

Natural Health Service towards commissions – lessons learnt from Nature4Health

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Developing a Natural Health Service

- A consortium of organisations
- Products targeted at specific conditions
- 10-16 weeks course (dose)
- Information and governance in line with other commissioned services
- Framework for assessment of progress using approved & validated measures
- Independent evaluation



Natural Health
Service



Research Centre of Excellence

- Working with the two universities in Liverpool
 - Two PhDs
 - Evaluating the health and wellbeing benefits associated with outdoor interventions
 - Mindful contact with nature



BSc placements

MSc research

Research bids eg. NIHR

Papers at conferences:



Our Products:

- Walking for Health
- Horticultural Therapy
- Mindful contact with nature
- Forest School
- TCV's Green Gym



Using this first year to:

- Test the Natural Health Service approach
- Monitor and evaluate
- Improve delivery
- Working towards being commissioned



What worked best?

- When collaborating with partners who are embedded within their community
- Celebrating success
- Importance of monitoring - evidencing change
 - Qualitative is important too
 - SORI
- Social interaction is as critical as the activity
- Being clear from the outset what we expect
- Rolling 12 week programmes - as at the Countess



Results from Year 1

There were a lot of lovely conversations about life and recovery in the polytunnel, which was great therapy.

(Addaction Horticultural Therapy participant)

“This exercise is keeping me out of the hospital. Better than therapy”

(Green Gym Participant)

“The group is good and I can now take on the world - bring it on!”

(Therapeutic Gardening Participant)

“Billy: hasn’t needed to access his mental health support team since starting the course. Usually accesses ‘all the time...every five minutes!’

(Forest School for Adults Participant)



What have we learnt?

- Market products to the audience
- Flexibility critical – within product fidelity
- Time of year is more important than we thought
- Health, not environment, has to be the focus
- Professionalism of delivery partners critical
- Honest and working relationship with delivery partners is vital
- Getting follow up questionnaires is proving harder than envisaged - lots of reasons: jobs 😊



Social Return on Investment

What does this mean?

- As a consortium, we are now in a position to conduct and integrate relevant impact mapping
- Project planning strengthened
- Stakeholders more engaged
- Outcomes better defined
- Monitoring and evaluation more effective
- Communication strategy more effective



Discussion



Critical Success Factors

- Provide the supply chain from land owners, managers and experienced community leaders to deliverers, researchers and academics.
- A single contact point for commissioning organisations.
- Offer a range of products to help promote good health and assist in treatment of poor health.
- We are not exclusive – open for organisations to join
- Robust processes in place



Working at scale

- Working as partners (consortium) so that there are a (limited) variety of 'products'
- Evidenced based
- Effective
- Lower cost
- Replicable
- Builds resilience and develops coping strategies.
- Location within a Community Forest - near to the population



Applying elsewhere

- Loads of learning!
- Still working hard to develop a strategic commissioned programme over a sustained time period (as opposed to short term funded projects at the end of the financial year.)
- Found some great ways of engaging the hard to reach communities
- Evidencing the results in meaningful way to commissioners with minimal intrusion to the participants (still work in progress).
- The level of professionalism required to deliver the activities - and to manage the programme

