



Groundwork NE & Cumbria

Final Project Update

Healthy Parks: Healthy Minds Teesdale

February 2016

The funding that was provided for the Healthy Parks Healthy Minds project enabled us to deliver weekly volunteering and green exercise activities within the Heart of Teesdale area for people severe and enduring mental health issues to enable this client group to have the opportunity to engage with environmental conservation tasks within their local area. The project was completed in September 2016.

20 clients were engaged throughout the lifetime of the Healthy Parks Healthy Minds project, which included an additional four in the final delivery period between July and September 2015. Some of the individuals engaged over much of the programme and were regulars at weekly tasks, whereas others were engaged on a short term basis or engaged in one off taster sessions delivered throughout. The nature of the clients engaged throughout meant that this flexibility in terms of their involvement was imperative.

Participants within the remaining two months of the programme were involved in the following activities:

- Snowberry removal at Egglestone Abbey
- Scrub bashing in Flatts Woods- cutting back overgrown sections of the footpaths
- Photography walk- linking to a walk along the River Tees, enabling clients to express themselves creatively through the use of photography and create a display
- Balsam bashing at the bandstand in Flatts Woods- focussing on an area where the group have had previous involvement
- Harvesting and maintenance in the community garden at the Hub, Barnard Castle
- Bird box building for installation on sites across the Heart of Teesdale programme area
- Celebration activity- clients took part in a guided walk and trip to Low Force before enjoying a celebratory lunch to thank them for their engagement throughout the programme and the difference that they have helped make to the landscape of the Heart of Teesdale

We continued our relationships with Shildon Alive and the SOS Drop in Café through to the end of the programme, providing referral opportunities for new clients to join the programme. We also continued to work with the Hub at Barnard Castle to link clients with this key community facility and support the continued improvements to the community garden located here.

The final months of the programme also focussed on work with the support workers and partner organisations with existing links with the clients in order to negate any detrimental effects to clients as a result of the loss of the programme. As previously highlighted for some of the clients engaged, this was the only time they would participate in a formal programme or even leave the house to access any form of services, other than those provided by health professionals. This was illustrated when speaking to clients, one of whom said the following:

“I hope the project will continue after August as I don’t know what I will do; it will be taking away my support system which is invaluable to me right now”.

By the end of the programme we had been able to identify some alternative activities for clients to participate in to ensure that they would not be at a loss without their weekly HPHM sessions. This included clients engaging in some ongoing volunteer work at the Hub in Barnard Castle and some involvement in the River Tees Rediscovered Landscape Partnership, in addition to existing activities already delivered outside of the Heart of Teesdale area by partners.

Evaluation was undertaken throughout the programme to ensure that the programme was meeting the needs of participants and to enable the delivery plan to be revised throughout to meet their interests. Feedback from clients was very positive and including the following:

“Even if I am having a really bad week, and I haven’t left the house, I just think about Tuesday. Going out with my group and getting fresh air. I really feel at peace in the outdoors, where it is not as busy. I finally feel like I can relax with people who I trust”.

“I like to go to the Hub, I enjoy helping out and working with all the people there, it makes me feel a part of the team. I don’t get out of the house very often but I really enjoy it when I do, that’s why I like this project, it gets me out the house and gives me the chance to meet new people. I like meeting new people”.

“HPHM provides me with a place to get away from other things going on in my life; it takes my mind off things happening in my life and gives me time to think about something that I enjoy doing. My brother James also gets a break when I am out with the project, this is important as it can sometimes be overwhelming for him.





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