



2002 ~ 2017

Sydenham Garden

15 years of a growing community

Annual Evaluation of Sydenham Garden 2016 - 2017



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1.) Executive Summary

Introduction

Sydenham Garden is primarily a rehabilitation and recovery based organisation, using various creative and therapeutic activities to help people with significant illness in London, predominantly the boroughs of Lewisham and Bromley. While there is evidence to suggest that the activities Sydenham Garden run prevent escalating need, the primary reason doctors and health professionals refer patients to Adult Mental Health (AMH) groups is for recovery purposes. The primary reason doctors and health professionals refer to Dementia groups is to stop dementia symptoms from worsening. The organisation grew and evolved significantly during the 2015/16 period, and consolidated this growth during the period this evaluation considers.

Evaluation aim

This evaluation considers Sydenham Garden's four main projects, looks at cumulative totals to generate a picture of the organisations effectiveness, and references the other work Sydenham Garden carried out over the period.

This evaluation was conducted over the financial year 2016-17. The aim was to construct a report on the topics and outputs achieved during the period.

Outputs	2016-17	2015-16	2014-15
Number referred:	421	403	269
Number commencing:	214	246	141
No take up*:	40	41	
Number dropped off**:	29	36	15
Number moved on***:	9	25	29
Number completed:	145	87	99
Number attending at least one session:	349	309	227
Collective attendance:	68%	68%	72%

(Co-workers who commenced their placement during the period are likely to complete it in 2017-18, as the placement is for 12 months. Therefore the completed number relates to co-workers who commenced in 2015-16 and completed in 2016-17)

Analysis

Sydenham Garden has improved, or maintained performance in all areas. The number of co-workers commencing in 2016-17 is down when compared to the previous period, but this should be seen in the light of the very large growth in that year. Despite this we have worked with more co-workers than ever before, and despite this increase, attendance levels have been maintained and drop off improved. This is a very positive result for Sydenham Garden.

**No take up: Co-workers or Sydenham Garden have decided after a trial period that the project was not suitable, or that the co-worker didn't want to attend*

***Dropped off: People stop coming for a variety of reasons such as ill-health, or we were unable to obtain their reason.*

****Moved on: People leave their placement for a variety of positive reasons.*

2.) Garden Project



Evaluation aim

This evaluation was conducted over the financial year 2016-17. The aim was to construct a report on the topics and outputs achieved during the period with particular relation to outcomes agreed with funders of the Garden project.

Topics

Wellbeing, ability to undergo physical activity, social inclusion & interaction, developments in life outside of SG project, quality of life, independence and confidence.

Method

Quantitative & Qualitative Study

In order to assess improvements of the stated topics in co-workers who completed their placement, a Likert scale questionnaire (consisting of 6 items) was used. The questionnaires were completed by the co-workers when they started on the Garden project, and then at quarterly intervals until they completed their placement. We were able to track and analyse this data for 31 co-workers during the period.

In order to assess improvements in mental wellbeing in co-workers who completed their placement, a WEWMBS (Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale) questionnaire was

used. These were completed by the co-workers when they started on the Garden project, and then at quarterly intervals until they completed their placement. We were able to track and analyse this data for 29 co-workers during the period. Using the data gathered a comparison can be made to the population, and the scale is a recognised, evidenced measure. Because WEMWBS scores show a roughly normal distribution, WEMWBS can be expected to capture the full spectrum of positive mental health without floor or ceiling effects and be suitable both for monitoring trends over time and evaluating the effect of mental health promoting programmes or interventions.

Moreover, co-workers were asked open-ended questions in order to reflect any changes in any of the six topic areas, along with setting their own goals and targets for their placement.

Results

A wide range of mental health conditions were reported by both referring agencies and the co-workers themselves. Schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, social phobia, bereavement, PTSD, cancer, low mood, isolation, diabetes, bipolar affective disorder and other psychosis were all included.

Quantitative co-workers study based on Likert Scale Questionnaire

17 out of 31 co-workers (55%) recorded a positive change in their ability to undergo physical activity.

9 out of 31 co-workers (29%) recorded no change in their ability to undergo physical activity. (5 co-workers reported a worsening in this area)

21 out of 31 co-workers (68%) recorded a positive change to their mental wellbeing.

5 out of 31 co-workers (16%) recorded no change in their mental wellbeing (5 co-workers reported a worsening in this area)

22 out of 31 co-workers (71%) recorded a positive change to their social inclusion and interaction.

5 out of 31 co-workers (16%) recorded no change in their social inclusion and interaction. (4 co-workers reported a worsening in this area)

22 out of 31 (71%) co-workers recorded a positive change to their quality of life.

7 out of 31 co-workers (23%) recorded no change in their quality of life. (2 co-workers reported a worsening in this area)

22 out of 30 co-workers (71%) recorded a positive change to their level of independence.

5 out of 30 co-workers (16%) recorded no change to their level of independence. (3 co-workers reported a worsening in this area)

22 out of 31 co-workers (71%) recorded a positive change to their confidence.

4 out of 31 co-workers (13%) recorded no change to their confidence. (5 co-workers reported a worsening in this area)

These results demonstrate an improvement on the previous period. With the broad range and non-specialist model of the Garden Project they represent an impressive return on any investment made.

Quantitative co-workers study based on WEMWBS questionnaire

	2016-17	2015-16
Group initial average (average of the scores on the first session):	35.10	40.8
Group average (average of all the scores during a placement):	45.97	43.9
Group final average (average of the final score):	44.62	45.9

A change of 3 points or more is considered meaningful (WEMWBS user guide vers.2), and therefore we can conclude co-workers’ mental wellbeing significantly improves during their time in the Garden project.

The general population average score is 50.7. On average, the majority of co-workers score in the low wellbeing category (WEMWBS user guide vers.2) upon starting in the Garden project and score in the moderate wellbeing category upon completion.

Further summaries are available for individual demographics. We can determine from these summaries that co-workers across all demographics experience meaningful improvements to their wellbeing and that the level of severity of difficulty that co-workers are referred to Sydenham Garden with is rising. Despite this, the Garden Project is achieving improvements to similar levels as in previous years.

Qualitative co-workers study

Ability to undergo physical activity

It is clear that there is a perceived rise in both their ability to, and the amount of physical activity that they partake in. Co-workers made reference to having more stamina, less fatigue and sleeping better. There were also multiple references to eating healthier food, which should lead to better physical ability.

Mental Wellbeing

Clearly co-workers experience a perceived improvement to their mental wellbeing, which correlates with the results from scale questionnaires. Lower levels of anxiety are referenced along with emotions and feelings associated with good levels of mental wellbeing such as joy, safety, laughter, interest in new things, a sense of peace and being relaxed. There was also one mention of medication being reduced.

Social inclusion and interaction

In correlation with the Likert Scale question on social inclusion this could be considered as

one of the strongest perceived areas of improvement for co-workers. Without fail the co-workers questioned mentioned an improvement in this area. There was mention of acceptance, feeling part of a group, mixing with others, making friends, a supportive environment, sharing food, gaining a better understanding of people from different backgrounds, talking, sharing experience, feeling less lonely and listening to others. Acceptance and being part of a community were running themes.

Confidence

An increase in confidence was referred to on many occasions. Much of this confidence was talked about in the context of social interaction and taking part in new and group activities. One co-worker stated that they are now able to say they are a confident person, when they couldn't before.

Independence

This area is not directly referenced by co-workers. We could assume that an increase in skills and confidence leads to increased levels of independence. We can also infer that where co-workers have stated they are moving on to voluntary or paid roles that this demonstrates an increase in independence levels.

Developments in life outside of Sydenham Garden

Many co-workers mentioned developments in their life outside of Sydenham Garden. These included cooking and eating a healthier diet, starting and joining creative activity groups, the possibility of fostering or adopting children, volunteering, the possibility of employment, and organising and working on their own garden.

Outputs	2016-17	2015-16
Number commencing:	60	64
Number dropped off*:	10	8
No take up**:	13	
Number moved on***:	4	16
Number completed (did the full 12 months):	30	24

(Co-workers who commenced their placement during the period are likely to complete it in 2017-18, as the placement is for 12 months. Therefore the completed number relates to co-workers who commenced in 2015-16 and completed in 2016-17)

Attendance

Collective attendance for the period was 65.2% (2015-16: 67.3%)

Reasons for drop off

Reasons were given for non-completion during exit interviews. Some were positive or neutral and some were negative. The negative reasons given were: Worsening of health

Output results

The Garden Project has stayed consistent with the previous period. This shows a good ability to consolidate the expansion achieved in previous periods. In attendance there was a small decline. The project should be pleased with achieving high levels of attendance for the demographic, but should also address this trend quickly.

Difficulties experienced in the methodology and terminology

Volunteers and the project lead reported that the WEMWBS statement "I've been feeling loved" caused distress. It was also difficult to get many Garden project co-workers to complete the questionnaires, leaving some co-workers with an incomplete data set.

During the period one Garden Project group suffered a serious decline in numbers. It was concluded that logistical changes to of the group needed to take place. After establishing these changes the group numbers picked back up and now boast a full contingent.

The Garden project Conclusion

The Garden Project has successfully improved the health, wellbeing and, to some extent status of its co-workers.

The rate of improvement ranges between 55% and 71% (2015-16: 46% and 68%), which is strong when considering rates from established and targeted interventions, which normally fall short of 50%.

The co-workers themselves have identified the Garden project as a vital part to the improvements they've experienced and this is validated by the results reported through WEMWBS.

**Dropped off: People stop coming for a variety of reasons such as ill-health, or we were unable to obtain their reason.*

***No take up: Co-workers or Sydenham Garden have decided after a trial period that the project was not suitable, or that the co-worker didn't want to attend*

****Moved on: People leave their placement for a variety of positive reasons.*

3.) Art & Craft Project



Evaluation aim

This evaluation was conducted over the financial year 2016-17. The aim was to construct a report on the topics and outputs achieved during the period with particular relation to outcomes agreed with funders of the Art & Craft project.

Topics

Wellbeing, ability to undergo physical activity, social inclusion & interaction, developments in life outside of Sydenham Garden, quality of life, independence and confidence.

Method

Quantitative study and qualitative study

In order to assess improvements of the stated topics in co-workers who completed their placement, a Likert scale questionnaire (consisting of 6 items) was used. The questionnaires were completed by the co-workers when they started on the Art & Craft project, and then at quarterly intervals until they completed their placement. We were able to track and analyse this data for 18 co-workers during the period.

Moreover, co-workers were asked open-ended questions in order to reflect any changes in any of the six topic areas, along with setting their own goals and targets for their placement.

Results

A wide range of mental health conditions were reported by both referring agencies and the co-workers themselves. Schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, social phobia, bereavement, PTSD, cancer, low mood, isolation, diabetes, bipolar affective disorder and other psychosis were all included.

Quantitative co-workers study based on Likert Scale questionnaire

11 out of 18 co-workers (61%) recorded a positive change in their ability to undergo physical activity.

11 out of 18 co-workers (61%) recorded a positive change to their mental wellbeing.

13 out of 18 co-workers (72 %) recorded a positive change to their social inclusion and interaction.

10 out of 18 (56%) co-workers recorded a positive change to their quality of life.

10 out of 18 co-workers (56%) recorded a positive change to their level of independence.

13 out of 18 co-workers (72%) recorded a positive change to their confidence.

Qualitative co-workers study

Ability to undergo physical activity

This was not directly referenced by any co-workers questioned.

Mental wellbeing

Emotions and feelings associated with good mental wellbeing were referred to repeatedly. These included enjoyment, less anxiety and feeling positive.

Social inclusion and interaction

This was an area that co-workers perceived large amounts of positive change in. This change came about both in the group and Sydenham Garden, but also outside the group as connections and interactions were made with family, friends and other groups due to the Art & Craft project.

Confidence

Increased confidence is a clear theme throughout the interviews. This included improved confidence to try something, improved confidence in social situations, and improved confidence about their future.

Independence

Different themes of improved independence were referenced. For one person it was being assertive, for another it was creating things for friends and family, while for another it was going outside more.

Developments in life outside of Sydenham Garden

Many co-workers mentioned developments in their life outside of Sydenham Garden. These included clearing and caring for their own garden with their son, joining other groups, creating things for friends and family and going out more.

Difficulties experienced

Beginnings and endings have been shown to cause distress and anxiety for co-workers. The Art & Craft team have shown the ability to develop their approach, along with a high level of aptitude, to mitigate this.

Outputs	2016-17	2015-16
Number Commencing:	16	33
No Take Up*	7	
Number Dropped off**	2	9
Number Moved on***:	3	3
Number Completed:	17	13

(Co-workers who commenced their placement during the period are likely to complete it in 2017-18, as the placement is for 12 months. Therefore the completed number relates to co-workers who commenced in 2015-16 and completed in 2016-17)

Attendance

Collective attendance for the period was 66.7% (2015-16: 60.6%).

Art & Craft project Conclusion

The Art & Craft project has increased its output levels. Less co-workers commencing is a sign of the groups being full and waiting lists managed.

The Project has successfully improved the health and wellbeing of its co-workers.

The rate of improvement ranges between 56% and 72% (2015/16: 40% and 72%), which is strong when considering rates from established and targeted interventions, which normally fall short of 50%.

The co-workers themselves have identified the Art & Craft project as a vital part to the improvements they've experienced.

**No take up: Co-workers or Sydenham Garden have decided after a trial period that the project was not suitable, or that the co-worker didn't want to attend*

***Dropped off: People stop coming for a variety of reasons such as ill-health, or we were unable to obtain their reason.*

****Moved on: People leave their placement for a variety of positive reasons.*

4.) Sow & Grow Project



Evaluation aim

This evaluation was conducted over the financial year 2016-17. The aim was to construct a report on the topics and outputs achieved during the period with particular relation to outcomes agreed with Lewisham Clinical Commissioning Group and the City Bridge Trust and all Sow & Grow related projects.

Topics

Mental wellbeing, ability to undergo physical activity, social inclusion & interaction, developments in life outside of Sydenham Garden, quality of life and independence levels.

Method

Quantitative study & qualitative study

In order to assess improvement in physical health, mental health, social interaction, quality of life and independence levels of co-workers who completed their group, a Likert-scale questionnaire (consisting of 6 items) was administered to Sow & Grow co-workers. The

questionnaires were completed by the co-workers twice: during the first weeks of the group and during the last sessions. We were able to evaluate the results for 60 co-workers. The evaluation of improvement was also monitored by questionnaires administered to carers, and the results for 34 carers were collected. The questionnaire was administered twice to carers: once when the group started and when it finished. For Sow & Keep Growing a Sow & Grow group with no fixed ending) the questionnaires were administered on a 6-monthly basis.

Moreover, co-workers and carers were both asked open-ended questions in order to reflect any changes in any of the five topic areas.

Results

Diagnoses of dementia were available for all co-workers and they included: Alzheimer's disease; Vascular dementia; Korsakoffs syndrome, FTD, Mixed dementia and Unspecified dementia.

Quantitative co-workers study

48 out of 60 co-workers (80%) reported a positive result in their ability to undergo physical activity.

48 out of 60 co-workers (80%) reported a positive result in their mental wellbeing.

41 out of 60 co-workers (68%) recorded a positive change to their social inclusion and interaction.

47 out of 60 co-workers (78%) recorded a positive change to their quality of life.

41 out of 60 co-workers (68%) recorded a positive change in their independence levels.

38 out of 60 co-workers (63%) recorded a positive change in their developments in life outside of Sydenham Garden.

Quantitative carers study

23 out of 34 carers (68%) reported a positive result in their co-worker's ability to undergo physical activity.

24 out of 34 carers (71%) reported a positive result in their co-worker's mental wellbeing.

23 out of 34 carers (68%) recorded a positive change to their co-worker's social inclusion and interaction.

25 out of 34 of carers (74%) recorded a positive change to their co-worker's quality of life.

21 out of 34 carers (62%) recorded a positive change to their co-worker's independence levels.

21 out of 34 carers (62%) recorded a positive change to their co-worker's developments in life outside of Sydenham Garden.

Qualitative co-workers and carers study

Participants and their carers were extremely positive about their experience of Sow & Grow. Many improvements were attributed to the project.

Ability to undergo physical activity

There was little direct reference to improved ability to undergo physical activity. However carers and co-workers mentioned finding various physical activities, such as walking or gardening, an important part of the experience at Sow & Grow.

Well-being

Feelings and emotions linked with good wellbeing were repeatedly reported and referenced by co-workers and their carers. Comments referring to enjoyment, satisfaction, anticipation, fond memories, feeling good, laughing, relaxing, interesting, rewarding and being happy were all made.

Social inclusion and interaction

It was made clear that both carers and co-workers perceived Sow & Grow to be a project that helped with social interaction and made co-workers feel part of a group. In some instances co-workers had become socially isolated and Sow & Grow was referred to as the reason this had changed, through helping provide motivation and the social interaction itself. There were also independent comments made about being less shy and improved confidence in social settings.

Quality of life

Co-workers and their carers believe Sow & Grow improved the quality of both their lives. For some this was a general feeling, and for others this was a significant time where a poor quality of life had been reversed.

Independence

Unlike previous years, improved levels of independence was not a strong theme.

Developments in life outside of Sydenham garden

There were very few references to this area. Despite the Likert scale indicating positive results, there were perceptions amongst some co-workers and carers that when their time finished in Sow & Grow they were going to have less activity. However there was some reference to developments inside the home, with improved memory and engagement.

Outputs	2016-17	2015-16
Number Referred:	144	126
Number commencing:	90	104
Number Moved on*:	2	3
Number Completed:	66	59
Number Dropped off**:	9	16
Number of No take up***:	12	4

(Co-workers who commenced their placement during the period could possibly complete it in 2017-18, as the placement is for 6 months. Therefore the completed number relates to co-workers who commenced in 2015-16 and in 2016-17)

Attendance

Collective attendance for the period was 80.5% (2015-16: 76.2%)

Reasons for non-completion

Reasons were given during exit interviews. These reasons were: Physical ill health (5), Moving location (2), No information obtained.

Difficulties experienced

A general discontent grew with the team administering the Likert Scale questionnaires during the period. There was a feeling that it caused confusion for co-workers. It was also difficult to obtain carer questionnaires or interviews and absorbed much of the team's time, which, when considering the team is mostly voluntary, could be seen as a distraction from the core work.

Sow & Grow project conclusion

There is an overall improvement in all areas evaluated for co-workers, varying between 63-80% (2015-16: 76-100%). The observed results according to carers are still high at 62-74% (2015-16: 46-92.5%).

What co-workers report and what carers report generally correlates. Co-workers and their carers identified Sow & Grow as beneficial because it helped them to increase their opportunities for social inclusion and improved their general wellbeing. There were also some reports of cognitive function improvements.

When comparing the 2016-17 period to 2015-16 we see that output levels have stayed consistent (a new group was started in the 2015-16 meaning higher levels commencing). However there has been a negative trend with the Likert Scales, particularly when considering the co-worker reports. It could be argued that the carer reports are more robust given the larger number completed (34 in 2016-17 versus 13 in 2015-16) and that the range starts significantly higher at 62% versus 46% in 2015-16.

**Moved on: People leave their placement for a variety of positive reasons.*

***Dropped off: People stop coming for a variety of reasons such as ill-health, or we were unable to obtain their reason.*

****No take up: Co-workers or Sydenham Garden have decided after a trial period that the project was not suitable, or that the co-worker didn't want to attend*

5.) Growing Lives Project



A full and independent evaluation of the project is available at www.sydenhamgarden.org.uk , or through Sydenham Garden's office team.

Evaluation aim

This evaluation was conducted over the financial year 2016-17. The aim was to construct a report on the topics and outputs achieved during the period with particular relation to outcomes agreed with funders of the Growing Lives Project.

Topics

Wellbeing, ability to undergo physical activity, social inclusion & interaction, developments in life outside of Sydenham Garden, quality of life, independence, confidence and self-esteem.

Method

Quantitative study & qualitative study

In order to assess improvements of the stated topics in co-workers who completed their placement, a Likert scale questionnaire (consisting of 7 items) was used. The questionnaires were completed by the co-workers when they started on the Growing Lives project, and then at quarterly intervals until they completed their placement. We were able

to track and analyse this data for 28 co-workers who completed during the period. (Some questions were missed by 1 co-worker, meaning those results were compared to 27 co-workers).

In order to assess improvements in mental wellbeing in co-workers who completed their placement, a WEMWBS (Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale) questionnaire was used. These were completed by the co-workers when they started on the Growing Lives project, and then at quarterly intervals until they completed their placement. We were able to track and analyse this data for 28 co-workers who completed during the period. Using the data gathered a comparison can be made to the population, and the scale is a recognised, evidenced measure. Because WEMWBS scores show a roughly normal distribution, WEMWBS can be expected to capture the full spectrum of positive mental health without floor or ceiling effects and be suitable both for monitoring trends over time and evaluating the effect of mental health promoting programmes or interventions.

Moreover, co-workers were asked open-ended questions in order to reflect any changes in any of the six topic areas, along with setting their own goals and targets for their placement.

Results

Quantitative co-workers study based on Likert scale questionnaire

(This data was taken during the period: February 2016-January 2017)

9 out of 27 co-workers (33%) recorded a positive change in their ability to undergo physical activity.

5 out of 27 co-workers (19%) recorded no change in their ability to undergo physical activity. (13 co-workers reported a worsening in this area).

8 out of 28 co-workers (29%) recorded a positive change to their mental wellbeing. 7 out of 28 co-workers (25%) recorded no change in their mental wellbeing (13 co-workers reported a worsening in this area).

8 out of 27 co-workers (30%) recorded a positive change to their social inclusion and interaction.

5 out of 27 co-workers (19%) recorded no change in their social inclusion and interaction. (14 co-workers reported a worsening in this area).

10 out of 28 (36%) co-workers recorded a positive change to their quality of life.

10 out of 28 co-workers (36%) recorded no change in their quality of life. (8 co-workers reported a worsening in this area).

10 out of 28 co-workers (38%) recorded a positive change to their level of independence. 8 out of 28 co-workers (29%) recorded no change to their level of independence. (10 co-workers reported a worsening in this area).

10 out of 27 co-workers (37%) recorded a positive change to their confidence. 7 out of 27 co-workers (26%) recorded no change to their confidence. (10 co-workers reported a worsening in this area).

15 out of 28 co-workers (54%) recorded a positive change to their self-esteem. 10 out of 28 co-workers (36%) recorded no change to their self-esteem. (3 co-workers reported a worsening in this area).

Quantitative co-workers study based on WEMWBS questionnaire:

	2016-17	2015-16
Group initial average (average of the scores on the first session):	42.5	43.9
Group average (average of all the scores during a placement):	46.98	48.3
Group final average (average of the final score):	50.86	43

A change of 3 points or more is considered meaningful (WEWEBS user guide vers.2), and therefore we can conclude peoples mental wellbeing significantly improves during their time in the Growing Lives project.

The general population average score is 50.7. On average the majority of co-workers score in the low wellbeing category (WEMWBS user guide vers.2) upon starting the Growing Lives project and score in the moderate wellbeing category upon completion.

Qualitative co-workers study

Interviews, case studies and focus groups were carried out. It is clear that co-workers value their time on Growing Lives and credit it with improvements to their health, wellbeing, social status, economic status and quality of life.

Ability to undergo physical activity

The case studies, interviews and focus groups all provide evidence that Growing Lives improves co-workers ability to undergo physical activity, including the feeling of having more energy. In particular, there were references to healthy eating and lifestyle changes that can be assumed lead to improvements in physical health.

Mental Wellbeing

It is clear that some co-workers perceive improvements in this area. References were made to feeling "like the pressure is off", feeling relaxed and happy, being positive, hopeful and optimistic.

Social inclusion and interaction

There was a strong theme throughout interviews, case studies and focus groups of co-workers improving their social interaction and feeling included. There were also

references to being prepared and empowered for social situations outside of the project and in the future.

Quality of life

Participants clearly perceive an improvement to their quality of life. Enjoyment, fulfilment, achievement, healthy eating and developing new activities at home were all referred to.

Independence

It can be inferred from statements such as "I've started cooking at home" that for some independence levels have been improved. There were references to less medication, to achieving qualifications, to independently leaving the home and to being able to work with others.

Confidence

Some co-workers feel their confidence is improved significantly through participating in the Growing Lives project. This includes the confidence to interact or enter into social situations. It also includes the confidence to take part in challenging activities or try new things.

Self-esteem

While closely linked to independence and confidence, the project felt they'd like to evaluate this subject. From the reports given there is a sense of dignity and pride that the majority of co-workers gain through the experience. It is clear that co-workers feel more valuable, or that their self-worth is improved through the project.

Outputs	2016-17	2015-16
Number commencing:	48	55
Number moved on*:	0	4
Number completed (did the full 12 months):	32	5
Number dropped off**:	5	7
Number achieving Open College Network level 2:	14	9

(Co-workers who commenced their placement during the period are likely to complete it in 2017-18, as the placement is for 12 months. Therefore the completed number relates to co-workers who commenced in 2015-16 and completed in 2016-17)

Attendance

Collective attendance for the period was 57% (2015-16: 63.4%)

Difficulties experienced in the methodology and terminology

There were reported issues for co-workers in understanding questions about social inclusion and interaction.

Attendance for some groups was extremely low. This leads to problems with taking data from individuals. This evaluation did not compare results between regular attendees and poor attenders; however it is likely that poor attenders did not submit enough completed questionnaires to be considered.

Growing Lives project conclusion

This year was a successful year for the Growing Lives project. More data on more co-workers was available than in the previous project year, making this evaluation more thorough and robust.

There have been some negative trends throughout the period and a strategy to address these should be implemented immediately. These include poor attendance, which was low in the first year and even lower in this period. They also included a low number of co-workers completing, even when considering drop off. The project aims to complete 40 each year, and achieved 32 in this period. A review of the numbers suggests that co-workers are remaining on the project for longer than 12 months.

The negative trends are entirely output related. When considering the outcomes the trends are positive, with improvements in all areas reported when comparing to the previous period.

Numerous hard outcomes were reported, including 14 co-workers achieving level 2's in Open College Network accreditation.

Reported themes of soft outcomes included improved health, wellbeing and opportunities. These are supported by meaningful results from the WEMWBS measure.

**Moved on: People leave their placement for a variety positive or neutral reasons., such as gaining employment or moving out of the area.*

***Dropped off: People stop coming for a variety of reasons such as ill-health, didn't enjoy it, couldn't engage, or we were unable to obtain their reason.*

6.) Ethnicity and Diversity

Organisational picture

Ethnicity co-workers	2016-17	2015-16	2014-15
White	60%	57%	57%
Mixed	11%	3.5%	3%
Asian	4%	10%	5.5%
Black or Black British	19%	25%	23%
Other	2%	2.5%	1.5%
Preferred not to say	2%	1%	5%
Not Indicated	2%	1%	5%

Gender of co-workers	2016-17	2015-16	2014-15
Female	54%	50.5%	52%
Male	43%	48.5%	43%
Transgender	0%	0%	0.5%
Other	0%	0%	0.5%
Preferred not to say	1%	0%	2%
Not indicated	2%	1%	2%

Age of co-workers	2016-17	2015-16	2014-15
18-24	4%	4%	5%
25-34	13%	14%	4%
35-44	9%	15%	5.5%
45-54	18%	19.5%	12%
55-64	14%	18%	10%
65-74	7%	6.5%	8.5%
75+	34%	21.5%	21%
Preferred not to say	1%	0.5%	7%
Not indicated	0%	1%	27%

Sexual orientation of co-workers	2016-17	2015-16	2014-15
Heterosexual	77%	80.5%	76%
Gay/Lesbian	5%	5.5%	4.5%
Bisexual	3%	1%	0%
Other	0%	1.5%	0.5%
Preferred not to say	12%	9%	18%
Not indicated	3%	2.5%	1%

Disability of co-workers	2016-17	2015-16	2014-15
Yes	47%	45%	32%
No	36%	41.5%	59%

Preferred not to say	12%	11%	8.5%
Not indicated	5%	2.5%	0.5%

Religion of co-workers	2016-17	2015-16	2014-15
Christian	62%	46.5%	55%
Buddhist	1%	1.5%	2.5%
Hindu	2%	7%	1.5%
Muslim	1%	4%	5%
Jewish	0%	0%	0%
Sikh	1%	2%	2%
No Religion	21%	22.5%	16%
Other	3%	5%	1%
Preferred not to say	8%	10%	16%
Not indicated	1%	1.5%	1%

Marital Status of co-workers	2016-17	2015-16	2014-15
Married	23%	14%	9%
Single	42%	58.5%	54%
Divorced/Separated	10%	9%	12%
Widowed	16%	9.5%	4%
Civil Partnership	3%	2.5%	0.5%
Other	1%	3%	0.5%
Preferred not to say	3%	1%	17%
Not indicated	2%	2.5%	3%

Analysis

Sydenham Garden has a broad ranging demographic that widely reflects its locality (Lewisham Census 2011). Sydenham Garden is reliant on referrals from medical professionals, but should still focus outreach on Black or Black British ethnicities owing to shrinkage in this demographic over the past 2 years. Considering the gender break down, Sydenham Garden is very effective in engaging with men. In fact, if dementia related projects are excluded, 51% of Sydenham Garden co-workers are male. This is a markedly different proportion to that seen in most psychological services in Lewisham, according to Lewisham CCG's review of psychological therapies in 2015.

7.) Other activities and achievements

Volunteering

Sydenham Garden relies on regular volunteers to help deliver its various programmes. The roles vary from supporting co-workers to take part, to administration tasks, to leading sessions. Sydenham Garden classifies any person who volunteers for more than three hours a week as regular volunteers.

Volunteering outputs	
Regular Volunteers (3.5 hours a week or more):	86
Volunteer forums & training:	6
Community Volunteer days:	7
Corporate Volunteer days:	21
Fairs and events:	5
Total Volunteer Hours:	21,705 (compared to 8775 paid employee hours)

Short courses and supplementary activities

Regular supplementary activities are run alongside Sydenham Gardens four core projects. During the period these included:

- 12 Community Lunches.
- 6 IAPT activating healthy behaviour workshop days
- 40 Independent Committee led Community Choir Sessions.
- 36 gardening and stabilisation therapy sessions for Tamil Asylum Seekers.
- 48 Singing sessions for people with dementia.
- 4 Art or Craft courses.
- 20 peer led Art Club gatherings.
- Weekly Counselling sessions.

Maintaining and developing natural habitats and bio-diversity

Sydenham Garden manages and maintains a registered nature reserve, along with restored Victorian Gardens, Greenhouse, and its own designated natural habitat areas across its sites. During the period, Sydenham Garden introduced new habitats including meadow land. Many bird, bat and insect homes were also built. They were awarded the Green Flag in recognition of efforts made.

8.) Interviews, case studies and feedback

Garden interviews

Garden co-worker interview:

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

Through work I knew it was a useful experience for people. Also a friend used to work there. Then the G.P suggested it for me.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

Unexpected opportunity for therapeutic activity. Something differing to what had gone before. A weekly session outdoors outside home & work. Free. A whole year.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

The people. Being outdoors. Being part of a group. Not having to talk if you didn't feel like it. Feeling cared for in a low key way. Doing something constructive in natural surrounds. I feel I've been given something.

What have you gained?

I have made some new friends and will keep in touch. I feel part of a community. I have gained confidence socially. I have learnt a few things about gardening, but mainly the confidence to have a go. I appreciated plants, trees and the environment more.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

I'm socially a bit more confident and spend more time with others. I am less fatigued. When I am tired I tend to push on rather than give in to it. I am more hopeful.

What will you go on to do next?

I've joined the monthly community garden days at De Frene when I can. I've gone back to work in a new role and have started a new service. I'd like to adopt or foster. If I can I'd like to volunteer at Sydenham Garden in the future.

Garden co-worker interview:

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

Sydenham Garden was suggested to me by a doctor at my memory clinic.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

I joined the Garden group after finishing with the Sow & Grow group. I have always enjoyed doing gardening and wanted to have more knowledge of plants.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

I have really enjoyed meeting new people and feeling supported by co-workers and staff. I don't have many friends and it is nice to have good company.

What have you gained?

I have gained knowledge of different plants and how they grow.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

I am less shy than I was before. When I moved back to the UK I was isolated and didn't see many people and had no friends. Now I attend different groups during the week and see people from Sydenham Garden outside of the group. I really appreciated being in the group and feel good about myself now.

What will you go on to do next?

I plan to join the Sow & Keep Growing group at Sydenham Garden.

Garden co-worker interview:

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

I was referred to this project by IAPT Lewisham.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

I was referred (see above) and was encouraged to give it a go, so I did. I have enjoyed the Sydenham garden from the start of my placement.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

I have enjoyed the peaceful surroundings and the work that I do in the garden. It has been good to meet other participants. I have learnt quite a lot of gardening things and enjoy seeing the progress of Sydenham Garden.

What have you gained?

Quite a bit of knowledge on gardening. I got to associate with others that have been through the same things in my life. I also gained a bit of peace of mind.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

Yes I am a little more outgoing. I can prompt myself to do work with others.

What will you go on to do next?

I have joined Growing Lives.

Garden Co-worker statement:

I had a garden at home, it used to be a complete wilderness! We would never go out there. Coming to the Garden project has given me the confidence to make a start, and to want to do something, bit by bit, with it and with my children. Now we enjoy the space and regularly use it. You can see everything out of our window, so it's even nicer inside. We've put lights out there. I'm thankful for the opportunity to be part of this. It's brought good memories back from when I was a child, it's helped me write again and helped me be peaceful.

Garden co-worker interview:

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

I heard about Sydenham Garden from a co-worker who was attending a project I was going to. I had heard about Sydenham Garden before so I got a referral from my GP

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

I wasn't going out very much and spent a lot of time alone. I had a relapse and wanted support with my mental health. I wanted to gain more confidence, meet other people and learn new skills.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

I have enjoyed how the sessions have encouraged me to build confidence and try new things. Being in the garden has inspired me to be creative again. I have started writing and doing art again which is something I stopped doing.

What have you gained?

I have enjoyed learning new skills. I have been able to take the skills I have learnt in the sessions and use them in my own garden. When I look out onto the work I have done in my garden I get a real sense of peace which also inspires my creativity. I have also been able to do gardening for my mum.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

I can now say that I am a confident person, which I wasn't able to do before. My confidence has grown during my placement. As the plants in the garden grow I feel co-workers grow as well. I have inner confidence and feel able to do the things that I want to do in my life. I feel like my health is improving and I have been eating healthier, I have been cooking with the produce grown in the garden, which has me more aware of what I am eating.

What will you go on to do next?

I would like to continue my work in mental health in higher education. I would like to do some short courses. I would like to set up a creative writing group at Sydenham Garden and am in the beginning stages of planning it.

Garden co-worker interview:

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

I heard of Sydenham Garden through echo mind an organisation linked to mind. I got referred by my GP.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

I was feeling depressed and wanted to do something more practical, at the time the only things I was offered were medication and talking therapies. I have always enjoyed being outside it really helps with my anxiety.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

I have enjoyed being outside and socialising with other co-workers. I felt accepted in the group because I knew other people had similar issues and understood how I was feeling. I didn't have to pretend and worry about what I was going to say in the group.

What have you gained?

I have gained gardening skills and confidence. The garden has helped me to feel more positive.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

I feel more confident and less anxious because the garden makes me feel really calm.

What will you go on to do next?

I am going to join the Growing Lives Tuesday group.

Garden co-worker interview:

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

I heard about Sydenham garden from my CPN (Community Psychiatric Nurse).

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

I wanted to come to meet people and get out of the house. I also enjoy gardening.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

I have enjoyed planting seeds, working in the green house and being outside.

What have you gained?

I have learnt more about different people who have different backgrounds which has given me a much better understanding of people. I have learnt that it is good to talk and share experiences with other people.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

I feel I am able to listen to people more. One of my targets was to be able to listen to others more and I think I have been able to do that during my time at Sydenham garden which has helped me learn about other people and understand different views and perspective.

What will you go on to do next?

I am looking for paid work at the moment. I want to continue doing voluntary work at my local school as a teaching assistant. I might do a course as well, I'm not too sure yet.

Garden co-worker interview:

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

Referred through a Doctor.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

I was depressed, I needed an activity to clear my head, a place to socialise and meet new people.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

I have enjoyed working outside in the garden alongside people. People have made me feel welcome; I have loved laughing as we work together. I have learnt about plants, how to look after them. Working in the garden has taken my mind of things. I've liked cleaning

and washing up.

What have you gained?

Social confidence, getting out of the house, learning new things, making new friends and having time to chill.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

Yes I feel better, I am more relaxed.

What will you go on to do next?

Joining Art & Craft, to build up more confidence and try something new. I feel comfortable trying something new at Sydenham Garden as I know it.

Garden co-worker interview:

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

I was referred by my Psychotherapist at Sydenham Green Practice.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

I wanted to get help with my recovery.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

I have enjoyed the activities in the garden, the friendships I have made and the community spirit.

What have you gained?

I feel I have gained more confidence and am in a much better place than I was a year ago. I have gained friends and I don't feel so lonely anymore. I have learnt new gardening skills.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

I go out a lot more than I used to. I am more interested in taking on new activities and learning new things.

What will you go on to do next?

I plan to go on to the Growing Lives project.

Art & Craft interviews

Art & Craft co-worker interview:

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

I was referred to Sydenham Garden by the Social Inclusion & Recovery Team, part of SLAM.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

I had become very insular since losing my husband and getting divorced. Even leaving the

house made me very anxious and I could go for days without any face-to-face interaction.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

The activities have been a lot of fun, especially when trying a new activity. It's been inspiring to meet other people with similar issues to mine and it feels like a safe environment where I won't be judged.

What have you gained?

I have gained a bit more perspective on my own issues (having heard about what others in the group have been through). I have more confidence in talking to others as well as confidence in my own abilities.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

Keeping a regular time to be out of the house has helped me with time management. I'm doing much more in my spare time such as painting and making things.

What will you go on to do next?

I'm starting with Arts Network this week and once my year in Art & craft is up, I would consider taking a place in the gardening group or go on to the Art Club. Coming to Sydenham Garden has made me realise that I would like a career in the creative sector.

Art & Craft co-worker interview:

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

I was referred by my GP.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

I was spending a lot of time at home and I wanted to get out more and start seeing people.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

I have enjoyed everything about Sydenham garden, I can't say a bad thing about it. I've enjoyed meeting new people and doing the arts and crafts especially making marmalade and paper.

What have you gained?

I don't know what I have gained but I have loved every day I have come.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

I go out more which is more than what I was doing before.

What will you go on to do next?

I would like to join the art club at Sydenham garden, I have been thinking about volunteering and would really like to volunteer to help other people.

Art & Craft co-worker interview:

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

I was referred to Sydenham Garden by my GP.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

I wanted to join because of my severe recurring depression due to my chronic pain as a result of my physical disabilities.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

Being accepted for who I am and the adaptations the staff made due to my physical disabilities.

What have you gained?

Confidence.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

A more positive outlook about my future and life.

What will you go on to do next?

I would like to be referred again to Sydenham Garden. For now I plan to find other arts and craft groups to attend.

Art & Craft co-worker interview:

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

I was referred by my GP.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

I wanted to get some support to help with my anxiety and stress.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

I have enjoyed being in the group and making new things. I really enjoy the fact that you never know what your end product will look like and I have been pleasantly surprised at the work I have been able to do.

What have you gained?

Coming to these sessions has allowed me to tap into my creativity that I didn't realise was still there. I feel a lot more confident about my art work now.

What will you go on to do next?

I think I will start to arrange where I am going to put the art work in my flat. I would like to come back and play some music at the Sydenham Garden Christmas fair.

Art & Craft co-worker interview

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

From my GP.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

I was feeling very stressed and needed something to help me.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

Everything! I enjoyed making Jam, baking cookies and cakes and selling them at the Christmas fair. I have enjoyed being with the staff and volunteers. I enjoyed every minute.

What have you gained?

I have gained a lot of things. I have learnt how to do a lot of things I couldn't do before.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

Yes I can make new things. I have been sharing my work and doing art and craft at home with my family. I have been making gifts for family and friends. I made a purse for someone at church and a book for my grandson.

What will you go on to do next?

I would like to be a volunteer at the Community Lunch and I would really like to join a baking course.

Art & Craft co-worker interview:

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

I was referred by an IAPT counsellor who I was seeing.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

My counsellor said it might be good for me so I decided to give it a go.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

I have enjoyed the support from the volunteers and the weekly company. I have learnt new art and crafts skills.

What have you gained?

I have learnt how to interact with other people in group and new art skills. I think my communication skills have improved a lot and I am more assertive in expressing what I want and don't want.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

I have more confidence now than I did before. I have built close relationships with other members of the group that I keep in touch with outside the group as well for support.

What will you go on to do next?

I would like to do more art and craft and other activities. I have been referred to Bromley and Lewisham mind to get more support with this.

Art & Craft co-worker interview:

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

I was referred by my therapist at Lewisham hospital.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

I wanted to socialise more with people and I had an interest in art and craft.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

I have enjoyed the company and the activities. It is a nice environment to be in. I think the setup is good to not feel nervous. Because there is a focus in the sessions there is less chance of getting anxious because you don't really have to speak to anybody if you don't want to.

What have you gained?

I feel more confident and my social anxiety has really reduced. I am more comfortable being around people.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

Same as above.

What will you go on to do next?

I would like to come to the Art club at Sydenham Garden. I am also planning on doing some voluntary work and getting into paid employment.

Sow & Grow interviews, observations and feedback

Sow & Grow Carers interview

My parents have been lucky enough to both attend the Sydenham Gardens Sow & Grow group. The staff were highly skilled at facilitating all the participants and demonstrated an incredible level of understanding of Dementia and Alzheimer's. All the staff were so positive, cheerful and supportive that my parents quickly settled.

Whilst all the activities were carefully pitched for adults with dementia they were carefully adapted to afford the group their dignity and validated all their contributions. My parents quickly grew to love the group and remembered more about that than many other aspects of their lives.

The activities seemed to be much enjoyed and certain staff members were described in highly positive terms. It seemed to support them to feel valued and sociable again. The scrapbooks created will be much treasured as they are full of lovely pictures of my smiling parents clearly enjoying the experience. It is difficult to describe how and why this was important but it was and the books will remain a great talking point.

Thank you all so much. Your work has touched the lives of my parents and us, their family too.

Sow & Grow Co-worker interview

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

I don't know.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

I went along with the offer – the reason for wanting to join.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

Everything but especially the gardening.

What have you gained?

I have enjoyed meeting people and the companionship.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

No, I don't think so.

What will you go on to do next?

Walk the dog, do the gardening; what I always do at home. (Would come back to SG but not to other groups).

Sow & Grow Co-worker interview

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

Emily, my daughter in law told me.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

No special reason.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

I've enjoyed it all. I liked meeting new people.

What have you gained?

I've tried new things with new people.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

No.

What will you go on to do next?

I go to the stroke group but I don't think I'll join any other groups (Would return to SG).

Sow & Grow Co-worker interview

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

GP.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

At the beginning, not sure really, 'going to university'. What has been beneficial? I look forward to coming, gets brain working.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

I've enjoyed it all. I liked meeting new people.

What have you gained?

Friendships, no animosity, no worries. Do have a giggle, thoroughly enjoy myself. Activities make you apply yourself, make the old grey matter work.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

Confidence came back. I had been quite within myself, now I'm like I used to be. I've come out of myself.

What will you go on to do next?

If I don't come I would be back indoors, not going to search for a group. I wants to continue with a volunteer hat on.

Sow & Grow Co-worker interview

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

Through Mindcare. Had been going to the Calabash where there was a chair exercise class but did not enjoy it at all.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

Curiosity and to try and get rid of shyness! XXX is always willing to try new things but finds it hard to do it. He makes himself go to things as he does not want to stay in and watch TV all/every day.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

Being able to socialise. Gardening. XXX enjoys the friendliness of the group as he has got to know people, has found it relaxing, interesting and rewarding. He is surprised at his colouring skills.

What have you gained?

Meeting people and chatting. Confidence.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

Less shy, although still finds initial contact with groups scary. XXX has confirmed to himself that it really is important to keep walking and meeting people as that keeps both his mind and body active.

What will you go on to do next?

Will see what is around but not chair exercise.

Sow & Grow Co-worker interview

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

Through Mindcare.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

I like more the garden. Come from a place with garden and space, countryside. And the company and the people who run it is very happy people.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

The people, the very, very happy people – enjoyed everything garden, the art work, the colour. Very happy atmosphere from any eyes.

What have you gained?

I live alone, I have a friend as a neighbour. I'm completely different – more happy, do more things for myself.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

My life is more joined – happy family. Happy.

What will you go on to do next?

Going on holiday to sister in Greek Island. Hope to come and join at singing group.

Sow & Grow co-worker interview

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

Various networks dealing with my daughter, who is working in the NHS (National Health Service) made the enquiries.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

I am willing to do anything that could help me come to terms with diagnosis which was a great shock for me.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

I have enjoyed my time at Sydenham because the organisers are helpful and understanding. We also had good every meeting.

What have you gained?

Yes, I am gained some more self-confidence and am gradually being able to lead a normal life.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

(See above) The previous months before my diagnosis were becoming a case of neglecting the normal life and not eating about anything very much.

What will you go on to do next?

I would like to continue with some sort of similar therapy. Some of the things that worry me as the fact that I can no longer write a space properly or even to add up figures. I can barely put 2 and 2 together.

Sow & Grow Co-worker interview

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

Way back – when someone started here – told her husband.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

When I was told – I said I wouldn't mind going. Back in Ghana I used to go and see my

mum, we had a garden.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

The dancing, the shaking, the singing and the gardening.

What have you gained?

I enjoy it, especially the dancing.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

In Ghana I used to dance, we all did. We had a garden. I love it, the dancing, the singing.

What will you go on to do next?

Made no comment.

Sow & Grow Co-worker interview

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

I think my daughter found out about it for me.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

Somewhere to go, to meet people.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

Meeting people, otherwise with son on Sunday as with daughter on Wednesday. Word search in evenings.

What have you gained?

Made my life more interesting, I make friends and have a laugh.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

I just keep going.

What will you go on to do next?

Keep going.

Sow & Grow Co-worker comments

I've LOVED the group both the company and the content. I have felt supported by friendships.

It gave me a reason to get up and get dressed, join other people with similar problems. Memory is going, I'm a bit more confused occasionally.

I look forward to coming. It's very good. I feel good afterwards.

I am going to miss this place because I love it here so much. The staff are all so friendly and helpful. I am wishing they could stay.

Carers of Sow & Grow co-workers comments

SG helps his social life. Helps to interact with people. He talks about it when he goes home, he doesn't remember detail, more how he felt.

Meeting people has helped her concentration, she has to remember that she is coming to Sydenham Garden, she does not forget - concentrates better on other things, slight benefit to her memory. Sydenham Garden has been great. It's a shame there are not more.

She really enjoys it. Looks forward to coming. Enjoys interaction. Will often remember what she did 4 or 5 weeks later!

SG is beneficial. She remembers pretty much everything. She makes the most of it.

Thanks for your email and for confirming the date of the last Sow & Grow session. I can't believe that 6 months has passed so quickly! * has enjoyed the sessions very much so thank you and all your volunteers for the happy times he's had. And not forgetting Mickey the Lurcher of course.

I'm afraid * doesn't want to join the Singing and Movement group. He seems to have an antipathy to music at the moment. I don't know whether it's connected to his increasing deafness or if his 'hearing' experience has changed. Bromley Carers run several choirs which he's also rejected. It's a pity but the situation may change so I'd be grateful if you would update me on any future groups.

Again, thank you for including * in the Sow & Grow group. It's a valuable resource and I know he's benefitted from it.

Kind Regards

Sydenham Garden has made a huge difference! Much to the family's surprise he has achieved functions he didn't have before starting. Singing has helped his language, he is doing puzzles at home now, interacting is easier and has grown in confidence.

He has a positive attitude to being at Sydenham Garden. Joining in everything. He speaks about SG when he gets home - he does not forget what he does here. It has more impact than the gym!

Co-workers comments from Sow & Grow

I really enjoy coming here as I meet people with the same little problems as I have and then I don't feel so bad about them. I do crafts at home to keep myself occupied

I love coming here every week. It gives me a lot of happy memories.

Reported on questionnaire; I really enjoyed the group very much. Happy place, I don't find other places as happy.

Commented on last session questionnaire; The friendship of the organisers is great and helped to improve my confidence.

Arrived at the beginning of the session and in response to the volunteer greeting him and asking him how he was he said, 'I'm happy here, I can let go of everything here, nothing to bother me' and he gave a big smile.

Growing Lives interviews and case studies

Growing Lives Co-worker interview:

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

I heard about Sydenham garden from my support worker.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

I wanted to improve my mental health. I was lacking in confidence and had depression with anxiety.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

I have enjoyed learning new things about gardening. I have enjoyed the practical aspect as well as doing physical work. I have enjoyed socialising with people in the group. It is nice being around other people with similar life experiences.

What have you gained?

I think I have gained more confidence and I am not as socially anxious as I was before. I feel comfortable in my own skin now. The seed has been planted for me to do more gardening in the future.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

I have built more confidence. My social anxiety has decreased and I don't feel so out of place.

What will you go on to do next?

I will be going into full time employment which was one of my goals through my placement. I am feeling optimistic about starting work again. I hope to come back to the Sydenham Garden events.

Growing Lives Co-worker interview:

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

I heard about Sydenham Garden from my occupational therapist at the social inclusion team.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

I needed to start doing something and get back into a routine. I enjoy being outside and wanted to learn more about gardening.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

I have enjoyed meeting new people and having interesting discussions about different topics. I enjoyed the lunches and being part of a group learning about sustainability.

What have you gained?

I have learnt how to work in a team and gained a routine which I think has helped to prepare me for employment.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

I am more conscious about what I buy and eat now and I think I have a better awareness and try to live more sustainably and eco friendly.

What will you go on to do next?

I will be starting full time work as a manager at a charity shop. I am really excited about this. I hope to still be able to come and visit Sydenham Garden and attend any events.

Growing Lives Co-worker interview:

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

Through GP (Sydenham Green Health Centre).

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

My GP recommended that group interaction and therapy may be a more positive alternative to medication. At that time I also felt that an appointment every week would help in the normalisation process.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

Meeting people, learning new skills, focusing on one thing and maintaining attention.

Please provide an example of how your social interaction has improved while attending the programme.

There has been some improvement in being less fearful of social situations and staying inside the home for long periods.

Also dealing with new people in situations (I still have variable levels with these issues, but Sydenham Garden has a good early base in helping with these). A team or classroom environment provided has been instrumental in promoting this.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

The appointment has helped me break up the week. Available consultation & connection with my GP has maintained safe-guarding. It has made me feel less isolated. It has helped me focus. It has prepared me for similar situations among people i.e. shopping & going for a walk.

What would you like to do following your placement at Sydenham Garden?

I'm unsure. A continued placement through my GP would make me feel more secure in terms of integration with people. These groups are also good training in being able to focus on specific things.

I have great difficulties with these issues and general appointments. Thus it acts as good

life training for people who have difficulty in coping with everyday life due to health issues.

Growing Lives Co-worker interview:

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

Through Mind.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

I was at a very low point in my life and needed to try and come away from my comfort zone and Sydenham garden seem like a good place to do that.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

I have enjoyed so many things about the garden; from the first time I walked in, I was made to feel welcome and part of a team. No pressure was put on me to do anything I was unsure of, people were kind and understanding and have gone above and beyond to help me when needed.

What have you gained?

I am little bit more confident, though I still have a long way to go there. (I've gained) friendships and a better understanding of the garden.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

I think I cook more with vegetables than I used to. I hope that in the New Year I can try and grow my own.

What will you go on to do next?

I would love to be able to volunteer one day.

Growing Lives Co-worker interview:

How did you hear about Sydenham Garden?

I heard about Sydenham Garden through a friend who was attending at the time, so I went to get a referral from my GP.

What were your reasons for wanting to join?

I wanted to get out of the house as I was spending too much time at home, where I was having issues with family.

What have you enjoyed about your placement?

I have enjoyed being out in the fresh air and meeting new people. I have gained some good relationships. I have enjoyed doing the gardening work, learning how to grow food and watering the plants.

I have really enjoyed attending other workshops at Sydenham Garden such as fan making, mosaics and jam making

What have you gained?

I feel I have gained more confidence. I have gained friendships with other co-workers in

the group. I have learnt how to be around people socially and how to show respect to others.

Have you seen any changes in yourself or your lifestyle during your time here?

I have learnt how to say no to people which I found hard to do before but I have learnt how to put myself first and look after myself. I have gained friendships with other co-workers in the group.

What will you go on to do next?

I'm planning on taking a holiday and then joining the art club. I would really like to help with the preparation of the Winter fair.

Case Study 1 – Roberto

Roberto was referred to the Growing Lives project through his GP. Roberto had been suffering from depression, and his GP thought that the group interaction and therapy available through the project may be a more positive alternative to medication. Roberto felt that a placement at Growing Lives could help him become less fearful of social situations and help him get out more (he was struggling to leave the house). Roberto enjoyed his Growing Lives placement; he enjoyed meeting new people, and working with them as a team, learning new skills and focusing on one thing at a time, maintaining his attention. Overall, Roberto felt that Growing Lives has made him feel less isolated, helped him to focus and prepared him for social situations in the future. Roberto states that the Growing Lives Project acts as good life training for people who have difficulty in coping with everyday life due to mental health issues.

Case Study 2: Michael

Michael was referred to the Growing Lives project through his therapist at the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme. Michael wanted to get involved as he felt that the Growing Lives project offered a way to improve his social anxiety, depression and low energy whilst offering opportunities to learn new skills and 'get away from it all'. Michael really liked the other people on the placement, as they knew where he 'was coming from', meaning he could really open up to them. Michael also enjoyed learning new practical skills (e.g. pruning apple trees) and doing the OCN course which enabled him to learn about the environment. During his placement, Michael told Sydenham Garden that he had started eating more healthily and said: "I feel like I have more energy and I generally feel better. I feel like I have a better structure to my day now".

Case Study 3: Stuart

Stuart joined the Growing Lives project after being referred by Oxleas NHS Trust following treatment for depression. He thought that the Growing Lives Project would enable him to learn new skills, fill the 'gaps' in his CV (due to his ill-health he has been out of work for 10 years), provide a structure to his week and provide opportunities for social interaction. Through the project, Stuart enjoyed meeting people with similar issues, and appreciated the relaxed environment cultivated by the project. At the end of the placement, Stuart stated he had learnt lots of new skills, and that the OCN qualification had really improved

his knowledge. Stuart told Sydenham Garden: "I am always more relaxed and happy when I leave here – I need to think of ways to carry that across the rest of the week". Now that his placement has ended, Stuart's priority is finding work. In the meantime, he is volunteering with Sydenham Garden, which is going really well.

9.) Conclusion

This year's evaluation confirms that the level of mental distress suffered by those coming to Sydenham Garden is greater than we have previously recorded. This fact is not surprising in the light of well publicised societal stressors together with fewer voluntary sector opportunities. Despite this the project continues to achieve significant success in facilitating the recovery journey of our co-workers.

The report places considerable emphasis on co-worker interviews which are a vital means of communicating some of the changes which a project like Sydenham Garden can bring about. They help to build up a true picture of the depth of change that is often witnessed by our staff and volunteers.



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