

Trustee Information Pack



WHAT WE DO AT HEART WOOD

Heart Wood is a new and developing charity based in Hexham, Northumberland, that offers woodland based person-centred therapy group work, in order to help people improve their mental health. We are seeking Trustees to support the charity in fulfilling the vision of this pioneering approach.

We currently have a particular focus on working with vulnerable and 'at risk' men who have a lived experience of psychological distress. We offer group work, as this provides an additional opportunity for the participants to not only be offered a constructive and positive relationship, but also to contribute to, witness and learn from others' experience.

We offer something different for people who cannot engage with other indoor services. Our work should not be confused with social prescribing, outward-bound activities, or excellent social support like Men's Sheds. It is relational group psychotherapy which uses the therapeutic benefits of nature and woodland activities.

Our core programme includes a men's ecotherapy group, meeting weekly for six-months in local private woodland; projects that specifically work with fathers and sons; and we are researching and developing a programme which will engage with younger men. We offer CPD training for psychotherapists in contact-oriented person-centred ecotherapy.

The work is currently facilitated by qualified person-centred counsellors / psychotherapists, Chip Ponsford and Rab Erskine, who recognise and include the therapeutic influence of the natural environment. Both have a wealth of experience working therapeutically indoors and outdoors.

Following the successful delivery of a pilot project in 2018 (in partnership with Northumberland Domestic Abuse Services), Heart Wood was founded in 2019. In early 2020, Heart Wood was awarded £87,712 from National Lottery Reaching Communities fund to support a three-year plan of activity, and we have fundraised a further £9,500 through Trusts and Foundations, fundraising activities, and private donations.

We were recently awarded additional National Lottery COVID funding which has enabled us to offer an adapted programme and maintain contact with the men who had been due to start the group project in April 2020. We have been recognised for being agile, adaptive and responsive during the coronavirus pandemic.

WHAT IS PERSON-CENTRED THERAPY?

Person-centred therapy is regarded as being counter-cultural, in that rather than looking at what is wrong with people and trying to fix it, the therapists work with people's natural tendency to develop and grow towards their potential. This is a particularly effective way of working with people suffering with complex and enduring needs.

Research shows that of all the factors in psychotherapy and counselling, it is the relationship between the therapists and 'clients' which is the most therapeutic. Person-centred relating is based on trusting people's natural tendency to develop towards their full potential - the 'actualising tendency'. Our aim is to facilitate this natural tendency by offering a particular way of relating. This can be described as a 'potentiality model', rather than the currently more common 'deficiency' or 'medical' model.

Our trust in people's 'actualising tendency' is expressed through our attitudes:

Empathy - accurate moment-to-moment understanding of people's experience and meaning-making. This is an ongoing process of sensitive active listening.

Congruence - high degree of therapist self-awareness and open and honest expression of our own experience in the moment when relevant.

Unconditional Positive Regard - we respect people as the experts on their own lives.

If we can offer the above, and people experience the relational environment as safe and trustworthy, then they will more readily grow towards their potential.

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The effectiveness of the three relational attitudes described above dependent on the degree of 'psychological contact' in the encounter or relationship. Margaret Warner describes Psychological Contact as *"[A] fundamental adaptation of the human organism that allows human beings to feel that they are meaningfully present [and there are varying degrees of meaningful presence] both verbally and non-verbally to themselves and to each other."*

Our approach is 'contact-oriented' which means that we do not assume psychological contact. We sense the quality of the contact and we respect that people might need very non-intrusive reacting in order to build their contact with self, other and reality.

Our person-centred values are expressed in any communication or relating with anyone who is interested in using our services.

The term 'person centred' is now used within the NHS and other services and this should not be confused with the person-centred values we introduce above which were formulated and developed by Carl Rogers, Garry Prouty and Margaret Warner as well as many others.

WHY OUTDOORS AND WHY MEN?

- The natural environment of woodland is therapeutic. Research shows that, for example, blood pressure lowers and people relax in a nature setting – a state essential for processing or integrating traumatic experience.
- Research shows that men are much more likely to engage with outdoor therapy with activities than with indoor options. Our work combines the group psychotherapy with mindful woodland activities such as walking, bushcraft and creative / expressive activities.
- Mental health is a major issue recognised in many recent policy documents. It is no secret that this is the case – and yet men are less likely to seek help with their mental health issues.
- Men have measurably lower access to the social support of friends, relatives and community and are isolated
- Suicide is the biggest killer of men under the age of 49. The North East had the highest national suicide rate in 2018 (ONS)
- Men are significantly less likely to access statutory indoor services, yet there are no other therapist-led outdoor mental health support services on offer.

COVID-19 adapted programme

We adapted to the Covid-19 restrictions by offering weekly 'holding connection' exercises in which men focus on their experiencing of themselves in nature, then write a paragraph about it and share that with the group. The group sees everyone's writings each week, and in this way get a sense of themselves and others in the group, including the therapists. We aim to meet as a group in the woods when restrictions are lifted.

This process expresses our trust in peoples' tendency to develop towards their potential. We are offering a 'holding connection' which recognises that these men are going out into nature at this time anyway and we can facilitate an enhanced focus on this natural process. We will offer research interviews or chats which will aim to find out how the men experienced this.

FILM

We have made a short powerful film about our work which we recommend seeing. Due to participant confidentiality, the film is not public. Please contact us if you'd like to view it.

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WHO ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

We are looking for enthusiastic and committed Trustees who will play a vital role in supporting the charity fulfil its' aims in this important early period of development and delivery. Trustees are legally responsible for the running of a charity. Full Charity Commission guidance can be found [here](#).

Summary of key responsibilities and accountabilities of the Trustees:

- Understand and uphold the vision and values of Heart Wood as set out in the constitution
- Ensure the organisation meets and complies with its objectives as set out in the constitution
- Help define the strategic direction of the organisation's activities, providing constructive challenge and ensuring its effectiveness
- Ensure clear accountabilities and communication within the organisation
- Keep up to date with any legislative changes that may affect the organisation's work
- Ensure the organisation's resources and assets are well managed and used to pursue its objects
- Provide proper accounts of the organisation's activities to its members, funders and any other bodies as appropriate
- Ensure volunteers and staff are supported to work effectively and deliver high quality services, reports, and information.
- Ensure there are appropriate policies and systems in place to recruit, develop, retain and remunerate staff
- Establish constructive, high quality relationships, with key current and potential partners, as required
- Ensuring the organisation has the correct policies and procedures in place, and that they are effectively monitored, and are periodically reviewed
- Ensuring that the organisation does not discriminate unlawfully in either employment or service provision
- Act in the interest of the organisation and its beneficiaries and not for personal gain

Trustees are expected to work collectively to:

- Assist in the promotion of good governance.
- Attend board meetings
- Represent Heart Wood at occasional external meetings and events
- Maintain good relationships with staff
- Undertake preparation or follow up relating to the above in their own time

Individual circumstances will be considered by the Trustees, but generally people will also be excluded if:

- They have been dismissed as a trustee or a director from an organisation of any kind.
- They are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or similar order.
- They have been dismissed as an employee for a reason other than redundancy.
- Anyone who fails to comply with Heart Wood's and Conflict of Interest policy.
- People who have received a prison sentence or suspended sentence of 3 months or more in the last 5 years.

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SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

We are looking for people with one or more of the following skills or experience:

- Setting up a charity and / or business development
- Financial management
- Leadership and management
- Legal practice and / or governance
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Fundraising
- Understanding and / or experience of the current statutory and 3rd sector health support
- Organisational development and HR
- Marketing and promotion
- Personal experience of the benefits of person-centred or humanistic counselling
- An understanding of the relevance and benefit of working in a person-centred way in an outdoor context

COMMITMENT

Heart Wood Trustees positions are voluntary and unpaid. We meet 4-6 times a year in the evenings for approximately 2 hours. These meetings currently take place via zoom.

There may be an occasional need for longer strategic planning meetings as the charity is in its infancy. Attendance at these meetings will be required in person. Travel costs are reimbursed for Trustees required to travel and who do not live locally.

It is also expected that you are available to respond answer queries or collectively with the other Trustees, make decisions, between meetings. This is particularly important as the charity is in an early phase of development.

APPLICATION

If you are interested in becoming a Trustee, we'd love to hear from you.

Please email heartwoodecotherapy@gmail.com with the following information:

- Why you are interested in becoming a Trustee
- What skills or experience you can bring that are relevant to our work
- Any areas of special interest or personal experience that you feel is relevant to Heart Wood
- Detail of any past experiences of being a Trustee for other organisations
- Your contact details

We will review your application and may contact you for an informal conversation to learn more about you and to explain in more detail the philosophy and aims of Heart Wood.

APPOINTMENT

On appointment you will be required to confirm that you are eligible to act as a Trustee. A sample Trustee Declaration form is available on request.

CONTACT US

We would be happy to talk to you if you feel you would like more information before applying to be Trustee. Please email heartwoodecotherapy@gmail.com or call Emma on 07813 814644 who will put you in touch with the appropriate person.

Thank you for your interest in Heart Wood.