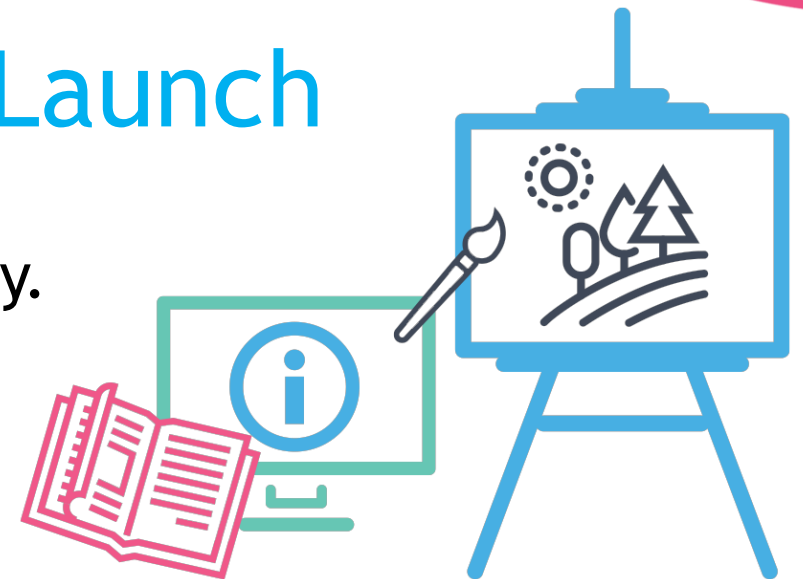




National
Academy
for Social
Prescribing

NASP Webinar: Green Social Prescribing Toolkit Launch

Thank you for joining us. The webinar will begin shortly.



Housekeeping

- Please note we are **recording** this webinar (*you will be sent the slides and the link to the recording, and they will be on NASP's website too.*)
- Please submit questions via the **Q&A function**. We will hold a Q&A session at the end of presentations.
- Please use the **chat function** for introducing yourself and networking. If you have any technical issues, please raise these in the chat, and a member of the NASP team will assist.
- **Closed Captions** are available (turn these on at the bottom of your screen)



Chair:

Molly Aldam, National Lead - Natural Environment at the National Academy for Social Prescribing

Speakers:

Molly Aldam, NASP

Steve Spiers, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire ICS

Sarah Paine, Nottingham CVS

Laura Armitage, Nottingham CVS

Dave Solly, Natural England

Rachel Quinn, NASP



Molly Aldam

National Lead - Natural Environment at the
National Academy for Social Prescribing

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Green Social Prescribing Toolkit

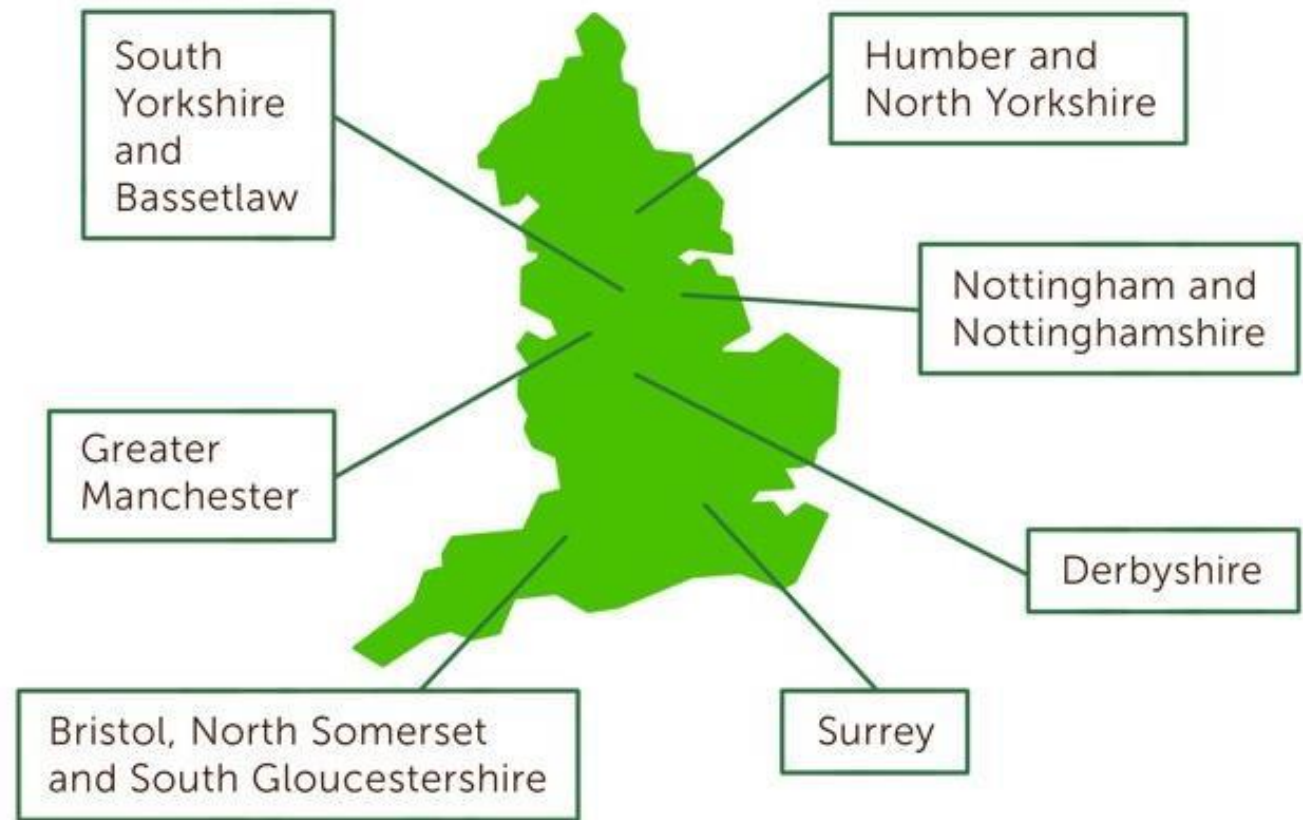
2026 Revised Edition

[Green Social Prescribing - National Academy for Social
Prescribing | NASP](#)



Cross-Govt Green Social Prescribing Programme to tackle and prevent mental ill health

- Partnership between NASP, Natural England, DEFRA, DHSC, NHS England and Sport England
- £5.77m funded by Treasury and core partners 2021-2023, with £2.3m extension 2024-5
- 7 test and learn sites across England
- To test how to embed nature-based interventions in social prescribing pathways



The GSP Toolkit

Originally published in 2023 to capture learning and best practice from the GSP Programme sites

Designed to guide the development of local GSP systems - where referral pathways to nature are built into health services

Revised according to feedback to improve clarity, and updated with some examples from the 2024-25 extension phase



New 3 Section Structure

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Examples embedded in the relevant advice

- **Promote diverse forms of evidence** including qualitative evidence, e.g. case studies, testimonials, films, infographics and photo diaries. Telling compelling impact stories is key to engaging stakeholders in the system.

Humber and North Yorkshire & BNSSG started every board meeting with a GSP case study, to bring the impact to life, and to demonstrate the power of qualitative evaluation methods to commissioners alongside quantitative data.

- **Co-develop evaluation goals, outcome measures and tools** between providers and the health sector, to reflect shared goals and build capacity within the sector rather than imposing rigid frameworks. Prioritise measurement tools that are practical, free, and acceptable for participants, and avoid overburdening providers with overly complex data requirements.

Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire worked with green providers to co-design a standardised dataset. To maximise the potential for success, they agreed to collect a common set of outcome measures, including participant demographic data, referral source, and two domains of the [ONS4 measure](#) to collect pre and post activity information about mental health and wellbeing, with a follow-up question establishing whether the intervention was the cause of improvement. See the questions used here. They also agreed to focus on creating strong impact stories. All providers were contracted to provide the agreed data and quarterly case studies.

BNSSG has also been working to access NHS data from the digital platform Elemental to measure Green Social Prescribing referrals. Issues around information governance meant they have had to agree data-sharing agreements with each Primary Care Network.

Establishing GSP Partnerships

- Stakeholder mapping
- Forming a steering group
- Making GSP offers inclusive and accessible for marginalised groups
- Co-designing local GSP offers

Supporting & Connecting Referrers and Providers

Creating structures to improve understanding & communication between referrers and community providers including.:

- Practice-sharing sessions
- Taster events
- Co-location of SPLWs in greenspaces
- Directories
- Co-developed levels of mental health need, to ensure appropriate referral

Scaling and Embedding GSP

- Generating robust evidence while prioritising participants' wellbeing
- Making links to different policy objectives; embedding in health and local authority strategies
- Creating referral pathways to GSP for specific NHS client groups
- The need for provider collaboratives and proportionate commissioning processes to help green providers to be commissioned
- How pilot sites combined various funding streams e.g. grant funding, public funding and commercial income, and attracted partners to pool investment towards GSP

Key resources on NASP's GSP webpage

- [Revised GSP Toolkit](#)
- [GSP Programme 2021-23 evaluation report](#)
- ['Changing the Lens: Provider Perspectives on Green Social Prescribing'](#) (Defra)
- [GSP Practitioner Guidance](#)
- [The GSP Process Journey Collection](#)
- [The Nature Buddies Toolkit](#)
- [Nature-based Interventions for Long-Term Conditions](#)
(Evidence Review and briefings for Commissioners, Clinicians, Patients/Carers)



How Can I Find Out More, Get Involved, or Get Help?

If you're a regional leader or decision-maker

[Revised Green Social Prescribing Toolkit](#): learning from the GSP programme sites around establishing, developing and sustaining Green Social Prescribing systems regionally.

The Providers' Report ['Changing the Lens: Provider Perspectives on Green Social Prescribing'](#) - DEFRA-funded research



Steve Spiers, BNSSG

Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire (BNSSG)

A case study in the sustainable funding of Green Social Prescribing (GSP)



It all started in 2021 when we were awarded a GSP Test & Learn site

- Our first community of practice in 2021 was attended by 120 partners and we got a lot of challenge around the lack of sustainable funding
- Over 4 years we were given £800,000 (£500,000 + £300,000)
- Of this £480,000 was committed to VCSE grants
- We turned this into £1,700,000 of VCSE grants
- This funded over 90 GSP providers that supported over 5,000 people to improve health outcomes via GSP provision

How did we double the £800K national investment

- We made deals and found the win/win (pooled investment)
- We used the power of nature and the many champions across our system and the wider public
- We highlighted powerful existing community insights
- We gathered and promoted evidence of impact (qual and quan)
- We have a proactive approach to comms and engagement – We were salesmen/women

Life after the Test & Learn

At the end of March 2025 the test and learn stopped and all our national funding was spent.

So what came next.....

GSP April 25 onwards

GSP was picked up in the context of personalised care and social prescribing, neighbourhood health and investment in the VCSE sector

The test & learn approach to pooled investment has continued and is now being scaled (more in a moment)

GSP providers are doing very well in this wider system context because of the strong programme and evidence base they developed (system funding and grant/lottery funding) **North Somerset CYP Wellbeing Fund as example**

Shortly we will launch the BNSSG Community Fund

The BNSSG Community Wellbeing & Health Fund Pilot 2026/27



The Solution

Better Funding & More Leveraged Funding

- **Shared Investment Funds** align money from different public sector partners, national funders, grant funders, corporates and private philanthropy
- **How it might work in BNSSG** – A locality based model
- **The national opportunity** – NASP & National Lottery



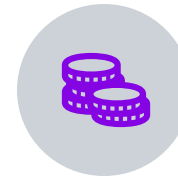
The fund in numbers



£1.2million



18 investors



Grants up to
£50,000



30% ring fenced
for small grants of
up to £10,000



50-100 groups to
be funded



3,000 + people to
gain support



Year 1 Process
opens late 2026

Emerging priorities outcomes for the Community Fund

- **Anxiety and depression**
- **Chronic pain**
- **Work and Health** (Mental Health & MSK)
- **Neighbourhood in** (IMD 1 wards)
- **Children outcomes** (Mental Health & Child Poverty)
- **Heathy weight, nutrition and physical activity**

What our communities want

- Free or low-cost provision
- Provision led by local people
- A focus on positive activities, such as art, nature connection & physical activity
- A focus on practical skills - cooking, employability, finance
- Simple information offers (including non digital)



Opportunities

- **Lots of public sector partners want to invest in community but are struggling both with capacity to run grant programmes or having enough money to run a meaningful programme. A pooled programme is a simple solution**
- **Corporate, social value and philanthropic investment is being left on the table**
- **National strategies acknowledge the role of VCSE and community in delivering community lead outcomes at a hyper local level. i.e. NHS 10 year plan, acute to community and sickness to prevention**
- **Nature connection is something our community have said is important to them**

Challenges

- **Pooled funding involves managing lots of relationships all with slightly different needs. Co-design is important but not quick.**
- **System governance is slow and often not suited to joint decisions and oversight.**
- **Public sector leadership is often risk adverse and needs a lot of assurances**
- **Measuring impact is not straight forward but it vital to continued investment**

A vision for the next 5-10 years

A £5million plus a year fund to sustain and
support high quality community provision
across BNSSG

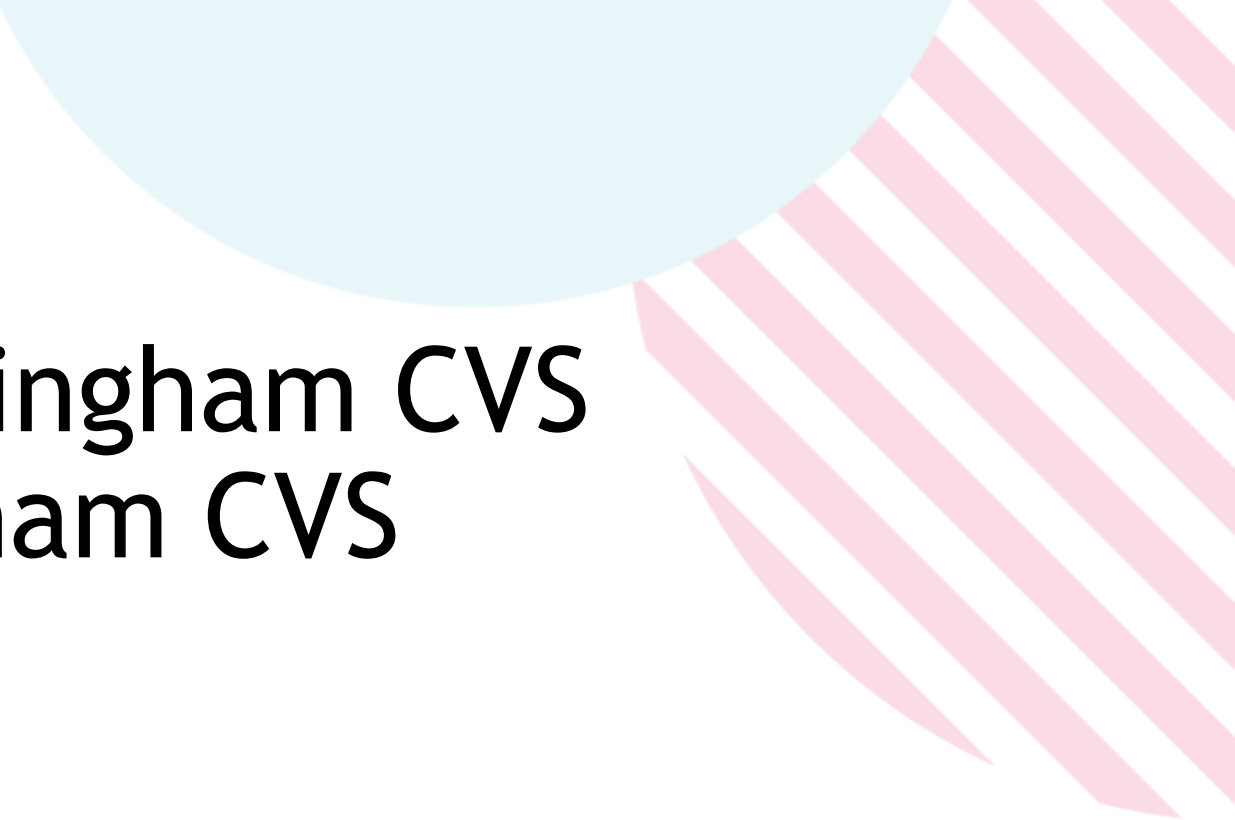
Healthier Together



Improving health and care in Bristol,
North Somerset and South Gloucestershire

steve.spiers@nhs.net





Laura Armitage, Nottingham CVS
Sarah Paine, Nottingham CVS



The Big Green Book and GreenSpace Trusted Provider Scheme



GreenSpace: Identifying The Need



Early discussions with local Social Prescribing Link Workers identified two key elements that would help them to make more referrals into green/nature based activities:

“We need to know the organisations we can trust.”

Time constraints meant SPLWs did not have the opportunity to develop new relationships with organisations, therefore tended to refer into the organisations they knew and these were reaching capacity.

They wanted a greater range of activities to be available, but wanted to know the organisations were properly set up, with robust safeguarding and health and safety policies and procedures in place, insurance, and so on.

They wanted to know which organisations were equipped to support the needs of the people they were referring, to avoid inappropriate referrals being made. This led to the development of the **GreenSpace Trusted Provider** scheme.



“We need information that we can easily access and share with patients.”

But not a book. Definitely not a book. Numerous conversations, meetings, planning and work looked into different ideas as to what was needed, what information it would contain and how it would be presented. The conclusion? We needed a book. And so, **The Big Green Book** was born!

GreenSpace Trusted Provider Scheme



So, how do we help SPLWs work out which organisations they can trust?

Local Social Prescribers wanted a variety of organisations that they could confidently refer people into, knowing that the activities were suitable and that all the relevant policies, procedures and insurance were in place to keep their clients safe during sessions. In response to this, we developed the GreenSpace Trusted Provider scheme.

What is a Trusted Provider?

Organisations that wanted to be Trusted Providers needed to prove that they had robust safeguarding and health and safety policies and procedures in place, their insurance covered all activities and they demonstrated other benchmarks that showcased their care and consideration of all participants, volunteers and paid employees.

As part of the application process, organisations received feedback and support, including tailored support and training from NCVS where needed. As a result, organisations reviewed and updated their policies, more organisations employed designated and trained safeguarding leads, and NCVS provided tailored business support and training to organisations across the city and county.



Trusted Provider Requirements 2021-2023

Mandatory

- Insurance (public liability, including volunteer cover)
- Safeguarding Policy & Procedures
- Health and Safety Policy
- Risk Assessments (examples)

Best Practice - Not all applied to all organisations

- GDPR Policy
- Covid Procedures
- Food Hygiene Certificate
- Volunteering Policy
- Volunteer Induction Procedure
- Equality and Diversity Policy/Statement
- First Aid Training
- Lone Working Policy/Procedure
- Volunteer DBS checks
- Mental Health First Aid Training
- Digital Media Guidelines

GreenSpace Trusted Provider Scheme: Learning



The Benefits

For providers: Providers reported that the application process was a **positive experience**; they **appreciated the external review** of their documents, the feedback they received and the **support to improve** where needed. As a result of this support, some organisations found it **easier to apply for funding** with relevant documentation in place.

For referrers: There was a **wider offer of activities** available and **SPLWs felt confident** to refer patients to Trusted Providers, knowing that the organisations were properly set up and managed. While it was still necessary to have conversations with organisations to establish whether they were the 'right fit' for a patient, having a bank of Trusted Providers **saved them time and resources**. Some referrers commented that they would like to see a similar scheme in place across the board, not just for green social prescribing.

For Nottingham CVS: The scheme helped to **strengthen relationships** between NCVS, local health teams and local nature-based community organisations. The GreenSpace team were able to link groups into **additional organisational support, relevant networks and training** available through the CVS.

The Challenges

The assessment and support process was incredibly **time intensive**, even the most straight forward applications required **numerous contacts** with the organisation and took **upwards of 5 hours** to process. Applications requiring **more intense feedback and support required significantly more time**.

To continue the scheme in the long-term, **funding was required** to pay for the staff time needed for such an intense support process. **Without funding, it was not feasible** for NCVS to maintain beyond the end of the Test and Learn phase.

GreenSpace Mental Health Levels



Many organisations expressed early concerns that they may end up supporting a large number of individuals with complex mental health needs. While they wanted to help, they realised they lacked the necessary experience and specialised training to do so in a way that would be safe and effective. In order to help organisations determine the level of need they could meet and to encourage communication between prescribers and providers, a set of level descriptors was developed in conjunction with the GreenSpace Mental Health Lead from the LiVE team at Highbury Hospital. This was crucial to making sure that the right referrals were made to each organisation.

The levels, ranging from 0 to 4 (see across), define escalating mental health demands. Most institutions determined that they could assist individuals falling into the first three categories of need. The Live Team at Highbury Hospital and the staff at Framework's Nature In Mind project provided specialised support for Levels 3 and 4.

Throughout the project, the Mental Health Levels were held in high regard by providers who felt empowered by the fact that the emphasis was on what they could truly offer and that they had a standard framework to use when talking with social prescribers before a person came to their setting. Social prescribers expressed their gratitude for the tool's assistance in helping them choose the best activity for their clients.



GreenSpace Mental Health Levels



Level 0: A person who is well and wishes to take steps to safeguard their mental health.

This is a person who has made the decision to improve their mental health through a green or nature-based activity. They will independently access advice and self-help resources as they need them and manage their own mental wellbeing without the need of additional support.

Level 1: A person who is at risk of developing mental ill health

This person is seeking help for mental health issues from a health worker or from their general practitioner (GP) due to issues such as anxiety, low mood, loneliness, a lack of routine, or motivation that are negatively affecting their mental health. Their GP can manage their low level of assistance with help from Social Prescribing pathways in the community and voluntary sectors.

Level 2: A person with mild mental ill health

This is a person who can manage their mental health with general practitioner (GP) support in addition to psychological therapies like cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) or counselling, short-term medication, and/or regular monitoring. To help them settle in during the first few sessions, they might require a Green Befriender. Rather than attending regular open sessions, they might need to attend specific sessions. If necessary, they can get support from their mental health professional or Link Worker. Volunteers who work for organisations that offer sessions for Level Two patients can receive training because the individual participating in the activity could require assistance from a volunteer.

Level 3: A person with moderate ill health

This individual needs care in multiple areas, from specialists to the local mental health team. Their requirements are more complex. Health professionals will monitor and assess their progress as needed. They could require a lot of assistance to participate in sessions, perhaps from a support worker. Services having specialised resources and experience in working with individuals who have persistent and complicated mental illness would provide the provision, which might be for a predetermined amount of time or as part of a package. The referrer will help the GreenSpace provider by offering information and advice. The provider and referrer will communicate regularly as needed, and in the event of a crisis, there will be a designated contact to reach.

Level 4: A person with severe or complex mental ill health

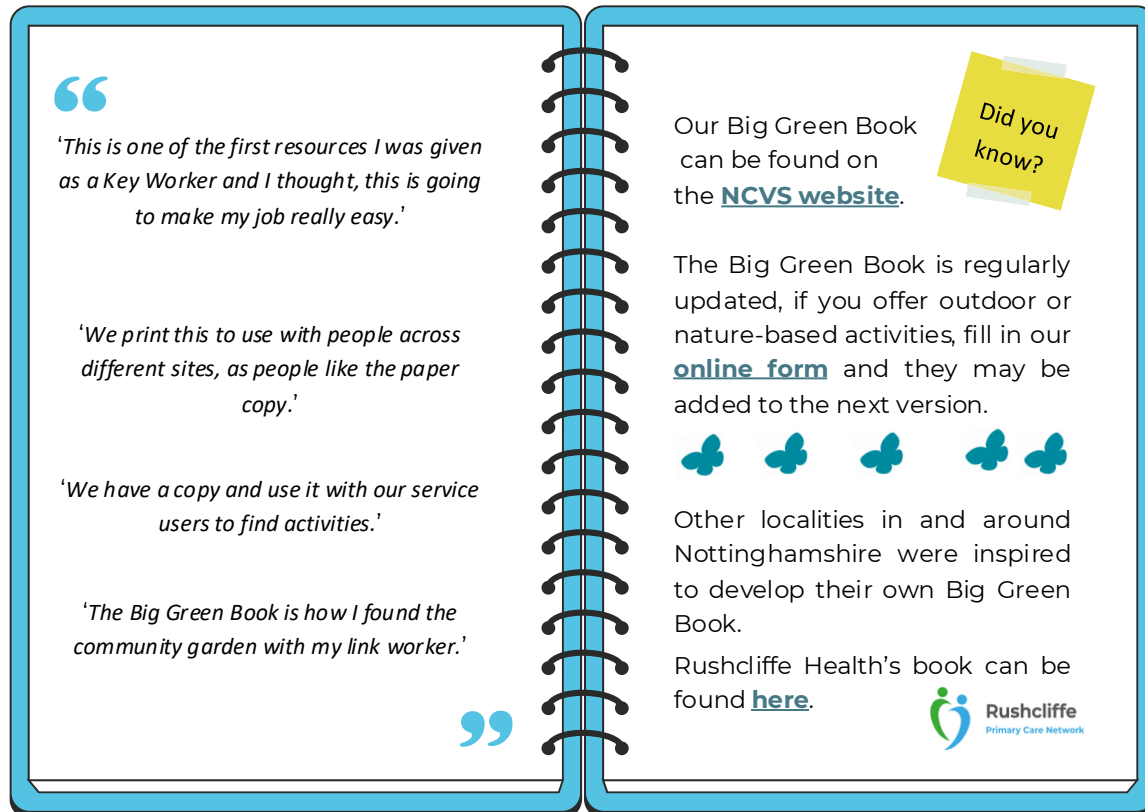
This could be someone with an acute mental health crisis requiring inpatient treatment or intensive crisis team support, or someone with a long-term serious mental health condition that affects their functioning and requires regular care and support. This person can use GreenSpace activities in a hospital setting, such as a hospital community or therapy garden. Services would be provided by specialist teams, such as medical professionals with experience working with people with a range of long-term and acute mental health needs. This person would need an initial visit and an individual needs assessment before starting the activity with ongoing support from a nurse or health professional, along with ongoing communication between the referrer and service provider.

The Big Green Book



Social Prescribers wanted easily available, detailed information about the range of different activities on offer to be shared with their clients. We needed a way to present the information we had acquired from the Trusted Provider Scheme and Mental Health Levels. Our initial plan of an online portal was not simple or inclusive so:

Our answer to this was The Big Green Book.



The Big Green Book is a directory of nature-based activities and opportunities around Nottingham. Social prescribers, healthcare workers, and other key referrers can find a wealth of information organised by location to help their clients choose an activity that is suitable for their needs. The book outlines the facilities available and details the level of mental health need that each group is able to support to ensure the right referrals are made to the right organisations.

The Big Green Book: Learning



The Benefits

For providers: Providers **valued the opportunity** to promote their organisations and activities. They were grateful for the inclusion of the mental health levels, which enabled them to **identify the level of need they were able to support** and this **increased their confidence** in the referral process.

For referrers: Referrers found the book was **a useful tool** when working with patients. They commented on how the layout and use of symbols **made it easy** for them to identify which organisations were appropriate for specific patients, and how the mental health levels **helped to avoid making inappropriate referrals**.

For Nottingham CVS: The Big Green Book provided **a blueprint that could be adapted** for other projects and the GSP extension period. A Big Green Book toolkit was produced and shared with localities in Nottinghamshire to enable them to **build on the work of the Test and Learn**. The **books were adapted** for specific locations in Nottingham as part of the Active Travel Social Prescribing Project, which included the addition of physical activity levels to support patients into walking and cycling activities in their area, along with other key information.

The Challenges

Information goes out of date, organisations close or their priorities change. Ensuring The Big Green Book is up to date takes a **considerable amount of staff time** - the process involves contacting all the organisations, confirming their information is still correct or updating as needed, then verifying the information is accurate before publishing. To date, there have been 12 updates of the book, but if this is to continue long-term **funding is required** to pay for staff time.

Ensuring referrers are using the **latest version** requires a **central location** to host the book and asking organisations to **host links to the page**, rather than hosting a copy of the book on their site. Some prescribers prefer to work with printed copies, which take a lot of resources to reproduce when there is an update.

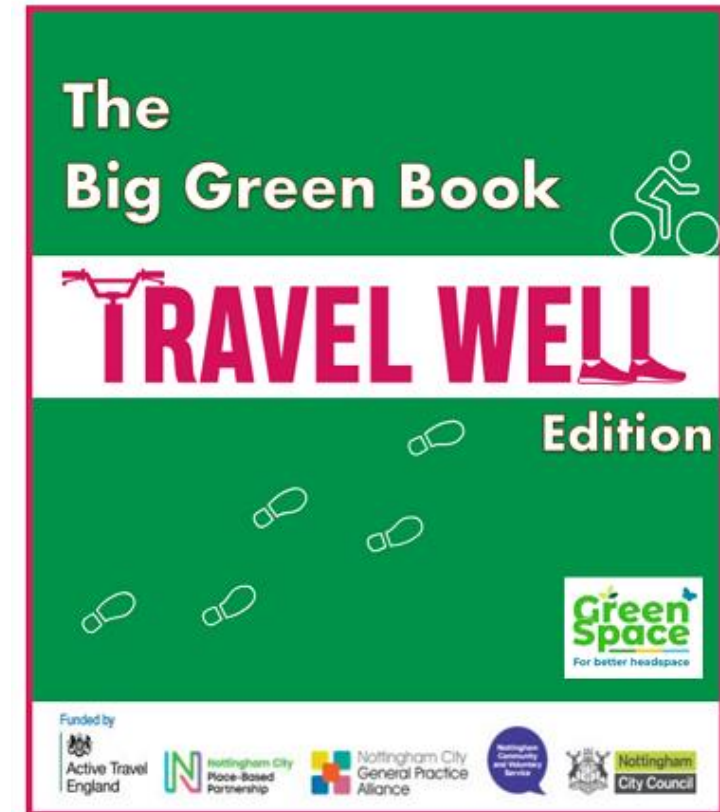
Adapting The Big Green Book



In 2023, NCVS began work on the Travel Well project, an active travel social prescribing project working in partnership with Nottingham City Council and Nottingham City GP Alliance. Three special editions of The Big Green Book have been developed to support the Travel Well project, integrating walking, cycling, and wheeling activities with the existing nature-based activities in each of the project's delivery areas.

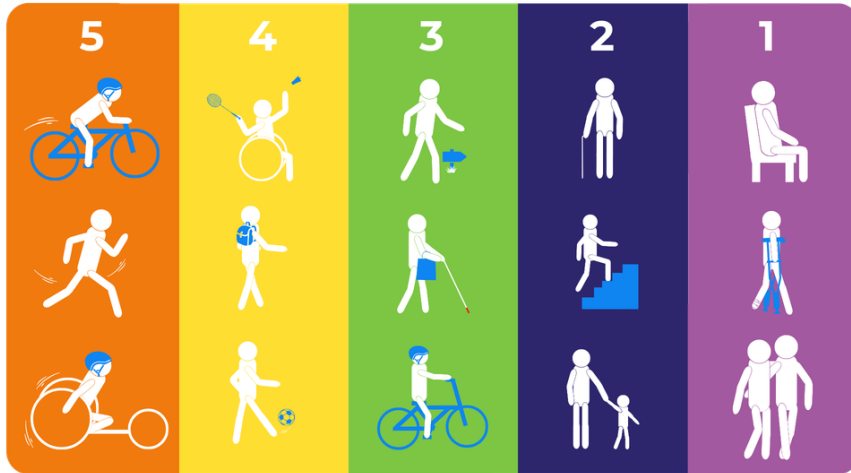
The decision to create special editions of the Green Book, rather than a specific Travel Well book, was intended to promote green social prescribing activities as a whole to better encourage people to build physical and social activity into their lives. Possibly by travelling to the activity by walking, cycling, or wheeling.

The Travel Well special edition books provide vital information for the Travel Well Community Connectors, as well as other members of the local social prescribing teams, enabling them to see at a glance the different activities available for their patients and the pathways to progress into other activities beyond the Travel Well offering.



Travel Well Activity Levels

TRAVEL WELL



“ I want to be more active, but I don’t know where to start. ”

Does this sound like you?

Well...

There’s no right or wrong place to start; everyone is different, everyone has their own starting point, and everyone will go at their own pace.

These levels are designed to help you find your starting point and make it easier to select the activities that you will enjoy and find beneficial to you.

You may be at different levels for different activities; for walking, you could be at level 4, but for cycling, you may find level 3 activities more suitable.

To find your starting point:

- 1 Think about your current fitness level when taking part in different activities.
- 2 Choose the statement that best describes your current fitness levels.
- 3 Look for that level in the description section of the activities in the Travel Well edition of The Big Green Book.

If your level is in the description of an activity, then that’s an activity for you to try!



Activity levels aren't permanent, and you may need to check and alter your fitness levels as you start to become more active. They can be a good marker of progress!

Did you know that people are naturally less active in the winter months or after a period of illness or injury? If you find yourself becoming less active or lacking motivation, don't feel disheartened—we all need motivation sometimes; just find your new starting point and go from there!

Travel Well Activity Levels

TRAVEL WELL



Level 1: I need a lot of help to be more active



Me now: I might do no physical activity or very little. This may be because I struggle with motivation or because I don't know how to get started. I may be inactive due to a medical condition, movement limitations, or disability, or I may be recovering from an illness, injury, or operation. I may need information and advice to help me find an activity that suits me, or I may need a lot of help to access a suitable activity.

My goals may be: To move more to feel better. To build my confidence. To be able to walk, ride or wheel more. To build up my strength and fitness. To connect with other people.

What will help me: I might try very short routes with lots of opportunities to rest. I may need help with transportation to activities. I might have a support worker who will come with me, or I may need the support of a buddy or mentor. I might benefit from 1:1 sessions, or I might want to take part in small group activities to meet people or to become part of a community.

Level 2: I need some help to be more active



Me now: I might do some physical activity, such as walking to the shops, gardening or housework, fewer than three times a week. This could be because I struggle with motivation or because I don't know how to start becoming more active. I may have a medical condition, injury or movement limitations.

My goals may be: To improve my fitness, strength, mobility and balance. To connect with other people. To improve the symptoms of medical conditions such as obesity, anxiety, depression, osteoarthritis or diabetes. I may be an older person, someone with a disability who wants to maintain their independence or someone in recovery from an illness, injury or operation.

What will help me: I may want to try gentle activities for 10 to 15 minutes at a time. I might want to try slow-paced walks, wheels or bike rides over short distances with places to rest on the route. I may need some information and advice to help me find a suitable activity, or I may need some help to access or attend an activity. I may benefit from the support of a buddy or mentor. I might want 1:1 sessions, or I might want to take part in more group activities to meet people or become part of a community.

Level 3: I am ready to become more active



Me now: I might do some physical activity at least three days a week, such as walking to work, school, the local shops, gardening or housework, but I don't do any other exercise. I am looking for ways to be more physically active and include exercise in my week.

My goals may be: To improve my level of fitness. To manage my weight. To improve health conditions such as obesity, anxiety, depression, osteoarthritis, or diabetes. I may be an older person or have a medical condition or disability and want to maintain my independence.

What will help me: I might want to try medium-paced walks, which make my heart beat faster and leave me a little bit out of breath. I may want to try routes that take around 20 to 30 minutes, with places to stop and rest. Slow to medium-paced bike rides that last 20 to 30 minutes. I might want to take part in small group activities to meet people or to become part of a larger community. I may need some information or advice to find activities that will help me get started.

Level 4: I am active now



Me now: I might exercise at least twice a week and do some physical activity most days of the week, such as walking to work, school, or the local shops. My job might require me to be active on my feet for long periods of time, for example, as a nurse or shop assistant.

My goals may be: To maintain or improve my fitness level. To manage my weight. To help improve conditions such as obesity, anxiety, depression, osteoarthritis, or diabetes. To connect with other people.

What will help me: I may want to try medium to fast paced walks for around 20 to 30 minutes which will make my heart beat faster and make me feel out of breath. I might want to do routes with a distance of three to five miles or that take 45 to 90 minutes to complete. I might want to try medium-paced bike rides that last 30 to 45 minutes. I might want to take part in more group activities to meet people or to become part of a community. I may need some information or for someone to signpost me to other activities that I may want to join in with.

Level 5: I am very active



Me now: I might exercise, take part in physical activity or sports almost every day, or work in a physically demanding job, for example, as a builder, gardener or postal worker.

My goals may be: To maintain or improve my fitness level, improve or maintain my mental health or connect with other people.

What will help me: I might want to try fast-paced walks for at least 20 minutes that raise my heart rate and make me feel out of breath. I may want to do longer routes (over five miles) or walks that last for an hour or more. I might want to try fast-paced or technical rides over several miles or kilometers. I might want to take part in more group activities to meet people or to become part of a community. I might need some information or signposting to new activities and opportunities.



Dave Solly, Natural England



Rachel Quinn, NASP



National
Academy
for Social
Prescribing

Q&A

Get in touch

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 National Academy for Social Prescribing

