

# Heritage Buddies

## Toolkit

**A guide to setting up and running a Heritage Buddies scheme**



A Nottingham Community & Voluntary Service partnership project with Historic England and the National Academy for Social Prescribing



National  
Academy  
for Social  
Prescribing



Funded by  
Historic England



Nottingham  
Community  
and Voluntary  
Service

# Contents

- Introduction
- What are Heritage Buddies?
- Wellbeing benefits for connecting to heritage
- Benefits of a Heritage Buddies scheme
- What is social prescribing?
- Heritage Buddies and Social Prescribing pathways
- What a Heritage Buddy role could look like
- Principles for developing a Heritage Buddies scheme
- Models to consider for a Heritage Buddies scheme
- Step by step process to setting up a Heritage Buddies scheme
  - Step 1: Scoping and set-up
  - Step 2: Co-design and co-production
  - Step 3: Implementation
  - Step 4: Evaluation
- Resources list
- Contact and references



# Introduction

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.

This toolkit has been developed following a pilot project delivered by Nottingham Community Voluntary Service, NCVS for Historic England. The aim of the pilot was 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 a Heritage Buddies scheme.

Heritage Buddies 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 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.

# What are Heritage Buddies?

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.

**Heritage Buddies** are 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.



I am committed to helping people to have a positive experience and recognise the barriers which may exist for people...places can be daunting"  
Heritage Volunteer



# Wellbeing benefits for connecting to Heritage

Growing evidence for the wellbeing benefits for connecting to our heritage and historic environment

- Greater connection to a place or community
- Connect to meaning and purpose in life
- Increases self esteem
- Social engagement
- Sharing experiences
- Helps reduce isolation and loneliness
- Feelings of belonging
- Helps brain health through learning and reminiscence
- Physical exercise from a venue visit or historic walk

Source: Historic England



# The benefits of a Heritage Buddies scheme



## Participant

---

- Improved health and wellbeing
- Ability to overcome barriers to participation
- Reducing social isolation
- Community connection
- Supports the 'It matters to me' conversation
- Personal growth



## Volunteer buddy

---

- Personal satisfaction
- Volunteer role development
- Improved health
- Sharing their interest and enthusiasm
- Life skills and employability



## Referrer

---

- Increases capacity
- Increases/sustains participation
- Improves connectivity between the heritage and health sector
- Builds local knowledge, awareness and understanding of heritage assets

**"I recognise first-hand the health benefits of volunteering in heritage"**  
**Heritage Volunteer**

# The benefits of a Heritage Buddies scheme?



## Heritage organisation

---

- Reaching new and more diverse audiences
- Attract and widen volunteer pool
- Volunteer development + retention
- Improved volunteer practices
- Increased awareness of asset and activities especially with health sector



## Befriending/community organisation

---

- Increased awareness and knowledge of local heritage
- Confidence to facilitate visits
- Increased community connection and integration
- Widening options to support clients/members



## Heritage sector

---

- Improving the access to heritage assets and activities
- More people using, valuing, protecting and advocating for heritage

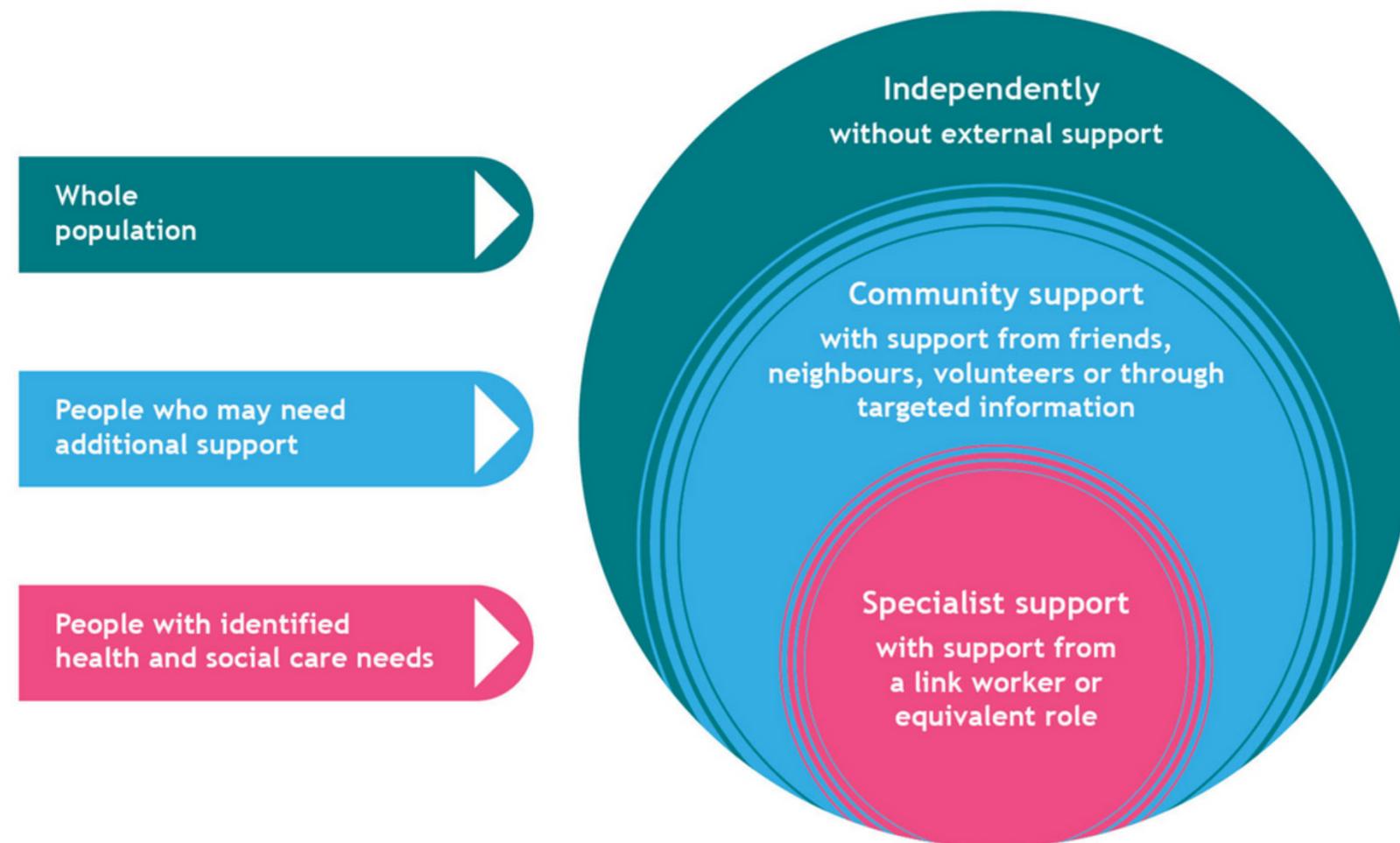
**"wonderful to have conversations about heritage"  
Befriender**

# What is Social Prescribing?

Social prescribing connects people via different pathways, including link workers or community-based referrals, to activities, groups and services in their community and beyond to meet practical, social and emotional needs that affect their health and wellbeing.



The model below illustrates the role that social prescribing can play in engaging and supporting different groups within the community.



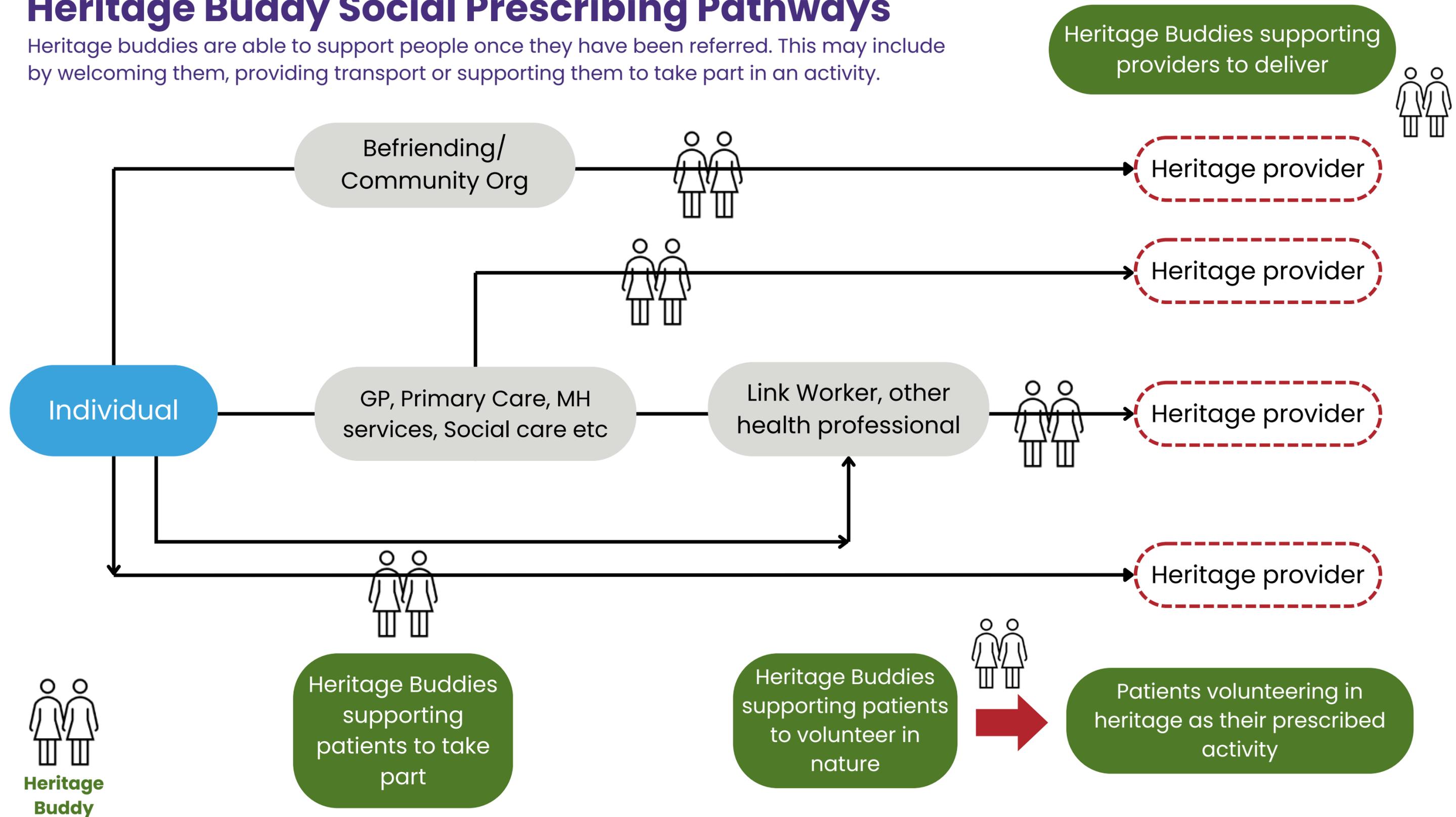
In England, Social Prescribing can involve a GP or another health professional referring patients to a Social Prescribing Link Worker. Link Workers work closely with people to understand their needs and develop a personalised plan. They then connect them to activities, groups and services in their community and beyond. This could include a programme run by heritage organisations.

As well as Link Workers, there are a range of other ways that people might be connected to heritage programmes that benefits their health and wellbeing.

People may be referred by other health roles, by community groups, by volunteer connectors – or they may hear about the scheme through friends and family.

# Heritage Buddy Social Prescribing Pathways

Heritage buddies are able to support people once they have been referred. This may include by welcoming them, providing transport or supporting them to take part in an activity.



# What a Heritage Buddy role could look like

<b>Communication support</b>	Provide the first welcome to the person that you are helping to get to heritage sites and activities. Maybe start with a phone call or a friendly meet and greet to provide a personalised welcome. This could involve practical steps such as researching bus time and routes.
<b>Travel support</b>	Provide help to get to heritage sites and activities. It could involve meeting them and travelling with them to the activity – and possibly accompanying them back afterwards.
<b>Activity support</b>	Encouragement and sharing what you do in your existing volunteering with someone who would otherwise not have the confidence to be involved. Involve the practical side of your heritage own volunteering Share your interest and enthusiasm for heritage .



# Principles for developing a Heritage Buddies Scheme

- Fully involve volunteer leads and volunteers from heritage organisations in the design and development of the scheme.
- Work with organisations that have a volunteering lead and a strong volunteering infrastructure.
- Consider issues such as safeguarding, duty of care and lone working when developing a scheme.
- Build in sufficient time and resource for the initial engagement with potential partners.
- A single model approach will not work for all organisations. Be flexible and adapt the model to meet the requirements of different organisations.
- A co-production approach with stakeholders helps secure buy-in and commitment from heritage organisations demonstrating how involvement in a scheme could align with their own objectives (such as growing their visitor numbers, diversifying their visitor profile)
- Map out and consider how to address specific barriers to accessing heritage - these could be physical, socio-economic, or social barriers to engaging with local heritage places and put actions into place to reduce these before putting into place any social prescribing activities.

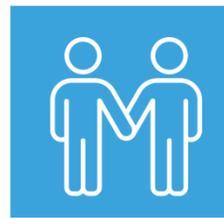


# Principles for developing a Heritage Buddies Scheme

- A co-production approach will ensure that the buddy role is clearly defined with boundaries, expectations and responsibilities established for each participating organisation.
- Community outreach activity and networking between participating heritage organisations, befriending/community and health professionals helps to develop relationships and build awareness and understanding of what is available.
- Clearly define and communicate how heritage activities can contribute health and wellbeing outcomes, including mental health, social connectedness and overall community well-being.
- Consideration of seasonality and the availability of heritage activities and site opening times is important.
- Look at including wide variety of heritage access points in a scheme. This could be walks around cemeteries, allotments or along a canal towpath - these may be more accessible and sustainable for some people.



# Models to consider for Heritage Buddies



**Befriending/community organisation**  
Recruits, trains, hosts and supports  
Supports a specific client/community group



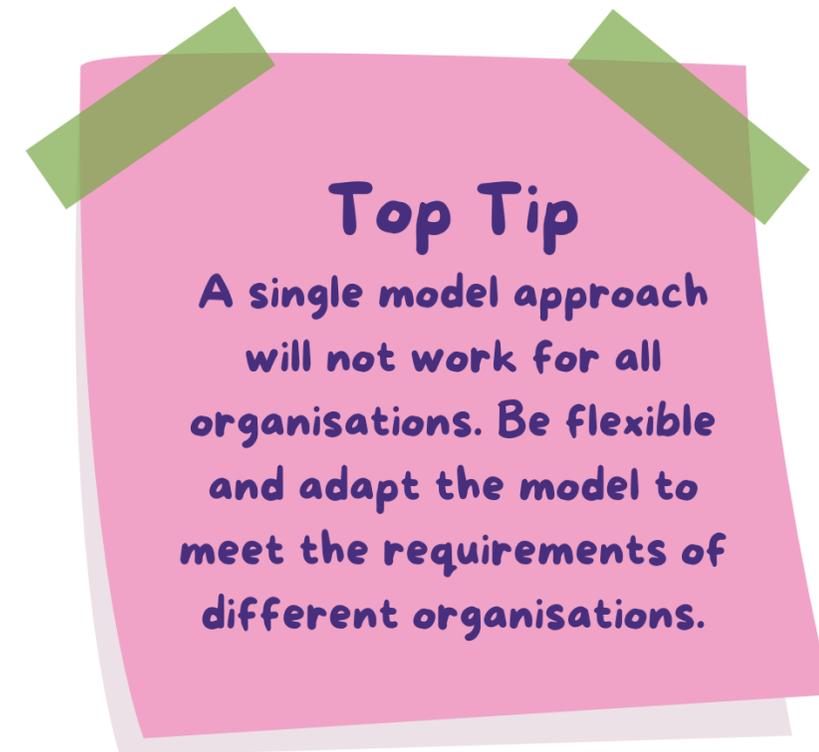
**Heritage organisation**  
Recruits, trains, hosts and supports  
Providing a warm welcome  
Participant can become a volunteer



**Local infrastructure organisation**  
Recruits, trains, hosts and supports  
Pool of Heritage Buddies



**Health provider/PCN/SPLW provider**  
Recruits, trains, hosts and supports  
Focus on a specific population



## Top Tip

**A single model approach will not work for all organisations. Be flexible and adapt the model to meet the requirements of different organisations.**



## Support organisations

Meeting space

Training

Transport

Heritage information/directory

# Step by step process to setting up a Heritage Buddies scheme

This section provides a list of suggested activities under each step of the process.

**Step 1:** Scoping and set-up

**Step 2:** Co-design and co-production

**Step 3:** Implementation

**Step 4:** Evaluation



# Step by step process to setting up a Heritage Buddies scheme - Step 1: Scoping and set up

- Make the case locally for a heritage buddies scheme by:
  - linking it to the local health priorities for your Integrated Care Partnership, ICP, place or neighbourhood. How could a scheme respond to and address these priorities, needs and issues?
  - identifying how a scheme could help potential partner organisations achieve their aims whether a heritage organisation, a befriending organisation, a community group or a social prescribing link worker team.
- Consider what costs might be associated with a scheme and how these will be met, perhaps through funding or provided, in kind, by your partner organisations.
  - Costs could include scheme administration and co-ordination, training, resources for buddies, DBS checks, communications, volunteering expenses and networking.
- Start to engage with stakeholders and set up a steering group with representatives from your partner organisations.

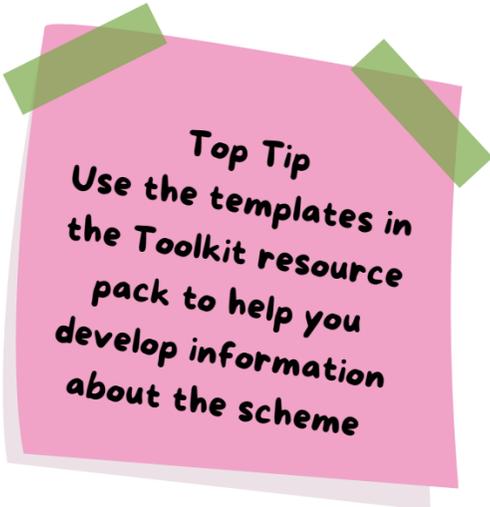


**Top Tip**  
Ensure you include the  
volunteer leads from  
participating  
organisations in your  
steering group



# Step by step process to setting up a Heritage Buddies scheme - Step 1: Scoping and set up

- Map local heritage assets and provision in your place.
- Start to engage with heritage organisations, befriending and community organisations to introduce them to the scheme.
- Hold a series of engagement workshops with interested stakeholders identified from your mapping and initial engagement activity. This can be helpful to introduce the concept of Heritage Buddies, start to explore how this could work for different organisations and gain an understanding of who and how different stakeholders could be involved in a scheme.
- Provide information about the Heritage Buddy role and opportunity for heritage organisations and befriending/community organisations to share with their volunteers.



**Top Tip**  
Use the templates in the Toolkit resource pack to help you develop information about the scheme



# Step by step process to setting up a Heritage Buddies scheme - Step 2: Co-design and co-production

- Work with the volunteer leads to develop the Heritage Buddy model and role description that will work for their organisation. Explore with them how this fits into their existing volunteering practice.
- Hold detailed design workshops with your partner organisations where you can explore and test the emerging models and role descriptions. Include some of the volunteers who are interested in becoming Heritage Buddies.
- Develop training packages for the Heritage Buddies. Use feedback from the introductory and design workshops to help you develop these. You may need to tailor your training for each organisation that you are working with.
- Identify any other training or learning that might be helpful for the Buddies, for example, mental health awareness training.



# Step by step process to setting up a Heritage Buddies scheme - Step 3: Implementation

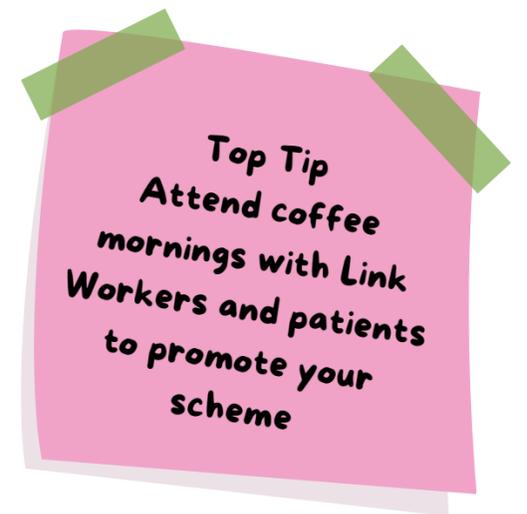
- Deliver the training to the volunteers in each organisation. This could be in person or online or a combination of both. You may need to spread the training across several sessions. Ensure that the volunteer lead is involved in the training so that they can deliver it themselves to new volunteers in the future.
- Develop resources to support buddying activity. This could include heritage signposting and destination information, safeguarding guidance and transport links.
- Engage with Social Prescribing Link Workers and other health professionals to raise awareness of the buddying opportunities and provide information on how they and their patients can benefit.
- Develop a Heritage guide providing information on the local heritage provision that includes accessibility guidance for befriending/community groups to use with their clients/members.

**Top Tip**  
Deliver the training at a heritage site - helps to raise awareness of what is on offer



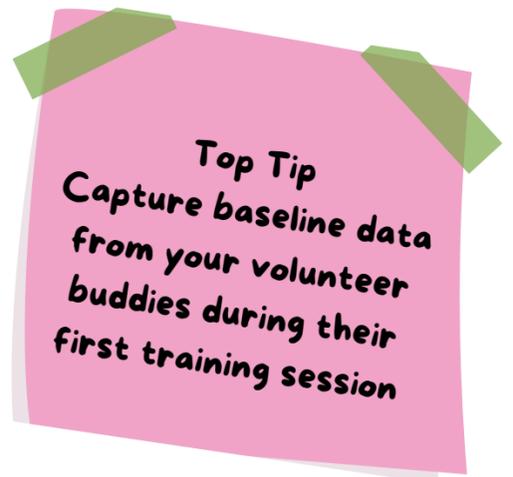
# Step by step process to setting up a Heritage Buddies scheme - Step 3: Implementation

- Share specific referral information with the local social prescribing network giving clear guidance on which organisations are taking part in the Heritage Buddies scheme and how to access.
- Consider delivering heritage awareness sessions with befriending/community organisations to encourage their engagement with local heritage.
- Consider facilitating visits for volunteer leads, volunteers, service users from befriending organisations, community group leads and social prescribing link workers to heritage venues in your place. This can be helpful to raise awareness and build relationships across your Heritage Buddies network.



# Step by step process to setting up a Heritage Buddies scheme - **Step 4: Evaluation**

- Design your evaluation framework at the start of your scheme. Consider developing a logic model to help you define inputs, outputs and outcomes. Develop and share this with your scheme stakeholders.
- Use a combination of surveys, case studies, one to one interviews and focus groups to capture both quantitative and qualitative data.
- Capture the experience of the organisations and volunteers involved as well as the participants.



# Toolkit Resources

This toolkit includes some resources to help you set up and run your Heritage Buddies scheme. The material is taken from a Heritage Buddies pilot run in Nottingham. Please use these resources as templates and amend the content to reflect your local place and context.

- Heritage Buddies Project overview
- Heritage Buddies example role profile
- Supporting you to enjoy: information for participant on offer available at heritage site
- Referral information for social prescribing link workers on offer available at heritage site
- Heritage Buddies training handout
- Heritage Buddies introductory/training resources



# Heritage and wellbeing: resources and further reading

- [Heritage and Wellbeing](#) (Historic England's website) – more case studies and resource
- [Heritage and Social Prescribing](#) (NASP website subpage dedicated to heritage)
- [Wellbeing and Heritage Strategy](#) (Historic England, 2022)
- [Heritage and Social Prescribing](#) (Historic England, 2022)
- [Wellbeing and the Historic Environment](#) (Historic England, 2018) – policy, case studies and framework
- [Evidence on social prescribing](#) (NASP, 2022)
- [Social Prescribing and the potential of Historic England's local delivery](#) (Historic England's website, 2020) – case studies and recommendations for HE
- [Heritage, Health and Wellbeing](#) (The Heritage Alliance, 2019) – case studies from the wider sector
- [Heritage and Social Prescribing webinar June 2020](#)
- [Nature and Heritage Buddying webinar Feb 2024](#)
- [Heritage and social prescribing article HE Research September, 2021](#)
- [Heritage and Wellbeing Special Edition](#) – Historic England Research February 2022 (and [online edition](#))
- [AMPHORA Guidelines for involving people with mental health issues in heritage projects](#) – October 2022
- [Social Prescribing resources](#) – webinars and case studies (NASP website)
- [Heritage Special episode from Podcast on Prescription](#) (Dec 2021)



# Heritage and wellbeing: contact details

## Historic England

Desi Gradinarova

Senior Policy Adviser – Wellbeing and Heritage

email: [desi.gradinarova@historicengland.org.uk](mailto:desi.gradinarova@historicengland.org.uk)

## Nottingham Community and Voluntary Service

Amanda Chambers

Health and Wellbeing Programme Manager

email: [amandac@nottinghamcvs.co.uk](mailto:amandac@nottinghamcvs.co.uk)

A Nottingham Community & Voluntary Service  
partnership project with Historic England and the  
National Academy for Social Prescribing

