

# Connect With Nature

Accessible Walks And Experiences  
For Social Care

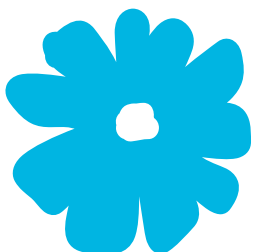
Created by Community Integrated Care  
with RSPB





# Walk with Nature

Nature is all around us. From the hedgerows and gardens on our streets, to our local parks, and even our beautiful countryside and nature reserves.



**This toolkit will help you to empower the people you support to enjoy inspiring walks in their home community or in other special places.**

From the sensory pleasure of birdsong and sweet-smelling plants to the excitement of spotting insects, animals and birds, a walk with nature is always enjoyable and unique.

This programme is for everyone. Community Integrated Care supports many people who use wheelchairs or have restricted mobility to enjoy experiencing nature alongside their Support Workers, friends, and families.

When we use the word 'walk', we're simply referring to the experience of getting out in nature with friends – *there is no emphasis* on distance travelled or an individual's physical mobility.



## Who is this guide for?

This guide is created for Support Workers and family members of people who need support in their daily lives. In this guide, we'll show you how to enable the people you support to enjoy inspiring walks, observing and connecting with nature.

**It is also supported by a simpler easy read guide**, which helps explain the four key themes of walking with nature in an accessible way.

You can download this and a host of other resources at:  
[www.CommunityIntegratedCare.co.uk/Nature](http://www.CommunityIntegratedCare.co.uk/Nature)

## Why Walk?

Walking more and connecting with nature can benefit everyone, but this can have a particularly significant impact on people who access care and support in their daily lives. Walks with nature are deeply sensory and are accessible in many ways – you can choose a place, distance and type of walk that suits you best. And, importantly, walking is free!

**Spending time in nature is great for our physical and mental health.**

Being active is also vital for a healthy and happy life. Sport England recommends that people enjoy 150+ minutes of exercise and movement each week to be active. So, as an example, by enabling the person you support to enjoy a 20-minute walk with nature every day, you are helping to improve their mental health as well as their physical.





# Let's Walk with Nature!

Wildlife and nature are all around us. A walk with nature simply means enjoying the beautiful environment we encounter when we spend time outdoors.



**Nature walks can be planned** – a set walk to a special place or a group activity. Or, they could just be part of our everyday lives – simply observing and connecting with nature as we are out and about.

**Walks don't have to be long** – they can be shaped around the physical abilities and goals of the people you support. You don't even have to travel far – nature is on our doorsteps and in our gardens!

In this guide we share some broad principles. We encourage you to shape them, so that whatever activity you enable is accessible and engaging to the person you support.

## Walk with Purpose

**Every walk should be unique to the person or group that you are supporting.**

The walking experience should be co-produced alongside the individual, based on their interests, preferred environment and aims. People should be supported to lead the way!

Before going on a walk with someone, make sure you sit down with them to identify the things that will make the walk really meaningful for them.

### Where would they like to visit?

Is there a place that they enjoy visiting?

Would they enjoy a special day out?

Would they like to visit someone special on their walk – like a family member or friend?

### Who would they like to walk with?

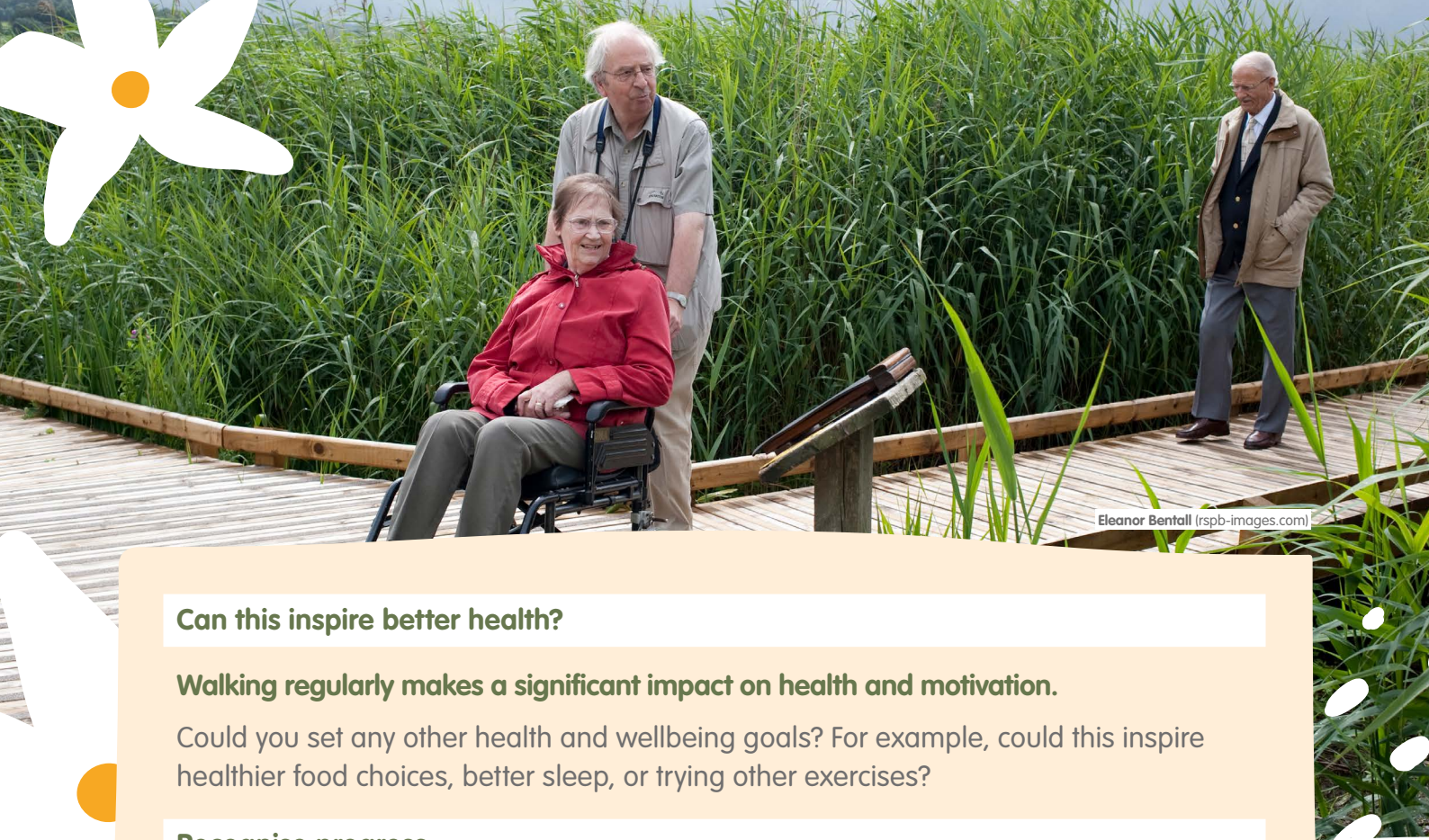
Walking is social and fun. Involve family and friends, if they wish, to have fun together.

### What is the best environment?

Factor in somebody's preferences, sensory profile, and physical abilities. Consider things like:

- Would they prefer a quiet place or to be around people?
- Is there a time of the day when they have more energy?
- How far would they like to walk and will they need rests?

**This all helps you to plan your perfect route!**



### Can this inspire better health?

**Walking regularly makes a significant impact on health and motivation.**

Could you set any other health and wellbeing goals? For example, could this inspire healthier food choices, better sleep, or trying other exercises?

### Recognise progress

**It is amazing how much walking can improve a person's overall health and mobility.**

As the person you support becomes healthier and more confident, consider new ways to build upon this success. Maybe you can target walking further distances, or perhaps you can build walking into more everyday activities – like swapping short taxi and bus rides for a lovely walk?

### Make it fun!!



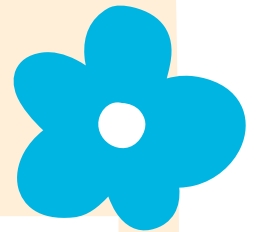
### Walking isn't meant to be boring!

You can make the walk fun and meaningful in so many ways. From packing a delicious healthy picnic, to bringing binoculars and a magnifying glass to really explore the beauty around you, there are so many ways to make walking fun.

Lots of people supported by Community Integrated Care enjoy bringing their other passions into their

walking groups. As one example, Joe loves to take his camera with him to capture photos of the wildlife and plants that he sees, and to remember the great time he had with his friends. Some people even do fancy dress walks!

A good walk can also support great experiences when you get home too. As just one example, you can use your walk to collect interesting materials to create special artwork! This could be a picture, collage or even a sculpture. Choose things that are clean, safe and won't disturb wildlife, such as twigs, fallen leaves and rocks.





# It's Time to Step Out!

To enjoy a walk with nature, you just need to focus on four things:



When out on a walk with someone, support them to think about how it makes them feel, focussing on the sensory elements of the activity.

## **The nature we can see:**

As you walk, look all around you – up at the clouds and down at the ground. From birds in the sky, to bees buzzing through flowers, we can observe the beauty around us.

## **The scents that we can smell:**

Whether it's flowers in bloom or the damp earth on a rainy day, nature is a sensory delight.

## **The sounds that we can hear:**

Can you hear birdsong, the wind, or animals?

## **The experiences we feel:**

Feel the wind in your hair or the warmth of the sun, the sticky mud on our shoes or the crinkly cracking of dry autumn leaves. Nature is full of tactile fun!

**In your walks, purposely try to connect the person you support to all these sensory pleasures.**

**. Find:** Consider how you can help the person you support to recognise and enjoy nature.

– **Can you point out interesting things that you see?**

Beauty and interest can be found in every natural object. From the patterns on leaves to the changing colours of the seasons, the smells of plants, to the birds flying above us in the skies – share what you see!

– **Can you bring the touch and scents of nature to the person you support?**

Whether it's picking up falling conkers and acorns, or feeling the grass as you sit and rest, you can help create a connection with the wonders of our natural environment.



**. Encourage:** Your encouragement will make the walk engaging and fun.

– Celebrate efforts. Give praise, inspiration and support along the way.

– Find ways to stimulate interest. For example, you could set challenges together like:

“First person to see a swan at the park wins!”

“We’ve never been to the local forest, shall we try it?”

“We did 20 minutes yesterday. Shall we see if we can go a little further today and aim for 25? You can break your record!”

“How many different birds can we see on our walk today?”



**. Talk:** Walks are fun and social. If you can, enjoy conversations together. Your walk is a great way to share memories, set goals and build relationships.

– “This beach reminds me of going on holiday! Would you like to go on a holiday again?”

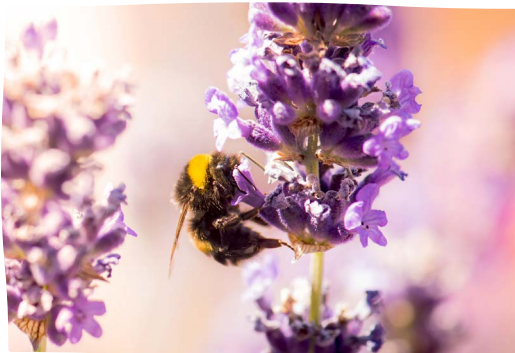
– “What does this winter holly remind you of?”

**. Reflect:** In the heart of nature, just take a moment to rest and relax together. Pause and enjoy a mindful moment.



# Find Your Walk with Nature

In every community, we are surrounded by nature - plants, birds, flowers, and scenery.



As **Wild Isles** shows, in this beautiful nation of ours, we are surrounded by nature!

From the gardens on the streets that we live on to our local parks, through to the amazing sights of our coasts, countrysides and cities, we have many ways to enjoy wildlife and our environment.

Walking doesn't have to cost money. It doesn't have to be challenging. It is accessible to us all.

## We can find nature everywhere!



### In our streets

Nature is on your doorstep...

- The insects in our gardens and hedgerows
- Birds in our skies and trees
- Pets and other animals



### In our communities

Nature is in your local community, in...

- Local parks
- Ponds, canals and rivers
- Our shared greenspace

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## Special Places

Britain is filled with beautiful places that we can all enjoy:

- Countryside
- Coastline
- Waterfronts
- Areas of beauty
- Nature reserves
- Forests

You can also find nature in exciting places like zoos, aquariums and safari parks.

There are so many ways to enjoy nature walks. Why not enjoy a mix of observing nature on your everyday walks, and also planning some special days out?

## Find somewhere amazing!

- Search online for phrases like 'accessible walks' or 'wheelchair friendly walks'.
- Check out your local nature reserve. The RSPB, National Trust, Woodland Trust, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, and Wildlife Trusts all own reserves and you might have a community or Government-owned one near you too. You could find your nearest reserve on Google Maps or the websites of the charities mentioned above.
- Download Motability's free '[Rough Guide To Accessible Britain](#)' – search online to find it!





# Staying Safe

Walking is easy, but there are some simple things to remember to stay safe and have a good time.



- Wear shoes that are comfortable to walk in.
- Take a warm, waterproof jacket in colder weather.
- On a hot day, wear something light and apply sun protection.
- Take a bottle of water or a hot flask, depending on the weather – especially if you are walking a long distance.
- Bring healthy snacks on longer walks.
- Wear something reflective, if you are walking at night.
- Share your plans. Let other colleagues or family members know when and where you are going.



## Record your progress

It's always good to keep track of how far you walk!

Pedometers are a device that help count your steps. Many mobile phones and smart watches also have apps to help show you how far you have walked.

Do you have any other goals? Some people may want to get fitter, visit new places or have a weight loss goal. Keep a record of these too!

You'll learn many great things through these experiences that can be recorded in Care and Support Plans, to enrich the overall support that you provide.





# A Year with Nature

Top tips of things to spot on walks during each season...

## January



Get outside and enjoy the crisp wintery air! Feel the wind and rain on your face or the crunch of frost underfoot! Watch a winter sunset!

### Connect with Nature:

- Look for unusual moss or lichen on buildings, walls or trees.
- Feel the snow or frozen ground under your shoes, what does it sound like?
- Step outside and be still for three minutes. Listen out for the sounds of nature. What can you hear?
- Find your local stream or river and listen to the flow of the water. Follow the patterns of the water moving downstream for a few moments. Can you play Pooh sticks?

### Watch Out for Wildlife:

**Birds you might see:** Robins, Goldcrests, Wrens, Blackbirds, Great Spotted Woodpeckers.

**Other wildlife you might see:** Foxes, Grey Squirrels.

## February

Find twigs, leaves and other natural materials that you can collect outside to make a nature mobile at home.

### Connect with Nature:

- Feel the bark of two different trees. What do you notice?
- Take a look at the ground beneath your feet, can you see anything growing yet?
- How many colours, textures and shapes can you see?
- What sounds can you hear as you walk along?

**How different are they to other places you walk?**

### Watch Out for Wildlife:

**Birds you might see:** Blue Tits, House Sparrows, Wood Pigeons, Long-Tailed Tits, Grey Herons.

**Other wildlife and nature:** Roe Deer. On sunny days, you may even see some bumblebees enjoying the nectar from early flowers!



## March

See if you can spot any daffodils or other flowers coming into bloom. Notice the differences between them.

### Connect with Nature:

- What signs of spring can you see? What do you like about springtime?
- Whilst outside, what can you smell? Maybe new flowers coming into bloom, or the smell of the earth after it has rained?
- Can you see any frog or toad spawn in any ponds, streams and lakes?
- How many plants can you see growing within the pavement? Are any flowering yet?
- Look out for bees emerging from hibernation.



### Watch Out for Wildlife:

**Birds you might see:** Wheatears, Chiffchaffs, Sand Martins and Great Tits.

**Other wildlife you might see:** On warmer days, you might see butterflies, such as Red Admirals, Small Tortoiseshells and Peacocks. Hedgehogs will start to emerge from hibernation.

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## April



Enjoy the blossoms on the trees. What different colours can you find?

### Connect with Nature:

- More birds have now returned to the UK. Listen to them singing first thing in the morning. This is the dawn chorus.
- Spot the first bluebells in bloom.
- Go on a micro safari. Choose one small space in nature and study it up close. Perhaps explore a patch of grass, the trunk of a tree or the petal of a flower. What colours do you see? Are there any minibeasts there?
- Why not get creative with nature? Draw or create art based on what you see outside.

### Watch Out for wildlife:

**Birds you might see:** Swifts, Puffins (by rocky coasts), Skylarks, Song Thrushes, Robins, Blackbirds, Wrens and Willow Warblers.

**Other wildlife and nature:** Brown Hares, Slow Worms, Orange-Tip Butterflies, bats.

## May

There's so much nature to enjoy in the last month of spring!

### Connect with Nature:

- Visit a local river or stream. Sit and rest a while. Look for dragonflies, mayflies or damselflies dancing above the rivers.
- Look out for Swallows, House martins and Swifts returning after spending the winter in Africa. Visit [rspb.org.uk/swiftswallowmartin](https://www.rspb.org.uk/swiftswallowmartin) to learn more.
- Take a picnic outside. Stand barefoot or run your fingers through the grass. How does this make you feel?
- The first Sunday of May is International Dawn Chorus Day, why not wake up early to have a listen?

### Watch Out for Wildlife:

**Birds you might see:** Swallows, Buzzards, Greenfinches, House Martins, Great Crested Grebes.

**Other wildlife and nature:** Bluebells, tadpoles, dragonflies, damselflies.





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The grass is growing tall in the fields and gardens now. Can you spot different types of grass? Breathe in the smells when the grass is freshly cut.

## Connect with Nature:

- Have a healthy breakfast in a local park. Breathe in the fresh air and take in the views. Watch birds foraging for their breakfast. You might see blackbirds being fed by their parents.
- See the different insects you can find by turning over leaves in the trees and bushes of hedgerows.
- Listen to the sounds of grasshoppers and crickets in the grasses as they make their 'song' by rubbing their legs and/or wings together.
- Notice what you can smell. Is it flowers, freshly cut grass, barbeques or something else?

## Watch Out for Wildlife:

**Birds you might see:** Baby birds leaving their nests for the first time. Mallard ducklings and Mute Swan cygnets.

**Other wildlife and nature:** Butterflies such as Peacocks, Commas and Speckled Woods, moths, bats, wildflowers.



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Can you find any dandelion clocks dancing in the wind? Are the fluffy white seed heads blowing around? Give them a blow and watch them fly away!

## Connect with Nature:

- Find a grassy field and stand or lay quietly for a while. Can you hear any grasshoppers or crickets?
- Listen out for a bird call and try to copy it. Can you 'talk' to a bird?
- Scan the skies for Swifts high up in the air catching insects. They can fly at up to 69mph – imagine how it feels to fly that fast through the open sky! Visit [rspb.org.uk/swift](https://rspb.org.uk/swift) to find out more about Swifts.
- Find a lavender plant, or another lovely smelling plant, in your local park or community garden. What do you think of the smell?
- Look out for moths on your windows or attracted to lights at night.

## Watch Out for Wildlife:

**Birds you might see:** Bullfinches, Goldfinches, sea birds such as Gannets and Fulmars by the coast.

**Other wildlife and nature:** Hummingbird Hawk-Moth, butterflies including Meadow Brown and Gatekeeper, pondlife such as frogs, toads, newts, damselflies, dragonflies and pond skaters.

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## August



Bats, bees and butterflies – there's so many wonderful creatures in the air!

### Connect with Nature:

- Watch for bats skimming around in the early evening sky.
- Look out for bees and hoverflies attracted to different flowers and plants. Which seem to be the most popular?
- What can you smell in the air? Are there hints of honeysuckle, earthy moss or cut grass? What is your favourite scent this month?
- Lie in the grass and watch the clouds come and go.
- Dip your feet into cool water (this can even be a bowl of water at home!). How does it feel? Is the water moving? What can you see in the water?

### Watch Out for Wildlife:

**Birds you might see:** Hobbies, Green Woodpeckers, Oystercatchers, Collared Doves.

**Other wildlife and nature:** Heather, Grass Snakes, Adders, Slow Worms, Common Lizards.

## September

There's so many new sights to enjoy as we enter autumn!

### Connect with Nature:

- Look for a snail after rainfall and follow its journey. Notice the slow and steady movements and how it uses its tentacles to sense the world around it, including you!
- Can you find any conkers?
- Ivy should be flowering now. Can you see the different bees and butterflies that visit it?
- Take a woodland walk and absorb the autumn sights, the smells of trees and undergrowth and the texture of any seeds and nuts.

### Watch Out For Wildlife:

**Birds you might see:** Blackbirds, Mistle Thrushes, waders including Knots and Curlews on the shoreline.

**Other wildlife and nature:** Migrant Hawker Dragonfly, berries on bushes and trees.





## October



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Notice the changing colours, light and scents of autumn on your walk!

### Connect with Nature:

- Spot the fabulous fungi growing near trees and on patches of grass. How many types can you find? Notice all the different colours, shapes, and patterns.
- Look out for winter berries around you. You might see elderberries, sloes, hawthorn berries, rose hips or crab apples. Notice any birds feeding on them.
- Collect some natural materials for your windowsill. Look out for acorns, conkers and hazelnuts.
- Turn over a rock and see what's living underneath. If you're not sure what you've found, try visiting [buglife.org.uk/bugs](http://buglife.org.uk/bugs) for more information!

### Watch Our for Wildlife:

**Birds you might see:** Coal Tits, Jays, migrating Geese, Tufted Ducks, Woodpigeons, Sparrowhawks.

**Other wildlife and nature:** Red Deer might be noisy as mating season approaches, autumn moths such as Canary-Shouldered Thorns and Pink-Barred Sallows.

## November

### Connect with Nature:

- Listen for the distinctive call of an owl. Young owls are very noisy at this time of year. Visit [rspb.org.uk/owls](http://rspb.org.uk/owls) to learn more.
- Try stargazing and looking at the night sky. How do you feel?
- Sit under a tree and watch the leaves or seeds fall to the floor.
- Skip in the leaves and don't be scared to get muddy!

### Watch Out for Wildlife:

**Birds you might see:** Whooper Swans, Teal, Little Egrets, Peregrine Falcons, Redwings, Fieldfares, Siskin, Lesser Redpoll, Brambling, Long-tailed Tits, Blackbirds, Song Thrush.

**Other wildlife and nature:** Hedgehogs, Stoats and Weasels.



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It's Christmastime! How many festive things can you spot on your walk? Can you spot a Robin on your walks?

### Connect with Nature:

- Get up close to a bare tree. What has been hiding behind the leaves? Are there any abandoned nests? Are there any mosses or lichen? Are there any interesting knots or secret hollows in the branches?
- Can you find a winter flower? Even at this time of year there are flowers to be found.
- Feel the soft yet prickly leaves of a holly tree. The tree and berries are a seasonal favourite this time of year.
- Look out for Starling murmurations at dusk as they prepare to roost for the night. For a national map of Starling murmurations visit [starlingsintheuk.co.uk](http://starlingsintheuk.co.uk).
- Watch for your breath in the cold air.
- Look out for frost sparkling on leaves and branches.
- Look for fallen branches, ivy or berries and make a festive wreath or table decoration.

### Watch out for wildlife:

**Birds you might see:** Starling murmurations at dusk, Jackdaws, Pied Wagtails, Grey Herons, Rooks, ducks and geese.

**Other wildlife and nature:** Squirrels, Brown Hares, centipedes and other minibeasts.





## Reflect and look ahead!

### Enjoyed a whole year's worth of wonderful walks?

It's time to take stock on what you've accomplished! Since starting your walking group, think about how far you've come.

- Have you achieved your goals?
- Have you had fun?
- What would you like your group walking goals to be next year?

### Reflect on your experiences...

- What was your favourite nature moment?
- How does it feel now as you bring it to mind?
- What are you looking forward to noticing in nature next year?

### Reflect on your goals...

- Would you like to walk further next time, or more often?
- Can you use your walking group to do good, like litter picking, raising money for a good cause or helping the community?

## Top tip:

If you've set up a walking group, use the end of year as a way to help strengthen that bond! Create awards for all the members of your group to celebrate their achievements!

### Here's some examples:

- Best Walker
- Most Improved
- Funniest
- Best Teammate
- Most Prepared



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on social media, tagging in  
Community Integrated Care



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“In my long lifetime, I have travelled to almost every corner of our planet. In the British Isles, there are extraordinary animal dramas and wildlife spectacles to match anything I have seen on my global travels.”

**Sir David Attenborough**



**Nature is for everyone.** That's why Community Integrated Care leads Care With Nature –a range of dedicated programmes, campaigns and resources to bring the power of our natural world to social care.

This guide has been developed in partnership with the RSPB, who have generously shared their time and expertise to enrich this resource. It has already inspired hundreds of people across the UK to get active in nature.

It was originally developed in partnership with the RSPB, the National Trust and WWF inspired by Wild Isles is a special BBC TV series narrated by Sir David Attenborough. This partnership proudly received the Care Innovator Award at the Great British Care Awards for Scotland and North East in 2024, and was named one of the ten best innovations in the social care sector in 2025.

[www.CommunityIntegratedCare.co.uk/Nature](http://www.CommunityIntegratedCare.co.uk/Nature)