Green care: An overview

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• So many different ‘nature’ initiatives
• Being run by and for many different people
• Increasing interest in using nature for health
• But there is sometimes confusion
• Where to start?

How can we make green care a natural part of the health service?
What is green care?

Nature-based interventions or therapy for a variety of vulnerable groups

“Green care utilises plants, animals and landscapes to create interventions to improve health and wellbeing (i.e. it does not represent a casual encounter with nature).” Sempik and Bragg, 2013

A range of different green care interventions available
Range of different contexts, activities, health benefits, clients, motivations and needs.

Source: Adapted from Hine et al., 2008; Bragg et al., 2013 and Bragg 2014
Differing roles, contexts and engagement levels of green exercise and green care approaches.
Source: Bragg, 2015, 2014; adapted from Haubenhofer et al., 2010; and Sempik and Bragg, 2013.
The benefits of green care

Psychological restoration

Increases in:
- social inclusion and social contact
- social and work skills empowerment
- social functioning
- coping ability
- social rehabilitation

Improvements in:
- cognitive functioning and wellbeing
- self-efficacy
- self-esteem
- mood
- personal and social identity
- quality of life
- reduction in depression and anxiety related symptoms
Further benefits

Where green care involves food growing it can also lead to healthier lifestyles:

• Increases in physical activity
  • contribute to maintaining a healthy weight - reduces the risk of obesity.

• Provides access to locally grown, fresh produce
  • helps increase the consumption of fruit and vegetables,
  • improves attitudes to healthy eating
Green care – wellbeing research

- Ecominds
- First study of different types of green care in the UK
- Longitudinal & acute effect study
- Using both recognised outcome measures and bespoke tools
Wellbeing – longitudinal/ trait

- WEMWBS
- Significant increase in participant wellbeing over the course of the programme
- Improvements in the proportion of participants in each wellbeing category after taking part in green care

![Graph showing mean WEMWBS score comparison between baseline and endpoint.](image)

*Represents an increase in wellbeing of 5.3, significance tested with a 2-tailed t test (p<.001)*

![Bar chart showing percentage of participants by wellbeing category.](image)

- Beginning of programme
- End of programme
Self-esteem – Longitudinal/ trait

- RSES (Trait)
- Significant increase in participant self-esteem over the course of the programme
- Change in each participant’s RSES score from baseline to endpoint
Some key findings....

- Findings similar for all 3 types of green care
- Wellbeing and self-esteem significantly improved over the course of the green care programmes.
- Increases occurred simultaneously with increases in social engagement, connection to nature and aspects of a healthy lifestyle.
- Social engagement significantly increased from the beginning to the end of the green care programmes.
- Increases in the frequency of participants taking part in community activities were also found.
Implications....

• Links between nature and
  ▪ attention restoration
  ▪ recovery from stress
  ▪ mindfulness
  ▪ wellbeing

• Treatment for those with existing mental health problems
  ▪ Another tool in the tool box for mental healthcare
  ▪ An enjoyable option to help people feel better
  ▪ Leaving the diagnosis at the gate
  ▪ Helps reduce social isolation
Multiple outcomes from green care

- simultaneously produces other positive life outcomes
- wider than clinical outcomes
- is therefore cost-effective
- also enjoyable – people go back!

• Need to raise awareness - practitioners and patients alike
Source: Bragg et al, 2014; Adapted from Naylor et al, 2013.
Three main issues

• different types of green care mobilise to collectively promote the sector – *to give a clear message*
  • Collective name – green care, nature-based interventions, ecotherapy
  • But many different settings and contexts under the umbrella

• make a distinction between specifically designed and commissioned interventions for the vulnerable and public health initiatives for the general population

• providers of nature-based interventions should work together to provide a larger ‘offer’ to commissioners such as CCGs (Clinical Commissioning Groups)
Online Survey for Green Care

• Green care, Ecotherapy or Nature-based interventions? - Your thoughts please!

• There are now numerous local and national organisations offering a range of nature-based interventions (also known as green care)

• We are asking people working in the field of green care for their opinions regarding the development of a common language in order to communicate more effectively with commissioners.

• We would be most grateful if you could spare the time to complete our short questionnaire (only 9 questions), by following the link below:

  https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/VXQ87FB
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Full references for figures

- Please include short reference underneath the figures whenever you use them – many thanks
- Full references are as follows:


