



West of England Social Prescribing Network Event

12:30 – 17:00, 13 November 2019 at Old Barn, Kelston Roundhill, Bath

Ahead of the presentations and discussions in the Old Barn, attendees were invited to participate in a grounding exercise and a mindful walk up to the top of Kelston Roundhill.

Michéal Connors (Natural Academy) welcomed attendees and invited everyone to briefly introduce themselves. It was explained that the purpose of the event was to build connections between practitioners in nature and health, social prescribers, interested people working in healthcare, and other interested organisations.

PRESENTATIONS

Presentations were received from Stuart Gardner of WENP, Michéal Connors of Natural Academy, Emily Malik of EcoWild, Kelly Bray of Avon Wildlife Trust, and Dave Kelly, Managing Director of Storm Consultancy. Slides from the presentations are available at the following link: <http://www.wenp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/SP-Network-Event-Nov-19-Slides.pdf>.

David Kelly explained the importance of health and wellbeing, both mental and physical, to employees and employers and noted the importance of employers stepping in proactively to provide a support network that may otherwise be missing from employees' lives. Storm Consultancy is looking to leave a positive environmental 'legacy', including purchasing land to create woodland, and there is a community of tech companies in Bath that may be interested in doing something similar.

DISCUSSIONS ON CHALLENGES TO NATURE-BASED SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

Attendees were invited to break into mixed groups to discuss the key challenges for increasing the number of nature-based social prescriptions in the West of England and possible solutions to these challenges.

The key issues and potential solutions that arose from the discussions are summarised in the table below.

Issue	Potential solutions
Lack of connections between practitioners and social prescribers/navigators/health professionals	Building connections through regular contact between practitioners and Social Prescribers etc. Utilisation of Umbrella organisations, such as SPEAR Develop a resource map (of practitioners, social prescribers etc.) and directory of services Use of existing resources, such as WellAware Sharing of activity with social prescribers; invite them to participate in activities Provision of a website to connect practitioners and others

Issue	Potential solutions
Lack of funding for the provision of nature-based health services, and unpredictability of the funding that is available	<p>Work strategically to make the case for the efficacy of nature-based health services, including their financial efficiency</p> <p>In the absence of regular funding, utilise funds such as those provided by the National Lottery. Keep up to date with funding sources and share them among practitioners</p> <p>Explore possibility of co-designing solutions/activities with interested large companies, and build on existing initiatives (e.g. tree planting)</p>
Lack of (free) transport and access to venues where nature-based health activities are conducted	<p>Funding to enable provision of transport to venues</p> <p>Making venues as accessible as possible, within the constraints of the activity's requirements</p>
Lack of awareness of nature-based solutions among health professionals (e.g. GPs)	<p>Proactively work to ensure that health professionals, especially GPs, are informed of the evidence relating to nature-based health solutions and their benefits</p> <p>Seek support from NHS and other providers to this end</p>
Lack of assurance regarding nature-based health services, which may act as a barrier to commissioning and funding	<p>Develop strong governance; conduct risk assessments; provide 'ground rules' for activities; develop standards for practitioners</p> <p>Provide accessible training in nature-based health (which will also increase the availability of interventions)</p> <p>Share knowledge and best practice among practitioners to increase quality and range of offer; provide peer support</p>
Cultural barriers to certain groups accessing nature-based activities	<p>Taster sessions</p> <p>Work with community organisations, health professionals etc. to engage a diverse range of participants and younger people</p> <p>Tailor services to hard-to-reach communities</p> <p>Appropriate and sensitive ground rules to encourage new participants (e.g. confidentiality, possibility of taking time out)</p> <p>Provision of suitable equipment/clothing for attendees who might not otherwise be able to afford it</p>

It was agreed that drawing up a directory of practitioners and social prescribers in the region would be useful in developing awareness of nature-based health services. The West of England Nature Partnership will look to do this but will require consent to include people on such a directory.

An invite to join [Hyvr](#) (the online social media platform that is used for practitioners in nature, health and wellbeing in the West of England) will be sent to attendees to encourage the building of links between practitioners and others.