



Project Name and number: Heritage Buddies 9104 MAIN

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Date: 21 December 2023

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1. Project Summary

The Heritage Buddies project's main goal was to test and trial the use of existing volunteers to link people in need, through social prescribing, to engagement with local heritage and the historic environment in a place. This is part of the "whole-community approach to social prescribing", as adopted by the National Academy for Social Prescribing, NASP and will help inform Historic England and NASP about the effectiveness of the Buddies models and directly meets Historic England's purpose to improve people's lives by championing and protecting the historic environment – and demonstrating its wellbeing benefits and social impact.

It is based on utilising existing local community, heritage or other volunteering/befriending schemes to identify and support people that may benefit from heritage wellbeing activities and helping them access these.

The project has been delivered by Nottingham Community and Voluntary Service, NCVS between April 2023 and December 2023. NCVS aims to improve the quality of people's lives in Nottingham through strengthening the voluntary sector, improving the quality and breadth of volunteering opportunities across the city and speaking up for the voluntary sector on issues crucial to its future.

There is growing evidence for the wellbeing benefits of engaging with heritage and the historic environment. As demonstrated by Historic England and others, there are many ways to improve individual and community wellbeing through heritage - from volunteering and visiting sites, to sharing stories and memories of a place and connecting with others

Many people experience challenges which mean that they find it overwhelming or impossible to take part in life as they would like. Buddies can support a variety of different people with different needs, and particularly people experiencing anxiety, loneliness or social isolation to have the confidence to start taking part and to continue taking part. By overcoming barriers to accessing activities, with support from a Buddy, people can improve their mental and physical health, boost their sense of enjoyment and their quality of life.

2. Project Delivery: Timeline of Activities

This section provides information on the key activities undertaken against each project work stream.

The dates for the project were originally set at 1 December 2022 to the 31 August 2023. Due to delays in recruitment of the Project Coordinator who did not start in post until the 6 April an extension of the project to a revised end date of 30 November 2023 was agreed with Historic England.

2.1 Work Stream 1: Initiation and set up

- Heritage Buddies Coordinator recruited by NCVS – 9 month part-time contract - 14 hours a week (6 April 2023 to 5 January 2024)
- Monthly steering groups in place from May 2023. Steering group members were:
 - Health & Wellbeing Programme Manager (Project Manager) - NCVS
 - Heritage Buddies Project Co-ordinator - NCVS
 - Social Prescribing and Community Development Project Manager – NCVS
 - Volunteering Development Officer - NCVS
 - Heritage Volunteer Lead – Newstead Abbey and Nottingham Castle – Nottingham City Council
 - Senior Policy Adviser, Wellbeing and Heritage – Historic England
 - Principal National Landscape Adviser – Historic England
 - Consultant – Wavehill (Lead evaluator)

2.2 Work Stream 2: Development of Heritage Buddies training

- Mapping of heritage assets/provision in the city and surrounding areas.
- Creation of Heritage Buddies project overview to share with potential partners.
- Engagement started with heritage organisations, befriending and community organisations (see Appendix 1 for list).
- Project introduction/design workshops held with partners expressing interest in the project. Aim of workshop to introduce the project, its aims, an outline of what the training for buddies could involve and explore with the partner how it could work for their organisation.
- Confirmation of heritage partners engaging in project.
- Heritage partners sharing Heritage Buddy opportunity with existing volunteers.
- Development of the Heritage Buddies introductory training sessions for heritage organisations. including identification of the different unmet needs for heritage and befriending/community organisations.

- Review of draft training with volunteer leads in participating organisations and capture of feedback.
- Proposed training developed and facilitated with small group of volunteers and feedback gained, which included the collaborative development of the heritage buddy role with the volunteers.
- Development of resources to support buddying activity including heritage signposting and destination list, safeguarding guidance and community transport links.
- Production of a A-Z heritage providers signposting page available shared through NCVS website and document. (See <https://www.nottinghamcvs.co.uk/projects/heritage-buddies>)
- Engagement with Social Prescribing Link Workers, SPLW, on the role of volunteering and buddying at a SPLW event in Nottingham.
- Engagement with Nottingham City Community Champions to assess potential for involvement in project.
- Promotion of the Heritage Buddies project and opportunity for involvement through the NCVS e-bulletin, NCVS social media and the NCVS Leaders of Volunteers Network.
- Development of a 'Heritage in Nottingham' detailed resource –providing information and knowledge of the breadth of Heritage provision and resources locally and accessibility guidance and considerations for community providers.

2.3 Work Stream 3. Delivery of Heritage Buddies Training: August to November 2023

- Delivery of introductory and training sessions in two parts to volunteers from Newstead Abbey. Role profile developed in collaboration with volunteers and volunteer lead and opportunity shared with social prescribing network.
- Delivery of introductory and training sessions in two parts to volunteers from Nottingham Castle and Brewhouse Yard Museum. Role profile developed in collaboration with volunteers and volunteer lead and opportunity shared with social prescribing network.
- Delivery of introductory training sessions with National Justice Museum scheduled and postponed 3 times due to volunteers not yet being recruited through the organisation's robust recruitment process and ready for the newly advertised roles.
- Delivery of introductory training session with York Archaeology – exact Heritage Buddy role to be developed once funding secured.
- Delivery of introductory and heritage awareness sessions (online and in person – in collaboration with National Justice Museum) with befriending/community organisations
- Specific referral information shared to SPLW network through Social Prescribing and Community Development Project Manager and attendance of HB Project Co-ordinator at SPLW team meetings and SPLW / patient coffee mornings.
- Referral information for Nottingham Castle and Newstead Abbey suitable for both SPLW and patient developed and shared.
- Facilitated heritage visit in practise to the William Booth Museum. Visit organised for befriending and community groups; volunteer leads, volunteers and service users. Attended by Refugee Roots, Chinese Welfare Association and SPLW/patient.

2.4 Work Stream 4: Evaluation of Heritage Buddies project

- External evaluator invited to attend all HB steering group meetings.
- Baseline questionnaire given to volunteers during first introductory training session for completion and return to external project evaluators.
- Project stakeholders and partners took part in one to one interviews with external evaluators
- Focus group held with HB volunteers led by external project evaluators.

2.5 Work Stream 5: Participant follow up and next steps

- Final project report completed.
- Heritage Buddies Tool Kit produced including resource pack.
- Legacy plan developed for Heritage Buddies detailing role for NCVS going forward including how broader heritage opportunities can be embedded into local SPLW and community social prescribing pathways and practice.
- Follow up with project team, stakeholders and partners by external evaluators planned for June 2024 as a check in on any progress/outcomes/legacy from pilot project.

3. Project Aims and How They Were Met

3.1 Overall aim

To test the potential of the heritage sector to contribute to the development of local social prescribing and the improvement of individual and community wellbeing through the “Buddies” scheme.

The Heritage Buddies project showed that there is potential in the heritage sector to contribute to the development of local social prescribing. There was a positive response from heritage organisations, their volunteer leads and volunteers, befriending/community groups and social prescribing link workers to the initial concept of the role a heritage buddy could play. Heritage organisations were interested to see how this model could help them to diversify their audiences and reach under-served communities. Befriending and community groups saw the opportunity to increase their awareness of heritage assets locally and gain a better understanding of how to support their service users to access these assets. Social prescribing link workers were receptive to the opportunity to engage and connect with heritage locally for the benefit of their patients and welcomed the idea of support from a buddy to facilitate this.

Strategic aims

3.2.1 Provide evidence for the potential of local heritage to improve people’s lives through social prescribing, thus making the case for the high public value of heritage and the historic environment and raising the profile of the sector, while supporting people to appreciate the wider benefits of engaging with their local heritage and strengthen their pride of place.

In the timescale of the project we were unable to test an actual buddying experience for a participant and therefore have limited information and feedback on the immediate and potential impact/outcomes for participants (those benefiting from the support of a Heritage Buddy). However engagement with patients and service users towards the end of the project demonstrated the potential for improvement in individual and community wellbeing and evidence is provided of this in section 4.4 of this report.

3.2.2 Support the health sector by pioneering the development of new approaches which can help lessen the burden on the NHS and decrease the pressure on the social prescribing link workers employed by PCNs or charities locally.

Social prescribing link workers were receptive to the opportunity to engage and connect with heritage locally for the benefit of their patients. They welcomed the idea of support from a buddy to facilitate this and help patients overcome any anxiety they may have about visiting a venue or taking part in an activity.

A 'prescription' from a health professional is just the start of the journey for a patient. Of the critical factors that influence an individual's capability, opportunity and motivation (COM-B) to engage with and experience the benefits of engaging with heritage, buddies are a key enabler to participation.

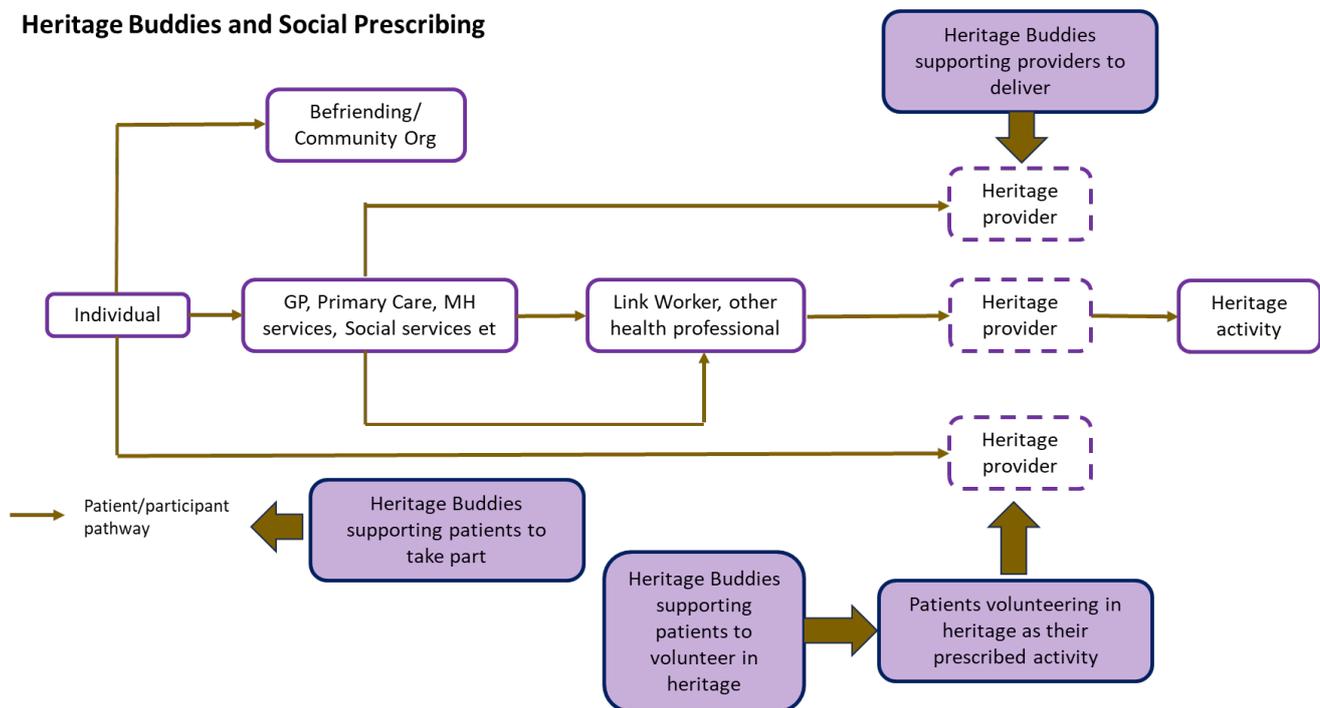
For befriending organisations and community groups, a buddy can play a facilitating role in supporting and enabling service users and group members to become aware of, access and ultimately enjoy the wellbeing benefits of engaging with heritage assets and activities.

3.2.3 Support individuals from all backgrounds and diverse communities to feel better and live better lives by connecting to their local heritage and improving their physical and mental health, both by being referred by the Heritage Buddies and/or by becoming Heritage Buddies themselves.

Volunteers who attended the buddy training sessions said that they were committed to helping people to have a positive experience and would enjoy welcoming people and that the project plays to their interests and strengths in sharing enthusiasm about the history of the heritage site and their volunteering experiences. They recognised and valued the health benefits of volunteering in heritage, through their own personal experience and valued these benefits for self and for others.

The volunteers also suggested the development of heritage volunteer buddies – existing heritage volunteers acting as buddies to support individuals into a heritage volunteering role. Volunteering has been identified as a prescribed activity so there is potential to develop this offer for social prescribing.

Heritage Buddies and Social Prescribing



3.2.4 Work in partnership across the heritage and health sectors to increase understanding and collaboration and support the development of the personalised care approach, focusing on individual needs and targeted interventions.

The personalised care approach sits at the heart of social prescribing and centres around the ‘what matters to you’ conversation. The role of the Heritage Buddy can be an enabler to deliver against the needs and preferences of the patient. Through the pilot we found it important to take the time to build awareness, knowledge and trust between the heritage and health sectors. Understanding the needs of the patient/participant in accessing heritage is key and sharing this with the heritage sector so that they can provide an offer that is accessible, attractive and welcoming. We aimed to do this by bringing together the two sectors in informal settings such as coffee mornings and also by facilitating visits involving health professionals to a heritage venue.

3.3 Operational aims

3.3.1 Test the suitability and effectiveness of the “Buddies” scheme for delivery of social prescribing via engagement with heritage and the historic environment locally.

A series of engagement and design workshops with interested partners for the project provided the opportunity to test the concept of Heritage Buddies with the sector and build an understanding of how it could work in practice and for specific organisations. It became clear that one size does not fit all and there was the need to be flexible in our approach.

Two different core strands developed throughout the pilot. A ‘site specific’ Heritage Buddy Role within Heritage Organisations and a ‘Heritage Informed’ Buddy within befriending and community support organisations.

The two strands responded to the different identified needs and required different responses, resources, and tools to be developed and implemented. This co-production approach was essential to securing the engagement and continued involvement of heritage partners.

This table provides a summary of participation by heritage organisations with brief explanation of how the concept of a Heritage Buddy is applied to meet local conditions and the needs/working practice of the organisation.

Heritage Organisation	Volunteer recruitment approach	Volunteer introductory training	Heritage Buddy Role In context	Referral Process
Nottingham Castle and Brew house Yard Museum– Nottingham City Council	Pre-existing volunteers involved in development of the role	Initial development: 2 consecutive sessions delivered. Part 1 – 10 volunteers (25/09) Part 2 – 4 volunteers (19/10) 1 complete session– 3 volunteers (24/11) 12 different volunteers Involved	Supported visit around Nottingham Castle and site or specific site activity tailored to individual interests. Reference: role profile	HB role and offer circulated to Social Prescribing Link Workers Network across the city and Newstead Area. Discussed at 1 SPLW meeting and 2 patient coffee mornings. Some enquiries made directly to volunteer lead.
Newstead Abbey – Nottingham City Council	Pre-existing volunteers involved in development of the role	Initial development: 2 consecutive sessions delivered. Part 1 – 7 volunteers (17/08) Part 2 – 4 volunteers (13/09) 7 different volunteers Involved	Supported visit around Newstead Abbey and site or specific site activity tailored to individual interests. Reference: role profile	HB role and offer circulated to Social Prescribing Link Workers Network across the city and Newstead Area. Discussed at 1 SPLW meeting and 2 patient coffee mornings. Some enquiries made directly to volunteer lead.
National Justice Museum	Recruiting new volunteers to the organization and the proposed role	3 training sessions postponed. Volunteers not yet recruited	Supported visit around the museum or specific activity at NJM. Potential for a phone call in advance to ensure confidence in visiting and accessing NJM. Reference: role profile	
York Archaeology	Pre-existing volunteers involved in development of the role	Initial introductory training session: 1 session delivered (03/11) 3 volunteers Involved	Plan for role to support new community outreach and engagement archaeological activity in different locations. Role to be defined.	

This table provides a summary of participation by befriending/community organisations with brief explanation of how the concept of a Heritage Buddy is applied to meet local conditions and the needs/working practice of the organisation.

Befriending / Community Support Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugee Roots (1:1 befriending refugees) • Improving Lives (1:1 befriending adults with long term mental health needs) • Chinese Welfare Association (Group support for Chinese elders) • Nottingham Women’s Centre (Group support for women)
Understanding needs	A Heritage Buddy exclusive role too niche for services. Service needs: Addressing barriers to Awareness of and Access to Heritage provision and resources in Nottingham
Resource development and delivery	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Initial A-Z Heritage Signposting Directory hosted on NCVS website 2. Heritage in Nottingham Resource developed and presented in facilitated workshops: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage in Nottingham online session (18/10) • Heritage in Nottingham session – hosted with National Justice Museum (20/10) Volunteer lead and Volunteer Participation: Refugee Roots – 6; Improving Lives – 1; Chinese Welfare Association – 5; Nottingham Women’s Centre - 2
Heritage Facilitated Visit	Facilitated Visit to William Booth Museum for Befriending / Community Support Organisations / Social Prescribing Link Workers (16/11) Participation: (mix of staff, volunteers, service users) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refugee Roots - 3 • Chinese Welfare Association – 5 • Social Prescribing Link Worker and patient – 2

3.3.2 Establish the short-and medium-term effects of engaging with heritage through the Heritage Buddies model by supporting the external evaluation of the project, which will be commissioned separately.

The project lead from Wavehill, the company providing the external evaluation of the project was invited to be part of the project steering group and attended several of these meetings.

Baseline information was gathered from the volunteers from heritage organisations when attending their first introductory training session. These volunteers were also invited to attend a focus group at the end of the pilot by the external evaluator.

Key project stakeholders were also invited to take part in one to one interviews, with Wavehill, towards the end of the project.

The time required during the pilot period to develop the Heritage Buddy role within each organisation and raise awareness and engagement of scheme with Social Prescribing Link Workers and community groups/organisations did not allow time for any referrals to Heritage Buddies to take place. This means that there is no data available on the short or medium term effects of the buddying activity for patients/participants. However interest in referrals was starting to emerge at the end of the pilot period and it is intended to carry out some follow up activity/capture feedback as part of the legacy aims for the project.

3.4 Legacy aims

3.4.1 Identify barriers and challenges to engaging hard-to-reach individuals and communities with their local heritage and the historic environment and propose ways to address these.

Introductory and follow up training was completed for volunteers at Nottingham Castle and Newstead Abbey and heritage awareness sessions for befriending and community groups to encourage them to support their clients with visits. These sessions revealed the complexities and challenges involved in establishing buddy schemes and also the barriers to access heritage assets for befriending and community groups.

Wider access barriers were recognised and discussed with organisations and volunteers which included entry costs, on site mobility restrictions, transport to a site, level access and restricted lift availability in historic venues. For example, the Chinese Welfare Association, CWA, specifically requested a pre-visit to Nottingham Castle and/or Newstead Abbey to help familiarise themselves with the site and information, so they could prepare to interpret and be confident of accessing the site with their service users (Chinese elders) and engage with the trained Heritage Buddies at the site. The CWA asked for support to cover the costs of these visits as neither the Castle nor the Abbey could waiver the entry costs. Further work needs to be undertaken with heritage organisations on how they can support such visits within their budget constraints. It was possible to provide a familiarisation visit free of charge with another heritage organisation in the city (William Booth Museum) and the benefits of this were evident for both the Museum and the groups attending, including a social prescribing link worker and her patient.

For befriending and community groups it is valuable to address considerations of visiting heritage sites/providers, to help increase confidence and realistic planning for both groups and individuals. This was

addressed through the development of a Heritage in Nottingham workshop and resource which provided detailed information.

3.4.2 Establish ways to encourage continuous engagement after the end of the project, where the effects have proved to be positive, and propose sustainable models of heritage engagement through the Buddies scheme.

All four heritage organisations who took part in the project are committed to developing and embedding this role into their service delivery.

Newstead Abby and Nottingham Castle have trained Heritage Buddies and will be supported by NCVS and the ICB Personalised Care services to connect into local social prescribing services and support referrals. New volunteers joining these organisations will be offered Heritage Buddy training, delivered by the Volunteer Lead.

The National Justice Museum will be offering their new volunteers the opportunity to be trained as Heritage Buddies once they have completed their onboarding and started in their volunteering role.

It is to be noted here that the commitment of the Volunteer Leads in these heritage organisations has been and will continue to be vital to embedding the Heritage Buddy role into their volunteering operations.

York Archaeology have plans to develop the role with volunteers to support engagement in community outreach projects. They have recently received a small grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to pilot a project in Autumn 2024. They plan to host a series of sessions in archaeological-based activities to improve their health and well-being and foster new social connections to combat loneliness and improve self-esteem and confidence through the gaining of new skills, knowledge and meeting people.

NCVS will continue to provide information about heritage opportunities in the city to raise awareness and build knowledge through the maintenance of the A-Z heritage listing on the NCVS website, through the sharing of the Heritage in Nottingham resource through our channels and networks across the VCSE and health sectors. Opportunities to embed Heritage Buddies into the city's Place Based Partnership Integrated Neighbourhood Working projects will be explored.

3.4.3 Publish results and share lessons learnt to inform further policy and strategic work on heritage and wellbeing and support the progress of social prescribing as a method of wellbeing delivery.

This final project report, the evaluation report from Wavehill and the Heritage Buddies Toolkit will provide a set of documents to support the sharing of learning and outcomes from the Heritage Buddies pilot project. NCVS will take part in future learning events, webinars and conferences to share their learning from this pilot.

4. Impact Statement

This section covers the immediate and potential impact/outcomes of the Heritage Buddies project on the various stakeholders involved in the pilot that were gathered by the Nottingham CVS project team. The impact of the project on stakeholders is being evaluated by Wavehill and will be available in a separate report.

4.1 Volunteer buddies

Although this pilot did not capture any impact or outcomes from volunteers on any buddying activity, feedback was received from volunteers involved in the introductory training sessions on their view of the benefits of and impact for them of the Heritage Buddy role. These are some direct quotes from volunteers.

- *'would enjoy welcoming people and plays to interests and strengths in sharing enthusiasm about the history and our volunteering experiences'*
- *'value being able to help people know they are entitled to access this place, as part of their own heritage'*
- *'committed to helping people to have a positive experience and recognise the barriers which may exist for people. Places can be 'daunting'. Perceptions – white, middle class, old people, physical access issues'*
- *'recognise first-hand the health benefits of volunteering in heritage and also these benefits for self and value this for others – especially reducing social isolation and meeting people / making friends / learning from others / beautiful environment /learning and remembering the history'*

Volunteers also identified:

- that the project provided opportunities for the positive development of the volunteers' current role
- that they would enjoy welcoming people and that the project plays to their interests and strengths in sharing enthusiasm about the history of the heritage site and their volunteering experiences
- that they are committed to helping people to have a positive experience whilst recognising the barriers which may exist for people. Places can be 'daunting', perceptions exist of Heritage being for white, middle class, old people and there are many physical access issues with old buildings
 - *'socially people think these places aren't for them'. (Castle Volunteer)*
 - *'it's not about what they see or learn, the important outcome from heritage buddies is how the person feels after their visit'. (Castle Volunteer)*
- that they were very engaged engaged in suggesting and identifying solutions to recognised barriers and show a real commitment to improving access and opportunity for people
- that they recognise and value the health benefits of volunteering in heritage, through own personal experience
 - *'(we have) feelings of healing and peace in these historic places'*
 - *'as a volunteer..I have a happy feeling after I've been here'*
 - *'it would be criminal not to use heritage sites for social prescribing'*
- and value these benefits for self and for others – especially reducing social isolation and meeting people / making friends / learning from others / beautiful environment /learning and remembering the history
 - *'it was good to start thinking about people's needs and feelings, importance of empathy. It's not just about me!'*
 - *'I'm looking forward to my first session as a heritage buddy'*

4.2 Heritage organisations

Immediate and potential impact/outcomes for heritage organisations involved in a Heritage Buddies scheme are as follows.

- The opportunity to diversify audiences and volunteer pools providing a route to support people to access heritage who don't usually.
- The opportunity to develop volunteer buddying with potential/new volunteers therefore supporting volunteer development and the link with volunteering as a 'prescribed activity' from SPLW or through community SP pathways.
- The improvement of volunteer practices – the pilot highlighted current volunteering practice in heritage organisations especially with regard to access and inclusion issues, safeguarding, duty of care and lone working to ensure that the role is safely developed and implemented.
- Consideration of the practicalities of implementing a buddying scheme in a heritage context, for example limiting to a meet and greet role, and managing the buddying in a 2 to 1 (buddy to participant) ratio or small groups to avoid lone working.
- The impact of the amount of work for volunteer leads in heritage organisations in continuing to recruit and train new volunteers joining the organisation as Heritage Buddies and their role in facilitating referrals to volunteer Heritage Buddies.
- The impact of the work required by a heritage organisation to develop more 'involved' buddying roles within their organisation and whether capacity exists to develop and manage these new types of roles.
 - *'love the idea and interest in engaging with Heritage Buddies to support access to sites and activity –IF – another organisation can recruit, coordinate and manage the Heritage Buddy volunteers.'* (Green's Windmill and Science Centre, Sneinton, Nottingham)
 - *'interested in the project and lots of activity suited to heritage and social prescribing. In this context, groups are intentionally staff led not volunteer led. Don't want volunteers to have this responsibility, if they want to, 'switch off', garden and develop garden skills.'* (STAA at St Ann's Allotments, Nottingham)
 - *'main concern is the development of the volunteer role and responsibilities. Duty of care etc. This is new. Currently have a warm group of volunteers, who are friendly and helpful and chat. Concerns about creating a heritage buddy role, as this will create a responsibility and then raises questions and boundary issues -Are they then one of us? Opportunity for an organic friendship to develop or a buddy relationship with boundaries?'*
- Proactively supporting accessibility for visitors.
- Raising awareness of heritage assets and activities especially across the health sector.

4.3 Befriending/community organisations

Immediate and potential impact/outcomes for befriending/community organisations involved in a Heritage Buddies scheme are as follows.

- A specific 'heritage buddy' was considered too niche. (Refugee Roots). Not able to 1:1 'match' people on this basis alone. Current befrienders work organically to build relationships and support broad interests and personal development of their 'clients'.

- Instead a model and resources were developed to support existing befrienders/community organisations to consider, plan for and visit heritage sites for wellbeing benefits of their volunteers, befrienders and clients.
- The need for befrienders to have more information, knowledge and awareness of Heritage provision and accessibility, including learning about opportunities to engage with heritage that are free of charge.
- This improvement in information, knowledge and awareness can result in helping organisations to be more aware and confident to facilitate and promote visits and access to Heritage venues and resources resulting in direct befriending visits, new and interesting places to visit, positive conversation and language development focus - all ideal for supporting service users from different countries to locally orientate.
- Many considerations exist for befriending/community organisations in planning a visit to a heritage site/activity to increase confidence and engagement.
- Ideas were generated for incorporating heritage places into pre-existing projects. For example one volunteer leading on a personal development group using photography was very inspired to connect this with local heritage sites and knowledge.
- Enthusiasm and motivation for connecting service users with heritage was evident following the workshops with befriending/community organisations and the value of connecting with other organisations and volunteers, sharing ideas and knowledge was recognised.
 - *'I learnt loads and feel excited to take this back to NWC. Great to have this resource and make these connections' (Nottingham Women's Centre)*
 - *'we are hoping to use the Arboretum tree walk as part of Walkshops with Nottingham Contemporary next year, inspired by this project' (Nottingham Women's Centre)*
 - *'I am also involved with.....a peer support group for people with mental health. We are just in process of becoming a charity through Rethink who help people with mental health issues. I was wondering if our group could possibly work with you' (Volunteer attending workshop)*
 - *'thought provoking and inspiring, so glad to be a part of and also meet interesting people' (Refugee Roots)*
 - *'I think the elderly (service users) would be very happy if we could arrange a group visit to the heritage in the near future' (Chinese Welfare Association)*
 - *'it would be great to connect service users and volunteers to this training where possible, it's wonderful to have conversations about historic sites and events, I think just having conversations does wonders and connect people who may not have access to the information to what's going on' (Improving Lives)*

4.4 Participants

We have limited information and feedback on the immediate and potential impact/outcomes for participants (those benefiting from the support of a Heritage Buddy).

- Nottingham Castle has had some enquiries from Social Prescribing Link Workers and some early patient interest in the Heritage Buddy support, but no uptake as of December 2023.
- One Befriending Volunteer from Refugee Roots who attended the training workshop fed back as follows following a visit to a heritage site which demonstrates the potential of just raising awareness of the heritage assets available across stakeholders.
 - *'I had a lovely catch up over cake and coffee at the Malt Cross- it was a great recommendation from the Heritage training, it was a beautiful building and we really enjoyed sitting in there'*
- Direct contact with patients being supported by Social Prescribing Link Workers took place during attendance at a coffee morning organised by the local Link Workers. At this session the Heritage Buddies offer at Nottingham Castle and Newstead Abbey was introduced. Discussions took place on heritage and sharing experiences and memories of local heritage. This group conversation was valuable in sharing direct experience and encouragement to visit places, through reducing anxiety about visits.
 - *'I've lived all my life in Nottingham and never knew we had a windmill! I'd really like to go'*
- There was more confidence from patients in the idea of visiting places as a group and some interest in a whole coffee morning group visit if supported by the Link Worker. This presents a great opportunity for Heritage Buddies to support group visits, with potential for follow on support for any individual independent visits following this, dependent on interest and hopefully enabled by familiarity and a positive experience.
- One participant accessing the facilitated William Booth Museum trip with the support of their Social Prescribing Link Worker, had a very positive experience. This led to a definite interest in accessing the support of a Heritage Buddy at Nottingham Castle as a next step, which they were motivated to follow up on themselves.
- Other volunteers, volunteer leads and participants attending the visit to the William Booth Museum all equally enjoyed discovering this unknown and 'hidden gem', dedicated to the life of William Booth and his wife who founded the Salvation Army. Participants appreciated the warm welcome from the organisers and expressed an interest to return.

4.5 Collaboration between heritage and health sectors

Immediate and potential impact/outcomes for improving collaboration between heritage and health sectors as a result of being involved in a Heritage Buddies scheme are as follows.

- An increase in the awareness, knowledge and understanding amongst health professionals of the heritage assets, activities and opportunities in the city and their potential role in improving the wellbeing of patients.
- Improved connectivity between the heritage and health sectors to better meet the needs of patients
- Social Prescribing Link Workers engaged in this project had a positive response to the opportunities to better access local heritage assets and activities.

- Potential for collaborative networking and information sharing in accessible and experiential ways, for example hosting Social Prescribing Link Worker coffee morning visits, meetings in heritage venues/spaces, tailored and personalised meet and greet invitations and events.

4.6 Sustainability

Immediate and potential impact/outcomes for sustainability of a Heritage Buddies scheme in Nottingham are as follows.

- The Heritage in Nottingham resource will continue to be available as an information resource to be shared with social prescribing networks, befriending and community organisations and partners and wider through the NCVS Leaders of Volunteers network, the Nottingham Voluntary Sector network and NCVS communication channels.
- The Heritage in Nottingham resource will be embedded as a PDF into the Heritage Signposting webpage on the NCVS website.
- The Travel Well Active Travel community team (hosted by NCVS) will use the Heritage in Nottingham resource as part of their engagement work with local communities in the city.
- The NCVS Project Manager for the Heritage Buddies pilot will act as a point of contact for Newstead Abbey, Nottingham Castle, the National Justice Museum and York Archaeology to provide support going forward as appropriate for the implementation of their Heritage Buddy offers.
- NCVS will continue to identify and support where Heritage Buddies can contribute to local programmes such as Integrated Neighbourhood Working and volunteering and health initiatives and opportunities.

5. Project Highlights (what worked well and why)

- Engagement with a broad range of 13 heritage organisations, reflective of the breadth of heritage venues available across the city. Including:
 - Nottingham City Council provision: Nottingham Castle and Newstead Abbey
 - National charities: National Justice Museum, York Archaeology, The Salvation Army – William Booth Museum, Canal and River Trust
 - Local charities: STAA at St Ann’s Allotments, Green’s Mill and Science Centre, Bromley Library, The Malt Cross, Canalside Heritage Centre.
 - Interested organisations operating in the county: Nottinghamshire Gardens Trust, Forestry England.
- Building a strong understanding through this engagement of how the Heritage Buddies scheme could work and developing adaptations of the original Heritage Buddy model for different heritage contexts.
- The design workshops with heritage organisations:
 - were useful to introduce organisations to the proposed Heritage Buddy pilot project and discuss openly how they may add value and work in practice in each organisation
 - provided an opportunity for positive development of the buddy roles and responsibilities, scope and potential within each organisational context

- encouraged cross organisation sharing of ideas and thinking
 - enabled organisations to consider the practical resource factors required to deliver a scheme
 - raised awareness and understanding of social prescribing and potential connections into health
 - resulted in strong interest and continual commitment from 4 heritage partners to take part in the pilot and continue beyond the timeframe of the pilot to embed a Heritage Buddies scheme into their volunteering offer.
- The development of a heritage signposting page, hosted on the NCVS website to help increase ease of access to information for health professionals, individuals and befriending/community organisations but also as a positive means of involving a wider group of heritage organisations in the city who did not have the capacity to be fully involved with the Heritage Buddies pilot.
 - Active engagement with a diverse group of participating organisations: Refugee Roots (1:1 befriending Refugees), Nottingham Women’s Centre (Group support-women), Improving Lives (1:1 befriending people with long term mental health needs), Chinese Welfare Association (Group support - Chinese Elders).
 - Development through the engagement with befriending and community organisations of an alternative approach to the original proposed Heritage Buddies model which focused on how the organisation itself could encourage and support their clients/service users to access heritage for their well-being. This co-production approach identified that for the befriending and community organisations engaged, knowledge and resources were required to support their awareness of Heritage provision across the city, including clearer understanding of relevant accessibility considerations for their groups and service users.
 - As a result of this engagement, the development of a Heritage in Nottingham resource and two workshops to introduce and facilitate engagement with the resource. Delivered both online and in person, in response to accessibility requests and interest in heritage related networking.
 - A facilitated visit for volunteer leads, volunteers and service users from befriending, community supporting organisations and Social Prescribing Link Workers to a lesser known heritage venue: William Booth Museum in Sneinton.
 - Involvement of the heritage organisation volunteer leads and volunteers in the development of the content and scope of appropriate and proportionate introductory training sessions for interested volunteers. Areas identified for inclusion in the training were heritage and wellbeing, basic mental health awareness, active listening, respecting differences, boundaries, safeguarding awareness.
 - Inclusion in the introductory training of ideas and advice taken from Linking Lives’ Good Conversations online training which provides accessible training for volunteers at a community level.
 - Involvement of pre-existing volunteers (from Nottingham Castle and Newstead Abbey) in the design and development of the Heritage Buddy role. A collaborative process with these volunteers led to the development of a defined Heritage Buddy role in different heritage contexts.
 - Involvement of the volunteer lead from the heritage organisations throughout the design and delivery of the project and training.

- Engagement of volunteers committed to increasing accessibility to sites and identifying and removing barriers.
- Clear understanding and shared experience amongst volunteers of the positive wellbeing effects of volunteering in heritage.
- Volunteer lead from National Justice Museum, NJM, shadowed development and training session with Nottingham Castle volunteers, which provided a useful insight for the development of the NJM Heritage Buddy role in their similar museum context.
- Membership of the project Steering Group representative of all stakeholders ensured positive development, stakeholders' contributions and transparency and accountability of project management.

6. Project Challenges (what was challenging and why)

- Whilst initially nine months seemed a reasonable timescale to develop and implement a Heritage Buddies scheme, it became apparent that the engagement and design phases of the project were more time consuming than anticipated. Connecting, communicating and engaging with organisations takes time and this was challenging for the Project Co-ordinator working two days a week.
- Mapping and identifying heritage activities suitable for social prescribing. Many heritage organisations charge for visits and activities and these need to be part of the conversation with referrers as a charge may present a barrier to a participant.
- Broad initial enquiries about interest in the project elicited a slow response. It proved time-consuming to chase and follow up this initial engagement.
- Only a small number of heritage organisations following initial interest were able to proceed with the project as this initial interest was not always matched with realistic capacity. Some organisations were struggling to recruit and keep volunteers and needed to prioritise their contribution to essential service delivery. This was very evident for the smaller heritage organisations, however this did allow deeper engagement with those organisations who did take part.
- A decision was taken early in the project to work with heritage organisations who had a strong volunteering lead, a good volunteering infrastructure and procedures as there was not time in the project to provide development support around these. This did therefore exclude some organisations.
- Working with heritage organisations to understand and co-produce a scheme that works for their organisation is time consuming and defined/limited by the capacity of each organisation. Many organisations engaged in the early stages of the project showed interest but did not have the capacity and/or resources to take part.
- The initial model of a 1:1 buddy role to provide a supporting relationship for an individual to access and engage with heritage was problematic for the heritage organisations who engaged in the project, in particular relating to safeguarding and lone-working policies and practices. None of the heritage organisations engaging with the pilot project wanted to develop a lone-working buddying role at this

stage and therefore considerable time was required to develop a budding solution that was appropriate for each organisation. For example, the developed role with Nottingham Castle and Newstead Abbey offered a supported, tailored on site visit rather than a supportive relationship being built over time.

- The fourth Heritage pilot partner, York Archaeology, were reliant on new funding to develop community engagement archaeological projects, which would then enable the development and implementation of their supporting Heritage Buddy role. They were unable to secure this funding during the timescale of this pilot project which meant they were unable to take part. However, it is hoped that they will be able to develop a scheme in 2024.
- A wider pool of engaged heritage organisations may have resulted in finding an organisation who were able to adopt the original 1:1 model but this was not possible to achieve in the timescale of the project.
- A challenge arose throughout the project around the social, economic and cultural perception of heritage. What is heritage and whose heritage were frequently asked questions from across stakeholders. There was a strong perception that heritage provision was for while middle classes and was all about 'old buildings'. The project provided some opportunity to discuss and challenge these perceptions and also address this through the choice of imagery used to promote the project and the provision of the Heritage in Nottingham resource which highlighted the breadth and diversity of heritage resources representative of the diversity of Nottingham's communities. However these perceptions, if they persist, may have a negative impact on the involvement and take-up of other heritage buddy schemes. Outreach work by heritage organisations may be useful in challenging and altering these perceptions especially with under-served communities.
- Engagement with Social Prescribing Link Workers and patients later in the project identified potential challenges with the communication between a referrer and a heritage organisation/Heritage Buddy. Consideration needs to be given to how a Link Worker contacts a heritage organisation, who is the key contact, digital exclusion, and availability of the volunteer lead to respond to enquiries. For example, for one heritage organisation in the pilot, email was the only available communication route as work phones were not available. Given the personalised nature of this type of support a phone call may be preferable.

7. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

- Engagement with potential partners and stakeholders takes considerable time and resource. Initial interest can be gained but significant time and resource should be allocated to engaging, exploring and understanding how a Heritage Buddies scheme can work in the context of each organisation.
- A single model approach will not work for all organisations. Flexibility and adaptability to modify the model to meet the requirements of different organisations is required.
- This adaptability is also required in how volunteers from different organisations are introduced and trained to be Heritage Buddies. A co-production approach is recommended where the volunteers are fully involved in developing how the role will work in their particular context and situation.

- This co-production approach will ensure that the buddy role is clearly defined with boundaries, expectations and responsibilities established for each participating organisation.
- Working with organisations that have a volunteer lead and a strong volunteer infrastructure is recommended. If these are not in place, then consideration should be given to how these can be developed prior to any organisation taking part in a buddying scheme.
- Heritage organisation volunteering policy and practice may need reviewing to develop so suitable for more 'involved' buddy roles and consider issues such as safeguarding, duty of care and lone working.
- The volunteer lead role in the heritage organisation is vital to success of a Heritage Buddies scheme. They will be involved in recruiting buddies from existing pools of volunteers, or developing the role for new volunteers, training new buddies and facilitating referrals once a Heritage Buddies scheme is in place.
- Consider the role and value of developing heritage volunteer buddying as a means of existing volunteers supporting new or prospective volunteers into heritage settings. Volunteering as an activity can be promoted as socially prescribed activity.
- Accessibility challenges to heritage assets and activities need to be addressed and are crucial to the success of a buddying project, especially if the aim is to reach under-served populations and people with limited illness and/or mobility. This could include charges, travel, mobility restrictions, physical access and social/cultural perceptions.
- There is considerable value to community outreach activity and networking between heritage organisations, befriending/community groups and health to connect and build relationships can help to build awareness and understanding of what is available, explore and overcome barriers to access and facilitate interest. This outreach work could be a role for a Heritage Buddy sharing their experiences of the heritage organisation. Many volunteers who attending the training in Nottingham were skilled in this type of activity and keen to meet people and enthuse about their organisation.
- For a befriending/community organisation a specific 'heritage buddy' role might be too niche. Often befrienders work organically to build relationships and support broad interests of their clients. However they may be open to information on and guidance on access for heritage assets for their clients as part of their wider support. These organisations may also be interested in group visits and access to heritage assets and play an organisational heritage buddy role.
- Some Social Prescribing Link Workers welcomed detailed referral information about the availability of Heritage Buddies at specific heritage assets. They preferred to pass this full referral information onto their patient who can then make their own enquiries. Videos from heritage organisations as warm introduction and welcome to patients explaining how to access their Heritage Buddies can be useful and also be used as a promotional tool. We would also recommend building relationships with a number of Social Prescribing Link Workers in a system and encourage them to share information with their colleagues through their internal communication channels.
- Explore collaborative opportunities with related projects to maximise opportunities to develop and share resources, networks and communication channels. This may support future sustainability of a scheme.

Appendix 1

Heritage organisations actively engaged with project

- Newstead Abbey (from existing volunteers and new volunteers being recruited)
- Nottingham Castle (from existing volunteers and new volunteers being recruited)
- National Justice Museum (from new volunteers being recruited)

- York Archaeology Project, Nottingham (interest from volunteers but dependent on funding being secured and volunteer lead back from maternity leave – will revisit in 2024)

Befriending/Community Organisations actively engaged with project

- Refugee Roots: helps asylum seekers and refugees build relationships and navigate the complexities of building a new life in the UK
- Nottingham Women's Centre
- Improving Lives: improving the lives of people with complex health and social needs in Nottingham
- Nottinghamshire Chinese Welfare Association:

Some heritage organisations expressed interest in the project but did not wish to take forward the development of a heritage buddy in their organisation for a mixture of reasons including no capacity in volunteering workforce, no perceived need for the role, organisation not in a position to develop this, other accessibility issues to address. These organisations were happy to be listed as 'destination' venues for the project.

- Bromley House Library
- STAA based at St Ann's Allotments
- Green's Windmill and Science Centre
- William Booth Birthplace Museum (Salvation Army)
- Canal Heritage Centre, Beeston Lock
- Canal and River Trust

Appendix 2

William Booth Museum Open visit

Nottingham CVS @NottinghamCVS · Dec 4

Thank you @WmBoothMuseum for a fascinating insight into the history of The Salvation Army - organised as part of our Heritage Buddies scheme!

To find out more about the #HeritageBuddies project visit buff.ly/3rgUT5c

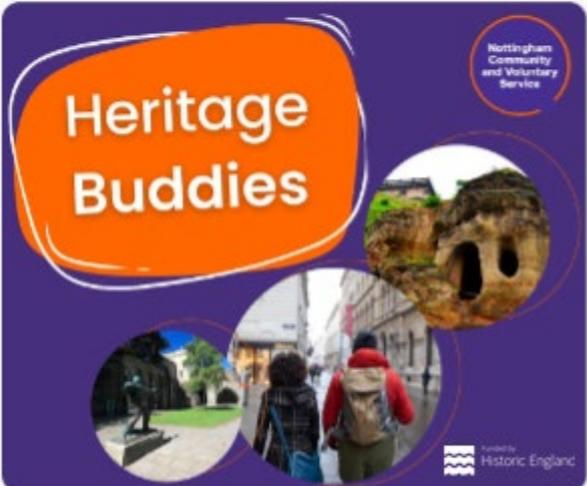
#socialprescribing
@RefugeeRoots @HistoricEngland



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Nottingham CVS @NottinghamCVS · Nov 7

A big thank you 🙌 to @JusticeMuseum for hosting the recent Heritage in Nottingham session; helping support peoples' health and wellbeing, and widen #community access to local #heritage. This is at the core of our Heritage Buddies project!



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