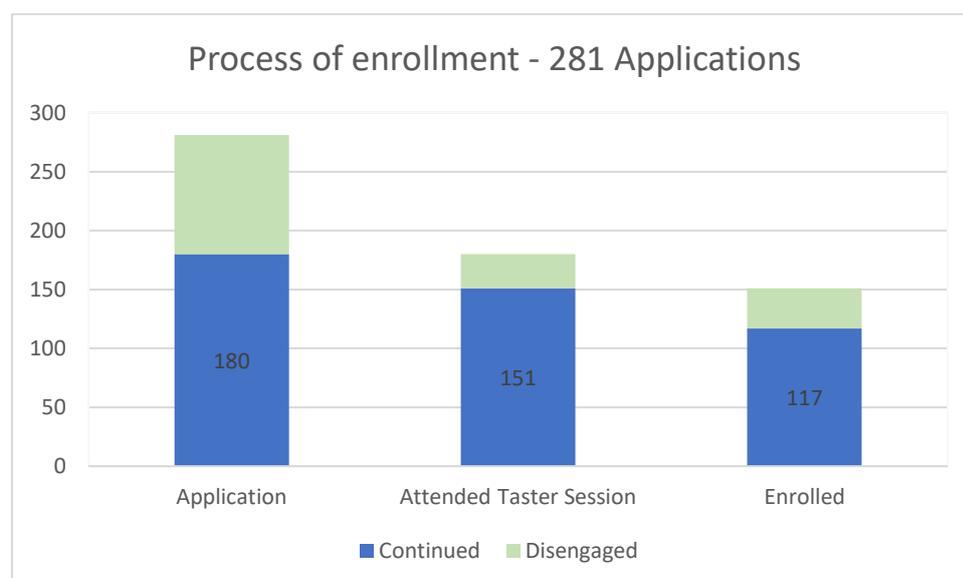
Posters and leaflets were displayed in suitable locations such as community centres/cafes and drop-in centres. Promotion through the Avon Wildlife Trust website and AWT members via the quarterly magazine and e-newsletters. Coverage on social media platforms for targeted promotion was increased and the project linked into wider campaigns such as 30 days Wild and Mental Health Awareness Week.

We produced articles for local papers and other media that highlighted our work through people's stories and how our service has impacted their lives in a positive and sustainable way. There were challenges to the extent of publicity offered due to the confidence of participants wanting to share their story, or who wanted to remain anonymous and not have their photo taken.

Advertising the 18-week course as three separate six-week courses allowed more people to participate, attracting people who may otherwise have been put off by the 18-week course. For example, those who are taking a short break from work due to stress.

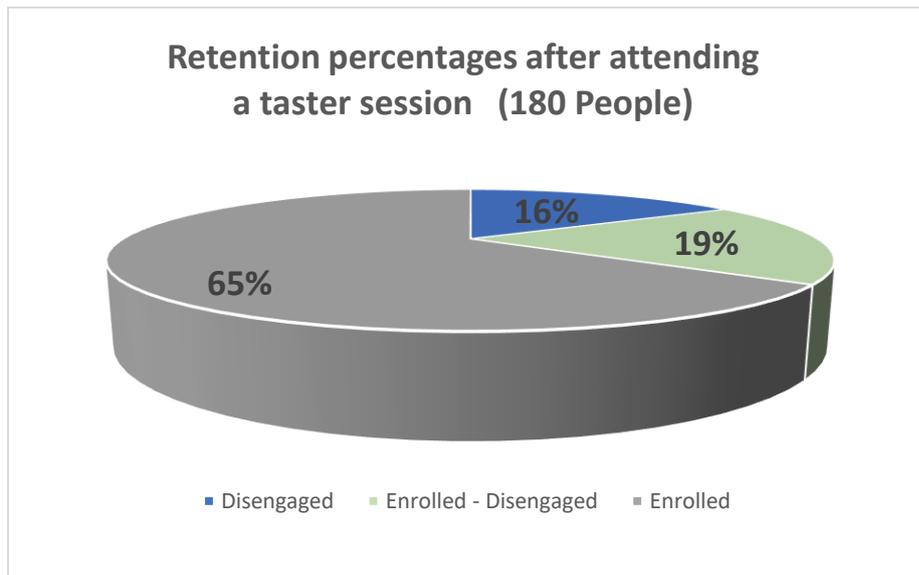
11.2 Analysis of the enrolment process

The 18-week course received 281 applications with 117 people that enrolled on the course. The below table illustrates when people disengaged from the enrolment process.



34% of applicants were either not suitable, did not respond when contacted, or did not think it was for them or 'not the right time' when contacted. The course was aimed at those with the motivation to make a positive change, which was not fully understood by referrers.

Retention of participants was also a challenge, to alleviate this we began to ask potential participants to attend to a taster session to make that first step, so that they fully understood the content of the course and were able to commit.

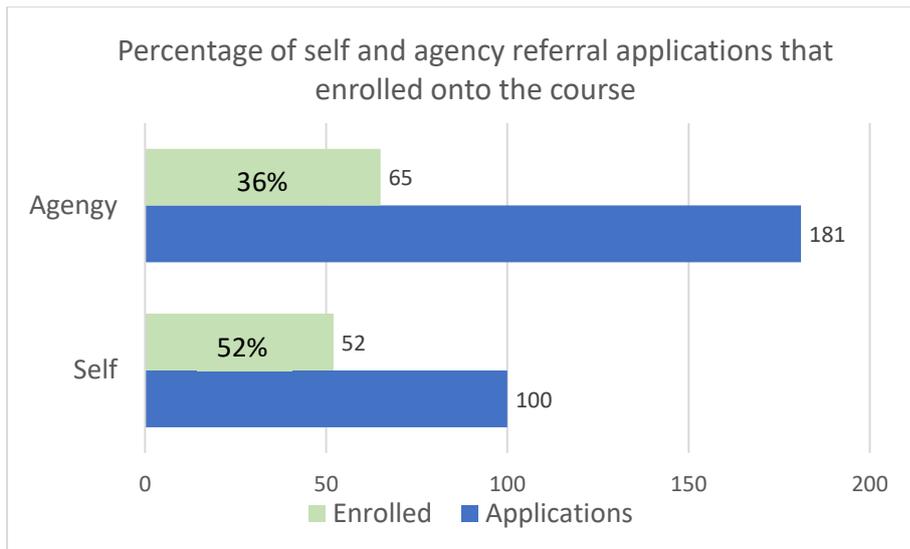


The table above shows that 16% of those booked on a taster session did not turn up, an additional call was made to invite them to a second taster session. Barriers include anxiety about leaving the house, irregular sleeping patterns and changes in health conditions.

A further 19% who attended a taster session and enrolled still did not turn up on the first day of the course this meant that at times participant numbers remained low for the 6 weeks. This was mainly due to sudden changes in mental and physical conditions, housing or family issues.

11.3 Analysis of Referrals

Across the 281 applications 100 (36%) were self-referrals and 181 (64%) were agency referrals. Agency referrals included social prescribers and link workers, mental health and drugs and alcohol support organisations, mental health nurses, housing support and back to work schemes. Although not routinely recorded, a high proportion of self-referrals found out about the course through an agency. This demonstrates the need for regular and effective messaging to be established with agencies, that clearly communicates the type of interventions, activities and suitability of the course.



A good relationship was built with The Care Forum's social prescribing project. A support worker attended one of our sessions and was one of the main referrers for Grow Wilder along with a mental health nurse covering five GP surgeries and the Head Injury Unit. In Bath the main referrer was Myscript, part of the Wessex Water project.

Dundry referrers included Rethink, Ways of Working and Grange Road Surgery. Referrals were intermittent and mainly came from mental health organisations and drug and alcohol support organisations many of whom had multiple and complex social needs which made it more challenging for people to participate and turn up.

“The wellbeing through nature course offers our patient group the perfect setting to continue to utilise new therapeutic strategies acquired during their admission with us. It also gives the individual an opportunity to experience the benefits of being mindful away from a hospital setting and to gain new skills.” Rosa Burden Centre (Head Injury Unit), Southmead Hospital

Lessons Learnt

Providing taster sessions did increase enrolment numbers that previously would have disengaged. When enrolling participants onto the course, overbooking should be considered and a system of peer support to help people make that first step should be recommended.

A large amount of staff time went into the process of enrolling people on the course. Once an application was received one of the team made an initial phone call to assess interest, suitability and then book that person onto a taster session. A text was sent the day before to remind and encourage people to come along. If they did not attend the session an additional call was made to offer another opportunity. Providing adequate staff time for promotion and the enrolment process needs to be factored in.



Even with good communication and relationships with social prescribers, barriers to engagement were often due to people in crisis with a majority concerned with housing and finances. The model for social prescribing is a person-centred approach but there needs to be better communication around the value of nature for health and wellbeing even if they perceive that nature is not their interest. This potential lack of understanding from referrers may present another barrier to encouraging those who may benefit from attending the course:

“What we're doing is fairly unique and I don't know if people who are referring fully understand it or promote it in the right way”. For example, when we were telling (the participant) what we did, she said that is so much more than what I got told. I was just told it was a gardening project and it's so much more than a gardening project”. Project Officer

Support workers that attended the first few sessions also helped participants continue to attend. Workshops should be scheduled for referrers throughout the year to ensure the appropriate people are referred.

11.4 Assessment of evaluation methods

Due to the pandemic and staff on the furlough scheme, the project was unable to find sufficient time to find an alternative external evaluator to produce the report.

The Holistic Health and Nature Scale (H-Han) was developed and embedded into the design of the course and session outcomes. This provided a useful tool for the individual to track their progress and see these positive changes for themselves. This method offered a holistic approach compared to other validated questionnaires purely for evaluation.

There were 74 completed data sets. Reasons for no or incomplete data included those who did not wish to partake, facilitator oversight, unable to read and write, participant absence on either week one or week six when data was collected.

Providing 1-2-1 mentoring and exit interviews helped facilitators collect ongoing feedback and quotes from participants. This was onerous and challenging at times and would be affected by other dynamics or weather that would prevent consistency.



The Pro-conservation behaviour scale (section 7.8) was used at the end of the project. Going forward using this scale at the beginning and at the end of a participant's engagement would help to further demonstrate people's nature connectedness and pro-conservation behaviours as a result of their involvement.

The University of Bath study (section 7.2.2) used validated scales and demonstrated correlations between increased nature connectedness and improved mental wellbeing using the Short Warwick-Edinburgh Wellbeing Scale that is recognised by commissioners. The evaluation did add additional paperwork on top of our existing evaluation, and the length of the questionnaire meant that more time was taken up in the delivery sessions to complete them. However, using validated scales meant that the wellbeing data could be benchmarked to local populations. Going forward combining the H-Han wheel with a validated scale such as ONS4 (which is used by many social prescribers) and the ProCoBS-FC should be considered. The downside is that this would be a lengthy process and may deter people from completing it.

11.5 Assessment of staff resources

A large proportion of staff time was dedicated to the development and design of the course session plans and wellbeing interventions; the daily preparation of sessions, the planning of individual practical activities, tools, ordering materials and accompanying resources; continuous promotion and the referral process; liaising and building relationships with community groups; wellbeing data entry, monitoring outputs, finances and reporting; and researching other activities for participants to go onto. Delivering regular sessions weekly can limit staff time to develop new initiatives, with this and considering the above, an appropriate ratio of preparation and delivery must be considered by funders and those that commission services.

It is essential that staff delivering green care must be fully supported and trained. The partnership with Natural Academy ensured that the team had the correct facilitation techniques, coaching skills and emotional support throughout the project. Mental Health First Aid is also essential when delivering this work along with updated processes and procedures. Providing two members of staff per self-care group was essential for the smooth running and safety for both participants and staff, ensuring the correct level of support and allowing 1-2-1 mentoring to occur.



11.6 Assessment of resources and partnerships

Sites

The project was very lucky to have some fantastic sites that included toilet facilities, indoor shelter, and warmth for the wetter and colder months to deliver sessions from. This enabled delivery to continue all year round, broke down barriers to engagement and maintained attendance levels. However, these sites are limited to specific areas and are not always accessible to people or within a general practice locality. Although the project was able to deliver in any natural setting, sessions tended to be shorter, limited to the spring and summer months and unfortunately would have to be cancelled if there was poor weather. There need to be more local outdoor sites where people live. Strategically, if the Government and NHS wish to promote and provide more green prescribing there needs to be consideration for the provision of wildlife rich sites that includes basic facilities. It also needs to be noted that a budget to pay for such facilities must be incorporated.

Transport

The funding allowed the purchase of a seven-seater vehicle which became an invaluable resource to enable the project to run effectively ensuring participants could access sessions. It must be noted that to drive a minibus a PCT minibus test must be undertaken, this is very expensive and can be hard to pass. Therefore, the seven-seater provided an alternative means of transport for a small number of people with access to AWT's minibus when needed. It was not always the convenient solution for the facilitator to drive the transport as this hindered preparation and set up time. Therefore, it is recommended that either volunteer drivers are recruited or to incorporate budget for community transport.

Finance

In year one we re-forecasted the budget to accommodate additional expenditure for consultancy and training which was paramount to the effectiveness of the project's impact and support for staff. When delivering Green Care, it is also important to include budget for site hire, transport and materials.



Partnerships and networks

The funding has enabled AWT to form new partnerships and contribute to strategic decisions regionally and nationally. This has included:

Joint delivery and collaborations with the Head Injury Unit, Bristol Autism Spectrum Service (appendix C), Changes, Bath City Fam, Brooklea Health Centre, Wellspring Healthy Living Centre, The Care Forum and multiple organisations as part of the Come on Board Project, Bathscape and Wessex Water Social Prescribing pilot.

Contributing and sharing our learning with the West of England Nature Partnership (WENP)- Nature and Health Strategy Group. This group works to mainstream and integrate nature-based health services in our public health system, through identified strategic actions which aim to share best practice. The group have representation from BNSCCG, Public Health, Academia, Practitioners, Environmental NGOs, and North Bristol NHS Trust. It hosts a practitioner forum providing a platform for sharing best practice at a local level between green care providers.

Supporting The Wildlife Trust's (TWT) Health and Wellbeing group that works together to share best practice and influence policy and change nationally. Advice comes through this group from DEFRA, the Environment Agency and Natural England and more recently the National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP). This has provided a platform for a shared vision for green prescribing and how we can all be involved and support this development.

11.7 Additional outcomes

Volunteer Support

An unexpected outcome has been the support from health professionals who have offered their time to volunteer on the course and support the group. This has included a retired GP, a mental health occupational therapist and a psychiatrist. Please see appendix K for their feedback. Overall, we had nine regular long-term volunteers to support our delivery of which four were participants from our 18-week course.

Two volunteers who completed the facilitator training went on to share their learnings, delivering activities and wellbeing interventions within their own work streams and other supported volunteering activities they undertook. This demonstrates a transferable model that shares learning and expands our approach beyond and outside of the project. We are very grateful for all the volunteer's commitment, kindness, and passion for the project.

As an occupational therapist by background, the course has regularly made me reflect on my work and consider how I can use the Five Pathways and nature more effectively.

For all of us I believe it has led to an increased recognition of the role that nature and occupying ourselves in meaningful activities have on how we feel and what we can achieve.

**Volunteer Placement,
Grow Wilder**

Facilitator training

What emerged during the project was the need for training and wellbeing courses for staff and volunteers from other organisations. As mentioned in section 5.4, after initially piloting a training course for AWT staff and volunteers we developed a chargeable facilitator training package to be offered to other organisations. Feedback from our external course.

'The schemes of work and sharing of practice means that we leave, not only understanding the processes and purpose of the work but equipped with the tools that we need to start doing it – PRICELESS – Can't thank you enough.'

Loved the training last week – thank you.

Already using it with school groups, particularly the grounding at the start of sessions.

Anyway – I thought you would like this comment from an 8-year-old today. When asked how he felt after the grounding activity he calmly said:

“I felt more engaged with the world around me”.

Jaw dropping from the teacher and myself!! (That was in a class of 30 doing it as well) I have never had something so drastically impact my practice so quickly – thanks again.

Devon Wildlife Trust

A second training course was booked, for Wildlife Trust members, and included a member from the mental health charity Changes and members from the Cancer Charity WHY; with a third booked with the National Trust. Unfortunately, the pandemic halted this in 2020. During the pandemic Natural Academy was able to deliver training to WHY online and has developed Community Connector and Green Care Facilitator training both accredited to OCN level 2.

Integrating Wellbeing across Avon Wildlife Trust

The project enabled the team to train and upskill AWT staff to incorporate wellbeing and nature connectedness into their work streams. The training enabled the Grow Wilder Team, the Learning Team, Our Bright Futures Project (young people) and People and Wildlife Team to introduce a grounding, check-in and reflection for some of their groups, volunteers, school sessions and corporate groups. Joint development and delivery for more focused self-care and nature-based wellbeing interventions was provided for Blackwell School over four days, Winstons Wish a charity supporting families and bereavement, self-care course for young volunteers and wellbeing walks as part of the My Wild City project.

In the last few months of the project, the wellbeing team met with staff to understand who had been implementing skills and techniques they had learnt and what additional support or training they may need. The consensus was that although most individuals had brought in elements and activities into their sessions, especially straight after the training when it was fresh, it was not consistent or maintained. Further training and ongoing support and practice was also mentioned highly and the need for specialist wellbeing skills to help develop programmes within each project team.

12 Sustainability

We have trialled and tested our service and believe we have created a flexible approach that can be delivered in any natural setting to achieve positive outcomes for both people and the environment.

The project was designed so that a lasting benefit would be felt by individuals who became involved. Our evaluation demonstrates this longer-term impact to improved self-care, wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviours.

We will continue to offer support to existing and new AWT staff partnering with Natural Academy offering OCN level 2 training. We will develop and deliver joint sessions using a matrix style approach to staff resourcing with a strategy developed that widens our green prescribing offer and feeds into our new Team Wilder approach.



We will continue to deliver the Natural Pathways Bathscape Project (2019 -2023) at Bath City Farm. The collaborative public health pilot project facilitated by Wessex Water will be delivering a phase two project in Sommer Valley, BANES with co-ordination from Natural England and we will be seeking further funding to contribute to this work.

The outcomes of the facilitation training with the Wildlife Trusts have seen members develop their own delivery for wellbeing in schools and teacher training in Devon, and six-week courses with in-house training in Staffordshire. We will continue to work in partnership with Natural Academy providing training for those who wish to develop the necessary facilitation skills to deliver green care leading to sustainable service going forward.

We believe there is a need for our approach to be made available to a greater number of people. We are investigating an introductory training course to support organisations, community groups and individuals to understand the Five Pathways to Nature Connectedness, the value of nature and its benefits for wellbeing. Through learning by experience this would be a stepping-stone approach to further training for those who wish to facilitate nature-based interventions within their community. This would also lead to a greater number of careers in the environment sector and build our evidence base for sustainable training model expanding our approach with increased demand for Green Prescribing.

We are supporting Somerset Wildlife Trust, the Quantock Hills, Mendip Hills and Blackdown Hills AONB's new partnership project Somerset Nature Connections. In 2019 Natural Academy and Avon Wildlife Trust presented our work to the four organisations and shared learning as part of their funding application process. Work has already begun with Natural Academy's delivering their Green Care facilitator training to staff with ongoing support, guidance, and evaluation.

Since starting this report we have also received a grant from City Funds: Bristol Community Health to deliver six-week self-care courses at Grow wilder, sessions for Brooklea Health Centre, Wellspring Settlement and new and existing participants in Hartcliffe on Dundry Slopes. This project will deliver shorter courses with focus on self-led groups which we will test, evaluate and review, providing the evidence base that will strengthen AWT's wellbeing offer. A delivery model that can be shared and transferred to the wider community bolstering green care and green prescribing in the area.



In December 2020, our Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Sustainability and Transformation Partnership was one of seven areas in the UK to be awarded funding from the Government to pilot a system wide approach to social prescribing and the provision of 'nature-based services'. This is a great accolade for the whole environment and conservation sector and AWT hope to play a key role in supporting this initiative that will test ways in which connecting people to nature can improve mental wellbeing. As a collaborative partnership project facilitated by the West of England Nature Partnership, AWT looks forward to working with the NHS, sharing the evidence and learning gathered through Wellbeing with Nature project. If we can all work collectively, people and wildlife can recover and thrive together.