

A project of



# Clover

March 2021 to June 2022

# Evaluation Report

The Clover Partnership



Herefordshire  
Wildlife Trust



Supported by the Thriving Communities Fund, made possible thanks to



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## Introduction

The Clover Project resulted from a successful partnership bid to the Thriving Communities Fund in January 2021 to run a social prescribing project (subsequently named Clover) in Ross-on-Wye and the surrounding HR9 area.

The project was coordinated by Ross-on-Wye Community Development Trust (the lead partner; Ross CDT) on behalf of a partnership which comprises five other core partners: Active Herefordshire & Worcestershire (Active HW); Herefordshire Wildlife Trust (HWT); ignite CIC; Rural Media (RM); and Taurus Healthcare (who manage the Herefordshire Social Prescribing Team).

The project's success has depended on the involvement of a much wider group of stakeholders beyond the core partnership, including:

- Referring agencies, statutory and voluntary, who were invited to nominate individuals for priority booking onto Clover activities
- Course providers, from the voluntary, public and private sectors
- Venue providers
- Lastly, and most importantly, Clover participants.

The evaluation strategy set out in the Project Plan was two-stranded. An evaluative film, produced by the Clover core partner Rural Media, would be complemented by a written report. This document should therefore be read in conjunction with the film, which can be viewed at [this link](#).

The Clover Project would not have worked without the enthusiasm and goodwill of many individuals and organisations in the HR9 area and Herefordshire more widely. We would like to thank all of those involved for their help in establishing the project, keeping it going over the last sixteen months, giving us feedback to help us understand what works well and what could be improved, and helping to spread the word. Ross CDT would especially like to thank:

- Our Clover core partners: Active Herefordshire & Worcestershire, Herefordshire Wildlife Trust, ignite CIC, Rural Media, and Taurus Healthcare for their ideas, wise counsel and positivity throughout the project.
- The funders for their faith in our ideas and support throughout the project: the Thriving Communities Fund; Herefordshire Council; South & West Herefordshire Primary Care Network; Ross-on-Wye Town Council; and Herefordshire Community First.
- The many course providers whose goodwill and willingness to share their expertise has been crucial to the project's success.
- The venue providers who welcomed our participants and worked so flexibly to accommodate us (especially Ross Community Garden, the Larruperz Centre and the Venue).

- And the activity participants whose enthusiasm and affection for the programme has demonstrated very forcefully the value of the project over the last year and its potential to deliver similar value into the future.

## The Clover concept

The Clover acronym was developed in the pre-planning period of the project. The partners agreed that the acronym encapsulated both what the project was trying to achieve (a greater sense of well-being for individual participants (and therefore being “In Clover”) and the ways and means by which well-being was to be achieved:

- Create
- Learn
- (Be) Outdoors
- Volunteer
- Exercise
- Relate

This classification of activities was mapped to the Five Ways to Wellbeing (NHS, 2022) to demonstrate the congruence of the two classifications. In terms of marketing and engagement it was decided that the Clover classification had advantages for the project over the “Five Ways” approach, because it could concisely convey the range of activities available, whilst offering attractive branding opportunities for better community engagement.

Table 1: Mapping of CLOVER acronym to the Five Ways of Wellbeing

	<b>C</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>R</b>
	Create	Learn	Outdoors	Volunteer	Exercise	Relate
<b>Connect</b>				X		X
<b>Be Active</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Take Notice</b>	X	X	X			
<b>Learn</b>	X	X				
<b>Give</b>				X		X

## The project workstreams

The Project Plan set out seven workstreams, which will be reported on in turn.

### A: Clover Steering Committee

The core partners attended regular steering group meetings throughout the initial and programme planning phases of the project. Given the distances involved in this rural county, and due to the Covid-related restrictions in place at project start, these were all held online. Initially fortnightly, meetings reverted to monthly once the initial programme had been launched and a Project Manager appointed. Once the final programme had been launched in April 2022 regular meetings ceased but communication continued by email and phone to the project end date.

The [Clover Partnership agreement](#) was used to set the terms of reference of the steering committee. This included agreement and monitoring of procedures in respect of safeguarding, health & safety, insurance requirements, as well as finance procedures.

There was client representation on the Steering Group, although continuity in this proved difficult to sustain. A representative from Crossroads Herefordshire (a group promoting the interests and welfare of those with caring responsibilities) attended early meetings in that capacity but then was appointed as a local social prescriber, and thus subsequently attended as a core partner representative, with her successor in the Crossroads role also attending later meetings. An early Clover participant who gained the confidence to offer to lead courses in later programmes contributed to some steering group meetings also.

Dates were set to coincide with the key decision points identified in the Project Plan. Agendas were circulated in advance and the meetings were usually minuted by the Ross-on-Wye Community Development Trust Finance and Admin Officer, or by a committee member in the case of absence. Once appointed, the Clover Project Manager reported to the Steering Group on the progress of the project.

### B: Clover website and menu

The Clover website/menu is a key component of the project. The aim, which was successfully achieved, was to develop a simple tool to collect information from activity providers and present this in a menu format so that suitable activities can be accessed by social prescribers and their patients, as well as the public. This is the Clover website at [www.clover-hr9.org.uk](http://www.clover-hr9.org.uk).

It was not possible to develop the website before the start of the Summer 2021 programme, but an early version was launched on schedule in August 2021, to coincide with the publicity period for the Autumn programme. For each programme period, there was a two-week priority booking window for social prescribers and other referrers, prior to opening bookings to the public. This was to ensure that referred participants would be able to access popular courses.

Since its launch, the site has been used to advertise well-being activities in the HR9 area, whether these were initiated and funded by Clover or not. After June 2022 there will be no further Clover-funded activities, but the site will continue to advertise both paid-for and free activities run by other providers. The site will be managed as a free community

resource by Ross-on-Wye Community Development Trust. RossCDT will continue to use its social media channels to promote the site and the courses and activities advertised there.

### C: Marketing & Engagement

The Clover website was promoted via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Next Door to maximise the exposure of the site. Conscious that not all members of our target demographic would be social media users, we also promoted the Clover programmes using printed media. As well as paid-for advertising and free editorial publicity in the Ross Gazette and Hereford Times, Clover literature was delivered by RossCDT volunteers through 6500 letterboxes in Ross and some surrounding parishes at the start of each Clover programme, as part of the delivery of our regular newsletter, Ross Neighbourhood News. The flyers carried information on how to register online, or via the RossCDT telephone helpline.

Face-to-face publicity events took place from time to time. In May 2021 a Clover launch event was held at the Market Place in Ross, but extreme wind, rain and cold on the day limited its effectiveness. Later in the project stalls were sometimes held as part of larger events, such as Ross Town Council's Festival of Well-Being in September 2021. It was noticeable at these later events that Clover had already achieved a good level of brand recognition, with the majority of local people enquiring at the stall saying that they were already aware of Clover, due to the letterbox or social media publicity.

It was noticed during the first two programmes (Summer and Autumn 2021) that some courses experienced drop out after the first sessions, due to participants having decided the activity was not for them. For the two 2022 programmes, we therefore held *Come and Try It* "taster days" to allow participants to try out activities before registering for a full course.

In the final weeks of the project in June 2022 an *In Clover* event was held in Ross, to which all Clover stakeholders were invited (core partners, course providers, referrers and participants). There was a particularly strong turnout from Clover participants, who were about two thirds of the 35 attendees. The event was an opportunity to review the Clover Project, explore and capture the ways in which it has increased well-being in Ross-on-Wye, and consider ways forward to support social prescribing and community well-being. It was also the premiere the [Clover evaluation film](#).

During the event participants were encouraged to share their "Clover Stories" with another attendee and to record these in writing. The Clover Stories are set out in Appendix 2 and analysed in the next section.

### D: Evaluation

As noted above, there are two strands to the Clover internal evaluation, which itself runs in parallel with the Wavehill evaluation. These are the Rural Media film and this Clover Evaluation Report.

The [Clover film](#) was shot over several days at different stages of the project. Shooting was on location in Ross and aimed to unpack the aims of the project and the extent to which they were being achieved. Participant testimonies were key to this, but the footage includes interviews with some Clover partners also.

This *Clover Evaluation report* was coordinated by Ross CDT as the lead partner, with input invited from each of the core partners. Evaluation data comprises:

- Course registration data, including participant characteristics
- Pre- and post-course reported well-being scores from course participants, using the ONS4 methodology
- The Clover stories (see Appendix 2)
- Feedback from core partners and course providers (see Appendices 2 and 3 but feedback was drawn from across the whole project, not just the final reflections).

#### *Course registration data*

These data were used to determine if the Clover Project has successfully recruited participants from its two of its target groups (the over-65s and those in rural isolation). Data to identify carers was inconclusive as the question asked at registration was insufficiently precise. However, anecdotal evidence and conversations with participants did indicate that carers made up a significant minority of the total registrations.

For context, the demography of Herefordshire is less racially and ethnically diverse than that of the UK as a whole. The 2011 census showed that only 6% of the county's population was of BAME origin. Of this 6%, 3.9% was accounted for by the category "white: other" (i.e. not British; Irish; Gypsy or Irish Traveller) ([Understanding Herefordshire, n.d.](#)).

The county also has a significantly older population than the UK, with over a quarter of the population aged 65 or over. This age group is projected to grow rapidly in coming years and the proportion of over 85s to grow even faster ([Understanding Herefordshire, n.d.](#)).

There were 233 course registrations during the project on activities which were directly organised by Clover. The analysis below is based on these registrations as we have a full set of data for these. There were a further 67 registrations on activities which we advertised and subsidised, but did not organise directly. These included Paddleboarding taster sessions and Seated Exercise classes at Walford Parish Hall. Because our data for these participants is limited we have not included it in the analysis below, but have added the limited data we have onto the Wavehill Participant Profile Data file, bringing the total participants listed there to exactly 300.

Of the 233 course registrations we controlled, 164 divulged their age at the point of registration and the breakdown is tabulated below, showing that over two thirds of these registrations were from those over 60.

Table 2: The age distribution of Clover course registrations

Age bracket	Number of registrations	Percentage
16-24	1	0.6%
25-49	28	17.1%
50-59	29	17.7%
60-69	68	41.5%
70-79	33	19.5%
80-89	5	3.0%

All registrations divulged their sex and these are tabulated in Table 3. Participants were predominantly female and it would be important for any future programmes to consider why this is and how activities could be devised to encourage greater participation from males.

Table 3: The sex distribution of Clover course registrations

Sex	Number of registrations	Percentage
Female	211	90.6%
Male	21	9.0%
Other	1	0.4%

All participants had to provide contact details, including a postcode, at the point of registration. However, some registered participants then registered their friends or acquaintances using their own address, so the address in the data may not always be that of the actual participant. Assuming the data are correct, 67 of the 233 registrations were from outside Ross, Table 4 showing the extent of the project's reach into the surrounding rural areas.

Table 4: The distribution of Clover course registrations between Ross and the surrounding rural areas

Contact address	Number of registrations	Percentage
Within Ross town	166	71.2%
Outside of Ross	67	28.8%

Overall the registration data show that Clover was effectively targeting older people and those living in the rural parts of HR9.

The registration data also allowed tracking of referrals, although it is likely that these data are incomplete. This is because informal referrals might not be recorded and also that where referred applicants were registering themselves they may not have revealed that they had been referred or prescribed. So the referral figures in Table 6 below are likely to be underestimated.

At the start of the programme in March 2021 there was one part-time social prescriber to cover the whole of the South & West Herefordshire Primary Care Network, of which HR9



contains a significant proportion of the population but a minority of the land area. However, the staff member was on secondment to the Covid vaccination programme, which accounts for the zero prescription rate in the first programme period.

New appointments were subsequently made and currently there are two Social Prescribers covering the PCN. They have been prescribing not only onto Clover courses but also requesting befriending help from Ross CDT's Ross Good Neighbours project for housebound clients in need of social contact. Table 5 shows prescription and referral rates growing as the project progressed.

It was always the intention that Clover courses would be available to members of the public for self-referral or just enjoyment, as well as for those referred by social prescribers or other agencies. It was felt that this approach would be non-stigmatising, as well as opening up wider possibilities for forming new social relationships for participants than would have been the case if course had been available on prescription only.

Table 5: Clover referrals by programme

Programme	Number of registrations	Social prescriber referrals	Referrals from other agencies	Total referrals
<b>Summer 2021</b>	23	0	3	3
<b>Autumn 2021</b>	35	2	2	4
<b>Spring 2022</b>	102	3	2	5
<b>Summer 2022</b>	73	3	5	8
<b>TOTALS</b>	233	8	12	20

#### *Wellbeing scores*

ONS4 data was collected at the point of registration, however interpretation of this data is complicated by several factors:

- As part of the data consent process participants were given the choice of opting out at the registration stage, or subsequently. So the pre-course data are incomplete.
- At the end of the course participants were asked to answer the ONS4 questions again. Response rates were variable, despite reminders by email and in some cases follow up by phone. As time elapsed between the course-end and the questions being answered grew longer, the relevance of the answers to the course itself diminished.
- Where registrations were made by referrers, or friends of the actual participant, the questions could not be answered
- The small numbers on each course (between 6-10) meant that statistical analysis course by course would not be meaningful and this has not been attempted.
- The answers to the questions could be affected by many factors or life events, other than course participation.

Bearing in mind these factors, comparing the pre- and post-course scores for those does generate positive scores for three out of the four ONS4 questions, as Table 6 shows.

Table 6: Difference in the average pre- and post-course ONS4 scores across all registrations for which there is complete data

ONS4 question	Increase/decrease in average score
Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?	1.52
Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile?	1.15
Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?	0.92
Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday?	-0.73

### *Clover Stories*

The Clover stories which were collected at the *In Clover* event were combined with a small number of stories from non-attenders that were submitted online. All are set out in Appendix 2. The lessons from the stories are:

- That there was strong enthusiasm for the Clover project from stakeholders, especially participants
- There is a clear opportunity to support a Clover legacy group which, if established, could take forward the concept by organising similar provision into the future
- Clover has been of particular benefit to some of those recently arrived in Ross (which is growing rapidly due to new housing developments on the edge of town). This suggests future initiatives should bear in mind the needs of this group, as well as the originally envisaged target groups (over-65s, carers and rurally isolated).
- There had been a strong social element to many of the courses, and the new acquaintances and friendships resulting have been valued by participants.
- Although most course registrations did not come through social prescribers, self-referrals and referrals by other agencies had resulted in participation by those who found significant benefit in terms to their mental health and well-being, perhaps diverting them from contact with primary care services
- That the courses were free was an important factor in allowing some to participate
- Course providers recognise the benefits of the courses to the wellbeing of participants, and especially the importance of the social element.

### *Feedback from core partners*

The final reflections of core partners are presented in Appendix 3. The main points arising are:

- There is a recognised tension between making courses accessible to all and keeping group sizes small in order to provide a safe environment for those who may be socially anxious.
- The relatively slow start to the project paid off, as learning from the early programmes was used to shape later course provision.
- The project may not have succeeded as well as it had intended in the support provided to those who are socially anxious and may be easily discouraged from initial attendance. Volunteer befrienders were recruited and available but participants who might have benefitted from this did not respond as expected to the relevant question in the registration process.
- Working relationships have been strengthened across stakeholders, including core partners, course providers, venue management teams and course participants. The online meeting approach within the Clover core partnership worked well in terms of Covid avoidance and the travel distances involved in this very rural county. However, more face-to-face meetings might have helped to build even stronger relationships. In a future project it might be worth considering training for core partners in effective relationship building.

### **E: Volunteer recruitment and management**

Ross-on-Wye Community Development Trust recruited and managed volunteers for specific roles on the project, although the demand for volunteer assistance to enable participation on the programme was rather less than originally anticipated. Volunteers who were involved included:

- The Ross Neighbour Buddies, a network of patch-based volunteers who provide befriending, practical help and signposting in the town. They distributed Clover literature to publicise the four Clover programmes.
- One outcome of the closer working relationship between RossCDT and the local social prescribing team was an increase in requests for buddy support for vulnerable adults from the prescribers. The Neighbourhood Buddies were able to pick up this extra workload, which mostly comprised requests for at-home befriending and some shopping.
- The Ross CDT telephone helpline team answered queries and took bookings from people who were not able to book online.

Volunteers were successfully recruited, screened and where appropriate DBS checked for the originally envisaged roles set out below, but there was little demand for these services,

despite their availability being prominently displayed during the Clover course registration process:

- Volunteer drivers, to assist those without access to transport to access activities
- Volunteer sitters, to provide respite for carers so that they can attend activities
- Befrienders, to accompany those who lack confidence to sessions.

#### F: Partnership Learning

Some of the project budget was allocated for skills development of project partners, course providers and other voluntary groups in HR9 to enable them better to provide well-being activities that would meet the needs of the Clover target groups. Suggestions and requests for other training topics were invited but little response was received.

However, an early offer of First Aid and Mental Health First Aid training proved very popular and these courses (5 First Aid; 2 Mental Health First Aid) were well-attended and well-evaluated, particularly by the voluntary sector in HR9. An Adult Safeguarding course was also provided.

Clover partners were conscious of the need to reflect on their learning over the project as a whole, and this was a standing item on the Clover Steering Committee agenda. End of project reflections from project core partners are included as Appendix 3.

#### G: Clover activities

The activities were programmed into four 12-week windows, each with its own publicity and planning schedule and these are set out in Appendix 1.

## The Clover Legacy

Throughout the Clover Project the partners have been planning for the post-funding period. The impacts of the project on social prescribing and the visibility of wellbeing activities will be sustained in the HR9 area into the future in the following ways.

### The Clover website

In the initial funding bid, Ross CDT undertook to maintain the Clover website into the future as a free resource for well-being activity providers to publicise their HR9 offerings to social prescribers, statutory and voluntary referring organisations and the public. The extent to which activities that were not funded by Clover have advertised on the site during the course of the project suggests that this will be a useful resource for the foreseeable future.

### The Clover participants group

The *In Clover* event held in June 2022 demonstrated the strength of support for the Clover Project from those who had attended Clover activities. It is hoped that Ross CDT will be able to support the formation of an independent Clover group to identify the need for future courses and to make these happen. Future activities will be able to be based on the strengths identified in the Clover Project programmes whilst learning from identified issues, such as the apparent relative lack of attractiveness of the activities to male participants.

### Working relationships

The Clover Project has strengthened relationships between an extended network comprising social prescribers, the Clover core partners, course providers, other referring groups, activity venues and the course participants. It is anticipated that future activities will be enabled by these new relationships, and will in return strengthen and extend them. These new relationships are particularly timely given the introduction of Integrated Care Systems to NHS primary care provision from July 2022.

### Funding opportunities

The Clover brand now has a track record of effective provision, relationship building, partnership learning. In the immediate future we hope to add participant empowerment to these strengths by supporting the establishment of a Clover Participant group. It is hoped this record of achievement will be advantageous in seeking funding for future activities to meet the need for community-based wellbeing activities that have been clearly demonstrated through the Clover Project.

# APPENDIX 1

## Clover activities by programme

Numbers of registered participants in brackets

### Summer 2021

Nordic Walking (12)

Mindfulness Weaving (5)

Wellbeing In Nature (6)

### Autumn 2021

Mindfulness Weaving (6)

Nordic Walking (6)

Hand Building with Clay (8)

Calming Crochet (6)

Christmas Wreath Making (9)

### Spring 2022

Passport to Activity (10)

Getting Creative in Nature (7)

Come and Try It day (35)

Hand Building with Clay (8)

Block Printing (8)

Mosaic Making (12)

Nordic Walking (6)

Calming Crochet (7)

Pickleball Try It (4)

Pickleball (5)

### Summer 2022

Come and Try It Day (18)

Mindfulness Weaving (7)

Introduction to Drawing (7)

Calming Crochet (3)

Fun with Fabrics (8)

Pickleball (4)

Embellish with Embroidery (8)

Mindful Walks in Nature (3)

Nordic Walking (4)

Introduction to Watercolours (9)

# APPENDIX 2

## Clover Stories

### Clover Story 1

The Clover publicity leaflet led me to the Clover website. I became interested in the taster day sessions. A consequence was that I joined the Calming with Crochet course.

I felt the Taster Day was a key/main event used to spark interest and attracted people all on the same skill/interest level.

I enjoyed most (6/7) of the classes and the sessions stimulated me to carry on practicing the skill outside of the course sessions. Most classes exceeded my expectations.

One improvement would be larger group sizes allowing more people to benefit from the experience and maybe more Taster Sessions.

I have definitely made new friends during the course and believe that these friendships that will continue for years to come.

The activities have improved my physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

We have already formed a small craft group of persons with like interests and friendships and I would be willing to help with a new group if one was formed.

Groups I attended: Crochet, Wreath Making, Mosaic, Fun with Fabrics, Embroidery + Embellishment, Drawing and Watercolour.

### Clover Story 2

This Clover participant did the Willow Weaving, Nordic Walking and Crochet courses because she wanted to get out, try something new, and get stuck into things. On Nordic Walking she found it too hard on her hands, and didn't complete the course. She is presently enjoying crochet very much, with a very considerate tutor.

She chose all three without any expectations. She went with an open mind and wasn't disappointed with the provision.

When asked what could have been done better, she struggled to think of what might have been improved. All three tutors have been brilliant, related well to everybody taking part. All have been considerate of everyone's needs. Working on the floor at the Community Garden (Willow Weaving) was a little hard-going, she is aware that tables are used for the same activity now.

Socially, the courses meant that she was reacquainted with a lot of old friends from the area. She met new people, got on well, which was pleasing though hasn't continued new friendships since.

She thought that possibly the courses had led to improved wellbeing, health, although getting out again had been the main thing, and it was good to get focussed doing something new.

She would be willing to get involved in a new Clover group.

No real story to tell, other than that she enjoyed simply being out and about with people, interacting a bit and trying new things!

### Clover Story 3

A went on 3 courses with his partner. He mainly came on the courses as moral support for her, as she has extreme mental difficulty in leaving the house. C has also attended a number of the other Clover courses on her own. They heard about the Clover programme via a support group that B attends (although they do use the internet).

The three that A came to are; Willow Weaving, Clay and Pickleball. He didn't continue with Pickleball, beyond the first couple of sessions, because wasn't happy with the activity. His main reason for coming to the courses was to accompany, and encourage/support B. The choice of courses was largely based on B being interested in creative activities, rather than the more physical or nature oriented ones. Having some kind of tangible end product was also quite important for both of them.

Of the two creative courses he found the Willow Weaving to be slightly more enjoyable than Working with Clay. This was mainly because there was more group interaction on the Willow course with everyone working on a similar project each week. He felt that it gave more opportunities for discussion with the other course participants. The social interactive aspects of the courses seem to be important to both of them.

He didn't feel that either course could have been improved. Overall he seemed very content that the courses had provided a good opportunity for both of them to leave their house and interact with others. Some of this also seemed to relate to bringing some structure into their lives in terms of turning up to an event on a regular basis. He also felt that it was good to have courses where you could learn something new, with a practical outcome.

Although he had engaged with the other course participants he didn't feel that he had made any new friends, but that might be because he was coming to them with his partner.

Overall he had found the courses to be enjoyable but they were probably of more benefit for his partner and her overall mental condition.

He felt that there was a need for more of these type of courses, in Ross, but was unaware of many of the activities that were already available in the area.



A would be prepared to contribute to a post Clover group but probably not in a major way. He and B belong to one of the younger age demographics. He works from home and his partner is not currently working.

#### Clover Story 4

I attended Clay and Mosaic Taster, Pickle Ball and Willow Weaving.

It was empowering to learn new things and have been able to talk to my family about the new things that I have done.

I wanted to do something creative that I hadn't done before and to meet new people. I went with my partner as I don't think I would have been able to come on my own.

Yes the courses met my expectations. I learnt something new on all of the courses. I was anxious about meeting new people but I got more confident as time went on.

They were well co-ordinated and the access was good. Covid compliance was good which was something that I was concerned about. I enjoyed the tasters as I was able to try something without worrying about wasting a place.

I haven't developed any firm friendships yet but I have made lots of acquaintances. This may come in time as I haven't finished the courses yet.

My mental wellbeing has improved. My mind is much calmer through doing the creative activities. It takes my mind off things and gives me somewhere to go and build routine into the week. I now have something to get up for.

I would like to join a group to look at the future development of the project. I am very sad that it is ending. It has all been so positive and has helped me to get to know the area as I only moved here in November.

#### Clover Story 5

I joined Weaving as I had always wanted to do it. The course exceeded my expectations. There was nothing that could have been done better.

I have made friends as there are now a friendly group of 6. It has most definitely improved my mental and emotional wellbeing.

I would like to join up with others to keep it going.

I moved to Ross shortly after lockdown. I left friends behind and wanted to make new friends. I had a bereavement and Clover has been amazing for making friends. Keep it up- don't stop it. I have had a chance to do a thing that I couldn't have done. With no income classes would have been out of my reach.

## Clover Story 6

I moved from over a hundred miles away after 20+ years. The usual outlets were not working for networking. I had always wanted to paint and then I saw these courses advertised and saw the potential for growing a social circle. The whole concept was to do things.

The course very much met my expectations. Everyone was very friendly. Teacher was fabulous. The skills learnt were very good and gave me lots of confidence. I always assumed I could do painting but never got around to trying. Mother has always been very good at painting and it allowed us to connect a new area of our relationship.

I picked up the course fairly late. Slightly different marketing/targeting would be better because it is more than just a course. There will be people in the community who needed it more.

I have not made "friends" as such but plenty of people who exchange conversation but in time friendships will form.

It hasn't monstrously improved my wellbeing in terms of a huge change but that does not mean that it hasn't been enjoyed. I will enjoy the future courses but I understand that there will be others who need the place more than me.

I would be happy to join with others to keep providing these services. It would be very good.

## Clover Story 7

Having taken early retirement, moved to a new development in Ross (where I knew no-one) and having moved 100 miles away from all my friends and family, not knowing ANYONE, I was afraid and anxious of my new life. I felt I could become extremely isolated. Within one week of moving into my new house, I saw the Clover ad in the Ross CDT Newsletter. I immediately signed up for and started Clay Building. I was initially attracted to the Willow weaving course and became extremely disappointed that I could not join this as it had already started. The Clover team placed me on a waiting list until the next one took place.

I saw joining the different Clover courses as a way of meeting new people, learning new skills and integrating myself into Ross-on-Wye. In turn forging a new life for me in this new town.

Virtually all the courses far exceeded my expectations. With exception of one course, tutors were knowledgeable, extremely experienced and patient. The skills I have learnt were interesting and useful, sparking what I hope and can see becoming lifelong passions. The friendships I made during every single course were invaluable to me and enabled me to feel 'at home' in a place that I have only know for the past 10 months (since I moved to Ross).

I found it somewhat disappointing and surprising to meet people in Ross and surrounding villages that knew nothing of Clover's existence. I took it upon myself to advertise Clover to our new housing development (via our Facebook site) and I informed WI members and U3A

members and virtually anyone I met. Although there are leaflet drops in which Clover is mentioned, I feel awareness raising is vital in stimulating more interests and take-up on courses. Perhaps an attempt to reach a wider demographic maybe communicating via different social media platforms could be further enhanced. Also leaflet drops to all outlying HR9 postcode/villages needs to be stepped up. Maybe, if budgets permit, to advertise in the local press and via local radio/news channels. Perhaps even using local school settings to put on presentations to parents about the health benefits of Clover and include any home-schools children.

I now feel fully integrated into Ross community. Clover has led to lasting friendships with so many people. It even introduced me to volunteering for Talk Community at Ross Community Gardens; for Ross CDT IT Team; to U3A. In meeting people on Clover courses, I was introduced to the Women's Institute in Ross (Sparkling Wye) and now hold the position of WI Secretary and their Website Developer. There are many other voluntary positions that I hold and groups that I have joined since arriving in Ross 10 months ago. I feel that this would not have been possible if I had not forged friendships with persons via Clover courses. Clover has meant that the prospect of being very lonely in my new life in Ross, soon disappeared and I now recognise and am recognised throughout Ross – which is comforting and empowering.

The Activity Passport enhanced my use of the Ross Halo pool as I love to swim, but on a pension was finding it quite expense to do so. One negative of the pass was the restriction on having to use the pass for consecutive days proved impossible for someone who is unfit and over-weight. It is a shame it wasn't 7 days over a month, which the literature seemed to imply.

My mental well-being has been enhanced in immeasurable ways, e.g. the personal contacts via Clover and the relaxation experience that is channelled by activities such as basket weaving, embroidery, pottery, crochet, etc.

With moving 100 miles away from my family and original friends, selling and buying a house and leaving the teaching profession after nearly 40 years, I was fearful of my new life and highly emotionally charged. For me, Clover provided a grounding, a social scene, a skill focus/development and a reason to get up in the morning. I am stronger and less fearful because of Clover.

For many of us we are fearful of the daunting reality of Clover courses coming to a close. We do not want to go back to being trapped at home, not seeing any one and not engaging our brain/body with Clover activities. Therefore approximately 10+ of us are hoping to form a craft group, visiting each other's houses with the aim of maintain those friendship contacts, sharing skills and resources.

I would be interested in being part of organising activities/outings/social events for current and future Clover participates (a similar role I have within U3A groups and for Sparkling Wye WI).

The activities I attended were: Hand-building Clay, Crochet, Wreath Making, Yoga, Tai Chi, Activity Passport (Swimming), Mosaic, Fun with Fabrics, Block Printing, Willow Weaving, Creative in Nature, Art Class (Beginners), Embroidery + Embellishment, Seated Exercises, Drawing and Watercolours.

### Clover Story 8

I am delighted to have an opportunity to give you feedback as the team deserves much praise for the pleasure and joy it has brought to the community.

I was fortunate to gain a place on the Willow Weaving course. Our instructor was a wonderful patient man who, to our amazement, taught us skills beyond our expectations.

Many thanks to all at Clover.

### Clover Story 9

I attended Willow weaving, embroidery, block printing having seen it advertised on Facebook. I joined to meet people. I live in a very rural location with no-one around for miles, only other farms nearby. Socially isolated. Moved to the UK only 6 months before Covid so felt extremely isolated during the last few years as was unable to get out there.

All the instructors were good. The challenge seems to be how to get it out there to more people and to a wider range of people.

I did form new friendships, but it was hard as people didn't start talking till 3 or 4 weeks in. We were getting everyone's phone numbers to get people to come out for coffees and meet at others homes.

Participation has improved my sense of well-being. If a group was formed to continue similar provision I would probably like to join this.

I wish there was a space in Ross with power points, kettle, sink, that can be used for groups to meet. Like a community building or room, a community hub, a community workspace. Somewhere to bring sewing machines, or get tables out and paint together. Somewhere welcoming for all – where all ages can come together to exchange learning. Somewhere central, maybe on the high street.

### Clover Story 10

I had the privilege to chat to D who had attended several of the Clover courses and really hopes it can continue for others in some way.

D was new to the area having only been in Ross about 18 months. She had suffered with anxiety and depression for some time and was going through a particularly bad time.

Following a particularly bad period D was put in touch with Herefordshire Healthy Minds who asked if she was aware of Clover – she wasn't aware and hadn't seen it advertised so felt that it could have been better publicised at that point.

Her first introduction was signing up for the Mindfulness in Nature course which she found inspirational and made new friends. Those friends also led onto new ones which was great in developing her social network locally.

Inspired by her first activity she then went on to join crochet and mentioned how enthusiastic and inspirational the course leader was. This has been followed by embroidery, which she described as a 'high point' and now embarking on water colour painting.

Unfortunately, D is now having to move away which is proving very difficult to come to terms with. She has however already formed a plan to talk to her new GP and ask about social prescribing and other services, like Clover, that might be available in the local area there.

She has good days and has been trying really hard on the not so good days to continue to embrace the activities. Sometimes she is able to socialise, others it is only about doing the activity but feels her overall well-being has improved over time.

Although D knows she will probably always be dealing with 'difficult times' she has found Clover a fantastic help and said she is very grateful to everyone for the opportunities, new skills she has learnt and new friendships she has formed.

### [Clover course leader story 1](#)

For a person to learn there has to be mistakes and in the process of weaving a basket one has to make mistakes and one has to go back and put them right in order to proceed otherwise the whole basket looks wrong. This is a very powerful lesson and to realise that it's OK to make mistakes and then correct them and move forward in a positive way. To achieve a goal has a lasting effect on the person involved and engaged in the creative process.

I have watched clients develop their self-confidence in the most amazing way and every week they come back, eager to do more and full of positive energy.

People gained self-confidence through becoming capable of creating some wonderful woven willow baskets. Also the interaction of the group of people have come out of their shells. It's a positive environment.

We have created an infrastructure – a venue, designed a six week course. Missing ingredient is funding. We have kept our fees low to try and sustain it.

Having been the tutor on two six-week willow weaving courses I have watched my clients develop several skills. When they first arrive many are quiet and socially inept but after one or two sessions they unfold come out of their shells and start to interact with others on the course. I think that being engaged in the creative process brings an inner peace and when they see the results of their work there is a feeling of self-worth and realisation of capability.

This combined with the friendships developed between them makes for a very positive environment and by the time we have reached the sixth week my clients have become much more confident and self-aware, more able to embrace the learning process, not afraid to fail in front of others in fact able to see that there is no such thing as fail, just learning.

Thank you for involving me in this wonderful project and I hope I get the chance to do more in the future.

### [Clover course leader story 2](#)

We provided a 12 week wellbeing nature course on a Wednesday morning. Many friendships were built and there is still a WhatsApp group going with the participants.

The main benefits was to get people to slow down and learn about their surroundings and see the beauty around them.

There was a high drop out when the weather was poor as people perceived that they would be too wet or too cold. We should have made more of the indoor space at the community garden and perhaps done some activities so people weren't cold.

The main problems were weather and lack of diversity. We mainly had women 45-65. The numbers may have been down due to the wording of the titles and the lack of understanding as to what the courses were.

Roles between the partners need to be set in stone at the beginning so that we know who is doing marketing, who is in charge of recruiting etc. Better communication is needed re numbers. It would have been good to evaluate participants half way through.

It would be good to see how to bridge the gap from the Social Prescriber to actually getting them on the project. Sometimes the step to do it on their own is too big.

### [Clover course leader story 3](#)

I would like to say how grateful I am to Clover for hiring me to run two courses over the past few months. The communication and admin has been very efficient which has helped with the smooth running and delivery of the courses.

The first course was a 7 week Hand Block Printing experience, which encouraged participants to discover their own creative style and design ability. It was wonderful to see the many designs and styles develop over the weeks and where the increase in confidence was evident. The second is a 6 week Hand Embroidery course, still currently running and once again it has been fulfilling to see how much the participants have grown in confidence. They will have gained skills, which are transferable and can be developed and used for years to come.

All participants have been a delight to teach with some attending both courses!

# Appendix 3

## Core partner organisations' appraisals of partnership learning

### ignite CIC

ignite CIC is a small community interest company working across Herefordshire, enabling people to be creative and active in local rural communities. We were excited to be a partner in Clover and we used our previous experience and local networks of providers/practitioners to help source and provide opportunities for this to happen in the HR9 area. We also worked with and developed relationships with other partners and new providers.

The learning for ignite from the project....

- working with Clover supported our experience of new projects taking time to get started, especially when insight isn't necessarily available to guide the initial activities
- reinforced that listening to participants in order to plan future activities, venues and structure is crucial
- showed again that small group sizes helped those who have lower confidence levels and promotes a sense of belonging to the group
- the early activities were helped by being based in the outdoors – helping confidence after covid and also increasing feeling of wellbeing in the outdoors.

Being part of the steering group from the beginning was really positive and helped us to understand the planning and development of the project but also to raise awareness with Ross CDT and other partners what ignite could potentially contribute.

Initial activities were based on existing insight and our experience of working with social prescribers and others from the signposting routes. Whilst slow to start, when the promotion became more widespread, the activities were all fully booked. The feedback from the courses was fed back to the steering group which enabled better planning for future courses and anecdotal feedback showed many of the participants wanted to be involved in future activity.

ignite was conscious that we should try, wherever possible and appropriate, to develop relationships with local providers as this would help sustainability in the future. Some strong relationships were developed throughout the project which hopefully will enable independent opportunities to continue whilst still being in contact with Ross CDT and local signposting routes.

As a Clover core partner we have learned from the project:

- That good comms is key to successful partnership working. HWT is countywide with our base north of Hereford so the distance from Ross made us feel a little remote at times.
- Ross CDT was excellent at keeping the partners well informed of activities via email/zoom etc but it could have been useful (in the less covid times) to have face to face meetings too.
- That people need a lot of surround support to engage in an activity for the first time.
- Community based solutions to social issues are extremely valuable and draw out potential leaders/organisers of future initiatives.
- That there is a place for training in partnership work and how to draw out the best from each partner in this kind of working

Clover has really helped increase HWT's presence in Ross and we have developed new beneficial relationships as a result e.g. with the Ross Community Garden and the Ross CDT itself.

Not being project lead allowed us to get involved in a area of work that we are passionate about but don't always have the resources to lead on.

One challenge for us were the number of participants on our courses and not knowing where the responsibility for increasing community awareness of our offer lay.

For similar provision to be sustained into the future, our view is that gaining additional funds to support emerging community groups to develop and raise their own funds will be necessary.

Another model could be socially prescribed activities which are paid for by the participant who receives funds from a NHS/social care fund – “a social prescription.” This would alleviate the pressure on providers to chase the required funding to cover the costs of social prescribing.

Our relationship built with Ross Community Gardens is now creating some interesting ongoing opportunities, working with local practitioners. Raising awareness of other activities locally, for example the local leisure provider Halo and other physical activities, has given wider choices for individuals to plan their own wellbeing pathway with support from social prescribers, health professionals and Ross CDT.

The enthusiasm of participants to continue to support the Clover concept and share their experiences will help new people to engage and benefit from the activities that have been sustained during the project and explore new opportunities.



## Taurus Healthcare Social Prescribing Team

The Clover project was such a saving grace for the social prescribing service. During my time as a Senior Social Prescriber with the South and West PCN team, it was so beneficial to be able to refer patients to the Clover group. The range of activities was fantastic – both physical and mental health and wellbeing were addressed through the project.

Patients who were struggling with some aspect of their health, be it physical or mental, could find something to engage them and to help with their wellbeing. From the partnership, I certainly learned that non-clinical interventions, with the right leadership and support can be as powerful as any clinical prescription. I have learned that the resilience of the individual can be supported through community and through a sense of wellbeing rather than, a focus on poor health.

The fact that activities were funded enabled the social prescribing service to refer people into service for whom this type of activity/sense of community would be out of reach. Addressing social inequalities through activity really struck a chord with anyone working in social deprivation. Inspiration and spirit were embraced through this venture and people genuinely benefitted from the direction and support of this project.

Lots of patients benefitted and felt included and “well” whilst engaging. Referral into the group was extremely easy and the tutors/volunteers were knowledgeable in their chosen subject and patients felt comfortable within the service.

In order for similar provision to be sustained into the future one option could be to encourage a volunteer group to fundraise and apply for grants. The evidence that this works is overwhelming and we would be sorry to see this project go.