



Somerset's Nature and Wellbeing Project Annual Report 2016-17

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Executive Summary

Project Overview

The Nature and Wellbeing project aims to tackle some of the barriers that prevent particular groups experiencing the health and wellbeing benefits that Somerset's Areas of Outstanding Nature Beauty offer. The Nature and Wellbeing Project will help people to access these quality natural spaces, with a particular focus on supporting mental wellbeing and physical activity, working with groups and individuals who may benefit from such engagement. Project activities focus both on linking people to existing provision and setting up new activities and events.

Partnership Working

This is a two and a half year project, managed by the Blackdown, Quantock and Mendip Hills Areas of Outstanding Beauty and funded by Public Health at Somerset County Council. Year one has involved a great deal of partnership development including getting to know colleagues within the 3 Areas of Outstanding Beauty; building relationships with external delivery partners on the hills who may be able to host projects, visits and trips and finally engaging with health and wellbeing partners in the key towns and villages.

Partners have included:

Delivery Partners

- Huntstile Farm
- National Trust
- Natural England
- Forestry Commission
- Private Landowners
- West Country Man
- Charterhouse
- The Hive Café
- Yeo Valley
- Somerset Wildlife Trust
- Watchet Visitor Centre
- Young Wood
- Somerset Rural Youth Project
- Folly Farm
- Ferne Animal Sanctuary

Health and Community Partners

- The Alzheimer's Society – Memory Cafés
- The Watch Project, Chard
- Somerset's Clinical Commissioning Groups – West Somerset, Mendip, Taunton and South Somerset
- Children's Centres – Taunton and West Somerset
- In Charleys Memory, Burnham-on-Sea
- MIND – Taunton and West Somerset
- Rethink
- Walking for Health
- Zing Somerset
- Knightstone Housing Association
- Somerset Partnership – Community Mental Health Team
- Somerset Partnership - Rydon Ward, Taunton
- Manor Court Primary School
- Stoberry Park Primary School
- Eastover Primary School
- Cheddar Patients Participation Group
- Wellington Patient Participation Group
- Future 4
- Green Days Day Care
- Better, Taunton

Nature and Wellbeing Project, Year 1 in Figures

- **721** participants attended nature based activities organised by the project.
- Developed **66** new nature and wellbeing groups and activities
- Presented to **763** professionals at **31** engagement events.
- Facilitated **48** new nature based volunteering opportunities.
- Supported **44** members of staff/volunteers to attend relevant health and wellbeing and nature based training.

Quantitative Results Summary Tables

Supported Sessions/Groups

| Group | Visit Type | Participants | Visits | Vols. | Staff | Partners |
|---|---|--------------|--------|-------|-------|--|
| Taunton Memory Café | Tea and stroll - Fyne Court | 4 | 1 | | 1 | Alzheimer's Society National Trust |
| Chard Memory Café | Blackdown Hills Event The Candlelight Inn | 10 | 1 | | 1 | Alzheimer's Society Blackdown Hills AONB Natural Futures |
| Zing Somerset (Hamp) | Fyne Court Family Day | 9 | 1 | | 1 | National Trust |
| Knightstone Housing | Family Day at Fyne Court | 12 | 1 | | 1 | National Trust |
| In Charley's Memory | Strawberry Line – Walk | 5 | 1 | | 1 | The Strawberry Line |
| | Night Walk | 10 | 1 | | 3 | West Country Man |
| Williton Children's Centre | Coastal Exploration | 18 | 2 | 1 | 3 | Somerset Wildlife Trust |
| | | 10 | | 1 | 4 | |
| Eastover Primary School | Natural Free Play and Exploration | 30 | 3 | 6 | 5 | Somerset College, Quantock AONB Vols. National Trust |
| | | 30 | 3 | 6 | 5 | |
| Stoberry Park Primary School | Seasonal Play Sessions | 30 | 2 | | 5 | West Country Man Natural England Forestry Commission |
| | | 30 | 2 | | 5 | |
| | | 30 | 2 | | 5 | |
| Manor Court | Ferne Animal Sanct. Assembly | 393 | 1 | | 20 | Ferne Animal Sanctuary |
| | Ferne Family Day | 53 | 1 | 1 | 2 | |
| | Story Telling Blackdown Hills | 393 | 1 | | 20 | |
| Rydon Ward, Taunton | Gardening Task | 3 | 1 | 1 | 2 | Private Land Owner |
| Future 4 | 'Mending the Mendips' | 5 | 6 | | 4 | Yeo Valley Mendip Hills AONB Team Forestry Commission |
| Foot of the Blackdown Hills Walking Group | Social Walking/nature group | 8 | 5 | | 3 | The Hive Café, Trull Better, Somerset |
| Quantock Monthly Vol Group | | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | Quantock Hills AONB MIND, Taunton and West Somerset Somerset Partnership |
| | | 5 | | | | |
| | | 8 | | | | |
| Churchinford Coffee Morning | Tea and Chat on the Hills | 2 | 1 | | 2 | Alzheimer's Society Churchinford Village Hall |
| Ferne Animal Sant. Community Garden | Gardening Tasks | 2 | 3 | 1 | 2 | Alzheimer's Society |
| Somerset Partnership Vol Group | Farm Tasks | 5 | 24 | | 2 | National Trust Huntstile Farm |
| | | 7 | | | | |
| | | 7 | | | | |

Promotional Events/Meetings

| Group | Participants | Event Type |
|--|--|--|
| Somerset Partnership, Bridgwater | 15 professionals | Presentation |
| Wildness Event at Young Wood | 25 professionals | Networking |
| Halcon One Team Meeting | 20 professionals | Introducing the Project |
| The Project Young People | 4 young people, 1 member of staff, 1 volunteer | Introducing the project |
| Cheddar Flu Café | 15 conversations with attendees | Stall and info sharing about Mendip AONB |
| Living Well Exhibition 2016 | 25 patients/25 partners | Stall and info sharing about all 3 AONBs |
| Living Well Exhibition 2017 | 10 visitors/10 Partners | Stall and info sharing about all 3 AONB's |
| Fit Cheddar Event 2016 | 30 Young People and 20 Adults | Stall and networking |
| National Association of AONB's | 150 Professionals | Networking |
| Chard Memory Café | 30 attendees, 5 volunteers and 1 member of staff | Presentation, quiz, conversations, sharing maps and resources |
| Mendip Memory Café | 15 attendees, 3 volunteers and 1 member of staff | Presentation, quiz, conversations, sharing maps and resources |
| Bridgwater Memory Café | 20 attendee, 4 volunteers, 1 member of staff | Presentation, quiz, conversations sharing maps and resources |
| Taunton Memory Café | 35 attendees, 5 volunteers and 1 member of staff | Presentation, quiz, conversations sharing maps and resources |
| Public Health Conference | 40 Professionals | Stall and networking |
| Mental Health and Physical Activity Conference | 30 Professionals | Networking and getting involved in Somerset based workshops with colleagues. |
| Children's Centre Team Mtg | 20 staff | Presentation |
| Watch Project | 7 attendees and 4 staff 12 attendees and 3 staff | Talk Talk and event planning |
| MOVE Meetings x3 | 15 attendees | Involved in discussions and sharing information |
| Partnership Mtg 3x AONB's | Mendip x2 (15, 25) Quantock x1 (15) Blackdown x1 (15) | Presenting and info sharing/networking |
| Children's Centre Team Day | 37 professionals | Presentation, walk, activities and info sharing |
| Somerset's Clinical Commissioning Group Mtgs | Central Mendip 15 CLICK (South Somerset) 20 Taunton 15 West Somerset 15 | Presentation and activity |
| Wellington Patient Participation Group | 15 professionals | Presentation and questions |

Volunteering Opportunities

| Opportunity | Partner Group | Participants |
|---|--|----------------------------|
| Mendip Hills Volunteering Group – Practical Tasks | Rethink | 1 |
| New: Foot of the Blackdown Hills Walking Group | Alzheimer’s Society Memory Café | Possibly 3 (not confirmed) |
| Quantock Monthly Vol. Group | MIND Taunton and West Somerset and Som Par Taunton | 10 |
| Walk Leader Training – Walking for Health | Mendip Volunteers | 2 |
| Huntstile Farm | Som Par Taunton | 14 |
| Ferne Animal Sanctuary | Alzheimer’s Society Memory Café | 3 |
| Photography Project – Eastover School | Somerset College | 5 |
| National Trust, Fyne Court | Som Par, Taunton | 5 |
| Private Landowner | Rydon Ward | 3 |
| Quantock Monthly Volunteering Group | Memory Café, Quantock Hills AONB Volunteers | 2 |

Training Opportunities

| Training | Partners | Participants |
|---|---|--------------|
| Mental Health Awareness Session | MHFA, 3 AONB Teams | 13 |
| Mental Health First Aid | Nature and Wellbeing Officer | 1 |
| Dementia Awareness Session Dementia Friends and Stepping into Nature | Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust, Active Devon, Yeovil Country Park, Blackdown Hills, Quantock Hills, Somerset Wildlife Trust, Living Options, Age UK, Better – Somerset | 16 |
| Outdoor Play Training Session - Young Wood | Children’s Centre Staff | 14 |

Year One Delivery Groups

1. Schools

Work with 3 Primary Schools across the County (one in each of the three areas), linking them with natural environments close by.

Eastover Primary School, Bridgwater

Two year three classes spent the summer term (2016) making weekly visits to Fyne Court. The visits were supported by the National Trust and offered children the opportunity to connect with nature and experience free play and exploration within the quality natural environments of the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



Pond Dipping at Fyne Court

At the beginning of the project 29% of children felt that they didn't get enough time to play outside in places with trees, plants, flowers and wildlife. Over half the children hadn't visited Fyne Court before.

We have so far worked with 60 pupils and 5 school staff.

Physical Activity

'I learnt climbing skills'

The environment allowed for plenty of physical activity and opportunity for children to develop confidence through trying new things and challenging themselves in exciting and unfamiliar surroundings

- 95 % of pupils felt they got to move around more than they would on a normal day.
- The children were given pedometers to measure the difference between a day at Fyne Court and a normal day at school. The average steps taken at school were 3423 and at Fyne Court 6933 – more than double the steps.

Social Connections

'I enjoyed jumping in muddy puddles with friends'

93% of pupils felt that they got to spend more time than they would on a normal school day, with friends talking and having fun together.

Taking Notice and Learning



'I learnt that there are sticky plants....I loved being in nature.'

95% of pupils felt that they were able to play outside with nature more than they would on a normal school day with 95% saying they would like to visit Fyne Court again.

Enjoying the 'healing benefits of nature'

Giving Back

5 Somerset College Photography Students and a member of staff as well as a Quantock Hills volunteer gave their time to support Eastover Children exploring the Natural Environment and taking photographs.

Partnership Working

As well as linking the school with the National Trust we also worked with Somerset College photography students who helped the year 3rs capture their experience and the connections they had made with nature. A selection of these photographs were displayed at Bridgwater Library over the summer holidays and at Fyne Court during the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Beauty Celebration week.

How did the sessions make children feel?

Active – Bright – Brave – Adventurous – Brilliant – Chilled – Epic – Excited – Free – Happy – Healthy – Hungry – Joyful – Relaxed – Speechless – Warm

What was your favourite part?

Doing Cartwheels, running around with friends, jumping in puddles, building dens, pond dipping, building a hut for our tiger cub, walking, nature trial, spending time with friends

Comments

- Teaching staff reported that many children really thrived in this environment. For example those who found lesson time difficult were well behaved and enjoyed their time at Fyne Court.

What's Next?

'I took my dad there but he wasn't as good at building dens as me though'

Some children have already returned to the Quantock Hills with their parents since the sessions took place. We will continue to work with the school next year to ensure other children have to opportunity to build connections with local natural environments. A report was produced by the nature and wellbeing officer for staff involved in the project to present to senior staff at the school as well as governors illustrating the benefits of such experiences for children's health and wellbeing. This has now been agreed as a school priority and they have already been in touch with the Nature and Wellbeing Officer to help them prepare for the Spring/Summer Quantock Hills programme 2017.

Stoberry Park Primary School, Wells



Stoberry Park Primary School got involved in the project in September 2016. Working with Key Stage 1 teaching staff we planned a series of 'seasonal sessions' that would take place throughout the school year 2016-2017.

We have worked with 90 pupils and 6 school staff.

Bug Hunting on the Mendip Hills

Partnership Working

The school linked up with the local Natural England team for our autumn visits to Ebbor Gorge as well as working with Mendip Hills legend, 'West Country Man' - Les Davies, who, along with his colleague, led fun, informative, nature based walks and activities. During the Spring Term (2017) we worked in partnership with the Forestry Commission who led walks and talks teaching the children about the work they do while helping us look out for wildlife.

Taking Notice and Learning



'Dent de Lion – Lion's teeth'

The knowledgeable local leaders taught the group about plants and trees and showed them how to identify plants through looking at their flowers and leaves as well as telling stories about local history. Children spent time picking blackberries, which for many was a completely new experience. Children were also encouraged to take photographs of the things within the natural environment that they found beautiful or enjoyed, thinking about colours and textures. The photographs will be displayed at an exhibition for parents/carers and members of the public to attend during the holidays.

Physical Activity

'It feels like I'm on top of the world'

The key stage 1 pupils walked for about 1km taking them over some muddy footpaths and fields. They also had plenty of opportunities to run about and explore during 'free play' time.

During the Spring Session at Stockhill Wood the children spent a large proportion of their time exploring and playing, with limited adult intervention. The children built dens, played games, hunted for insects and made interesting nature-based discoveries.



What's Next?

Work with Stoberry Park Primary School continues this Spring/Summer with evaluation taking place before the summer holidays. Still to come this year we have the following visits/themes planned:

Spring Term: Colours of the Landscape/moods and feelings. Priddy Mineries & Stockhill Forest (20 mins drive from Wells).

Summer Term: Weather and Physical Geography. Split Rock/Underwood Quarry (5 min drive from Wells)

May Half Term: Exhibition of their Photographs and other artwork inspired by the Mendip Hills



Enjoying the views at Ebbor Gorge with the 'West Country Man' Les Davies.

Manor Court Primary School, Chard

Manor Court Primary School joined the project during winter 2016. We spent the winter months planning activities for the New Year presenting ideas to senior staff about developing lasting links with the Blackdown Hills.

We have so far worked with approximately 390 pupils and 13 families.



Making enrichment items for chickens at Ferne Animal Sanctuary

Partnership Working

Manor Court linked up with Ferne Animal Sanctuary's Education Officer and have so far had two assemblies, one family day during half term and a Blackdown Hills storytelling day in their outdoor learning area.

53 individuals (pupils or family members of pupils attending Manor Court) attended the Ferne family day along with another 129 people at Ferne Animal Sanctuary on Monday 13th February. 46% of Manor Court visitors had never visited before or haven't visited very often. 69% said that their day outside lifted their spirits with 47% leaving feeling more relaxed.

Physical Activity

'We enjoyed walking in the sunshine...even though it was cold'

47% felt that they were more quite a lot or a lot more physically active than they would be on a normal day. 46% spent more time outside than they would on a normal day.

Social Connections

'It was nice to spend time with Nanny and the family'

39% said that they got to spend more time with family and friends than they would on a normal day.

Taking Notice/Learning

'The trail was really useful to keep the children moving forward and engaged'

The Education Officer at Ferne Animal Sanctuary organised a trail which took families around the site looking for and identifying birds. Families really enjoyed this aspect of the day and encouraged them to enjoy views across the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Giving Back

The children and families attending the family day had the opportunity to make enrichment items for the chickens who are currently inside due to Bird Flu. This meant that not only were the children learning about what animals need, they were also getting involved in making items that help to keep them busy.

What's next?

The Nature and Wellbeing Project will continue to work with the school this year to establish a key link between the school and Ferne Animal Sanctuary and the project will continue to work with the school to help them to develop and better utilise their outdoor learning area.

2. Health and Community Groups

Support visits/activities to promote Somerset's AONB to groups working with potentially vulnerable, isolated or lonely people with health and wellbeing needs.

Green Days Day Care – Reading the Landscape



The group during a visit to Hodder's Coombe

Partnership Working

Green Days Day Care have been working with the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty team, including Landscape Planning Officer, Emma-Jane Preece, Ranger Andy Stevenson, Volunteer Ranger, Nicky Matthews and Nature and Wellbeing Officer, Kristen Lambert, on our **'Reading the Landscape Project'**

The project is being supported by the National Trust as we start and finish our trips at Fyne Court. During the winter months we have been using the library room for our discussions and creative time, which we hope to take outside as we move into spring. We have also linked up with the Forestry Commission who have offered the use of their educational room at Great Wood for future visits.

Taking Notice/Learning

A group of 6 people from Green Days have been visiting different sites across the Quantock Hills every other Tuesday and through walking, taking photographs and writing poetry they are connecting with the diverse landscapes and recording their experiences. Purposely designed questions help to lead discussions about what they have seen, what they liked/didn't like and how different places make them feel. The group are also learning how

to read OS maps, use a compass and are starting to identify different trees/leaves, plants and birds.

Giving Back

The findings will be used to assist Emma-Jane's Landscape Character Assessment of the Quantock Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Being part of this important piece of work is giving the group a flavour of the conservation and landscape planning work the Quantock Hills team do. The group aim to continue their visits throughout the seasons, taking a note of how the landscape changes feeding into the landscape character assessment.

The group aim to produce a calendar with photographs and poems about the Quantock Hills Landscape.

Physical Activity

'Feeling relaxed and happy'

The project offers the opportunity for plenty of physical activity, with the group walking for at least an hour each visit and at times across rough terrain and scaling steep inclines. The group have already started to walk further walking up to 1 mile initially and reaching 2 miles during their last visit.

Through supporting the group to engage with the landscape more mindfully – encouraging them to stop and listen, noting the sounds, smells and colours - they have started noticing how connecting with the top quality landscapes of the Quantock Hills can make them feel 'relaxed', 'cold on the outside – warm on the inside' and 'tired' due to the 'fresh air'. They have also noticed how they are often more energised and engaged when visiting the different sites, compared to when we go back inside.

Social Connections

Through the sessions we are introducing the group to a range of different professionals and volunteers working on the Quantock Hills – broadening the group's knowledge and understanding as well as social networks and potentially opening up new opportunities for volunteering.

What's next

The group will continue to visit every other week and have a project pack with information about where to go, who to link with and what to look out for. They will continue to work with Quantock Hill volunteers and feed into the Landscape Character Assessment.

See **Appendix 1**. for some of the poems the group have written about the landscape

Future 4 and Yeo Valley – Mending the Mendips



Project Manager, Simon Moth.

The Nature and Wellbeing project brought Future 4 and Yeo Valley together for a project that started early in 2017 after a few months of planning. The project supported 5 participants from Future 4 Day Care in Frome to learn how to dry stone wall with help from local expert Tina Bath and Yeo Valley

The group have been spending one day every other week at one of Yeo Valley's farms, near Priddy. They have enjoyed being outside and getting stuck into rebuilding some walls on the site. The group have completed baseline questionnaires but have yet to do their follow ups, so no evaluation evidence have been collated yet.

Partnership Working

Not only have the group been working closely with Yeo Valley they have also started to visit other sites on the Mendip Hills on the weeks when they're not dry stone walling. There are plans to work with the Mendip Hills AONB team on some path clearance at Blackmoor Reserve, as well as litter picking at some of the local Forestry Commission sites.

Physical Activity

'We'll sleep well tonight'

The group have been spending 2-3 hours each visit doing physical work which involves lifting and carrying sometimes heavy stones. The group are also working outside and visits involve some walking too.

Taking Notice/Learning

'We had a great day... in the sun and wind'

Tina has been passing on advice and tips to the group to support them to develop their dry stone walling skills and techniques. The group have worked hard together to produce some really good work. As the site is so exposed they have also experienced the changing weather conditions and are starting to take notice of nature and wildlife, spotting birds and deer.

Social Connections

'We're working together as a team'

The tasks involved and the beautiful locations on the Mendip Hills have provided the group with plenty of opportunities for social interaction and some great conversations have taken place as well as lots of brilliant team work.



Somerset Partnership - Community Mental Health Team, Taunton



In Spring (2016) The Nature and Wellbeing Project started working with Somerset Partnership Occupational Therapists from the Community Mental Health Team in Taunton.

The project continues to run with support from senior staff at Somerset Partnership. To date there have been 4 groups attending blocks of sessions between 6-9 weeks long. The next block of sessions is starting again soon.

Partnership Working

'Through interacting with community agencies in a supported way, individuals felt that they could develop their confidence in dealing with others beyond mental health services'

At the beginning of the project we linked with the National Trust working at Fyne Court and now work alongside Huntstile Farm who have been extremely supportive and understand the important impact their work can have on the health and wellbeing of participants. The nature and wellbeing project has continued to ensure that participants have opportunities beyond the group, providing information about further volunteering opportunities which some have since taken up, including countryside management courses and the Quantock Hills Nature and Wellbeing Volunteering task group (see below for more details).

Social Connections

Group members developed social skills with peers through engagement in a shared project, reporting increased social confidence. It was also reported that it was nice to be part of group where you could see others enjoying themselves and to share in this enjoyment with

them. Furthermore, it was felt that that working as part of a team took the pressure them as individuals, noting that they felt supported, motivated and encouraged by others attending.

Taking Notice/Learning

“It kept me interested and evoked a willingness to learn – it made it engaging by the variety of tasks we were set each week.”

Group members have developed practical and social skills transferable to various future opportunities, including voluntary work and study. The variety of tasks kept the group interested and the gardener at Huntstile proved to be extremely popular, sharing tips and advice and taking on an extremely supportive role. Participants have also learnt skills and tips that they have taken home to their own gardens and one participant has even started to grow things at an allotment since being involved in the project.

One participant has taken on his own allotment since being involve in the project and reflected that the group had offered him lots of ideas to take forward and implement on his own

Giving Back

‘A holiday from troubles’

The group reported that feeling valued helped to develop a sense of belonging and improved confidence in talking to others. Participants noted that it felt really rewarding and that farm staff were always so grateful providing refreshments and encouraging them to take away produce.

Others felt that seeing the fruits of their labour was a really positive experience and volunteering on the farm felt like a meaningful way to spent time, commenting on how much was achieved during sessions.

One participant noted that he particularly enjoyed pruning the climbing roses and took pleasure in looking back at the work he had carried out.



Natural environment

‘Engaging actively with nature led participants to feel a sense of calm whilst engaging with the group’

Participants found the journey relaxing and felt that it allowed an opportunity for reflection and to watch the trees. Once at the farm people found the natural environment ‘beautiful’

and 'inspirational' and generally really enjoyed being outside with the animals doing gardening activities. The groups found it hard to leave the farm saying the ethos and friendliness of the place made them want to spend more time there. Others found the experience a 'mindful' one through spending time really connecting with the natural environment.

Physical Activity

"Sometimes we could get really involved in a task and could be quite physically demanding..."

Participants spoke about how the sessions helped to keep them both physically and mentally active. The group involves lots of bending, stretching, lifting, pushing, carrying and walking but can be adapted to meet the physical needs of different group members as there is always a task to suit everyone.

Other comments

- "As we approached the end of the course I started to find something else to take the place of Huntstile farm." Since leaving the project, this participant has joined three classes, started swimming and started attending concerts/ ballet shows.
- "It has given me the chance to feel fulfilled and happy."
- "...doing gardening and feeding the animals with John (Gardener at Huntstile) really put a smile on my face, so now...no need to worry about me staying in bed. I awake each day and get up and do things..."
- 'It's the first time after many months of depression I had found something I enjoyed'
- Another group member suggested that it offered her protected time away from her difficult home life.

What's next?

The fourth group will be starting up at Huntstile this spring/summer with continued support from Somerset Partnership staff. The Nature and Wellbeing Project will remain involved by support participants to link up with other nature based opportunities if they are interested. There is a waiting list of participants wanting to be involved in the project. Some participants have already started volunteering in other groups and continue to enjoy connecting with natural environments in a meaningful way. They also still often reflect on the positive experience they had at Huntstile Farm.

Monthly Volunteering Group - Quantock Hills

The Nature and Wellbeing Project worked with MIND in Taunton and West Somerset to apply for funding through Somerset Community Foundation to transport groups from Taunton on a monthly basis to volunteering opportunities on the hills. This is a new group that we have developed as a response to demand after some successful projects with MIND (Go Wild Stay Well) and Somerset Partnership, with many individuals wanting to continue volunteering on the Quantock Hills. This group is open to all but at the moment we are promoting it through MIND and Somerset Partnership's Community Mental Health Team. The group is led by the Quantock Hills AONB Ranger and supported by a Volunteer Ranger and a volunteer from Taunton's Memory Café. MIND continues to support with some of the administration involved in referrals.

Participants: 8

Volunteers: 2

Staff: 2

Sessions so far: 3

Various Projects with The Alzheimer's Society – Somerset's Memory Cafés

Having visited many of the Memory Cafés in Somerset this year staff, volunteers and participants have got involved in a number of nature and wellbeing opportunities across the Blackdown and Quantock Hills. As well as a few trips and linking people into existing opportunities there have been a few new projects develop as part of this partnership working.

Ferne Animal Sanctuary Community Garden

After supporting Ferne to apply for some funding through the Blackdown Hills AONB Community Fund through the sanctuary are supporting monthly sessions for older people to come and socialise and get involved in some basic gardening tasks in the sensory and community garden.

Participants: 2

Staff: 2

Volunteers: 2

Sessions so far: 3

Foot of the Blackdown Hills Walking Group

'The pace allowed us to take in the countryside and enjoy what is around us'

Working with Better we put on a series of walks around Trull promoted to Taunton and Trull Memory Café. The idea was to run walks that focused on 'taking notice' of nature and wildlife rather than walking longer distances. The group are now keen to continue with these walks and there are plans to run some walk leader training for members of the group. As a result of being involved in the group, one participant has started to volunteer at The Hive Community Café.

After every walk the group go for tea and cake which have allowed the group to look at plant and tree identification books, share resources about other events and walks on the Blackdown Hills and in and around Taunton and to share nature and wildlife memories and stories of their childhoods.

After 4 sessions participants reported that they enjoyed the nature, the company and the exercise.

100% enjoyed the walks

80% felt that they were more physically active than they would normally be

80% felt that they got to spend more time socialising than they normally would

80% felt more relaxed having attended the group

80% felt that the sessions lifted their spirits

Participants: 8

Staff: 3

Sessions so far: 5

In Charley's Memory

After linking In Charleys Memory up with opportunities on the Mendip Hills last summer they were keen to continue to get involved and set up some specific nature and wellbeing projects/opportunities for groups, in particular their Young Ambassadors. The project supported the charity to apply for Mendip Hills AONB community funding and they were successful. They are now in the process of planning their year of activities for 2017/18. So far we organised a Night Walk at Blackmoor Reserve with the West Country Man.

Participants: 10

Staff: 3

Volunteers: 1

Rydon Ward – Nature and Wellbeing

'It's lovely to be outside, away from the ward'

Having heard about the work Somerset Partnership Community Mental Health Team colleagues had been doing at Huntstile Farm, Rydon staff we keen to run a similar project with those being supported at Rydon Ward. A private landowner at the foot of the Quantock Hills had approached me about offering her beautiful site to groups to use. Rydon are now linked in with the private landowner and they have already been up to visits getting involved in some volunteering tasks.

The coffee breaks to enjoy the views and to just 'be' outside, away from the ward seem to be really enjoyed by the group.

Participants: 3

Staff: 2

Visits: 2

3. Children's Centres

Children Centre (Get Set) staff were contacted and relationships built with relevant group leaders.

The first year of the project involved working with Children's Centres in the Taunton and West Somerset Cluster.

Attending meetings with Children's Centre Managers and Senior Staff, holding a talk about nature and wellbeing work at a

whole team meeting which later led to a team day in November, at Fyne Court (see photograph below). This involved a talk, a walk, some fire lighting and information sharing about opportunities to engage families in local natural environments. This was attended by 37 members of staff. The team have already requested a follow up.



Learning

'The possibilities for families are endless'

89% of participants felt as though they knew more about Somerset's AONBs than they did before. Feedback included thinking about passing knowledge, learning and ideas to families;

- It has helped me to realise that 'there are many free or lost cost activities which families can access'
- 'I wasn't aware how accessible it is'
- 'Very positive and rewarding experience. Improved knowledge and motivation to support others to access these.'
- 'Could be beneficial to families to promote wellbeing and family time together.'

Social Interaction (Team Building)

'It was lovely to get out and about with work friends and take time to think of the benefits such experience would have for the families we support'

The team really enjoyed their visit to Fyne Court and talked about it positively on their evaluation forms.

- 'Fantastic to get away from a PC. Really good for morale. Loved the marshmallow toasting. Gorgeous Autumn Colours'
- 'I love this – the wellbeing factor'

- 'Informative. Creative thinking, mindful of all abilities'
- 'Accessible site once families are here with a good choice of walks for different abilities'
- 'It was very beneficial for our team to access the outdoors as it gave a different dimension to the team day. Many are town dwellers and to be able to reconnect with nature illustrated how it contributes to wellbeing.'
- It has been really nice to be out of the office in an outdoor environment and being able to enjoy time with my colleagues

Physical Activity

As part of the team day, the staff went on a 40 minute walk around Fyne Court – many commented that it was great to be away from the office and seemed to enjoy clocking up the steps on their various devices! We ensured that there were different walks available for those who didn't want to go the full distance.

What Next?

Since the team day we organised staff training with a forest school leader (which has already taken place) as well as getting another date in for a second team day in the summer, due to such positive feedback from staff.

Other ideas about future nature and wellbeing work noted on the 'idea's Tree' at the end of the first team day included;

- 'I would love to incorporate into PEEP (Peers Early Education Partnership) group sessions in the future.'
- 'Will signpost families to outdoor opportunities'
- 'Will look at transport and link our 2 year old and young parents groups in'
- 'Will encourage families to get out and work together'
- 'Work with other team members to organise an activity for our families with advice and support from Kristen.'
- 'Will try to promote health benefits of using outside and promote family time'
- 'Would like to look into doing a project with young parents to encourage them to get outdoors'
- 'Encourage families to explore the countryside – it's free!'

Partnership Working

As well as this work the project has supported Williton Children's Centre staff to put on 2 free coastal walks during the summer holidays working with knowledgeable Somerset Wildlife Trust staff and Volunteers who have helped children and families to explore the beaches at Watchet. A third coastal walk is booked in for the Easter Holidays which will start and finish from the new visitor centre at Watchet with the aim of linking families in to what's going on locally.

4. Conclusion of Year One and Beyond

Year one of the Nature and Wellbeing Project has developed some key partnerships with both nature based and health and wellbeing projects and professionals. As a result, a number of key pilot projects have been developed with some really positive outcomes for individuals and groups.

From the AONB perspective Chris Edwards, Manager of the Quantock Hills AONB Team (that Kristen is part of and hosted by) has offered the following comments:

“This is a totally new venture for the Somerset Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty taking us beyond the “home territory” of protecting and enhancing the natural and historic heritage and supporting public enjoyment/recreation, and into the field of public health and wellbeing. In this project recognising the specific health benefits of time spent in these outstanding natural landscapes is taken a key step further by Kristen - developing, promoting and enabling access and activities in these areas, particularly for those whose vulnerability and health needs make the potential benefits really very significant. In year one Kristen has shaped the project from the outset, meeting all the objectives and being so productive that she has significantly “over-delivered” (that’s a good thing!). I am genuinely surprised at the extent of new contacts, range of activities and positive health and AONB promotion delivered already by this project, as described in this report, and I am really impressed at the evidence of a significant need being met – often through the touching words of those benefitting” **Chris Edwards, March 2017**

In year two, the project will continue to work with existing groups as well as introducing new health groups to the project and supporting their involvement. This may include Young Carers, Somerset Care and Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). The project also aims to look at marketing and promoting Somerset’s Natural Health Resource more broadly, linking with other partners to do this.

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Appendix A. Green Day’s Day Care Poems

Late January at Hodder’s Coombe

*The fallen tree, covered in moss, grassy green, cold and soft.
Fern is growing, a sign of spring, the birds sing a sweet tune.*

*The stream drifts away, the sound of trickling water.
Claggy brown, muddy shoes, through the bright green bushes and the steep path.*

Feeling sleepy, relaxed and warm.

Written By Green Days Day Care

Colours of Nature

*Walking along the cliff edge with the waves gently rolling in.
The seagulls fly into the grey mist as the sea reveals the charcoal grey jagged rock pools.*

*Rusty brown, windswept grasses form the edge of the muddy coastal path.
Hoof prints led the way through fields of turnips.*

*Standing beneath the oak tree – the smell of bonfire brings back memories of the past, while
the sheep in the distance form part of the view.*

*The stream leaves our feet feeling cold and wet and as the walk ends, the white and yellow
heads of the snowdrops and daffodils appear in the churchyard.*

Feeling happy and ready for lunch.

Written by Green Days Day Care.

Greatwood

As we walked through the forest we could smell the burning heather.

*Feeling small amongst the forever green trees,
We heard the sound of running water and the singing robin.*

*In between the daffodils and primroses we spot deer tracks.
We feel the excitement of the thought of seeing roe deer.*

With eyes peeled all we see are empty bird boxes and wooden sculptures in the trees.

Written by Green Days Day Care