



# Natural Academy Training

Learning that grows and connects



Natural Academy is in the space intersecting human and environmental health. We recognise the mitigation of the health and nature crises we are within requires the facilitation of individuals, communities, organisations, and statutory bodies. This facilitation can be through messaging, both at an intellectual level and also through experiential interventions, as well as accredited trainings that create deeper change, enabling individuals, teams and organisations to put health and nature at the centre of who they are and what they do.

## Nature Crisis

- Climate change<sup>1</sup>
- Loss of biodiversity<sup>2</sup>

## Natural Academy

- Evidence shows a positive association between time spent in nature and mental and physical health<sup>3 4</sup>
- Connection to nature is associated with wellbeing, educational outcomes, pro-environmental and pro-conservation behaviours<sup>5</sup>
- Nature connectedness is positively associated with positive well-being and negatively associated with mental distress.
- Green spaces are associated with a lower likelihood of using medication for depression
- Inland-blue space visits were associated with a lower likelihood of using anxiety medication

## Health Crisis

- Mental health issues on the increase in the UK<sup>8</sup>
- Obesity on the increase in the UK<sup>9</sup>
- Long term health conditions increasing in UK<sup>10</sup>

*Helping people connect to nature is the purpose of Natural Academy, this connectedness has been evidenced to improve their health and wellbeing, bring purpose and meaning and encourage pro-nature values and behaviour shifts.<sup>11</sup> This is the foundation for the NatureWell approach that Natural Academy developed.*

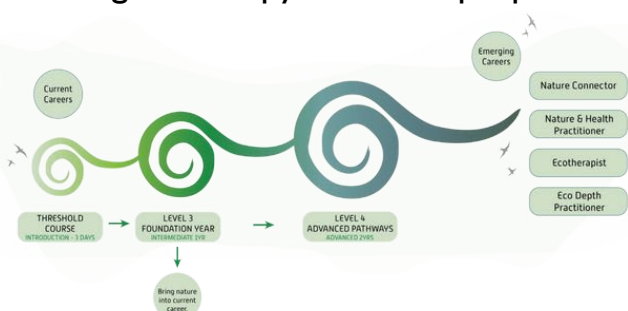
We offer accredited training courses and ongoing support to both groups and individuals. This enables individuals and organisations to start, or further develop, their work with people in nature. By training professional, nature based practitioners, and by guiding and supporting individuals and organisations, we seek to create competent and confident professionals in nature based approaches to health, healing and deeper purpose.

Since 2007, our not-for-profit eco-social enterprise has helped thousands of people, either directly through group training courses, or by working with institutions – such as the NHS, conservation charities, and community health and social care organisations – to more effectively engage their patients, beneficiaries, clients, and staff in nature.

We offer two training routes in ecopsychology and nature based practice

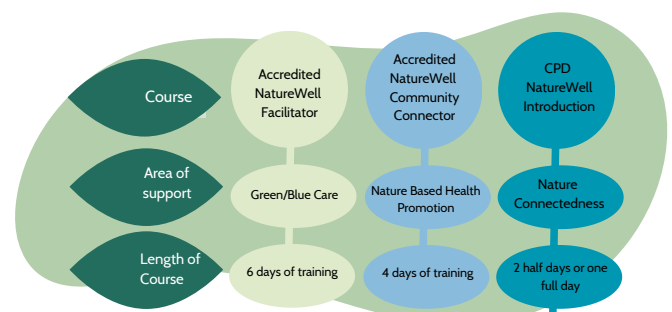
## The Pathway

The Ecopsychology vocational pathway is for individuals seeking a career in nature, health and wellbeing, ecotherapy and eco-depth practice.



## NatureWell

The NatureWell training is for organisations wanting to develop nature and health services.





# NatureWell Training



NatureWell is an innovative training and service design that has been created and pioneered by Natural Academy. It represents a unique and compelling way of addressing the challenge of supporting both environmental and human health. We have woven together expertise in eco-psychology, health and wellbeing and land use such as conservation, food growing and green community space development in this approach.

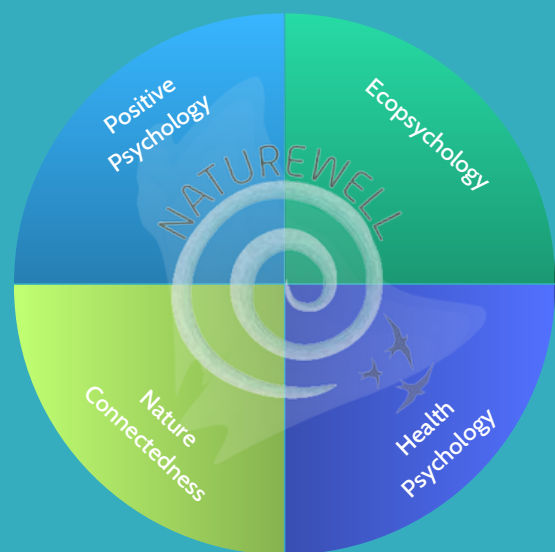
## NatureWell

- enables people to explore nature-based strategies and practices for self-care
- offers nature-based tools for relaxation, restoration and revitalisation
- provides people with nature-based knowledge and learning to take into other professional domains.

The NatureWell approach is based in the evidence from ecopsychology, health psychology, positive psychology and nature connectedness.

The evidence base explores how we can find a reciprocal support for people and nature through our natural affiliation to nature or 'biophilia,' and within a developing sense of our nature connectedness. We know that connectedness to nature naturally arises when we stop, become more mindful and take time to notice the natural world around us.

Facilitating these experiences within evidenced frameworks and interventions means that the resources for self-care and pro-nature behaviours can be more fully experienced, explored, and integrated into wider practice.



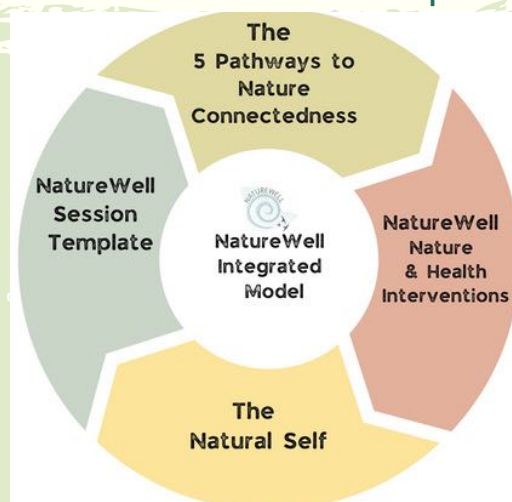
The NatureWell approach has woven together 4 main threads of our expertise:

- Our knowledge of the emerging evidence for the effectiveness of nature and health services
- Our many years offering nature-based practices and health self-management
- Our professional understanding of effective nature-based interventions
- Our proven delivery frameworks and session design

These threads have been integrated into a simple approach that is highly effective, relevant, and innovative. We are helping to enable teams, organisations, and projects, in the health, environmental and VCSE sectors on a journey of development and learning, so that they can confidently and competently deliver nature-based programmes. We design and deliver these in a local bespoke way to meet the needs of their communities and participants.

This integrated approach is underpinned by the five pathways to nature connectedness developed by Derby University.

Contact,  
Beauty  
Emotion,  
Compassion  
Meaning



NatureWell offers health practitioners an opportunity to develop the skills to work in nature, and nature practitioners the skills to support people's mental health outcomes.

We have delivered training all over the UK. Over the past years we trained over 200 people in the NatureWell integrative health and nature approach and have facilitators and trainers across the UK. We have set up 3 hubs.

We deliver training across three main sectors: Nature Conservation, NHS and the Voluntary Community Social Enterprise (VCSE). Partners have included:

Sectors and types of NatureWell Facilitators

-  NHS organisations 45
-  Nature conservation projects 35
-  Natural academy practitioners 43
-  VCSE organisations 89
-  Community and Social care 10



**200+**  
NatureWell Facilitators



- We Hear You Charity, Frome Somerset
- Shine Coaching, Lancashire
- Newquay Community Orchard, Cornwall

- Glasbren Community Farm Carmarthenshire
- Ernest Cook Trust
- Soul Trail
- Tortworth Forest Centre
- NurtureWild CIC
- WEA Adult Education
- Changes Bristol
- Ecowild CIC
- Wilderconnection

**94%**  
Overall Rating of course by participants

What have participants fed back about the NatureWell training?

**93%**  
Agreed or strongly agreed

"I feel confident that I have the ability to implement the skills/methods I have learnt"



- Avon Wildlife Trust
- Somerset Wildlife Trust
- Cheshire Wildlife Trust
- Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
- Cornwall Wildlife Trust



- NHS Forest, Green Spaces for Health, national reach
- Aintree Hospital Liverpool
- St Martin's Hospital, Kent & Medway
- Mount Vernon Hospital,
- Southmead Hospital, North Bristol
- Sussex Community NHS Foundation

"I believe implementation of the skills/methods I have learnt is feasible at work"

**98%**  
Agreed or strongly agreed

*"The rich content, the clear structure and the teaching of the course following the format of facilitating sessions, this really helps you to learn from an embodied experience"*

What did participants like about the NatureWell training?

*"the many opportunities to experience the pathways, deepen nature connection and use skills"*

*"The relevance to our work and the fact that the micro sessions were relevant and real"*

Children and Adolescent Mental Health Project. CAMHS

- Oxford Health, Marlborough House
- Alder Hey Hospital Liverpool
- North Cornwall Partnership Trust

Adult Mental Health

- Avon and Wiltshire Partnership AWP



# Case study

## Avon Wildlife Trust

### Wellbeing with Nature

Natural Academy partnered with the Avon wildlife trust to develop their Wellbeing with Nature Programme. This drew together expertise in psychology, conservation, wellbeing and nature based practice. This was designed to improve people's health and wellbeing and to have a positive impact on the environment. The programme offered three levels of engagement in nature.

#### Green Care

89% participants had improved health and wellbeing.

78% participants had increased connections with their community.

94% participants increased their connection to nature

#### Community projects

97% agreed that their mood was enhanced.

93% agreed that their physical activity increased.

93% agreed that their social interactions increased.

in total  
**1995**  
people engaged  
in the project

**154**  
participants

Wellbeing Self-Care Courses  
(Green Care)

**136**  
participants

Community Projects  
(Health Promotion)

**1705**  
participants

Wellbeing and Nature Connection  
Days  
(Health promotion and everyday life)

Wellbeing  
and nature  
connection  
days

92% agreed that their mood was enhanced and that they were more aware of the benefits nature has on wellbeing.<sup>12</sup>

#### Wellbeing Self-Care Courses (Green Care)

These sessions were designed to offer nature-based health and wellbeing interventions to those living with long term health conditions and those experiencing mental ill health. These sessions had clear health and well-being outcomes. Participants included groups from BANES cancer centre, Genesis Trust (Homelessness and mental health charity) and Booklea Health Centre

#### Community Wellbeing Projects (Health Promotion)

AWT engaged with local communities to improve green spaces, tailoring interventions to specific groups in order to support them with their wellbeing, connection to nature and social interaction within their communities. Community groups included the Brandon Trust (supporting adults with learning disabilities) Horizons (supporting young people with mild learning disabilities) Age Uk and the NHS Dementia wellbeing centre.

#### Wellbeing and Nature Connection Days (Health promotion and everyday life)

These were one-off sessions designed to promote the benefits and value of nature through nature based activities. They were delivered to specific groups as one off sessions, and taster days for those interested in attending longer courses. Activities were also demonstrated at community events. Groups and sessions included Bike Minded and Headway (mental health) Orchard Vale trust and Centre (Learning disabilities) Contact the Elderly and Catherine House Care Home (elderly)

*"This course has pretty much saved my life. Before I started I was pretty much homeless and didn't have any connections to anyone, I was really low. The course has given me connections to nature and to people that I never had before" Dundry Slope Participant*





# Case study

## Marlborough House

### CAMHS adolescent inpatient unit

We delivered NatureWell trainings to a multidisciplinary staff team at Marlborough house, an inpatient CAMHS setting.. This pilot group demonstrated ways in which nature based activities could be adapted and integrated within clinical settings, and the co-benefits for both staff and patient well-being. It also enabled the staff that completed the training to explore ways in which they could incorporate nature based interventions into their professional practice.<sup>13</sup>

Staff included a psychiatrist, nurses, occupational therapists and those working in support roles. Training focused on providing the service with the foundations to create nature based programmes for their patients.

#### Marlborough House participants' evaluation of NatureWell training

What have participants fed back about the NatureWell training?

*"Great for our wellbeing, great for kids' wellbeing. Offering hope at a very important time"*

*"...the training itself is so immersive and experiential it also offers personal restoration"*

*"it is therapeutic not only for the clients with which we work but also for the facilitators. Everyone benefits"*

**94%**  
Agreed or strongly agreed

"I have learnt many useful and relevant skills/methods that I plan to use in my role"

**89%**  
Agreed or strongly agreed

"I feel confident that I have the ability to implement the skills/methods that I have learnt"

**94%**  
Agreed or strongly agreed

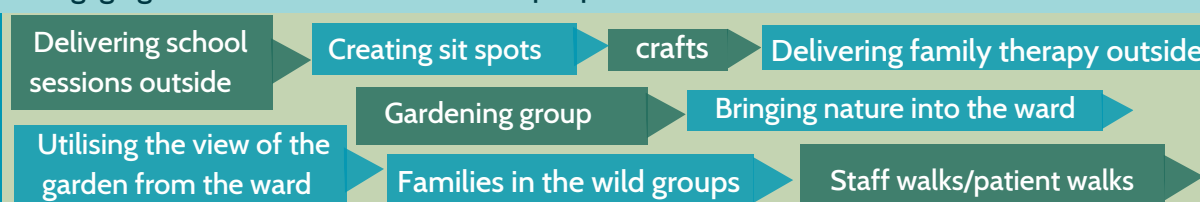
"I believe the skills/methods that I have learnt will be effective in improving patients' recovery and wellbeing"

Focus groups were held with some of the participants to evaluate the training and to explore how they will integrate this into practice . Some key themes emerged around the benefits and the potential of this work:

#### Some key benefits

Emotional Regulation	being outside is calming for young people in distress	Using grounding for young people with high arousal	Using nature to distract young people from negative thoughts and feelings
Relational security	Being in nature helps young people open up	A less restrictive environment to the ward	Young people and staff sharing experiences can aid relationships
Sustainable and recovery orientated approach	Encouraging families to engage with nature on visits	Teaching young people skills they can incorporate into life after discharge	Potential to link young people up to nature-based community groups on discharge
Holistic benefits	Health benefits of engaging with nature	Importance of sleep for young people	

#### Some activities and approaches used and potential ideas going forwards





# Case study WHYoutdoors

We Hear You is a charity offering free counselling for anyone affected by cancer or other life-threatening conditions. They support children, young people and adults across Bath, Somerset and Wiltshire. WHYoutdoors was a holistic project developed in a collaboration with Natural Academy through NatureWell training and service support. The project aimed to offer emotional support and wellbeing to those living with and beyond a cancer diagnosis, who often suffer from lasting anxiety and depression.<sup>14</sup>

An evaluation was carried out by Moa Sundström, of King's College London in order to gain an understanding of what the participants took from WHYoutdoors and how the course had affected them. Facilitators were also interviewed to see how the training and course had impacted them and how they believed it had impacted participants.

**5**  
Participants

Five WHYoutdoors participants all women (mean age 57.2) took part in semi-structured interviews.

**4**  
Facilitators

Four WHYoutdoors facilitators also took part in semi-structured interviews. All were counsellors for WHY prior to this training

## Main theme - Nature connection and being outdoors

The course improved participants' nature connection and made them look at, and spend time in nature in a different and more meaningful way

## Main theme - the WHYoutdoors format

The setting where WHYoutdoors took place was very important and aided participants' positive experiences and healing

## Main theme - Powerful and profound experience

WHYoutdoors can be a life changing experience and have a positive effect on most aspects of a person's life

## Main theme - Psychological impact and wellbeing

The psychological long-term effects of cancer were mentioned numerous times and the importance of psychological, emotional and spiritual healing

## Main theme - Many changes to personal life after WHYoutdoors

The training and course led to many changes with the facilitator's lives as it altered some of their core beliefs

## Main theme -Using nature in counselling

WHYoutdoors gave the counsellors several tools to use in their day-to-day counselling sessions

*"I believe in nature and this connection with oneness and all that kind of stuff. It just felt right to explore where I was at in my life. In that way the connection with the land and where you fit, it just made so much sense..."* Participant

*"...as a counsellor I think the most important thing I took is that in regular talking therapy, we talk about a container in therapy...the training and nature work really blew my mind because suddenly the container could be nature, and actually nature is there all the time"* Facilitator

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