



STEPPING INTO NATURE YEAR 2- 2018-2019

Dorset

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

PROGRESS REPORT

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 What is Stepping into Nature?

Stepping into Nature (SiN) is improving the health and wellbeing of participating older people, people living with dementia and their carers by enabling them to connect with Dorset's natural environment. There is substantial evidence of the health and wellbeing benefits contact with nature can deliver, and of the barriers SiN's target population faces to accessing those benefits. SiN is led by Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (DAOB) with funding from the National Lottery Community Fund.

Nature, social connection & wellbeing

Brief contacts with natural environments can improve physical and mental well-being (Cole and Hall, 2010; Mayer et al., 2009; McMahan and Estes, 2015). Nature based experiences have been found to be therapeutic and to contribute to emotional, psychological and spiritual well-being of people with dementia (Chalfont, 2006).

Social connectedness is a powerful predictor of health outcomes for older people (Ashida, 2008; Berkman and Krishna, 2014; Santini et al., 2015). Social ties give meaning to a person's life by enabling them to participate in it fully and to feel attached to their community (Berkman and Krishna, 2014). Through participation in voluntary activities, life acquires a sense of coherence, meaningfulness and interdependence (Berkman and Krishna, 2014). A substantial body of research links social engagement and participation to improved cognitive function and a high level of well-being in older people (Glymour et al., 2008; Tun et al., 2013).

1.2 Who are the partners delivering & evaluating SiN?




Evaluation has been built in to SiN from its initiation. The evaluation has been led by Public Health Dorset's intelligence team, with external advice provided by Visual Insights People. A summary of the evaluation framework is provided at the end of this report.

The SiN evaluation partnership has aimed to:

- Build evaluation in as a key activity from project initiation;
- Capture impacts beyond funder requirements and explore the unintended benefits;
- Build evaluation capacity and skills and relationships between sectors;
- Provide a framework that can be applied to other projects and areas

2. SIN PROGRAMME LOGIC

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short term (ST) outcomes	Medium term (MT) outcomes	Long term (LT) outcomes
ORGANISATIONAL MANDATE TO PARTICIPATE	DELIVERY OF NATURE RELATED ACTIVITIES	NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES	INCREASED ACCESS TO ACTIVITIES ✓	SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT IN ACTIVITIES ✓	IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE FOR PWD, CARERS AND OLDER PEOPLE ✓
	PROMOTION OF ACTIVITIES	NUMBER OF PEOPLE REFERRED TO ACTIVITIES	PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA, CARERS AND OLDER PEOPLE ARE ENGAGED IN ACTIVITIES ✓	INCREASED SOCIAL CONNECTION ✓	INCREASED SOCIAL SUPPORT ✓
FUNDING FOR - Activities - Evaluation	ENGAGEMENT WITH ACTIVITY PROVIDERS	NUMBER OF PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN ACTIVITIES	INCREASED SOCIAL INTERACTION ✓	REDUCED ISOLATION AND LONELINESS ✓	SUSTAINABLE AND SCALABLE ACTIVITIES
	ENGAGING WITH REFERRERS	NUMBER OF PROVIDERS ENGAGED	PARTICIPANTS ENJOY TAKING PART ✓	IMPROVED CONNECTION WITH NATURE ✓	INCREASE IN DEMENTIA FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES
EXISTING NATURE ACTIVITIES AND EXISTING ACTIVITY PROVIDERS	ENGAGING WITH CARERS AND FAMILIES	NUMBER OF DEMENTIA FRIENDLY TRAINING EVENTS	INCREASED KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS ✓	PEOPLE HAVE IMPROVED UNDERSTANDING AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS DEMENTIA ✓	PEOPLE ARE MORE INCLUSIVE OF PWD
	CAPACITY BUILDING OF ACTIVITY PROVIDERS - Training	NUMBER OF PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN TRAINING EVENTS	INCREASED CONFIDENCE AND MOTIVATION ✓	IMPROVED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PWD AND CARER ✓	IMPROVED GREEN SPACES (E.G. PRESERVATION)
PARTICIPANTS - Older people, carers, PWD - Volunteers/Providers	DEMENZA FRIENDLY AWARENESS EVENTS/ SESSIONS	NUMBER OF DEMENZA AWARENESS EVENTS	RESPIRE AND RELAXATION FOR CARER ✓	INCREASE IN DEMENZA FRIENDLY GREEN SPACES ✓	SUSTAINED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OF PWD
	STAFF TIME/RESOURCES FOR DELIVERY OF ACTIVITIES/TRAINING	NUMBER OF PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN AWARENESS EVENTS	INCREASED DEMENZA AWARENESS OF PROVIDERS ✓	MORE PEOPLE DOING OUTDOOR ACTIVITY INDEPENDENTLY	Contribution to Major Health and Care Outcomes
DECREASED STRESS			INCREASED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY		
GREEN SPACES		INCREASED DEMENZA AWARENESS OF PUBLIC	MORE PEOPLE DOING OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES	INCREASED COMMUNITY CONNECTION	REDUCED PRIMARY CARE COSTS
				INCREASED INDEPENDENT CONNECTION WITH GREEN SPACES BY PWD CARERS AND OLDER PEOPLE	INCREASED INDEPENDENT LIVING
				PEOPLE OVERCOME BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATE	REDUCTION OF STIGMA

-  Quantitative evidence from participants and providers of outcomes achieved
-  Qualitative evidence from participant interviews and providers of outcomes achieved

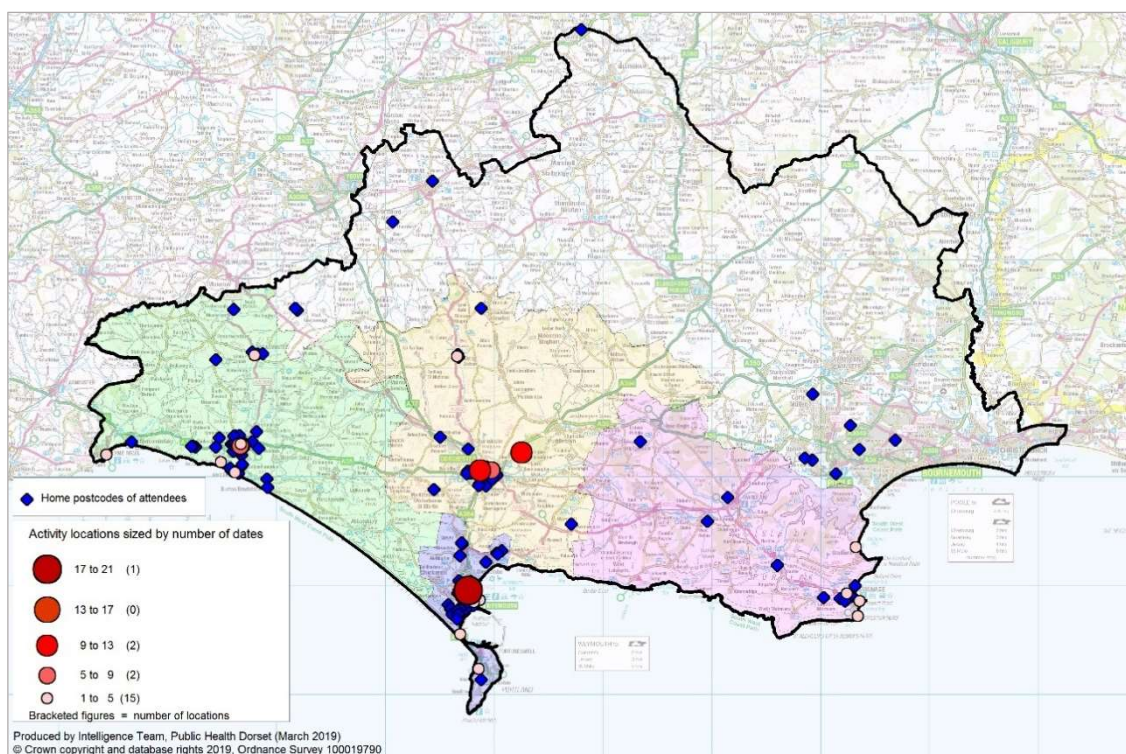
3. HOW HAS SiN ENABLED MORE PEOPLE TO ENGAGE WITH NATURE?

3.1 SiN has provided different types of activity in different types of location to maximise its appeal to the target audience.

SiN activities have been designed to maximise opportunities for connection with nature by offering a wide range of types of activity (appealing to different interests) across a broad geographical area, including both rural and urban locations.

These activities can be grouped by the approach they take to facilitating contact with nature: through physical-based activities, skills-based activities and social activities. Importantly, while each activity can be characterised as providing primarily physical, skills or social benefits they all deliver one or more secondary benefits e.g. activities focussed on physical activity also provide opportunities to connect and socialise with other people.

Figure 1: SiN activity locations (sized by number of dates activities ran) and where attendees live



3.2 SiN has successfully engaged its target audience

During Year 2 SiN was successful in reaching its target population with 79% of participants aged 60 or older. Participation of the target group increased in Year 2 in comparison to Year 1 and is expected to continue to increase in Year 3.

Table 1: SiN participant age in year two

Age	Percentage of total participants (383 people)
59yrs or younger	21%
60 -74yrs	38%
75yrs and older	41%

3.3 SiN provided opportunities for people to take part in nature-based activities.

During year 2 of the project the majority of participants attended a single activity, but 29% were repeat participants.

Table 2: Frequency of participation in SiN activities during year 2.

Number of activities participated in	Percentage of total participants (383 people)
1	71%
2 -3	16%
4 or more	13%

Barriers to repeat participation were investigated during year two through telephone interviews with participants who only attended one activity. Analysis of these interviews did not identify any issues that fell within the SiN project's sphere of influence. Participants felt that activity quality was good and the decision not to participate more regularly was driven by several factors such as changes to participants' health, adverse weather and seasonality, wanting someone to attend with and competing priorities for people's time.

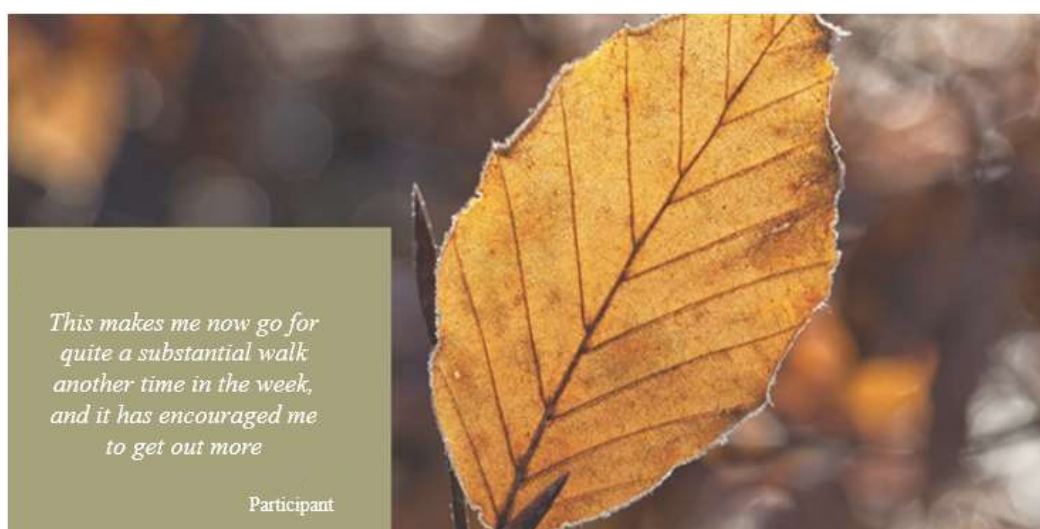
4. HOW HAS SiN USED NATURE TO INCREASE SOCIAL INTERACTION AND WELLBEING?

4.1 SiN is enabling people to increase the amount of time they spend in nature.

A key audience SiN has sought to engage was people who did not usually have contact with nature. SiN has succeeded in engaging people in activities who, prior to registration, had little or no contact with nature. Table 3 shows the frequency of participation by attendees who took part in outdoor activities less than once a week before registering with SiN.

Table 3: Activity participation frequency by participants who did not usually have contact with nature

Number of activities participated in	Percentage of 'low nature contact' participants (91 people)
1	50%
2 -3	36%
4 or more	14%



4.2 SiN activities provide opportunities for people to connect with nature.

Table 4: Participant views on SiN's benefit for nature connection

After activities participants said:	Percentage of participants who agreed with the statement
They intend to return & take part in SiN activities	92%
Activities allowed them good opportunities to connect to nature	82%
They intend to spend more time outdoors	79%

SiN participants reported that activities they took part in provided good opportunities to connect with nature and the majority agreed that they intended to spend more time outdoors after taking part. Physical activity based activities have provided the most effective means of connecting people to nature with 95% of participants agreeing that the activity allowed them good opportunities to connect to nature.

Interviews with participants and observation of activities identified several ways that participants connection to nature was stimulated, through:

- a. **Reconnecting them with environments and/or activities from their past**
- b. **Discovery of new environments or activities to connect to**
- c. **Nurturing a fresh perspective and appreciation of the pleasure to be gained from 'everyday' nature experiences**
- d. **Increasing confidence & motivation to get out in nature**



4.3 SiN is enabling participants to make social connections

Table 5: Participant views on SiN’s benefit for social connection

After activities participants said:	Percentage of participants who agreed
They had had a good chance to meet people	90 %
They had felt included	98%
They had met new people they intend to meet again	71%
They had had good opportunities to socialise	92%

SiN has delivered activities where participants have felt included and met new people. Participant observations during activities saw people talking, sharing experiences and knowledge with each other. Having a task/activity to focus on was seen to help people connect socially. After a history walk, participants were observed going on to cafes to continue talking and enjoy the surrounding area outside of the SiN led activity.

Activities brought together people with similar interests or ‘kindred spirits’ allowing some participants to build relationships and make new friendships, sometimes meeting independently outside of the SiN activities. Feeling included and integrated with others taking part in the activities fostered increased sense of belonging. Some participants referred to the sense of wellbeing generated through just listening, talking and sharing experiences with others.

Some of the key features of SiN activities that enables people to make meaningful social connections are:

- a. **The inclusive nature of activities increased people’s sense of belonging and experience of meaningful connection**
- b. **Participating in activities close to where they live enabled “chance” meetings with other participants in their local community and a greater feeling of inclusion in community, including at community care facilities.**
- c. **Meeting people with similar interests at activities encouraged friendships to form and people meeting up outside the activities to continue their shared interests**



The actual fact that I am being integrated with other people, into the town, it’s great... knowing that I’m going to see other people and be part of another organisation. It’s great you know... to get out with another group of people in an organisation like this, it is very worthwhile.

Participant

5. HOW HAS SIN IMPROVED WELLBEING OF ITS TARGET AUDIENCE?

5.1 Participation in SiN activities has improved participant wellbeing

Post activity, participants reported immediate feelings of 'fun', 'enjoyment' and 'pleasure', 'happiness', a sense of 'doing something different' and 'relaxation'. They said they would tell others how 'enjoyable', 'fun' and 'interesting' the activity was. Participant observations noted people visibly relaxing as an activity progressed – shoulders rested, opened up body language and sounding more confident in their voice.

SiN's impact on participants' wellbeing was explored through interviews. Some of the key ways that activities improved wellbeing were:

- a. Experiencing a lift in mood, happiness and appreciation of life.
- b. Activities facilitating people stepping outside their day-to-day routine and develop their personal interests
- c. Learning new skills and seeing things differently 'broaden the horizons' of life and increase confidence to 'take the initiative' to get out and do more
- d. Activities connect people with others who could support them, or who have similar experiences



5.2 Participation in SiN activities has improved carers' wellbeing

The 'dementia friendly' format of the activities has also been beneficial to participating carers. Interviews exploring the impacts on their wellbeing found that the activities:

- a. Provided informal support through connecting to other carers able to understand their situation and feelings
- b. Allowed their partner to interact independently and safely, providing them some respite from their caring role and enjoyment in seeing their partner engaged.
- c. Allowed carers to participate with their partner, supporting their relationships through rebuilding rapport and providing new focus for conversation.



I feel happier... no worries... relaxed and not so tense and so [my partner] doesn't pick up on the tense atmosphere. I know [my partner] is doing what he loves and is building his own independence and confidence. I don't have to stay by his side and can let have his own space, so he doesn't feel watched and checked up on.

Participant, carer

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6. HOW HAS SiN INCREASED ACTIVITY PROVIDER AWARENESS, CONFIDENCE AND CAPACITY?

6.1 SiN has increased activity providers' capability to engage the target audience

The SiN project delivered dementia friendly training to providers to ensure their activities were 'fit for purpose', enabling providers to shift to focus on 'sensory experience' rather than on education. Activity providers valued the dementia friendly training for helping them connect people of all abilities to nature and seeing participants positive reactions to their delivery. The support from SiN has enhanced their capability to engage by:

- a. **Increasing providers' understanding of dementia and an appreciation of this audiences' needs and behaviours**
- b. **Increasing providers' confidence in working with the audience and catering for differing abilities or unexpected situations**



..to maybe understand dementia and stuff is something I hadn't bumped into in my personal life so it's been really good for that and from my professional point of view it has just added a completely new dynamic. I didn't know I could do something like this and have such an amazing impact on the currently few people who have attended.

Activity provider

Wellbeing Walk © Nicki Masien and Kei Little

6.2 Funding & support from SiN has allowed providers space to learn what works and make sustainable change to delivery

Providers' reported that the financial support and dementia training received from SiN has allowed them space to develop their delivery and offer by:

- a. Providing some financial security that allows space to try out new approaches and learn what works for the audience.
- b. Increased awareness alongside confidence has led to looking at wider activities 'with fresh eyes' to creating dementia friendly activities and spaces beyond the programme.



I now get everybody to be a dementia friend within here so that's probably my biggest roll out that's you know connected to but has nothing to do with Stepping into Nature. From my awareness from me doing dementia friends just as part of all this to then think actually everybody on that front desk needs to have this

Activity Provider

© Katie Wilkinson

6.3 SiN has connected organisations and built networks for collaboration

Support from the SiN project team and working together as a partnership under the 'SiN umbrella' has helped to build connections between organisations and providers to make contacts with groups through:

- a. Co-ordinating and bringing people into the project
- b. Connecting providers with new groups and organisations they hadn't engaged with before
- c. Building a model that allows providers' to share their experience and delivery beyond the SiN programme.

I've had quite a bit of roll out from the project, that I've been invited to speak to lots of different organisations about what the [activity] is, and also of what we can offer [in other locations beyond SiN area] they want to deliver a very similar project and hopefully taking some of the models from the SiN project across.

Activity Provider

Image: Stepping into Nature film shown at open air cinema event



Further evaluation work is being undertaken in Year 3 to understand the sustainability impacts beyond the SiN project.

7. HOW CAN SiN BENEFIT MORE PEOPLE?

What have been SiN's successes?

1. The project is enabling its target audience to engage with Dorset's natural environment.
2. This engagement has benefitted participants' health and wellbeing by increasing connection to nature, social connection and involvement in meaningful activity.
3. The SiN partnership has established an effective framework for data collection and project evaluation.

What is enabling SiN to deliver this success?

1. The coordination of SiN by the core project team has been key to creating an effective partnership and bridging the health and environment systems.
2. SiN is enabling a sustainable approach to delivering activities and collaboration between the health and environment sector. In the short to medium term, increasing the scale of this activity is dependant on the maintenance of a core project team.
3. The partnership approach to evaluation has increased local capability for designing and delivering effective evaluation and improving delivery during the project lifespan.
4. SiN has established a brand and identity that is increasingly recognised and trusted across the health and environment sectors and the project's target audience.

How can this success be scaled up?

1. Expand SiN's delivery setting to include more localities.
2. Build on SiN's effective model for delivery by the environment sector to increase coworking between the environment and health sectors.
3. Increase SiN's reach by targeting the entire population of people aged over 55s.
4. Focus on only delivering the most effective and beneficial activities.
5. Target activity delivery to locations that are accessible for the people most in need.

8. METHODOLOGY: STEPPING INTO NATURE EVALUATION (2016-2019)

The evaluation was guided by a framework that included a Theory of Change and Program Logic developed in partnership by Dorset AONB and Public Health Dorset. A mixed-methods (qualitative and quantitative) approach was used for data collection from the beginning of the project in 2017. The focus of the evaluation was on project effectiveness, evidencing the difference SiN was making to the lives of participants and the capacity of activity providers and other stakeholders.

Evaluation data collection included:

1. Routine quantitative data collection on project participation, participant demographics and other project outputs;
2. Quantitative evaluation tools for measuring project effectiveness including: participant and provider satisfaction, participant benefits (such as increased social connections and increased wellbeing) and provider benefits (such as increased knowledge of working with people with dementia and their carers, and increased capacity to provide appropriate and effective activities).
3. Qualitative evaluation using in-depth interviews and participant-observation for eliciting benefits of activities in the lives of participants and investigating processes and good practice with providers.

The evaluation instruments include forms, surveys, data entry tools and interview schedules. Training was provided in survey administration, data entry and management and qualitative interviewing by Visual Insights People (VIP) in December 2017 and December 2018.

The evaluation data collected and used for the Year 2 report is summarised below.

Data type	Notes	Number
In-depth interviews with participants	Including participants from woodland craft, walking group, poetry and archive based activity	11
Participant-observation	Undertaken by project team at walks and archive based activities.	6
Participant Post activity survey	Completed anonymously to gauge activity quality & participant enjoyment	424
Participant engagement survey	Phone interviews with participants who did not return to an activity.	10
In-depth interviews with providers	Completed with providers of arts, woodland craft and walking activities.	4
Annual Provider Survey	Survey administered November 2018	12
Activity Provider post activity survey	Provider feedback submitted post activity sessions	70

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