

Green Minds

North Manchester



Growing Health Case Study

Health area: Mental health

This series of Growing Health case studies provide examples of projects which use food growing in the community to provide health benefit.

Key client groups

Green Minds is a therapeutic horticulture project run by Sow the City providing activities to aid recovery from mental ill health at North Manchester General Hospital and with local community gardens. At the hospital, the project has been utilised on Acacia Unit, a rehabilitation unit which works with service users whom have enduring mental health needs to improve their mental and physical wellbeing in supporting their own recovery to ultimately live meaningful and fulfilling lives in the community. The project also includes building the capacity of the three community gardens to enable them to improve the capacity to work with people with mental health needs. Reducing social isolation and developing positive roles and routines can reduce relapse rates and need for future hospital admission.

Summary of services

Sow the City is an award-winning social enterprise based in Manchester building a healthier city where everyone can grow their own food. Established with a few packets of veg seeds and some compost in 2009, they now help thousands of people grow their own food. The organisation supports a network of over 60 community gardens in Greater Manchester and enables people to set up and join new community gardens by providing site assessments of new sites, funding advice, workshops and events. Their food growing and gardening programmes have increasingly been used by organisations within

the health sector to treat people experiencing mental illness, dementia, drug and alcohol dependence, and other health conditions.

Funding and partners

Sow the City was initially funded with a small grant from Untld but has worked for Public Health Manchester since 2011 running the city's community food growing programme called Growing Manchester. The organisation is also supported by funding from housing associations, schools, other local authorities, grants, and increasingly the NHS. They have also worked with Sustain's Big Dig programme, which provides an online map of the gardens and enables them to take part in initiatives to encourage volunteering and support community gardens. www.bigdig.org.uk

Green Minds is funded by Manchester Heath and Care Commissioning through a grants programme administered by MACC (Manchester's local voluntary and community sector support and advocacy organisation). The project is being run in partnership with Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust (GMMH) who operate Park House and community mental health teams in the North Manchester area.

The community gardens taking part in Green Minds are Crumpsall Community Garden (Crumpsall), Garden Needs (Broughton), and the Lalley Centre (Collyhurst).



Background - context and landscape for health and wellbeing

Greater Manchester has some of the highest rates of mental health problems in England. The NHS North Manchester Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) area, where this project is targeted, is the 6th worst performing in the country out of 209. Furthermore 6.9% of North Manchester patients aged over 18 have 'unresolved depression' compared to 5.8% for England.

Links with local health priorities and services

Greater Manchester has new devolved powers for health and social care and there is an increasing realisation that the voluntary sector can make a positive impact on the emotional and mental wellbeing of the people and communities in the city. The aims of the local CCG (Manchester Health and Care Commissioning) include strengthening the social determinants of health and promoting healthy lifestyles. In addition, The Greater Manchester Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, produced by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) includes a firm commitment to work in partnership with the third sector to sure it is an integral part of each patient's pathway.

The Green Minds project is being funded by Manchester Health and Care Commissioning until December 2017.



Service aims and delivery including aims and objectives

Green Minds aims to provide a setting at Acacia Unit, Park House for up to 20 people with mental health problems to learn how to grow fruit and vegetables, as well as ongoing provision through a network of community gardens for people following during and after their period of inpatient rehabilitation.

Service users at the hospital learn how to grow and cook their own fruit and vegetables, as well as having opportunities to take part in other related activities. For example, service users have been involved in building and filling raised beds and composters using power tools and wheelbarrows. The sessions are wide ranging and include developing food growing skills, improving socialisation, improving confidence, self-esteem and anxiety, and increasing physical activity levels and motor skills.

At the three Green Minds community gardens, Sow the City is working with group leaders and garden volunteers to build their capacity so they are better able to improve mental health outcomes and work with people with mental health issues. The project includes wellbeing workshops in the gardens for mental health service users, taking other referrals, and supporting members of the public so they can benefit from these therapeutic spaces.

Outcomes and key achievements

Sow the City has a wide range of evidence to demonstrate the wellbeing benefits of health promotion type community gardening and food growing initiatives however Green Minds project required a new approach to measure impacts on mental health for people with a higher level of need. To address this problem, Sow the City incorporated evaluation measures developed by Clinical Psychologist and Occupational Therapist from GMMH thus providing a wide range of qualitative evidence including case studies.

- Based on an evaluation of service users attending horticultural therapy sessions over 69% said they could be creative in sessions, 62% said they felt closer to nature and 62% felt motivated. Almost 69% of service users wanted to do gardening in the future with 38% wanting to join a community garden when they left the hospital.

- Over time there has been an observed and self-reported improvement in service user's motivation and confidence as they have experienced and developed new interests, knowledge and skills around food growing and their own environment.
- Staff and service users have been working as a team and fully committed to all aspects of the project.
- One service user who has a diagnosis of schizophrenia has difficulties with his motivation, self-confidence and sustaining relationships with others has partaken in every session. Where he usually spends large portions of the day in his room initiating little social contact he has begun to show interest and get involved in building raised beds and planting as well as spending time with his peers. He is keen to gain voluntary work within the community gardens in the future.
- Sessions in the community gardens have been accessed by a range of service users with differing needs both from community and inpatient settings. As well as helping to create and improve community gardens the opportunity has enabled people to develop social relationships based upon common interests reducing the level of social isolation.
- Through the project Sow the City have developed a strong working relationship with statutory services (GMMH) and the voluntary sector providing therapeutic horticulture (Garden Needs, Crumpsall Community Garden).

Key challenges

NHS reorganisation: Government and local priorities have led to a reorganisation within the NHS. The launch of the Green Minds project was delayed initially to administrative issues and there were some concerns amongst NHS staff that the project was going to replace existing services.

Community garden capacity: Most community gardens are volunteer led and have small budgets and therefore limited resource to accept referrals. To enhance the ability of community gardens projects paid and trained staff could be employed to run sessions.

Key opportunities

Devo-Manc: The devolution of health care budgets to Greater Manchester has resulted in fresh opportunities to transform the healthcare system and move the region from one with some of the worst health outcomes to the best. There is a new focus on working with the voluntary sector and it is hoped that food growing projects particularly in a social community garden setting could start to become a useful tool for recovery.

Improved referral systems: There are at least 60 community gardens around Manchester that could be used for therapeutic horticulture/ green care and for health promotion. The network could develop a 'one stop shop' so people can easily see what opportunities are available. This would be used by a variety of health practitioners for formal referrals and by local people to refer themselves.

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Produced June 2017

Growing Health is a national project run by Garden Organic and Sustain, which is funded by the Tudor Trust, to see how community food growing can be routinely used by the health and social care services as a way of promoting health and wellbeing for a range of individuals and population groups.

To sign up to the Growing Health network visit

www.growinghealth.info

Supporting documents

www.macc.org.uk

www.sowthecity.org

www.gmhsc.org.uk/assets/GM-Mental-Health-Summary-Strategy.pdf

