



# Green Social Prescribing on Farms

2022 - 2024



# Background

The original idea and inspiration came from the, then, HRH The Prince of Wales in 2022.

The project was intended to demonstrate the potential benefits that access to healthy food, engaging with the outside environment, farming and sustainable food production, could provide in terms of individual health, healing and wellbeing.



# Team

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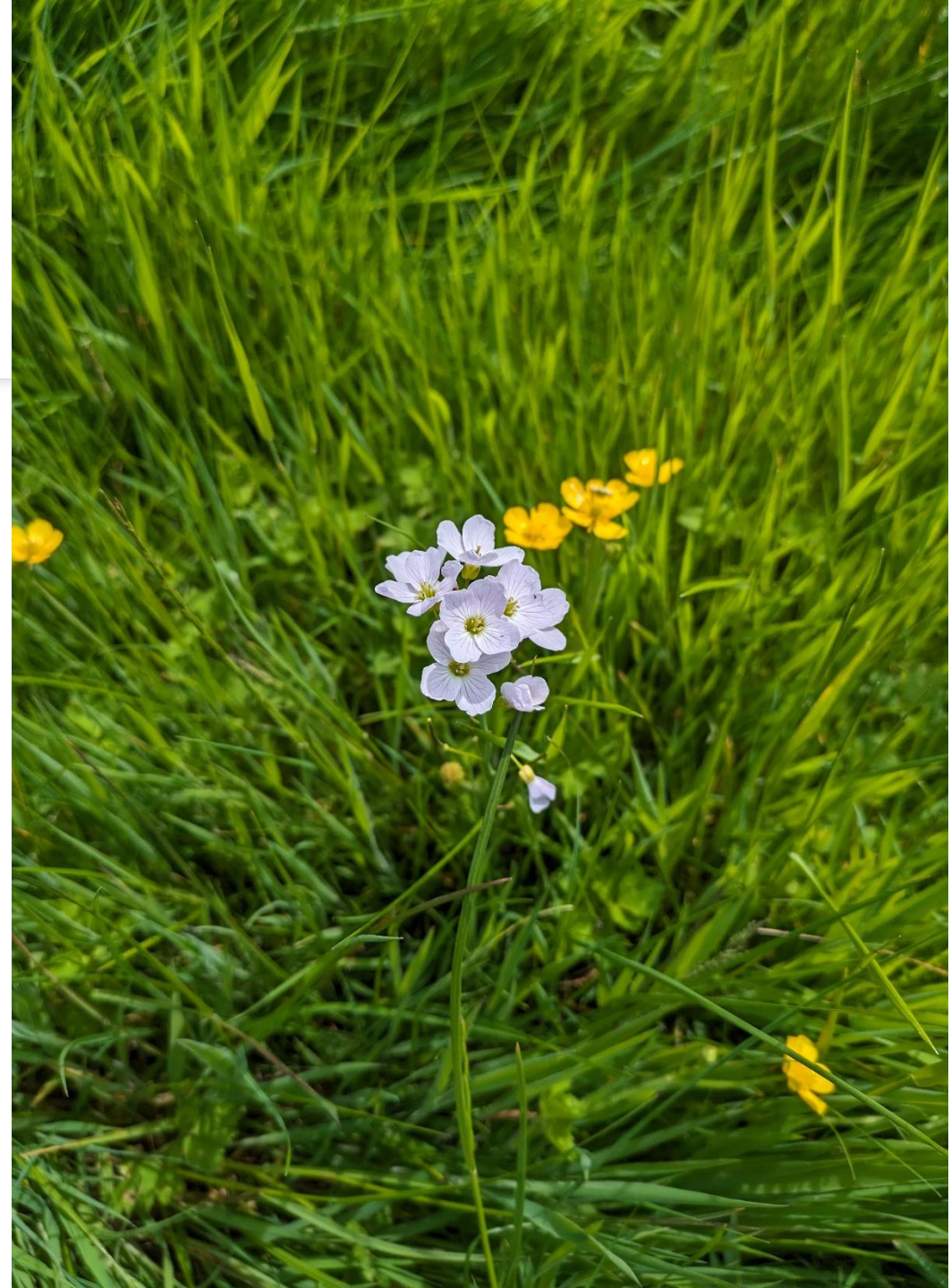
- College of Medicine - Dr Michael Dixon
- Sustainable Food Trust - Bonnie Welch
- University of Bristol – Debbie Sharp
- Belmont Farm – Tamsin Rossiter/Nic Gliddon
- Yew Tree Farm – Catherine Withers
- Langford Farm – Charlie and Teresa Allward
- Funded by a personal donation to the College of Medicine



COLLEGE OF MEDICINE  
AND INTEGRATED HEALTH

# Developing the intervention

- Focus group with topic guide – recorded
  - All relevant local stakeholders plus experts from around UK
- To set up a pre pilot phase to:
  - Define the intervention – process and content
  - Agree farms and thus local general practices/ benefits and harms
  - Inclusion and exclusion criteria for patients
  - Develop working relationships with SPLWs
  - Sort out transport
  - Agree evaluation criteria



# Timeline

- **Pre-pilot (phase 1):** Sept – Dec 2022 at Yew Tree Farm (patients from Southmead Development Trust) and The Belmont Estate (patients from Weston super Mare GP practices).
- **Evaluation and reflection**
- **Pilot (phase 2):** June – July 2023 at Yew Tree Farm (different set of patients from SDT) and Langford Farm (patients from S Bristol – Connexus PCN).
- **Winter Programme:** Sept – Dec 2023 at Yew Tree Farm (patients from S Bristol – SWIFT PCN) and Langford Farm (patients from Keynsham PCN & S Bristol – Connexus PCN).
- **Spring Programme:** April - May 2024 at Yew Tree Farm and Langford Farm, with patients from S Bristol (including Connexus, SWIFT and Bridge View PCNs).





# Social prescribing link workers

- Social prescribing was the obvious platform for this initiative
- SPLWs are attached to practices, PCNs or community organisations
- They take the referrals from primary care (in this instance)
- Identify suitable patients for the programme
- Took consent and provided us with patient details
- We developed strong positive links with SPLWs over the 2 years
- On occasion they came to a farm session

# Patients

- SPLWs worked with us to decide on criteria for inviting patients to participate
  - Southmead recruited bereaved patients
  - Weston Super Mare – mainly mental health challenges
  - South Bristol – mainly mental health challenges, some elderly and isolated patients with minor physical issues.
- Excluded severe mental illness or learning disability, although we had two people come with a carer.
- Needed to be able to walk reasonable distances on uneven ground.
- Able to get to transport pick up points.





# Farm visits – Phase 1 Yew Tree and Belmont

Autumn/Winter 2022

- 6 visits at fortnightly intervals
- Range of activities including meeting the farm animals, exploring the farm landscape, spending time outdoors and in nature, and taking part in farm-based activities like foraging and collecting honey.
- Transport via taxis for 2 hourly sessions

SPRING 2023

BRISTOL AND NORTH SOMERSET

## Farm Visits

GREEN SOCIAL PRESCRIBING, BRISTOL

Join our weekly farm visits where you will have the opportunity to spend time in nature, meet the farm animals and take part in activities like foraging, mindfulness and wildlife identification.

Ask at your GP surgery for a referral into the Social Prescribing Team and learn what activities are available.









# Evaluation

- Quantitative (completed at visits 1, 3 and 6)
  - ONS – 4 (measures personal wellbeing)
  - SWEMWBS – 7 (Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well Being Scale)
- Qualitative (after programme completed)
  - Telephone interviews with sample of
    - Patients
    - SPLWs
    - Farmers
    - Project leads
- Allowed changes to be made for phase 2

# Positive Feedback

I can't wait to go back, I'm excited about it! It's a lovely place, lovely and calming place and beautiful people

I'm just really, really happy to be part of it, and keen to be part of it. Yeah. I really enjoyed it (farmer)

I really enjoyed going. And I will hope, I will look forward to going again

It was really, really good and I hope it runs again. One thing I would say is all the people who went on this pilot, have all arranged with each other to go back to the farm (SPL)



# Mechanisms of Action

- Farm and project staff – welcoming, friendly, inclusive
- Getting out/loneliness/socialising, chatting was therapeutic
- Fresh air, nature, animals good for wellbeing/mental health
- Space and time to think/reflect/meditate

It was nice to know you're not alone, that other people have experienced the same thing as you

The farm people and the people who went with us, and the taxi driver, yes everybody was friendly!



# Benefits and Outcomes

- Mental health – calming, relaxing, helped with anxiety, improved mood
- Socialising and reduced loneliness

It really helped me. Now I can start conversations with other people

I did feel a bit more active and just a bit more like myself ...when I came back, I was in a better mood

Built up quite a nice connection with each other, which I thought was great, because that would go back into the community then, and that could impact the rest of their lives, to have that support and friendship (farmer)

Change in people's energy from when they arrived to when they left. They arrived a lot of the time quite unsure and a bit flat and then they opened up as the session went on and then they seemed to leave with a bit more of a spring in their step (farmer)

# Farm visits – Phase 2 Yew Tree and Langford

Spring/ Summer 2023

- We attempted to overcome several of the barriers and challenges experienced in phase 1.
- 6 visits at weekly intervals
- Range of activities
- Transport via taxis, sessions starting later

SPRING 2023

BRISTOL

## Farm Visits

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# Farm visits – Phase 3

## Yew Tree and Langford

Autumn 2023

- 6 visits at weekly intervals
- Range of activities
- Transport via community transport (CATT Bus) / taxis







# Farm visits – Phase 4 Yew Tree and Langford

Spring 2024

- 6 visits at weekly intervals
- Some patients attending for a second time
- Farmers increasingly able to run the visits themselves
- Some patients wanting to visit / help on the farms independently
- Further quantitative evaluation









Phase 1  
(Autumn/Winter 2022)

Phase 2  
(Spring/ Summer 2023)

Phase 3  
(Spring 2024)

Phase 4  
(Summer and  
Autumn 2024)

Belmont Estate



Yew Tree Farm



Langford Farm



Gloucester - tbc



Kent / Other - tbc



# Next Steps

- Feedback and review process with stakeholders.
- Expansion into **other areas** – Gloucestershire, Devon, Cornwall, Kent – tbc.
- Explore **Green Care Quality Mark** accreditation process with SF&G.
- Research into longer-term **funding options** and possible organisations that might want to take this work forward.
- Development of **handbook** for those interested in setting up their own project – including lessons learned, format, funding opportunities, accreditation process.





# Acknowledgments

- The farmers at Belmont, Yew Tree and Langford Farm
- The SPLWs in South Bristol and Weston Super Mare
- The social prescribing leads in BNSSG
- Colleagues participating in the original focus group
- Dr Ava Lorenc who led the focus group and undertook the interviews
- The taxi companies and community buses