Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care System (ICS) has been successful in applying to deliver a two-year (April 2021 to March 2023) green social prescribing project aimed at improving the mental wellbeing of communities hardest hit by coronavirus. In year one, our focus for the programme will be Nottingham City; however the project will aim to grow into Nottinghamshire in the second year.


It will test how to make green social prescribing an integral part of supporting local communities in order to:
- improve mental health outcomes
- reduce health inequalities
- reduce demand on the health and social care system
- develop best practice in making green social activities more resilient and accessible.

What is Green Social Prescribing?

Green social prescribing links people to a wide variety of nature-based activities. Activities could include local Walking for Health schemes, active travel (such as walking or cycling), local park runs, community gardening and food growing projects, as well as conservation volunteering, green gyms, and arts and cultural activities which take place outdoors such as enjoying or creating art, literature and poetry which focus on nature.

Why Green Social Prescribing?

Mental ill health is a widespread, serious and rising problem. Approximately 1 in 3 people over 16 in the UK experience poor mental health during their lifetime. COVID-19 has increased health inequalities and levels of mental ill health have highlighted not only the value of accessing green spaces, but also the inequalities of access to green spaces.

Access to nature and green spaces is associated with improved mental health including reduced stress, fatigue, anxiety and depression. People who connect with nature regularly feel their lives to be more worthwhile and the relationship is similar in children. Unfortunately, people from disadvantaged groups generally have less access to good quality green space and are likely to connect with the natural environment less often.
Nottingham’s Approach and Aims

Nottingham’s intention is to make green prescriptions (using exercise in the fresh air to improve people’s health and well-being) and nature connectedness (taking the time to notice and enjoy nature) a part of everyday life.

Building on Nottingham City’s green commitments, the green social prescribing programme aims to weave a web that connects people, places and projects into a green network that offers something for everyone, no matter their ability or where they live in the city.

Citywide - improved health, care and green connections will develop a range of accessible gateways into experiences with nature. Health, care and community professionals will gain the knowledge and confidence to be able to offer a well-designed green prescription that builds nature connections.

At a very local level community spaces and places and neighbourhood partners will not only connect but empower people to get involved and to value and treasure their local green parts of the city.

On an individual level, people will be supported to access what they need to develop their own sense of wonder, by connecting them with nature, both physically and digitally.

Following initial engagement with many of the city’s service users, stakeholders and health and care professionals, several key themes emerged:
- Develop the Green Network
- Invest in the Community and Voluntary Sector
- Build on the city’s assets
- Focus on inequalities
- Build sustainability.

Our Target Communities

Nottingham City’s green social prescribing pathway will focus on a whole-system, all age approach to provide the sustainability, scale and scope that will allow the learning and good practice to be shared with the county in year two of the project. Targeted initiatives will be focussed on some of the most deprived communities that have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, namely
- People living with long term conditions, especially older people
- BAME communities
- Families living in disadvantaged communities and in particular, those without access to gardens, balconies or green space.
The green social prescribing project team will continue to prepare the project and finalise delivery plans working with local organisations, local people and the national team.

We’re pleased to confirm Nottingham Community & Voluntary Service (NCVS) will be leading the scheme working closely with Framework and the Canal & River Trust, alongside local partners across the city to enhance the nature-based offer by

- Developing green volunteering opportunities, capacity and capability
- Enhancing the connections between nature based providers and health and social care
- Delivering targeted nature-based interventions
- Investing in the community and voluntary sector
- Communicating green opportunities and engaging communities in green co-production.

The Green Social Prescribing programme will launch in May during Mental Health Awareness Week (10 May – 16 May). The theme for the week is nature and the benefits engaging in nature based activities have on mental health.

In June we will also be launching our Green Grant scheme for community and voluntary organisations to enhance or develop their nature based activities.

Recruitment

Green Social Prescribing Programme Manager

Meanwhile…

Connecting with nature is one of the few activities that can safely take place during the pandemic. Here are several opportunities to get involved, help and learn about nature in your community.

Explore what’s on locally or virtually:

- Local Parks, Allotments & Green Spaces
- Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust
- Canal & River Trust
- The Royal Society of Protection of Birds (RSPB)

Like the idea of Forest Bathing? Forestry England has a [Forests for Wellbeing toolkit](#).

Interested in finding out more about Nature Connectedness? Derby University are offering a [free short course on Nature Connectedness](#) endorsed by Natural England.

Are you a Health & Social Care professional? The Canal & River Trust is seeking your views on Green Social Prescribing via a [Survey](#).

To be added to the green social prescribing circulation list please contact greensocialprescribing@nottinghamcvs.co.uk.