



Referral Guidelines 2023

6-Week Social & Therapeutic Horticulture Programme

The Centre for Ecotherapy (C4E) offers its popular 6-week, client-centred Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (STH) programme for people at risk of isolation or experiencing mild to moderate mental health conditions. Clients benefit from participating in nature-based, structured physical and social activities in an outdoor allotment setting, in Stanmer Park, Brighton.

Sessions take place on Friday mornings from 10am – 2pm throughout the year.

Clients will need sturdy footwear and clothing suitable for the weather on the day.

Hot drinks are provided, and a communal vegetarian lunch is prepared by the clients on site and eaten communally around the fire (some clients may prefer to bring a packed lunch).

What does the 6-week Programme do?

We provide participants with the opportunity to spend time in nature, working alongside other people, to experience the benefits to personal wellbeing, that a supported nature-based environment can bring. We encourage participants to engage in a range of activities, to the extent they feel personally able on the day. These include:

- Weeding and digging, preparing new beds.
- Seed sowing and seedling care; planting out and follow-on care
- Fire-making and food preparation
- Tree and shrub care, pruning and clearing
- Walks, animal/bird identification, discussions
- Site development, including practical carpentry or fencing work
- Use of tools - garden tools, woodworking tools, bushcraft tools, hand saws.

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 (and) 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...'

Referrers please read these guidelines with your client and check they understand what they are being referred to *before* referring.

- This is an outdoor allotment site that clients should attend for 6-weeks.
- Travel arrangements needs to be discussed to support your clients' attendance.
- The C4E needs to communicate with the client by mobile phone.

Please take some time to discuss the programme with your client before referring.

Accessing the site

C4E is part of the Stanmer Wellbeing Gardens at the back of Stanmer Park. It is accessible by car, bicycle, train (Falmer Station) and bus, or on foot.

Buses (no 25) stop at the Lower Lodges, at Stanmer Park gates, followed by a 15-20 min walk through park to reach our Allotment site, or we can sometimes offer a lift.

We have funding to provide a taxi journey TO the site for 6 sessions for those people for whom the bus journey and walk in the morning would be a barrier to accessing this service. The client will need to make their own way home.

Taster session

Following referral, clients will be invited to attend a taster session to see if they would like to take part in the programme, which they may attend alone or with a support/care worker, or 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.

PLEASE NOTE: We cannot provide a taxi for the initial taster session. In our experience clients often need support from a care worker or family member to help them navigate the journey and arrive on site for their taster session.

Evaluations

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

Initial assessment: A 20-minute discussion and WEMWBS assessment allows the programme leader insight into the clients' initial well-being levels and support needs. They help set three simple goals (e.g. to speak with everyone at the session at least once) for the client to focus on over the 6-week period.

Mid-term assessment (Wk. 3): the programme leader will help review progress, to consider the goals set by clients, and whether adjustments can help support the clients' well-being.

End of programme assessment (Wk. 6): Clients can discuss how the programme has affected their well-being and if they would like to continue as a drop-in client at the sessions. A second WEMWBS assessment will highlight changes which may have occurred over the course of the programme.

Following the 6-week funded programme clients can continue with the project as a Drop-in client ***without travel assistance*** and will also be encouraged to consider joining other volunteering groups. They may be asked to take part in project-wide evaluations as an independent member of the project.

Requirements

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

- **The programme 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.
- **Mobile phone contact with the client is essential**. Landline and email communication is possible prior to participation but cancellation of sessions due to bad weather is made by mobile on the morning.
- **Important to participate every week for 6 weeks** While unexpected illness or absence is understood, clients should be determined to attend the full 6 weekly sessions to gain the benefits of the nature-based programme.
- **Reasonable physical ability is needed to access the site**, clients who have serious difficulties walking more than 50 yards need to be aware of the access issues and 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.
- **This is not a 'closed' group** Occasionally new volunteers or people interested in the Centre for Ecotherapy will attend sessions. Clients will be made aware of this at the time.

Referrers 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 attached referral form and email it to: referrals@centreforecotherapy.org.uk

Or scan and send to Centre for Ecotherapy, c/o 113 Queens Rd, Brighton, BN1 3XG.
For further information or to clarify anything please call 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 for you.

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