



# Toolkit 2023

Achieving a healthier community and healthier planet together

A Green & Healthy Future for Frome is a partnership made up of the following:

Funded by:



# Guide to this toolkit

This toolkit is intended for use by people who want to take action on climate and health including: healthcare professionals, local authorities, social enterprises and community organisers. It aims to share learning for anyone looking to adapt the Green & Healthy Future for Frome model in their own communities.

A Green & Healthy Future for Frome wants to achieve a health and climate win-win by exploring ways to help local people make changes which are good for their health and the planet's health. This community-led initiative is based on the fact that these issues are firmly linked – if we improve one, we'll also improve the other, enabling everyone to share in a healthier, fairer and more sustainable future.

The programme is a partnership between **Edventure: Frome, Frome Medical Practice, Frome Town Council** and our local community. Our programme is made possible by the **Climate Action Fund** through **The National Lottery Community Fund**.

This toolkit is part of a series of six and tells the story of one project strand: **Green Community Connectors**. The full series is:

- Future Shed
- Cycle Together
- Choosing Wisely
- **Green Community Connectors**
- Storytelling
- Healthy Homes



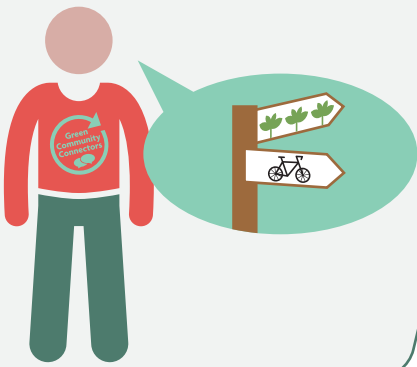
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This Green Community Connectors Toolkit was written by Charlotte Carson and Hannah Burd, Project Manager (until February 2022) from the Green & Healthy Future for Frome project. Thank you to Jenny Hartnoll for co-writing and adding her passion and beautiful way with words. Change to: Thank you to the GHFF Evaluators Veronica Wignall (until April 2022) and Owen King. All photos by Charlotte Carson.

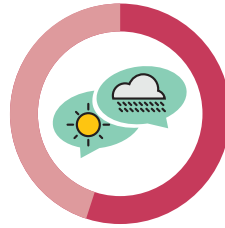
**This toolkit was completed in February 2023. An earlier working version was published in July 2022.**

## In brief Green Community Connectors

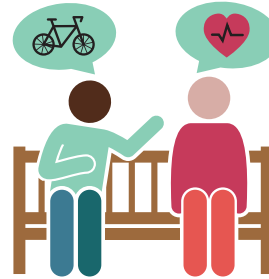


## Why?

We know the value of social relationships to reaching further within the community



55% of people say that they never or only rarely talk with family and friends about climate change

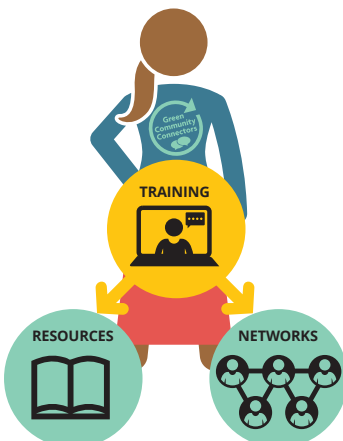


Frome has harnessed the power of community networks to seek to support health and wellbeing



Learning and owning information means we are more likely to make changes

## How?



Individuals & groups

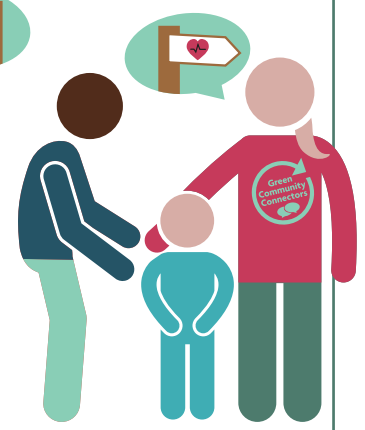
### CLIMATE-HEALTH



### SIGN POSTING



### CONFIDENCE



Opportunity for participants to learn, to build on existing learning and to reflect

## Outcomes & Insights

Individuals are empowered with knowledge on support available in Frome to improve health, wellbeing and the environment. To have the tools, the confidence and resources to share or take steps.



What brings climate and health into your daily conversation?

## Checklist

- Map what is in the community
- Map access points, messages and resource
- Design and implement training programmes
- Build on existing training and resources
- Integrate into the service and community
- Review, evaluate and expand

# What are Green Community Connectors?

Green Community Connectors are individuals in the community who have been trained in how to take positive steps and know about support available to make a difference to the planet and peoples wellbeing.

Anyone and everyone can be a Green Community Connector empowered with information to action themselves or share with their community.

Training sessions are open to all and last between 30 minutes to 1 hour. The training gives the opportunity to discuss the link between climate and health as a community, giving participants the time to build on their existing knowledge of climate and health win-wins and to reflect on this as a group.

The consequence of this is participants may take practical action, they may share or make new connections in their community or continue their learning. Some individuals may do nothing following the training but feel empowered by the session.

These conversations and actions ripple out into the wider community, reaching a large diversity of people.



**Right: Green Health Connector delivering in person training to Medical Practice Staff.**

### What are Green Community Connectors?



**I feel excited to start having more meaningful conversations around health and the environment and was pleasantly surprised by how much the two go hand in hand."**



**Particularly enjoyed hearing about the links between health and the environment as I'd never thought of that link."**



Above: Social Prescribing Team proudly holding up their Green Community Connector Certificates

## Case Study

### Green Community Connector June 2022

I heard about how to make my home better insulated in the Green Community Connectors training. The back boiler had always been temperamental, and inefficient, but it was one of those jobs that got put down my list of priorities. It worked when it needed to, for an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening, as that's all I could afford, being on a low income, and especially with the huge price hikes we've seen in the last year.

The Centre for Sustainable Energy got started within two or three weeks of my initial enquiry. I kept asking the contractor when he came to

do the installation whether I would be charged for labour or anything, as it seemed too good to be true! He assured me it wasn't and said lots of people couldn't believe this would be covered by the grant.

So I must say a big thanks to Green and Healthy Future for Frome, Green Community Connectors, Frome Town Council and the other organisations involved in this amazing transformation of my house and heating system! My family are now warm and toasty, and I am a lot less stressed about the heating bills.

# Why we set up Green Community Connectors



British adults have consistently ranked health and the environment as among the top three issues facing the country in recent years (often above immigration and Brexit).<sup>1</sup> More than four in five (82%) are concerned about climate change. A quarter (25%) see climate change as one of the biggest threats to their health, along with accidents/injuries and mental health problems.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, when it comes to taking action, more than half (55%) of people say that they never or only rarely talk with family and friends about climate change, and only a small minority (around 1 in 10) say they do so often.<sup>3</sup>

We know the huge value of our social networks and communities, both in sharing information via different methods of communication and shaping the social norms that in turn strongly influence individual actions.<sup>4</sup>

Frome has harnessed the power of community networks to support the town's health and wellbeing, via the town's very successful Let's Connect initiative. As part of this, over 2,095 Community Connectors across Mendip have attended a 1 hour session that enables them to become more aware of the many ways that people can take steps to improve their health and wellbeing within their local community.

They are also supported to then have conversations with friends, family, neighbors and strangers that in turn amplify healthy messages through their social networks. The intention is to avoid people saying 'if only I had known that', and instead to create a community where individuals are informed and empowered to say 'I know where you can get help!'

Health Connections Mendip (HCM), which has grown the Let's Connect service since 2013, estimate that these active citizens have around 42,000 conversations a year in which they signpost people they know to health and wellbeing services and activities.<sup>5</sup> Like Community Connectors, HCM have replicated their model several times over the years, creating networks of Digital Connectors, Warm Homes Connectors and several others. We wanted to see what effect the same approach would have if a new group of Green Community Connectors grew in Frome.

**55%**

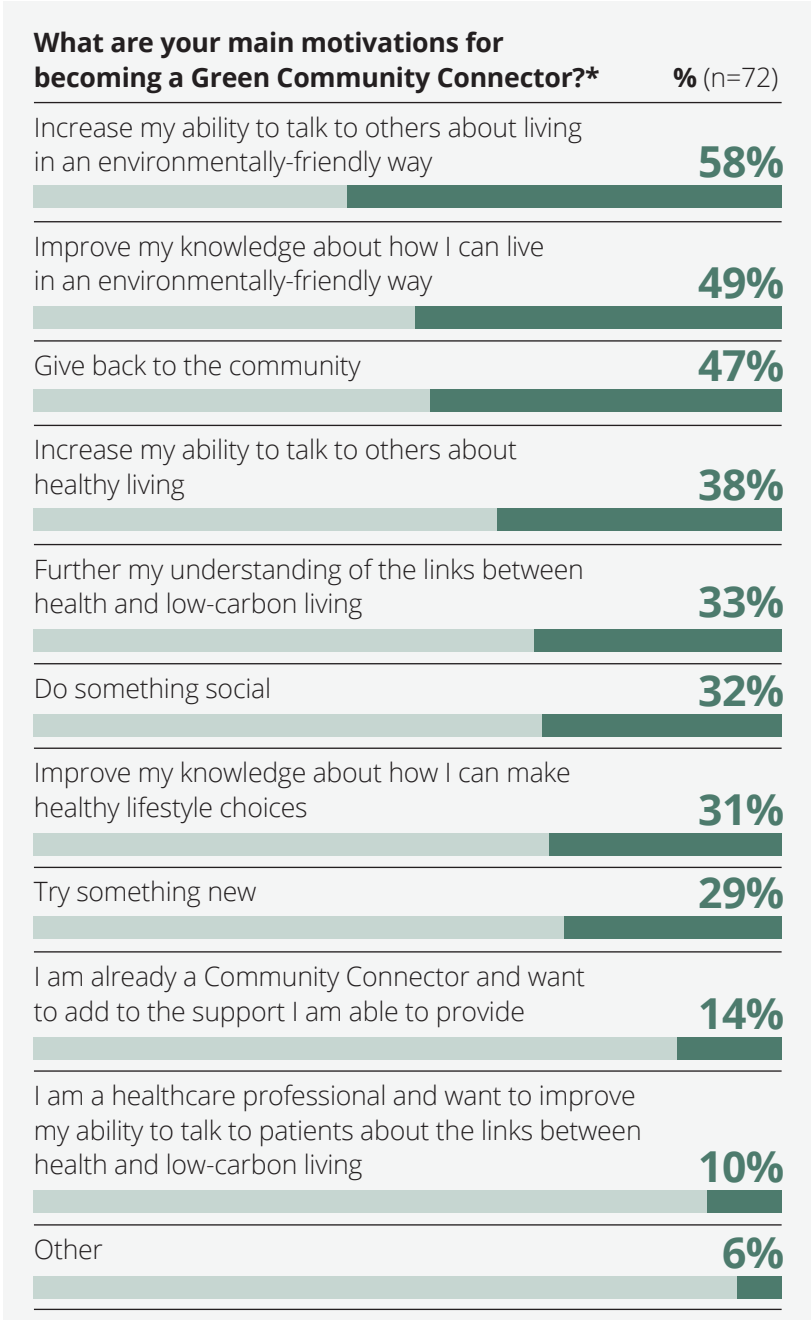
**55% of people say that they never or only rarely talk with family and friends about climate change**



**Right: A Green Community Connector**

**Why did we set up Green Community Connectors?**

Those taking part in the scheme cited many reasons for wanting to become a Green Community Connector. Some were already Community Connectors and wanted to expand the support they were able to provide (14%), or were healthcare professionals and wanted to improve their ability to talk to patients about the links between health and low-carbon living (10%). The most common reason for joining the scheme was to improve ability to talk to others about living in an environmentally-friendly way (58%) and knowledge about how to live in an environmentally-friendly way (48%).



\*This data was gathered in 2022



**58%**  
 wanted to improve their ability to talk to others about living in an environmentally-friendly way

# How we set up Green Community Connectors



The Green Health Connector within the social prescribing team built on the foundations of the already existing Health Connections Mendip Community Connector training.<sup>6</sup>

**A one hour training session is delivered online or in-person**

## Design

- By referring to the community directory and already existing resources
- Designed the training's rationale and key messages
- Designed a training session with a duration of 1 hour, delivered online or in-person. It had a few components (see Box 1)

## Develop

- Piloted training sessions online and offered this out via the team's local networks
- Incorporated a survey evaluation and GDPR permissions to collate feedback
- Reviewed attendance rates at the early sessions and set a fixed monthly date and time for open, online public training sessions
- Incorporated early feedback

## Implement

- Out in the community, we offered bespoke training to groups, organisations and individuals
- Promoted training at public events, press, Talking Benches and Talking Cafés
- Raised awareness with Frome Medical Practice staff to signpost to the Green Community Connector training and participate themselves

## Evaluate and iterate

- Reviewed feedback at 6 monthly intervals
- Iterated to improve the training package

**How did we set up Green Community Connectors?**



**Box 1 What did the 1 hour Green Community Connector session include?**

**1. Definitions**

**What is our carbon footprint? And, what is a community connector?**

- Defined a community connector as someone who:
  - Builds their local knowledge then can pass it on
  - Shares individual key messages (but is not expected to always know all the information)
  - Shares key messages however they choose (such as via conversations, social media, making personal changes)
  - Is part of a much larger community of 2,095 community connectors
- Explored what a carbon footprint is and how it can be measured (looking at parish or individual carbon footprint calculators)

**2. Topic**

**A Green and Healthy Future**

- Had an open floor to give the opportunity to discuss the win-win links of community health and planetary health
- Made connections between the importance and co-benefits of caring for our climate and caring for our health
- Time to reflect on actions we are already taking or want to take
- Discuss the challenges and opportunities for this in Frome

**3. Signposting**

**How to put this into action and conversation**

- Shared the key signposting information, where people could direct family, friends and others to find out more and the most up-to-date information
- Discussed different types of signposting (for example the difference between someone we know and a stranger)
- Explored what makes a good conversation
- Encouraged attendees to role play different examples

**4. Conclusion and questions**

**What are your takeaway key messages?**

- Gave people a chance to summarise their own key take-away points
- Gave participants the opportunity to set 'signposting' targets or individual targets.
- Answered questions

We ensured that the training had a diverse mix of receiving information, interaction between participants and time for reflection.

# What key ingredients allowed us to set up Green Community Connectors here?

Many factors enabled Health Connections Mendip and Frome Medical Practice to achieve impact in the first year of the Green & Healthy Future for Frome programme:

**Health Connections Mendip is a mature social prescribing and community development service** that aims to bring together and work with the community by running groups, offering one-to-one support, creating a comprehensive directory of local services and training citizens in the community to share information and signpost others.

**The Green Community Connector training and role built on the foundations of the Community Connector model** and is now part of a large community of more than 2,095 Community Connectors.

**Practice-wide support for sustainability.** In 2018-2021, Frome Medical Practice won Gold and Gold Plus in the Green Impact for Health Toolkit awards.<sup>8</sup>

Practice staff support sustainability as a core value and welcome the important role the wider community plays in the health and wellbeing of the town. Health Connections Mendip are physically based in the Practice building, therefore communications and ideas are easily resolved. It is a large Practice and there is consistent joined up working across clinical, non-clinical and third sectors.

2,095

Green Community Connectors is now part of a large community of more than 2,095 Community Connectors.



# What happened next?

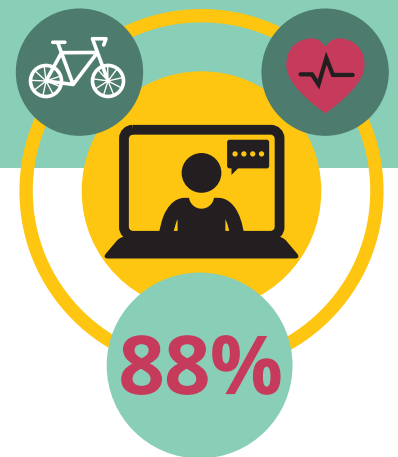
Surveys of participants before and after showed that after training, Green Community Connectors felt more confident in their knowledge of how to reduce their carbon footprint and the links between low-carbon living and health, and their ability to talk to others about making healthy lifestyle choices and living in an environmentally-friendly way.

For example, before the training, 50% of participants felt quite (43%) or extremely (7%) confident in their knowledge of the links between low-carbon living and health; after the training this had increased to 88%, with 63% quite confident, and 25% extremely confident in this knowledge.

While 96% were satisfied with the training (with the remaining 4% being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, n=57), participants had suggestions for how to improve the scheme. These included more group discussion, annual update conversations and including a second session to go into more detail for some of the topics covered in the training.

Will this increase in confidence translate into a growing network of community discussion around climate and health? At the time of taking the training, most participants were not having regular conversations with others about living in an environmentally-friendly way. Following the training this increased by 32% in the proportion of respondents reporting to have at least four conversations per week relating to making healthy choices.

Similarly, conversations about making healthy lifestyle choices were infrequent at the time of the training; 58% said they had these types of conversations between 1-3 times per week while 31% selected 'never'. Our follow up surveys 6-8 months after the training will indicate whether these conversations become more frequent for trained Green Community Connectors.



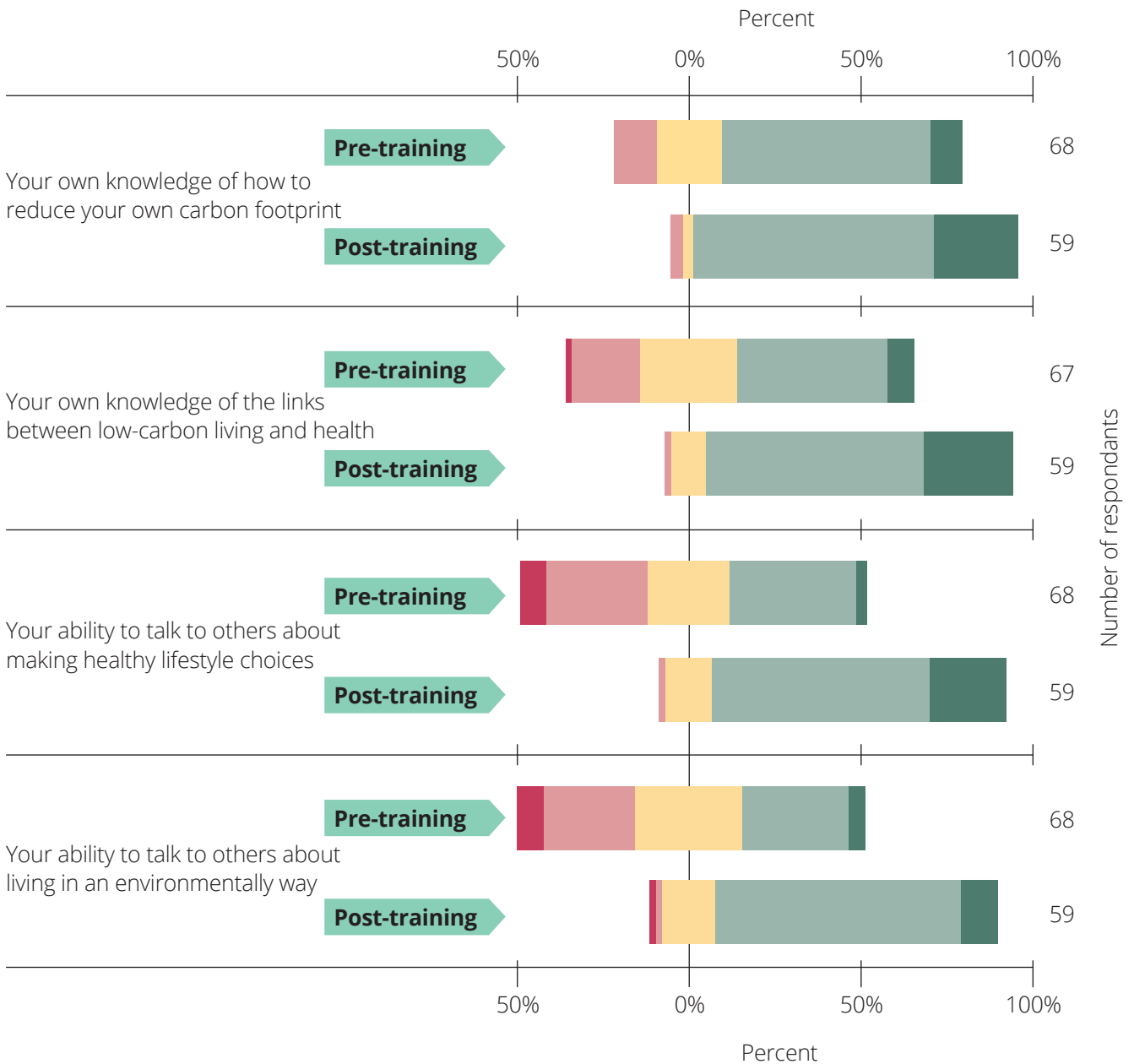
**Before the training, 50% of participants felt quite or extremely confident in their knowledge of the links between low-carbon living and health; after the training this had increased to 88%**

**“Participants had suggestions for how to improve the scheme. These included more group discussion, annual update conversations and including a second session to go into more detail for some of the topics covered in the training.”**

**What happened next**

**Confidence before and after GCC training\***

■ Not at all confident ■ Not very confident ■ Neutral ■ Quite confident ■ Extremely confident



\*This data was gathered in 2022

# What people told us

## Case Study

### Green Community Connector August 2021

I was encouraged to do the training as a part of my role at FMP and came away from the training thinking about what small changes I could make at home. I have begun to have conversations with my family about ways we can improve our health that are also good for the environment and also save money.

From a short education session where I was sceptical any change would happen, there have been several changes and links of the health and planet that are considered more.

The changes I immediately made at home were to lower the temperature of the washing machine programme, plan meals on a two-week basis to avoid food waste and make the most of the food we have. This saves time and money as well as making sure we are eating a well-balanced diet. One of my teenage daughters has become interested in growing her own food and spent the summer planning and growing vegetables that we have been able to incorporate into our meal plan.

Growing vegetables has made us as a family more interested in where things are grown, noticing that the strawberries in the supermarket in September came from Spain and choosing not to buy them and buying apples from the UK instead.

The conversations we've had at home have started to impact my husband's business, when deciding what packaging to use he has now changed to fully recyclable (non-plastic) packaging. This is just an example of how conversations at home can influence bigger changes in the workplace. Overall cost and aesthetics are also a consideration, but sustainability is also part of that thought process now.

In my role at the medical practice I have also started to think differently when planning projects to make sure that from the start they are going to be sustainable. Always small things, such as thinking about the location of an activity or an event so that it is central, easy to get to or walkable for as many people as possible.



**I'm looking forward to putting the training into action and also working out how to get more involved with helping out in any way."**



**I very much enjoyed talking about my challenges in relation to discussing climate change with people. I feel more comfortable about this now"**

# Key lessons learned

- **Flexibility** to continuously improve and evolve the training based on participant feedback.
- **Low attendance:** To address this we moved to in-person outreach, going to join groups in the community and meeting them where they were, rather than hoping they'd come to us. Bespoke sessions meant that participants were in a trusted setting, "The space felt calm, informal and non-judgemental. I liked the fact that the training is focussed on providing the tools for signposting people rather than telling them what to do".
- **Low pre-survey completion rates:** Regular and timely reminders have meant reliable completion of surveys.
- **Light touch sessions:** Following early pilot feedback, the structure of the training evolved from an emphasis on climate facts and data heavy slides to a broader, open discussion around the interconnectedness of our health and the health of our planet plus discussions on having difficult conversations.
- **Low take up:** We shortened the length of the training to maintain participant engagement and encourage take up of the training session in time-short settings.
- **Demand for hybrid delivery:** We developed in-person training that could be delivered in person and without devices (following requests for outdoor training during Covid lockdowns).



The space felt calm, informal and non-judgemental. I liked the fact that the training is focussed on providing the tools for signposting people rather than telling them what to do"



You inspired me to explore the Health Connections Mendip website and as a direct consequence I have enrolled for two webinars on Healthy Homes (heating and retrofitting) and am now exploring the Centre for Sustainable Energy website. Exciting stuff!"



Right: Outdoor training session for SelGrow, Frome

## Next steps

To increase our impact and scale, the Green Health Connector plans to:



- Develop Train-the-trainer materials and train 20 Trainers to percolate further into the community



- Establish a mailing list to send a regular newsletter to keep Green Community Connectors updated on the program and updates to the signposting points



- Offer 'modules' for Green Community Connectors to widen knowledge



- Create a virtual online guide to support other practices or business to set up their own Green Community Connector networks.

## Resources shared with Green Community Connectors

- **Monthly Talking Cafe with 'green' focus to meet and develop the GCC community following feedback from participants such as, "Look forward to future opportunities to engage and meet as a group"**
- **A5 sheet to keep on fridge or notice board, signposting points at a glance**
- **Further links or websites from the training for post-training reading**
- **Option to sign up to a quarterly newsletter and mailing list**

## References

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<sup>1</sup><https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2021/06/04/environment-once-again-top-three-priority-british->

<sup>2</sup><https://www.health.org.uk/publications/public-perceptions-of-climate-change-and-health-september-2021>

<sup>3</sup>Wang, S., Corner, A., and Nicholls, J. (2020). Britain Talks Climate: A toolkit for engaging the British public on climate change. Oxford: Climate Outreach, <https://climateoutreach.org/reports/britain-talks-climate/#>

<sup>4</sup>[https://www.bi.team/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/BIT-Publication-EAST\\_FA\\_WFB.pdf](https://www.bi.team/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/BIT-Publication-EAST_FA_WFB.pdf)

<sup>5</sup><https://healthconnections.mendip.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/SWAHSN-Social-Prescribing-Case-Study-Frome-041220.pdf>

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<sup>7</sup><https://healthconnections.mendip.org/lets-connect/training/community-connectors/>

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<sup>8</sup><https://www.greenimpact.org.uk/giforhealth>

Watch our short films to see our project in action and download our other toolkits at [www.greenhealthyfuturefrome.org/storytelling](http://www.greenhealthyfuturefrome.org/storytelling)

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