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Embedding Nature-Based Practice and Nature Recovery Strategies into Public Healthcare

INSIGHTS FROM SITE VISITS & CASE STUDIES

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NHS staff were funded to participate in the Certificate in Nature-based Practice delivered by Circle of Life Rediscovery CIC (CLR).

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INSIGHTS FROM SITE VISITS & CASE STUDIES

The staff identified in this report are critical links between the priorities of Natural England to create “resilient ecosystems rich in wildlife and natural beauty, enjoyed by people and widely benefiting society” and the ambition of the NHS to take “urgent action to address climate change”, yet they continue to face challenges.

One

Strong desire from NHS staff to incorporate nature-based practices into healthcare, despite institutional and logistical challenges.

Two

Diverse site conditions (e.g. size, accessibility, ecological profile, sensory overstimulation) constrain the therapeutic potential of available NHS green spaces.

Three

Limited funding, staffing, and systemic support curtail the regular implementation of nature-based interventions.

Four

Lack of clear communication channels between healthcare staff, estates teams, and managers, resulting in disjointed or stalled initiatives.

Five

Absence of a centralised process map or shared strategy across Sussex NHS Trusts for developing and managing nature-based practices.

INSIGHTS FROM SITE VISITS & CASE STUDIES

Six

Low awareness of existing frameworks like NHS Forest and Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS) among NHS staff.

Seven

High variability in site readiness and individual managerial support across the NHS Estate in Sussex, contributing to unequal access and opportunity.

Eight

Sussex NHS Trust estate sites and nature-based practice interventions require internal evaluation to consolidate existing knowledge of impact and benefit for public and staff on well-being and healthcare outcomes.

Nine

Need for dedicated, secure green spaces (e.g. woodland sites) for consistent nature-based care delivery across services identified by NHS staff.

Ten

Current site conditions limit the potential for NHS staff to experience the health and well-being benefits of spending time outdoors whilst engaged in their day-to-day professional roles.

ACTIONS REQUIRED BY NHS STAFF TO EMBED NATURE-BASED PRACTICE IN HEALTHCARE

If systemically supported, these NHS staff (and others like them) could be engaged as stewards for the recovery of nature across the NHS estate in Sussex. In turn they could provide those using the NHS for their healthcare with direct access to nature.

1

Allocate funding and job-planned time for NHS staff to develop, implement, and evaluate nature-based interventions at their sites AND **encourage participation in Special Interest Groups** and ensure their time is protected by formal NHS support.

2

Enhance current NHS estate site conditions to support their therapeutic potential and benefit to staff and public.

3

Increase funding and engage external nature-connection mentors to support NHS staff in deepening site-specific practices and programme development.

4

Foster collaboration between NHS estates, health professionals, ecologists, and community partners for nature and health co-benefits.

5

Use process mapping and data-informed advocacy to clarify how staff can navigate system-level barriers and activate site potential.

ACTIONS REQUIRED BY NHS STAFF TO EMBED NATURE-BASED PRACTICE IN HEALTHCARE

Continued

6

Establish a central resource hub with templates, session plans, site assessment tools, and risk frameworks AND forge connections with LNRS provision and NHS Forest initiatives.

7

Support staff well-being by creating nature-enhanced environments that allow for outdoor breaks, therapeutic gardens, and patient engagement.

8

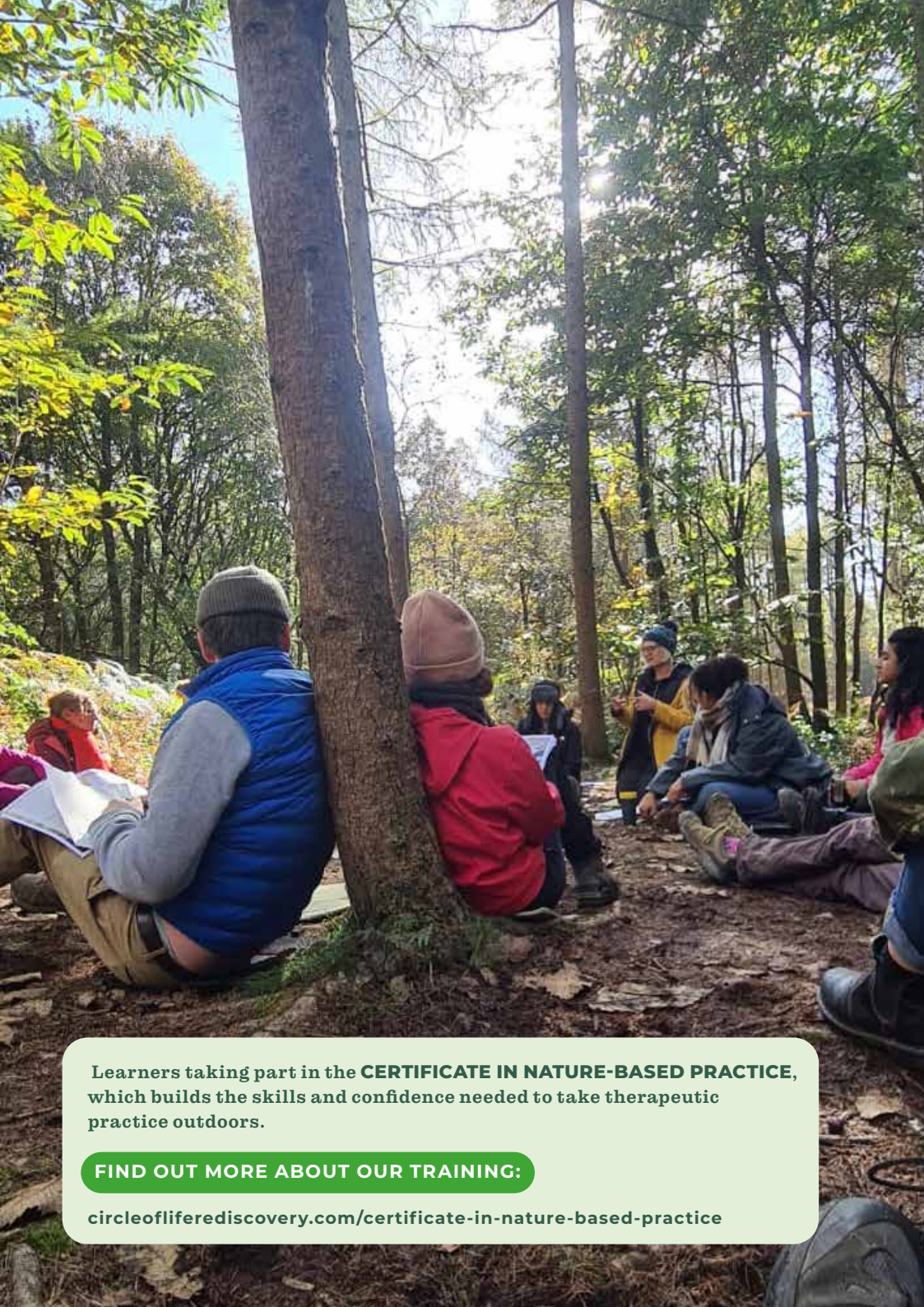
Include 'Experts by Experience' in programme design to reflect patient perspectives and evaluate impact.

9

Create or designate dedicated woodland or outdoor therapeutic spaces accessible to multiple NHS services across the region.

10

Participate in training such as the **Certificate in Nature-based Practice** with Circle of Life Rediscovery CIC.



Learners taking part in the **CERTIFICATE IN NATURE-BASED PRACTICE**, which builds the skills and confidence needed to take therapeutic practice outdoors.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT OUR TRAINING:

circleofliferediscovery.com/certificate-in-nature-based-practice

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LEVEL 3 CERTIFICATE IN NATURE-BASED PRACTICE
provided by Circle of Life Rediscovery CIC, next
starting June 2026.

*"This course has been brilliant. Really informative and fulfilling.
It has helped me to reconnect with the therapeutic component of
nature and how to use it with my service users – it has been amazing to
see the impact that these interventions have had on my service users!"*

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