

The Natural Health Service Programme

The Natural Health Service is a single point of access to a range of well-developed and evidence based natural environment focussed services to help tackle a range of health and wellbeing issues.

We aim to help those with poor mental and/or physical health and promote good health and well being by using the natural environment as the basis for our work.

Halton is fortunate to benefit from many local natural environments, good quality parks, woodlands, and all types of green spaces. There is strong evidence that supports improved physical and mental health in people enjoying these areas whether for relaxation, leisure or activity and that such areas lift people's mood, alleviate stress, improve wellbeing, children's development and help people age well. Importantly there is also increasing recognition in the health service of the role of the natural environment toward assisting good health and to treat some illnesses. Halton Natural Health Service builds on this evidence.

The Natural Health Service is ideal for those who do not enjoy formal exercise, or who don't want to focus on their limitations but enjoy developing their potential through new positive experiences. It is ideal for those who want to enjoy the outdoors and their natural surroundings, or want to learn or do more practical things that make a real difference locally. The services are free but require a commitment of 12 weeks and agreement to take part in confidential questionnaires to measure feelings of and actual improvement.

The services do not require medical information and do not offer specific health solutions: They offer a good experience, undertaking an enjoyable activity with others at whatever pace participants like. The services available meet all ages and abilities, and individuals are welcome to attend with a family member, friend or carer. Everyone will always be treated with respect and made to feel welcome and safe.

Which Natural Health Service?

- **For school children** – Several schools take part in Forest Schools that are either within the school grounds or at Wigg Island. Forest Schools allow children to be active, explore, learn and share.
- **For families or children with carers** – Children can attend with family members or carers at Green Volunteering on Saturdays or Nature Awareness Walks on Sundays both at Runcorn Hill Park.
- **For adults** who want to garden or grow food there are a Horticultural Therapy options or
- for those who want to do more than gardening by making improvements to the environment there are two Green Volunteer services, a Green Gym, and Mud to Muscle green volunteering.
- These are two types of health walk – Walking for Health takes place at a number of locations as well as at a gentle pace in Victoria Park and the
- Nature Awareness Walks are predominantly peaceful walks, learning about the environment, seasons and nature and allowing people to time to take in their surroundings and see weekly changes in life.

What, when and where?

All the services are set at a pace that suits those attending; everyone is encouraged to take regular breaks and stop whenever they wish. There is no 'fitness' or other regime, but the opportunity to feel better and become more able, more supple and stronger and improve health as a 'by product' of taking part in a regular enjoyable experience with others, but always remaining in control of activity levels.

Those with a medical condition that requires assistance or supervision must bring someone with them.

They all begin in the first week of September (except some Forest Schools) and run through to Christmas. Most are weekly, some twice weekly and two are fortnightly for those who cannot make a weekly commitment. Participants are asked to attend all sessions they agree to at the start and if they wish to continue after Christmas services continue but without the Natural Health Service support and evaluation.

There are various locations which are shown in the programme overleaf and we'll help find transport etc.

Booking is essential, either by self 'referral' by another referring someone to attend. This is to one contact point only who will then follow up directly with the person wishing to attend and/or their carer. Participants can "change my mind" which allows for a change of venue or service after the first or second session.

People attend the first session in groups of two to four and will have an introduction first with the group leader who will talk through the session and complete some forms with participants.

The following sessions run on the days shown. The Natural Health Service will run for sixteen weeks from September to December (except for two Forest Schools). We ask participants attend nearly all sessions and a minimum of 12 weeks out of the available 16 weeks. Evidence shows that by attending regularly for this period of time improvements are noticeable, healthier living and/or coping strategies become a lot easier and some people have found new opportunities or jobs after this sort of regular commitment. During the 16 weeks we will independently consult with you on satisfaction, quality and your experience and evaluate with you, and/or your carer, your progress, feelings and any improvements so that collectively these can demonstrate how the sessions worked. Individual details will not be used and personal information stored confidentially. After the sixteen week period participants are welcome to continue with sessions, however, the Natural Health Service support and monitoring will cease.

Horticultural Therapy

Victoria Park	Start 14/09/13	End 21/12/13	Saturdays mornings 10.30 weekly (suitable for those with disabilities)
Norton Priory Trust	Start 02/09/13	End 19/12/13	Monday & Thursday mornings 10am – weekly (suitable for those with learning difficulties when accompanied)
Brookvale Community Garden - Grozone	Start 06/09/13	End 06/12/13	Friday mornings <u>fortnightly</u>

Green Volunteering

Runcorn Hill Park	Start 05/09/13	End 19/12/13	Thursday mornings weekly
Runcorn Hill Park (family groups)	Start 07/09/13	End 21/12/13	Saturday Mornings weekly
Pex Hill - Green Gym	Start 04/09/13	End 18/12/13	Wednesday mornings weekly
Wigg Island – Mud to Muscle	Start 06/09/13	End 20/12/13	Friday mornings <u>fortnightly</u>

Nature Awareness Walks

Wigg Island	Start 06/09/13	End 20/12/13	Fridays at 2pm weekly
Pickering Pasture (rough ground & horticulture)	Start 01/09/13	End 15/12/13	Sunday afternoons weekly
Runcorn Hill Park	Start 04/09/13	End 18/12/13	Wednesdays at 2.30 weekly
Runcorn Hill Park (family walk)	Start 01/09/13	End 15/12/13	Sundays at 2.30pm weekly

Walking for Health

Victoria Park Visitor Centre	Start 02/09/13	End 16/12/13	Mondays at 12.30 (easy) weekly
Windmill Hill - Priory View	Start 03/09/13	End 17/12/13	Tuesday at 1pm weekly
Meeting points around Runcorn	Start 04/09/13	End 18/12/13	Tuesdays at 10am weekly
Meeting points in Runcorn	Start 05/09/13	End 19/12/13	Wednesdays at 11 am weekly

Forest Schools

Windmill Primary School - Wigg Island	Start 10/09/13	End 15/10/13	Tuesdays in Autumn term x 6
All Saints Primary School - Wigg Island	Start 12/09/13	End 17/10/13	Thursdays in Autumn term x 6
Victoria Rd Primary School - Wigg Island	Start 7/11/13	End 12/12/13	Thursdays in Winter term x 6
Farnworth CE Primary School,	Start 07/10/13		Autumn term x 8 & Spring term x 4

Booking is essential using the 'referral' form; please download the or contact us for one.

Contact the Natural Health Service www.naturalhealthservice.org.uk

Phone - 01925 816217 and ask for Paul or Kirsty in the Natural Health Service –

e-mail - info@naturalhealthservice.org.uk

Text your details for us to call you back on 07760 668188

Or write to Natural Health Service C/o The Mersey Forest Offices; Risley Moss; Ordnance Avenue; Birchwood; Warrington; WA3 6QX