

Welcome to our August newsletter. This month we focus on the impact of **Green Social Prescribing** and some of the creative ways patients have managed social isolation and emotional wellbeing.

Green Social Prescribing



Green social prescribing links people to **nature-based interventions and activities** and includes both green and blue environments (e.g. parks, woodlands, rivers and beaches).

Activities are varied and may include:

- Green exercise, such as local Walking for Health schemes and dementia walks
- Active travel (such as walking or cycling)
- Local Park Runs
- Community gardening and food growing projects
- Conservation volunteering, green gyms, and arts and cultural activities which take place outdoors

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/green-social-prescribing-call-for-expressions-of-interest/green-social-prescribing-call-for-expressions-of-interest>

NHS England

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of being outdoors to people's mental and physical health, as well as the inequality of access to green space.*



ONS Pandemic Data

The natural environment has helped some people to **cope** with negative feelings such as increased anxiety

Those **working from home** were more likely to visit a park or local green space than those who travelled to work (45% compared with 30%)

Around **9 in 10** agreed that natural spaces are **good for mental health and wellbeing**

More than 40% noticed that nature, wildlife, and visiting local green and natural spaces have been even more **important to their wellbeing** since the coronavirus restrictions began**

**ONS. (2021). How has lockdown changed our relationship with nature? Accessed

06/08/2021: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/articles/howhaslockdownchangedourrelationshipwithnature/2021-04-26>

*<https://www.england.nhs.uk/personalisedcare/social-prescribing/green-social-prescribing/>



Our patients have experienced various challenges throughout the pandemic, but have also proved resourceful and innovative in ways to access or utilise green space.

'Lillie' has utilised her **green space at home** by planting vegetables, growing fruit and preparing to make jams for Christmas fayres. She gets great pleasure from giving gifts of jams and spreads to loved ones, which in turn improves her mental wellbeing.

Lillie also enjoys green space away from home, having previously enjoyed hiking holidays with her husband.

Adequate provision of public green space in local neighbourhoods and within walking distance is important for positive mental health*

"It does your soul good being in the countryside"

Park Road Medical Practice Patient



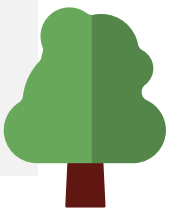
'Connie' had been referred into the service in Nov 2020 with complex family situations and reduced mental health. After working on these issues with her social prescribing link worker, by January 2021, she felt she wanted to re-focus and gain "more fulfilment in life".

Since Spring 2021 she was able to enjoy **National Trust Talks at Home**, through Age UK North Tyneside's 'Spring into Action' virtual activity programme. This provided a space to engage with local spaces in a 'Covid-safe' way.

*Wood, L., Hooper, P., Foster, S., & Bull, F. (2017). Public green spaces and positive mental health—investigating the relationship between access, quantity and types of parks and mental wellbeing. *Health & place*, 48, 63-71.

'Alex' has been able to access **local green space, The Rising Sun Country Park**, via support from VODA's Good Neighbours Walking Buddy. This offered the opportunity to build confidence in leaving home independently, following a period of isolation during the pandemic.

Alex reported feeling an increase in physical stamina, as well as reduction of social anxiety.



'Ed' has a diagnosis of anxiety and was recently referred into the Social Prescribing service to increase access to the community.

During the height of the pandemic, and with a limited budget, Ed drew on neighbours donations to create a **"Yarden Paradise"**. This reduced anxiety by being mindful of the green spaces, birds and local wildlife, that can be seen from their outdoor space.

"Having breakfast outside amongst plants and watching the bees - enjoying looking after them and sitting with them - mindful moments"

Portugal Place Health Centre Patient

"I love the outdoors, the environment, the birds - even wildlife programmes"

Garden Park Surgery Patient