

# People & the DALES

Diversity Access Learning Environment Sustainability



## A report of the Access to Nature funding period May 2009 – December 2013



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## Summary

People and the DALES is a nationally recognised and highly successful outreach project run by the Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (YDMT). Building on a range of earlier work by YDMT the project works with disadvantaged groups that have little or no previous experience of the countryside. The project was funded through a grant from the Big Lottery's Access to Nature Scheme (May 2009 – 2012) and also received a Sustaining Change and Impact grant supporting activity to December 2013. People and the DALES (PaD) is now very much an ongoing YDMT project supported through reserves, grants from a range of charitable trusts and some direct contributions from the community groups taking part.

People and the DALES enables individuals to take part in fun, active and thought-provoking activities which focus on the special qualities of the magnificent landscape of the Yorkshire Dales. Activities aim to inspire, enthuse and encourage people to return independently with family and friends and provide opportunities for improving health and well-being. We work directly with mainly urban based groups supporting marginalised and disadvantaged individuals providing tailored opportunities for enjoying a range of activities appropriate to the needs and interests of those involved. The range of activities available provides a broad, stimulating package of options that might involve a short walk to a Dales landmark, a longer walk up-hill, repairing dry-stone walls, planting trees, or working with a local hill farmer for the day.



Activities are supported by training events for group leaders in leading groups in the outdoors and a range of resources including a website [www.peopleandthedales.org](http://www.peopleandthedales.org) and a printed handbook, enabling people to have the knowledge, skills and develop the confidence to return for themselves either individually or with their groups or families.

Our project film <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJpo6dchcYY> provides a snapshot of our work which has so far provided opportunities for more than 4800 people to take part in activities in the outdoors. Beneficiaries have mainly been individuals living in the urban fringes to the South of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. This includes people from communities in West Yorkshire; focusing on Bradford, Keighley and Leeds with a smaller number of groups from Huddersfield and Halifax, or North East Lancashire; focusing on Blackburn with Darwen and Chorley. Our expertise has been developed through working with groups that do not traditionally visit the countryside (some of which were highlighted by the 2005 Diversity Review) and include people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, people with disabilities, people experiencing mental health problems and mental illness, the elderly, refugees and asylum seekers, young people and those experiencing disadvantage through where they live. Most participants come from the 10% most economically deprived communities in the country and demonstrate multiple indicators of disadvantage.

Project feedback has been overwhelmingly positive with project activities providing fun, positive, enjoyable and thought-provoking experiences. Through the range of visits and activities provided through the project, people have built up positive and meaningful experiences of being in the countryside.

Key project impacts recorded include:

- Increasing people's confidence to make independent visits in the outdoors
- Giving community leaders the skills and confidence to lead groups in the outdoors
- Positive benefits for health and well-being
- Improving quality of life and life experiences

- Providing new opportunities and opening doors
- Positive impacts on community organisations involved
- Providing resources to support further activity in the outdoors

PaD has been used by Natural England as a case study for engaging more diverse groups in the countryside through the Access to Nature Learning papers - *'Minority Ethnic Communities and the Natural Environment'* and *'A sense of ownership: Fostering a change in relationship between people and the natural environment'* <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/10382390?category=8871008>

YDMT believe that the highly successful People and the DALES delivery model is one which is applicable and replicable in other geographical locations and for other organisations. Our experience and expertise has been disseminated to other practitioners and organisations through a range of workshops, training events and presentations delivered by the team and interest has been expressed for training to be delivered in other locations.

Two key pilot projects have been undertaken, in very different geographical locations, which successfully demonstrate PaD's appropriateness and transferability to other locations / organisations.

- Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - 'People and the Fells'  
During 2013 dissemination work was undertaken with the Forest of Bowland (FoB) Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) team which led to a pilot set of events being delivered with disadvantaged groups from the AONB catchment in Lancashire. Discussions are ongoing between YDMT and Bowland AONB over future activity with various potential ways forward being identified including direct delivery of visits or further training provided by YDMT to AONB staff.
- North Yorkshire Natural Health Service  
Following a proposal to North Yorkshire & York Local Nature Partnership (LNP) YDMT were commissioned to research the potential for developing a 'Natural Health Service' for North Yorkshire, developing opportunities and provision through the natural environment and cultural heritage for improving the health and well-being of some of the county's more disadvantaged residents. The research identified and established links with potential beneficiary groups and providers of potential environmental opportunities in 3 areas of the county, bringing them together at an event to explore opportunities for project development. A model was developed based on co-ordination and training facilitated by YDMT for delivery across the region by local partners and organisations. Further funding has had enabled a delivery phase of the North Yorkshire Natural Health Service to take place. This will enable a version of the People and the DALES group leader training to be delivered in the Catterick Garrison area. This event will work with community group leaders directly supporting people experiencing disadvantage providing them with the interest, skills, knowledge and support to be able to take groups out for themselves in a range of 'green' locations within the LNP area.



To find out more about the work we are doing visit [www.peopleandthedales.org](http://www.peopleandthedales.org)

You can also keep up to date with our latest activities via our Facebook page

[www.facebook.com/PeopleandtheDALES](https://www.facebook.com/PeopleandtheDALES) or on twitter <https://twitter.com/PeopleandtheDAL>

## 1. Project Background

The Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust (YDMT) works “to support the environmental, social and economic well-being of this special area” – the Yorkshire Dales. We are proud to be a “doing” organisation that achieves practical change – and enables others to do. We have specialist knowledge in delivery and practical experience and our own projects demonstrate this.

Over the last 10 years YDMT has developed a programme of outreach work to help address issues that were later identified in research undertaken by the Countryside Agency (now Natural England) in 2005. The ‘Diversity Review’ “found that some people are less likely to use the natural environment for recreation and other purposes”<sup>1</sup>. The under-represented groups identified were disabled people, black and minority ethnic people, people who live in inner city areas and young people.

Initial pilot work in the development of education and outreach work was undertaken by YDMT firstly through the ‘Dales Heritage Education and Training Project’ (2003 – 04). This led to ‘Learning in Limestone Country’ (2005-08) which enabled 1700 people to take part in activities in the Yorkshire Dales. This paved the way for the development and launch of People and the DALES (Diversity, Access, Learning, Environment, Sustainability), in 2009.

YDMT now has a growing national reputation for outreach work with a range of under-represented groups based on a very successful operational model, a strongly committed and supportive partnership, well developed networks and excellent relationships with community groups.

Since its outset YDMT has enabled more than 7000 people from disadvantaged backgrounds to access the fantastic countryside of the Yorkshire Dales, enjoy a range of environmental activities and develop the skills and confidence to return independently.

Whilst this report mainly covers the period funded through Access to Nature (2009 – 2013) People and the DALES continues thanks to financial support through YDMT internal reserves and a range of small grants from trust funds including David Brookes Charitable Trust, Sovereign Health, Sylvia Adams Charitable Trust and others.



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/enjoying/linkingpeople/outdoorsforall>

## 2. People and the DALES

### – Diversity, Access, Learning, Environment, Sustainability

People and the DALES (PaD) works with people from a range of disadvantaged groups that have had little or no positive experience of the countryside. The project enables individuals to take part in fun, active, thought-provoking activities which focus on the special qualities of the magnificent landscape of the Yorkshire Dales, aiming to inspire, enthuse and encourage people to return independently with family and friends.

Working directly with groups supporting marginalised and disadvantaged individuals, we provide tailored opportunities for enjoying a range of activities appropriate to the needs and interests of the individuals involved. The range of activities available provides a broad, stimulating package of options that might involve a short walk to a Dales landmark, a longer walk up-hill, repairing dry-stone walls, planting trees, or working with a local hill farmer for the day.

People and the DALES (PaD) began in May 2009, funded initially by the Big Lottery Fund through its Access to Nature programme. Access to Nature was run by Natural England and formed part of the Big Lottery Fund's Changing Spaces programme launched in November 2005 to help communities enjoy and improve their local environments. The project received an initial grant of £198,000 (2009-2012 – Phase 1) followed by a further £71,500 through Access to Nature's Sustaining Change and Impact (SC&I) programme which enabled PaD to run for a further year to December 2013 (Phase 2).

Additional funding was provided directly by YDMT internal resources and personnel, 'Gift in kind' match funding from partners and urban based community projects/ organisations and match funding from a range of charitable trusts and societies including John Laing Charitable Trust, George Martin Charitable Trust, Wharfedale Foundation, Yorkshire Dales Society and through private donations.

With YDMT acting as the lead body, the project is run in partnership with Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, Natural England, Field Studies Council at Malham Tarn and City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council.

#### **Key project objectives:**

- Involve sectors of society that do not visit the area for physical, financial or cultural reasons
- Overcome barriers limiting participation, and enable a more diverse population to access and enjoy this high quality environment
- Enable people to learn about the rich natural and cultural qualities of the landscape, become more interested and develop a long-term relationship with the place
- Inspire people to value the natural world and enthuse them to return independently
- Increase activity in local green space areas
- Experience positive and enjoyable activities which will be physically challenging at a level appropriate to the nature of the group
- Bring physical and mental health benefits to the participants

#### **Key project activities:**

- **Make links** – to build relationships with relevant and eligible communities and between groups and different communities

#### **Provide:**

- **Day visits** – a range of activities tailor-made for the interests and abilities of each group
- **Conservation & practical work** – a range of activities including; woodland management, dry stone walling, path laying, hill farming skills, organic horticulture and maintenance of historic features
- **Residentials** – for groups such as carers, refugees and parents that would benefit from a night away from the city

- **Linking local communities with urban communities** – by introducing participants to a local farmer, developing exchange links between youth groups, environment groups, community centres, faith groups, refugee groups
  - **Training** – of key individuals to build confidence and equip them with the skills and knowledge to organise visits to the countryside
- Research** – carried out by undergraduates into the benefits of activities on physical and well being

The project maintains and builds on the momentum of knowledge and networks of contacts built up by YDMT over recent years. The focus has been on engaging with deprived, excluded and needy individuals, organisations and communities from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, disabled people, those experiencing mental health problems, people experiencing social /economic deprivation and young people within close proximity to the Yorkshire Dales National Park. By providing opportunities for these groups to access the countryside through a range of new and engaging activities. It aimed to develop new working partnerships between urban community groups from West Yorkshire and North East Lancashire and communities and conservation / countryside organisations working in and around the Yorkshire Dales.

Additional funding through the Sustaining Change and impact (SC&I) phase of Access to Nature enabled PaD to extend their work further through:

- Reaching out to groups experiencing greater disadvantage
- Undertaking more detailed evaluation on the impact of visits and the training, with a particular focus on health and well-being impacts
- Encouraging more people to make independent visits to the Dales in the longer term, with or without the project
- Encouraging and enabling other practitioners to work with more diverse groups in the outdoors
- Identifying ways of enabling this work to become more sustainable in the longer term

Whilst this report mainly covers the period funded through Access to Nature (2009 – 2013) People and the DALES continues thanks to financial support from YDMT internal reserves and a range of small grants from trust funds including David Brookes Charitable Trust, Sovereign Health Care Charitable Trust, Sylvia Adams Charitable Trust and others.



### 3. Project achievements

#### 3.1 Project beneficiaries

Over the course of the Access to Nature Phases 1 & 2, People and the DALES provided opportunities for 4750 people to take part in activities in the outdoors. The beneficiaries were mainly individuals living in the urban fringes to the South of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. This included people from communities in West Yorkshire; Focusing on Bradford, Keighley and Leeds with a smaller number of groups from Huddersfield and Halifax, or North East Lancashire; focusing on Blackburn with Darwen and Chorley.

Participants were mainly from groups that do not traditionally visit the countryside (those highlighted by the Diversity review) and included people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, people with disabilities, people experiencing mental health problems and mental illness, the elderly, refugees and asylum seekers, young people and those experiencing disadvantage through where they live.

Most participants came from the 10% most economically deprived communities in the country and demonstrated multiple indicators of disadvantage.

Of those who participated, a large percentage (44%) came from a BAME background (including refugees and asylum seekers). This reflects the fact that the urban fringe of the southern Yorkshire Dales has the third highest BAME population in the UK, including people predominantly of Pakistani and Bengali origin, and that West Yorkshire cities are dispersal centres for refugees and asylum seekers. They also represented some of the new emergent migrant groups who are settling in these areas. Over the course of the project, and particularly during the SC&I period, we began to work with those groups experiencing greater disadvantage working particularly closely with groups supporting refugees and asylum seekers.

Those with a disability included people with learning difficulties, people with physical disabilities or the visually impaired and represented 9% of participants.

Those specifically facing mental health problems represented 5% of participants. Most participants fell into the urban disadvantaged category but included specific groups such as those who are carers, homeless, or part of a drug or alcohol rehabilitation group (14%). Youth groups included pupils from referral units, young carers and school linking events which brought together children from urban and rural schools (28%).



#### 3.2 Project activities

##### Activity Days

Project activities are designed to meet the varied needs of the participating groups and range from walks enjoying and learning about the natural environment, visits to specific sites (farms, quarries, historical or archaeological sites), art and crafts activities inspired by the natural environment, to practical tasks and conservation work such as dry stone walling, hill sheep farming, woodland management and horticulture.



Activities met two broad project outcomes:

- Creating greater awareness and enjoyment of the Yorkshire Dales
- Learning more about conservation and developing new skills

Activities included:

- Walks of varying lengths often with a particular focus such as wildflowers, history, or archaeology



- Conservation and practical tasks such as dry stone walling, hill sheep farming, path laying, woodland management, tree planting, horticulture and willow weaving
- Visits to specific sites such as farms, quarries, historical or archaeological features
- Environmental games
- Arts and crafts such as kite making and flying, painting and felt making

The project has also explored new ways of sustaining peoples' links with the Yorkshire Dales. A series of rural / urban links have been run which have brought together people from different backgrounds to explore the countryside together and develop connections with both the rural environment and those who live in it. Connecting people to local people and communities has also been an important element of visits and activities.

### Training

Over the course of the Access to Nature funding People and the DALES group leader training has been provided for 68 community group leaders and volunteers. This aimed to increase the skills and confidence of community leaders to enable people from disadvantaged backgrounds to enjoy the outdoors for themselves. These practical residential training weekends took place in a range of Dales locations and provided community leaders with the opportunity to learn about reading maps, planning group visits and leading walk as well as providing a wealth of information about the special features of the Yorkshire Dales and particular locations.



6 people were also supported through Walking Group Leaders training through a bespoke training weekend. This was made possible through partnership with the British Mountaineering Council and Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority.

### Other Project Activities

Over the course of Phases 1 & 2, People and the DALES has also created a range of 'legacy' products:

- Established an equipment library in Bradford thanks to donations of 'pre-loved' waterproofs through Rohan's 'Gift your Gear' scheme' and are working with Leeds groups to develop the same in Leeds
- Created a YDMT stock of waterproof coats for use and loan to groups. (Access to appropriate clothing and equipment was highlighted as a key factor that prevented people from taking part in outdoor activity)
- Produced an 11 minute project film made by a local young person studying film at university
- Created a website [www.peopleandthedales.org](http://www.peopleandthedales.org) providing access to much of the information the project holds on the local area, walks suitable for groups, information on leading groups in the outdoors as well as detailed information and direct links to timetables and websites enabling people to find the appropriate information to access the Yorkshire Dales
- Produced a printed 'handbook' version of some of this information making the information readily and easily accessible to all

## 4. The Impact

A large number and wide range of beneficiaries have taken part in the project, from the desired target community categories. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive with project activities providing fun, positive, enjoyable and thought-provoking experiences.

Through the range of visits and activities provided through the project, people have built up positive and meaningful experiences of being the countryside.

### **Increasing people's confidence to make independent visits in the outdoors**

Group leaders have reported increased confidence in participants:

*'Sense of achievement in own capabilities'*

*'More confidence in going to new places'*

*"Confidence and self-esteem to access the countryside – it IS for us too"*

When asked how confident they felt their group members were about making independent visits to the countryside before and after being involved in People and the DALES visits, group leaders reported a more than two-fold increase. An average before score of 1.57 was reported compared with an average score of 3.77 after people had undertaken visits (where 1 is not confident at all and 6 is really confident). Increases of between 2 and 4 points were reported demonstrating that the project has increased the skills and confidence of beneficiaries to return to the Dales independently.

Group leaders have reported that visits have **increased beneficiaries knowledge and understanding** of how to access the countryside independently:

Over the summer one project worker gave out timetables to mental health service users and people went off to the Dales for days on their own, he commented

*"This wouldn't have been possible without the familiarisation through the project. People would not have had the confidence to do this, to do these things independently."*

Other comments from group leaders support this:

*'Increased individual knowledge that can be shared with others'*

*"There is awareness that the Dales are there and it's not so far."*

For some the reality is that they cannot get out into the Yorkshire Dales for themselves due to financial constraints or other issues or commitments (this is discussed further in Learning from People and the DALES). However, many groups have reported that following on from visits with People and the DALES more people are now using and visiting greenspaces closer to home. In the Phase 1 evaluation 88% of groups reported that people were now visiting local greenspaces and anecdotal evidence from the SC&I phase supports this further.

*"There has been greater confidence in accessing city green spaces"*

*"The visits have encouraged the women to go out more and some have been for walks in local parks."*

*"Upon return to Leeds the client ... took to continuing her personal development in local parks and woodland. She is another ambassador of the benefits of outdoor activity, taking the time to organise small groups of friends who visit local parks and sit and discuss similarities in their past experiences."*

### **Giving community leaders the skills and confidence to lead groups in the outdoors**

People and the DALES group leader training has also impacted on both individuals taking part and the beneficiaries they work with.



A survey conducted as part of a Social Return on Investment (SROI) pilot undertaken by external evaluators, reported that trainees showed an average **increase in confidence** of 2.1 points (using a simple numerical scale where 1 is not confident and 6 is very confident). Responses also suggest that the confidence gained is, at least to a degree, a lasting benefit as both recent trainees (4 months after training) and previous trainees (a year or more after training) reported similar scores.

Group leaders have reported leading a wide range of walks

for service users, other community groups they are involved in and for families, friends and work colleagues. Those trained prior to the SC&I funding reported an average of 3.36 occasions when they had led walks, increasing from an average 1.3 occasions prior to training. 45% of organisations have increased their frequency of providing outdoor opportunities from 'occasionally' (once or twice a year) to 'often' (defined as every couple of months).

Trainees reported an **increase in skill level** (an average gain of 1.5 points) reporting skills and knowledge developed around; map reading, route planning, leadership skills, risk assessment, group safety and assertiveness.

Enabling 6 community leaders and volunteers to undertake further training through a bespoke Walking Group Leaders course has further increased community capacity in this area. Through taking part in the course all participants reported an increase in confidence to take groups out in the Yorkshire Dales.

Participants showed an average confidence gain of 1.8 points, from 3.3 before to 5.1 after, with the largest reported increase being 3 points and the smallest 1 point. Two participants started off hesitant but after the course felt very confident indeed. All apart from one were either confident or very confident at the end of the course.

Anecdotal evidence gained directly from the participants further supports this development and progression:

*"People and the DALES group leader training was a godsend! Having the opportunity to develop his map reading skills, learn about leading groups and lead walks increased his confidence. Walks could provide a new way of working with clients an opportunity for physical activity, a space and a chance to 'just be in the outdoors', but also to connect and meet with others."*

Since the training this community leader has run a range of walks for clients to a range of Dales locations including Malham, Ingleton, Pen-y-ghent, and Buckden Pike.

Following WGL training through the project, he has set up a community walking group in Keighley and is regularly taking groups and families out into the Dales for a range of walks. It has also given him the confidence to work with new user groups engaging them in outdoors activities:

*"The training has given me the skills and confidence to take a younger group of substance mis-users out on a longer walk to Buckden pike, this really opened doors for the organisation, new partnerships and new opportunities."*

The comments of others support this further:

*"Now there are 12 of us going out and walking in the Dales and the Peaks. I organise the routes and the times, the meeting points, tell people what to wear. I've learnt what it takes to be a leader. I'm really proud of myself for this –it's a real achievement"*

*"Prior to my training, I hadn't climbed any of the peaks but since the training the group have done all three peaks but not all at once. We are planning to do all three by end of June this year. We have encouraged and motivated people at work and you can see the result and the group is expanding. The training with you had a knock on effect as people are taking family members and friends for walks in the dales. Fauzia has kick-started her husband and he and his three friends have started their own group. I have also got my friends outside work to start walking in the Dales."*

A Social Return on Investment study was undertaken looking at the added benefits and economic return of our training programme. The evidence gathered by the study indicates that the group leader training run through People and the DALES is generating a range of benefits. These include: gains for service users as a result of accessing the outdoors and through making independent visits to outdoor spaces as a consequence of their involvement and



connection to the work; improved skills and confidence for trainees in the organisation and leadership of walks and other outdoor activities, gains in confidence in working with people from other organisations and increases in the volume of outdoor activity delivered by public, voluntary and community organisations which have sponsored trainees.

The study sought to assess the social return associated with these outcomes, creating a story of change linked to the programme and adding to the understanding of the impact of this work. The SROI demonstrated by the study indicates that for each £1 invested in the training, a further £4.08 of social value is generated.

A series of in six depth case studies have been researched and written during the project. These have highlighted the impact the project has had on a range of 'user' groups including; people experiencing mental illness, refugees and asylum seekers, people experiencing homelessness, people from BME communities and young carers. In addition some of these case studies highlighted the impact the project has had on community workers and organisations we have worked with.

### **Positive benefits on health and well-being**

Visits and activities in the outdoors and in particular in the countryside (a report by the British Psychological Society stated that the benefits of being in the outdoors are greater in areas of countryside rather than urban greenspace) offer huge benefits to improving physical health, mental health and well-being. Individual participants and group leaders have reported the powerful and often profound impact the experiences provided through the project have had on health and well-being of those taking part.

*"One service user commented on an early visit to Malham that this was the first time he really felt like he didn't need his medication. This really brought home the powerful impact of the serenity of the countryside on well-being."*

*"This client initially attended a tree-planting day at Tarn Moor and was immediately smitten with the wide open spaces and the fact that somebody had not only empowered him with the trust and responsibility of tending the local environment, but were also encouraging and welcoming in their approach. A few months later, this client returned on a lambing experience and the change was instantly recognizable. His once withdrawn manner had been replaced with a greater inner confidence, a willingness and motivation to engage of his own accord and increased ability to communicate his needs and emotions in relation to what he was experiencing, not only in the outdoor environment but also in things he was experiencing back home."*

*"My physical and mental wellbeing has increased tenfold, I am able to take responsibility and ownership for groups, have developed an increased set of skills (such as navigating with maps and recognising local flora and fauna) and on the whole feel a greater sense of stability and self (one of the major components of Bipolar Disorder). I cannot praise enough how much walking, lambing, planting trees, visiting places of natural and historic interest and being treated as somebody with a right to be involved in this wonderful environment, has impacted on my journey of self-discovery and continued development/interest in this area."*

Group leaders reported that "people open up more because they are relaxed and because it's a neutral space" thus providing increased capacity for both provided support and counselling opportunities but also for self-growth and development. An advocacy and support worker for a refugee and asylum seeker support organisation commented "a day in the Dales is worth hours and hours of counselling" Empowerment was a recurring theme reported by many community workers.

*"Being able to do something that makes a positive lasting contribution."*

*"It lifts your spirits' helps with a more positive way of thinking"*

Project impacts also reflect current strategies and thinking in relation to well-being.

Research by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) working with NHS confederation (2008) produced the '5 ways to well-being' - an easily promoted campaign to improve well-being within the wider population<sup>2</sup>.

These five elements positively enhance personal well-being through promoting 'good functioning' making a person feel good and increasing their mental capital (resilience, self-esteem and emotional intelligence).

The 5 ways to well-being elements are:

**Connect** - Connect with people around you, building connections will support and enrich your everyday life. A primary social network of 3 or less predicts the probability of common mental health disorders. Feeling close to and being valued by other people is a fundamental human need.

**Be active** - Exercise makes you feel good – go for a walk, step outside, cycle, garden, dance! Discover a physical activity that suits your level of mobility or fitness. Regular physical activity is associated with a greater sense of well-being and lower rate of depression and anxiety across all age groups.

**Take notice** - Be curious, catch sight of the beautiful, notice the changing seasons, savour the moment, reflection will help you appreciate what matters to you. Being trained to be aware of sensations, thoughts and feelings has been shown to enhance well-being. Mindfulness – (the state of being attentive to and aware of what is taking place in the present) and associated self-regulatory behaviour is important for well-being. Savouring an experience can help to reinstate life priorities.

**Keep learning** - Try something new, rediscover an old interest, set a challenge you will enjoy achieving. Learning new things will make you more confident and it's fun to do.

Continuation of learning through life has the benefits of enhancing an individual's self-esteem, encouraging social interaction and a more active life.

**Give** - Do something nice for someone, volunteer or join a community group. Seeing yourself and your happiness linked to the wider community can be incredibly rewarding and creates connections with people around you. Social cooperation is intrinsically rewarding. Feelings of happiness and life satisfaction have been strongly associated with active participation in social and community life. Volunteering is associated with more positive affect and more meaning in life, while offering support to others has been shown to be associated with reduced mortality rates. Those who report a greater interest in helping others are more likely to rate themselves as happy. Giving and sharing are important for defining a sense of purpose in the community and a sense of self-worth.

Over the course of the project we have collected a large amount of anecdotal evidence and have within this identified comments from both participants and community group leaders that evidence the impact project experiences are having on these five areas, thus demonstrating the potential for significant well-being benefit gained through engaging in a range of activity in the outdoors and the countryside in particular.



<sup>2</sup> <http://www.neweconomics.org/publications/entry/five-ways-to-well-being-the-evidence>



### Improving quality of life and life experiences

Other benefits enabling people from disadvantaged backgrounds to have a 'better life experience' have also been gained through the project, many of which contribute to improved well-being:

- building new friendships and support groups through meeting up and having shared experiences with others
- helping build a sense of community and belonging helping reduce isolation and overcome loneliness
- allowing people the freedom to just be who they are, sharing experiences and memories of other experiences and other lives

One refugee & asylum seeker support worker commented:

*"The visits have enabled the women to have fun, to give them hope that life can be better. One woman commented that the day had 'enabled her to forget she was an asylum seeker for a day. Experiencing the English countryside for many brought back memories of home and provided a safe and positive way to reflect on home, traditions and to be able to share their stories and experiences with others. People made friends and through the shared experiences of the day built a sense of 'community' helping the women overcome loneliness and isolation. All of these aspects helped improve their mental health, their well-being."*

A young carers support worker commented:

*"Just being in the outdoors in the fresh air is something that most of these young people would not normally do; home circumstances just don't enable it. It was fantastic to see them just having fun and enjoying themselves, the days created some fantastic positive memories for the young people. They really came together as a group too. It was an ideal time to just focus on them and I have seen the knock-on benefits to their well-being, their confidence and ultimately their health."*

### Providing new opportunities and opening doors

The project has also opened up new opportunities for both participants and community group workers. Providing a stepping stone to taking part in new environmental activities in the local area for some:

*"Having experienced the benefits of being in the outdoors both for herself and the young people at Willow, Sylvia has been inspired to find more opportunities for the young people to get*

*involved in activities outdoors. Willow have undertaken walks in local parks and green-spaces and now work closely with a local environment centre, taking the young people out there regularly to do a range of activities under the banner Wild in the Woods. Part of this will include taking the young people to harvest some willow on a reserve and using this to build a willow structure in the garden of the local MIND mental health project, so not only are they working outdoors they are helping to improve their local environment too."*

Or providing the confidence to talk in public about their experiences:

*"One member of the group Sarah, an asylum seeker from Somalia and a young single mum, came back on a second visit as a volunteer. She was fascinated by the farming in the Dales. She spoke at the People and the DALES celebration event about her experiences. Sarah had never spoken in public before and was very nervous about it but she did it and she did it brilliantly. Since then she has gone on to talk about her experiences as a pregnant and young mum asylum seeker at many events including national conferences and events for midwives and health professionals. When I asked her how she does it she said 'I just think about being in the Yorkshire Dales and I'm OK'. It is amazing that such a seemingly simple experience can have such a powerful effect on someone's confidence."*

Group leaders who took part in People and the DALES training also reported that the project had increased their 'ambition'. Either through an intent to apply the learning and training or as a desire to improve skills further often through gaining a formal qualification (e.g. WGL or first aid). This demonstrates that the change impacted through the training in particular is significant and therefore more likely to be longer lasting, thus contributing to longevity and sustainability of the benefits gained through the project.

### **Positive impacts on organisations involved**

The work done through People and the DALES has also impacted more widely on many of the 90 or so community groups we have worked directly with.

Organisations have reported that as a result of being involved with People and the DALES events and activities staff have the confidence to step out of the structured environment they work, and have become more relaxed and confident to take kids outdoors and allow things to happen.

*"Helped us get out there and have more of a community presence"*

*"Gave us confidence in trying new things."*

*"Changes the culture – more open to doing things outdoors"*

*"The organisation has seen the benefits of this new way of working and now have other members of staff who are Walking for Health trained and some are trainers for W4H cascade programme.*

*Through developing the walking groups they have also formed new and improved partnerships with other organisations across the District"*



Community workers who have attended training have *"noted the support from their manager, who now sees outdoor activities as a priority for the organisation, as they are offering significant benefits for service users in terms of well-being and health gains"*.

Organisations have also commented that the outdoor activities provided through the project have helped break down barriers between a range of partners, for example between:

- parents and staff
- service users / young people and staff – staff were able to see clients differently because they were seeing them in a different context "Relationships between pupils and staff at our centre have changed dramatically."

- individual service users - developing a different relationship with one another in a different environment (adverse weather can be bonding!)
- different cultures therefore encouraging community cohesion

### **Providing equipment to support further activity in the outdoors**

The donation of 'recycled' outdoor gear to the project through Rohan's Gift your Gear project will help towards sustaining activity in the outdoors with community groups. Lack of equipment was identified as a barrier to engaging in this type of activity. The setting up of community based libraries of outdoor coats ensures easier access for groups to ensure they are appropriately equipped for outdoor activity.

## **5. Reaching Wider**

People and the DALES has actively sought to promote and develop access to the outdoors for a range of people from disadvantaged groups through working with stakeholders, project partners and other practitioners and organisations. This has enabled us not only to celebrate project success but also to contribute to the knowledge and skills base of other practitioners and organisations.

To support this People and the DALES has produced wide range of legacy products:

- a series of project newsletters
- an accessible summary version of the first phase project evaluation
- an 11 minute project film, produced by a local young person studying film at university  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJpo6dchcYY>
- a project website [www.peopleandthedales.org](http://www.peopleandthedales.org)
- a Facebook page [www.facebook.com/PeopleandtheDALES](https://www.facebook.com/PeopleandtheDALES) and
- a twitter site <https://twitter.com/PeopleandtheDAL>

A wide range of dissemination has taken place, this has included:

- Delivery of presentations and interactive workshops at a range of regional and national events, for example Institute of Outdoor Learning Northern Region Conference 2013, Access to Nature Celebration, Brathay Health and Well-being conference
- Direct support and consultation with 2 AONBs, meetings with 4 other organisations. Additional telephone discussions have been had with other organisations
- Presentations for a range of other organisations and events including: ASMAF Refugee forum Blackburn, Malham Tarn Field Centre anniversary celebrations
- Informal dissemination through attendance at other events, e.g. EcoMinds celebrations, North Yorkshire Wider Partnerships Conference, Natural England Outdoors for All
- Promotion of such work and issues through our project newsletters, summary report, film, Facebook, twitter, project website, organisations website and numerous articles in a range of local media



This has led directly to new partnership working and the development of new projects enabling people from disadvantaged groups to access other areas such as the Forest of Bowland AONB. It has also enabled other bodies to provide new opportunities for those experiencing disadvantage or marginalisation and also recognise the value of experiences in the outdoors as an effective and affordable means of improving the health and well-being.

Evaluation has highlighted the importance of projects like PaD in raising awareness of and promoting and developing access for disadvantaged groups in the countryside.



*“Having now had the experience of working with the project I have the confidence to lead activities and think of how we can bring more People & the Dales Group here. Working with disadvantaged groups is now firmly set in the ongoing management and development of the NNR. I very much look forward to being involved with future delivery, and need to think what can be done on the NNR to improve on the existing facilities, interpretation etc that enhances the experience of visiting groups.”*

The project has also tried to increase the ‘presence’ of images of people from disadvantaged groups out in the countryside through resources and articles. Our website, handbook and project film show a diverse range of groups taking part in a range of activities in the countryside. Project images have featured in press articles that have been disseminated and published widely and reports produced by Natural England and Access to Nature. Positive imagery (people seeing images of people like themselves engaging in activity in the outdoors) is key to normalising outdoor activity for people from the target groups.

*“The website and handbook are an excellent example of how to promote and celebrate diversity.”*

Although the project has reached out directly to more than 4750 beneficiaries it should be acknowledged that the wider reach of the project - indirect project beneficiaries is potentially huge. Indirect beneficiaries include staff, trustees and other users of each of the partner organisations who have been made aware of the increased access to the countryside by disadvantaged groups. This would also include facilitators who have organised activities, farmers whose land we have used, individuals who have passed the groups whilst out walking or undertaking conservation activities, bus drivers who have brought the groups out to the Dales, families and friends of the groups who have heard all about the event once participants have returned home and those who have undertaken visits themselves, staff at residential venues who have welcomed participants, local shop keepers, village hall secretaries, people who have picked up newsletters or read articles, people we meet at events, workshops and the range of people we meet whilst out and about with groups. We have made presentations about the project to a wide range of groups from interested support groups and businesses to WI and Rotary groups both in the Dales and the surrounding urban areas. There have also been a variety of press releases (both those written by us and some written by others about the project) which have had wide coverage. We have also reached a substantial number of people through posts of our film and other activities on our social media pages and website and even more through ‘shares’, ‘likes’ and re-tweets – we know for example that the link to our film alone was re-tweeted to around 35,000 people.

## **6. Learning from People and the DALES**

Key project strengths and attributors to project success include:

- **Flexibility** - Provision of personalised, diverse, tailored activities to suit groups.
- **Strong relationships** - Developing a good relationship with a Community ‘leader’ is key to success as a good knowledge of peoples’ interests and needs is essential.
- **Appropriate** - Activities are suitable for the group’s physical ability and their specific needs.
- **Informative** – Providing beneficiaries with the right amount and kind of information to make their visit and easy, informative and enjoyable one.
- **Equipped** - Provision of adequate clothing and equipment to suit all conditions groups are often unprepared so boots, waterproofs, extra socks and jumpers are vital.
- **Understanding** - It is essential to maintain good communication, for project staff to maintain humour, patience, tolerance and understanding of potentially chaotic background of groups and individuals.
- **Developing Skills** – Providing opportunities for people to learn about leading groups for themselves has ensured that groups begin to undertake outdoor visits for themselves.
- **Aftercare** - On-going communication contact and networking events with groups.

- **Promoting diversity in the outdoors** – Sharing information about events and the project with both groups and a wider audience.



The personal relationship, the approach and contact between PaD's two community workers (1fte) and community group leaders in the urban areas has been key to the success of the project. Establishing links with a range of groups through existing networks, attending a range of community events and ultimately through word of mouth has ensured that the project has had a continuous supply of groups keen to take part in project activities. These intermediaries need to be well connected to the group and have a good knowledge of their interests and needs to ensure visits are successful. Changes in personnel in groups can often impact on the success of future visits and in some cases meant that visits no longer took place for certain groups.

*"This project is all about relationships. It's the difference between what PaD offers and what a typical 'widely advertised open programme of outdoor events' might offer."*

As one group leader surmised, *"You are an extremely open, warm welcoming team who are able to adapt to the needs of the groups you support"*

Many of the beneficiaries are visiting the countryside for the first time. They don't know what to expect and the needs of different groups can vary enormously. It's very important to offer as much information as possible in advance to prepare people for the visit – pre-visit talks to new groups (though these are time consuming but essential for some very needy group), photographs, personal testimonies and copies of our newsletter have all helped with this.

Maintaining the relationships has played an important part in project success too. This means maintaining contact, keeping people informed about PaD and other local activities – this has been achieved through personal contact, collective events such as community evaluation and networking days and celebration events and also through our project newsletter, Facebook page and email updates. This has generally been easier in Bradford & Leeds than in Lancashire where the groups seem to be more self-contained. It is hard to reach individuals that are not part of groups. The project has had some success with this, through for example contact with liaison workers in schools or Children's Centres, housing associations and support / advice organisations, but there is still work to be done here accessing those who are more isolated and not in touch with organisations or support services.

A wide range of activities are on offer through the project. These are needed to appeal to the diverse range of groups involved. The team ensures that the activities are not too demanding physically but appropriately challenging to those groups that need it and the locations/settings are appealing. It is essential to devise activities that work with 'where a group is at' at that moment in time, particularly for initial visits. This provides a safe starting point for some groups that may be reluctant to visit new places or try new activities. Once trust and familiarity has been established then groups can be moved on to try new activities and challenges.

*"The emphasis is on fun and enjoyment and offering new experiences that are interesting and stimulating."*

*“Flexibility is key – there is no set programme which means that activities can be adapted to meet the needs of any group.”*

Good partnerships with other providers are vital – these have been built on and expanded during the course of the project. The organisation and project team are open and happy to talk with other providers and keep an ongoing dialogue about their activities and opportunities for joint working.

Providing People and the DALES group leader training and Walking Group Leader (WGL) training to community group leaders and volunteers has increased the capacity of local communities to enable people from disadvantaged backgrounds to enjoy the outdoors for themselves. It will however still take time for such activity to become the norm in many of these groups.

The project has also tried to increase the ‘presence’ of images of people from disadvantaged groups out and about in the countryside in resources and articles. Through seeing images of people like themselves engaging in activity in the outdoors people from a range of backgrounds and experiences are more likely to begin to see this kind of activity as the ‘norm’ and being to take part in it – hopefully supported by resources such as our website and handbook.

Even after attending training, group leaders may still not feel able to return and run a visit independently. *“One lady has brought lots of different groups out and attended training but still doesn’t feel able to lead a group on her own”*. There are lots of factors that make this follow-through quite difficult such as people's community backgrounds, lack of funds, lack of transport, lack of confidence and other pressing priorities within their workloads.

Many groups / group leaders would like to undertake more visits and walks both through the project and for themselves but are often limited as this is seen as peripheral to their key area of work.

Access to appropriate clothing and equipment was highlighted as a key factor that continued to prevent people from under-represented groups taking part in outdoor activity. Inappropriate clothing is a common problem (there can be cultural barriers to this) - having access to appropriate clothing/equipment was an essential element of the project (44% of survey respondents cited this as being a best feature of the experiences).

The ‘supply’ of boots/equipment from a partner organisation is crucial to the successful running of the project. A donation from Yorkshire based company ‘Farnells’ means that YDMT now have their own stock of steel toe cap boots for use by groups and the additional donation of ‘pre-loved’ waterproofs via Rohan’s ‘Gift your Gear’ scheme has ensured that there is access to appropriate equipment. Without these many activities would not be able to take place.

Seeing images of people ‘like themselves’ out walking or taking part in conservation activities plays a key part in acceptance and ‘normalisation’ of this kind of activity for these groups of people, People and the DALES has worked hard to both deliver and promote this. Resources such as the project website, handbook, project film, Facebook and twitter pages all help promote the involvement of people from more diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds in the outdoors to a range of audiences.

The added value of visits such as the ones provided through the project shouldn’t be underestimated. Groups reported that the visits had:

- Positive benefits to mental health / well being
- Positive benefits and improved outlook to physical health (introducing ‘new’ forms of exercise)
- Improvements in staff / client relations in groups (time away from setting)
- Groups discovered new ways of working with their clients
- Providing shared experiences for groups, enabling them to come together more positively
- People engaging with their local natural environment and green spaces



- Group leaders enjoying time out and seeing clients in a different environment

Cost of travel is still a big issue for many of the people we are working with and whilst we provide information to groups/individuals on cheaper travel options e.g. subsidised 'Dales Experience' bus, the cost is still prohibitive for some, so for many our 'taking it back home' resources have been key to providing new opportunities closer to home:

*"Cost of travel is a prohibiting factor for Refugees & Asylum seekers but there has been greater confidence in accessing city green spaces."*

*"Individuals have started walking themselves locally to home."*

*"Trips inspired new ideas which attendees take back to their own environment e.g. making leaf boats and playing Pooh sticks."*

*"Upon return to Leeds the client signed up for a 6 week gym program and when this finished, took to continuing her personal development in local parks and woodland."*



The project has provided participants and community group leaders with a wide range of support and information, but the behaviour change and capacity required for large numbers of people to 'get out there' independently will be a slow process beyond the life of the project. For some of the individuals we have worked with, there are prohibitive factors that prevent accessing areas such as the Dales without support and external funding.

Due to the nature of the work external funding is still often needed, but the promotion of the wider benefits such as impacts on health and well-being may provide opportunities for this. Recent changes in health

structures may create opportunity for this and may support future delivery of this work.

Success in this area requires further partnership working with an increasing and more wide ranging scope of organisations and bodies. Many of the organisations/bodies that could support and partner delivery of this work (Public Health teams, CCGs, Local Nature Partnerships) are newly formed and in some cases still forming so until they are clear in their structure and direction little progress can be made. So although further work is needed to secure funding or ongoing commitment to the work delivered through People and the DALES good progress has been made in establishing links and promoting our work to them.

## **7. The Future – People and the DALES and beyond?**

YDMT believe that the highly successful People and the DALES delivery model is one which is applicable and replicable in other geographical locations and for other organisations. This could take place for example through direct delivery by YDMT or working with local environmental organisations to support them to deliver similar work (through provision of direct support and training). A number of opportunities to explore this further have emerged thanks to additional funding. Two key pilot projects have taken place, one delivery based and one research based, in very different geographical locations, which successfully demonstrate PaD's appropriateness and replicability to other locations / organisations

### **Pilot project 1**

#### **Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - 'People and the Fells'**

Following dissemination work with the Forest of Bowland (FoB) Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) team a pilot set of events were trialled with disadvantaged groups from the

AONB catchment in Lancashire.

The quantitative achievements of the project include:

- Four visits by four groups that had previously not participated in outreach activities plus four group leaders that have been enthused to bring groups out again.
- Three farms plus Beacon Fell Country Park hosted events.
- 36 new participants of whom only 5 had ever been to the Forest of Bowland before giving 31 first time visitors. This is a new potential audience as everyone was alerted to the Forest of Bowland programme of activities and Transport to the area.
- 100% of participants reported feeling better after the event.

There were also a range of more intangible achievements resulting from this work:

- New partners became involved – Beacon Fell Country Park, Laund, Lower Gaysgill and Cobble Hey Farms.
- A range of photos of people participating in events and activities which can be used in future promotion of events.
- Press articles.
- New working relationship between YDMT and Forest of Bowland AONB.
- Resulting contact with Lower Gaysgill Farm interested in becoming a Care Farm.
- Databases of groups to approach re further visits and venues to visit.

Discussions are developing between YDMT and Bowland AONB over future activity with various potential ways forward, including continued delivery by YDMT.

## **Pilot project 2**

### **North Yorkshire Natural Health Service**

In 2012 North Yorkshire County Council approached a range of other organisations to work together on developing a proposal for a Local Nature Partnership (LNP) for North Yorkshire and York. The Government accepted the proposal and awarded the North Yorkshire & York Local Nature Partnership official status in July 2012. The LNP secured funds for a limited period to deliver one or more projects relating to the objectives of the LNP. Within this YDMT wrote a proposal and was subsequently commissioned to research the potential for developing a North Yorkshire Natural Health Service, developing opportunities and provision through the natural environment and cultural heritage for improving the health and well-being of some of the county's most disadvantaged residents. This pilot project adopted an approach based on the model developed through People and the DALES.

Through the project links were made with a range of organisations providing support to those experiencing disadvantage and potential providers of environmental experiences in 3 pilot areas across the county. A networking event bringing together the potential range of partners and to look at how the project might move forward.

Further work is needed to link the project and partners with local health professionals to enable to the scheme to support and work in collaboration with GPs, CCGs, Health and Well-being boards and other health practitioners. Such a partnership is crucial for recognition and integration of the project within existing services. This could incorporate training for potential delivery partners in how to become a 'referred organisation', taster days and other showcase / networking events for health professionals.

The report highlighted a series of recommendations to facilitate the development of a North Yorkshire Natural Health Service. This included training, liaison and commitment from local health professionals and delivery of activities by local organisations / providers.

Further funding has been secured to enable a pilot delivery phase of the North Yorkshire Natural Health Service. This will enable a version of the People and the DALES group leader training to be delivered in the Catterick Garrison area. This training will working with community groups leaders directly supporting people experiencing disadvantage providing them with the interest, skills, knowledge and support to be able to take groups out for themselves in a range of 'green' locations within the LNP area.

The People and the DALES project team have been able to continue their work beyond the Access to Nature funding thanks to support from a number of Trusts and largely due to the commitment of funds directly by YDMT to support staff time and a reduced level of project delivery whilst additional funding and project working is secured.

We have developed and are exploring other possible routes to enabling project sustainability such as working with local Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) and Local Authority Public Health teams and Health & Well-being boards. We are also beginning to establish links with organisations that may be able to pay directly for our services such as brokerage organisations supporting those with personal budgets.

The training delivered through People and the DALES has been a unique asset to the project, enabling a wide range of people to have the knowledge, skills and confidence to take the groups they work with out into the natural world whether that be the Yorkshire Dales or their local park. We are looking to develop this training further through gaining accreditation possibly through linking into Mountain Training England's new awards for Hill Skills or Lowland walking. We are running a pilot training event for people from BME groups with financial support from MTE. Our pilot event in North Yorkshire will also enable to develop more replicable and transferable courses for community group leaders interested in leading groups in the outdoors. We are also planning additional training based on a range of aspects within People and the DALES such as 'Working with diverse groups in the outdoors' and 'The benefits of outdoor activity for improving health and well-being' particularly aimed at those working with disadvantaged or marginalised groups. We will also continue to share our experience and expertise in these areas through presentations and workshops at a range of events and through writing articles for a range of publications.

To find out more about the work we are doing visit [www.peopleandthedales.org](http://www.peopleandthedales.org)  
Or keep up to date with our latest activities via [www.facebook.com/PeopleandtheDALES](https://www.facebook.com/PeopleandtheDALES) or [www.twitter.com/PeopleandtheDAL](https://www.twitter.com/PeopleandtheDAL)

***"This kind of work is essential to the well-being of our service users... many organisations want to take their service users on trips to the countryside but worry about expertise, health and safety, equipment. This project breaks down barriers and makes something incredibly important possible."***





## Appendix

### Case Studies

- BME Community Group
- BME Interfaith Group
- Mental Health Support Group
- Youth Group
- Refugee and Asylum Seeker Group
- Homelessness Support Group

# People & the DALES

Diversity Access Learning Environment Sustainability



## People & the DALES TEAM

**Dave Tayler**  
Project Manager  
david.tayler@ydmtd.org



**Judy Rogers**  
Community Worker  
judy.rogers@ydmtd.org



**Gail Smith**  
(works mainly Wednesday  
& Thursday)  
Community Worker  
gail.smith@ydmtd.org

## Contacts

People and the DALES

Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust,  
Old Post Office, Main St, Clapham,  
LA2 8DP

015242 51002

judy.rogers@ydmtd.org

gail.smith@ydmtd.org

[www.ydmtd.org](http://www.ydmtd.org)

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