

### What is a Nature Prescription?

A growing body of evidence indicates that individuals with a greater connection to nature, experience improved mental wellbeing, greater vitality and happiness, and are more satisfied with life. Research also shows that increasing your connection with nature can positively impact a range of conditions, including stress, anxiety and depression.

An RSPB Nature Prescription is a free to use, non-medical approach based on accessible, self-led activities that people can do from home, on their own or with others; and that aim to create lasting connections with nature that inspire a desire to nurture and protect it. Nature Prescriptions can be done in a person's own time, are generally free and do not require travel.

An RSPB Nature Prescription can be offered by a trained healthcare professional and includes a leaflet and calendar of activities. From listening to the sounds of nature from your window to looking for patterns in a frozen puddle, the activities aim to highlight a wide range of ways to realise the health benefits that being in nature can deliver.

It is important to highlight that a Nature Prescription consists of a guided conversation, supported by the calendar and leaflet. It would have considerably reduced value and impact as a self-prescription or as a simple download. An evaluation of Nature Prescriptions was conducted in a pilot study in Edinburgh and a report is available [here](#).

The RSPB are developing the Nature Prescription offer throughout England and highlights from this work are covered in this blog: [RSPB Nature Prescriptions one year on](#)

### Nature Prescriptions Pilot in the High Peak

Project leads from the RSPB and the Peak District National Park Authority, with support from local GP Tom Miller, [The Bureau](#) in Glossop and the [High Peak CVS](#) worked to pilot the first ever Nature Prescription in England.

- In late 2022, we co-created with the staff from the Bureau and the High Peak CVS, the Nature Prescription Calendar and Leaflet for the High Peak. RSPB printed these as high quality materials.
- The calendar includes a variety of suggested ways to connect to nature that can be completed in local parks and green spaces. There are also suggestions that can be completed at home for those that might struggle to access local green spaces. Each month also has a slightly more challenging, aspirational activity to make individuals aware of the opportunities that are available in the Peak District National Park, such as the Miles Without Stiles routes. [Miles without stiles](#)
- In November 2022, we provided a training session for 12 members of the social prescribing teams to outline why connecting to nature is important to our health and wellbeing, to explain how a Nature Prescription works and to provide them with the key messages around the value of connecting with nature.
- The project lead from the [Grapevine Wellbeing Centre in Buxton](#) agreed to trial the Nature Prescription as a part of their service, to see how the prescription might work in a group setting.
- On 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2023, we officially launched the first pilot of RSPB Nature Prescriptions in England, which led to a lot of media interest, both national and globally.
- In July 2023 we provided an additional training session for new social prescribing link workers and an option for a refresher session for existing link workers. This training included the Derbyshire Dales CVS Social prescribing team, who launched their Nature Prescription in August 2023 (more details below). 15 individuals trained in using the Nature Prescription.
- Following interest from Older Adult services from the Community Mental Health Team, in late 2023, we provided training for the 9 members of their team (Dementia Support Workers and the Occupational Therapists). They have shared the idea of Nature Prescriptions within wider team meetings with other CMHTs throughout Derbyshire, and this has sparked wider interest.
- The Christmas 2023 Edition of the BMJ included an article on Dr Tom Miller and his support for the pilot [Role model: Tom Miller | The BMJ](#)

## Nature Prescriptions Pilot in the Derbyshire Dales

Although the High Peak pilot was delivered with no financial ask from the RSPB and the PDNPA, it would not be sustainable for the Nature Prescriptions to expand within Derbyshire without any funding. After hearing about the pilot in the High Peak, Derbyshire Dales CVS Social Prescribing Team [Social Prescribing \(ddcv.org.uk\)](http://ddcv.org.uk) were keen to have a Nature Prescription for their clients and successfully secured funding from Derbyshire Mind's Mental Health and Wellbeing Activity Grant. This enabled us to:

- co-create a Derbyshire Dales Nature Prescription.
- print high quality materials.
- provide training for the link workers to be able to confidently use the Nature Prescription.
- support the staff in creating an additional online resource to sit alongside the materials padlet [Nature Prescription \(padlet.com\)](https://padlet.com).
- provide ongoing support to promote and deliver the Nature Prescription.

## Evaluation of the Pilot

There is a wealth of evidence that connection to nature has a positive impact of many aspects of health and wellbeing. Rather than measuring impact on an individual client level, which can be complicated and time consuming, we are collecting the following:

- Number of trained prescribers – 30 (both High Peak and Derbyshire Dales)
- Numbers of prescriptions given out – 70 in High Peak (this number includes those who accessed the Nature Prescription through the Grapevine)
- Individual case studies to record the positive impacts from the pilots.

We will provide more information on this in the presentation on 31<sup>st</sup> January.

We are also going to be running a facilitated workshop in February with the project leads and both the High Peak and the Derbyshire Dales social prescribing teams to reflect on the two pilots. The aims of the workshop are:

- to recognise the successes and highlights of the project to date.
- to identify any barriers to take up and explore potential solutions.
- to reflect on whether and how the materials need adapting or changing.
- to explore ways to embed Nature Prescriptions as a tool to use across Derbyshire.

## Next Steps – supporting existing pilots

We will continue to support the existing format of the Nature Prescription in the two pilot areas, through provision of materials and additional training for new members of staff within the social prescribing teams. In addition, we are planning:

- to work with Townend Community Garden to set up a Nature Prescription group session.
- to develop a digital document to provide easy access to links in the prescription.
- to set up Nature Natters walks in the Derbyshire Dales – short supported walks with a focus on connecting with nature to compliment the Nature Prescription.

## Next Steps – beyond the pilots

We are exploring whether there is interest and funding to develop a Derbyshire Wide Nature Prescription that could be part of the toolkit of a range of health and social care professionals working within Derbyshire to support health and wellbeing.

In other areas in England, the RSPB project lead has delivered projects that have focused on creating Nature Prescription for more targeted audiences, such as stroke survivors and their carers and people living in mental health rehab units. This learning could be used in Derbyshire to create Nature Prescriptions for specific audiences where there is a recognised need.

**Thanks for reading. For more information, please contact the project leads:**

Sarah Walker, Nature and Wellbeing Manager, RSPB, [Sarah.Walker1@rspb.org.uk](mailto:Sarah.Walker1@rspb.org.uk)

Jo Hanney, Community and Wellbeing Ranger, PDNPA, [jo.hanney@peakdistrict.gov.uk](mailto:jo.hanney@peakdistrict.gov.uk)