

## West of England Practitioner Network for Nature and Health

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14:00 – 15.30, 24 March 2020, online

Practitioners met online for the seventh meeting of the Practitioner Network for Nature and Health. The meeting had originally been planned to be held at the Sawmill, Tyntesfield, but was moved online due to restrictions in place because of the Covid-19 outbreak.

Michéal Connors (Natural Academy) welcomed attendees to the meeting and invited everyone to participate in a brief ground exercise, taking time to notice the nature surrounding them at home. Participants were then split into 'Breakout Rooms' to explain who they were and why they were attending the meeting. Michéal provided a brief overview of the purpose and work of the Network, which provides an opportunity for Practitioners in nature, health and wellbeing to provide a unified voice, to connect and to share learnings.

### UPDATES

Stuart Gardner (WENP) provided an update to members on the work of the West of England Nature Partnership (WENP):

- A WENP Consortium bid, led by Michéal and with support from Sophie Griffiths (Feral and True), has been developed as a means to establish what 'commissioning-ready' looks like for a selected range of service providers and to facilitate the mainstreaming of nature-based health services in the West of England. An expression of interest has been submitted to the Kings Fund (Communities and Health) and other submissions will take place as and when opportunities are identified. This bid has arisen through the WENP Nature and Health Strategy Working Group and the related [Plan for Nature and Health in the West of England](#); there is buy-in from WENP partners through the WENP Board and the Nature & Health Strategy Group.
- Funding has been provided from the five Directors of Public Health in the West of England and Wiltshire to support WENP's work on nature and health, including funding to continue the Practitioner Network. Meetings of the Practitioner Network will continue to be held online while social distancing measures are in place to continue the momentum of the work on nature and health in the West of England.

Michéal noted the importance of WENP's involvement in enabling the integration of nature and health, rather than using nature for health.

Jo Lewis (Natural England) provided an overview of the work package she was leading as part of the Somer Valley Pharmaceuticals in the Environment Project, which will explore the impact of nature-based social prescribing on pharmaceuticals in the environment in the Somer Valley. This work package is focused on existing capacity for nature-based social prescribing in the area and barriers to expanding this capacity. Jo requested that attendees contact her with comments on barriers to nature-based social prescribing barriers in the Somer Valley and how to overcome them. Stuart also agreed to provide Jo with the outcomes of the Social Prescribing Network event held in November, which included a session on barriers to social prescribing and how they could be overcome.

Dáithí Ó Súilleabháin asked what the Network's ethos was regarding environmental problems and issues such as the link between environmental problems and colonialism. Michéal replied that it was important to find a way to work more on the community process, focusing on systemic processes rather than individualism. It was agreed that Dáithí would talk with Michéal offline about having an item in the next meeting on this topic.

### WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT

Michéal provided an update on the development of a website specifically for practitioners in nature and health. It was explained that part of the purpose of this website was to understand what 'good practice' means for practitioners, as it has become clear that there is a huge need for this and to feel 'together' as a sector, without comprising the energy and diversity of practices. This will help pave the way towards a 'commission-ready' model for nature and health.

The website has been created as a draft version, and currently contains three sections: a Members section, a Professional section, and a Participants section:

- The Members section provides a space for an online community of practitioners, as well as containing guidance and templates for practitioners.
- The Professional section will provide professional standards for practitioners, as well as containing information on evidence and training.
- The Participants section will be for users of nature and health services, providing information on how nature and health services and information on providers of these services.

The professional standards will also link to social prescribing quality assurance, to facilitate nature and health services forming part of the social prescribing movement, which will be important for accessing participants and longer-term funding.

Members of the Practitioner Network were requested to provide comments on the draft website, which can be accessed here: <https://wix.to/x8BKCNk>. Comments can be provided via the link, or can be emailed to [info@wepn.org.uk](mailto:info@wepn.org.uk).

Participants then broke out into 'breakout rooms' to discuss the draft website in small rooms.

### **THE IMPACT OF AND RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

Emily asked participants to consider the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak on their practice in small groups, and how interventions could be adapted in the medium term to incorporate social distancing and the impacts of Covid-19 on people's wellbeing.

It was agreed that Work to bring people into the natural world will be fundamental post the Covid outbreak, as people will need recovery and reconnection, both socially and with nature. Additionally, the climate and ecological crisis will remain after the Covid outbreak has passed.

### **NEXT MEETINGS**

The next Forum meeting will be held online, with the 11<sup>th</sup> June the date for the next meeting. However, an additional meeting may be held before this date to keep practitioners connected while social distancing measures are in place.