

Pathfinder News



Newsletter for Pathfinder West Sussex, our partners and service users, keeping you up-to-date with developments across the alliance

Spring 2021

In this edition of Pathfinder News we're looking forward to Mental Health Awareness Week in May, and focusing on this year's theme: Nature

The Mental Health Foundation decided on this theme for 2021 because 'the evidence is clear that access to nature is crucial for our mental health and millions of people re-discovered that during lockdowns this year. However, this was not the same for all of us. We want to explore what the barriers are and ensure everyone is able to share in the natural world and experience the mental health benefits.'

We take a look at the many different ways in which Pathfinder services connect to and explore the natural world: from

Richmond Fellowship's allotment project to Stonepillow's work with the Cobnor Activities Centre Trust.

There's also a chance to hear about West Sussex Mind's Moving Minds campaign, which aims to help people back outside after lockdown using kites, as well as the benefits of mindful walking.

If you have any suggestions for future newsletters, please contact pathfindercomms@westsussexmind.org



Photo credit: Brad Christian on Unsplash

www.pathfinderwestsussex.org.uk

Outdoor activities for Stonepillow

Starting the year in another lockdown has been a challenging time for so many people. But with the days becoming lighter, clients of Stonepillow - the Bognor-based homelessness charity - have a spring in their step.

Throughout March, Stonepillow's clients have been taking advantage of the bespoke program of multi-activities on offer to them at the Cobnor Activities Centre Trust; an independent charity based in Chichester Harbour, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Since receiving funding from Sussex Health and Care Partnership, Stonepillow have been working with the dedicated team of professional staff at the Trust Centre who specialise in providing training and development in a range of activities and courses including sailing, raft building and kayaking, climbing, orienteering and archery - as well as many other challenging and imaginative outdoor and environmental activities.

All activities are designed to help those struggling with mental health challenges, and will promote self-belief, resilience, teamwork, and communication.



Stonepillow decided to run the activities program again this year due to the great success of the first program in October & November last year when clients had a wonderful time and gained a lot from the experience.



Significant increases were reported in levels of confidence, feelings of usefulness, optimism about the future and the ability to make decisions. Here is what Stonepillow clients had to say.

"It was amazing! Great team bonding, confidence building and very enjoyable."

"I would definitely go again; I learnt lots about myself and my peers."

Stonepillow is extremely thankful to Cobnor Activities Centre Trust, and Sussex Health and Care Partnership, for their support to enable such an enjoyable and inspiring program to benefit the health and wellbeing of their clients.

Moving Minds campaign

West Sussex Mind's 'Open Minds' project focuses on anti-stigma and mental health awareness-raising in the community. As with all projects at West Sussex Mind, it is service-user led, based on the insight and creativity of people with lived experience.

Tying-in with the Mental Health Awareness week theme of Nature, the Moving Minds campaign launches on 1st May and will continue with activities until 31 May.

Objectives

- Communicating specific opportunities to think and talk about moving from the confines of lockdown back into the community and community spaces: building confidence to leave the house to go outside, be around others and feel okay.
- Re-engaging face-to-face with available support and services as the community opens up.
- Creating more opportunities for awareness and engagement from under-represented groups.
- Creating colourful, creative events across West Sussex where people can access information and engage with mental health champions, developing their feelings of being safe and liberated using parks and open spaces.
- Engaging schools and young people in anti-stigma around mental health and prevention of experiences that have a negative impact on positive mental health.
- Building on past experience of a digital campaign and increase reach and content.

Exploring diversity

A photographic exhibition will tell the story of mental health champions from diverse communities, sharing their personal mental health journeys and recoveries to raise awareness and encourage people to seek support.



Photo credit: Umut Yilman on unsplash

Kites

This year's Moving Minds aims to capture movement - not only in the physical sense but as a call to action.

A kite can fail to fly many times due to the conditions, but the joy of a moment of flight can be a wonderful reward and so uplifting. We're using this metaphor of kites and kite-flying to express diversity and display unity with the message Moving Minds: Together We Rise.

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Moving Minds - continued



Photo credit:
Hello I'm Nik on unsplash

A video will be made available to share, explaining the campaign and demonstrating how to make a kite.

We'd like to encourage the making and displaying of kites in windows to show solidarity around mental health. Kite posters based on service users' artwork will be available for display.

We see the kites as an opportunity for people to venture out into public spaces and reclaim them in a safe way.

For more information and to get involved, please email
Louisa.Hernandez@westsussexmind.org

Sussex Partnership step challenge

Walking is a stress-busting, health boosting calorie burner and 'Be Active' is one of the 5 Ways to Wellbeing. The Pathfinder Team are taking part in the Care Without Carbon Step Up Challenge with Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust, and have committed to covering 2100 miles in 12 weeks.

There are three virtual routes:

The Bones Route which is a virtual adventure along the Jurassic Coast covering 95 miles of ancient coastline

The Fairytale Route which is a walk from Dover Castle to the Little Mermaid in Copenhagen covering 1050 miles

The Great Frontier Route which is a virtual adventure along the Appalachian Trail covering 2100 miles, the longest hiking only trail in the world!

We have some keen walkers in the team and, so far, after just one week have covered over 300 miles.

www.pathfinderwestsussex.org.uk

Allotments and mental health/1

There is no doubt that allotments have become increasingly popular in recent years, with many families, schools and community groups taking over plots.

In part this is down to people wanting to know - and for children to learn - where their food comes from. But there is an increasing body of evidence that shows the benefit of working on allotments for good mental health. They are a perfect way for many people in urban settings to access nature through plants and wildlife. And also to have access to a community, helping to combat isolation.

Allotments during lockdowns

Tending allotments has been allowed under the lockdown as part of the daily exercise allowance. For many - including ploholders at in Worthing's West Tarring Allotments - being able to keep connected to others, as well as nature, was a vital activity for their mental health.

I just like to get down here, get my hands dirty and say 'hello'. There's always someone down here.
Sue, West Tarring Allotments,
Worthing

John Harrison is the well-known author of several books on vegetable growing and allotments. His allotment-themed newsletter reaches 35,000 people every month. In the March 2021 edition he noted 'Mental health does suffer in isolation - I know mine has ... there are days when I feel very down and negative.

'Getting outside or even just in the greenhouse helps improve the mood no end.'



John Harrison, credit britishrecycledplastics.co.uk

Academic study

A recent study by the University of Sheffield*, and published in the British Food Journal, investigated how 'participation in urban horticulture (UH) is increasing in popularity, and evidence is emerging about the wide range of social and environmental benefits "grow your own" can also provide.'

The paper discussed how urban horticulture can increase mental and physical well-being, as well as improve connectedness to nature, social capital and community cohesion.

Over 160 allotment holders were engaged for the study, with the findings noting that participants recorded high levels of social and community activities .

*<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/BFJ-07-2020-0593/full/html?skipTracking=true>

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Allotments and mental health/2

The study found that participants benefited from the sharing of surplus food produce, knowledge exchange, awareness and interaction with wildlife, emotional connection to their allotment, appreciation of time spent outside and aesthetic delight in the natural world around them.



Photo: Katherine Anne Rose/The Observer

What's clear is that allotments have the potential to offer engagement with all five ways to well-being.

Richmond Fellowship project

Richmond Fellowship set up its own Allotment Project in April 2019 with the aim of showing clients how growing food and flowers can improve physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

The team worked on a previously overgrown patch of earth using donated tools and materials. Advised by neighbouring plot holders, they have produced harvests of vegetables, herbs and flowers.

Being part of the allotment team has helped participants develop friendships and networks.

As well as the practicalities of how to grow food and flowers, there has also been an opportunity to learn about seasonality, and the medicinal and nutritional properties of fruit, vegetables, herbs and flowers.

In addition there has been greater connection with nature through understanding more about pollinators and wildlife, and creating a healthy eco-system on the plot.

Crimsham Farm

United Response have also been referring clients to this Bognor-based community farming project, spearheaded and run by armed forces veterans and young adults with learning difficulties.

In addition to helping grow vegetables, the farm offers the opportunity for people to get close to the farm's saddleback pigs and saanen goats.

Community growing projects

Of course, not everyone has easy access to an allotment. In many places there are long waiting lists, and the regular attention allotments need don't fit in with everyone's lifestyle. However, there are a range of community garden and orchard projects across the county, which encourage participation in growing food. Below are links to a few of them:

Arun community orchards
arun.gov.uk/community-orchards

Steyning community orchard
Steyningcommunityorchard.org

Transition Chichester
transitionchichester.org/grow-chichester/

Transition Town Worthing
ttworthing.org

Mindful walking: my nature cure

Penny Watts – Bognor Community Mental Health Support Worker, United Response - explains how mindful walking can help everyone.

One thing that I have always loved is nature and the outdoors and it is something I always try and encourage the people I support to do: go for a walk and get outdoors, especially when they are struggling.

We need this now even more so during this difficult and challenging year that we have all had. We need an emotional break from the constant chatter, in all its forms that bombards us on a daily basis. For me, being outdoors and walking allows me to press the re-set button, recharge, reflect and be free.

I am always regaling the benefits of this simple pleasure to my clients because it is accessible, free and easy. When I hear that someone has had a walk or a sit by the sea, {we are lucky to live by the coast}, there is always a positive outcome and it can make a difference to low mood and anxiety levels and it can calm the mind.

The very motion of putting one foot in front of the other can have a meditative effect and it's not just about physical exercise, it's about calming the mind, slowing down the inner chatter, breathing and just being.

As you walk you start to notice, feel, watch and listen: this allows you to be present and mindful of what's around you. A bird singing, the wind in the trees, the shape of clouds, the lapping of the waves can be a soothing balm for the spirit. It's like a remedy; your senses are stimulated but in a nourishing way and when you are in that moment worries and anxieties can disperse.

I can go out and begin a walk consumed with the days 'stuff' going around in my head, then I see a kestrel and suddenly the world is all kestrel and I feel released as I watch it hover and hunt. It helps to rebuild my armour and prepares me afresh.



Photo credit: Ute Becker from Pixabay

This is when being in the present just happens without trying or practicing and it just unfolds naturally and is both healing and soothing.

Whatever is going on in the world or your own life, going to nature can have a curative effect and it never lets you down. With all life's uncertainties, nature is a constant; the birds will sing, the cycle of life and survival will play out regardless. This is why I think it's healing because it is there like an old and loyal friend.

Even if you live in a city or town there is a green space or park to be found to just be outdoors and feel the air on your skin. It is there for us to connect with and after all we are part of it and it is part of us.

Other ways of connecting with nature

Sussex Wildlife Trust

www.sussexwildlifetrust.org.uk/get-involved/community-projects

The Trust has a number of community projects which aim to engage West Sussex residents, and help them connect with nature. Current projects include an activity focusing on the marine environment, and a rewilding partnership with Horsham District Council.



Sussex
Wildlife Trust

Steyning Downland Scheme

<https://steyningdownland.org>



A registered charity which manages part of the Wiston Estate near Steyning, West Sussex. The scheme aims to reconnect local people with their species-rich piece of downland, as well as their community, through volunteering, events and inclusive access.

South Downs National Park

www.southdowns.gov.uk

Dominating the West Sussex countryside, the park encompasses a number of walking and cycling paths - including the South Downs Way, Serpent Trail and the soon to be launched West Sussex Mind Trail - as well as bridleways. Volunteering opportunities are advertised on the South Downs National Park website, along with a host of guides to the plants and wildlife that can be found within the park.



Knepp Wilding

www.knepp.co.uk



Knepp Wildland is a large rewilding project in a 3,500-acre site which also contains the ruins of the old Knepp castle. Volunteering opportunities are advertised on the Knepp Estate website.



pathfinder
west sussex

**FOR BETTER
MENTAL WELLBEING**

What is Pathfinder West Sussex?

Pathfinder West Sussex is an alliance of organisations working together to enable people with mental health support needs, and their carers, to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

We provide a pathway of mental health recovery support so people can move freely between services to get well and stay well.

Services are provided in ten areas: Adur, Bognor, Chanctonbury, Chichester, Crawley, Horsham, Littlehampton, Midhurst, Mid Sussex and Worthing.

Our website (www.pathfinderwestsussex.org.uk) is updated weekly with news and blogs, and also gives contact information for all partners.

The four lead providers of Pathfinder services are West Sussex Mind, United Response, Sussex Oakleaf and Richmond Fellowship, the other organisations that make up the alliance with them are CAPITAL Project, Mind in Brighton and Hove, Rethink, Stonepillow, Southdown and NHS Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust (SPFT).