



NGS Elsie Wagg Innovation Scholarship Final Report Summary 2023/2024



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.

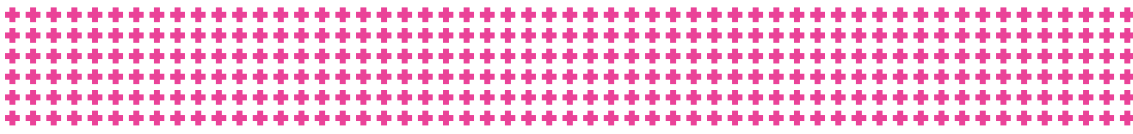
The Scholarship is open to all nurses working in the community and are awarded to five nurses submitting the best applications each year, for projects that promote the health benefits of gardening and garden visiting among a group of people.

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 Essex to Lancashire.

The following is a summary of their final reports.



Background

The Queen's Nursing Institute and the National Garden Scheme have worked closely in partnership as the gardens and health movement has developed over the past decade.

Gardens like the ones showcased in these nurse-led projects have clear and measurable benefits in physical, mental and emotional health. The specific benefits of individual projects vary quite widely, while also sharing common themes.

Some people have been helped to develop greater confidence in spending time outdoors, perhaps with their children or other family members. Personal bonds are encouraged to develop in a safe, relaxed and non-threatening environment.

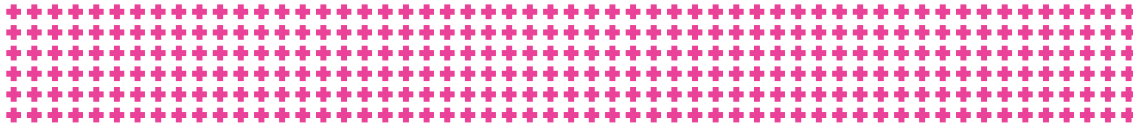
Physical activity associated with gardening can have a huge impact on people's mobility, balance and overall physical condition. The mental benefits simply of being outside can be described more easily than they can be measured, but a growing connection to nature through all our senses can have a transformative effect on almost anyone.

Other projects have connected people with trees and plants that produce fruit and vegetables. In an age when many people derive nearly all their food from shops, many of us have lost connection with the origins of food production. Food grown in gardens is more sustainable, having lower 'food miles', is often largely organic, and is natural and unprocessed.

People of all ages can benefit from gardening and some of the most effective projects have been with care homes and nursing homes, making better use of the gardens that many homes have, re-igniting a lifelong hobby for many residents.

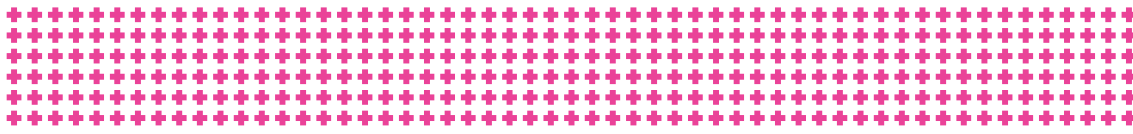
The gardens and health movement has great potential to support national and local efforts to improve good health and prevent ill health, to support healthier lifestyles and promote self-care, and to reduce health inequalities – all national policy imperatives for the National Health Service and part of the wider effort across the whole health and care system.

The science behind the health benefits of gardens and gardening is still very much in development. It can be much harder to measure the benefits of such 'soft' health and lifestyle changes, compared to the 'hard' data gained from pharmacological interventions. Both approaches are necessary if we are to achieve better individual and population health – we cannot medicate our way out of a public health crisis.



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The Sanctuary Garden project



Above: the garden; **above right:** the team; **bottom left and middle:** the mosaics taking shape; **bottom right:** the vision for the garden.

Project team

Angela Willan, Lead Nurse for Physical Health (Mental Health & Learning Disabilities); Claire Holloway, Dean Ward Manager, Gloucester.

Project summary

Wotton Lawn Hospital is a community mental health hospital in Gloucester, and female inpatients often feel sexually unsafe in open spaces, and the hospital did not have a dedicated women only outdoor space. Therefore, this project developed The Sanctuary Garden, an outdoor space specifically for female inpatients only to access. The garden has been co-designed and planned with over 50 patients and 12 staff who worked with the Gloucestershire garden designer and NGS member Ruth Chivers, to provide a safe, outdoor safe for socialisation, activity, privacy, learning, and fulfilment. The planned garden became a much bigger plan than the original intention, which has meant additional fundraising is required, which is well underway.

Outstanding achievement

A co-produced and designed mosaic has been commissioned and will take pride of place in the garden. The garden has inspired one of the doctors to undertake a research study, 'Creating and using an inpatient women's therapeutic garden: service user and staff views and experiences – a qualitative service evaluation', which the patients and staff have contributed data to.

‘Thank you for letting me help with the project, the mosaic reminds me that even broken pieces can make something beautiful.’



Quotes

One of our patients from the Dean Ward who has been attending the Mosaic Group is a lady who has been in and out of hospital with severe mental illness for many years, and has really taken to the mosaic work.

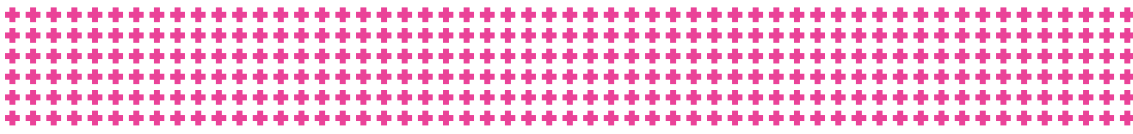
She said, ‘Thank you for letting me help with the project, the mosaic reminds me that even broken pieces can make something beautiful’.

These words from someone who has had so many problems in her her life is really touching, and knowing that she has been helped to feel this way is an outstanding achievement of the project so far.

Professional achievements

The positive benefit of the project so far is a huge sense of pride that so many people have come together to help us with the project, and the morale boost it has given to the staff and patients has been huge.

We have developed new skills as a result of undertaking the project, including project management, fundraising, and also developed our tenacity, patience and perseverance!



The Green Wellbeing project



Above: Residents enjoying the sessions.

Project team

Carolyn Fleurat, Transformation Lead Nurse for Community Services and Anna Redpath, Operational Manager, Staffordshire

Project summary

COVID-19 brought unprecedented challenges to health care systems, especially in care homes. This project aimed to improve the mental health and well-being of residents by early identification of deterioration by advance nurse practitioners, through re-engagement rehabilitation sessions. These would at the same time be more sustainable by reducing duplication of services and encouraging care homes to recycle and grow produce themselves. A six-week pilot in four local homes in the Midlands involving five or six residents, who were identified as being isolated, were invited to activity sessions related to gardening. The sessions were held in outside spaces, weather permitting, including planting seeds, building bird boxes and bug boxes, and discussions related to gardening. Collaborative approaches with care staff, Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) partners, families, and volunteers, enabled inclusion of people who may not have been engaged before in these activities. The sessions enabled holistic assessments to take place and non-pharmacological approaches to therapy-based care to be used. The sessions also provided the opportunity to educate staff about skin care, hydration, falls preventions and how to identify softer signs of deterioration. This helped to reduce nurse call outs and give more support for care home managers and allow their queries to be answered when the activity sessions were taking place and the nurse was on site.

The project has changed the organisation's perspective of social prescribing, and a health coach role to support preventative health has been developed with VCSE colleagues. It has also enabled the development of a Green Social

'It was wonderful to have BR fully engaged in the sessions - BR's daughter and staff at the care home were thrilled to see her confidence be restored.'



Prescribing group to encourage other healthcare professionals to use this approach for future care provision. Working collaboratively together with the local authority and GP partners has also reduced duplication of care and identified appropriate routes to care.

Outstanding achievement

Using nursing skills in collaboration with private organisations and the VCSE sector to provide integrated care and contribute and make a difference to residents' lives. In addition being able to promote the use of social prescribing in our care homes and organisation, and introduce a Green Social Prescribing group which promotes the use of gardening activities to support health and wellbeing.

Professional achievements

Have a greater understanding of challenges faced by the care home sector, who are affected by gaps in NHS support and delivery. Being able to explore social prescribing instead of using a medical model of care has been very beneficial, and sharing this with the other project leads across the country has made us feel part of the QNI family.

Case studies

1. During the COVID-19 pandemic BR had been required to isolate in her room on several occasions due to outbreaks of COVID-19 in the care home and also having COVID-19 herself on two occasions.

Following the pandemic, BR had not been out of her bedroom for over 12 months. BR had become very used to staying in her room and requested all her meals to be brought to her room. She was encouraged very frequently by care staff to come out of her room for meals and activities, but she declined, and recognised herself that she had lost her confidence in leaving her bedroom.

The care home manager identified BR as resident for The Green Well Being Project to support her confidence. The sessions were planned to be flexible so they could take place both outdoors and indoors, and could be adapted to be 1:1 sessions.

The first couple of activities took place as a 1:1 with BR in her room. These included planting and watering seeds, looking at gardening books and photographs, and putting together lavender bags.

BR really welcomed the sessions in her room. Over the weeks a good relationship was built with BR who with encouragement, agreed to come into the conservatory for a session and then eventually into the garden.

It was wonderful to have BR fully engaged in the sessions, and this then led to BR going out on a trip to the cathedral. BR's daughter and staff at the care home were thrilled to see her confidence be restored.

2. DF was a frail elderly gentleman with a diagnosis of Parkinson's disease. Due to the disease being at the advanced stage, DF had limited mobility and used a wheelchair, however he had often tried to mobilise independently and had had frequent falls.

This had resulted in DF requiring 1:1 care to ensure his personal safety. The care home manager identified DF as a resident for The Green Wellbeing project, as he often was isolated from the group and did not attend any of the current activities provided by the home.

Upon discussion with DF, it was found he was a keen gardener and took pride in looking after his garden before he became a resident in the home.

He disclosed that he loved being out in the garden, but due to the wheelchair provided by the home it was difficult for family members and carers to push DF up and down the hill to access the garden.

During each session seedlings were brought up from the greenhouse to ensure residents were able to monitor the progress and DF was always excited to see this each week. Support was also provided to DF to use a screwdriver and craft hammer to build bird boxes and bug houses, and DF was able to demonstrate improved dexterity by using these items.

DF enjoyed these activities and felt a sense of achievement in seeing the finished products.



New Longton Wellbeing Garden Project



Above: The launch of the garden; **middle:** Corrie and Fiona Rogers QNI's Nursing Programmes Manager (Innovation); **right:** Corrie and Dr Whitworth.

Project team

Corrie Llewellyn, QN, Quality Assurance & Governance Lead/ Clinical Strategic Lead, Lancashire & South Cumbria

Project summary

The original intention for this project was to set up a wellbeing garden, for staff and patients at the General practice premises in the small village of New Longton in Lancashire. Unfortunately, due to horrendous flooding and drainage issues it was not possible to build the garden there. However, the local care home had unutilised land and was willing to accommodate and help with the relocation of the project, so the project has been able to meet its aims in improving community engagement and the wellbeing of surgery staff and care home staff as well.

The garden aims to be bee friendly with large vegetable beds, the produce of which will be shared at local community events including health events, as well as a summer house for residents, staff, and people of the community to enjoy. As the project has been delayed due to the relocation outcomes have not yet been measured, but the garden has increased the wellbeing of the care home gardener and by focusing on the garden the project lead and their family were able to cope with a significant bereavement during the project year, bringing them together with a shared purpose, as their father had been involved in the planning stages of the project building bee houses and their wellbeing was improved as a result during this very difficult time.

Outstanding achievement

Corrie has been instrumental in starting to set up one to one social prescribing sessions for patients run by the social prescriber and health and wellbeing practitioner. With this garden space staff and patients can access gardening as part of the therapeutic appointments, with the opportunity to increase use routinely. There is one patient who has been

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struggling to leave their own home, or go to school, who has now agreed to visit the garden, and the plan is that through gardening, and maintaining the space with the social prescriber and groundsman, they will be able to grow in confidence and hopefully reap the benefits this space has provided.

Corrie has not only implemented planned use of the garden she has also promoted the benefits of a garden to other practices across Lancashire and south Cumbria. Corrie presented at the local ICB Green Week for staff and has developed a slide presentation to provide information on how wider community participation can be utilised to achieve positive outcomes.

Professional achievement

Project management skills have increased building confidence to present a Green sustainable case study to the ICB and to present at the all QN day. The project has improved relationships and links between the general practice and local organisations, who by working together can help to improve the wellbeing of local people. Undertaking this project has also linked the lead with fellow project leads who provided immense support and guidance.

Corrie who embraced the challenge so well and with sheer determination created a successful garden scheme. On commencing the project to now the professional development and growth and the increase in personal wellbeing has been unsurmountable. This was an unexpected outcome for the project that although some self-development was expected the personal growth and increase in wellbeing was much greater. The satisfaction and reward at seeing how well the garden is being enjoyed and used by staff, patients and family was measured. The positive feedback from both staff and patients has since opening been deeply rewarding and encouraging.

Case study

‘At first there was a fear that I wouldn’t be able to meet the challenge. I had concerns, mainly due to time restraints that I would get no support from others and at times found the reluctance of others in the community disheartening.

Going to London and taking part in the development sessions was not only an amazing opportunity to learn and grow but allowed me to also connect with others and be inspired. Travelling and doing this alone was also personally challenging and at times daunting.

The self-reflection from this experience has been beneficial and I can clearly see how much an impact this project has had on myself. Following the after effects of the social isolation from covid and the personal impact of feeling disconnected, coupled with the loss of my father the whole project has been a personal challenge. As a nurse I was feeling ungrounded, almost jaded about my role and I was doubting the benefits I could give to others and my patients. It is the first time in my career I have questioned my professional identity. I have to say coming to London meeting the wonderful teams and colleagues really impacted me. I felt more empowered, more connected and I certainly was reminded of why we all work so hard.

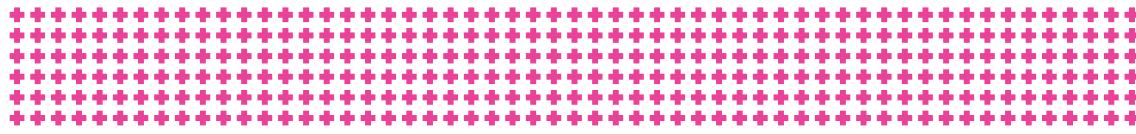
An unexpected outcome from the project was that from all areas of the country my family came to help me build the summerhouse and beds. Some with bruises to prove their hard work and determination to support me. Personally, this really impacted me through grieving my father. The increase in my own wellbeing through gardening with my brother and family was unmeasurable. The feeling of connecting with the earth and planting and knowing

the benefits it could have to others spurred me on to be determined to finish.

Although my father was unable to see the garden completed the beehouses and decorative houses he painted with the help of others before his death are there for all to see. I am so proud of this achievement, and I get to see a piece of my father through the garden.

One of the biggest impacts and restoration of my faith of how amazing we all are, was the support of the humble groundsman. Matt who did not want to be in the limelight and so freely gave his time, expertise and who weekend after weekend rose to the challenge of moving and rebuilding the summer house and beds to the care home. Without him the garden would not be the success it is. He genuinely thrived from the project often bringing plants from his own garden so he could make the garden a success. The care homeowner who donated his own money and has fully embraced the community wellbeing garden who will ensure this is sustained for years to come. This human outcome has not only helped me, but I have had feedback from colleagues and this wider reach of the impact has been apparent.

The most rewarding outcome is seeing the impact the garden has on some of the residents in the care home. I visit the care home every Tuesday to do the enhanced ward round, and I have yet to see the garden empty. One lady has been helping weed and water and potters around happily. Even those who do not venture out have been talking and looking at the garden through the window.



Botanical Brothers project



Above left: Mfon Archibong in the garden; **above right:** Fawn Bess-Leith; **bottom right:** the team with Dr Amanda Young and Matthew Bradby both from the QNI.

Project team

Fawn Bess-Leith Specialist Health Visitor Perinatal and Infant Mental Health and Mfon Archibong (PhD) Specialist Health Visiting Research Lead, Essex

Project summary

Studies show that 1 in 10 fathers struggle with postpartum depression and anxiety, 29% of UK men feel forgotten/left behind due to society's expectations of them and lack of support, and a third (34%) of men under 35 feel that struggling with mental health makes them feel less masculine. Father's mental health may contribute to family breakdown, which costs taxpayers about £41 billion a year. Themes from the London Borough of Newham Father's Forum re-echoes the need for father-friendly activities, space, services, and environments tailored to support their psychological and emotional needs, with sensitivity to the rich diversity of their cultures, language and ethnicity.

This garden project aimed to bridge this gap by providing a safe space for fathers and male carers to talk freely about their mental health and wellbeing without stigma, and to create awareness that asking for help is not a sign of weakness. The project offered a trauma informed approach, where practitioners were available to connect with 10 fathers in the garden to enhance their emotional health and wellbeing, resulting in a positive impact on their overall health and emotional wellbeing and that of their families. The garden project has been accessed by members of the public who were very positive about the space, and it has been added to the social prescribing list in Newham in East London. The garden owners and the Church of England board are committed to the project and support its ongoing use including, through volunteers and the provision of a chatty bench and a micro gym.

‘They were particularly impressed with the food tasting session; they were amazed to identify the stark difference between the taste of organic and non-organic vegetables.’



The garden project also arranged practical and theoretical gardening activities for fathers and their families in the evenings, so that working parents could attend, which were co-produced with fathers and were held in a local community centre. Activities included gardening theory and the benefits to health, sowing seeds and soil preparation, cultivation of food and flowers, and developing a how to wean family recipe book using produce grown in the garden, as well as an organic food tasting workshop. Trips to garden centres for education and relaxation were arranged, and a workshop to design and make bouquets for special occasions was delivered.

Through engagement with the project, access to essential mental health services, including mental health screening, has improved, with feedback reflecting improved father/child relationships and increased community capacity to support fathers.

Outstanding achievement

Creating gardening awareness, and the project having a positive influence on other services, for example children's services, and having a positive impact on the community and creating interest among other services who wish to benefit from the space, including the Youth Justice Service and Community Links.

Professional achievement

The passion we had for gardening was used as a creative activity to connect with our service users and colleagues, which is outside the norm of our professional practice but meets with our personal values.

The project was a new experience and had the added value of experiencing the benefits of gardening and healthy eating.

Case study

A couple - including a mother who had a mental health condition - were regular attendees at the BB theory sessions; they reported that they were now motivated to start their own home garden.

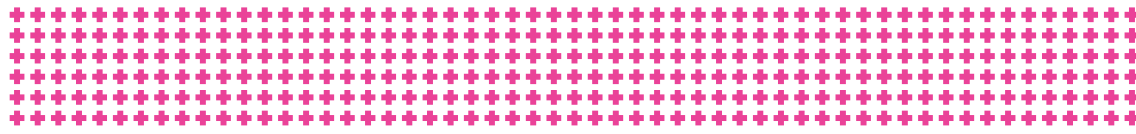
They acknowledged that being in nature brings many benefits including an increase of positive feelings. They enjoyed attending the evening sessions as the husband worked in the mornings, and attending them was a good way to spend time together as they walked to the session while interacting socially.

They attended with their 2.5 year old daughter and she enjoyed the company of other toddlers in the group. They also looked forward to attending as they connected with another family from their country of origin and friendships were made.

They were particularly impressed with the food tasting session; they were amazed to identify the stark difference between the taste of organic and non-organic vegetables.

More importantly they were amazed to see their daughter giving preference to the organic vegetables (cucumber, tomatoes and boiled beetroot) than the non-organic ones. When she tasted the non-organic vegetables (purchased from a local supermarket) she showed disgust by puckering her face and spitting it out, and we were all surprised at her reaction.

They did not believe that she would relish any of the vegetables, and at the end of the session they decided to offer more vegetables as snacks instead of commercial snacks that they usually offered at home, and they both said they will try to incorporate more vegetables in their diet with the aim of growing their own.



Grow Together Share Together project



Above top left: Simon Littlefield; **above middle:** the launch; **above right and bottom left:** local school children helping out; **bottom middle:** a before and after of the garden; **bottom middle:** crocheted vegetables used to raise funds.

Project team

Simon Littlefield, Director of Nursing & Quality (Community & PLACE); Laura Price, Podiatrist, Surrey

Project summary

The aim of the Grow Together Share Together project is to bring together different generations in a shared space, working with the local community, based within the grounds of Dorking Community Hospital, which is situated in the heart of the town.

The once overgrown space has been brought back to life with relaxing spaces, to sit amongst clusters of greenery and colourful planting. The garden has improved the experience of patients and staff by engaging a cross section of the local population, encouraging volunteers and a circular economy.

Men's Shed built the benches, young people from the local school come weekly to practically learn about horticulture, the volunteers weed and plant, local tradesmen jet wash, and cups of tea can be enjoyed in the volunteers' shop. There was even a visit from a therapy donkey to the garden.

Outstanding achievement

There are many outstanding achievements, but I think the sense of community it has created and the long-lasting relationships that have been formed are the most important. The garden has also inspired other initiatives across the

‘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.’



organisation to happen, with another garden project being started. It has led to more involvement in other community groups and the extended sunflower competition resulted in a lovely email being received from a school nurse about their involvement. The craft workshops proved so popular they were extended and run throughout the year, with many participants joining local groups and continuing what they had learnt.

Quotes

‘We really enjoyed the class a lot. XXX was saying on the way back that she would never have tried crochet without you running the class and I have to say she is now loving it! She has had a few issues with her mental health in recent years and the crochet is helping her have a focus and is giving her confidence in her abilities.’

From the community volunteer group:

‘It was lovely to meet you and see what an amazing transformation has taken place. I’m delighted our Patchworking Academy students were both able to help but also feel they had made a real difference using their skills and experience.’

Comment from someone who took some plants home :

‘Please see a pic of my lovely potatoes! I can’t wait to harvest them!’

Comment from visiting staff :

‘I just wanted to feedback that the Patio/Garden area in Dorking Com Hospital is lovely! I spent a couple of minutes there before I left, - and it looks such a great area to be able to use - patients and staff - great furniture, features, plants - everything. Well done, as this must have taken some coordination and effort - but really well worth it. - Such a wonderful space! Thank you.’

Feedback

There has been lots of positive feedback from visitors to the garden. When the pupils visit they were asked to complete a questionnaire, and out of 77 respondents who completed the garden survey it was found that before visiting on average respondents felt happy/satisfied, and after visiting the garden this increased to them feeling extremely happy/extremely satisfied, a change in neutral score of 0.77. There were no respondents recorded as feeling angry/sad, unhappy/dissatisfied or ok/neutral after visiting the garden.

Professional achievement

This has been a very personal journey; I hold a position of authority and I’m used to directing people etc., but when working with volunteers and external stakeholders none of that matters! Therefore, I’ve had to learn different ways of talking to people and how to engage them and build energy.

I’ve also learned that I have transferable skills outside of nursing that have helped me with the wider community, and that I belong somewhere and am part of a community.

See video : <https://ngs.org.uk/dorking-hospital-garden-rejuvenated-with-help-from-the-community/>

Case study

There are two stand out moments:

The lovely story of a person with dementia creating a flower posy to say thank you to staff. This patient wanted to thank staff for the care and attention she had received on the ward. She was going to buy flowers, which would have been unaffordable and unacceptable, so the staff took her outside instead and she made a posy from the flowers and shrubs outside.

The one that sticks with me the most is a lady who came for an X-Ray and returned with her carer the next day I spoke with her, and she wrote a lovely letter. She had chosen to return to the garden to be away from the high street in a peaceful setting. She said it was a lovely setting, and good to spend money in the volunteer shop rather than the big high street chains.



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