

Nature and Health in the West of England



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West of England Nature Partnership
Joining up the dots for nature

The case for Nature and Health

The benefits of nature for human health and wellbeing — both physical and mental — are increasingly well understood. Current national policy supports the integration of nature into our healthcare systems. The Government's **25 Year Environment Plan** specifies actions to integrate environmental therapies into mental health services and promote the linkages through a three-year Natural Environment for Health and Wellbeing programme. The NHS and Public Health England are committed to driving a 'whole person' approach to health that considers the wider determinants of health and wellbeing — for which the natural environment plays a key part. This approach to integrated care is adopted more locally through **Sustainability Transformation Plans (STPs)**: through the Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire CCG's Healthier Together STP, and the Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire CCG's STP.

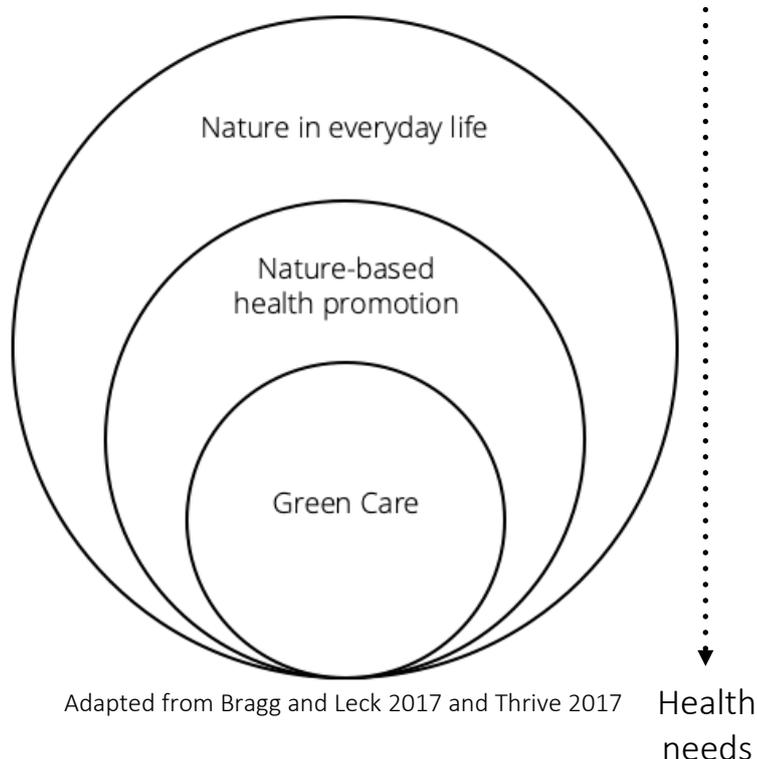
What do we mean by Nature and Health?

Nature can benefit our health and wellbeing in many ways and support different levels of need. There is a growing range of opportunities and activities in the West of England to support Nature and Health across this spectrum.

Nature in everyday life represents the role of everyday engagement with nature for health and wellbeing, e.g. gardening and outdoor exercise.

Nature-based health promotion includes more targeted activities to support health and wellbeing, such as Walking for Health.

Green Care refers to nature-based therapies or treatment interventions for people with a defined need, such as mindfulness in nature, walking in nature, therapeutic horticulture, woodland wellbeing, water-based therapies, care farming, conservation volunteering, or ecotherapy.



Nature-based health interventions can support people with a wide range of needs: across mental health, social care, occupational therapy, addiction, learning disabilities, strokes, sensory disabilities and dementia, among others.

A plan to mainstream Nature-Based Health Services

In addition to supporting the full range of nature-based health activity, there is an opportunity to strengthen emerging nature and health-based services, including Green Care, and drive the integration of well-evidenced interventions into our healthcare systems in the West of England.

WENP has collaboratively identified the following actions to help mainstream nature-based health services in the West of England. WENP's Nature and Health Strategy Group is working to drive these actions forward locally.

1. **Embed** support for nature-based health interventions, including Green Care, in local and regional health **strategies** and **policies**
2. Promote **investment** and **funding** mechanisms, including commissioning support, that enable sustainable provision of nature-based health services and unlock support for the natural environment
3. Support ongoing **public engagement** on the importance of nature for health to help drive self-care and demand for nature-based health services
4. Help **professionalise** nature-based health services by promoting and supporting the development of **standards** that build capacity and help legitimise nature-based health services; and establishing a **Practitioner's Forum** to facilitate those working in the field to learn from each other and foster new collaborations
5. Support **signposting** of information to GPs, social workers and other connectors about local nature-based health interventions that are available
6. **Embed** the benefits of nature into existing practitioner training through focused CPD days and reviewing existing training
7. Help develop **evidence** to make the case for nature and health-based services and drive knowledge of what works for different needs — through mapping, cost-benefit analysis, needs assessment and project evaluation

Visit our website (wenp.org.uk) and see our Annual Reports (online) for updates against these actions. Please get in touch if you'd like to discuss our approach and opportunities to collaborate at info@wenp.org.uk.

The West of England Nature Partnership is a cross-sector partnership working to restore the natural environment in the West of England through embedding the value of nature in decision making across spatial planning, public health and economic development.

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