



# 6-week Social and Therapeutic Horticulture and Ecotherapy Programme - Referral Guidelines 2021

The Centre for Ecotherapy is receiving referrals to its popular 6-week monitored social and therapeutic horticulture programme and has extended the programme to include the Ecotherapy service too. This programme is aimed at people at risk of isolation or experiencing mild to severe mental health conditions who may benefit from participating in structured social activities in an allotment/nature-rich setting.

The outdoor space allows us to maintain safe conduct under the current public health guidelines.

Social and Therapeutic Horticulture sessions will take place on Friday mornings from 10am – 2pm. Ecotherapy sessions will take place on Monday mornings from 10am - 1pm. Clients will need sturdy footwear and clothing suitable for the weather on the day. Hot drinks are provided. Dietary requirements can be catered for however a client may also bring lunch and their own cup if they prefer.

## **Programme Ethos**

To provide participants with the opportunity to spend time in nature, share time with others, and experience the benefits to personal wellbeing that a supported nature-based experience can bring. We have a programme of activities we encourage participants to engage in to the extent they feel personally able on the day. These include:

- Plant bed creation and preparation
- Seed sowing and seedling care; planting out and follow on care
- Tree and shrub care, pruning and clearing
- Site design and development, including practical carpentry or fencing work to further these aims
- Fire-making and food preparation
- Social engagement

- Use of tools including garden tools, woodworking tools, bushcraft tools, hand saws. Possibly motorised equipment such as lawn mower/trimmer if considered appropriate.
- Walks, animal/bird identification, discussions

### **Some feedback from previous participants**

'I've found it really, really, good, it's really helped me to feel positive .... Being out in nature is just so healing. (Being in nature) just calms my brain so much, I really feel the difference, as soon as I'm near trees **I just feel calmer**, especially actually working in the ground it is really good.'

'This is the only place with other people that I feel comfortable and relaxed. Here I can sit with 6 or 7 other people and interact normally. I come here and it feels like I get a holiday from my mental illness. I come here and I feel useful and I realised in my second week here it is the first time I've felt useful in 7 or 8 years'

'It has helped me realise that not all people are 'meanies', there are lovely people out there... you know, like-minded...it's having something in common, with the garden...'

### **Accessing the site**

The Centre for Ecotherapy is situated in the Stanmer horticultural area at the back of Stanmer Park. It is accessible by car, bicycle, or on foot. Buses (no 25) stop at the bottom of Stanmer Park, at the Lower Lodges, however it must be recognised that this is followed by a 15-20 min walk.

It is recognised that for some people the bus journey and walk in the morning is a barrier to accessing this service. To this end the Centre for Ecotherapy has set aside some funding to provide a taxi journey from a specific location *TO* the allotment site for the 6 sessions. The client will need to make their own way back home. *PLEASE NOTE: No taxis service is offered for the initial taster session. The client will need to make their own way to and from this session.*

### **Evaluation**

In taking part in the programme clients agree to have their well-being sensitively recorded so as to monitor their progress towards their individually determined goals and to provide evidence to guide service development. Evaluations are conducted as follows:

Following referral, clients may attend the project for a taster session to see if they would like to take part in the programme. They may attend alone or with a support/care worker, or a friend/family member. The travel arrangements for this visit

must be made by the referring organisation or the individual themselves (Please contact us if you think this might cause difficulties.)

*Initial assessment:* During the first programme session a 20-minute assessment and WEMWBS assessment will be conducted to determine the initial well-being levels. The client sets three goals (eg. to speak with everyone at the session at least once) that they would like to achieve over the 6 week period.

*Mid-term assessment (Wk 3):* Mid-way through the programme the client will again spend 10 minutes or so with a member of staff to review their progress, to consider the goals they identified at the start of the programme and to discuss whether these are still relevant or, if not, what adjustments could be made to help the client further enhance their well-being.

*End of programme assessment (Wk 6):* After the final session, the client will discuss what effect the programme has had on their well-being, whether they would like to continue at the project or whether it is perhaps better to try something else. A second WEMWBS assessment will be administered to better understand any changes which may have occurred over the course of the programme.

Following the 6-week funded programme clients can continue with the project for a further 3 months *without travel assistance* or consider other options, such as joining another volunteering group. If they decide to continue with the project they will need to access the allotment independently, and take part in the project-wide evaluations as an independent member of the project.

## **Requirements**

**Clients** must be made aware of and agree to a number of factors before referral:

- The programme often has a waiting list, please be patient for first contact from the Centre following referral. This can take up to 1 month. If client is happy to make first contact please share the contact details with the client and encourage them to do this.
- A mobile phone number is required and contact with the client by mobile is essential. Landline phone and email communication is possible prior to participation however possible cancellation of sessions due to inclement weather is made by mobile on the morning.
- A certain level of physical ability is needed simply to access the site, therefore clients who have serious difficulties walking more than 50 yards must be made aware of the access issues and clients will need to make arrangements for their return journey home.
- The site is in a public access area of Stanmer Park. Members of the public and dogs are often around the allotment.

- Occasionally new volunteers or people interested in the Centre for Ecotherapy will attend sessions. Clients will be made aware of this at the time, but it is important to know that this is not a 'closed' group.
- Essential to participation in the programme is the determination to attend every week for 6 weeks. While unexpected illness or absence is understood, clients should be aware that they are expected to attend for the full 6 weeks in order to gain the benefits of the programme.

**Referrers** must assure that the client has read these guidelines and understands exactly what they are being referred to *before* referring, specifically the attendance requirements, the transport arrangements and the need for mobile phone use. Please take some time to discuss the programme with your client before referring.

By referring a client, referrers agree to being the point of contact (POC) for the programme leader if difficulties arise. If this POC changes, referrers must update programme leader with new POC details.

If this programme is of interest to you or your client, please fill out the referral form below and send to Centre for Ecotherapy, c/o 113 Queens Rd, Brighton, BN1 3XG. Or scan and email it to: [info@centreforecotherapy.org.uk](mailto:info@centreforecotherapy.org.uk)

For further information or to clarify anything please call Liz Ingram on 07989 512322.

*NB. This is a referral programme therefore if you are thinking about it for yourself, a friend or member of your family, please take these guidelines to a consultation with a GP, health practitioner or support worker and request that they make the referral in your/their name.*



# Client Referral Form 2021

*Please note that information in this questionnaire will be kept confidential and retained under the guidelines of the General Data Protection Regulations 2018.*

## Client Details:

Title:

Full Name:

Address & postcode

Date of birth:

Gender: Male  Female  Transgender  Prefer not to say

Email:

Mobile:

**Please provide name, relationship, and telephone number (preferably mobile) of someone who can be contacted in an emergency:**

Session applying for

Friday STH

Monday Ecotherapy

**Main reason for referral (medical diagnosis):**

Health conditions that could affect client's ability to participate in physical outdoor activities e.g. allergies, asthma, diabetes, heart problems, high or low blood pressure, sensitivity to sunlight, physical limitations. Any medication being taken on a regular basis?

Is there any history of violence/aggression or drug/alcohol use that we should know about – particularly any episodes within the last 6 months? Is alcohol used as an acknowledged part of recovery process?

**Equalities Monitoring**

**Ethnicity:**

**Employment status:**

**Pick-up location on morning of session:**

**How will client return home after session?**

Does client wish to attend a taster session before commencing 6-week programme? Yes  No

If yes, will client attend alone or with support worker/family member?

**Any additional information you feel may be useful to us**

**Referrer's Details:**

**Name:**

**Organisation:**

**Address:**

**Position:**

**Contact number:**

**Email:**

**Signature:**

**Date:**