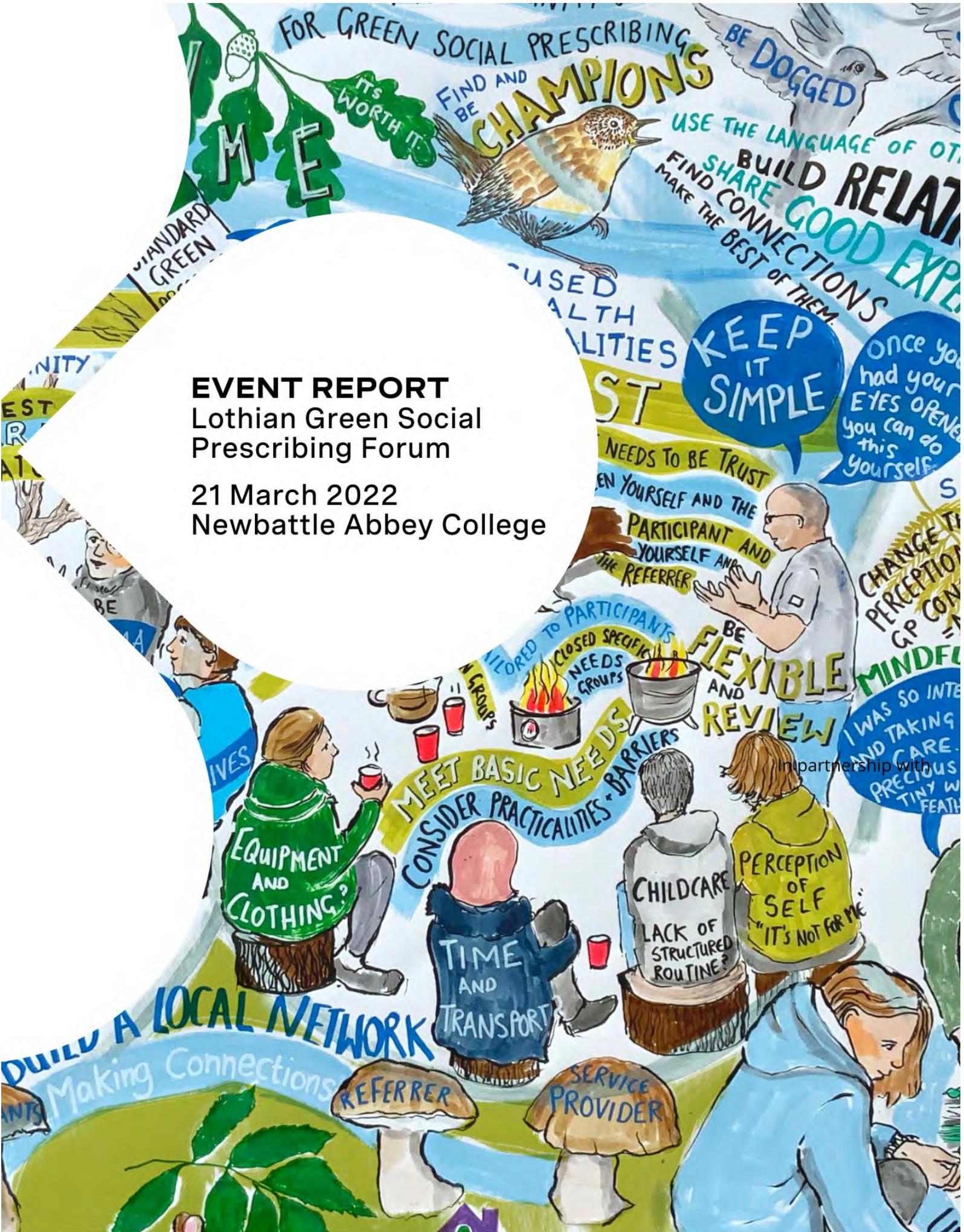


EVENT REPORT

Lothian Green Social Prescribing Forum

21 March 2022
Newbattle Abbey College



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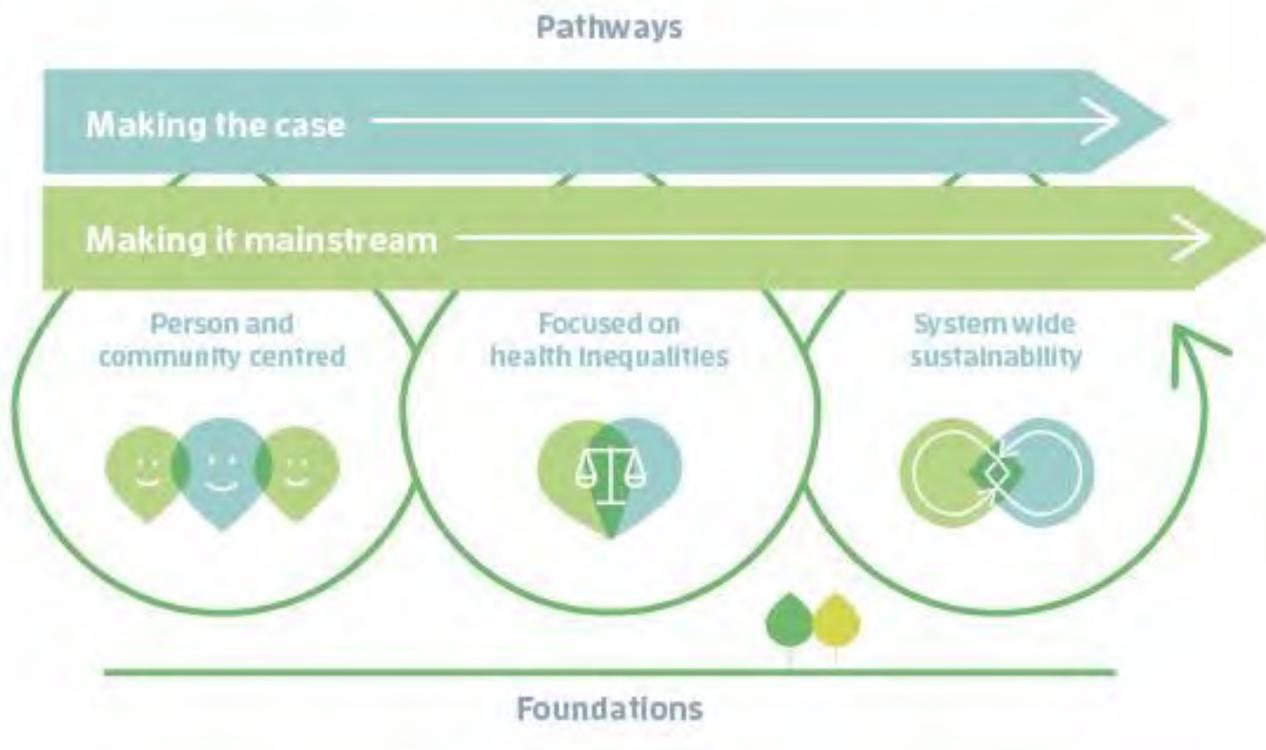
Report prepared by Tartan Jigsaw on behalf of greenspace scotland and Edinburgh and Lothians Health Foundation. Edited by Ian Mackenzie, Green Health Programme Manager, Edinburgh and Lothians Health Foundation.

2 CONTEXT

We are increasingly recognising the important role of greenspace and green health activities on our health and wellbeing. In fact, greenspace is often now described as our natural health service. Through the Greenspace and Health programme, Edinburgh and Lothians Health Foundation is working in partnership with NHS Lothian to make the most of the health board estate and capitalise on community greenspaces as health assets.

NHS Lothian published the first health board led Greenspace and Health Strategy in Scotland. The framework sets the priorities for how health and wellbeing can be supported through the NHS Lothian estate, publicly accessible greenspaces and green health activities. Since publication, Edinburgh and Lothians Health Foundation has been working with a wide range of partners to deliver this vision.

Green Social Prescribing uses the interaction between people and healthcare services to identify those who could benefit most from green interventions and connect them with nature. The report [“Green Health Prescribing: its role in Lothian’s COVID-19 recovery”](#) developed a shared vision for green health prescribing to be embedded across the system, targeted at people who can most benefit, resulting in reduced health inequalities, stronger communities and more valued greenspace. To deliver this vision we are working together across the health and social care partnerships to support them in making this a reality using five golden threads.



The Golden Threads of Green Social Prescribing

3 GREEN SOCIAL PRESCRIBING FORUM 2022

On 21 March 2022 a Green Social Prescribing Forum was held at Newbattle Abbey College to create an opportunity for around 70 potential prescribers, providers and enablers of green social prescribing in Edinburgh and the Lothians to come together.

These include:

- **Prescribers:** Community link workers, wellbeing practitioners, weight management service, NHS recovery service, Occupational Therapists, Pharmacists, Physiotherapists, mental health nurses and GPs.
- **Providers:** primary and secondary care providers and third sector organisations active in green social prescribing.
- **Enablers:** Commissioners of services and activities, funders, decision makers.

The event provided a space for networking and having conversations to begin to develop a community of practice allowing a space to connect, share their work, and understand the challenges and opportunities. A series of introductory talks was followed by lunch which allowed an opportunity for attendees to network. In the afternoon attendees were able to choose an experiential workshop to join, followed by a Q&A panel session and reflections on the day (the event programme can be found in Appendix 1). The whole event was documented on film and captured in the visual minute below.

4 THE SPEAKERS:



Attendees gathered in the conference room at the start of the day for a presentations to set the scene

Welcome & Golden threads

Kim Simpson - on behalf of Ian Mackenzie (Edinburgh and Lothians Health Foundation / greenspace scotland:

Kim welcomed everyone on behalf of Ian. Kim offered an overview of the golden threads and the project so far explaining that the project has built on the expertise of the people attending and involved and Ian / Kim wished to extend thanks to everyone for their enthusiasm for the programme. Kim invited all attendees (around 70) to turn to someone else on their table who they had not previously met and introduce themselves explaining that the event was about connecting, networking and gaining insights into the benefits of working together. After five minutes of noisy chatter Kim called attention back to the speakers.

“It is apparent that the opportunity to connect with fellow humans is something so important which has been much missed during the last two years.” Kim Simpson

Perspectives on developing green social prescribing in Lothian

Rachel Hardie - former consultant in Public Health, NHS Lothian and Associate, greenspace scotland:

Rachel explained that the event was spinning on the back of the project and talked about how Green Health Prescribing is the interaction between people, encouraging people to connect with each other and nature / green spaces. Rachel elaborated on the Golden Threads of three foundations and two

pathways and outlined how the 200 people who had contributed to the project shared success stories, challenges and barriers, and experience, and that this had allowed for a collaborative learning project.

“Today is a milestone in the future; an opportunity to network, collaborate, enthuse, build community and take it forward.” Rachel Hardie

Tracy McLeod - NHS Lothian Public Health:

Tracy commented on the stunning grounds and building and described meeting a colleague outside on the way in and how well they both felt connecting with each other in person in the sunshine. Tracy reflected on how the pandemic demonstrated the benefits to our health and wellbeing from being outdoors. Tracy outlined *Good Conversation* practice and the *Midway* whole system approach emphasising that a patient should meet the same approach throughout all of Midlothian regardless of which point they access NHS care. Staff are not fixers holding power to heal but should be considered enablers and facilitators to coach and support. Tracy stated that there is much to learn from the Third Sector in approach. Tracy showed an image of a noticeboard in a surgery created by a pharmacist showcasing self-help opportunities. The difference between self-support and supported self-management was highlighted with the example of a patient who should spend time outside being signposted towards a regular walking group versus a patient who may require an introduction to a group with a phone call invitation. The importance of good conversations in identifying needs and possible barriers to access. Tracy stated keywords should be ‘collaboration, learning, and working it out together.’

*“We are **all** who we talk about. Hold on to your humanity. We are just a spokesperson for the team of humans, whether we are a doctor, nurse, health visitor.... We all just want to be well in our world. Our job is to provide opportunities and support for people to make their world better.” Tracy McLeod*

Judy Paul, College Forest Coordinator- Newbattle Abbey College:

Judy is based at the venue the conference was held in and gave attendees some background to this ‘special place’ which was bequeathed to the nation for educational purposes. The college offers a second chance to learn with limited barriers to access to create a life changing educational venue. With just 70 students the venue provides an alternative environment to those who may have been failed by education previously. The college offers inclusive awards, forest and outdoor learning, adult achievement awards, promoting the connection between good mental and physical health. Judy explained the high success rate for students of attaining qualifications noting the importance of social connections, high motivation and engagement with many students surprised by learning, welcoming the opportunity to try new things and control their own learning experiences. Judy mentioned how much she has learned from students too in letting people learn at their own pace, meeting their basic needs first (if someone is hungry, thirsty, cold, uncomfortable they are distracted from learning - providing correct kit, transport, childcare etc. allows a relaxed state to access learning.)

“The connection to outdoors and nature allows for ongoing access to the same space to witness the changing of seasons, weather conditions, flora and fauna and a sense of place.” Judy Paul

Charlie Cumming, Chief Executive, Edinburgh and Lothian Greenspace Trust:

Charlie described the vision that everyone in Edinburgh and the Lothians should have access to green space for mental and physical health and wellbeing. Charlie outlined the various strands to the project including talking about partners such as THRIVE Edinburgh and Cyrenians.

Charlie described some of the activities and initiatives along with opportunities for referral, either from professionals including mental health link workers, community nurses, recovery services and GPs or self-referrals. Most self-referrals currently are for projects such as the walking and jogging groups.

“We are actively looking for more referrals. We need a greater awareness of our services to encourage more people to prescribe them and to take them up.” Charlie Cumming

Hannah Macrae, Service Manager Community Gardens, Cyrenians:

Cyrenians is a charity working to tackle the causes and consequences of homelessness. Hannah shared details of a project in two hospital grounds where she works with staff, patients and volunteers to use the outside space to improve mental and physical wellbeing with green space activities. Working to create safe spaces, therapeutic activities, and social connection opportunities allows opportunities to become a giver rather than a receiver of services as a user. Cyrenians is also a partner with THRIVE.

For many participants of the garden projects, it has been their first outside and social connection time in two years but there has been limited provision during covid and there are waiting lists for referrals.

Hannah showed a short film to illustrate some of the activities such as tree care, planting, arts and crafts, fencing, tending the fire or making the tea. Comments from service users included how they find the programme peaceful and safe, how the structure and regular times and days are valuable, the social connections are important and people feel it is rewarding to give something, feel helpful and see tangible outcomes. The keywords from the participants were feeling hopeful, invested in the future and having learned.

“It is a service-user led service, exploring what users want and need and then working with them to provide it.” Hannah Macrae

5 NETWORKING, WORKSHOPS AND EXPERIENCES

“Don’t underestimate the power of just deciding for yourself that you want a change. That is what connects you to all of the other people who want a change and a network is created to make that change happen.” Tracy McLeod, NHS Lothian Public Health

Networking lunch

While people had remarked on the grandness and beauty of the building it was the outside space of the venue which offered the most to the day for the attendees. As people spilled outside their voices grew louder and their confidence in mixing with others again was visibly growing. Watching people come outside was like watching flower buds open up and bloom, turning their faces up towards the sun and gravitating towards each other. This offered an opportunity for attendees to connect with each other, reflect on the talks from the morning session and consider what they wanted to get out of the rest of the day.

Workshop and experience sessions

Seven workshops were held simultaneously with three indoor and four outdoor sessions. Conference attendees had signed up for one workshop. The workshops offered an opportunity to connect and share work and challenges with a focus on building relationships and future action. Each workshop had an activity provider and a facilitator allocated to the session. The activity provider led a green themed activity or discussion. The facilitator’s role was to outline the aim of the workshop, encourage participants to introduce themselves and express what they hoped to get from the session and to guide conversations to focus on the three key questions:

- 1. What have you been doing / want to do?**
- 2. What have you learned?**
- 3. What do you need to do next?**

The workshops all had between 7 and 10 attendees from across the potential prescribers, providers and enablers. Facilitator Notes can be found in Appendix 3. Attendees returned to the main conference room for a final session of reflections and a Q&A session with a focus on Measuring Success and Making it Happen.

Marketplace

During the course of the event two boards were placed in a prominent position with attendees invited to contribute with their feedback via sticky notes, which were available on every table. The boards were captioned with ‘what you need’ and ‘what you can offer’ which captured the essence of the project as an ongoing partnership between the groups with all parties having something to contribute and something to be gained from engagement and participation. The Market Place was interacted with over the course of the event (Appendix 4) and the ‘what you need’ board had 19 contributions with the ‘what I can offer’ board having 15 contributions.

Workshops details – the following workshops were available to attendees each had an activity provider and a facilitator to support the group to get the most out of the conversations.

A: A systems approach to embedding Green Health Prescribing (indoor workshop) led by Tracy McLeod - NHS Lothian Public Health. Midlothian Health and Social Partnership are piloting a collaborative approach to embedding Green Health Prescribing as an offer following a Good Conversation. With an aim to address health inequalities with a model to support those who may find it harder to engage with these opportunities. An introduction to the whole systems approach known as the *Midway*

B: Outcomes of the Edinburgh Nature Prescriptions Pilot (indoor workshop) led by Karl Stevens, Head of Engagement, RSPB Scotland. Exploring the RSPB pilot project of Nature Prescriptions in Edinburgh which has been developed in partnership with GPs and Edinburgh and Lothian Health Foundation. The session covered a discussion of the key outcomes and recommendations of the pilot and ways to develop and prioritise the next steps. A film was shown about the pilot and a pack of resources including a leaflet, a calendar of seasonal activities and a map was handed out.

C: How we developed the golden threads for green health prescribing (indoor workshop) led by Rachel Hardie, former consultant in Public Health, NHS Lothian and Associate, greenspace Scotland. A deeper dive into the golden threads for green social prescribing with the author of “Green Health Prescribing; its role in Lothian’s COVID:19 recovery.”

D: Woodland Health Walk (outdoors participant experience) led by Caroline Freeman, Community Woodland Ranger, Newbattle Abbey College. A walk in the grounds to share the experience of a health walk participant on a gentle woodland walk to invigorate the senses; appreciate some of the sights, sounds and smells of the woodland and find out about some of the species that live here along the way.

E: Discover the Elder Tree (outdoors participant experience) led by Judy Paul, College Forest Co-ordinator, Newbattle Abbey College. Based on the green prescribing activities offered by the college the session was a celebration of the elder tree, the folklore and uses of the elder and some crafts with the wood.

F: Wild Ways Well (outdoors participant experience) led by Paul Barclay & Katie Brown, Project Officers, The Conservation Volunteers. A demonstration of some of the successful techniques Wild Ways Well has used to engage participants with the five ways to wellbeing. Using a safe fire lighting technique and kelly kettles to boil water for a sensory tea tasting activity with a variety of different teas. Session of lighting fires to boil water for teas. There was also some traditional forest art using clay in the trees and education around tree, plant and animal identification as well as folklore and stories about the woodland.

G: Mark the Spring Equinox (outdoors participant experience) led by Abby Boulton, Community Projects Officer, Edinburgh and Lothian Greenspace Trust. A session exploring the Spring equinox, its significance to past societies and in the present time with a reflective and creative group activity of making a woodland mandala using fallen leaves, feathers, twigs, stones, pinecones and other gathered natural treasures from the environment.



Experiencing what a green prescription might be like at Newbattle Abbey College



Discussing the golden threads of the green prescribing strategies



Exploring a Wild Ways Well session

6 DISCUSSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

The discussions and observations from the workshops were gathered via facilitator notes and observations and captured in the visual minutes.

Where are people at in the green prescribing journey?

Attendees of all the workshops represented all three of the groups of potential prescribers, providers and enablers. The common theme for the aims and motivations for attending were to gather information and foster a better understanding. For prescribers this was largely a fact-finding mission for most attendees who were looking to find out more about what projects and services were available and how they worked. For providers it was about explaining their services and what the benefits of them were to previous and existing users as well as promoting them to potential prescribers to gain more referrals.

What have we learned?

Attendees of all sessions were very open to listening and learning from the providers and from each other. The experiential workshops provided a real taste of the sort of benefits that green social prescribing can offer, while the indoor workshops provided opportunities to share experiences. The following key themes were identified:

The identified needs:

- Clear guidance or a tool kit for green prescribing for prescribers, practitioners and enablers.
- A comprehensive, up to date working directory across the area to match those providing with those seeking green prescriptions.
- A joined up and coherent approach for green prescribing.
- Good Conversation training across the board along with a system-wide roll out of the principles to enable prescribers to confidently provide the 'warm introduction' to services.
- Secure long-term funding to enable providers to focus on providing services without concerns about sustainability / longevity of the projects.
- More appropriate measurement and evaluation tools to ascertain the successes without detracting from the benefits to the services users.

The opportunities:

- Increased understanding of challenges from different groups.
- Increased understanding of roles of others across providers and prescribers.
- Identifying the benefits of local connections.
- Increased engagement with benefits of provision for everyone, not just a service user.
- Increased understanding of universal accessibility to the benefits - everyone engages at their own level.
- The reset that the pandemic has offered to remind us all of our human status, our need for connection to each other and to the world around us.

- Networking across the prescribers, providers and enablers to enhance understanding and appreciation of the challenges and opportunities of what each group is working on.

The challenges:

- Resources - time pressures for prescribers and funding issues for providers.
- Currently low numbers of prescriptions makes evaluation challenging.
- Lack of knowledge of providers / lack of understanding what they actually do means it is difficult to match providers with service users.
- Expectation from patients to have a solution which is often medical.
- Barriers to service users - practical such as access, transport, childcare, kit, language, feeling disengaged with green spaces.
- How to prescribe something you don't use yourself?
- The issues surrounding short term provision.

How do we measure success?

It was clear that while measurement is often required and evaluation of this approach can prove a challenge, social prescribing should not be target driven. The evidence may be time consuming to collect but it comes in the form of people's voices, stories and experiences.

How do we make it happen?

People felt that the power lies with the people in the room to make it happen. To learn and embrace social prescribing, to force system change by asking for training, networking with each other, starting with small incremental steps and tiny changes.

"The key takeaways from the day have been the need to invest in communities, relationships and time"
Kim Simpson, greenspace scotland

"It sounds so simple but getting a change to happen is more difficult. As a whole system change is required that will be a process and needs to be driven from the bottom up rather than the top-down but we are seeing a shift and the start of a movement. We are on the cusp of change and the key thing to remember is not your job title but your status as fellow human that matters." Tracy McLeod, NHS Lothian Public Health

"There are so many diverse backgrounds and experiences in the room and we need to work out how to harness that, streamline it and find ways to work together. Green prescribing is happening but it is not always labelled as such. We need to network and bring together all the strands." Lucy Holroyd, Cyrenians

"I know from my five years of doing this sort of thing that it works. The kelly kettle sessions can change lives and give people confidence. The challenge lies in prescribing and embracing it." Paul Barclay, The Conservation Volunteers

7 SUMMARY

There were recurring issues across all three groups of participants which came up during the day in the workshop discussions and feedback as well as the Market Place boards. A short film captures participant feedback and provides a flavour for the event, details can be found in Appendix 6.

Focused on health inequalities



Person and community centred



System wide sustainability

