



NGS Elsie Wagg Innovation Scholarship Final Report Summary 2023



In 2021, the QNI and the National Garden Scheme created a scholarship programme for community nurses, the NGS Elsie Wagg (Innovation) Scholarship.

The new scholarship was launched by George Plumptre, Chief Executive of the National Garden Scheme, speaking at the Queen's Nurse Annual Meeting on 12th May 2021, Nurses' Day.

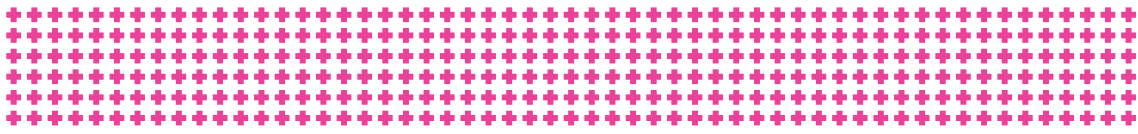
The Scholarship is open to all nurses working in the community and are awarded to five nurses submitting the best applications each year, for projects that promote the health benefits of gardening and garden visiting among a group of people.

The QNI has a long track record of supporting nurses to develop and implement their own ideas to improve the nursing care of the people they care for in the community. Project leaders receive a year-long programme of individual and group support, as well as funding to implement their project to improve healthcare.

The scholarship is named after Elsie Wagg MBE, the QNI council member who originally had the idea to open gardens to raise funds for the charity, which led to the creation of the National Garden Scheme in 1927.

The successful projects were based across England, from Newcastle-upon-Tyne to Cornwall.

The following is a summary of their final reports.



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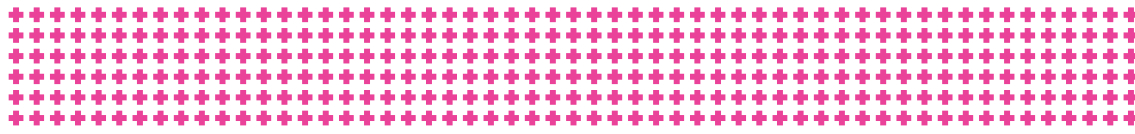
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** These three projects were NHSE funded but the National Garden Scheme were happy to give them honorary Elsie Wagg scholarship status due to their focus on gardening and well being.*



Shildon Growing Healthy project



Above: top left: tomatoes growing; top right: cucumbers growing; bottom left: more plants growing; middle bottom: at the beginning of the project; bottom right: produce grown in the garden.

Project team

Sue Duggan, Community Anchor, Guy Campbell, Youth Practitioner, Shildon, Durham

Project summary

Shildon is a town of high deprivation with 40% of children living in relative poverty. The aim of the project was to provide a low-level intervention that can reduce social isolation and improve mental health and wellbeing. By providing a safe supportive environment amongst peers, children can feel connected for two hours a week in term time and two sessions a week in the school holidays.

Over 20 young people were recruited to the project, with six to eight attending the indoor and outdoor groups, where they planted, grew and harvested fruit and vegetables, learning about nutrition, cooking, and trying new foods. Over half of the participants cycled or walked to the project as well as physically engaging with gardening tasks, learning about fire safety, and engaging with veterans who ran a carving workshop, as well as helping build a bench for the site.

The Shildon Alive charity has housed the project's allotment site which has also been used by 120 year 6 pupils from five local primary schools, to build relationships and explore space to help with the transition to secondary schools outside of the area. The project has also successfully linked with The Salvation Army, the military veteran hub, and Recycle Y'Bike which helped one participant attend the project by sourcing a bike for him. These links were not anticipated at the beginning of the project and were important unintended outcomes.

Six young people gained confidence and self-esteem through the John Muir Award: two have started to volunteer with Harrogate and District Foundation Trust, one was supported to successfully apply for a job, one was supported with a university application after a successful trip to an open day, and one was given help to open a bank account.

‘They shared how the project had improved their emotional wellbeing by building friendships through fun activities and shared experiences, as well as sharing the value of sustaining the project going forward.’



Friendships have developed and existing members are welcoming and encouraging new members. One participant was also able to share his experience of attending the project to the executive board meeting. They shared how the project had improved their emotional wellbeing by building friendships through fun activities and shared experiences, as well as sharing the value of sustaining the project going forward. This was successful, with additional smaller pots of funding and a successful bid to Sport England, the project with the Youth Practitioner is going to continue.

Outstanding achievement

The project will be a blueprint for setting up similar Growing Healthy Gardening projects across the county. The positive life changing impact on some of the young people in such a short time was visible and affirmed how projects like this can make a difference.

Quotes

From parents and a teacher:

‘My son really enjoyed attending the allotment activity days over the last few months. It really helped with his social skills after the pandemic and lockdown. He enjoyed getting out of the house and away from gaming and making new friends. It definitely helped him with the transition from lockdown back into normality. He enjoyed planting seeds and painting. Hopefully this project will be able to continue to help children engage with nature and help them socially in the future.’

‘It’s a great environment for young people to learn new activities outside of school. Not all young people are suited to a structured, classroom way of learning and this project gives us the opportunity to teach the students new skills in a completely different environment more suited to their preferred way of learning. Thank you for introducing us to these great spaces.’

‘My daughter attended Forest school today with Guy (the youth worker). She has absolutely loved it and has been quite excited at the thought of attending the project. Guy, I want to thank you for such an amazing job, well done today with her, I am really pleased with how she has responded.’

Feedback from young people:

‘I’m learning new things about where vegetables come from.’

‘I can’t wait to go home and make my pizza!’

‘I enjoyed cooking on the fire, the best.’

‘Mam exclaimed, ‘he has never made himself something to eat or drink before.’

Stepdad quoted, ‘after he had been to the Forest School, he had come alive, he wasn’t going to come as there has been some upset at home.’

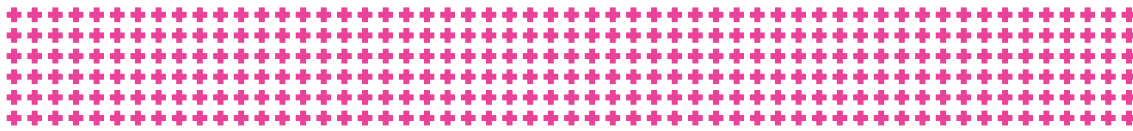
Professional achievements

Being a successful project leader built confidence and enabled project management and presentation skills to develop during the workshops. Also being able to present to commissioners, thinking innovatively about how to promote the service and to demonstrate the impact that practitioners have when working with families.

‘Thank you for the opportunity, it’s been an enriching experience working with the QNI.’



Above: at the start of the project in April 2022



Case Study

Background

Student E lives locally to Shildon Alive and had enquired about volunteering opportunities. She was directed to the Shildon Allotment Project and began attending in August 2022. She has a diagnosis of autism and was involved with mental health services in the past. She is very conscientious, methodical, and literal in her approach. She is academically gifted and is planning on going to university.

Although E was confident in her academic capabilities, she was keen to attend the project to improve her mental wellbeing, develop self-esteem and confidence, and build relationships with others. She also wanted the opportunity to make a positive contribution to her community, as well as gather evidence that would support her application to university.

Practice Development

Initially, E was quiet in the group, unsure of herself and how to engage with others. She looked to the youth practitioner for a lot of guidance and direction around how to participate in the activities. She didn't know how to do basic tasks in the allotment such as digging, weeding, planting, and tended to stay separate from the rest of the group. She presented as anxious and critical of herself for not being able to get things right first time.

The Youth Practitioner was very responsive to E's anxieties, reassuring her it was OK to not know things and that the project was a safe space to learn new things. At the same time, he encouraged her self-efficacy and belief that she could develop new skills.

Over time, E was able to relax more at the project and importantly have fun. She started to engage with the

other young people, finding out about them and sharing information about herself. She developed friendships and learned from the others as much as from the Youth Practitioner. She started to take initiative and make suggestions about what the group could do.

As new young people attended the project, E took on the role that had been offered to her when she first started. She was nurturing, patient and reassuring. She encouraged them to ask questions, supported them to try new things and importantly work past any anxiety they might feel and give the group a go.

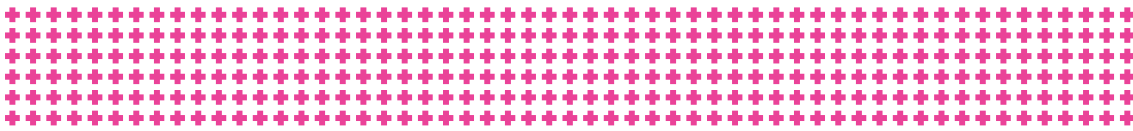
Measuring Impact

Since attending the Shildon Project, E has grown in confidence and self-esteem. She has developed new skills as well as new relationships. She is going through the process of becoming a volunteer with the local trust and is a massive support to the Youth Practitioner and other members of the group. She is an asset to the group and is at the point where she puts in as much as she takes out.

She has joined another group facilitated by the trust and learnt self-defence skills. She attended a day out at Rof 59, a local trampoline and climbing centre, supporting and nurturing the confidence of other members of the group so they could fully engage in the activities.

She is planning on making the journey into Newcastle on public transport with the support of the Youth Practitioner to visit the university. This is another first for her and an indication of the way her confidence and belief in herself has developed.

*Guy Campbell
Youth Practitioner, Sedgfield*



The Just Be Garden project



Above: top left: volunteers digging; top middle: promoting the garden; far right: the QNI's Amanda Young, Fiona and Joanna
bottom left: the garden; bottom middle: more plants.

Project team

Fiona Waddington, Health Visitor and Joanna Brady, Children's Centre Manager, Goole, East Yorkshire

Project summary

Old Goole is in an area of high deprivation with young mothers identifying that there are few safe outdoor spaces for them to take their babies, complicated with having spent a large proportion of time at home in isolation through Covid, with higher levels of anxiety.

The children's centre had a large expanse of unused lawn which we wanted to turn into a garden to help support parents to enable them to nurture their children. The parents were consulted at the planning stage with an overwhelming response to have flowers, with all those consulted being aware that being outdoors is beneficial to health.

There is a pre-school nursery held at the children's centre which has shown a keen interest in the garden, and although their involvement was not included in the initial plan, many of the children's activities have now moved outside, including growing vegetables.

We collaborated with the Smile Foundation, who helped with networking, and The Greenteam, a local gardening charity, who helped with the larger gardening jobs such as planting trees and developing flower beds. We received additional support from Men's Sheds, the National Garden Scheme (NGS) county organiser, with advice for planting, and advice from the social prescribing lead for the area. These people have all helped to ensure that the foundations for the garden are strong to help it be sustainable.

‘By creating a garden, people have been offered a different way of looking at wellbeing. They have been shown that there are ways to take care of themselves that does not demand anything of them, and that does not cost anything.’



Generous donations from Asselby Nursery and discounted supplies from California Lodge Garden Centre and Myers Beck Nursey have also really helped with the garden’s aesthetic and development.

The networking and building of relationships took a long time which has meant health improvement data is yet to be collected, but the project has changed the organisations perception of the benefits of engagement, and a new green group has been started.

Outstanding achievement

There is now a new garden in Old Goole, a space to sit, to watch the clouds, just breath and just be.

Quote

From the Children’s Centre Manager shared at the NGS northern regional meeting:

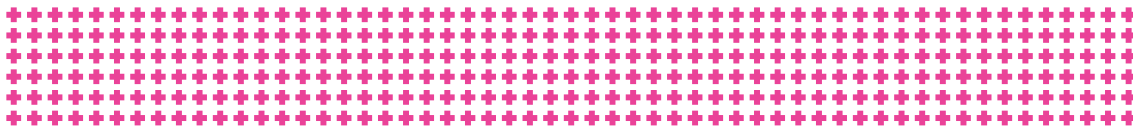
‘I am the manager of Marshlands Day Nursery, which is situated within Marshlands Children’s Centre. Since the garden project started on the front lawn space of the children’s centre, it has become a space that we value as a nursery. It has turned into an area of education for the children that attend our nursery. We can go out there to look at nature and wildlife, and we will even be able to walk through the willow arch when it has grown and established itself. We used to have to ask the primary school next door if we could go and investigate and use their nature area, but now we feel that we don’t have to because we have what is turning out to be our very own. We love it and the children love it. Thank you for creating what is turning out to be a lovely space to enjoy.’ Donna Swift (manager)

Professional achievements

We feel much better connected to the community and the local population with a much better understanding of all the work that is being done to support wellbeing outside the NHS. The trust is a mental health trust, and some people feel let down by existing services, as service provision does not always work for everyone. By creating a garden, people have been offered a different way of looking at wellbeing. They have been shown that there are ways to take care of themselves that does not demand anything of them, and that does not cost anything.



Above: A Teddy Bear picnic



Project GARDEN (Grow, Active, Recharge, Develop, Enrich, Nurture)



Above: top left: staff with some flowers; top middle: tomatoes growing; top middle: Maritess; bottom left: preparations for the garden; bottom middle: onions growing; bottom middle: a resident eats a salad he has picked and prepared.

Project team

Maritess Murtagh, North Central London Nurse Educator, Louise Keane, Education Manager, North London

Project summary

Covid had a devastating effect on care homes nationally. Locally we had engaged virtually with homes every two weeks to follow the progress of sunflower seeds growing, and this demonstrated the huge benefit that nature had on residents and staff. This project builds on this idea and aimed:

Grow - To encourage and engage residents, families, and staff to start gardening, to go out in their gardens or outdoor spaces, and to enjoy nature, including wildlife.

Active - To improve activity levels of residents and staff in a creative, fun way, and get care home staff to be active participants and facilitators.

Recharge - To recover and use the spaces that have not been used, and cultivate the spaces to create areas for enjoyment, relaxation, and reminiscing opportunities.

Develop - To support staff, residents, and families to develop their gardening skills, provide opportunities for them to pursue their interests in gardening, and to explore new hobbies.

Enrich - To empower everyone (staff, residents, and families) to garden, grow plants and facilitate active and passive participation. This includes empowering staff and residents to share their learning and skills with other residents and staff.

Nurture and nature - To encourage care homes to grow their own vegetables and fruits and be sustainable. In addition, to increase awareness about nature and environment and the importance of access to outdoor spaces or gardens when providing and commissioning services.

‘Our relationships with residents have become stronger. We are all looking forward to doing things together. Their gardening is a common ground, we work well, and it brings us together, we share ideas and knowledge, and we are a team.’



These aims were achieved by delivering garden packs to all care home settings and collaborating with a not-for-profit organization, Sweet Tree Farming, who provided outreach activities for those with support needs, and three visits to the farm for residents and staff, to undertake activities on site which was a great success.

‘I enjoyed visiting Sweet Tree Farm and very much appreciated Gemma’s guided tour of the farm and her explanation of how people with different support needs can benefit from the use of the facilities and resources that are available. I also appreciated Gemma running a selection of activities for myself and the other participants that stimulated my own creativity, engaged all my senses and thinking skills, as well as promoting team working that generated a sense of overall wellbeing. I believe that the environment and ethos of Sweet Tree Farm as well as the activities that were introduced at the session will be very beneficial for the wellbeing of the residents at [the] Care Home which is only five-to-ten-minute drive to the farm.’

The farm manager also provided 11 one-hour long virtual gardening sessions, on topics such as sowing seeds, water conservation, growing crops, and composting. 87 staff and 21 residents of the nine care homes and one supported living home for people with learning disabilities attended the sessions. They were followed up with 10 support sessions to check progress. These were advertised in the monthly newsletter which was designed with the support of a graphic designer.

Links were made with local community groups and organisations, securing additional grant funding, garden vouchers, free garden seeds and trays, all of which have helped grow the gardens and supported activities. The evaluation undertaken has provided evidence to take the project to the trust board and local council as a model of good practice with measurable benefits.

Outstanding achievements

Nine of the care settings reported that residents and staff engaged in the project showed an improvement in mood, an increase in physical activity, and an increase in meaningful interaction and engagement between residents and staff. Residents and staff taking control of their gardens and outdoor spaces and connecting with nature for their health and well-being, and they are planning to be more sustainable by growing their own vegetables, fruits, and herbs. In addition, the project was able to build connections between care homes and the local community. There was a positive impact on the nursing staff supporting the homes as well.

Quotes

‘Carers shared their experiences with the garden and their expertise, and they talked about the garden. Staff were using the garden a lot. The garden connected the staff with each other and with residents. With common interest brings a lot of good memories and increases the bond.’

‘Gardening encourages reminiscing, and one resident loved gardening and remembered gardening. Gardening is the key to getting the residents outside and to being less socially isolated.’

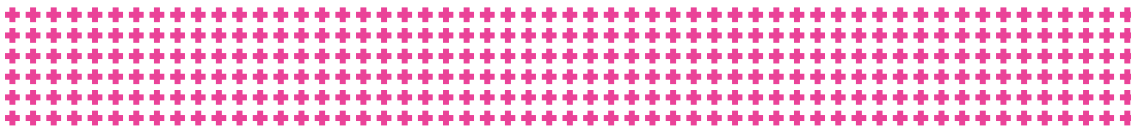
‘Our relationships with residents have become stronger. We are all looking forward to doing things together. Their gardening is a common ground, we work well, and it brings us together, we share ideas and knowledge, and we are a team. When it comes to gardening, we are one. When we are gardening, we are a team. One of the resident’s sisters became involved in the gardening as well.’

‘Gardening is the best exercise; it increased our physical activity’.

‘A resident was not climbing the stairs but after the risk assessment on the garden step, he now has full range of the garden, is able to use the space and likes getting involved with activities.’



Above: a resident eats his own prepared meal



'A resident moved into the care home a few months ago and had no close family relations. She stayed in bed a lot at first. I showed her the tomato plant from QNI, and she became really interested. I observed the change in her mood. She is now motivated to go out (has a reason to go out). She felt enjoyment and ownership of the plant. She is nurturing the plant'.

'One of our residents with learning disability and a mental health condition can get anxious and easily agitated. During our first gardening session, she touched the soil, planted the seeds, and watered the plants. We have noticed that her whole demeanor changed, she didn't look distressed and appeared very calm'.

Professional achievement

We became more innovative, creative, and resourceful, and are committed to supporting social care staff and residents. There is a sense of pride and achievement on seeing the participants taking charge of their gardens, connecting with nature, witnessing the meals prepared with the harvests, and the smiles this then creates. Presenting the project to a larger audience of North Central London commissioners, and winning the Nursing Times Best Digital System and Process Development Award (using technology to improve outcomes for care home residents and staff).

Case Study

Message from a friend of a resident involved in the gardening project and sent to the well-being and activities team at Priscilla Wakefield House in Tottenham. Names were anonymised, except for the staff of Priscilla Wakefield who gave consent.

I just wanted to say I think it's a wonderful project. It gets 'Resident A' and the other residents involved out in the fresh air, and doing something with purpose - something I don't think you can underestimate the importance of.

During gardening club, Resident A isn't being helped but helping others. She is watering and weeding and planting. She has purpose. She takes visible delight and pride in it. Throughout everything but the most wintery months, how the garden is doing and what was the latest thing to be planted or harvested or flower is often the first thing she says to me. I think growing food and herbs is particularly engaging. That she and her friends have eaten pizza with courgettes on it that she had grown or drunk mint tea that she had picked is an extra part of the joy. She is delighted now because the potatoes have been planted.

A happy side-effect is that it also made coming into the home and visiting Resident A much easier for me to start with. That probably sounds silly, but anything that encourages visitors coming in and feeling they have something helpful to do is, I'm guessing, a great thing. I see the positive impact of having a visitor on Resident A, but I think others

as well - I always end up having a chat with Resident B, Resident C and Resident D and others (I'm not very good with names). I think the gardening project is wonderful and I am keen to help and support it anyway I can. If there was one thing that could be improved, it would be to have a few more things to do later in the year.

We continued planting things in October, but I didn't think many would have worked. A few bulbs that you can plant late in the year and have the joy of seeing in spring would be fantastic! I also wanted to say I think Amerissa, who is the member of staff I see most doing it, is wonderful at making it work and be fun. She always plays music, chats, and gives Resident A and the others all the choice and 'power' in the situation and encourages me to come back.

I popped in today, hoping to do gardening, but Resident A was instead with lots of the other residents doing karaoke. What a joy! The members of staff running it were just perfect I thought! What a skill to get so many people engaged and having a lovely time, singing, or shaking a tambourine along - what I am sure is the highlight of many people's weeks, even if they can't all remember or express it. Frankly it was the highlight of my week - thanks for making me so welcome. If I hadn't already put a 5-star review of the home on google, I would have done it again! Keep up the great work activity people - what you do makes the resident's world a much better place! Under-sung and under-paid but important.

Resident A's Friend



Connecting with the Senses project



Above: top left: Jasmin with a resident; top right: residents and staff; bottom left: one of the planters; middle left: a resident; middle right: residents and staff; far right: Jasmin and a resident.

Project team

Jasmin Lanzaderas, Deputy Manager. Tracy Norbury Home Manager, Cheshire

Summary

The nursing home specialises in the care of people with very advanced dementia and behavioural issues, with many residents requiring one to one supervision and a lot of antipsychotic medication. The residents have complex needs and innovative ways of caring are needed, so that residents and their families can lead fulfilling lives as they travel on their dementia journey.

The aim of the project was to minimise distress reactions by promoting diversion, sensory distraction, and engagement as a therapeutic intervention through gardening both inside and outside of the home, which had a large unutilised garden where very few people ventured into or enjoyed.

The first stage of the garden was to purchase a greenhouse which was an instant success, with residents enjoying planting seeds and potting. Bulbs and plants were donated and planted both in the garden and in the mobile beds that can go indoors or outdoors. Three large tractor tyres were donated and have made excellent flower beds. The residents made handprint clay tiles which have been used to enhance the garden path. Care UK arranged electricity to the greenhouse for heating and lighting so the greenhouse can now be used all year round.

The project has served as therapy sessions for relatives and has helped to build relationships between staff, residents and their families. Providing space to share experiences of having a loved one with end stage dementia has also enabled conversations about advance care planning. There is also a garden club which five relatives attend on a weekly basis, which has improved their wellbeing. The project also led the home's 69 staff to actively find ways for bedbound

‘His wife is happy and confident to have “days off” for herself, for her own well-being too, knowing that her husband is settled.’



residents to enjoy the garden as well. This resulted in staff effectively working with a private occupational therapist, who now assesses residents for suitability to have a specialised chair so that they can go out in the garden safely. This has had a huge impact on the 41 families, seeing the reaction their loved ones show being outside in the garden, which was impossible to get to prior to the project, creating positive memories and experiences.

Outstanding achievements

Celebrations and events have been held with all the home’s residents outside, which had never happened before the project started. Residents are now offered meaningful occupations and hobbies in a beautiful garden that they enjoy, and the project is now being looked at as a possible development across all care homes in the organisation.

A reduction in the use of antipsychotic medication has also been recorded which reduces side effects for residents, improves wellbeing, and reduces the cost of treatment.

Professional achievement

As a keen and passionate gardener, being able to integrate personal passion with work is a win-win situation. Learning to be mindful increases positive energy, and connecting with wildlife enables a reduction in stress whilst on shift. I have become more confident in presenting as I have presented at the QNI annual QN day in conversation about the success of the project.

Case Study

A resident diagnosed with vascular dementia was transferred from another nursing home. He came with 12-hour support over 24 hours due to his high levels of distress. He was prescribed a high dose of antipsychotic and benzodiazepine medication regularly, as well as other medication for co-morbidities relating to his health and wellbeing.

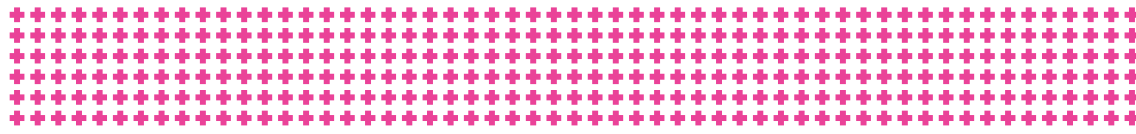
When colleagues introduced him to the garden, he appeared to reminisce and remember the garden. He started to go to the door and wait for colleagues to open the door for him. He now walks around the garden, volunteering to water the hanging basket as he says, “I will do it as I can reach it,” he then smiles at the colleague he is with.

His wife believes this is bringing his “personality back”, making his wife happy. Most days he will sit on his favorite chair in the garden with a cup of tea, routinely picking up the bucket out from the shed whilst his wife walks around dead heading the flowers. He weeds as well with the staff and his wife. On a Saturday he chats with other relatives

at the garden club. He watches their beloved dog play in the garden. When winter comes, he declines to go outside as it is too cold for him. However, he will come out of his room and look at the inside garden wall and smile.

These are the benefits of his garden routines:

- He has a routine to meet his need for meaningful occupation, as a result his one-to-one support has stopped, which has saved the CCG a substantial amount of money.
- The garden appears to have been instrumental in settling him down, enabling colleagues to do other types of activities with him and others.
- The garden is a “common ground” where confidence and comfort from both staff and family have bonded.
- His benzodiazepine use has reduced and is now prescribed and administered on an as required basis. This has significantly reduced to just 1mg in a month.
- He has been stabilized on his antipsychotic medication.
- His wife is happy and confident to have “days off” for herself, for her own well-being too, knowing that her husband is settled.



Healthy South Wirral Sensory and Wellbeing Garden project



Above: top left: the garden, a blank canvas; top middle: measuring the space; top right: Helen and a volunteer; bottom left: building the pagodas; bottom middle: adding the finishing touches; bottom right: the launch.

Project lead

Helen Hurst, General Practice Nurse, Wirral

Summary

People with learning disabilities and veterans with post-traumatic stress sometimes find it hard to attend GP appointments, due to the noise and business of the surgery. Having a calming space outside can improve the wellbeing of those with difficulties, but also of staff and other surgery visitors.

Adjacent to the health centre was a lawn which was not utilised by anyone, and by involving military veterans and a learning disability patient, the primary care network, One Wirral and Willaston Farm (both community interest companies) a serenity garden has been created which provides a place of calmness where patients and staff can just be.

The project required a lot of networking and liaising with other organisations before it could get started. As a result, the garden is now a spoke garden for the Defence Garden Scheme which provides veterans with a 10-week horticultural therapy course, which will also help to maintain the garden for free. The garden has also been used for GP registrar training sessions and the primary care network is looking at linking its cardiovascular project to the garden, using the five ways of wellbeing to reduce hypertension. The project is also being promoted by the social prescribing teams and NHS England greener prescribing.

‘Coming to the garden gives me a sense of peace and tranquillity, as I struggle with mental health issues and find it difficult with my joints aching most days.’



Quote

Carol wrote: *‘I have autism and diabetes and was referred to Helen, to help with the garden project, from the Practice Nurse.*

Coming to the garden gives me a sense of peace and tranquillity, as I struggle with mental health issues and find it difficult with my joints aching most days.

We meet on a Friday morning, and I had to catch the bus to get to the garden, I also went on other days to just potter and one highlight was watching two blue tits starting to nest in the new bird boxes that have been put up on the Pagodas. Sometimes it was just Helen and me shovelling slate or there could be other volunteers there. I planted the dwarf apple tree and some hydrangeas, and I lined some planters.

Being involved with the project has helped me with interacting with other people and given me a sense of purpose, and I look forward to seeing the garden grow and be. I will volunteer as a member of the maintenance group.’

Outstanding achievement

Becoming a spoke garden for the Defence Scheme and having the garden opening as Veteran Aware Event with Kate Davies CBE, Director of Health and Justice, Armed Forces and Sexual Assault Services Commissioning, NHS England open the garden. Creating a garden space from a patch of grassland.

Professional outcomes

The project linked with the Royal College of General Practice (RCGP) Veteran Friendly Accreditation Scheme and the Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance.

The project helped make Wirral more veteran aware and made NHS England aware of a different green therapy for veterans’ health and wellbeing.

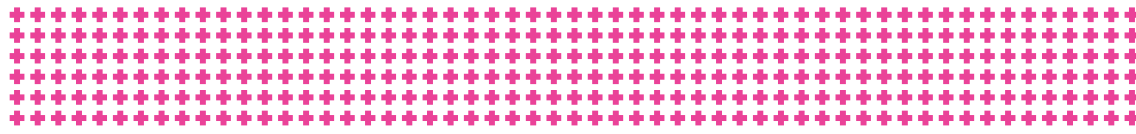
This networking also enabled the project lead to advise the Defence Garden Scheme on social prescribing, highlighting the benefits of horticultural therapy.

An article was published in the Journal of Community Nursing (JCN/12-2022/14) on how sensory garden space can help support health and wellbeing for military veterans and learning disability patients.

Personal health and wellbeing improved because of undertaking the project.



Above: the original plan for the garden



Willow Incredible Wellbeing Garden project



Above: top left: the wasteland, aka the garden at the beginning; top middle: launch with the Mayor; top right: courgettes grown in the garden; bottom left: tree planting; bottom right: the garden with volunteers and raised beds.

Project team

Stephanie Llewellyn, Advance Nurse Practitioner, Dr Robin Harlow, GP, Janie Millerchip, Gosport Locality Transformation Project Lead, Gosport, Hampshire

Summary

Gosport has two areas which are in the top 15% of areas in England which experience health deprivation, as well as health inequalities where people feel they have limited influence regarding their health and wellbeing. There is a high prevalence of coronary vascular disease, diabetes, and mental illness, with a lower life expectancy than the rest of Hampshire.

The project aimed to promote innovative, personalised solutions to help patients manage ill-health. There was also an aim to promote greater wellbeing by creating a garden that encourages social engagement, peer support, doing practical activities to increase physical and mental health and reduce loneliness, and to encourage learning about how food is grown, and cooked to empower people to choose healthier choices.

These outcomes were achieved after planning the garden, creating a network of volunteers to maintain the garden and by networking with local voluntary organisations such as Motiv8, who provide a range of activities to support and inspire vulnerable young people and have utilised the space to carry out activities. Two Saints (a homelessness charity) also met with the project leads to discuss using the space with homeless and vulnerable adults.

The project has additional outcomes with new friendships being made, with volunteers coming forward of all ages, and from other charities and projects in the community, as well as staff engagement. Donations were made from local garden centres staff and the local community. Donations from Hampshire and the Isle of Wight funded 15 volunteers

‘We have created a garden from a piece of wasteland. We now have a wildflower bed that is germinating, fruit trees, raised beds, a path, and a network of volunteers. ’



to attend Thrive.org.uk garden training. Internal communications and Brighterways charity helped with a successful bid for further funding. Abri homes have provided a grant to support the volunteer co-ordinator to continue to support volunteer sessions.

The networking and planning with a range of other organisations at the beginning of the project means that collecting wellbeing data is ongoing and will be reported on at a later date.

Outstanding achievement

We have created a garden from a piece of wasteland. We now have a wildflower bed that is germinating, fruit trees, raised beds, a path, and a network of volunteers.

Professional development

Confidence has grown in speaking up and presenting the project to small and large organisations to ask for quotes, arrange deliveries, and ask for support through donations towards a shed and other equipment to maintain sustainability. Resilience has developed through personal determination to keep going even when there have been setbacks and frustration.

Case Study

The Coronation Big Help Out inspired us to do an open garden event on the Monday bank holiday.

A gentleman due to be 80 later this year came wandering by and saw our flag in the distance so came to see what was happening. He had to show some bravery as the surgery garden is at the back of the building and by his own admission, he struggles with feeling isolated, lonely, and sometimes is depressed. However, he managed to keep coming round the side of the building where I bumped into him. We were in fact packing up and most people had gone home. I took him round to the back area of the garden and offered him tea and biscuits. I explained about the garden and he did not feel he would be able to offer much or do a lot practically. I said we were also looking for people to just enjoy the garden, sit on the chairs, and chat to the others that visit. I really encouraged him to just pop up on the Thursday with no pressure to stay for any length of time.

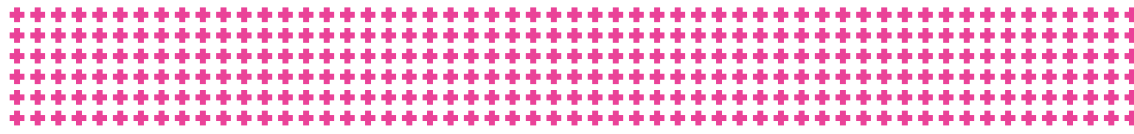
We are very happy to report this is what he indeed has done, the next three Thursdays he has come and had tea and biscuits and has said to the volunteer co-ordinator he thinks he has found his place to come and just be. He lives in a flat in a high-rise block. This is exactly what the garden was about – not just those who can garden but for those without green spaces or gardens to come and enjoy.

As a result of our open event during the coronation weekend we have gained even more volunteers and now we have a great range of ages and backgrounds coming and being part of the garden.

Two ladies attended individually to the open garden event, and they now attend the garden sessions, one aged 75 and the other 79. They had never met before, one was lonely, and the other was now living in a flat without a garden. They have really clicked and become firm friends. We had not thought that friendships would form that would go beyond the garden.



Above: the coronation weekend opening




No Inequalities project

Dear Patient name,

Thank you for attending your annual review we have provided your results in an easy read format.


The traffic light system highlights results that we can work on together and should not cause worry. For more detailed information you can access your results online. We are interested to know what matters to you so please tick items you would like to discuss at your next appointment.



What matters to me?

Housing		<input type="checkbox"/>	Diet		<input type="checkbox"/>
Exercise		<input type="checkbox"/>	Smoking		<input type="checkbox"/>
Sleep		<input type="checkbox"/>	Work		<input type="checkbox"/>
Mood		<input type="checkbox"/>	Alcohol		<input type="checkbox"/>
Money		<input type="checkbox"/>	Medication		<input type="checkbox"/>
Relationships		<input type="checkbox"/>	Weight		<input type="checkbox"/>
Family		<input type="checkbox"/>	Driving		<input type="checkbox"/>

		Latest Result	Previous Result	Act now	Think change	No action
Smoking		Ex-smoker	Ex-smoker	Smoker	Passive	
Alcohol units (per week)		12 Units/Week	12 Units/Week	>14 units		
Exercise		Moderately active	Moderately active	Inactive	Moderately active	
Body Mass Index (BMI)		29.29 Kg/m²	28.31 Kg/m ²	>30	25-30	19-25
Risk of a heart attack or stroke in next 10 yrs (QRISK2)		33.88 %	28.4 %	>20%	10-20%	<10%
Blood Pressure		132 / 78 mmHg	165 mmHg/ 89 mmHg	>150/90	140/80-150/90	<140/80
Diabetes (HbA1c)		53 mmol/mol	46 mmol/mol	>54	48-53	<48
Kidney Function Urine (ACR)		1.2 mg/mmol	1.8 mg/mmol	>5	3-5	<3
Kidney Function Bloods (eGFR)		74 mL/min/1.73 m²	86.1 mL/min/1.73m ²	<45	45-60	>60



Above: above left and right: excerpts of the letter; bottom right: the team and Dr Amanda Young in the garden

Project team

Rebecca Shearer Lead Practice Nurse, Western Road Medical Centre, Charlotte Marshall, Newcastle-upon-Tyne

Summary

Weston Road Medical Centre is in a deprived area in Newcastle where there is a need to address and challenge inequalities in health such as poorer health outcomes for preventable diseases, like diabetes and cardiovascular disease. There was a need to provide accessible and meaningful information related to annual health checks. Prior to the project, a three-page results letter was sent out to clients giving them blood test results, and included information which was difficult to interpret and make sense of.

The aim of this project was to present results that were meaningful and could be used to address health behaviours to reduce the risk of disease. A letter using a traffic light system was developed: red means act now, amber means time to think about change, and green means no action is required. Patients who wish to know more are encouraged to access their own health records or make a follow up appointment. The letter also focuses on joint personalised care planning and holistic assessment of not just physical health but also mental health and social factors.

This letter was developed by working with community groups and patients. These collaborations have meant that weekly community drop-in sessions provide the opportunity to work with other Newcastle practices to address health inequalities in a different way e.g., vaccination hubs within food banks and local surgeries to increase uptake to prevent disease. The project has now evolved into the wider community to address inequalities with a welfare hub to address the cost-of-living crisis. We are working with the most vulnerable people with representatives from other charities that provide support and advice.

‘The project has given us the opportunity to establish relationships with Year of Care, Connected Voice, Foodbank and Riverside Community Health project. A long-term partnership is envisaged moving forward to tackle health inequalities together.’



As well as meeting the aim of the project, there were unintended outcomes of undertaking this project. Rebecca became a Queen’s Nurse and Charlotte gained a management position within the primary care network due to having increased confidence from being a co-project lead. Inspired by the National Garden Scheme innovation projects that were on the same programme, a disused area at the practice was transformed into an outdoor garden space for staff to utilise.

Outstanding achievements

The project has given us the opportunity to establish relationships with Year of Care, Connected Voice, Foodbank and Riverside Community Health project. A long-term partnership is envisaged moving forward to tackle health inequalities together.

Although Ardens (Ardens Healthcare Informatics, the practice patient record system provider) were unable to develop the technology for the letter, they are utilizing the new version and trying to find a solution.

A video with visuals to explain the year of care process to our patients has been made.

Establishing a garden to support the health and wellbeing of staff allows outside space for staff to gather their thoughts and somewhere to have lunch. We have also included gardening in team building exercises, which was well received by staff.

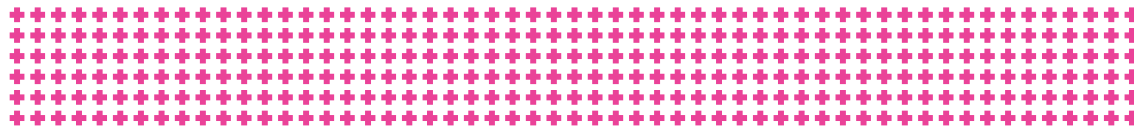
Professional achievements

Self-confidence in being a good leader has improved the development of leadership skills, as well as fuelling enthusiasm for nursing. We were thrilled that the project was recognised locally in the Connected Voice Bulletin. As a result of personal development, more compassion and attentiveness is being paid to my team’s needs, with a focus on personal development and retaining the workforce.

The professional links made allowed the development of partnerships, which bridge gaps in expertise and knowledge, developing relationships between primary care and community projects to improve patient care and to understand issues accessing primary care.

Working out of the foodbank one day a week has resulted in collaborative working with Riverside Community Health Project to offer a one stop health shop in other community settings, working to benefit the community.

Although Ardens were not able to create the letter with the technical capacity hoped for, a great sense of pride that the letter was rated so highly that they are considering using it as the template, within their long term conditions package.



Rowcroft Space for Nature project



29 JAN 23
 BIRDWATCH: ROWCROFT.
 10-30 → 11-30 WINDUP

SMART TIT	111
BLUG TIT	111
L. TAILOD T	111
NUTHATCH	1
W. PIGEON	1
BLACKCAT ♀	1
ROBIN	1
BLACKBIRD	11
BLACKCAT ♂	1
COCK TIT	1
CHAFFINCH	11
DUNNICK	1
JAY	1



Above: top left: making the pinch pots; top right: some of the art; bottom left: the birdhide; bottom middle: a record of the visiting birds; bottom left: the birdfeeders.

Project lead

Sarah Baker, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Devon

Summary

Rowcroft Hospice has extensive gardens and a disused outbuilding was ideally placed to become an outdoor space for patients and relatives. The benefits of connecting with the natural environment can help the emotional and physical challenges faced by those with a life limiting illness, as well as providing an environment that can be utilised for activities for patients, their families and the bereaved.

The bird hide was completed in October 2022, but activities were held prior to the completion of renovations from the outpatient departments as access to the gardens was still beneficial for the initial four to five bereaved relatives who met weekly. Activities including a walking woodland meditation, pottery, gardening, music, creativity in nature, bird watching, bee keeping and a mindful tea ceremony.

Two of the group members were able to play musical instruments but both admitted in the music session that since their bereavement they had been unable to play any music. Both people fully participated in the music session and one of them felt able to play a solo guitar piece to the group. On leaving Mr D commented how powerful and emotional he had found the session and was pleased to have played the guitar again for the first time since his bereavement. Mrs K has found a renewed interest in the birds and the natural environment around her, and has told us she is now taking pleasure from being mindful on her walks and spending more time in nature than previously.

‘This project has been a lifeline to me, providing much appreciated support . . .and the incentive to get out of the house to meet with other people.’



An additional session was added at the request of the group for a history walk and presentation by a member of our Estates team, explaining the history and background of the Hospice and grounds.

At the end of the first programme of eight sessions the participants were given a feedback form to measure outcomes. All four of the regular participants completed the feedback form, and the findings are summarised below. In addition to this, participants gave feedback on individual sessions verbally or via email.

None of the group were known to each other at the beginning of the programme, and over the weeks the relationship between them was observed to develop. They were respectful of each other’s feelings and opinions and all members of the group participated in group activities and discussions. In feedback they stated the groups were friendly, interesting, and enjoyable. They enjoyed the opportunity to come to the Hospice gardens.

Participants commented that the group gave them the chance to meet with others experiencing loss and bereavement and helped to combat their loneliness.

Patient Quotes

Mrs R commented ‘*This project has been a lifeline to me, providing much appreciated support . . . and the incentive to get out of the house to meet with other people.*’

Mrs M stated ‘survive life’s tests and taught (us) how to start living’. She went on to write the group ‘offered structure and togetherness and gave a good feeling of a place I can attend and feel I belong’.

Mr J commented the group offered the chance to meet new people, have new experiences and combat his ‘profound loneliness’. He started the programme by saying he did not walk for pleasure, only to get from A to B, and he had never walked to appreciate nature. Through the various sessions Mr J began to display an interest in walking in nature for enjoyment and we were able to sign post him to a walking group in his village, which he has gone on to join.

Outstanding achievements

The Bird Hide has been transformed from an undervalued storage hut to a pleasant useable space for both service users and staff to benefit from.

The Bird feeders are very popular with the birds with a wide array of birds visiting the feeders each day.

A volunteer carried out the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch in January 2022, where he recorded 14 different varieties of bird seen from the Bird Hide in the space of one hour.

Working on the project has encouraged involvement and links with many members of Rowcroft multi-disciplinary team, with joint working established between volunteers, Spiritual Care Team, Complimentary Therapy, music, and art therapy. In the current programme a volunteer with the spiritual care team has committed to supporting each session.

Professional achievements

Increased confidence in group facilitation, with support from colleagues, especially working with bereaved relatives in a way that was not done previously, which has enhanced clinical practice and better understanding of how to approach bereavement and loss.

Confidence to collaborate with other departments in the hospice as well increasing the ability to manage a project. The training offered by the QNI in project management, demonstrating value and creative thinking were valuable to my development, not only for the purpose of this project but also my wider role.



Case Study

Mrs R

Mrs R came to the group following referral from her bereavement support worker. She had experienced the loss of her husband under the care of Rowcroft Community Services six months earlier and had received one to one support through Rowcroft Bereavement team.

Mrs. R was tearful on arrival at the first session and she described how difficult it had been for her to come to the group that day and required some initial support. The first session was a gentle introduction with a mindful nature walk. Introductions were made and ground rules established.

After her initial hesitancy, Mrs. R felt able to stay for the first session and subsequently returned to every session. Initially she did not contribute verbally to the group as much as the others but as the weeks progressed, she was

able to contribute with honesty and openness, becoming an integral part of the group.

Mrs. R is a creative person and was eager to engage in all activities. In the music group she shared that she was a keen musician but had been unable to play her instruments since the death of her husband. In the session she felt able to pick up and play several instruments and felt this marked a milestone for her. She has since made plans to visit the Bird Hide with a fellow musician to play her harp in the natural environment it offers.

Through joining in with activities, Mrs. R felt her interest and focus was being reawakened. After the pottery session she explained this was an activity she had never done before but intended to actively pursue outside of the group.

Email feedback from Mrs. R

'Thank you so much for today, it was fabulous! Everything you've organised for our sessions has been amazing and has made such a positive impact on my quality of life.'

When the group sessions came to an end Mrs. R felt she wanted to continue some involvement with the hospice so has signed up to volunteer in non-patient roles and also has written a blog highlighting the Nature project, to be published on the Rowcroft social media, part of which is included below.

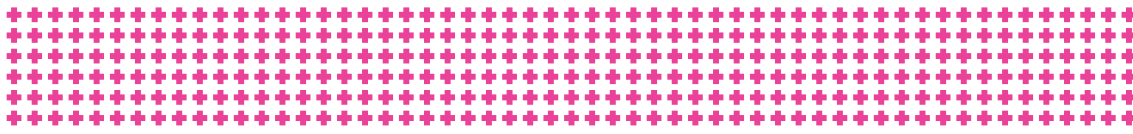
From blog by Mrs. R Space in nature

'I was also offered the opportunity to attend Rowcroft's pilot group project, 'Space in nature'. This project offered me a safe, caring environment where I could engage as little or as much as I felt comfortable, without any pressure. Each session had a different activity, all of which were extremely interesting and rewarding and were provided by volunteers who showed great empathy and understanding.'

'We took mindfulness walks in the beautiful grounds, made music, had a tea ceremony, learned about Rowcroft's bees and history, and worked with clay among other things.'

A vital lifeline

'It was such a positive and supportive experience and has helped me take the first steps towards finding a way forward, which I desperately needed. I hope that the project will continue as it offers a vital lifeline to people whose lives have been turned upside down and are in desperate need of support; the gravity of grief cannot be overestimated. I will be forever grateful for the support I have received and I have now signed up as a gardening and 'office saviour' volunteer for Rowcroft as I wish to help support this worthy charity to ensure that others will continue to benefit from its vital services.'



Sustainability and Nutritional Programme for patients in a Community Hospital Setting **project**



Above: top left: the launch; top right: growing produce; bottom left: Simon Littlefield, George Plumtre from The National Garden Scheme and chef Sarah Agyemang; bottom middle: QNI cake! bottom right: the launch.

Project team

Grahame Hardy, Lead Specialist Nurse in Dementia, Sarah Agyemang, Head Chef Hawkhurst Community Hospital, Kent

Summary

As one of nine community hospitals in Kent, the aim of the project is to improve and aid the recovery of patients in the rehabilitation facility by introducing home cooked, own grown fruit and vegetables from a garden in the hospital grounds. Patients were involved in harvesting and preparation of produce prior to eating them. The patients really enjoyed being involved and this helped with their rehabilitation. A reminiscence area and sensory garden were developed and well used throughout the summer, and patients and staff said that being outside had a positive effect on how they were feeling and their wellbeing.

The sustainability lead in the organisation was able to utilise the data from the harvested produce to calculate the total harvest and how this had impacted on the carbon footprint of the organisation.

Between March and November 2022, 27 different crops were grown providing a total of 90.94kg of fresh, locally sourced fruit and vegetables to the hospital kitchen.

It was determined that the Hawkhurst Farm produced enough food to offset £386.57 in procuring costs. Herbs such as chives and parsley had the largest impact due to their weight-to-value ratio.

‘Seeing my dream of growing my own fruit and vegetables for patient and staff meals has made me even more passionate about feeding patients nutritious, wholesome food.’



By growing this food on site, this is estimated to have prevented the emissions of 30.54kg of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO2e). This is approximately the same as a KCHFT fleet vehicle travelling 219 miles.

Patient and Staff Quotes

‘[I] loved the fresh air and the flowers. [I] loved the sun and it felt wonderful on my skin’

‘[I] toured the vegetable garden and picked a strawberry – With permission!’

‘Taking a patient outside is always a high priority when you can. They need fresh air as much as I do. [The patient was] a keen gardener herself so she was happy to go outside and see all the new plants and in particular all the daffodils. The colours are amazing and all sizes, it’s intriguing to see all sizes and colours and lovely to take five minutes out to think of something outside the hospital.’

‘Seeing her outside is wonderful as a healthcare assistant, it’s uplifting to watch and aid her walk around taking it all in, showing me what plants, she has and seeing the signs of spring is a welcoming distraction from being in a hospital all day. I was happy to see her interacting and showing her what we grow and where. Seeing all the spring colours and getting some fresh air is a joy and makes you generally feel so much better, clears all the cobwebs from mine and the patient’s head.’

‘Managing to get outside to get the air and to see someone enjoy what you also enjoy as part of your job really does make you feel enriched in your role. When it gets warmer and longer days, I look forward to taking more people out and hopefully getting my hands dirty’.

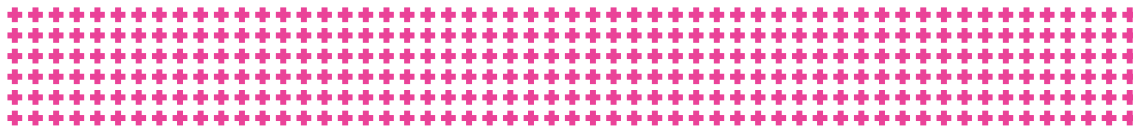
Outstanding achievements

The project has attracted a lot of interest, and the Trust was gifted 20 trees from the plant a tree scheme. The chef Sarah Agyemang won the trust health and wellbeing award, as she is a positive ambassador for wellbeing and mental health and promotes and provides nutritional individual choices for choices for patient. She is respected and popular for her tireless dedication, excellence and commitment to her profession.

Several local journalists have been very interested in learning more about the garden, which has resulted in a number of publications and invitations for appearances including articles in KentOnline and Kent Life magazine, alongside an interview of BBC Radio Kent.

The increased promotion of the programme has been beneficial in increasing collaborations with other organisations across the country. These new collaborations have included:

- Head Chef Sarah Agyemang being invited to join Love British Food Hospital and Care Catering Working Group.
- Interest from Nicola Strawther (Chief Dietetic & Catering Technician from NHS England and NHS Improvement).
- Visit from Tim Radcliffe (Net Zero Food Manager at NHS England)
- Simon Littlefield (Director of Nursing and Quality Leadership Team from Surrey Downs Health & Care NHS Trust) visiting the garden with a view to sharing the project design with his trust. Simon has since been successful in an application to involvement with QNI and continues to be in close contact with KCHFT.



Professional Achievements

For Sarah Agyemang our chef the achievements have been multi-faceted and profound. Professionally, the project has provided a valuable channel for upskilling, creating new dishes using fresh ingredients :

'Seeing my dream of growing my own fruit and vegetables for patient and staff meals has made me even more passionate about feeding patients nutritious, wholesome food. It has increased my belief in the power of plant, pick, cook, eat, knowing that patients are getting the freshest ingredients possible.

Creating new dishes with items I've harvested – chocolate courgetti cake, cheese and green onion scones, broad bean and spinach tart, courgette, and carrot muffins is such a joy especially when asking patients to guess what is in them!

Involving patients in this also adds to the positive power of being outside in nature whilst seeing our produce grow – add to that, patients picking and eating fruit straight from the garden and it brings back so many memories of their earlier years.

As chemicals are never used in our garden, I have been on a journey of learning. Using companion planting to ensure crops are as pest free as possible, crushed eggshells and banana skin fertilizer as feed. Taking these items and many more out of the waste system and using them helps to reduce our waste quantity.

The garden has created a huge positive learning curve for me, and it is something that adds so much to my everyday working life. Knowing patients and staff are enjoying the garden and being involved in the garden brings a whole different meaning to loving my job.'



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