Branching Out
Positive Mental Health
Through Nature

2007-2018
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Forestry Commission Scotland

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- Health Walks
- Horticultural therapy
- Branching Out
- Green Gym
- Natural Play
- Forest School
- WAP for people with Dementia
Greenspace and conservation on referral for adults using mental health services

Programme runs in 10 area health boards across Scotland

40 plus groups delivered per annum

Established training programme for environment and health professionals

Economic study 2016
Branching Out
Summary of Economic Study

Branching Out is a programme run by Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) that aims to improve the Health-Related Quality of Life of adults experiencing severe and enduring mental health problems. First established in 2007, it is based on a 12-week programme of woodland activities, which are used as a vehicle to help participants learn strategies that can maintain positive mental health. It runs as an adjunct treatment for those in secondary and tertiary care.

The programme has been evaluated through two survey-based studies, one for 2011-2012 and one for 2014-2015. The studies used 12-point short form surveys, completed by participants both before and immediately after the scheme, with a follow-up survey three months after completion of the programme.

The 2011-2012 survey showed benefits in Quality-Adjusted Life Years (QALYs), a standard measure used to assess the cost-effectiveness of treatments across the health care sector, but these were not statistically significant. It also showed that the programme was cost-effective when compared with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines. The aim of the 2014-2015 survey was to increase the amount of data available, to see whether a larger sample would show statistically significant effects for QALYs, and to extend the analysis of the programme’s cost-effectiveness.

The results of both surveys show small but significant improvements in participants’ mental health, social participation and general vitality. Perhaps because of a relatively low response rate to the full survey, the benefits for QALYs in the 2014-2015 survey are also not statistically significant.

Improvements in mental health and vitality as a result of the scheme are particularly marked for participants with more severe mental health problems before they entered the programme.

The programme has a high retention rate. Participants were more likely to maintain contact with Branching Out than with comparable schemes, which indicates their satisfaction with it.

The cost of one QALY delivered through Branching Out is just over £17,000. This compares favourably with the NICE benchmark of £30,000 for an intervention to deliver one QALY. Although it was not possible to collect reliable data on how long its benefits last, this indicates that Branching Out is a cost-effective way to improve mental health.

Details of the programme are available at www.forestry.gov.uk/branchingout

No’s of groups and referrals since 2007

- **Total Number of Groups**
- **Total Number of clients referred**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Number of Groups</th>
<th>Total Number of clients referred</th>
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<td>2012 – 2013</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2016 – 2017</td>
<td>344</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Quantitative evidence using Cost Utility Analysis

- Recent health economic study carried out over 2 years
- Data collected in 2014 and 2015
- Short form 12 questionnaires (self-administered patient questionnaire to measure treatment effectiveness - www.optum.com)
- Baseline, Post & 3 month follow-up
Quantitative evidence using Cost Utility Analysis: Results

- Scores converted to SD-6 scores (health state classification utility scores)
- Lower score indicates a worse health state and a higher score indicates improved health state
- Pooled data shows improvements in scores for physical health, mental health, vitality, social functioning and life role measured.
- Used to calculate cost of Quality-Adjusted Life Years (QALY)
- Pooled data shows a QALY improvement in 51% of participants, and no change in 10% of participants (n=175)
- 2011/12 data shows QALY improvement in 57%, and no change in 8% (n=73)
Our Results

- One QALY costs £17,300 compared to NICE guidelines of £30,000.

- Completion rate 2007 – 2015 is 70% (2050 participants)

- Adults with moderate to severe & enduring conditions show the most improvement.

Focus groups (2007) reported 5 areas of improvement:
1. Mental wellbeing
2. Physical health
3. Daily structure and routine
4. Transferable skills acquisition
5. Social skills and networking
Branching Out Economic Study

- The cost of one QALY delivered through Branching Out is £17,300
- NICE benchmark of £30,000 for intervention to deliver QALY gain
- Branching Out is a cost-effective way to improve mental health

Details of the programme are available at [www.forestry.gov.uk/branchingout](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/branchingout)
Other Green Prescription programmes

Woodland Activity Programme
For People with Early-Stage Dementia

To book a place please contact the ranger service
Forestry Commission Scotland Rangers
Gordon Harper 07798 668 125 or
Julie Hamilton 07876 508 586
E-mail: scottishlowlands@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

For research enquiries contact:
Jim Smalls 0779 6938 403

Callendar Wood, Falkirk
July–September 2016
Benefits for people with dementia and their carers:

- Being treated as equals
- Improvements in self-esteem
- Increased confidence
- Increased socialisation
- Mental restoration
- Connection to the past life experiences
- A sense of togetherness
- New and innovative service that complements traditional therapeutic interventions
Questions directed to:  

nathalie.moriarty@forestry.gov.uk

Website:  

www.forestry.gov.uk/branchingout

Photography:  

Forestry Commission Picture Library  
& Andrew MacDonald  

www.exhibitscotland.com