

# Making the most of green space for people's health

## CASE STUDY

### STEPPING INTO NATURE, DORSET

#### What and why?

For a variety of reasons, older people and those living with dementia and their carers can find it hard to visit natural environments and thus receive the health benefits that engaging with nature can provide.

Stepping into Nature aims to help people be happier and healthier by connecting with nature. It uses Dorset's natural and cultural landscape to provide activities and sensory rich places for older adults, including those living with dementia and their care partners. Its nature-themed activities – both indoors and out – help people find new places to go, learn new skills and meet like-minded people.

It offers a wide range of dementia inclusive activities across different locations.



Sing and Stroll

Poetry at Dorchester Memory Cafe



**Location:** Across Dorset

**Partners:** Dorset AONB, Public Health Dorset, Dorset Council

**Stakeholders:** Activities were delivered by a consortium of environment and cultural organisations, freelancers and community groups supported by the SiN core team.

## Activities:

Stepping into Nature works with a range of activity providers such as Dorset Wildlife Trust, Dorset Forest School and Dorset History Centre to support and fund the delivery of inclusive activities inspired by or within nature. Activities have included, but are not limited to, village walks, poetry sessions, green woodwork and gardening.

From 2017 – 2020, 474 dementia friendly nature-based activities have been delivered through a range of partners involving 827 participants.

There has been a focus on improving inclusivity through improved access to nature as well as addressing mental barriers such as fear of the unknown for the targeted audience, of older people and those living with dementia and their carers, as this was identified as a key barrier.

Provides funding for communities and organisations to help create more “Dementia Friendly”, inclusive, accessible and enjoyable green spaces.

Supports staff and volunteers, particularly those within environmental organisations, to become dementia friendly so that they are better equipped to provide activities for the target audience.

### **LINK TO PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESSFUL INTERVENTIONS**

**Social promotion activities.**

**Community engagement.**

**Cross discipline engagement of health and environment systems.**

For more information:

[www.stepin2nature.org](http://www.stepin2nature.org)

## Outcomes:

Increased connection and time in nature for participants. Increased health and wellbeing of participants and increased life skills.

Provided opportunities for social connection and involvement for participants.

Provided informal respite for carers and supported carer-partners relationships.

Training and support provided to activity providers by the project, which has increased the activity providers' awareness, confidence and capacity to deliver to the target audience.

Adapted the location, time, days and types of activities after evaluation to ensure the activities are accessible to as many people as possible.

### **LESSONS LEARNT**

- The project found that people living with dementia and their carers were a hard to reach group. The language used in promoting activities proved very important and influenced the number of people taking part in activities.
- A combination of social interaction and active participation was where people saw the most positive difference for people with dementia and their carers.
- Limited transport or mobility prevents many people from accessing green space, therefore important to have locally accessible dementia friendly outdoor activities.
- Encouraged co-ordination between the environment and health sectors. A longer term aim is to forge new partnerships with the health sector in Dorset and linking more closely with social prescribing.