



Sheffield &  
Rotherham

## Sheffield & Rotherham Wildlife Trust

### Initial Findings from Green and Blue Social Prescribing Mapping and Insight work and suggested grant priorities

## Purpose of Report

To update task group members on initial findings from mapping and insight work completed by SRWT working in conjunction with Place Leads. This report outlines activity completed to date and themes that have been identified from this work that may support our objective to scale up, embed and increase the impact of Green and Blue Social Prescribing (GBSP).

Recommendations are shared suggesting how these themes and priorities might be reflected in the criteria for the upcoming small grants programme and in the future activities of SRWT development workers and the wider programme.

## Background

SRWT have been engaged to lead mapping, scoping and co-design work with communities and partners across South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw to strengthen our green offers and pathways, building a universal green offer and ensuring connection with our target communities.

To date we have:

- Worked with place leads to codesign and deliver half day stakeholder workshops in each of the 5 places to explore barriers and opportunities, suggested solutions and support needed.
- Completed further insight work using a mixture of questionnaires, visits to GBSP groups, meetings and phone calls. Those we have talked to have included service users, groups and representatives from our target communities, GBSP providers and link workers.
- As part of the stakeholder workshops we gathered information on local GBSP providers, activities and facilities, these have been collated and mapped and then further research completed to build a more complete picture of provision across SYB.
- We have accessed new Natural Capital mapping data commissioned by South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, this has been used to produce heat maps showing accessible natural greenspace and demand for access for SY. For Bassetlaw we have produced similar maps using Natural England's Accessible Nature data and IMD.
- We have analysed all of these data sets alongside IMD data indicating areas of deprivation and greatest need in terms of health inequalities.
- We have also completed limited desktop research drawing on particularly relevant reports such as the HEPP report, Health Inequalities in Social Prescribing, VAR Feb

2021, Natural England's People and Nature Survey and the findings of the University of Sheffield led Improving Wellbeing through Urban Nature (IWUN) research project.

We have particularly appreciated the support of place leads in making connections, helping to facilitate the workshops and reviewing the findings with us.

Given the time available for this initial insight work we have taken a pragmatic approach and in general (though not exclusively) we have focused on exploring issues with deprived communities in Sheffield, BAME communities in Rotherham, young people in Barnsley and young people and those living with dementia (and their carers) in Bassetlaw.

Constraints have meant that we have been less successful in completing insight work in Doncaster and with the clinically extremely vulnerable and we have had limited input from health professionals such as GPs.

## Summary of Findings / Themes

### SYB area wide

Some clear themes have arisen from the workshops and other insight work that have been consistently highlighted across all of the places. A number of these reinforce some of the barriers and enablers already highlighted in the Theory of Change completed by Chris Dayson in July.

#### Improve Pathways

People have told us that referral pathways need strengthening and that the capacity of social prescribing link worker teams can sometimes constrain referrals to GBSP. Suggested solutions put forward have been;

- Develop self-referral pathways and information to support more direct referral to GBSP alongside the established link worker route
- Work with social prescribing link workers to increase referrals to GBSP where appropriate – the planned training for link workers will support this
- Develop referral pathways for those outside the GP practice system - explore the possible role of 'community connectors' (This point echos the HEPP report recommendation re BAME communities to '*Encourage alternative pathways to provision, beyond GP referral where appropriate*')
- Awareness raising / training and information on GBSP to healthcare professionals so they can apply this in their work
- Further discussion is needed with primary care and other healthcare professionals to understand their needs / viewpoint

#### Development of provision close to where people live

Mapping work has shown that quality accessible natural greenspace is often missing from areas of our places where health needs are greatest. Travel is a barrier that has been raised repeatedly. Stakeholders have told us of the importance of using the green and blue assets on people's doorsteps. To address this we suggest:

- Development of new GBSP activities in accessible natural green and blue spaces close to where health needs are greatest
- Greater provision of resources and information to encourage people to access natural green and blue spaces close to where they live – this could engage local people in sharing tips and places to go with their community through social media campaigns and other digital platforms. To combat language barriers and digital exclusion

information should also be spread through 'community connectors' (see section on Building Community Connections below)

- Pursuing opportunities to develop more accessible natural greenspace in areas of need where this is limited (mapping for SY has already identified specific opportunity sites, there is still a need to identify these in Bassetlaw)
- Support and training for green and blue organisations and groups delivering nature based activities to adapt/connect their activities with GBSP
- Support and training for other organisations/individuals to incorporate GBSP into their activities

### **Develop hubs/networks for bringing together all GBSP providers and linking systems**

We've heard that it can be challenging for small organisations to compete with the bigger providers and that the array of GBSP offers can be confusing for those looking for activities or making referrals. People have told us that the connections between healthcare professionals, link workers and GBSP providers are currently limited:

- One solution may be to explore means of coordination and support for providers (e.g. a GBSP hub) to manage information and referrals either at place or SYB level.
- Development of directories – or most likely adding green and blue activities and providers into existing resources - has also been suggested as a way to support both self referrals and link workers
- Briefings/information for the green/blue sector and healthcare sector to improve understanding of where roles connect as part of GBSP may also be helpful

### **Sustainable funding for GBSP providers**

This has been a recurrent issue raised by GBSP providers. Activities are often short term grant funded, meaning that delivery can be stop-start. It is recognised that this is a significant challenge. Those we have spoken to have suggested:

- Coordination of GBSP providers to access and distribute funding - allied to the point re a possible GBSP hub above
- There is a need for access to long term funding to support GBSP activities to ensure they can be sustained; as part of this opportunities for accessing NHS funding streams should be explored
- Exploration of funding sources for prevention
- Consideration of how we encourage, develop and promote Social Enterprise and Community Interest Companies around GBSP

### **Improve Accessibility of GBSP activities to our target communities**

People we have talked to have identified a number of barriers that limit access to GBSP and which particularly impact our target communities

#### **Travel and kit**

The distance to quality natural greenspace, limited public transport routes, cost of travel and availability and cost of outdoor clothing/footwear are all constraints that have been identified. In addition to development of provision close to where people live we should:

- Share information on accessible sites/routes and public transport connections (potentially linked with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority Active Travel Implementation Plan)
- GBSP activity providers to offer loan of kit and travel expenses where needed - funding needs to cover these costs.
- There should be consideration of influencing opportunities we can do at scale on this issue

## Understanding, Awareness and Information

People have told us that some of the language and terms used are alienating and that there is a lack of understanding of GBSP in our target communities, amongst social prescribing link workers, healthcare professionals and within green and blue organisations. Specific issues/solutions raised have included:

- The need for simple and consistent language and messaging around GBSP
- A communications campaign to raise awareness of GBSP using accessible language and positive stories and using channels / information sources most appropriate to the target communities
- Following the planned programme of link worker training, training could be developed and delivered for healthcare professionals. One suggestion is that training for GPs in GBSP could be included as part of the CCG protected learning initiative to ensure all GPs are reached
- Training for GBSP activity providers could be supported through the Green Network and a 'community of practice' developed to support new providers/grant recipients.
- It is suggested that all GBSP activity leaders should be mental health trained with consideration given to mental health accreditation (as per BMBC Public Health pilot MH accreditation for Sports Clubs/Providers) and opportunities to access mental health training offered by local authorities should be investigated.
- Signposting and access to GBSP providers and activities could be improved by a centralised hub/use of local directories. One service user requested *"A one stop place that advertises all the different things that are being offered"*
- People have asked for better information on where to go - resources and maps could be developed/added to/promoted for each place to show accessible routes, location of toilets etc, building on existing resources already available locally/through local authorities
- Links with organisations such as AGE UK and the local press could help inform/advertise

## Confidence and Safety Concerns

A further common barrier raised has been confidence to join activities/access natural greenspaces, with particular concerns around the safety of greenspaces, especially for women. Suggestions to address this have included

- Use of buddy systems/befriending schemes, with training and support of participants to offer peer support
- Better information on where to go (echoing the point under accessibility above) - people have told us that knowing about whether there is a toilet available and safe places/routes is key
- GBSP providers should take taster activities to where target communities live/existing community groups and offer supported visits to local natural green and blue places to build confidence

## Building Community Connections

People have told us of the importance of working with community groups and organisations and community leaders/influencers who are already working in our target communities. Many people have talked about the role of community bridgers / champions or community connectors, trusted organisations and individuals within our target communities that green and blue organisations and link workers can work with to increase access to GBSP. Suggestions have included;

- Development and support of community leaders, volunteers and those with lived experience as GBSP champions/advocates to act as 'community connectors'
- Encouragement for collaborative working between community organisations and Green and Blue organisations

- Developing close links with Local Authority Community Development workers and Family Information Centres especially in the most deprived areas
- The importance of co-designing activities with target communities and those with lived experience to ensure they are accessible and meet needs

Whilst there was significant commonality in the issues raised amongst the 4 target communities (as outlined above) some of our target communities have also shared more specific barriers/needs:

### **BAME Communities**

The importance of working with trusted groups/organisations and individuals was highlighted by those we spoke to as particularly important for BAME communities. This insight work is reinforced by findings of the HEPP report (Health Inequalities in Social Prescribing, VAR Feb 2021) which recommended '*Support for patients to understand the benefits of social prescribing through utilising ethnically diverse volunteers as advocates to support VCS Advisors and PCN Link Workers*'.

Barriers to access around language and cultural competency were also raised.

Suggestions to address this were:

- Particular promotion of BAME case studies and engagement in GBSP and use of communication channels most relevant to/used by these communities
- Particular focus on supporting and developing ethnically diverse volunteers to act as GBSP champions/advocates
- Cultural competency training for GBSP providers and link workers (again echoing the HEPP report which recommended "*Cultural competence training for staff involved, from GP's through to VCS organisations*")

### **Young People**

Young people in particular have expressed to us a lack of trust in mental healthcare services and their fears/concerns about being "*fobbed off*" with GBSP without the other support that they may need. They and others have told us that they would want to access GBSP alongside other support. This reinforces the role of link workers in signposting to a range of support and for GBSP activity leaders to be mental health trained and with good lines of communication to link workers and other support services.

They also raised a specific focus on skills and personal development as part of GBSP. In response to this GBSP providers could use opportunities like the John Muir award to accredit development and skills.

### **People with dementia and their carers**

Prompted by feedback from link workers in Bassetlaw about their caseload and how people with dementia and their carers have been disproportionately affected by COVID, there has also been some focus on insight work with this group. This has made clear the additional value of GBSP activities in providing respite and support to carers of those living with a long term health condition.

## **Place Specific**

In addition to these findings there have been place specific issues that have been highlighted through our discussions and a review of mapping work.

We have categorised current GBSP provision in each locality using the categories of activity as set out in the Nature on Prescription Handbook produced by Exeter University to help identify possible priorities for new activities. We recognise that this mapping and categorisation

of current green and blue activities and providers is not exhaustive and further research would be beneficial in filling any gaps.

## Sheffield

People have told us that the model of social prescribing in Sheffield can mean that activities are often delivered ‘in house’ by community organisations hosting the social prescribing link workers. The referral pathway from link workers to green/blue providers could be strengthened.

As a large city with a strong infrastructure of community and green/blue groups there is an opportunity to add value to this by building stronger connections to target communities and between different groups/organisations. Sheffield meetings about GBSP have been very well attended and it seems there is particular appetite to strengthen partnership working through development of a possible GBSP hub.

The table below suggests that there is a prevalence of horticulture based GBSP activities currently on offer in Sheffield.

Sheffield – GBSP activities by category	
Activity category	Prevalence
Horticulture/ food growing	35
Conservation	15
Physical activity and Moving More	30
Wilderness focused	0
Integrating alternative therapies	2
Craft focused	2
Integrating talking therapies	1
Care-farming	15
Nature appreciation	9

## Barnsley

Barnsley has some strong assets in terms of its natural heritage and the amount of green activities and volunteering going on. Although these offer health and wellbeing benefits we have heard that the GBSP offer is underdeveloped so focus should be around supporting activity providers to adapt their offer and link into the GBSP programme and referrals pathways.

Barnsley has communities experiencing health inequalities in close proximity to quality green spaces but it seems local people are not generally accessing these spaces. In Barnsley North and North East (health inequality areas) the Land Trust manages Rabbit Ing’s Country Park, New Park Springs Country Park and Cudworth Common. There is potential for further work with the Land Trust to explore this issue and improve access, promoting and encouraging use of these natural greenspaces to help improve physical and mental health in these areas.

There is also an opportunity to work more closely with the Recovery College so they are aware of the GBSP offer. Barnsley RC already do some excellent work around physical activity for mental health with the Health walk scheme, Couch 2 5K, cycling, football, netball and previously gardening/allotment (with the space still available). They are currently in the process of recruiting/inducting four full time physical activity mentors who would likely be able to assist with the mentor/buddy link for people under their service accessing GBSP.

The table below suggests a prevalence of physical exercise based GBSP activities in Barnsley.

Barnsley – GBSP activities by category	
Activity category	Prevalence
Horticulture/ food growing	27
Conservation	30
Physical activity and Moving More	42
Wilderness focused	1
Integrating alternative therapies	3
Craft focused	5
Integrating talking therapies	0
Care-farming	4
Nature appreciation	10

### Bassetlaw

As a more rural borough Bassetlaw has geographically isolated communities so accessibility of activities and transport is a particular issue here.

The population structure has a greater percentage of older people than in other areas and a particular need/demand has been identified for GBSP to support those living with dementia and their carers. Insight work with groups of both young people and those living with dementia and their carers has built a picture of activities that these groups would like to access in future which has been reflected in the grant criteria below.

Similarly to Barnsley there is recognition of the value of working with existing providers already known and trusted in the area to adapt activities to deliver GBSP.

The table below suggests a prevalence of physical exercise based GBSP activities in Bassetlaw.

Bassetlaw – GBSP activities by category	
Activity category	Prevalence
Horticulture/ food growing	7
Conservation	11
Physical activity and Moving More	28
Wilderness focused	0
Integrating alternative therapies	3
Craft focused	0
Integrating talking therapies	0
Care-farming	0
Nature appreciation	6

### Rotherham

Within Rotherham there is strong infrastructure of existing volunteer led local community organisations working within BAME communities in particular. In building new GBSP activities

there is an opportunity to add value to their work and build connections to these communities where some people may not be linked into mainstream health services.

People in Rotherham have expressed safety concerns about use of greenspaces. And similarly to Barnsley although there are communities experiencing health inequalities in close proximity to some significant natural greenspaces it seems that these communities are not generally accessing these sites (for example communities in Canklow which sit adjacent to Boston Park and Canklow Woods). There are key opportunities to develop GBSP in these locations.

Although Rotherham does have a befriending service in operation to support social prescribing it is still felt that this could be further developed particularly in relation to GBSP.

The table below suggests a prevalence of physical exercise based GBSP activities in Rotherham.

Rotherham – GBSP activities by category	
Activity category	Prevalence
Horticulture/ food growing	7
Conservation	6
Physical activity and Moving More	20
Wilderness focused	0
Integrating alternative therapies	0
Craft focused	2
Integrating talking therapies	0
Care-farming	0
Nature appreciation	11

## Doncaster

Doncaster also has strong assets in terms of natural heritage and green space but with communities geographically spread, accessibility appears to be a key issue.

Feedback has suggested that social prescribing is well established. Although there has been an effective ‘buddy system’ in place this is at capacity and an area which could be further developed to help start tackling accessibility issues.

The table below suggests a prevalence of physical exercise based GBSP activities in Doncaster.

Doncaster – GBSP activities by category	
Activity category	Prevalence
Horticulture/ food growing	8
Conservation	5
Physical activity and Moving More	13
Wilderness focused	0
Integrating alternative therapies	2
Craft focused	2
Integrating talking therapies	0
Care-farming	0
Nature appreciation	4

## Recommended priorities for grant criteria

As outlined in the grants guidance, overall arching priorities for the grants programme are as follows:

1. Activities that meet the SYB definition of green and blue prescribing.
2. Activities that increase access to green prescribing for the target cohorts:
  - People with a mental health need
  - BAME communities
  - Young People
  - People who are extremely clinically vulnerable to Covid
  - People living in areas of deprivation
3. Activities that help to strengthen the local pathways by receiving referrals from social prescribing link workers,
4. Activities that can demonstrate an alternative delivery plan in case of such events as adverse seasonal impact or Covid 19 restrictions/lockdowns e.g. can deliver elements online/social distanced, can compress/adjust timescale of delivery etc.

In addition to this, together with the place leads, we have developed the following suggested place specific grant priorities in response to the above findings and to ensure the grants programme has maximum impact in each place.

## Place specific grant priorities

### Sheffield

Priority will be given to applications that address one or more of the following points:

- Projects working with people from areas of deprivation (top 20% IMD)
- Projects with a clear commitment to increasing diversity and inclusion, that can demonstrate close links to the communities they plan to engage
- Projects that support development of volunteers as GBSP advocates/champions that can act as connectors to target communities
- Projects that incorporate volunteer befriending and peer support schemes allied to delivery of GBSP activities
- Projects that support training and awareness of green/blue spaces to facilitate longer-term engagement

### Barnsley

Priority will be given to applications that address one or more of the following points:

- Projects that incorporate volunteer befriending and peer support schemes allied to delivery of GBSP activities
- Projects that will add value to an organisation's existing activities
- Projects with a clear commitment to increasing diversity and inclusion, that can demonstrate close links to the communities they plan to engage
- Projects that include personal development and accreditation opportunities for participants as part of GSP activities (for example the John Muir award) – this may be particularly relevant to those projects engaging young people
- Projects that incorporate awareness raising and activities linked to addressing the climate and ecological crisis as part of their GBSP offer, in reflection of Barnsley's ambition to become a zero carbon borough

## **Bassetlaw**

Priority will be given to applications that address one or more of the following points:

- Projects that will engage the target cohorts in Bassetlaw: young people (aged 16-25) and people living with dementia and their carers
- Activities specifically requested by cohorts have included:
  - i) Young people – Intergenerational activities and skills swaps; Community gardening; Conservation and Sustainability projects to gain skills; Star Gazing; Bushcraft; Blue activities including cleaning areas for fishing; Cycle trials
  - ii) Those with dementia/their carers - Gardening including sensory gardens, Conservation and Wildlife projects; Bowling/Boules; Boat trips; Intergenerational activities and skill swaps; Outdoor arts and crafts; Outdoor exercise including tai chi; importance of all activities including socialising opportunities
- Projects that include personal development and accreditation opportunities for participants as part of GSP activities (for example the John Muir award) – this may be particularly relevant to those projects engaging young people
- Projects that will add value to an organisation's existing activities
- Projects that will ensure that new participants feel welcome and the environment is safe
- Projects that demonstrate how they will make activities accessible considering barriers of mobility and transport

## **Rotherham**

Priority will be given to applications that address one or more of the following points:

- Projects that will add value to an organisation's existing activities working with the target communities
- Projects from volunteer led community groups new to GBSP
- Projects that will link target communities to GBSP activities in accessible natural greenspaces close to where they live
- Projects that support access to natural greenspaces as safe and welcoming spaces and deliver inclusive and culturally appropriate activities
- Projects that incorporate volunteer befriending and peer support schemes allied to delivery of GBSP activities
- Projects that support development of volunteers as GBSP advocates/champions that can act as connectors to target communities

## **Doncaster**

Priority will be given to applications that address one or more of the following points:

- Projects that incorporate volunteer befriending and peer support schemes allied to delivery of GBSP activities
- Projects that demonstrate how they will make activities accessible considering barriers of mobility and transport
- Projects that will add value to an organisation's existing activities and in particular where they are already working with the target communities
- Projects that support access to natural greenspaces as safe and welcoming spaces and deliver inclusive and culturally appropriate activities

Cathy Slater, Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust  
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