

# Green social prescribing to prevent and tackle mental ill health

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Researchers at the University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University, the University of Exeter and the University of Plymouth investigated whether prescribing nature could help prevent and tackle mental ill

health.

Social prescribing and community-based support enable GPs, other [health](#) and care practitioners and local agencies to refer people to a link worker who gives people time and focuses on what matters to the individual. For some people, this will be green social prescribing, which links them to nature-based interventions and activities, such as local walking for health schemes, community gardening and food-growing projects.

The evaluation was contracted by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and supported by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), Natural England, NHS England, Public Health England (now UK Health Security Agency and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Documents. Services), Sport England, the National Academy of Social Prescribing (NASP), and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

Throughout the two-year funded period, the [research consortium](#) delivered an in-depth evaluation across [seven test-and-learn sites targeting](#) communities in England hardest hit by COVID-19. They wanted to help these sites understand how, and in what ways, their activities can successfully connect people with nature to improve mental health and well-being.

The team took a "lighter touch" approach to evaluating green social prescribing in other areas, helping to boost understanding of how green social prescribing could be scaled up and embedded into practice effectively.

Annette Haywood (University of Sheffield lead) said, "As one of the U.K.'s top 10 greenest cities, situated on the edge of one of England's most beautiful national parks, we were excited to be involved in this

evaluation of Green Social Prescribing. It will help deliver on the Government's ambition to enable more people, from all backgrounds, to engage with and spend time in green and blue spaces in their everyday lives. This is particularly important in the context of COVID-19, which has had an unprecedented impact on the nation's mental health and well-being."

**More information:** GSP Evaluation Interim Report—Main Report: [beyondgreenspace.files.wordpress.com/2023/01/gsp-report-jan-2023.pdf](#)

Provided by University of Sheffield

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