

Orb group on Wednesday Wanders course
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Case Study
Orb Community Arts

Orb Community Arts joined its sister organisation Pioneer Projects for a series of eight outdoor activity sessions facilitated by the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, Learning & Engagement Team.



Wednesday Wanders Bird ID talk in Grass Woods © Grace Knill, Pioneer Projects

Groups of up to 24 participants, drawn from rural towns and communities, centred on Bentham and Harrogate, took part in a wide range of outdoor activities at various locations in the National Park during spring 2024. The experience was overwhelmingly positive – both for participants and staff – who developed new skills and confidence in delivering outdoor learning and social prescribing sessions.

Orb Community Arts Director tells us how it began…

We'd been doing a year-long project with Pioneer Projects, in Bentham, where the two organizations and the two groups from Pioneer and Orb worked closely together and we wanted to continue that relationship. I'd been to an online conference that Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA) was running about green space and that's when I first met the Learning & Engagement Team. At the same time, YDNPA had contacted Pioneer Projects about social prescribing projects around Craven.

So we plotted out a project that we wanted to do jointly with Pioneer and identified what each of us wanted to get out of that partnership.

The National Park team wanted to build deeper relationships and get to work with organizations and people over a longer period of time. They were also really interested in working with groups specifically around mental health and well-being and wanted to learn more about the whole green social prescribing route and how they could help people who have been prescribed a programme of outdoor activities by their GPs.

YORKSHIRE DALES
National Park

www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/learning-and-engagement

Left
Nature Connection and Wellbeing walk Clapham © Kiri Wood, YDNPA

Right
Meeting Alpacas at Semerwater
© David Littler, Orb Community Arts





"Knowing that the transport is taken care of and you're with a group of like-minded people makes it so much easier to visit the Dales."

8
Walks in different locations.

x10
Participants

3
Staff trained in Nature Prescriptions and walk leading

"It was like going on a school trip when I was at primary school. The excitement and anticipation grew every week we had a trip and the journey in the minibus was all part of the experience"

The outcomes and benefits

- It's been really good from a staff perspective, because it's improved our knowledge of the outdoors, but it's also improved our wellbeing and ability to be more creative in our work.
- Being outdoors in nature is really important for my well-being. It's nice to be able to spend time away from the building and out in nature doing creative things in different locations with different people.
- We've been talking to the Learning & Engagement Team about doing some staff training around leading outdoor activities so that we become more skilled in taking people out into those spaces independently.
- Sometimes you can physically see the impact of getting outdoors on people almost instantaneously. You can watch people relax and begin to open up more. We've noticed the full spectrum of reactions, from excitement to thoughtfulness and even awe at the beauty of nature.
- On the way to the Dales, people are initially excited and chatting, then the minibus falls silent as the group stares out of the windows taking it all in. On the way back home, after a full day out in the fresh air, most people are so relaxed they simply fall asleep!
- Our building is a safe space it's familiar. But having the opportunity to venture out and broaden all of our experiences has been really crucial.

orb community arts
for positive mental health

Orb Community Arts is a specialist creative community arts and wellbeing organisation based in Knaresborough. Established in 2004, Orb supports people from across the whole of the Harrogate and rural district of North Yorkshire. Orb promotes positive mental health and provides better life opportunities to those experiencing poor mental health through engagement in creative activities, learning, performance and volunteering.

The Orb team help people overcome isolation, build skills and confidence, improve their wellbeing and play a valued role in the local community. Orb's services are funded through grants and pathways supported by North Yorkshire Council and the NHS.

Find out more at: **https://hadca.org.uk/directory/organisation/1381**