



**Dorset**  
**National**  
**Landscape**

## Nature Buddies Referral Criteria and Guidelines Page

Dorset National Landscape coordinates a network of Nature Buddies across Dorset. There are 2 types of Nature Buddies -

1. **Community Nature Buddies:** help people to access nature for wellbeing **from home** and are overseen by **Volunteer Centre Dorset**. They may help someone to explore the local area around them or take part in nature-based activities with them at the participant's home. The long-term aim being that they have increased confidence to join in a nature-based activity.
2. **Organisational Nature Buddies:** managed by various organisations/groups across Dorset such as gardening groups. Volunteers from these groups get people involved in nature and encourage them to take part in outdoor, nature-related activities on site. The overall aim being that if successful they will continue attending the activity when the buddying has come to an end.

Nature Buddies are tailored to the organisations that host them, but they are all trained volunteers that work alongside participants to help build confidence, resilience and self-efficacy. The aim of Nature Buddies is to improve wellbeing through increased use of nature-based activities.

**Please ONLY refer people to us if they are committed to making improvements in their mental health and/or wellbeing through guided self-help provided by the Nature Buddies.**

Volunteers (all of whom are 18+) are provided training from Dorset National Landscape and their host organisation and will be offered on-going training. Community Nature Buddies will undertake a DBS check and receive training in Confidentiality & Data Protection, Equality & Diversity, Safeguarding, Staying Safe, Customer Service.

We ask all our volunteers to commit to the service for a minimum of 6 months. Depending on the organisation, **volunteers will provide support sessions of approximately one hour per week for up to 6 sessions**. There will be feedback and evaluation during the sessions and if the partnership is not working it can be ended at any time by either party.

**Important:** We are not a counselling service, parallel and/or replacement service for participants who are experiencing beyond moderate physical and mental health conditions. This is a goal setting service to engage with nature and help participants reconnect with their wider community, the service cannot be provided indefinitely.

**All the organisations hosting Nature Buddies have identified [Mental Health Levels](#) of support they can offer.** You should refer to these levels when assessing whether a provider or activity is suitable to meet the needs of the person you are referring. This is displayed in their advert. Please ONLY refer participants who match the specified levels.

Our Nature Buddies Volunteers **can** provide participants with;

- Identifying recovery and wellbeing goals
- Helping people to reduce social isolation
- Accessing their local community

- Using public transport
- Improving confidence and self-esteem
- Accessing other means of support (e.g. agencies that can help support groups, community interest groups etc)
- Sharing nature inspired interests and knowledge
- Increasing hobbies and interests

Our Nature Buddies Volunteers **cannot** support participants with:

- Mental Health advocacy or any other formal advocacy
- Transportation to or from appointments or other activities
- Domiciliary care
- Dog walking
- Expert tuition on nature, history etc.

#### **Referral criteria:**

- Age 18+
- Home post code: All Dorset
- Experiencing a barrier to engaging with nature
- Experiencing low self-esteem and socially isolated

#### **Who can make a referral?**

Provided that consent is given from the participant, referrals are accepted from:

- Social Prescribers / link workers
- GPs
- Community Mental Health Teams
- Any other professionals (social worker, support worker, teacher, counsellor, etc.)
- Self-referral may be accepted for Nature Buddies within an organisational setting

#### **Dorset National Landscape Partnership**

hosted by Dorset Council Dorchester Dorset DT1 1XJ

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