



Funded by
UK Government

Feasibility of integrating outdoor health and wellbeing at the Bro Ddyfi Community Hospital

Consultation with community, hospital staff and key stakeholders

Prepared by: Coed Lleol / Small Woods and Ecodyfi



Steered by: Representatives from the Bro Ddyfi Community Hospital, Powys Teaching Health Board, Bro Ddyfi Patient Forum, Powys Organisation of Voluntary Organisations, Rural Health & Care Wales, Machynlleth Town Council, Dyfi Valley Health Surgery and the Bro Ddyfi Hospital Inpatient Twymyn Ward

Date: May 2024

POWERED BY
**LEVELLING
UP**



Summary

Introduction

This study explores the feasibility of Bro Ddyfi Community Hospital, situated in the Dyfi Biosphere in Mid Wales, integrating outdoor health and nature-based wellbeing alongside its clinical care. The study was undertaken by Coed Lleol/Small Woods in partnership with local development trust, Ecodyfi, and it was led by a Steering Group of key local and regional stakeholders. It was funded by the UK Government and Powered by Levelling Up, through the Shared Prosperity Fund, managed by Powys County Council.

The policy landscape is increasingly pointing towards more joined-up approaches across sectors, with a focus on sustainability and preventative approaches, including green social prescribing. The need for this study emerged at the end of the three-year Trywydd Iach | Outdoor Health Network project that provided outdoor activities on prescription in the area, with one of the key recommendations to engage further with one healthcare location to build an exemplar site. Feedback from hospital staff and the Patients Forum suggested a need for and a willingness to taking this forward with the Bro Ddyfi Community Hospital.

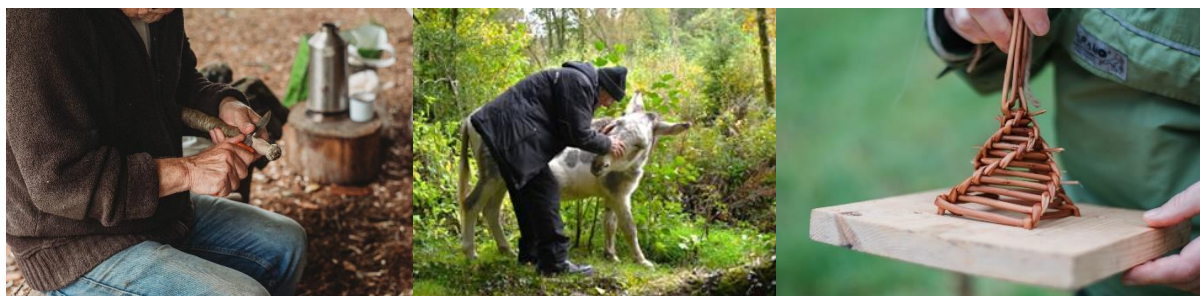
This report is relevant to stakeholders who took part in this study, decision makers and practitioners at the Community Hospital, outdoor health activity providers and individuals and organisations involved more widely in implementing preventative and alternative models of healthcare.

Methodology

The approach included desk research, surveys, engagement events, interviews and focus groups, and site visits were also undertaken. Over 600 different stakeholders were engaged by the study, including 400 adults and 45 children and young people responding to the surveys. Consultation work was followed by focused meetings and desk research to assess the feasibility and cost of potential interventions.

Key findings

A wide range of physical and mental health challenges are experienced by the community, as well as staff and patients in the hospital. The majority of respondents felt that the outdoors helped their



health and wellbeing and were interested in taking part in outdoor activities. They also felt that outdoor and nature-based activities should be available on prescription. This was supported by the hospital's clinical staff, who would like to be able to 'prescribe' outdoor activities alongside medical interventions. The main barriers to this were lack of time and availability of provision.

Adult respondents' most popular outdoor activities were woodland skills, cooking and foraging, arts and crafts, accessible walking and movement, conservation, and nature mindfulness. Young people were most keen on spending time with animals, woodland skills, cooking and foraging, wild swimming, and cycling. Barriers to taking part included lack of time, not knowing what is available, limited transport, and lack of confidence. Most would be willing to pay for activities using a 'pay what you can' approach and would like a central point for information to publicise what is on offer, such as a website and a hospital noticeboard.

The need for more activities to signpost people to was highlighted by hospital and surgery staff. There is currently a gap in outdoor activities for health and wellbeing in the area. Whilst there is a diverse range of outdoor practitioners, there is currently a lack of funding to deliver outdoor health and wellbeing programmes.

A network of experienced and skilled outdoor activity providers is available in the area. These providers would like to have stronger connections with the healthcare sector and run activities at the hospital and in the surrounding area. Their challenges included working part-time, often on a self-employed basis, with irregular work that is funding dependent. There is currently a lack of funded opportunities in the area. They would like to be part of a network that provides support, collaboration opportunities and that ensures minimum standards.

The community hospital site would benefit from developing its outdoor spaces. Proposals included a garden for inpatients on the Twymyn Ward, private outdoor spaces for each palliative suite, the addition of interpretation to the sensory garden. Other suggestions included more seating across the site, more trees, and more flowers. There was interest from activity providers in supporting the development of the gardens and in running sessions there for patients. The staff would benefit from a relaxing and private outdoor staff area, in which to relieve stress, have meetings and take breaks.

A community interest in volunteering was an unexpected outcome of the research, with more than half of respondents saying they 'would be' or 'may be' interesting in volunteering. There is potentially a need for volunteer support to enable the community to get involved in volunteer opportunities, such as outdoor health activity groups, walking groups, and developing a patient garden.

There is a need for the development of a more joined-up approach that integrates outdoor health into the existing patient referral process at the hospital. This would need to be quick and user-friendly, with a mechanism for tracking the healthcare journey for patients. It is key that this development links in effectively with the existing Community Connector service in the area, hosted by the Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations.



Any interventions need to be proportionate and implemented sensitively. Challenges with healthcare capacity and budgets mean that if there are to be opportunities for staff and patients, this must not be at the expense of other critical services.

Vision for integrating outdoor health at the Community Hospital

The collective vision emerging from this study is for a thriving Community Hospital at the heart of the Dyfi Biosphere. It would support the health and resilience of its community and the environment by offering an outdoor health service that is integrated and complementary to its primary and secondary clinical care. By developing the hospital outdoor spaces and gardens to link with other green sites across the Biosphere, the hospital could connect patients, staff and community members to evidenced-based outdoor wellbeing interventions. With a focus on reducing healthcare burdens, enhancing wellbeing and addressing environmental challenges, the hospital could engage local organisations and volunteers in a collective effort to sustainably promote the health and resilience of people and place.

Recommendations

1. Establish an Outdoor Health Development Group to oversee the study's follow-up and delivery of its recommendations. This approach fosters continuity and collaboration to address the diverse needs of the community and healthcare services.
2. The Outdoor Health Development Group to consider the creation of a new role, for the purpose of this report referred to as the Outdoor Health Coordinator. This role could address the need for enhanced staff capacity to enable integrated outdoor health services and effective communication between all stakeholders.
3. The Outdoor Health Development Group to facilitate the collective leverage funds to address the financial implications of proposed recommendations, with an aim to create more capacity and sustainability for outdoor health, alongside clinical care. Partner organisations would fundraise, develop collaborations, and implement recommendations. Stakeholder organisations could explore creating a sustainable investment portfolio to ensure continual programming. Community willingness to pay for some activities could also supplement funding.
4. Establish a sustainable and targeted programme of outdoor health and wellbeing activities, including formal and informal programmes, and taster days that meet the needs of the community, ensuring continuity of provision and accessibility. Connect with other outdoor sites across the Dyfi Biosphere for wellbeing and volunteering opportunities, including the two Woodland Hub sites.
5. Establish a volunteering programme that supports the engagement of community members interested in maintaining and enhancing green spaces in and around the Community Hospital, fostering a sense of collective care, and supporting biodiversity efforts.

6. Introduce a tailored outdoor wellbeing program for staff at the Community Hospital to address their aspiration to have more outdoor engagement and support their overall wellbeing needs that complements the current Powys Teaching Health Board staff wellbeing offer.
7. Establish and support an activity leader network in the Dyfi Valley, to ensure the consistent delivery of high-quality outdoor health and wellbeing programs. This network will facilitate collaboration starting at the hospital, provide ongoing training and professional development, and ensure adherence to minimum standards.
8. Facilitate effective communication and information dissemination regarding outdoor health opportunities via a centralised communication platform, such as a website, a hospital noticeboard, and a social media presence. This platform will serve as a resource for community members, healthcare providers, and activity providers.
9. Establish an integrated registration and referral pathway that caters to both formal referrals and self-referrals. This pathway should streamline the process for healthcare providers, patients, and community members, ensuring efficient and effective engagement with outdoor health programmes. It should be developed to work in synergy with the existing Community Connector service that provides social prescribing to a range of services, hosted by the Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations.
10. Revitalise the outdoor spaces at the Community Hospital, enhancing biodiversity and putting into practice the proven wellbeing benefits of the outdoors and nature for patients, staff and visitors. Community and staff would like a safe accessible dementia friendly patient garden, private patios for palliative care rooms, a private outdoor space for staff, amenity space for visitors, and engaging written and artistic interpretation linked to outdoor health and the 'hub' ethos of the hospital.

Conclusion

The study revealed that there is enthusiasm for outdoor health and nature-based wellbeing to be integrated into the wellbeing offer of the Community Hospital, alongside its clinical care. The needs, aspirations of the stakeholder engaged in this study was brought together into a set of proposals and assessed for feasibility. The result was ten key recommendations to take forward these proposals and realise the collective vision. With the overall positivity of the stakeholders, the willingness to collaborate and the skilled practitioners in the area, taking these next steps towards the vision appears achievable.



Cysylltwch â ni | Get in touch

✉ coedlleol@smallwoods.org.uk

☎ 01654 701495

🌐 coedlleol.org.uk

Dilynwch ni | Follow us

📱📺📷 CoedLleol

Rhif Elusen Gofrestredig **1081874** Registered Charity Number