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Bath Mind now has practitioners in the RUH emergency department (Image: Bath Mind)

Reach Advertisement

A spokesperson from Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust added: "We are pleased to be working closely with Bath Mind to support the collaboration working with vulnerable service users in Royal United Hospital Bath."

Bath Mind is not an NHS registered provider itself and prides itself on providing care in a non-medical sense. Ms Morton said: "We are non-clinical providers in the community. That isn't to say that we don't have registered people working for us — mental health nurses, [...] counsellors — but we pride ourselves on offering that alternative to the healthcare system."

The charity is keen to keep people out of hospital where possible. Ms Morton said: "They are not great places for people."

Bath Mind runs a range of services: from community groups, counselling, and benefits advice, to a registered care home and training for organisations. They support people from the higher end of need to people dealing with loneliness and anxiety.

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SHARE



very evening, the charity runs an in-person “breathing space” in the centre of Bath, where people can work with trained staff to have some “time and support” and to develop a plan for what they need and want. People can get access to the space by calling the “front door” number.

Ms Morton said: “Mental health often falls into those wider social determinants, where people don’t have warm dry affordable housing, they have relationship breakdown, they may be in debt and have financial crisis. So we provide support around all those issues.

“We don’t just do the one issue; we don’t just deal with your mental health issue. We deal with all those other factors which could be affecting your mental health.”

Bath Mind currently runs 17 groups but Ms Morton said there was demand for three times as many. The Covid pandemic brought with it an increase in people seeking support for their mental health, with Bath Mind seeing a fourfold increase in people getting in touch.

Ms Morton said: “There isn’t enough care because there isn’t enough money, and demand is outstripping supply.

“What I would say though is it might be that care in a clinical medical sense isn’t always needed, and what’s really exciting about this transformation model that we are just launching is that we are looking at a way of doing this differently.

“By Bath Mind being the front door to all services, we can then work somebody to assess whether it is care as such they need, or whether the care can come from a non-medical practitioner in terms of more supportive, self-care, resilient strategies to stay well.”

“Anyone in need of support with their mental health can contact Bath Mind’s “front door”, whatever their level of need.

Ms Morton said: “We never take risks. [...] We are trained to know that if somebody is very, very unwell and needs immediate attention, then we have access to all the right organisations to contact.”

She added: “We will make sure that we never leave someone stranded if they are very unwell.”

The rollout of the “front door” over the last 10 months has been a “soft launch.” Bath Mind plans to extend the service to GP surgeries in the near future.

You can contact Bath Mind’s “front door” on freephone 08081 751 369 from 9am to 11pm, seven days a week.

People in Bath and North East Somerset offered opportunity to boost wellbeing and learn more about gardening

By Dom Hall | March 17, 2023

A local Voluntary Social Enterprise and Community sector organisation is offering people in the Bath and North East Somerset area a chance to learn more about gardening in a special six week beginners course.

The new course, which is operated by Bath Mind, runs for the next six weeks at Monksdale Road Allotments, Bath, BA2 2JD

The course is for anyone living in Bath & North East Somerset who is interested in learning basic gardening skills, and benefiting their wellbeing through gardening activities. It covers everything a beginner would need to know about gardening from seed sowing to harvesting flowers and takes place in a safe and supportive space.

The course is one of a number run by Bath Mind aimed at helping to look after the wellbeing of local people through group activities such as gardening, photography, exercise, writing and other activities.

Kate Morton, Chief Executive of Bath Mind said

"We know that gardening can be really beneficial for our mental health and wellbeing and spending time outdoors can really help to reduce depression, anxiety and stress. "Our gardening course offers people a chance to get outside this spring in a safe and supportive space and is one of a number of courses currently on offer through Bath Mind aimed at helping to support the health and wellbeing of local people.

Email [Anne](#) in the Greenlinks team to book a space or for more information.



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BATHSCAPE ROUTES FOR EVERYONE

Siân Ellis discovers how new walks around Bath are bringing enjoyment and health benefits to a diverse range of people

WORDS: Siân Ellis PHOTOGRAPHY: Russell Sach





above: CNL's Nicole Daw (left) with dog Brock has worked with, among others, Angela Farr (centre) and Jemma Bartholomew (right), and dog Boris to create routes suitable for people of various abilities

right: Angela Farr on one of Bathscape's wheel-friendly walks



COTSWOLD COUNTRYSIDE

When asked how many miles she has walked during the course of her work with Bathscape over the last couple of years Nicole Daw, Cotswolds National Landscape (CNL) trails and access officer, raises her eyebrows and laughs.

She has explored the Circuit of Bath – launched in 2021 as a 21.5-mile waymarked walk around the fabulous World Heritage Site landscape – some five times (if you don't fancy tackling it in one go, it is divided into four shorter sections). She has led lots of guided walks and, most recently, researched and created 18 self-guided walks spread across Bath and its surroundings.

Answer to the original question: who's counting? More importantly: "Whether you are a visitor to Bath or a resident, there is a walk for you," Nicole says.

The Bathscape Scheme, launched in 2018, encourages people to get outside and enjoy the hills, valleys, grasslands and woodlands that frame the city. CNL has been busy working on walking routes and Nicole's now-published suite of 18 trails ranges from circa one mile to eight miles in length. A mix of urban, rural, strenuous, gentle and wheel-friendly walks: each is supported with clear information on directions, stiles, terrain and facilities.

When developing the walks Nicole sought ideas from colleagues including Cotswold Voluntary Wardens, and, to ensure different interests, abilities and needs were taken into account, she chatted with a wide variety of community groups ranging from parent and toddler groups to people with specific health conditions and an Age UK walking group.

Voluntary route testers were also recruited to double-check that each walk's instructions were clear and correct, or suggest enhancements like small detours to take in additional interesting features.

GOOD FOR THE SOUL

Jemma Bartholomew was among volunteer route testers and helped Nicole to formulate the St James' Cemetery Little Loop: a short (0.75-mile), flat route in central Bath.

Jemma suffers with Chronic Fatigue (CF) and whereas once she was very active – climbing Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania and hiking in Nepal – now she finds: "I don't have the energy to do any kind of fitness activity, beyond a gentle walk."

The impacts of CF (which include brain fog) mean she is unable to work, has little capacity to socialise, and rarely travels. Short walks in the fresh air with Boris, her Basset-Labrador cross, have become a hugely important part of her day-to-day enjoyment of living. "It's well documented that being out in nature is really good for the soul and helpful for anyone struggling with any kind of illness."

'Whether you are a visitor to Bath or a resident, there is a walk for you'

Sharing her experience of CF with Nicole on a recce to St James' ensured important relevant information for walkers was included in the route directions.

"There are a lot of people, like me, who have a burning desire to get out and do a short walk, but need to know they can park nearby, that the walk is level, that there is a resting spot somewhere like a convenient bench or log to sit on," Jemma says, adding, "It was surprisingly quiet in the cemetery given we were right by the main road. It was an unexpected, green and peaceful oasis." Jemma has since given feedback on other





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routes – 'It has been really nice to be able to do something useful on a voluntary basis that is within my capacity'. She particularly enjoys short stretches of Sensory Smallcombe: a walk encouraging people to tune into their senses as they explore a picturesque cemetery and a calming stretch beside the canal. Jemma likes the slow pace and Boris 'who loves sniffing anything and everything' is in seventh heaven in the cemetery 'because there is such a range of biodiversity, different grasses, flowers and wildlife.'

MINDFUL WALKING

Nicole is also involved in leading guided walks – there are two with Cotswold Voluntary Warden Steve Holbrow, on April 15 and May 20, along sections of the Circuit of Bath (free, open to anyone, book via the CNL or Bathscape websites).

She organises private guided walks, too, reaching out especially to people who 'maybe think it's not possible for them to go on walks.' Individuals with disabilities and carers' families are among those who have enjoyed private walks tailored to their interests and needs.

Last autumn Nicole led a short foraging-themed walk with Bath Mind, the local, independent charity that provides mental health and wellbeing support to individuals across Bath and North East Somerset. The walk formed part of a nature-based activity programme to encourage people to be outdoors, says Angela Farr, wellbeing services deputy manager for Bath Mind: 'We talked about nettles, looked at different trees – beech, hawthorn, elder – and even at herbs in someone's amazing garden. We did some bird identification and ate blackberries. It opened up people's eyes to what is around them locally. People that come on our walks can be experiencing a wide range of mental health problems; a walk like this can be a



positive distraction, as they're using all their senses to connect to nature. Being outside walking helps people to be mindful and learn more about the natural environment.'

Angela reports impressive positive feedback from walk participants: surprise at how good they felt being outdoors; improved mood; assuagement of social anxiety through being with other people and observing nature together yet without any obligation to be chatty. The 'very powerful impact of being outdoors' gave one socially anxious young man a stepping stone to joining in the charity's gardening group.

Nicole hopes to provide more guided walks to diverse groups throughout Bathscape and generally across the Cotswolds National Landscape – people with sight, hearing, learning or physical impairments, socially marginalised groups – so that everyone can enjoy the benefits of the outdoors. If your group is interested, do get in touch. ●



The Cotswolds National Landscape is a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which is looked after by the Cotswolds Conservation Board. For more information, visit cotswoldsaonb.org.uk or email info@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk

NICOLE'S TOP 5 BATHSCAPE SELF-GUIDED WALKS

SENSORY SMALLCOMBE: 2.1 MILES: 'Gently guiding individuals with sensory impairments or learning difficulties to experience nature. Also great for general wellbeing and slowing down!'

WILDLIFE & WATERWAYS (ON WHEELS): 3 MILES: 'The first walk I wrote and suitable for pushchairs and motorised wheelchairs, exploring the green and blue spaces of West Bath.'

ONE TUNNEL FROM SPRINGFIELD PARK: 2.1 MILES: 'Starting in a lesser known Bath park, through one of the famous "two tunnels" and rewarding walkers with incredible views over Bath.'

MONKTON EARLEGGIE, A FOLLY AND A FEAT OF ENGINEERING: 8 MILES: 'The longest walk, very varied, with farmland, river, canal, the Dundas Aqueduct, Browne's Folly – starting and finishing at a pub!'

SOUTH STOKE CIRCULAR: 3.4 MILES: 'A pub-to-pub walk in beautiful countryside around Bath, up to South Stoke and down along the route of the Somersetshire Coal Canal.'

Further information
Book to join Bathscape guided walks and download Bathscape self-guided walks at cotswoldsaonb.org.uk or bathscape.co.uk Walks are also available on the OutdoorActive app. To discuss booking a guided walk with your group, contact Nicole Daw, email: Nicole.Daw@cotswoldsaonb.org.uk Volunteers from Bath Mind and Bathscape lead Wellbeing Walks every Thursday, which are free and open to anyone. More at bathmind.org.uk

npw: Nicole Daw with Brock **author:** Jemma Bartholomew, who has Chronic Fatigue, helped develop a short flat route in central Bath



Essex girl Kate gone west explains Bath Mind's work on mental health

Bath Mind: A word of caution about Bath Mind. The Westgate Street offices of the charity are above the charity shop Mind Bath - a national charity - which is a separate organisation from Bath Mind a local charity - although the two are connected but not as directly as their joint location suggests.

Kate Morton of Bath Mind explained: "Mind is a national organisation that oversees the campaigns on mental health - offering information and advice on mental health problems and lobbies government and local authorities.

"Bath Mind provides services locally and we are an independent charity with a board of trustees with about 150 members and much of our money comes from grants from the local authority and the NHS.

"We also need to fundraise to top up through things like sponsored runners in the Bath Half Marathon in October and local events like the boules competitions and concerts.

"Fixed grants don't increase and

so every year we make our case to various commissioners for a cost of living increase."

Kate is an Essex girl gone west having lived and worked in London as a manager in a housing association.

She moved to Bath where she has a family of two sons and also has a sister here - but has also had to recover from a brain tumor which gave her an desire to continue in the voluntary sector - first as a trustee and volunteer and now as the CEO of Bath Mind.

"We help people in the area aged 16 plus with two big groups in particular," she explained, "Older people who have been in many cases affected by Covid and are excluded with a lack of social contact which has affected their mental health.

"We support them within their community often through wellbeing groups.

"And we help younger people who sometimes feel lost and lonely,



Kate Morton of Bath Mind in Kingsmead Sq near to the office in Westgate St Bath

as they are not connected and become depressed with social media often a negative influence.

"Then there are those diagnosed with a mental health illness."

Kate said their free phone number works as a front door to Bath Mind - with a practitioner on the line who can speak to someone who is worried about their mental health.

"Mental health is not a stand alone condition," she said, "it's often related to wider problems in someone's life such as debt, housing or homelessness, health and family

issues."

Bath Mind works with a number of other charities and agencies including the Citizens Advice Bureau, the Community Wellbeing Trust, the schools in the city, Bath Unive and Bath Spa University and Bath College.

The charity has a Free Phone number: 0808 1751369.

To find out more, to seek help or to help fund raise or to volunteer with Bath Mind visit <https://www.bathmind.org.uk/>

Harry Mott

The Bath & Wiltshire Parent

(<https://thebathandwiltshireparent.co.uk/>)



Bath Mind Mental Elf festive run raises over £6,000 to support wellbeing in community

12th December 2023