



Nature-based therapeutic interventions

Briefing: Well-being in Nature Green Tonic Packages



WWW.CIRCLEOFLIFEREDISCOVERY.COM
INFO@CIRCLEOFLIFEREDISCOVERY | 01273 814226

2025 - 2026

Contents:

1. CLR Organisation background and track record
2. Outcomes of our work
3. Previous and current clients
4. Nature based therapeutic interventions
5. References
6. Contact information

1. CLR Organisation background and track record

1.1 Circle of Life Rediscovery, a CIC, has delivered nature-based immersion programmes, green interventions, days and residential camps with health and education professionals, parents and pupils, disadvantaged and NEET youngsters and people with mental health support needs in Sussex since 2004. Our programmes draw on the woodland and green spaces as a resource for health and wellbeing (e.g 'The Woodland Project'). In addition we deliver the national curriculum, accredited professional development, and nature learning.

1.2 We have a long-term partnership with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service in East Sussex since 2010 delivering funded nature intervention programmes for teenagers and families (including ADCAMHS & LACAMHS). Our flagship project 'The Woodland Project' has further extended our partners to include CAMHS/FISS/LD (Family Intensive Support Service/Learning Disability) offering whole families nature days with their child who has severe learning disabilities, and staff trainings. From 2019/20 our services have extended to work with the Early Psychosis team, Adult Specialist Services for Dementia and Children in Care Emotional Wellbeing service.

1.3 As pioneers in this work, our funding has enabled the development of green interventions within a range of teams within Sussex NHS, and more recently are collaborating to enable longer term green prescription programmes. In line with our sustainability objective, we have developed a flagship private (& funded) training course 'Level 3 Certificate in Nature-based Practice' to enable health practitioners to take their practice outdoors.

1.4 Our services provide bespoke experiences in the outdoors, safeguarding the natural environment as a resource to: improve the wellbeing of marginalised disadvantaged young people and their families; support personal, social and environmental regeneration; deliver the national curriculum; diversify the skills and extend the impact of education and health professionals.

1.5 Independent evaluations and client feedback identify skills development, stress reduction and positive environmentalism as significant aspects of our social impact. We also contribute to improved engagement of learners and educational attainment, improved levels of wellbeing, and woodland safeguarding through positive use. Our funding partners have included education authorities, MIND, NHS trusts, and Natural England.

1.6 We are an award winning and influential social enterprise, most recently won a gold and silver positive practice awards within Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust (2025), [Therapeutic Services provider of the year \(2023\)](#), a SPARK Environmental Achievement Award (2016) highly commended status at the National Innovation in Child, Adolescent and Young People's Mental Health Awards. In April 2017 we won the ITV People's Project competition (Family Disability and Mental Health Project) on the basis of public support and a popular vote.

2. Outcomes of our work

2.1 Our mission is to transform education and health through Nature. We aim to support personal, social and environmental regeneration by drawing on the natural and woodland environment as a natural learning and well-being resource in which young people and adults can acquire multiple life and vocational skills, as well as providing opportunities for personal restoration, increase in social interaction and general well-being.

2.2 Consistent with the Department of Health's VCSE Health and Wellbeing Fund's focus, Circle of Life of Rediscovery is committed to improving equality and reducing health inequalities. Socioeconomic inequality in mental wellbeing has been shown to be 40% narrower among those who report good access to green/recreational areas, compared with those with poorer access (Evidence Statement DEFRA 2017).

In line with the VCSE HWF fund, our objectives include:

- Preventing ill health and supporting people to live healthier lives
- Creating person-centred nature intervention programmes which address equality for all.
- Building evidence of sustainable, scalable solutions to mitigate and prevent inequalities impacting on health and wellbeing of communities.

2.3 To meet these objectives CLR is extending its scope beyond vulnerable children and adolescents to include other vulnerable groups within Society to include adults with mental illness (e.g. depression, dementia, social isolation). We believe CLR is well placed to do this given its long and successful track record of delivering nature intervention programmes for vulnerable children, families and adolescents.

We have specifically designed nature interventions for vulnerable individuals within society, including those with mental illness. These are individuals with a defined need as per Natural England Report, 2017. Thus CLR is targeting Health and Social care Commissioners.

2.4 Our approach is also consistent with recent policy shifts, where there's a push for greater **access to green spaces** and **nature-based interventions**, especially for individuals with complex needs who may not always be eligible for traditional green prescriptions. Our work goes beyond the medical model, recognising the importance of the more-than-human world in fostering wellbeing and addressing the social determinants of health.

2.5 CLR will evaluate the impact of its programmes to inform practice. The impact of CLR's nature based programmes will employ the current recommended assessment tools by commissioned nature based projects. This will ensure our outcomes can be measured and evaluated alongside other similar initiatives. We work in partnership to deliver the outcomes and increasingly with researchers to deepen our research.

2.6 CLR has succeeded in delivering personal, social and environmental change in two sectors, education and health. Independent evaluations have been conducted by Max Hope (2024) [Exploring the impact of nature-based training on](#)

[practitioners in mental health and public, primary, and community health services](#). Further research has been conducted by Dr Joe Hinds (Canterbury Christchurch University 2015) and Dr Martin Jordan (2016). Their findings include greater personal competence and resilience, and stronger connections and positive attitudes towards the environment as outcomes for young people (Hinds 2015) and significant stress reduction and wellbeing benefits for people with disabilities (Jordan 2016).

We receive consistently positive feedback from parents, carers, health professionals, teachers and service users through professional research, video, online questionnaires, and focus groups.

(For more information follow:

<https://circleoflifediscovery.com/green-interventions/>).

3. Previous and current clients

3.1 We have delivered bespoke programmes and camps for mental health services, GPs, local schools and these have started to transform the delivery of the curriculum and therapeutic practices in Sussex, attracting the attention of providers elsewhere. CEO and founder Marina Robb has published extensively on restorative outdoor nature-learning, influencing policy and practice in health and education (most recently Learning with Nature 2015 and is co-publishing her next book with Jon Cree in 2021). Agenda-setting reports for health and education professionals have cited Circle of Life Rediscovery as innovative and effective practice and a direction of travel for future service delivery (Changing Young Lives, Natural England (2014).

3.2 There is an ongoing increase in green care prescriptions for adults by CCGs and GPs for which we are well placed to be a service provider – summarised in *Good Practice in Social Prescribing for Mental Health: the role of nature-based intervention* (Natural England, January 2017) - and this trend is set to continue. [The National Evaluation of the Preventing and Tackling Mental Ill Health through Green Social Prescribing Final Report](#) (January 2024) to improve the use of nature-based settings and activities to improve mental health and wellbeing. The East Sussex Clinical Care Intelligence Team reports strong demand (a total of over 30,000 referrals in Sussex, Hampshire and Kent in 2016/17) which we will address with these new services.

4. Nature based Therapeutic Interventions

4.1 Introduction to CLR 'Green Tonic in Nature packages'

Research indicates effective nature-based interventions "involve a deeper interaction with nature than some of the other forms of green care, allowing service users to engage with and shape nature (p 11, Bragg & Aitkens, 2016).

CLR is well placed to deliver measurable outcomes that improve people's well-being and health. Our 'Green Tonic' packages aim to: Provide therapeutic intervention whereby there is an immersive experience in nature within a social group context. The objective being to maintain health, wellbeing and support prevention and recovery through the medium of nature via nature based activities. Consistent with

the 2016 Natural England Report's (Bragg & Aitkens) literature review, our therapeutic model combines the following components to bring about benefits to mental health: i) the natural environment, ii) meaningful activities and iii) the social context.

4.2 Why?

Nature-based therapeutic services have been shown to offer a number of benefits to health and wellbeing as documented by the Natural England Report (Bragg & Aitken, 2016). Benefits of nature-based interventions include: psychological restoration and increased general mental wellbeing, reduction in depression, anxiety and stress related symptoms, improvement in dementia-related symptoms, improved self-esteem, confidence and mood, Increased attentional capacity and cognition, Improved happiness, satisfaction and quality of life, sense of peace, calm or relaxation, feelings of safety and security, increased social contact, inclusion and sense of belonging, increase in work skills, meaningful activity and personal achievement (Bragg & Aitken, 2016).

Further research into the benefits of nature for wellbeing can be accessed via:

- [Links between natural environments and mental health - EIN065 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](#)
 - [Links between natural environments and physical health - EIN066 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](#)
 - [How the Natural Environment can support Children and Young People - EIN067 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](#)
 - [Connection to Nature - EIN068 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](#)

4.3 Who may benefit from coming?

i) GP referrals for people with mental health issues including depression and anxiety, social isolation.

(Note: CLR ensure proper risk assessments for clients experiencing suicidal ideation and history of suicide attempts. Not suitable for clients with nature related anxiety as likely to exacerbate anxiety.)

ii) Adult social care referrals: to include specific groups: e.g. vulnerable adults, dementia groups, people with ongoing mental health issues.

iii) Referrals from current partners: CAMHS & CAMHS FISS, Social Care & SEN School Referrals

4.4 Well-being in Nature (*Green Tonic*) Packages:

CLR offers group and individual nature connection interventions. Optimal Group size for non-clinical therapeutic interventions is considered to be between 6 – 15 participants.

(Note: Given participants may have complex needs, CLR needs to ensure we have sufficient available staff as group size increases. Provision of psychotherapists may also be needed for particular groups. This will also depend on the type of intervention we are offering - whether a public health intervention for the general population and/ or interventions specifically designed for vulnerable people.)

4.41 Option 1: Group Nature-based Activity Package

Weekly group running for 10 weeks throughout the season in woodland location

Activities may include:

- Conservation activities that are meaningful and have a purpose.
- Walking, mindfulness and relaxation techniques in nature, yoga
- Fire-making, cooking, foraging, seasonal art and craft, bushcraft
- Sensory-based activities, back to the body & senses
- Opportunities to talk, share, learn strategies to manage stress & anxiety, change negative patterns of thinking and behaviour, effectively learn to manage conflict and difficulties.

Staffing:

2 individuals with specialist ecological and group work knowledge: e.g Forest school leader/ conservationist, art therapist, horticulturist, permaculturist with knowledge of group dynamics

(Note: All CLR staff have specialist knowledge of working outdoors and with groups; May need additional provision for Psychotherapist provided by CLR or Adult Social Care/ NHS Primary Care, if assessment identifies high risk; A third member of staff/volunteer may also be present).

Pricing/Cost:

£724.00 per day

(Note: Psychotherapist not needed)

Typical day:

- 8.30 am staff arrive, briefing and set up
- 10.00am Welcome & Check in: (include what week has been like, how you are feeling since last meeting, whether anything important has happened). Spend a few minutes supporting and signposting if needed.
- 10:30: Sensory/mindful moment. Activity choice: between 3-4 activities on offer to do throughout the day. Has to be at least 3 people per activity (social integration). Example: chopping, making, walking.
- Shared food/carry on activities
- 12.35 Brief closing circle (how found the day and how feeling)
- 12:50 Risk - safety check: last few minutes checking participants are feeling safe to go home and offer / signpost support if needed) – what they are interested in – voice for them.
- 1.00 participants leave
- 1:30 – 3.00pm Site down; staff debrief and planning for next session

4.42 Option 2: Group Nature Walk Time Package

Weekly group running for 8 - 10 weeks throughout the season in woodland location

Activities include:

Group walk in nature for 2 hours. Similar to above format with brief check in, walk, snack and check out.

Staffing: As above

Pricing/Cost:

£445.00 per session

4.34 Option 3: Bespoke 1: 1 Nature-intervention

1:1 Service for individuals who would benefit from this therapeutic approach. Qualified practitioners with many years' experience working alongside children, young people and adults.

Price/Cost: £85/hour

5. References:

Bragg, R., Atkins, G. (2016). A review of nature-based interventions for mental health care. Natural England Commissioned Reports, Number 204

Shanahan, D.F., Bush, R., & Fuller, R. a., (2016). Health Benefits from Nature Experiences Depend on Dose. Scientific Reports 6, Article number: 28551

Evidence Statement: DEFRA Project Code BE0109 on links between natural environments and human health. March 2017.

7. Contact Information:

Director: Marina Robb

Telephone: 01273 814226

Email: info@circleofliferediscovery.com