



NEW TO NATURE FINAL IMPACT REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

New to Nature is an ambitious programme of paid work placements designed to deliver life changing career opportunities for people from underrepresented groups, whilst contributing to wider efforts to create a more diverse and accessible environmental sector.

This report seeks to summarise the impacts of the programme on Trainees and participating organisations ('Placement Hosts'), whilst identifying potential learning for the wider sector.

Please note that this report should be considered alongside the Process Report summary, which highlights the key strengths of the delivery model and identifies recommendations for future programmes.



2. OVERVIEW

About New to Nature

The New to Nature programme looks to attract young people from diverse backgrounds into the environmental sector. It reflects a desire within the sector to demonstrate that the environment matters to everyone.

The programme aims to provide life-changing experiences for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market, whilst building capacity in the environmental sector, making it more inclusive and diverse. It has so far provided 95 work placements in a range of environmental roles, targeting people from diverse backgrounds, specifically young people (aged 18-25) who are:

- > ethnically diverse,
- > disabled, and/or
- > economically disadvantaged.

Each Trainee participates in a full-time, year-long paid work placement, hosted by an organisation within the environmental sector, and is supported by a Groundwork Employment Coach, with access to a peer network, development programme and individualised training budget. The employer ('Placement Host') benefits from access to training and development opportunities to enhance their Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) strategies.

New to Nature is being delivered through a partnership of Groundwork, The Youth Environmental Service (YES), The King's Trust, Disability Rights UK, and Mission Diverse. It is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (The Heritage Fund) as part of the celebrations to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the King's Coronation.

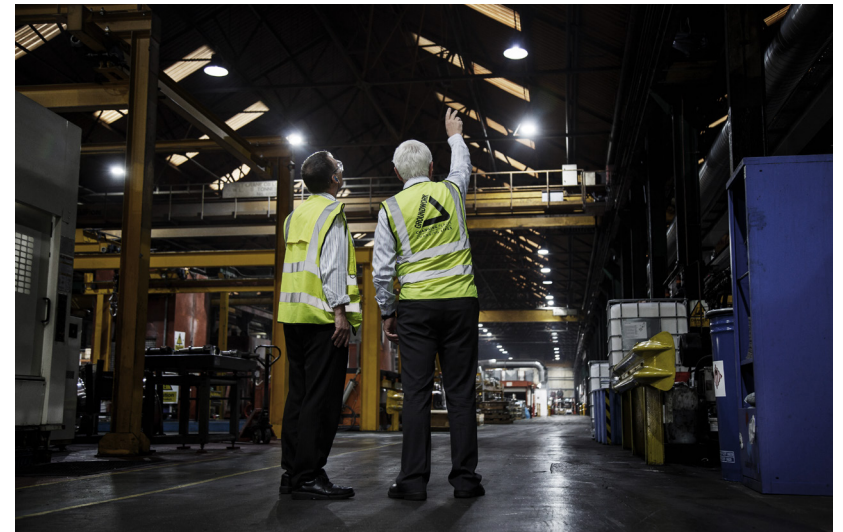


Delivery model

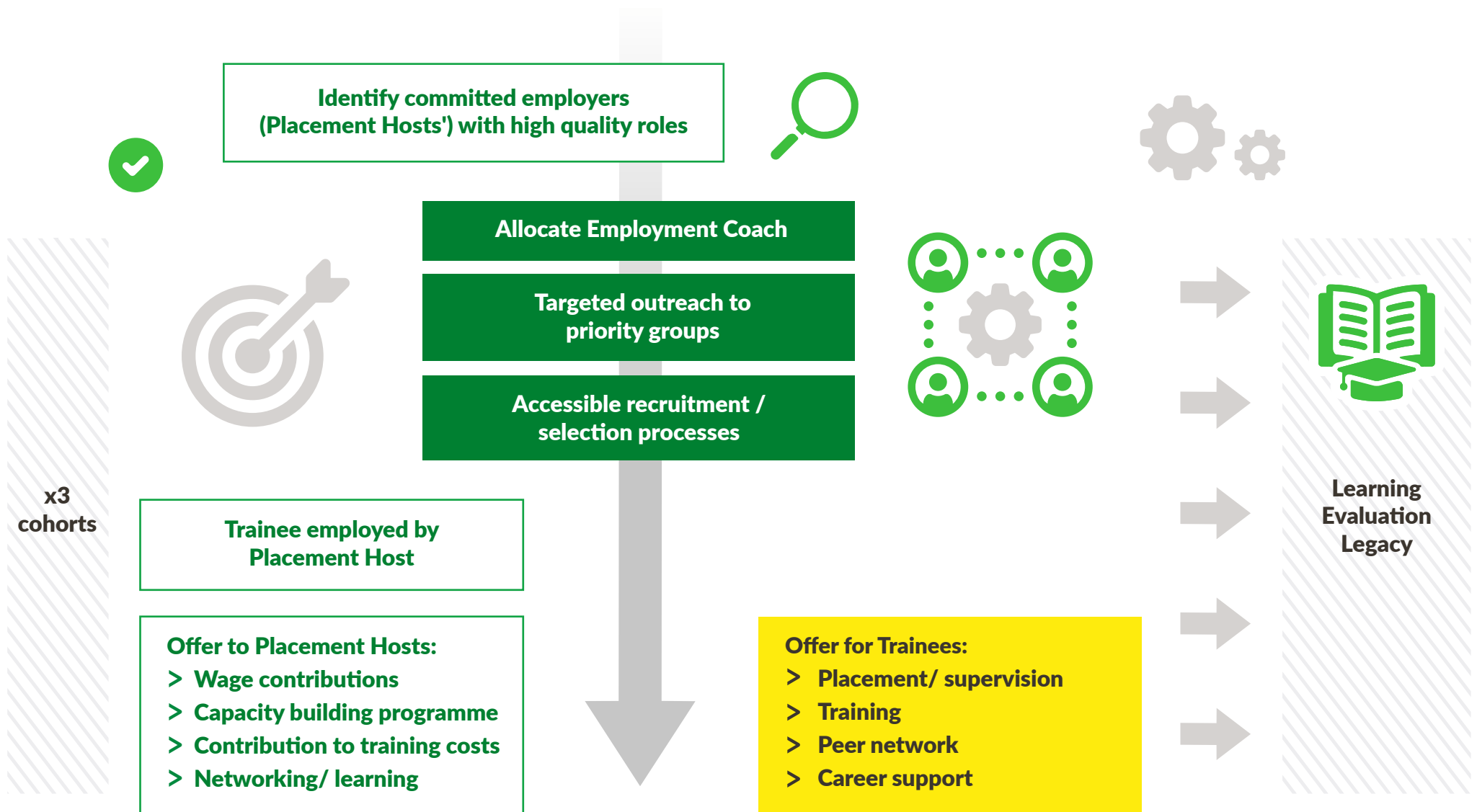
The New to Nature model is made up of the following activities:

- > **Identifying diverse opportunities hosted by committed organisations:** Via sector outreach and a competitive expression of interest process to create a diverse portfolio of opportunities
- > **Targeting potential Trainees from underrepresented groups:** Implementing outreach strategies and deploying partnerships to attract applicants from priority groups, and deploying accessible recruitment strategies to break down barriers
- > **Waged work placements with careers support:** Creating a full time, 12-month work placement, paid at the Real Living Wage, with a personal budget to address any barriers to work.
- > **Participant careers support, training and networking:** Including an Employment Coach to help support longer-term career aspirations, a training budget, and a peer development programme.
- > **Placement host capacity-building and networking:** Via a training programme and peer network designed to support organisations with their commitments to becoming more diverse and inclusive
- > **Evaluation and learning:** Gathering and disseminating feedback, evidence and learning to inform future practice.

More detail on the New to Nature delivery model can be found in the Process report.

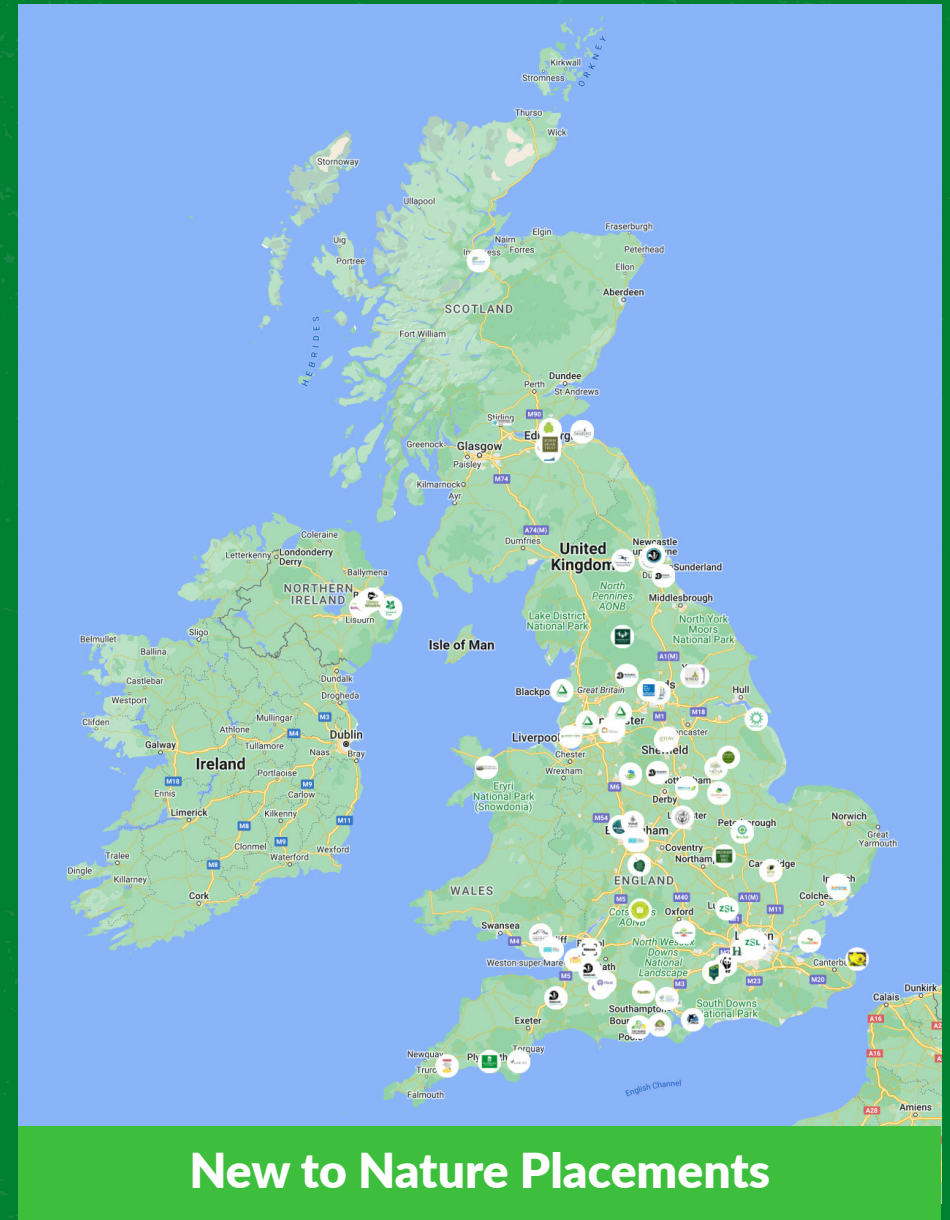


New to Nature Delivery Model



Scale and scope

82 not-for-profit organisations have hosted New to Nature placements, ranging in size and focus, but all hosting work placements centred around land and nature. Placements were selected based on the commitment of the host organisation to a more inclusive sector and the quality of the placement, whilst aiming to provide a variety of roles to suit different skills and interests, whilst achieving a geographical spread across the UK.



New to Nature Placements

Why is New to Nature needed?

The New to Nature programme was developed in response to two critical challenges:

The need for a new green work force

Responding to the climate and nature emergencies requires a new green work force. The Government's Green Jobs Delivery Plan talks of supporting the creation of 480,000 skilled green jobs by 2030, with some employers and industries already struggling to meet demand. For example, the Institute of Chartered Forestry has called for urgent action given meeting current tree planting targets will require a 70% increase across the workforce.

Green jobs are not universally understood, and are not necessarily seen as a career of choice – particularly amongst young people. New to Nature aims to attract people who may not have previously considered an environmental career, demonstrating the breadth and quality of opportunity as well as genuine career prospects.

Lack of diversity in the environmental sector

New to Nature was launched on the premise that the environmental sector does not have a diverse workforce and is not currently reflective of the communities it seeks to engage with and serve. Only 4.8% of 'environmental professionals' come from a non-White background (compared to the all-profession average of 12.6%). To add to this, there is a history of pathways into environmental careers being dependant on experience gained through unpaid work, which is not possible for many people on low incomes. These issues mitigate against people from a wider variety of backgrounds taking up opportunities in this sector due to the perception that this work is 'not for people like them'.

New to Nature seeks to complement the work already going on in the sector to address these challenges by:

- providing high quality placements and potentially life-changing experiences for people who are disadvantaged in the labour market
- helping to make the environmental sector more inclusive and diverse, with particular focus on building the capacity of smaller organisations
- creating a network of Trainees influencing change within their host organisation and working together to champion greater diversity and youth voice within the sector
- delivering learning and evidence to support ongoing campaigns for a national Youth Environment Service able to provide a pathway into green jobs and a mechanism for delivering commitments in the Government's 25-year Environment Plan

3. IMPACT



98 Trainees have been recruited to New to Nature roles.¹



82 organisations have hosted New to Nature Trainees – they range in size from a staff team of 2 to over 6,500.



86% of New to Nature Trainees recruited are from priority groups, with:

- > **29%** from an ethnically diverse background
- > **42%** being disabled
- > **63%** being from a low-income background



66% of New to Nature Trainees have secured ongoing employment at the end of their placement, with 52 of those remaining in the natural environment sector (as of August 2024). At the time of reporting, 11 Trainees were looking for employment whilst 7 Trainees had secured other positive outcomes e.g. moved into further education or decided to go travelling.



100% of New to Nature Trainees report that New to Nature has allowed them to gain new skills and experiences that will help them with their future careers.



88% of New to Nature Trainees report that they are now confident of finding a job in the field they want to be in.



88% of New to Nature Trainees state that they are 'very' interested in working in the environmental sector.



Four in five (80%) of Placement Hosts will make or have already made recommendations for change within their organisation based on their New to Nature experience.



95% of Placement Hosts have expressed interest in participating in programmes like New to Nature again in the future.

Impacts on Trainees

Understanding barriers to the environmental sector

New to Nature Trainees are helping to deepen our understanding of the barriers that are preventing people from joining the environmental sector.

Over half of all surveyed Trainees believe that careers in the environmental sector are not accessible to people from ethnically diverse backgrounds and/or working-class backgrounds, and two thirds perceive the sector as inaccessible for individuals with disabilities and long-term health conditions.

Reported barriers to securing work in the sector include a lack of experience (compounded by a prevalence of unpaid work experience which excludes those on low incomes), competition, and the need for formal qualifications.

Trainees reported that it was 'hard to find' appropriate entry-level roles within the sector. For many, this emphasised the need for schemes such as New to Nature.

Despite these barriers, 88% of Trainees were very interested in working in the environmental sector beyond their Nature to Nature placement.

'Diversity in the environmental sector is known to be poor. I come from a working-class background and have a chronic health condition, and I don't know anyone like me who works in the environmental or charity sector.'

- Trainee

'Many opportunities in this sector rely on extensive work experience, volunteering or unpaid internships which are not accessible to people who have grown up in poverty and currently still live under the poverty line. This also makes it very restrictive to people with disabilities/long-term health conditions.'

- Trainee

'As someone from a working-class background, I've absolutely struggled with the costs involved in obtaining environmental qualifications that many sector jobs want. I'm fortunate because I got to attend further education but for someone who's a school leaver, unless you have connections within the sector already, it's basically impossible to get into.'

- Trainee

Reaching priority groups

New to Nature has been successful in providing opportunities for people who are underrepresented in the natural environment sector:

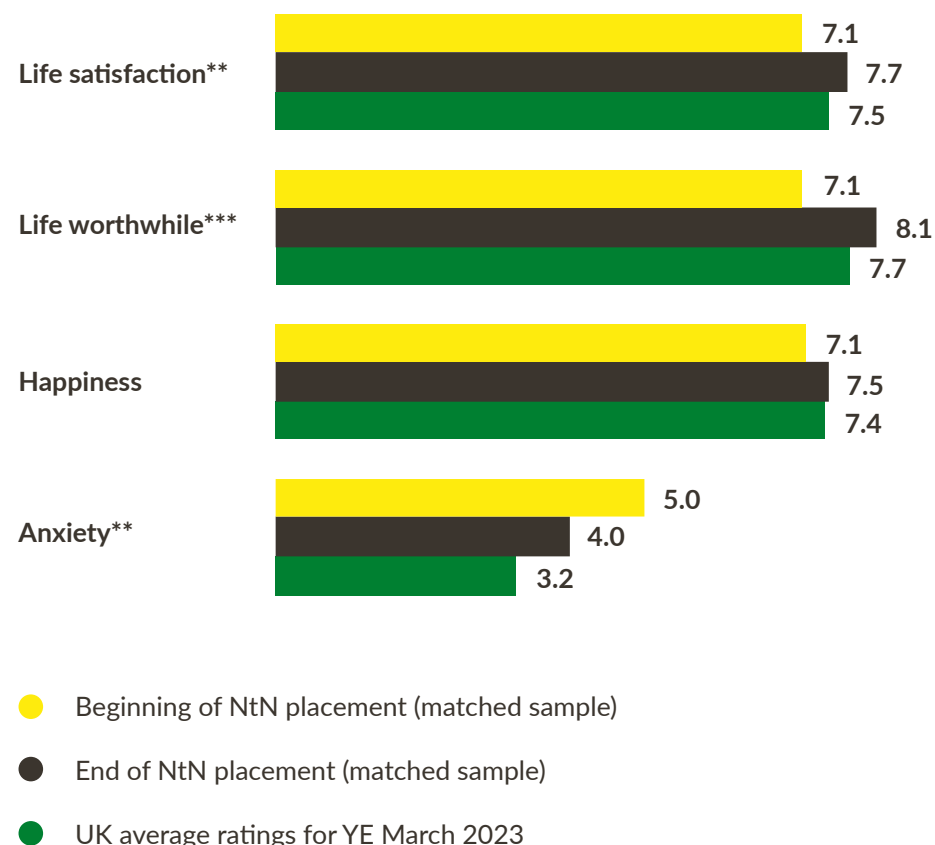
- > 86% of New to Nature Trainees are from at least one priority group, with 54% being from more than one group. 29% of Trainees are from an ethnically diverse background, 42% have a disability, and 63% are from a low-income background.
- > Of those who consider themselves disabled, 28% have a learning difficulty, 33% are neurodivergent, 20% have a long-term health condition, 46% have a mental health condition, and 8% have a physical impairment

Impacts on individuals

Within the evaluation of New to Nature, Trainees have participated in interviews at the beginning, during and at the end of their placement. In interviewing the Trainees the evaluation has found:

- > Improved wellbeing amongst Trainees, with general wellbeing having improved across all Office for National Statistics Wellbeing measures (see Figure 6.1). Prior to Trainees' placements, on average, Trainees self-reported feelings of life worthwhileness, life satisfaction and happiness that were lower than the national average. Analysis of Trainees' pre- and post-placement scores has determined that the change in Trainees' scores is statistically significant, confirming that there is a positive correlation between Trainees' wellbeing and their engagement with New to Nature.

Figure 1: ONS Wellbeing Scores



Base: Trainee engagement and follow-up survey (n=50) and ONS (2023). ** change in average wellbeing score is significant at 5% level; *** change in average wellbeing score is significant at 1% level.

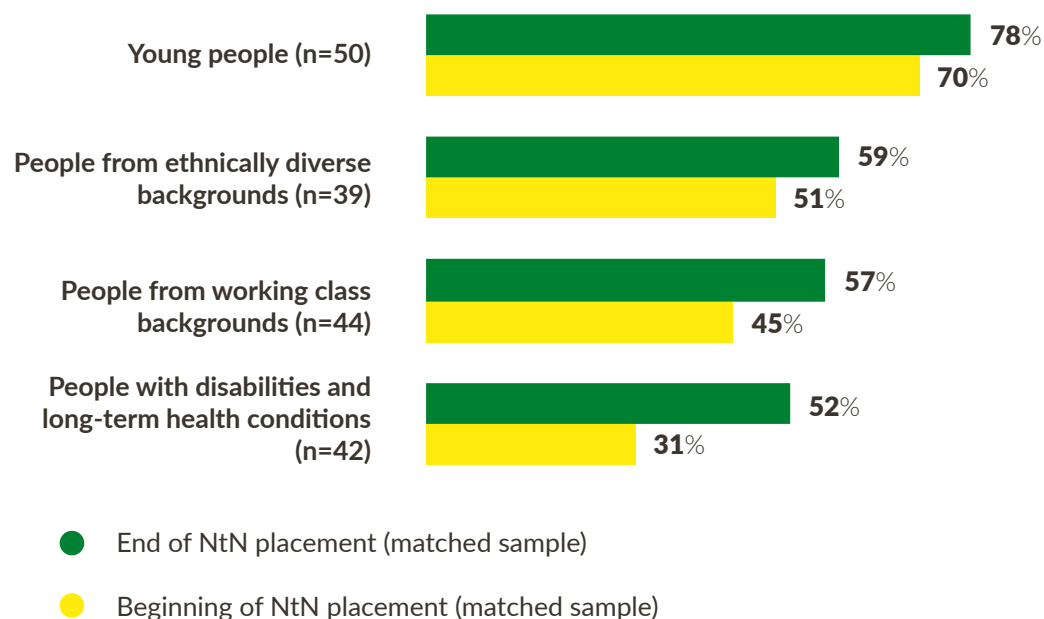
- Feedback from Trainees suggests that the programme has positively impacted wellbeing in various ways. Trainees frequently reported that having this opportunity to work in the nature sector with a range of integrated support has resulted in an overarching shift in their day-to-day life, their financial situation, their confidence and, as a result, their sense of wellbeing.
- The change in life satisfaction can be quantified in monetary terms using the WELLBY.² The wellbeing impact on the entire Trainee cohort is estimated at **£977,325.16** (2023 prices).³
- **Improved perceptions of the accessibility of environmental careers** for people from underrepresented groups amongst Trainees (Figure 6.2), supported by inclusive and supportive New to Nature experiences, whilst recognising that structural barriers (e.g. prevalence of unpaid work experience remain).

² Frijters, P., Krekel, C., Sanchis, R. et al. (2024) The WELLBY: a new measure of social value and progress. Humanit Soc Sci Commun 11, 736. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-03229-5>

³ It is defined as one point of self-reported life satisfaction (0-to-10 Likert scale) for one individual for one year and is valued at £13,000 (2019 prices). HM Treasury (2021) Wellbeing Guidance for Appraisal: Supplementary Green Book Guidance. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/60fa9169d3bf7f0448719daf/Wellbeing_guidance_for_appraisal_-_supplementary_Green_Book_guidance.pdf



Figure 6.2: Perceived accessibility of the sector for...



- > **Sustained interest in working in the environmental sector**, with 88% of Trainees stating that they are 'very' interested in working in the sector, compared to 86% of Trainees at the beginning of their placement.
- > **Increased knowledge of careers in the environmental sector** amongst Trainees, with 94% of Trainees reporting that they felt well informed on the sector and the opportunities it holds, compared with only one Trainee reported feeling very informed on the sector at the beginning of their placement.
- > **Increased confidence around job prospects**, with 88% of Trainees reporting that they feel confident they can find a job in the field they want to be in, and 89% reporting confidence in progressing within that job.

'Personally, the New to Nature programme has given me a lot of confidence and empowered me to work in the environmental sector, which is something that I was beginning to give up on prior to obtaining this role. I had previously thought that my disability and circumstances made me unemployable and I was never going to see a role that I would fit into but this placement has shown me otherwise.'

– Trainee

'It has helped me to realise how many transferable skills I have through activism and from my previous work history that I wasn't paying as much attention to. It has helped me to feel more confident that I belong in the environmental sector and that I have a purpose within the sector'

– Trainee

- > Trainees report that they have **gained new skills and experiences that will help them in their future careers**, with 91% reporting that their placement has helped them 'to a great extent.' More detail on Trainees' experiences of the placements and the support they received can be found in the Process report.

'That the programme is incredible and is so needed. There is this massive diversity problem in the sector and we always talk about, it's always acknowledged, but you don't really realise and understand it. For instance my first day in the office where it was just white people and I thought maybe [the Host Organisation] having a New to Nature programme meant that they had done work on diversity in the past. It definitely felt like this programme was the first official step they had taken which I think is very welcomed and very needed. Seeing visible diversity have been really encouraging. I have felt very, very welcomed by my organisation.'

- Trainee

'It's given me a lot of skills that I've developed, and I think also just a big confidence boost overall. It's such a competitive sector that sometimes it's really hard to get that first foot in the door and it can kind of be a bit off-putting because of how long it takes. So I think having that opportunity to have the first foot in the door and meet people and actually network and connect within the sector, I just find it's been a big confidence boost really.'

- Trainee

- > New to Nature is **helping participants to progress directly into longer-term employment**, with 66% of New to Nature Trainees having progressed directly into further employment at the end of their placement, with 57% staying in the natural environment sector. The majority of interviewed Trainees who secured employment reported that New to Nature helped them to do so (98%, 39/40).



Trainee case studies



Ade

Trainee Learning Officer At The Royal Parks

Through her work as a Trainee Learning Officer at The Royal Parks, Ade, now 26, provided environmental education to schoolchildren across London. Having paused her university education due to the effects of Covid-19 and experiences of institutional discrimination, New to Nature has fostered her enthusiasm for community engagement, with the ultimate goal of breaking down barriers and developing equal opportunities for young people to access nature's green spaces.

"I ultimately applied because, as a young person, it has been hard to find paid job opportunities in the nature heritage sector, which can have various barriers to accessing it. Since 2017, I have been campaigning over the intersections between racism and environmental issues. Communicating local issues in a clear, solutions-focused way that would encourage participation among those most underrepresented in environmental spaces, became my focus.

As a passionate young woman of Afrikan-heritage, I will be using my lived mental health experience and my involvement with delivering workshops and community activities. I aim to develop my professional career in environmental education, with a focus on intersectionality and improving access to public green spaces through supporting the education and community engagement work that The Royal Parks does so well."



Laura

Nature Project Assistant at RSPB

Despite multiple qualifications and years of unpaid volunteering experience, Laura (now 26) was finding jobs in the environmental sector inaccessible to her as an autistic person, particularly as she can find interviews and communicating with new people challenging. Now as the Access to Nature Project Assistant at the RSPB Belfast's Window on Wildlife nature reserve, Laura is building her confidence in a role focused on making nature accessible to people like her.

"Creating roles that have a person's experiences like this at the core not only creates new job opportunities for underrepresented groups, but it helps the organisation to learn and grow from their experiences. This was the first job I've had where my neurodiversity was actually an asset and not something that I had to cover up or something that made me less employable. Not only is the job accessible to me, the placement is centred around making nature more accessible to people like me.

It has been very helpful to have a network of other Trainees to connect with and provide peer support. It's great to have others who are going through the exact same thing and who are also 'new to nature'."



Stephanie

Volunteer Engagement Officer at the Bat Conservation Trust

Stephanie, 23 and from London, was determined to find her way into a green job. Following her New to Nature placement as a Volunteer Engagement Officer at the Bat Conservation Trust, Stephanie has ambitions to bring more diverse voices to the sector.

“I feel like a lot of people who migrate to the UK might feel left out from the conversation all the time and are not really asked ‘what do you think you can do to help out in this?’. So, I’d like to bring that together and invite them to the table – that’s what I hope to achieve in some sort of way.

I think it would actually be very difficult to get a role like this without New to Nature in all honesty. Without this sort of programme, I wouldn’t have been able to get into a conservation role really early in my career.

I’d like to have a career in the environmental sector. I want to get more people from my own background or people who might be singled out from society into the environmental sector as well. Being South Asian – we have our own ideas about climate change, and we have our own answers to it as well. Having indigenous or native knowledge behind us is also really helpful.”



Greg

Nature Recovery Assistant at Deadham Vale, and Coast and Heaths Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

New to Nature was a perfect starting point for Greg’s conservation career, a prospect which had seemed unattainable without certain qualifications. As a Nature Recovery Assistant at Deadham Vale, and Coast and Heaths AONB, Greg, (now 26) is now gaining the experience and knowledge required to work in practical conservation beyond his placement.

“I would have really struggled to find a similar role without this placement. Similar positions are nearly always unpaid, I wouldn’t have had the money to support myself or the energy to work another job at the same time.

I’m getting a lot of experience and increasing my knowledge around conservation. I’m also meeting a lot of people in the profession who have given me a lot of advice and pointers on how to get into this industry.

There are so many people out there who could be a massive aid to the environmental sector, but are unable to get over the initial barriers such as being unable to work long periods unpaid, lack of qualifications or disabilities. Being close to nature can improve anyone’s life, and getting more people to care and become involved, bringing their unique skills and knowledge, is incredibly important.”

Impacts on environmental sector organisations

Meeting demand from the sector

New to Nature has been received positively by environmental sector organisations, many of whom have cited an appetite for taking practical action to address a lack of diversity in their organisation, and the benefits of increased capacity to their teams.

- Over 300 representatives attended market engagement events following the launch of New to Nature. Expressions of interest were received for 164 roles, of which only 95 could be supported with the funds available.
- 94% of Host Organisations reported that New to Nature has met or exceeded their expectations, with some describing how New to Nature is 'opening their eyes' to the impact programmes like this can have on their organisation and the people they employ.

'From a host perspective, for us it shows just what someone can do when given the opportunity. There just aren't enough opportunities [for people] to prove themselves, the right person with the right support can do wonderful things.'

– Host Organisation

Motivations for getting involved

The majority (82%) of Placement Hosts are taking part in New to Nature because they want to be part of a more inclusive and diverse environmental sector. Hosts recognised that their workforce is not as diverse as it could be and that they want to be part of positive action that would benefit the sector in the longer term.

Specifically:

- Hosts acknowledge that their teams lack representation across the range of protected characteristics and this may discourage individuals from diverse backgrounds applying for roles. Many report that they receive very few, if any, applications from individuals with protected characteristics.
- Small staff teams, low staff turnover, and limited funds have been identified as common barriers to a more diverse workforce, and limited knowledge of how to recruit more inclusively.
- Hosts report that the additional resource secured through New to Nature has allowed them to dedicate more time and effort to widening participation in their organisation's workforce.

'We are very aware of the lack of diversity in our sector and our own records show that we have never had an application from a candidate that identifies as either having a disability or part of an ethnic minority. Although we are a [small organisation] we are trying to take systemic steps to address this. The New to Nature post is part of the organisation's learning towards greater inclusivity.'

– Host organisation

Building capacity

New to Nature was designed to be accessible to nature-focused organisations of all sizes, reflecting that the environmental sector is diverse but that resources are often scarce, impacting upon the pace of change towards a more diverse and inclusive sector. Feedback via interviews with Host Organisations shows that New to Nature has delivered the following impacts:

- Increased capacity has been one of the most impacts of New to Nature reported by Host organisations. Host Organisations reported that the largely funded Trainee placement has allowed them to recruit where they would otherwise not have been able to, whilst providing a focus for how to improve their internal processes and support infrastructure, enabling them to be more inclusive in their approaches.
- Being able to bring new staff into their organisations with fresh perspectives and ideas has demonstrably improved their organisations. For example, some Host Organisations provided examples of their Trainees implementing new activities within their organisation to reach wider and more diverse audiences. These activities, Host Organisations reported, will be maintained by the Trainees who have now been employed in the longer-term.

Impacts on practice and future commitments

Feedback from Placement Hosts tells us that New to Nature has aided learning and encouraged organisations to take new approaches which will benefit them in the future. Notably:

- Deploying effective strategies for attracting more diverse candidates, including targeted outreach via partners who are better placed to reach more diverse audiences. 80% of surveyed organisations stated that they'd utilised outreach via local networks and groups to promote their New to Nature Traineeship

We were struggling to reach beyond the typical types of candidates who apply for our roles. Through New To Nature, we have found ways to reach more diverse job seekers and remove barriers that prevented certain candidates from applying.'

- Host organisation

- Reviewing application and selection processes to minimise bias and maximise opportunities for positive action. 98% of Hosts confirmed that the New to Nature recruitment process was different to their organisation's typical approach, with 93% saying that the approach was effective.

'We found it a much better recruitment process and I think the strengths were that we reached a lot more diverse people than we would have otherwise done by traditional means.'

- Host organisation

- Four in five Host Organisations (80%) of Hosts report that they will or have already made recommendations for change within their organisation based on their New to Nature experience.
- Host Organisations commonly report that engaging with New to Nature has changed staff attitudes because of the positive impact Trainees have had on project work. For example as a result of the ability and insight of their New to Nature Trainees, Host Organisations reported that they are now actively recruiting individuals without degrees and/or young people.

‘Also, great learnings in that showing that placement/interns do provide value, a lot of people think that so much time going into teaching them – showing that recruiting great people who just need a bit to get started can become really valuable members of the team.’

– **Host Organisation**

- 92% of Host organisations confirmed that being involved in New to Nature has improved their organisations practices around diversity and inclusion. Over two-thirds of Hosts said that they were likely to amend their recruitment practice as a result of New to Nature.

‘Yes [we have] definitely [made changes to our practice]. The [organisation] has been trying to be more inclusive over the last 2 years, just before New to Nature. It really reinforced some of the changes we started to make ourselves. We have started sending out photos of our location before [the interview] and making interview questions available beforehand.’

– **Host Organisation**

- Over 90 organisations (New to Nature Placement Hosts and other nature sector employers) demonstrated their ongoing commitment to working towards a more diverse nature sector via the **Force of Nature campaign**.



Influencing change in the sector

Host Organisation feedback suggests that New to Nature is contributing to longer term change towards a more inclusive environmental sector:

- **All Host Organisations reported that New to Nature has successfully challenged issues inherent within the sector around inclusivity and diversity.** In most cases, Host Organisations reported that New to Nature has allowed the sector 'open up' about the lack of diversity in the sector and encouraged organisations to better communicate with one another and share good practice, training and resources. In particular, Host Organisations praised their ability to address challenges as a 'collective' through New to Nature.

'It is definitely addressing [inclusivity and diversity issues inherent within the sector]. When we are all involved in something we challenge each other. We are involved in so many networks and we share what we learn out of this with our peer organisations. Funding is always the block. It's not that they have passion and enthusiasm to do those things. There is so much added value by all doing this at the same time. Having it together has been really valuable to the sector. I really really value that Groundwork did not narrow what a green job is. Green skills have to be so much wider. The fact that it involved so many more [roles] has made it much more interesting to organisations and young people.'

– Host Organisation

'I think it is beginning to address [these issues] and there has not been meaningful change in the sector for a very long time. I am a little biased, but it feels like a real change, and we have been talking about change for a very long time. This is changing the makeup of the workforce for the future. I really want to see what these people are doing in 15 years.'

– Host organisation

- Most Host Organisations reported that New to Nature has supported the sector in its journey towards becoming more inclusive and diverse. Whilst organisations described New to Nature as an important step, it was also commonly acknowledged that the journey towards a truly inclusive and diverse sector would require sustained efforts and greater changes to practice across the sector.

'[New to Nature] brings [the issues] to the forefront. It's exciting to see how many people are passionate about this project and gives you hope that the sector can change. However, the people still remain predominantly white. Steps are and need to carry on being taken.'

– Host organisation

Appetite to do more

In a February 2024 workshop, attended by 44 Placement Hosts, 95% stated a desire for New to Nature (or similar programmes) to continue, so they could offer further placements to people from underrepresented groups.

Via the external evaluation, 98% of **Host Organisations reported that they would likely take part in New to Nature again**. In most cases (73%), Host Organisations reported that their ability to take part in the programme would be dependent on a wage subsidy being retained. More detail on the wage subsidy can be found in the Process report.

There has been a 52% increase in the number of organisations registered as disability confident among participating Host Organisations (as of September 2024). This suggests a commitment across New to Nature Organisations to sustain and continue efforts to make the sector more inclusive and diverse post-New to Nature.

‘The Disability Rights UK seminar pushed forward [our] thinking about becoming a disability confident employer.’

– **Host Organisation**



> RSPB West Midlands Case Study

RSPB West Midlands engaged with New to Nature to better engage individuals from diverse backgrounds, provide individuals with greater access to nature, and foster careers in conservation. New to Nature supported RSPB West Midlands' to broaden their approach to recruitment, in particular, how they were advertising their roles. This provided RSPB West Midlands with space and information to review their inclusive recruitment practice and resulted in them receiving a high volume of applications. As a result, RSPB West Midlands was able to attract a capable Trainee as a Community and Visitor Engagement Assistant who contributed to the organisation whilst also receiving support and training from RSPB West Midlands and their Groundwork Employment Coach. RSPB West Midlands intend to continue using a broad range of advertising platforms to ensure that information about the available roles and the process of applying is accessible to a wide range of people.



Alex Sharrod

RSPB West Midlands, Visitor Experience Officer:

"We've always had issues with developing and sustaining a diverse and inclusive workforce. It's been really good to get involved with this and just see how we can improve and how we go about learning and [...] how to reach different people."

"We had a really good response from the recruitment process, lots of applicants and lots of interest. We had to talk to lots of people and had lots of support as well from Groundwork. It allowed us to look at different places to advertise different ways to go about advertising and interviewing, how to change our recruitment process to allow lots of people with different backgrounds and needs to feel comfortable and find it easy to follow the recruitment process."

"I think it's been a really good programme. It's shown that we can recruit from different audiences. I think it's shown us that we should change our recruitment process a little bit to help make it easier for people from different audiences to apply for jobs in the sector."

> British Trust for Ornithology Case study

The New to Nature programme was a welcome opportunity for the British Trust for Ornithology, who were keen to change perceptions around the types of people working in the ornithology sector. While the organisations faced challenges in attracting a wide pool of young people to apply for the role, they were able to select a capable applicant. Supported by the allocated training budget, the Trainee developed her skills and knowledge and was quickly able to contribute to the Trust's work. This demonstrated to the organisation the value of paid internship roles and challenged the assumptions that interns require too much time and resources before they can start contributing. Going forward this has encouraged the Trust to offer more opportunities for individuals without a traditional ornithological background.



Faye Vogely

Youth Engagement Manager, British Trust for Ornithology:

"I'd say for us, working in youth engagement within the organisation, we really benefit from having someone younger on the team. That's really allowed us to be more inclusive in the work that we do because she brings the age category we work with into the staff team."

"I'm very pleased to say that she has been offered a permanent position with adjusted pay to recognise her contribution to the organisation and team."

"I'm hoping that this will show the rest of the organisation the growth potential in an individual as well. When she came, she'd never worked with young people before and hadn't had a full-time job before in this sector. She's expanded her knowledge, and her skills are to the point where four months into her contract they already said let's make a permanent [role for her]."

> Green Synergy Case study

Being a small charity Green Synergy was contending with limited capacity and sought additional resources for its garden operations through the New to Nature programme. While recruitment posed initial challenges, the support from Groundwork was instrumental in providing coaching, equipment and support from external providers to their New to Nature Trainee. Offering this level of support without the help of Groundwork would have been a challenge for the host organisation. The programme facilitated learning about neurodiversity and reasonable adjustments in the workplace, improving inclusivity and awareness among staff members. Beyond providing opportunities for the trainee, the programme also facilitated exchanges with other organisations and opened the door for other organisations to get to know Green Synergy.



Ana Oliviera

Garden Manager, Green Synergy:

“I think the programme is very good for small organisations that struggle with funding to increase capacity in the teams.”

“I think it will be improving inclusivity and recruitment practises and awareness around issues around race and neurodiversity and disabilities. I have become a lot more aware and I think the workplace will become a more inclusive place as well as a result.”

“I think when people need to think creatively as well having different points of view and different lived experiences does make for a better outcome. I think organisations in general, they will respond better to change if they have a diverse workforce.”

“The programme will have made a big difference for our Trainee.”

Legacy

- **New to Nature's legacy for Trainees** is defined by the skills and work experience they gained, the employment opportunities they have secured, and the networks they have established.
 - A total of 64 Trainees are known to be employed post-programme, with 48 staying with their Host Organisation. This is a remarkable outcome given the sector's funding pressures, reflecting the programme's success in equipping Trainees with valuable skills.
- The legacy of New to Nature for Host Organisations is reflected in changes to practices and attitudes in response to learning from the programme.
 - Many Host Organisations expressed their intentions to adopt key features of the New to Nature recruitment process after having had positive experiences with this process through the programme.
 - The programme has also influenced organisations' attitudes toward entry-level schemes such as Traineeships, shifting perceptions about the value of welcoming less experienced individuals into their teams.
 - The ability to implement changes varied depending on the organisation. Larger organisations, or those embedded within broader structures, have often had less flexibility or needed more time to adapt their processes.
 - The persistent challenge of limited funding across the public sector poses a potential threat to the sustainability of the New to Nature legacy. Offering entry-level roles, identified as critical leverage points for fostering diversity and inclusion, remains financially difficult to sustain for many organisations.
- The legacy of New to Nature on the sector is multifaceted and wide-ranging.
 - Host Organisation-led change: For Host organisations, the programme prompted meaningful changes. It was anticipated that greater practice within organisations across the sector would have a knock-on impact on other organisations.
 - New to Nature Trainees as advocates: An emerging network of Trainees from diverse backgrounds has the potential to challenge existing norms and promote greater diversity and accessibility across the sector. Host Organisations and stakeholders hoped that Trainees would continue to be champions of diversity and inclusivity, contributing to a sector that more effectively reflects and serves all communities.
 - The ripple effect of the model: The programme provides a model, framework and resources that other organisations can use to focus on recruiting and supporting individuals from diverse backgrounds, including those facing multiple barriers to entering the sector. The recruitment guidance is available on the New to Nature website and has also been published by the Heritage Fund.

4. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the New to Nature programme met its primary aim to support young people from underrepresented backgrounds to enter the nature sector. Through the programme, 97 Trainees were recruited. By August 2024, 64 Trainees had secured employment, of which 54 Trainees have remained in the nature sector. The programme has successfully developed and affirmed Trainees' interest in working in the sector. This is a considerable success for the programme and indicates that the application process effectively identified Trainees who wanted to work in the nature sector.

- **New to Nature has attracted more diverse candidates than standard recruitment practices.** Factors in making this a success have included:
 - Organisational commitment – Being prepared to challenge and change existing practice, to be clear with intent, and to commit time and resource to doing things differently
 - Understanding positive action and how to avoid positive discrimination – Providing the basis on which to level the playing field for candidates from underrepresented groups
 - Mobilising partnerships - Particularly with organisations better able to reach diverse audiences

Recommendation:

Host Organisations who can act as 'champions' of the scheme should be identified to showcase the work of New to Nature, share learning and resources. This will ensure that momentum raised through New to Nature can be sustained.



- **New to Nature has opened doors for Trainees**, many of whom report that they've aspired to pursue a career in the environmental sector but have faced multiple barriers. Success factors have included:
 - Creating entry level roles – Removing the need for qualifications or experience in favour of motivation and a willingness to learn
 - Considering accessibility – Being explicit about commitments to creating reasonable adjustments for disabled people, presenting a strengths-based culture, and addressing practical barriers such as rural work locations
 - Real Living Wage and personal budget to address barriers to work – Helping to ensure that people from low-income backgrounds aren't excluded, addressing the perception of low pay in the sector, and reversing the trends around unpaid work experience
- **New to Nature has delivered multiple benefits to Trainees from underrepresented groups** - New to Nature placements is positively impacting Trainees in several ways:
 - Improving wellbeing, with feelings of life satisfaction, and happiness higher than the national average
 - Increased confidence around job prospects
 - Inclusive and supportive experiences during placements have improved Trainee perceptions of sector accessibility for underrepresented groups
- **Peer networks have proved valuable** – both for Trainees, who have benefited from 'peer consultancy' sessions to explore common challenges and build resilience, and for Placement Hosts who have participated in quarterly Community of Practice workshops to share learning on their New to Nature experiences, informing their future plans.

Recommendation:

New to Nature should consider if and how the network of Trainees could be retained and strengthened post-programme. This will encourage continued peer networking and support as they progress their careers.



- **Potential to benefit from Neurodiverse talent**, has been showcased through New to Nature, with 33% of Trainees identifying as Neurodivergent. The programme has responded to this by:
 - Providing specialist training sessions to Placement Hosts around managing neurodiversity
 - Providing additional support to neurodivergent Trainees, including the creation of a peer network
 - Sharing resources about a strengths-based culture with Placement Hosts
- **New to Nature has played a considerable role in shaping Host Organisations processes, practices and knowledge** going forward. This included:
 - Informing organisations' wider efforts to foster diversity and inclusion within their workplaces.
 - Providing training and networking opportunities that encourage greater commitment to enhancing inclusive practice.

Recommendation:

Alongside greater expectation setting,⁴ future provision should ensure all Host Organisations commit to secure mandatory quality marks, e.g. the Disability Confident Employer Scheme, within the programme delivery period. This would ensure that Host Organisations motivations for joining the scheme are qualified with definitive actions.



⁴ Please note that this is Recommendation Eight in the Process Report.

- There is **an opportunity to build the scale and impact of New to Nature**, evidenced by:
 - Strong appetite amongst Environment sector employers for more placements
 - The positive culture of progress and learning amongst the Placement Host Community of Practice, illustrated by the number of organisations committing to changing practices
 - High levels of demand from applicants, with a high percentage from priority groups
 - Encouraging levels of New to Nature Trainees staying in the sector at the end of their placement
- **Sustained efforts are needed to materially impact upon the demographics of the environmental sector:**
 - Placement Host organisations report resource limitations that, without external intervention, will prevent them from building and maintaining the momentum needed to help them contribute to a more diverse and accessible nature sector.
 - An annual, rolling programme of New to Nature placements has potential to deliver more widespread change via a growing alumni of New to Nature graduates, and an increasingly active and aware community of Placement Host organisations. An annual programme would also allow for longer-term measurement of the programme's impact. Different models of employer financial contributions should be explored (potentially including private sector employers) in order to build the business case for continued investment.

Recommendation:

Longer-term impacts of the scheme should be tracked and measured. Whilst New to Nature has demonstrated considerable positive impacts post-placement, the additional value of the scheme longer term requires extended research.





FIND OUT MORE

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