



*Supporting the Over 50s*

# ***Nature Buddies Pilot***



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- **Background**
- Project initiated by Jules Hammon, Stepping Into Nature
- To link Volunteers with community members who could benefit from befriending support with a link to nature for their wellbeing
- Volunteers offer support to enjoy nature more, walking in open spaces, sitting in parks, spending time in their garden, visiting a Garden Centre



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- **Objectives**

- Improvements in wellbeing for Nature Buddies participants, such as reduced anxiety or increased confidence
- People will have more confidence to get out into nature and take part in arts and physical activities
- Improvements in wellbeing and/or skills for NB volunteers, such as increased confidence, more social connections or a sense of purpose



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- **Age UK NSW**
- We were able to engage with this as a part of our existing Independent Living Service by using many of the same processes as we do for our general Befriending Service. Volunteer Applications, References and DBS checks are the same, Client referral and processing is the same
- The link to Nature enables us to engage with a different Volunteer & Client audience
- Publicity was low-key as we needed to manage the project alongside our existing workload.



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- **Evaluation**

- We were able to link 6 Volunteers with Community Members
- All of the volunteers and participants who were taking part in Nature Buddies in May 2022 gave feedback to the evaluator, 12 people in total
- The contributions to the evaluation from the Nature Buddies participants and volunteers showed that intended outcomes for individuals were met
- Some buddies walked for up to two hours, some shorter distances, some visited a garden centre and some just the client's garden
- Visits included: the river, water meadows, Roman Villa, Maiden Castle, Poundbury, Maumbury Rings, Borough Gardens, Weymouth, Cerne Abbas and Abbotsbury Gardens



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- **Evaluation cont'd**
- Observations of the volunteers and self-reporting from participants show increases in physical activity for almost all participants. Many would not be out walking without their Nature Buddies and their wellbeing was enhanced by the conversation and companionship, experiencing new places and learning more about the local area
- Volunteers reported that Nature Buddies enabled them to feel they were contributing to their communities and gave them satisfaction from helping others and gaining greater knowledge of the local area



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- **Quotes from participants**

- I know more about Dorset and Dorchester now than I ever did. I've only lived here 7 years. My husband died two years ago. And my Buddy has been a great help. And she encourages me, you know
- We met at Top of Town car park, and we walked down to the river. And it was nice for her too because she'd not been that side of Dorchester. And we saw the old Roman Villa and things like that, you know, it was a lovely day. I've lived in Dorchester practically all my life, so I know where to go. So, I was the one that suggested this walk. And we're going to do another one weather permitting this Thursday. She is from another area but just recently for about a year in this area now



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- **Quotes cont'd**
- She's been to places that she hadn't been to before and equally, she's able to tell me things about Dorchester that I didn't know - It's just once a week and that's enough for me because I've got diabetes, and my feet have started playing up so walking for an hour and a half is just fine before I start feeling a bit tired
- We walk to the garden centre and we have a mooch around and a coffee. It's a question of what I'm up to at that moment, how far I can go
- It's taught me things that I didn't appreciate – the names of plants and flowers - I've learnt a lot - I enjoy it





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- **Carol**
- Used to walk but stopped as she didn't really enjoy walking alone
- Introduced to a Nature Buddy and they clicked
- Started walking down the river which is near her home
- When I last spoke to her they had just been out for 2 hours and walked to Lower Bockhampton and back via Stinsford Church
- She said it was marvellous and she was really pleased she could manage that far