

# Case Study: Dorset's Natural Health at its best

## Using Dorset's natural landscape to deliver dementia friendly activities: Stepping into Nature



**Lead Partner:** Dorset AONB

**Other Partners:** Dorset County Council (accountable body), Dorset Forest School, The Arts Development Company, Dorset Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Dorset POPP, Alzheimer's Society



**LOTTERY FUNDED**

### Project Summary

To improve the health and wellbeing for older people, those living with dementia related conditions and carers by providing opportunities to explore, experience and enjoy the area's outstanding coast and countryside together.

Working with a range of environment, cultural and health and wellbeing partners to deliver a range of landscape based activities that encourage older people to be physically and mentally active. Using the landscape for inspiration, we provide safe, enjoyable and sociable opportunities that adopt a philosophy of positive risk taking.

Stepping into Nature was awarded £328,000 from the Big Lottery Reaching Communities Fund to deliver the project for three years.

Stepping into Nature is a component of the 'prevention at scale' programme supporting the delivery of the Dorset Sustainability and Transformation Plan.

### Who does it support?

The project is aimed at older people including those living in their own homes with dementia related conditions and their carers in Dorset, particularly those at risk of social isolation: a major risk group for developing dementia.



**Winners of the Bowland Award from the National Association of AONBs Conference © Dorset Forest Schools**



**Taking in the view - Golden Cap  
©Dave Penman, Dorset AONB**

### Testimonial

*"We have been asked on many occasions if there are outdoor activities available for people with dementia, but unfortunately there is very little taking place within Dorset. This is something that is in great need currently and becoming even more so as people are being diagnosed at an earlier age and while they are still physically fit. Stepping into Nature will prove to be an invaluable resource to enable people to have more options of what activities are available for them, and particularly involving the outdoors"*

Jo Maylon, Dorset Alzheimer's Society

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### What are the health benefits to attendees? Why use the natural environment?

The audience indicated how important it is for them to feel active and productive to retain a sense of normality in their daily lives. The work will help them to continue taking part in things, they have done all their lives, supporting them to use skills they have and feel confident enough to help and share these skills with others.

By supporting the key beneficiaries and service providers, the project increases awareness and understanding of the needs and requirements of people living with dementia and their carer, creating safer natural spaces to visit. Increasing dementia awareness and resilience whilst reduce social isolation and loneliness by delivering activities with a person and community centred approach.



Greenwood Club © Dorset Forest Schools

### Health outcomes

The key beneficiaries will benefit from the positive effects for their health and wellbeing that can be gained from spending time in the natural environment. Evidence shows that these benefits can include improved physical and emotional health, reducing stress and increasing a sense of wellbeing.

Research shows people with dementia who engaged with the outdoors indicated they felt improvements to sleeping and eating patterns, increased independence and self-esteem and improvement of social interaction and belonging.



Facebook advert for Dementia Friendly Walks at Thorncombe Woods © DCC



Overlooking Golden Cap © Dave Penman, Dorset AONB

### More Information:

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2018

### Testimonial

*"Mum really benefitted from your skills, kindness and interest both in her and the beautiful and precious environment in which you work. When I visited her yesterday she was able to reminisce and talk with me and the staff at her home about the amazing time she had had in the woods and how much she had enjoyed it all. It will certainly be remembered as one of the highlights of 2016, and we hope to be back on another walk very soon! (weather and health permitting)."*

Carer whose mother lives with dementia