

VANESSA MILES

Vanessa Miles, who runs Well Image CIC, has two rare health conditions and so has lived experience of some of the struggles the photography participants are going through.

Well Image's aims are closely aligned to the NHS five ways to mental health. The photography acts very much as a catalyst to enable people to: engage with nature, become more present, connect with others, increase levels of activity and enhance creativity.

Most people are attracted to join to develop their creativity and the other four elements have been a very welcome by-product.

Photography as a therapeutic tool

Two people, who both have ME/CFS, talk to Vanessa Miles about how their very different approaches to photography have helped transform their lives.



Celia

Celia joined an online photography programme run by Well Image CIC which was set up as a response to the pandemic and funded by the National Lottery, supporting many people who self-diagnose as having poor mental health, whatever the cause. Photographic inspiration and discussion takes place in small online groups, reaching people who often find it hard to leave their home.

The programme enabled Celia to have the confidence to begin making new connections with local people.

Celia tells us: "I've been ill for almost 25 years now and I've been pretty much housebound all that time, so my life had become very samey. Not in a particularly awful way, just that there were only certain things I could do in certain ways. The photography literally and sort of more metaphorically, made me view my own environment differently. I started noticing really basic things like how the light came in through the windows or shadows on the walls and the view outside my windows, and how that changed as the seasons changed.

"We had a project on the colour orange. I didn't have anything I