



The Natural  
Health Award  
Green Care

# Older adults

## Foreword

The Natural Health Award was developed by NHS Forth Valley Health Promotion Service in partnership with the Scottish Childminding Association. It is suitable for all ages from early years to older adult. It has also been adapted for residential homes as a way of supporting residents' and staff mental wellbeing and resilience.

We would like to thank all the partners who took the time and made the effort to help develop the original Award.

The original Award concept was then further developed and adapted for groups identified as those who would particularly benefit from the aims of the Natural Health Award framework.

This version has been written for use with older adults. The needs of people with dementia type conditions have been taken into account.

We would like to thank all the partners who supported the adaption and development of this version.

Elaine Cochrane

Clackmannanshire and Stirling Health and Social Care Partnership, Health Improvement Service

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## Introduction

There has been increasing recognition in recent years of the health benefits that occur as a result of getting outside into nature.

“There is compelling evidence that green exercise improves not only our physical health but also our emotional and mental health as well.” Dr Gregor Smith, Deputy Chief Medical Officer (1).

The award offers a framework for activities that are known to improve wellbeing, to sit within. It also supports you to expand on activities you may already do and provides opportunities for staff to have positive engagements with residents. In this way each activity can maximise your wellbeing. At the same time, the wellbeing of staff or volunteers involved in the delivery of the Award can also be positively affected.

There is “emerging evidence that exposure to nature may have therapeutic benefits and so could be used as part of treatment for some conditions, for example there is some evidence that such contact can reduce levels of anxiety in dementia patients while they are in the greenspace.” (2)

Depending on the setting in which the Award is being used, you can encourage family and friends to be involved too. If they are unable to come to the residence in person, this can be achieved through social media, letters, photos and videos. This not only strengthens relationships with them but can improve the wellbeing of the person and their wider support network by maintaining contact and reducing isolation. It also makes activities much more fun and is motivational to those taking part.



## Welcome to the Natural Health Award

The Award is flexible and self-regulated. It provides a framework and the goal of achieving a certificate on completion from Clackmannanshire and Stirling Health and Social Care Partnership Health Improvement Service. There are also facilitator certificates for staff and volunteers who deliver the Award. It is suitable for all ages and can be adapted to suit the needs of the individuals taking part.

The purpose of the award is to:

- ⚙ Increase physical activity
- ⚙ Get people outside and connecting with the natural environment
- ⚙ Promote mental wellbeing
- ⚙ Increase resilience

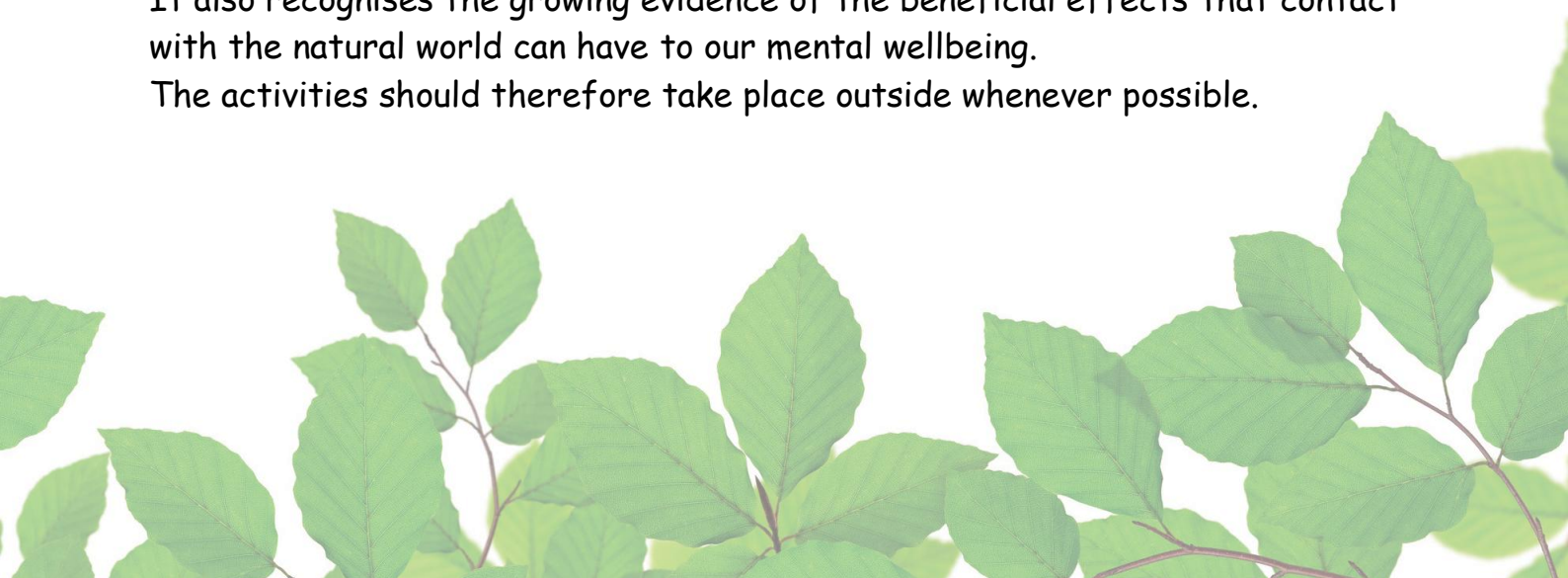
The 'five ways to mental wellbeing' are set at the heart of this award. These are explained on pages 25-27. The Centre for Wellbeing at the New Economics Foundation developed the 'five ways to mental wellbeing' which are evidence-based activities to improve people's wellbeing based on worldwide research.

Mental wellbeing can be defined as 'feeling good and functioning well'. Put simply it's how you are feeling and how well you can cope with day-to-day life (3).

The Award focuses on taking part in fun activities which get people more physically active outside and at the same time, closer to the natural world. Whatever our age, there is strong evidence that being physically active can help us lead healthier and happier lives (4). Further information on the importance of physical activity and strength and balance can be found on pages 28-30.

It also recognises the growing evidence of the beneficial effects that contact with the natural world can have to our mental wellbeing.

The activities should therefore take place outside whenever possible.





The importance of maintaining and developing resilience throughout the life course is acknowledged and embedded into the Award using the Resilience Framework developed by Boingboing. Resilience is the ability to cope with what life throws at us (5). This is further explained on pages 32-33.

The Award is written in line with Scottish Government policies and guidelines. It links relevant publications and blends theory into practice e.g. Health & Social Care Standards. Please see pages 34-36 for more information on the policies and guidelines.

It is recognised that health and social care staff play a vital role in supporting people to become more active and that care home staff are central to this. The report 'A More Active Scotland' highlights that it is essential that staff are provided with resources and support to be able to do this (6). The Award provides a practical resource which gives structure to activities that promote mental wellbeing, physical activity and life-long learning in the outdoors.

A Natural England Commissioned Report NECR204 highlighted a literature review which found that there were significant benefits for people with dementia having contact with nature (7). These included: "improved emotional state: reduced stress, agitation, anger, apathy and depression; improved sleeping and eating patterns; improved verbal expression, memory and attention; improved awareness, sense of well-being, independence, self-esteem and control; as well as improved social interaction and a sense of belonging."

The review also identified that it was the amalgamation of three key aspects which accounted for these mental wellbeing benefits. These included being outdoors with nature, taking part in meaningful activities and socialising. These three essential features are built into the Natural Health Award.



## What's in the Award

The Award has 15 activities in total. You can complete each activity in one go or activities can be done in short slots throughout the day or over several sessions, whatever suits you best. The Award can be condensed into a few days or spread out over several weeks.



The amount of time spent on each activity should be varied according to the needs of the participants. For example, activities for someone with dementia may last 10 minutes whereas an activity aimed at another person may last 2 hours or longer. It is up to you as the facilitator of the Award to decide what offers a challenge to the individuals involved.

All activities are designed to be flexible enough to enable the Award to suit the needs, interest, mental capacity and physical ability of the individuals taking part. This will support the facilitator to meet Quality Statement 5 of NICE's Dementia Quality Standards updated in 2019 (8).

“People with dementia are supported to choose from a range of activities to promote wellbeing that is tailored to their preferences.”

It goes on to explain that:

“Understanding the activities that a person prefers and adapting them to their strengths and needs will make a person more likely to engage with the activities offered.”

It is therefore important that the facilitator tries to involve the person and/ or their family and friends when devising how the Award sections will be completed and tailors the activities to their interests whenever possible.



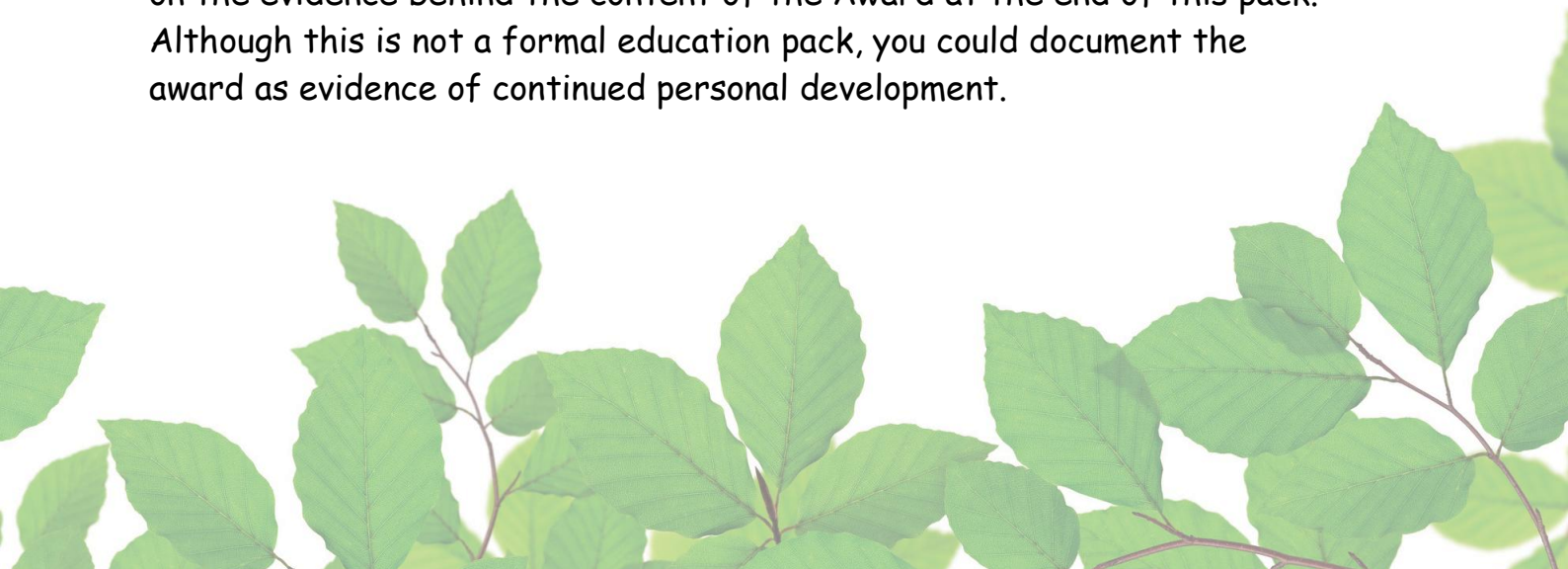
Physical activity should be built into the activities as much as possible. The activities can be used to encourage people to meet the daily recommended levels for physical activity. Maintaining and improving balance and strength is very important for older adults as it reduces the chance of frailty and falls. Simple activities such as bending to pick up leaves or stretching to tie bird feeders to branches, helps to improve balance. Muscle strength can be increased by walking, carrying or even standing up from a chair. Most importantly these all reduce the amount of time spent sitting.

Where practical, work as a group. Findings from the evaluation of the Pilot Award displayed that participants found working as part of a wider group encouraged participation, motivated them to complete it and was simply more fun for everyone. It is known that regular active participation in group activities is beneficial to all ages.

The activities within the Award can “support people to make and maintain meaningful relationships with people who live with them. This would combat some of the loneliness and isolation that can be experienced, even in a communal setting.” This is seen as a key requirement for care homes by the Care Inspectorate. The recommendation comes in “Understanding the activities that a person prefers and...adapting them to their strengths and needs, will make a person more likely to engage with the activities offered” (9).

If you are running the Award with a group, not all group members have to do the same activity or for the same period of time. Please use your professional judgement to tailor the award activities to meet the individual needs of those taking part.

There are other sources of ideas, activities and support available from various organisations, see pages 43-45 and further information is available on the evidence behind the content of the Award at the end of this pack. Although this is not a formal education pack, you could document the award as evidence of continued personal development.





## A word about the Award guidance

There is a section of the pack which provides Award guidance. The only form that must be completed is the certificate request (see page 11 for more information on it and where to obtain one). Please note: most of the forms are optional and you can decide if any are useful to you or not. You don't need to use any of the forms if you don't want to. They are there to guide you, they provide ideas and examples.

Examples of completed forms are available to assist you, followed by blank copies for you to complete, if you find them useful.

You can find alternative ways of documenting the award e.g. plan with an ideas board or record using a photo board or memory book of photos, drawings, quotes and descriptions.

A blank form is provided on pages 18-21 which can be used to evidence your work for organisational audits or Care Inspectorate requirements.

If you decide to use the form it can be hand-written or typed. We will not be overseeing what you do, as this is a self-assessment award.

The information provided is there to make things easier for you, not to make things harder. Please use it in a way that helps you.



## What you need to do to get the Award

There are three activities under each of the '5 ways to mental wellbeing', two are 'core' and one is a 'free choice'. So in total the award consists of 15 activities to be completed.

All activities should take place outside wherever possible and should include as much physical activity as is suitable to the individuals taking part. Try and incorporate creativity whenever you can. Working as part of a wider group is encouraged where practical.

### Be active...

**Core:** Visit an outside area such as the garden - devise an activity which explores the area and involves physical activity appropriate to the individuals' needs.

**Core:** Be an explorer - walk 10 or 100 steps observing nature along the way and devise a fun way of recording it. See how many steps you can do, (1,000 if you can manage it - you can combine the steps of the group taking part or accumulate steps over several outings).

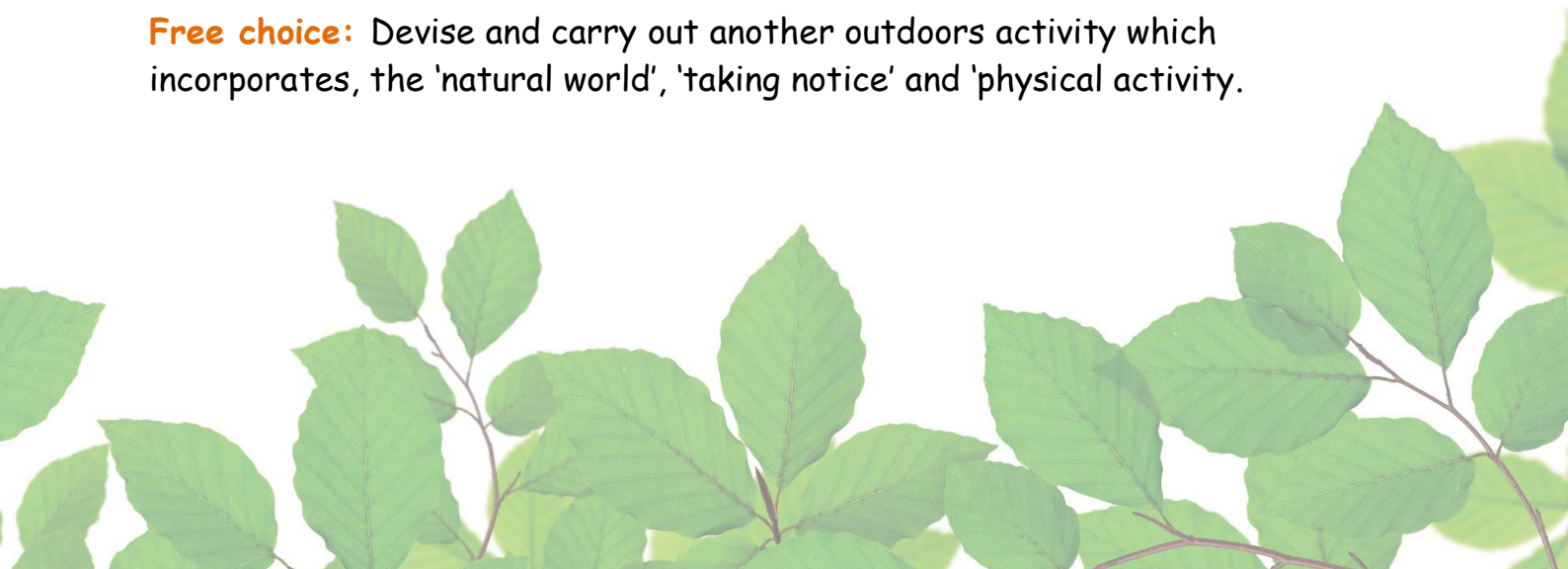
**Free choice:** Devise and carry out an activity outdoors that involves physical activity that gets you to breathe slightly harder and feel a bit warmer.

### Take notice...

**Core:** Make a piece of natural art outside and take photos to record it.

**Core:** Choose an activity which enables you to really take notice of the natural world.

**Free choice:** Devise and carry out another outdoors activity which incorporates, the 'natural world', 'taking notice' and 'physical activity'.



## Keep learning

**Core:** Choose a creature, plant or tree, get outside and study it and discover interesting facts about your chosen subject.

**Core:** Learn about an element of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, see page 37.

**Free choice:** Devise and carry out another outdoors activity which incorporates, the 'natural world', 'learning' and 'physical activity'.

## Give...

**Core:** Take part in an activity which aims to help conserve our natural world - e.g. making and putting up a bat or bird box, a butterfly feeder, plant wild flowers or seeds for bumble bees or butterflies etc.

**Core:** Bring out your creative side and make something involving natural materials and send or give it as a gift to someone.

**Free choice:** Devise and carry out another outdoors activity which incorporates, the 'natural world', 'giving' and 'physical activity'.

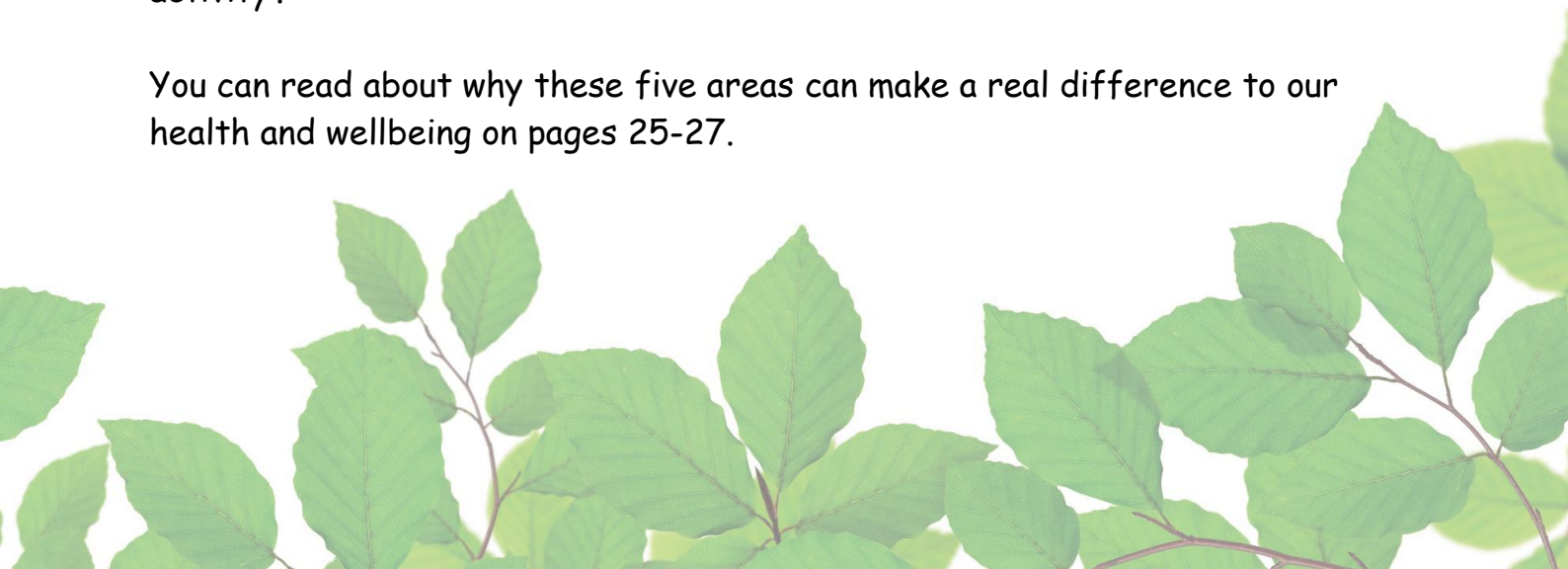
## Connect...

**Core:** Take part in an activity which enables you to let other people find out what you have been doing.

**Core:** Take part in a group activity outdoors.

**Free choice:** Devise and carry out another outdoors activity which incorporates, the 'natural world', 'connecting with people' and 'physical activity'.

You can read about why these five areas can make a real difference to our health and wellbeing on pages 25-27.





## Sample Award Guidance

The following provides guidance which you may find useful for planning, recording and reflecting on experiences whilst working on the Award.

Some of the forms have been developed for care homes to help provide evidence for care inspection purposes.

However, they can be used by other organisations but may require some adaptation to ensure it meets the needs of the individual establishment.

There are examples of completed forms and also blank copies to assist you. The only form that has to be completed is a certificate request. It gathers information on the number, age and postcode of the people who took part.

The request form is a separate document and which is available by email from [fv.naturalhealthaward@nhs.scot](mailto:fv.naturalhealthaward@nhs.scot).

An Award proposal and guidance, which you can use to write your ideas down, is supplied to make things easier for you. A completed example is on pages 12-17 and gives you an idea of what to do, with activities written in two different formats. You will see illustrations of both approaches in the 'proposal example'. The first approach is brief bullet points, the second is written in far greater detail than is required. It offers full explanations as to how each activity can be achieved as a guide if you are struggling to come up with ideas.



## Award proposal - examples

This proposal is to help you put your ideas down. You can complete it in a way that suits you or decide not to use it at all. It can be hand written or typed. You may find it to be a useful tool to record activities.

### Be active...

**Core 1: Visit an outside area such as the garden - devise an activity which explores the area and involves physical activity appropriate to the individual's needs. Describe how you will do this. You can simply write it as:**

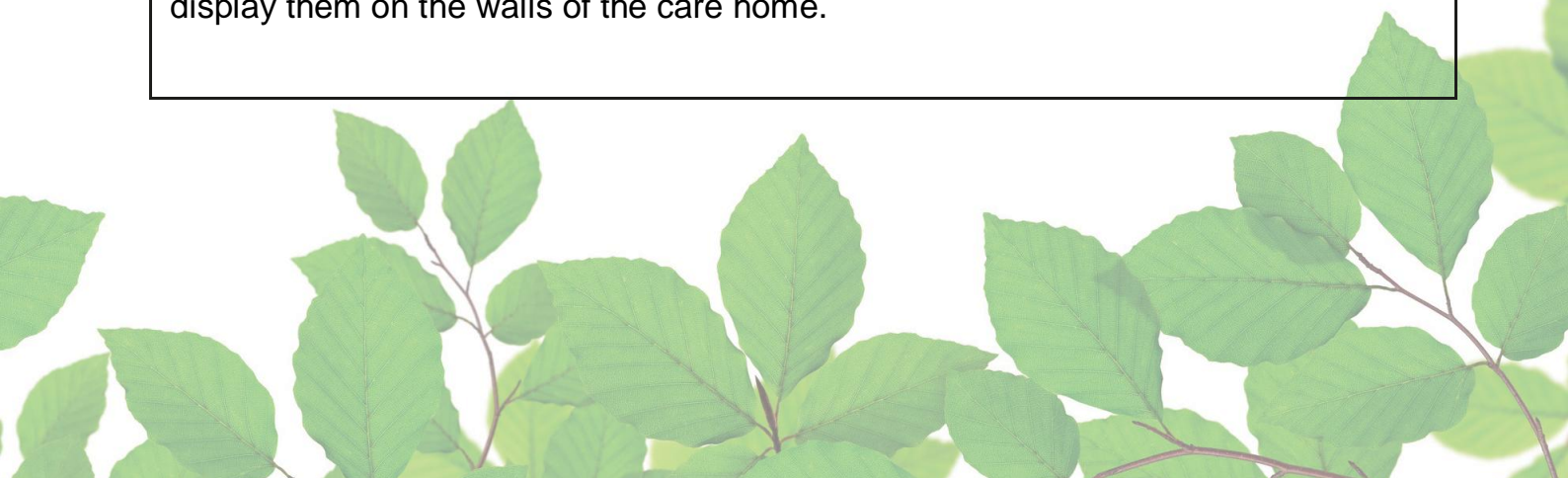
- ✿ Go out into the care home garden
- ✿ Search for attractive objects
- ✿ Keep these for another activity

**Or:** we will go out into the care home gardens and search for attractive objects. We will pick these up and then keep them for a craft activity that we will do on another day. This activity will involve physical activity through walking around the grounds and bending to pick up the objects.

**Core 2: Be an explorer, walk 10 or 100 steps (1,000 if you can manage it) observing nature along the way and devise a fun way of recording it. Describe how you will do this. You can simply write it as:**

- ✿ Use step counter
- ✿ Sensory trail
- ✿ Take photos
- ✿ Group count of 1,000 steps

**Or:** We will use a phone with a step counter to record the total number of steps we do as a group. Each care home resident will contribute to the total number of steps, doing as many as they are personally able to do. We will set up a sensory trail around the garden. We will identify items on the trail which stimulate the senses; texture, colour, smell, sound etc. We will take photos on the way to share through various social media methods, so that our friends and family can see what we have been doing or we will print them and find an interesting way to display them on the walls of the care home.



**Free choice: Devise and carry out an activity outdoors that involves physical activity that gets you to breathe slightly harder and feel a bit warmer. Describe how you will do this. You can simply write it as:**

- ✿ Make bird feeders
- ✿ Walk around the garden stretching and bending to hang them up

**Or:** We will make various bird feeders that suit different species of birds. We will go out together into the garden to hang them up. This will involve us walking, bending and stretching in order to reach branches on which to hang the feeders.

## Take notice...

**Core 1: Make a piece of natural art outside and take photos to record it. Describe how you will do this. You can simply write it as:**

- ✿ Gather materials
- ✿ Make frame
- ✿ Take photos
- ✿ Share on social media

**Or:** We will gather materials in the garden to make miniature landscapes or pictures. We will make frames from four pieces of wood or cardboard to frame our landscapes or pictures. We will take photos of the framed artwork and share them with friends and family through various social media methods and we will hang them on the care home walls to share them with the other residents and staff.

**Core 2: Choose an activity which enables you to really take notice of the natural world. Describe how you will do this. You can simply write it as:**

- ✿ Watch wildlife
- ✿ Live webcams

**Or:** We will watch wildlife through The Wildlife Trusts live webcams. Access the following website: [www.wildlifetrusts.org/webcams](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/webcams)

We will choose three birds/animals to watch through the live webcams. We will visit the webcam two times daily and make a timetable over seven days to go in and watch the animals that we have chosen. We will keep a diary/record of what we see and what they are doing.



**Free choice: Devise and carry out another outdoors activity which incorporates, the 'natural world', 'taking notice' and 'physical activity'. Describe how you will do this. You can simply write it as:**

- ✿ Colour palette

**Or:** We will go into the garden and search for colours in nature. We will compare the various shades of the same colour and where possible design a colour palette from some of the items we find.

We will display these on the walls so that all the other residents can enjoy these as well.

## Keep learning...

**Core 1: Choose a creature, plant or tree, get outside and study it and discover interesting facts about your chosen subject. Describe how you will do this. You can simply write it as:**

- ✿ Investigate fruit trees and how to care for them
- ✿ Look up information in books
- ✿ Experience searching for information on a computer/laptop/tablet
- ✿ Identify the changes to the trees according to the season
- ✿ Note when the various fruits should be ripe and how to pick them
- ✿ Take photos of activities and print them

**Or:** We will learn about the various fruit trees planted in the garden and how to care for them. We will download some information from the internet on various trees.

We will identify the stages the trees go through with the seasons. We will find out about the fruit that is produced, when it is ripe and how to pick and store them. We will take photos of the various stages of the activity and make a collage from them.

**Core 2: Learn about an element of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, see page 37. Describe how you will do this. You can simply write it as:**

- ✿ Look up information on the Scottish Outdoor Access Code
- ✿ Make picture and word cards
- ✿ Childhood memories

**Or:** We will find out about the Scottish Access Code. We will identify some key messages using picture and word cards that we make. We will use these to start conversations on childhood memories of spending time in the countryside.

**Free choice: Devise and carry out another outdoors activity which incorporates, the 'natural environment', 'learning' and 'physical activity'. Describe how you will do this. You can simply write it as:**

- ✿ Bug hunt
- ✿ Photos
- ✿ Bug identification
- ✿ Study the bugs

**Or:** We will go on a bug hunt outside. We will then take photos of the bugs we find. When we are at home we will make pictures or models of the bugs. We will then try to identify the bugs using the internet or sharing with friends or family.

## Give...

**Core 1: Take part in an activity which aims to help conserve our natural world - e.g. making and putting up a bat or bird box, a butterfly feeder, plant wildflowers or seeds for bumblebees or butterflies etc. Describe how you will do this. You can simply write it as:**

- ✿ Make hedgehog home
- ✿ Collect leaves
- ✿ Identify site

**Or:** We will make a hedgehog home and collect dry leaves or use straw to fill the box. We will walk around the garden to identify a suitable site to place this. See instructions from the Wildlife Trusts: [www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-build-hedgehog-home](http://www.wildlifetrusts.org/actions/how-build-hedgehog-home).

**Core 2: Bring out your creative side and make something involving natural materials and give it as a gift to someone. Describe how you will do this. You can simply write it as:**

- ✿ Decorate a pot of your choice
- ✿ Plant bulbs or seeds
- ✿ Give to someone else in the home

**Or:** We will decorate a pot e.g. old mug, empty yoghurt pot or anything else that we think is suitable in your house. We will plant bulbs or seeds into them and give them as a gift to someone else in the home or send an image to friends or family through one of the various social media methods.

We will tell them that we will look after their gift until we see them again.

**Free choice: Devise and carry out another outdoors activity which incorporates, the 'natural world', 'giving' and 'physical activity'. Describe how you will do this. You can simply write it as:**

- ✿ Make a sensory sun catcher
- ✿ Stick to window

**Or:** We will make a sensory sun catcher to put on our windows. We will collect flowers and leaves from the garden or somewhere close to our home. We will put a small amount of hair gel into a self-seal plastic bag then place our flowers and leaves into the gel face down. Once we have sealed the bag and taped the end, we will stick the bag to a window, so we can all enjoy each others' sun catchers.

We can then move the flowers etc around the gel making different patterns and feeling the various textures. Stimulating the senses and being absorbed in an activity can really help to reduce stress.

## Connect...

**Core 1: Take part in an activity which enables you to let other people find out about what you have been doing. Describe how you will do this. You can simply write it as:**

- ✿ Invite family etc. to a get together
- ✿ Display photos etc.
- ✿ Support residents to talk about what they've done

**Or:** We will host a "get together". We will invite family and/or friends, either through social media, or in person to show them the things we have made and the photos we have taken.

The residents will each be encouraged to talk about what they have made, what they are doing in the photos and how they have achieved their Award.





**Core 2: Take part in group activity outdoors. Describe how you will do this. You can simply write it as:**

- ⚙ Outdoor afternoon tea or campfire
- ⚙ Listen to sounds
- ⚙ Trip down memory lane

**Or:** We will set up tables and chairs outside. We will have an afternoon tea outside or we will have a campfire and make toast on it. After our tea/campfire we will pause for a while and listen to what we can hear. We will try to identify the sounds and prompt conversations on memories that are triggered.

**Free choice: Devise and carry out another outdoors activity which incorporates, the 'natural world', 'connecting with people' and 'physical activity'. Describe how you will do this. You can simply write it as:**

- ⚙ Make wildflower seed bombs
- ⚙ Prepare flower bed or box
- ⚙ Plant seed bombs
- ⚙ Visit flower patch regularly
- ⚙ Make video clip for family and friends

**Or:** We will make wildflower bombs by mixing soil and seeds into a ball and wrapping it in newspaper tied with string. We will then take the seed bombs into the garden and plant them somewhere suitable that we have previously prepared. We will keep an eye on them growing by visiting the flower patch regularly. We will take photos and make a short video clip of the various stages to share with friends and family through social media methods

Please remember these are examples and ideas, you can choose whether you want to use these activities or not. You can have a look at the many websites and books for suggestions or come up with your own ideas.

You can match activities to your group's needs, the resources you have, the local area and/or the season. This is your award and it's important that it meets your needs.

"Sensory activities can help improve the communication of patients with dementia and Alzheimer's. - 'The smells for instance, of flowers and herbs help people to recall places, memories and experiences. People with dementia can have problems communicating with others and being at the garden helps them to overcome that' - Occupational Therapist." (10)

## Award proposal - blank

This proposal is to help you put your ideas down. You can complete it in a way that suits you or decide not to use it at all. It can be hand written or typed.

### Be active...

**Core 1: Visit an outside area such as the garden - devise an activity which explores the area and involves physical activity appropriate to the individual's needs. Describe how you will do this:**

**Core 2: Be like an explorer, walk 1,000 steps (10,000 if you can manage it) observing nature along the way and devise a fun way of recording it. Describe how you will do this:**

**Free choice: Devise and carry out another activity outdoors that involves physical activity that gets you to breathe slightly harder and feel a bit warmer. Describe how you will do this:**

## Take notice...

**Core 1: Make a piece of natural art outside and take photos to record it. Describe how you will do this:**

**Core 2: Choose an outdoor activity which enables you to really take notice of the natural world. Describe how you will do this:**

**Free choice: Devise and carry out another activity which incorporates, the 'natural world', 'taking notice' and 'physical activity'. Describe how you will do this:**

## Keep learning...

**Core 1: Choose a creature, plant or tree, get outside and study it and discover interesting facts about your chosen subject. Describe how you will do this:**

**Core 2: Learn about an element of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, see page 37. Describe how you will do this.**



**Free choice: Devise and carry out another activity which incorporates, the 'natural environment', 'learning' and 'physical activity'. Describe how you will do this:**

**Give...**

**Core 1: Take part in an activity which aims which aims to help conserve our natural world - e.g. making and putting up a bat or bird box, a butterfly feeder, plant wildflowers or seeds for bumble bees or butterflies etc. Describe how you will do this:**

**Core 2: Bring out your creative side and make something involving natural materials and send it as a gift to someone. Describe how you will do this:**

**Free choice: Devise and carry out another activity which incorporates, the 'natural world', 'giving' and 'physical activity'. Describe how you will do this:**

**Connect**

**Core 1: Take part in an activity which enables you to let other people find out about what you have been doing. Describe how you will do this:**

**Core 2: Take part in an activity outdoors. Describe how you will do this:**

**Free choice: Devise and carry out one other activity which incorporates, the 'natural world', 'connecting with people' and 'physical activity'. Describe how you will do this:**



## Activities achieved - example

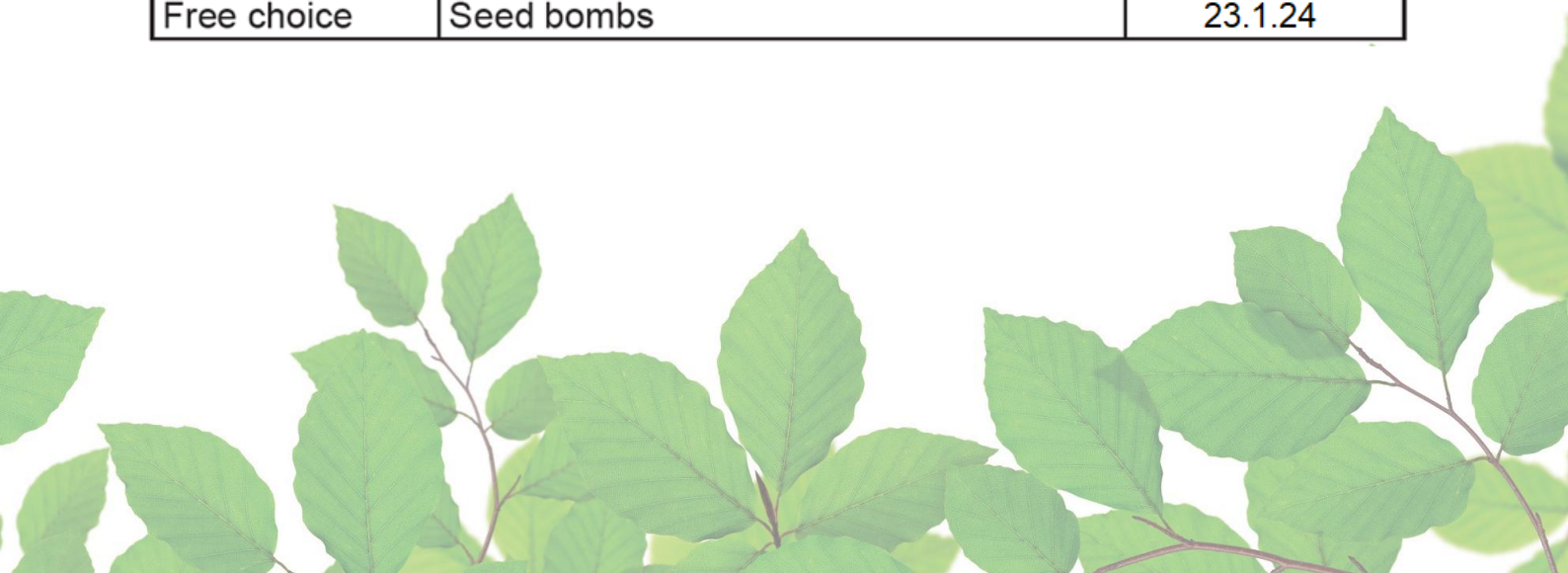
Be active	Activity	Achieved
Core activity 1	Garden search	25.3.24
Core activity 2	Sensory trail	3.1.24
Free choice	Bird feeders	12.2.24

Take notice	Activity	Achieved
Core activity 1	Miniature landscapes	15.2.24
Core activity 2	Wildlife webcams	13.2.24
Free choice	Colour palette	7.1.24

Keep learning	Activity	Achieved
Core activity 1	Fruit trees	28.1.24
Core activity 2	Card childhood memories	15.3.24
Free choice	Bug hunt	22.2.24

Give	Activity	Achieved
Core activity 1	Hedgehog home	15.3.24
Core activity 2	Seed pot	18.2.24
Free choice	Sensory sun catcher	15.1.24

Connect	Activity	Achieved
Core activity 1	Virtual get together	19.9.24
Core activity 2	Afternoon tea or campfire	18.3.24
Free choice	Seed bombs	23.1.24



## Activities achieved - blank

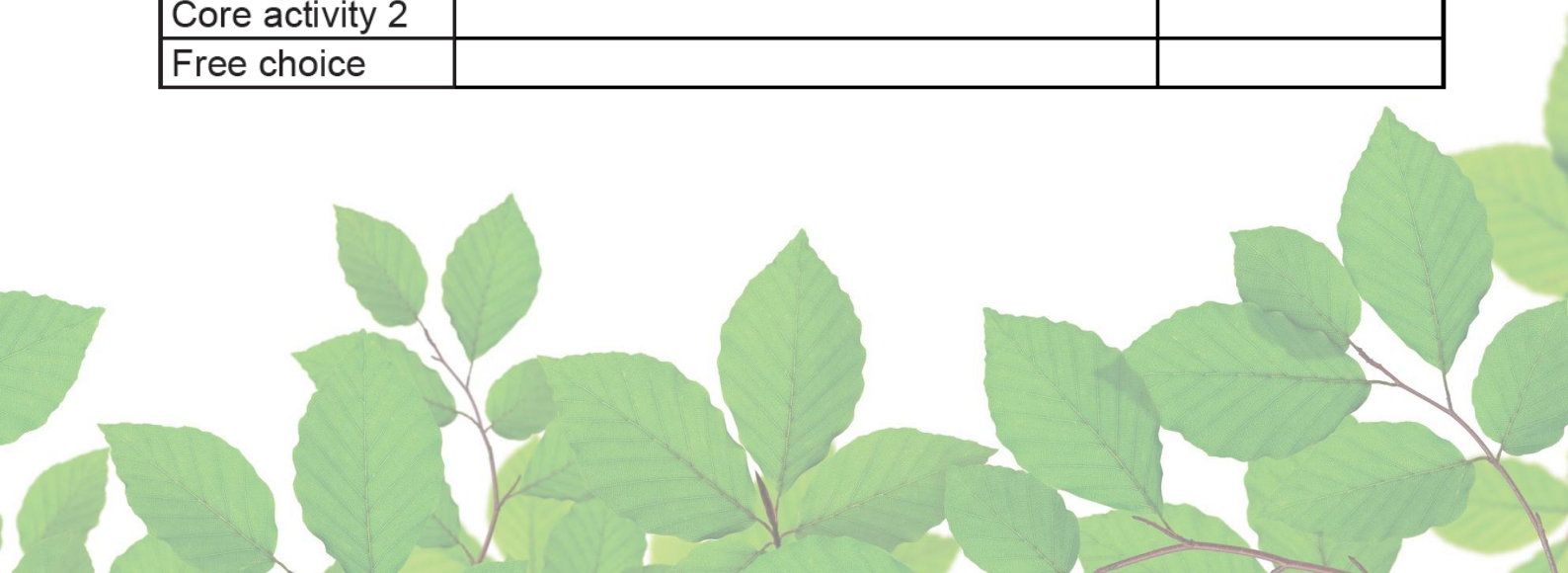
Be active	Activity	Achieved
Core activity 1		
Core activity 2		
Free choice		

Take notice	Activity	Achieved
Core activity 1		
Core activity 2		
Free choice		

Keep learning	Activity	Achieved
Core activity 1		
Core activity 2		
Free choice		

Give	Activity	Achieved
Core activity 1		
Core activity 2		
Free choice		

Connect	Activity	Achieved
Core activity 1		
Core activity 2		
Free choice		





# Further information

- ✿ The 'five ways to mental wellbeing'
- ✿ Physical activity
- ✿ Strength and balance
- ✿ Risk assessment
- ✿ Resilience
- ✿ Scottish Government policies & guidelines overview
- ✿ Illustrations of links between Scottish Government policies and guidelines
- ✿ Scottish Outdoor Access Code
- ✿ Stirling University Evidence Base
- ✿ What is dementia?



## The 'five ways to mental wellbeing'

Most of us know that we can improve our physical health by eating '5 a day' of fruit and vegetables, but did you know there are five ways to improve our mental wellbeing? These are: **Be active**, **Take notice**, **Keep learning**, **Give** and **Connect**. Taking part in the Award can support you to learn in a practical way about the five ways and how easy it is to embed them in everyday life.

They are research based, yet simple ways, that we can all try to increase our sense of wellbeing and get the best out of life (3).

**Be active...** Regular physical activity is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups.

It doesn't need to be particularly intense for you to feel good - slower paced activities, such as walking, can have the benefit of encouraging social interactions as well as providing some level of exercise.

You don't need to run a marathon or go to the gym - dance, swim, play a game, garden, cycle, anything you enjoy. Even 10 minutes of physical activity a day can make a difference to your mental wellbeing. It is especially good if it's with other people, having a laugh and having fun.



**Take notice...** Reminding yourself to 'take notice' can strengthen and broaden awareness.

Studies have shown that being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances your wellbeing and that savouring 'the moment' can help to remind you of what's important in life.

Heightened awareness also enhances your self-understanding and allows you to make positive choices based on your own values and motivations.

Take time out to really notice what's around you. Listen to the birds, watch the clouds, find out what 'mindfulness' is, be creative - anything that allows your mind time to calm down and be still. Thinking back on experiences can help you realise what really matters.

**Keep learning...** Lifelong learning improves self-esteem and promotes positive social relationships and a sense of interest in the wider world.

Learning makes us more confident. Working towards goals can give a sense of achievement. Try something new or rediscover an old hobby.

Learn to cook, change a wheel or sign up for that class. Learning is much more than formal education, it is anything that supports curiosity and encourages discovery.





**Give...** Individuals who report a greater interest in helping others are more likely to rate themselves as happy.

When we are kind and generous to others it triggers the reward mechanisms in our brain. This increases our own sense of happiness whilst spreading happiness to others.

Research into actions for promoting happiness has shown that committing an act of kindness once a week over a six-week period is associated with an increase in wellbeing.

Do something nice for a friend or even a stranger. Giving is not just about things that cost money. It can be giving your time, a compliment, a smile or a thank you, simply being kind to people. Remember and take time to treat yourself too.

**Connect...** There is strong evidence that indicates that feeling close to, and valued by other people is a fundamental human need and one that contributes to functioning well in the world.

It's clear that an individual's social relationships are critical for promoting wellbeing and for acting as a buffer against mental ill health for people of all ages.

Feeling connected to people around us is a basic human need and is important for mental wellbeing. Put time and effort into building stronger relationships. Take up a hobby that involves other people. Volunteering is great as it gives a sense of belonging and feeling needed. Make time for friends.





## Physical activity

There are many benefits to being physically active including reducing joint pain, reducing the risk of falling, maintaining cognitive function and improving health and psychological well-being. It is also recognised as playing a major role in reducing health inequalities. In the past, the Director of Public Health, NHS Forth Valley has recognised that there is a need to develop "health interventions to support the most sedentary in our communities to take up walking and other physical activities." Residents of care homes lead sedentary lives.

The Stay Active report was produced by the four UK Chief Medical Officers at the time (11). It recognises that there is a growing trend towards people spending more time indoors sitting in front of screens and other electronic equipment. It highlights that through increasing our physical activity and getting outside we could all improve our physical and mental health and we could live longer. Physical activity reduces the risk of obesity for all ages.

Public Health Scotland's Up and About Document states that "If you keep active as you get older you are likely to lead a more independent life. Whatever your age, it is important to be as active as you can" (12). The Award makes use of resources and ideas developed as part of the Care Inspectorate's Care about Physical Activity (CAPA) programme. It recognises the importance of getting people moving more often, highlighting that moving more often can help the older person boost energy, reduce stiffness, build confidence, keep bones and muscles strong and add more to the day together with better sleep at night. For more details see <https://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/guidance/9-professional/2615-care-about-physical-activity>.



By completing regular exercise to strengthen our muscles and challenge our balance, we can make our daily tasks easier and we can become steadier on our feet. However, to be physically active does not solely involve the completion of exercises. Through simply getting up and about and being mobile throughout the day, we can all achieve the advantages of a more active lifestyle.

We should aim to complete exercises twice every week and complete a form of physical activity daily. The key to maintaining good levels of physical activity is to make the activities enjoyable. Whether you enjoy gardening or dancing, we encourage you to participate in activities that you find fun. Group settings (when deemed safe) are a great way to promote participation as it provides a social aspect to exercise.

## Strength and balance

Keeping active and mobile has numerous advantages, especially for people who are usually inactive. Regular movement can strengthen muscles, increase balance and reduce stiffness and delay the onset of frailty. These all lessen the risk of falls and injuries.

For additional information including, videos and demonstrations on how to carry out different strength and balance exercises, have a look at Falkirk Community Trust's website.

<https://www.falkirkcommunitytrust.org/health-wellbeing-at-home/staying-active/strength-balance/>

Booklets containing strength and balance exercises can be obtained free of charge from the Health Improvement Resources Service (HIRS) at NHS Forth Valley. [NHS Forth Valley - Resources](#)





# Physical activity for adults and older adults



Benefits health



Improves sleep



Maintains healthy weight



Manages stress



Improves quality of life

Reduces your chance of

Type II Diabetes

-40%

Cardiovascular disease

-35%

Falls, depression etc.

-30%

Joint and back pain

-25%

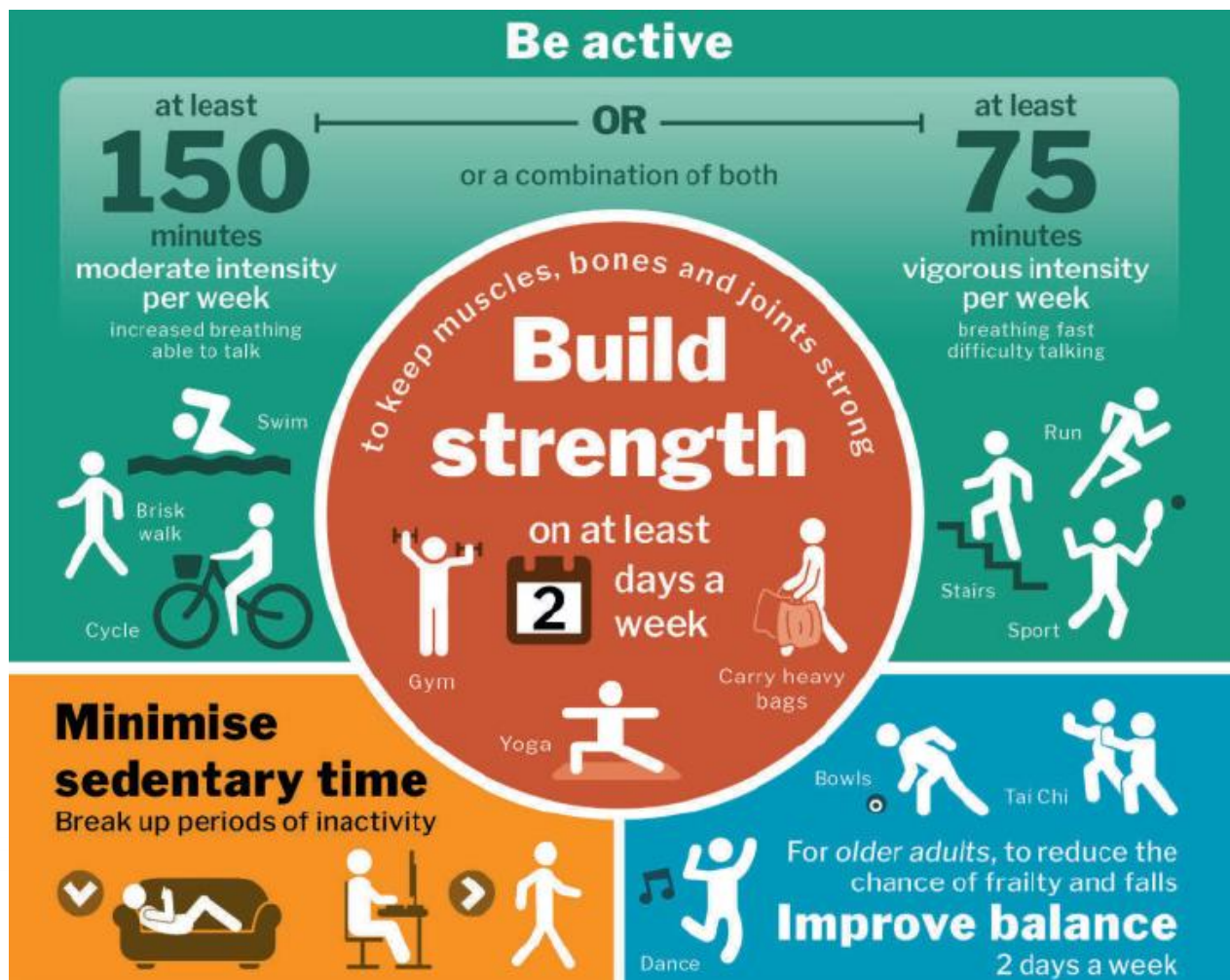
Cancers (colon and breast) -20%

Some is good,  
more is better

Make a start today:  
it's never too late

Every minute  
counts

## Be active



<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/physical-activity-guidelines>

## Risk Assessment

Risk is no longer viewed as something that should be totally avoided. The risks must be balanced against the expected benefits. We know that leading an inactive lifestyle by spending the majority of the day at rest is a greater risk to our health than increasing physical activity levels. The Care Inspectorate states that **"Most importantly, the benefits of physical activity outweigh the risks."** (9)

Through research, we know that fear of falling and causing damage to one's health by over-exertion are leading factors in discouraging physical activity. However, as we get older, it is lack of physical activity that causes muscle strength and balance to reduce, which in turn can lead to a fall. Exercises designed to improve muscle strength can reduce the risk of a fall by improving posture, coordination and balance.

The risks associated with increasing our levels of physical activity are minimal when compared with the benefits; this includes frail and elderly people. With support and guidance, we should be encouraged to partake in an appropriate and safe level of exercise.

If there is uncertainty regarding the level or nature of risk involved with physical activity, take time out to plan ahead. Prepare the activity by listing out the benefits and the risks to gain awareness of the uncertainties that may exist. By understanding this, we can find solutions that encourage people to take part in the activity or exercise.





## Resilience

Resilience is simply our ability as humans to bounce back from whatever life throws at us and do better than could be expected in the circumstances. It is recognised that some people have greater resilience than others and seem to be more able to cope with life's ups and downs.

Resilience can be improved and built on. Practical ways of increasing resilience in adults, children and young people are provided in a clear and concise framework developed by Boingboing (13).

The Resilience Framework visually shows you how Boingboing split their ideas under five headings - Basics, Belonging, Learning, Coping and Core Self. Within each of these is a selection of evidenced based ideas to improve resilience.

There is a copy of Boingboing's Resilience Framework for adults on the next page. The ideas which have a yellow star next to them are the ones that should happen naturally through the delivery of the Award activities. They should not incur any additional work for you but it's worth keeping them in mind when taking part in your activities. The framework designed for increasing adults resilience can be downloaded at: <https://www.boingboing.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/resilience-framework-adults-2012.pdf>



Resilience Framework (Adults) – Copyright Hart, Blincow & Cameron (adapted from original) www.boingboing.org.uk						
SPECIFIC APPROACHES						
BASICS		BELONGING		LEARNING	COPING	CORE SELF
Good enough housing		Find somewhere to belong	Help understand place in the world, & that others may face similar situations	Make work & learning as successful as possible	Understanding boundaries and keeping within them	Instil a sense of hope
	Enough money to live				Being brave	
Being safe	★	Keep relationships going (eg educator /support partners/carers/family)	Engage mentors	Identifying & solving problems (reduce self blame and guilt)	Promote understanding of others	
Access & transport		The more healthy relationships the better	Map out career or life plan	Putting on rose-tinted glasses (reframing/reappraising)	Help the person to know her/himself	
		Take what you can from relationships where there is some hope				
Healthy diet		Get together people the person can count on	Help self-organisation	Calming down & self-soothing (support reflection, not feeling overwhelmed by illness)	Help the person take responsibility for her/himself (self-advocacy)	
	★	Responsibilities & obligations				
Exercise and fresh air	★	Focus on good times and places	Highlight achievements	Remember tomorrow is another day	Foster talents	
		Make sense of where the person has come from				
Enough sleep	★	Predict a good experience of someone or something new	Develop life skills	Lean on others when necessary	There are tried and tested treatments for specific problems, use them	
	★	Make friends and mix				
NOBLE TRUTHS						
ACCEPTING	CONSERVING		COMMITMENT		ENLISTING	
Interpersonal skills, empathy	Interpersonal skills, trust		Ongoing support issues		Self (eg not passive), family, friends, mental health professionals, GP	



## Scottish Government Policy and Guidelines overview

### Health and Social Care Standards

The headline outcomes are:

- ✿ I experience high quality care and support that is right for me.
- ✿ I am fully involved in all decisions about my care and support.
- ✿ I have confidence in the people who support and care for me.
- ✿ I have confidence in the organisation providing my care and support.
- ✿ I experience a high quality environment if the organisation provides the premises.

The Standards are underpinned by five principles: dignity and respect, compassion, be included, responsive care, and support and wellbeing. These are relevant to any setting where vulnerable adults and or older adults are cared for (14). The Care Inspectorate Scotland will take into account the Standards when carrying out their inspections. The Award offers a framework to evidence that these Standards are being achieved.

The Award links the current policies and guidelines and creates a practical tool from the theory.

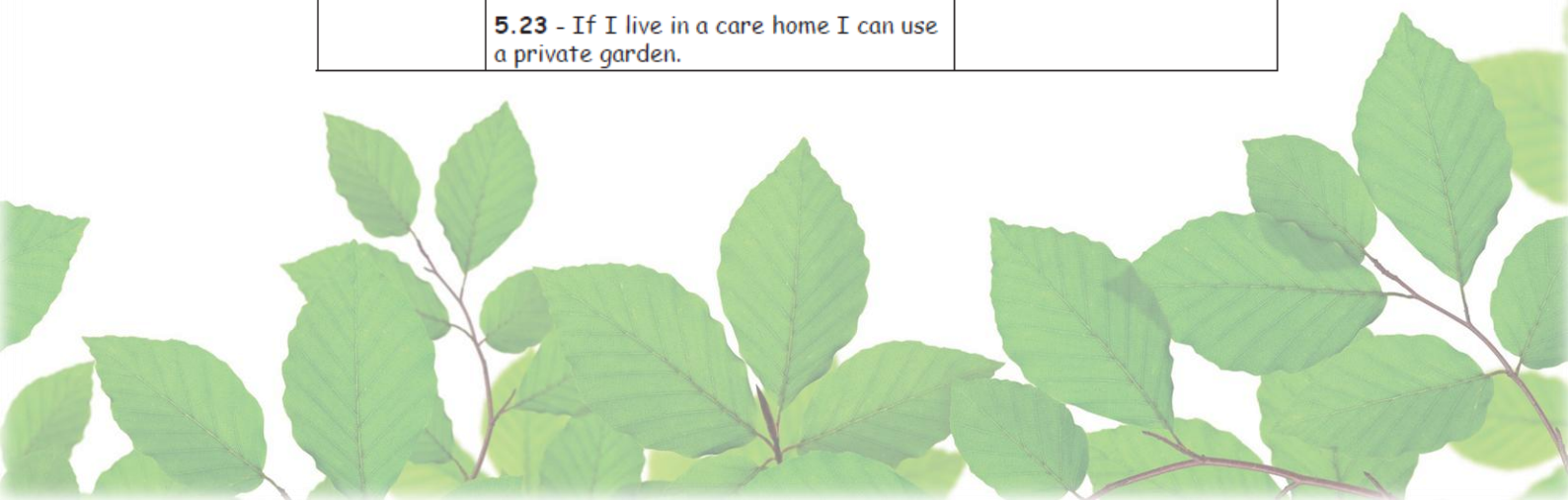




## Illustrations of links between Scottish Government Policies and Guidelines

Illustration of links between Scottish activity initiatives, standards and psychosocial needs for people with dementia.

Make Every Move Count	Health & Social Care Standards	Kitwood Person Centred Principles
Get to know me, what motivates me, supporting me to move with purpose.	<p>1.25 - I can choose to have an active life and participate in a range of activities outdoors and indoors.</p> <p>1.28 - I am supported to make informed lifestyle choices.</p> <p>2.11 - My views will always be sought and choices respected, including where I have reduced capacity to fully make my own decisions.</p> <p>2.24 - I make informed choices and decisions about the risks I take.</p> <p>2.25 - I am helped to understand the impact and consequences of risk taking and unsafe behaviour.</p> <p>2.9 - I receive and understand information that is in a format or language this is right for me.</p>	<p><b>SENSE OF AGENCY</b> They have the feeling that they can make things happen. They have a sense of control.</p> <p><b>SELF-WORTH</b> The person feels they are respected and taken seriously. They feel they matter. They expect their fair share.</p> <p><b>INCLUSION</b> Being involved in the lives of others.</p> <p><b>OCCUPATION</b> Being involved in the processes of normal life.</p> <p><b>IDENTITY</b> What distinguishes a person from others and makes them unique.</p>
Support me to move safely with confidence.	<p>1.25 - I can choose to have an active life and participate in a range of activities outdoors and indoors.</p> <p>2.24 - I make informed choices and decisions about the risks I take and am encouraged to take positive risks which enhance my quality of life.</p> <p>5.1 - I can use an appropriate mix of private and communal areas, including accessible outdoor space.</p> <p>5.9 - I experience care and support free from isolation because the location and type of premises enable me to be an active member of the local community if appropriate.</p> <p>5.17 - My environment is safe and secure.</p> <p>5.23 - If I live in a care home I can use a private garden.</p>	<p><b>SOCIAL CONFIDENCE</b> They are free to initiate contact with other people. They are relaxed in company. They are able to hold their own with others.</p> <p><b>INCLUSION</b> Being involved in the lives of others.</p> <p><b>COMFORT</b> The feeling of trust that comes from others.</p> <p><b>ATTACHMENT</b> Security and finding familiarity in unusual places.</p>





Support me to move more often and be more active every day.	<p><b>1.25</b> - I can choose to have an active life and participate in a range of activities outdoors and indoors.</p> <p><b>2.21</b> - I can take part in daily routines if this is what I want.</p> <p><b>2.22</b> - I can maintain and develop my interests in a way that I like.</p> <p><b>3.13</b> - I am treated as an individual by people who respect my needs, choices and wishes.</p>	<p><b>IDENTITY</b> What distinguishes a person from others and makes them unique.</p> <p><b>OCCUPATION</b> Being involved in the processes of normal life.</p>
Support me to move regularly and frequently	<p><b>5.1</b> - I can use an appropriate mix of private and communal areas, including accessible outdoor space.</p> <p><b>5.9</b> - I experience care and support free from isolation because the location and type of premises enable me to be an active member of the local community if appropriate.</p>	<p><b>SOCIAL CONFIDENCE</b> They are free to initiate contact with other people. They are relaxed in company. They are able to hold their own with others.</p> <p><b>INCLUSION</b> Being involved in the lives of others.</p> <p><b>COMFORT</b> The feeling of trust that comes from others.</p>
Support me to move, giving purpose and meaning to my day	<p><b>2.24</b> - I make informed choices and decisions about the risks I take and am encouraged to take positive risks which enhance my quality of life.</p>	<p><b>SENSE OF HOPE</b> They feel things will be alright in the end. They do not have feelings of hopelessness. They do not have persistent feelings of grief, anger, anxiety, depression...</p> <p><b>IDENTITY</b> What distinguishes a person from others and makes them unique.</p> <p><b>OCCUPATION</b> Being involved in the processes of normal life.</p>



## Scottish Outdoor Access Code

"Scotland's outdoors provides great opportunities for open-air recreation and education, with great benefits for people's enjoyment, and their health and well-being. The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 ensures everyone has statutory access rights to most of Scotland's outdoors, if these rights are exercised responsibly, with respect for people's privacy, safety and livelihoods, and for Scotland's environment. Equally, land managers have to manage their land and water responsibly in relation to access rights." (15)

Before taking part in any of your planned activities please refer to the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. The Code details information on your rights and responsibilities and offers advice on how you can protect our natural world.

For example, it is really important that we all prevent the spread of diseases such as 'ash die-back', which kills trees and has been confirmed in the Forth Valley area. Public access to woodlands is not restricted and the fungal disease is harmless to people and animals but we can spread it between woodlands.

Before we visit or leave woodlands we should scrape any mud and leaves off our footwear, pushchairs, bikes, cars and dogs and not remove any leaves, plants or wood from the area.

The Code website provides a practical guide to help everyone make informed decisions about what best to do in a wide range of situations. It is updated with information on current situations and is worth checking on a regular basis and be accessed at: <https://www.outdooraccess-scotland.scot>



## Stirling University Evidence Base

NHS Forth Valley Health Improvement Service commissioned Stirling University to provide an evidence base in relation to the benefits of outdoor engagement for people living with dementia. The following paper outlines the evidence base they provided.

### Evidenced benefits to nature based activity

There is a growing understanding of the physical and mental wellness benefits of nature-based activity by people living with dementia at all stages, regardless of whether they are living in the community or in a residential setting. The evidence base suggests that care providers should be encouraging green dementia care. According to Evans et al "[Green dementia care refers to both indoor and outdoor experiences and activities that aim to promote health and wellbeing through interaction with nature for people living with dementia.](#)" (16). These interactions can be either active or passive, but intentionally promote the health benefits of engaging with nature.

Unsurprisingly, there are many evidenced benefits to nature based activity for all people, including older people, in terms of general improvements to physical and mental wellbeing. As people age, certain needs that nature based activity can address may increase. This means that, nature based activity takes on a greater role of importance in maintaining good health, such as getting adequate sun exposure which stimulates production of Vitamin A. Vitamin A strengthens bone density, reducing the potential for fractures and there is also evidence that increasing outdoor activity can reduce falls for older people. The benefits extend to mental and social wellbeing as well, in particular, addressing





some of the issues that can arise from social isolation and loneliness, such as increasing social interaction and reducing incidences of depression. The importance of outdoor exposure as a part of beneficial activity was highlighted by a 2007 MIND report which indicated that 71% of people experienced a decrease in depressive symptoms following an outdoor walk versus a 22% increase in depressive symptoms following an indoor walk in a mall (17).

In addition to the health benefits previously listed, there are a number of evidenced benefits that specifically address potential issues more commonly experienced by older people living with dementia. Such as increasing time spent outdoors as a therapeutic intervention: to reduce agitation, reduce exit seeking behaviour and to reduce anxiety and stress.

One area where significant benefit has been evidenced for people living with dementia, who are encouraged to engage regularly with outdoor activity, is that the circadian rhythms are regulated and supported which impacts on sleep/ wake cycles and impacts on the quality of sleep achieved. These benefits seem to remain regardless of whether a person can exercise while spending time outside, and contribute to more time spent asleep at night.

There is also evidence that physical activity has been linked with slowing of cognitive decline for some people living with dementia. This evidence can be used to the benefit of people with dementia through encouraging regular structured outdoor engagement.

Kitwood, in his 1997 book *Dementia Reconsidered: The Person Comes First*, discusses the importance of supporting personhood in people with dementia. According to Kitwood this support is vital because of changes within the brain which make holding onto and sharing personal memories and experiences more difficult. As a person may struggle to retain the thread of





their history it becomes increasingly the job of the carer to support the connection between the person and their past. Engaging with the outdoors has the potential to impact upon this as well (18).

According to Curtis (19), place is closely linked to 'one's identity, sense of security and self worth'. Where we are located affects the way we feel about ourselves, particularly in terms of feeling like an active citizen. Identity is one of the basic areas of psycho-social needs that Kitwood discusses as being vital to supporting personhood in people living with dementia. Kitwood also defines the needs of occupation, comfort, inclusion, and attachment as psycho-social needs which must be addressed within the boundaries of person-centred support. Several research studies have looked at and found positive correlations between outdoor engagement and improvement in sense of identity and in community (inclusion).



## What is Dementia?

Dementia is not a natural part of the ageing process. It's caused by illnesses that affect the brain.

Dementia is an umbrella term for over 100 different types of diseases and symptoms, and it's possible to have more than one type. What all these diseases have in common is that they damage brain cells, so that the brain cannot work as well as it should.

Dementia can affect every area of human thinking, feeling and behaviour, but each person with dementia is different - how the illness affects someone depends on which area of their brain is damaged.

In Scotland, over 90,000 people have dementia. It is most common in older people but can affect people in their 40s and 50s or even younger.

We do not yet know exactly what causes dementia. Medical researchers all over the world are working to find causes and develop treatments.

There are many conditions which cause dementia - these are some of the most common. It is also possible to have more than one type of dementia at the same time.

**Alzheimer's disease** gradually destroys brain cells and their connections. This affects how the person copes with everyday tasks.

**Vascular dementia** is caused by problems with the blood supply to brain cells. It can involve tiny strokes which damage small areas of the brain.



**Dementia with Lewy bodies** isn't as easy to identify as some other types of dementia, so it can be hard to diagnose. It can include hallucinations and symptoms that are similar to Parkinson's disease.

In **frontotemporal dementias**, the parts of the brain responsible for decision-making, control of behaviour and emotion and language are affected.

## What are the symptoms of dementia?

Every person with dementia is different. How their illness affects them depends on which areas of their brain are most damaged.

Memory loss is one of the most common symptoms of dementia. Everyone forgets things sometimes and most people's memory gets worse as they get older. But when someone has dementia they may become very forgetful. For example, they may forget the names of family members or whether they have eaten lunch or not. They may repeat questions without realising.

People with dementia may lose track of the time and day. They may forget where they are or be confused. Their ability to think and work things out can be affected. They may make decisions that seem strange to us. Handling money may become difficult and they may find it difficult to solve problems.

Dementia can also change the person's personality and the way they behave. Someone who was active and energetic may become listless. A person who was pleasant and polite may become rude and aggressive.

Over several years, most functions of the brain will gradually be affected. Eventually, a person with dementia will probably need help with simple activities like dressing, eating or going to the toilet (20).



# Resource information and activity ideas

- ✿ **The Alderney Wildlife Trust** provides ways to help wildlife in your home, garden and local area.  
<https://www.alderneywildlife.org/actions>
- ✿ **The Bat Conservation Trust – Scotland**  
<https://www.bats.org.uk/pages/bctscotland.html>
- ✿ **Care about Physical Activity (CAPA)** is an improvement programme led by the Care Inspectorate to help older people in care to move more often.  
<https://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/guidance/9-professional/2615-care-about-physical-activity>
- ✿ **Forestry and Land Scotland**  
<https://www.forestryandland.gov.scot/>
- ✿ **Keep Scotland Beautiful** - Helpful hints on ways to support wildlife:  
[Inspiring action to Keep Scotland Beautiful](#)
- ✿ **Learning Through Landscapes (operates in Scotland as Grounds for Learning)** provides training and resources to help children to connect with nature, become more active, learn outdoors, develop social skills and have fun.  
<https://ltl.org.uk/free-resources/>
- ✿ **Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Countryside Trust** runs free weekly walks within the National Park. Some are dementia friendly.  
<https://www.trustinthepark.org>





- ⚙ **NHS Forth Valley Health Improvement Resource Service** has equipment, books and resources that can be borrowed free of charge which can help you to deliver the Natural Health Award. To borrow these resources you should login or register at [HPAC](#) and follow the on-screen instructions. There are also drop in sessions on Tuesday between 1.30 pm - 4.30 pm, Wednesday and Thursday between 9.30 am - 12.30 pm at: NHS Forth Valley, Health Improvement Service, Unit 2, Colquhoun Street, Stirling, FK7 7PX tel: 01786 434867 [NHS Forth Valley - Health Improvement](#)
- ⚙ NHS Live Well provides physical activity guidelines for older adults as well as tips and advice on getting older people more active [Physical activity guidelines for older adults - NHS](#)
- ⚙ NHS Inform provides information and practical examples of strength and balance exercises

[Strength and balance exercises | NHS inform](#)  
<https://www.falkirkcommunitytrust.org/health-wellbeing-at-home/staying-active/strength-balance/>
- ⚙ Care Home Infection Prevention and Control Manual (CH IPCM)  
[National Infection Prevention and Control Manual: Care Home Infection Prevention and Control Manual \(CH IPCM\)](#)
- ⚙ **OPAL's national citizen science surveys.** Help OPAL scientists with valuable research, learn new skills, have fun. OPAL is running surveys across the UK to learn more about the state of our environment and they'd like everyone to get involved.  
<https://www.opalexplornature.org/surveys>
- ⚙ **Paths for All**  
 You Tube video on strength and balance exercises.  
[Paths For All Strength and Balance simple exercises](#)



- ⚙️ **RSPB's Nature Prescription Calendar** can be downloaded free through the Healthy Shetland website. There are suggested activities to encourage you to be outside all year round enjoying nature.  
[Here is your prescription for nature - Scottish Nature Notes - Our work - The RSPB Community](#)
- ⚙️ **Scotland's Outdoor Learning Directory** aims to provide a portal to services supporting outdoor learning which are provided by these Scottish organisations.  
[Links - Outdoor Learning Services and Information](#)
- ⚙️ **Thriving with Nature** - a guide for everyone. Making the most of the UK's natural spaces for our mental health and wellbeing.  
[Thriving with Nature | Mental Health Foundation](#)
- ⚙️ **Watch wildlife on webcams** provided by Wildlife Trusts across the British Isles. Webcams allow an unrivaled view of intriguing behaviours from courtship, nesting and hatching to a peep in the first few weeks of a chick's life. Be warned - it's addictive viewing!  
<https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/webcams>
- ⚙️ **The Woodland Trust** run an online learning hub called Tree Tools for Schools where you can access Nature Detective activities free, the Natural Health Award activities or for simply keeping children occupied while they are home due to the schools being closed.  
<http://www.treetoolsforschools.org.uk/categorymenu/?cat=activities>



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- (9) [Welcome to the Care Inspectorate](#)



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[UK Chief Medical Officers' Physical Activity Guidelines](#)

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5d839543ed915d52428dc134/uk-chief-medical-officers-physical-activity-guidelines.pdf>

(12) [Up and about:](#)

[Taking positive steps to avoid trips and falls - Publications - Public Health Scotland 2023](#)

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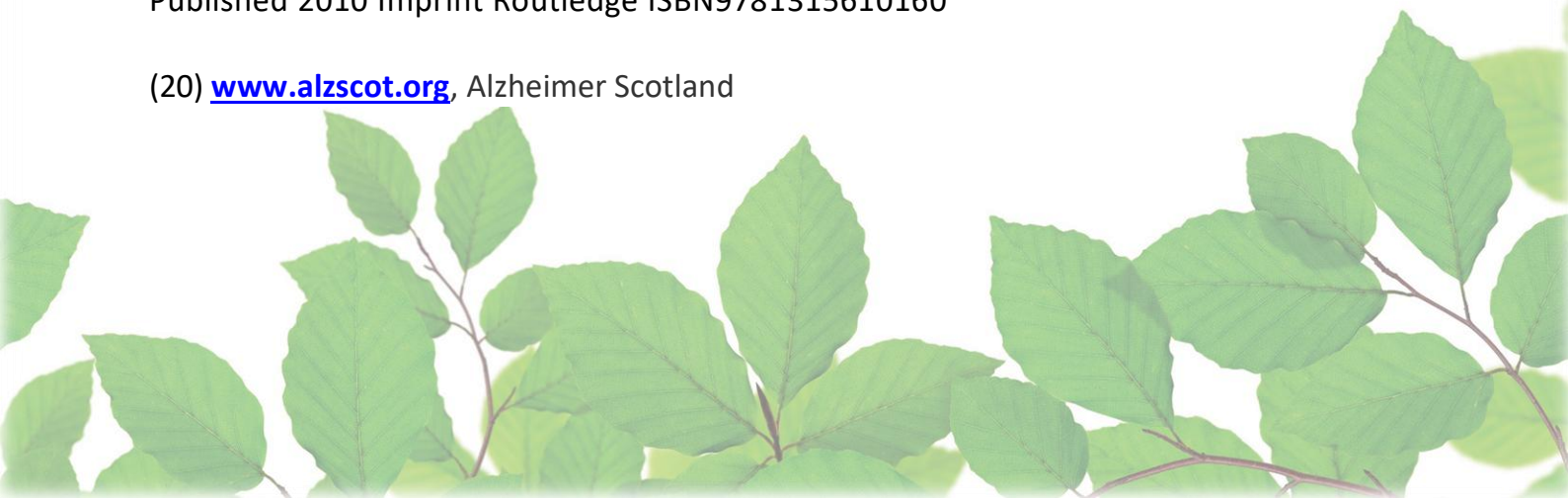
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The Meaning of Place for Identity, Spirituality and Mental Health, [Sarah Curtis](#), First Published 2010 Imprint Routledge ISBN9781315610160

(20) [www.alzscot.org](http://www.alzscot.org), Alzheimer Scotland







"Look deep into nature, and  
then you will understand  
everything better."

~ Albert Einstein



Any adaptations to this Award Resource must be agreed  
with the Health Improvement Service, NHS Forth Valley  
- January 2025

