

Case Study: Dorset's Natural Health at its best

Supporting people through Ecotherapy: Flourish at Livability Holton Lee



Lead Partner: Livability Holton Lee

Project Summary

Flourish is an ecotherapy project which aims to improve the wellbeing of individuals living with a disability or mental health illness locally. Individuals attend on average one day a week, at no cost, for around 4-6 months. Some individuals choose to stay longer through their direct payments, whilst others are supported to stay on as independent volunteers or move onto other volunteering opportunities elsewhere.



Josh with carrots
© Livability Holton Lee

Testimonial

"The service delivered by Emma and her team at Holton Lee is first class; they are focussed on delivering a gold standard client centred service which they achieve week in, week out. Our assertive outreach service uses this service regularly and feedback from service users is always very positive, the outcomes we see from our rather challenging client group are very good."

Graeme manages the alcohol community team at Poole hospital and refers individuals to the Flourish project

Who does it support?

Any individuals 18+ that have a disability and/or mental health illness and want to join a programme that will improve their wellbeing.

Key activities include:

- Horticulture Flourish manages a working garden that supplies fruit and vegetables to the local community
- Conservation Flourish works in conjunction with RSPB to help maintain the 350 acre SSSI site that they are based within
- Nature walks As part of daily activities in order to improve fitness and connection with nature, Flourish participants attend nature walks around the site
- Woodworking/craft and arts Flourish participants engage in making a number of craft items which are used on the project and are also sold to the public through open days/markets
- Wellbeing specific activities Flourish staff offer support through one to one support /coaching session as well as running wellbeing session such as mindfulness



Usman at Flourish © Livability Holton Lee

Testimonial

"A young lady came in who had a nervous breakdown, her anxiety levels were to the point where she could barely sit on a chair and have a conversation with me she was so physically anxious. Within 4 months of working here I saw an entirely different person, she started volunteering with a learning disabilities agency, where she was offered employment after six months." Emma (Flourish Manager) sees huge differences in people as a result of being a part of Flourish



Group working in the raised bed
© Livability Holton Lee

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College students working on the raised bed
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What are the health benefits to attendees? Why use the natural environment?

The Flourish programme is designed to target improvement for individuals within different wellbeing categories. We use the five ways to wellbeing as well as positive psychology model of wellbeing to set criteria for wellbeing improvement. Individuals can expect to improve their wellbeing in relation to:

- Connecting with others and building relationships
- Having fun and supporting positive emotion
- Notice their surroundings and support with emotional intelligence
- Being active and engaging with activities that you lose track of time in
- Learning new skills and gaining a sense of accomplishment
- Being altruistic and sharing skills/helping others
- Gaining a sense of meaning and purpose



Having a laugh
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More Information:

Emma Browning

ebrowning.holtonlee@livability.org.uk

01202 625562

www.holtonlee.org/wellbeing-projects/flourish

www.dorsetlnp.org.uk/case_studies

2018

Health outcomes

- Improved fitness
- Better managed conditions
- Reduced isolation
- Improved life skills
- Improved outlook on life – positivity, confidence, motivation etc.
- Moving closer to the workplace / education, training or independence



Anna and Chris with Veg boxes
© Livability Holton Lee

Testimonial

Chris has been part of Livability Holton Lee for five years and is now an experienced gardener. He says he was 'very shy' when he first arrived but now is eager to reach out to new arrivals: *"I've grown in confidence here. When new people arrive, I can help them and show them the ropes, show them around. I get on well with everyone. Working here is like being at my second home. I work hard and show other volunteers how to get the job done. It's all good fun."*

For Chris, his confidence with others now extends beyond sharing a task to offering emotional support: *"Being part of a team, I've learned team bonding and better communication skills. I help others when they're upset. I calm them down, talk to them, take them somewhere quiet. I get them to explain the situation and what they feel."*