

Annual Impact Report 2022-23

Welcome

From our Director

It's been a busy and successful for year for Sydenham Garden, with lots of challenges along the way. I'm proud that we've supported over 200 co-workers to participate in creative and horticultural activities, improving wellbeing and feelings of belonging. We've also supported nearly 150 school children to experience outdoor education in our gardens and welcomed our local community to our events, holding the first De Frene Summer Festival since 2019. The cost-of-living crisis has exacerbated mental health and wellbeing issues for many of our co-workers this year and there is much work to be done to support people in Lewisham and Bromley to live well and improve their wellbeing. I hope you enjoy reading about the achievements of Sydenham Garden and our co-workers over the last year and our plans for this year. Our many friends and supporters are always welcome at Sydenham Garden – we hope to see you soon!

Beth Jaichand

207 co-workers
supported in
therapeutic groups

106 co-workers
graduated from a
12-month
placement

Over **150** school
children
participated in
outdoor education

Five community
lunches & **four**
events for the
public



Social & therapeutic group for people of African and Caribbean heritage

Social & therapeutic groups in Art & Craft, Garden and Growing Lives

Sow & Grow – for people living with dementia and their carers

Wellbeing Wanderers – a 12-week walking group

Our Activities - Nurturing the Sydenham Garden community

Group to gain horticultural qualifications

School group outdoor education – for children with special educational needs

Promoting health & wellbeing, recovery and connection with nature, gardening, creative expression, and each other

Social enterprise activities – to enable co-workers to create, grow and sell

Social & therapeutic group for young people aged 18-25

Clubs, Community Lunches and Events

Transitions groups – to support co-workers to reflect and plan next steps



Adult Mental Health

Our **Adult Mental Health groups** provided **12-month placements** in a social and therapeutic group in one of our projects: [African Caribbean](#), [Art & Craft](#), [Garden](#) or [Growing Lives](#). Co-workers joined weekly sessions which provided creative and/or horticultural activities in our two gardens and nature reserve. This year **171** co-workers benefited from an Adult Mental Health placement during the year, with **63** co-workers graduating from a placement.



GARDEN



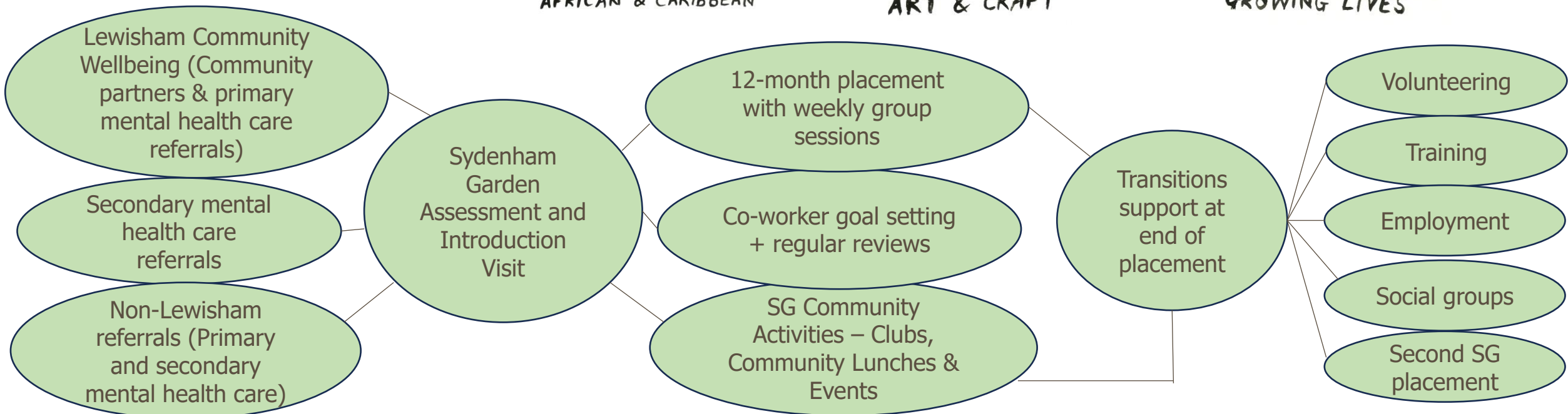
AFRICAN & CARIBBEAN



ART & CRAFT



GROWING LIVES



Adult Mental Health

During the year, we also offered placements in **Wellbeing Wanderers** – a 12-week walking group which explored our local area and ran our **Transitions** project, supporting **25** co-workers towards the end of their placement in dedicated sessions to reflect on their progress and plan their next steps.



Average Adult Mental Health placement length – **7 months**

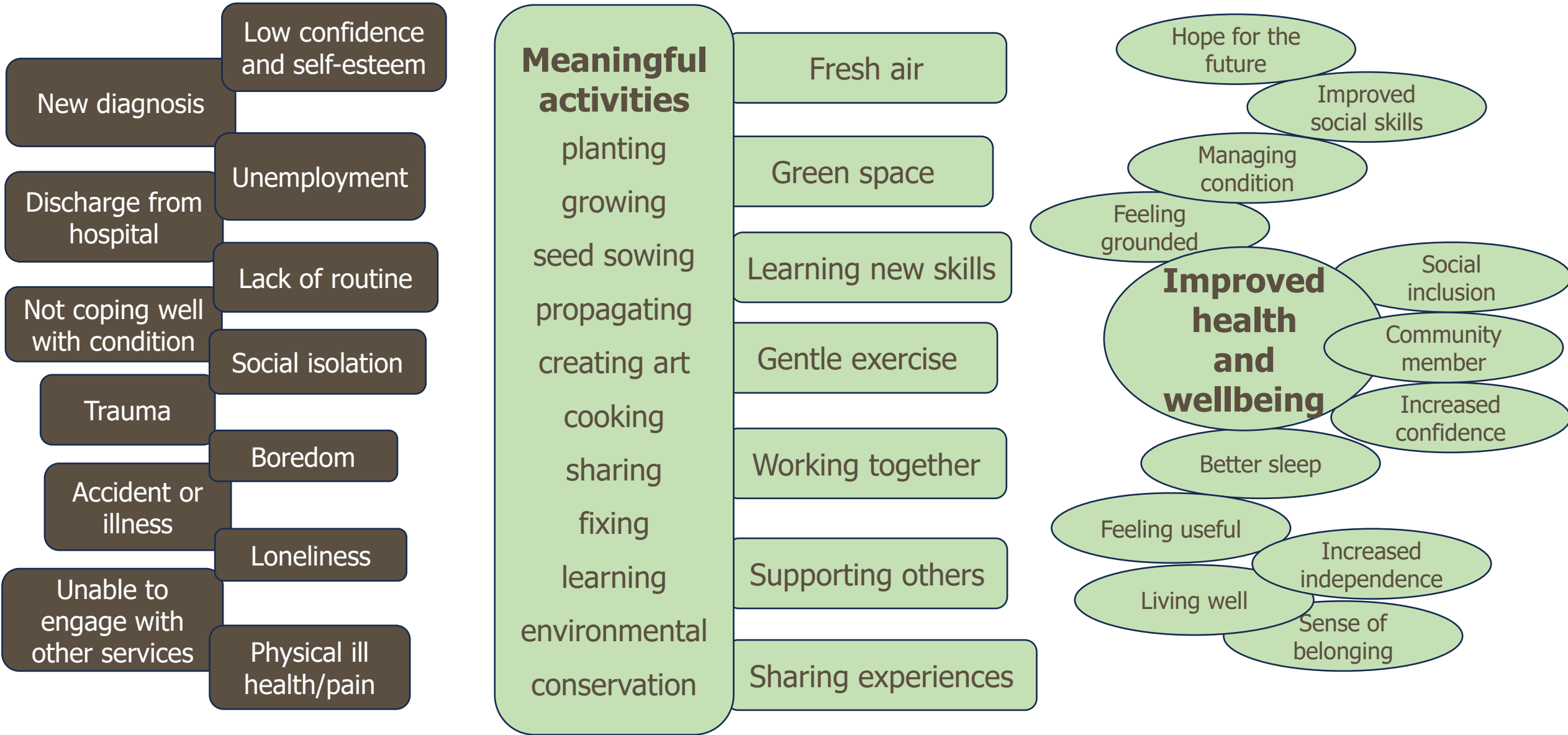
"I have really enjoyed being part of a group. I feel a real bond with the people in the group. Everyone is friendly, warm, supportive and welcoming."

"I am more confident, motivated and I trust myself to do things now. I have been pushed out of my comfort zone in a good way. I have started to volunteer since being in the group. I want to continue volunteering."

Average attendance in weekly Adult Mental Health groups – **63%**



Our Co-worker Journey

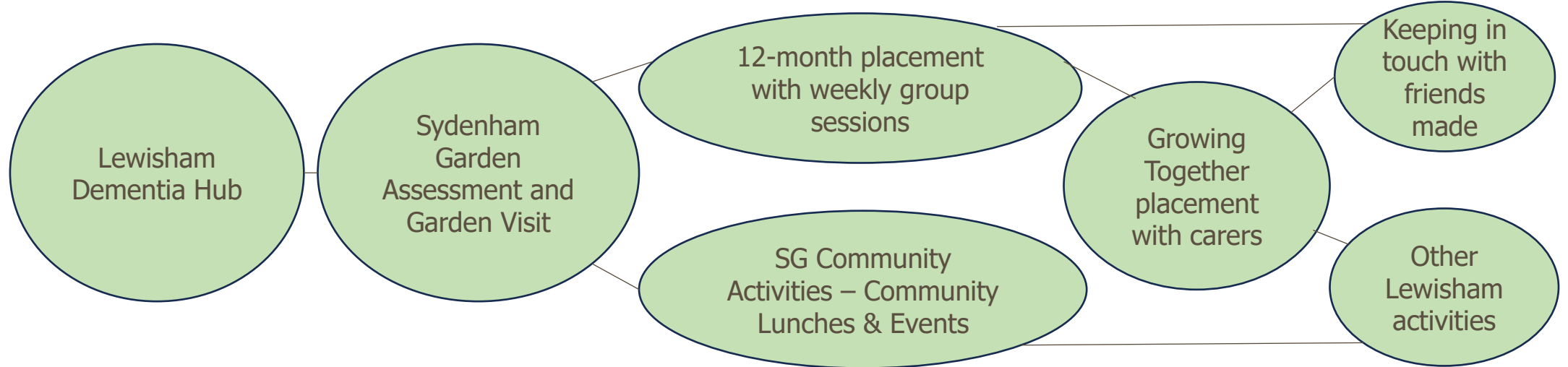


Sow & Grow (for people living with dementia)

Our **Sow & Grow** project enables people living with early-stage dementia to live well. Co-workers join a weekly group and participate in gardening, cooking, creative activities and singing. Our sessions use cognitive stimulation therapy (CST) techniques, helping co-workers to improve their cognitive skills, become more socially included and have a better quality of life.



During the year **36** co-workers benefited from the Sow & Grow project, with **10** co-workers and **8** carers going on to participate in **Growing Together**, a 6-12 week weekly programme which supports co-workers coming to the end of their placement and their carers. The group is a celebration their time with us, strengthening relationships and building lasting memories.





"Happiness rises
in me here"

"You start out
feeling sad, but
then it goes"

"You make people feel
important, special and
welcome – there isn't
anywhere else like it"



"I can't tell you enough
how amazing you, the
team and the set-up of
Sow & Grow is. What
an amazing gift to
everyone like mum"

New project: Practical Organic Gardening



PRACTICAL ORGANIC
GARDENING



"Thanks for this life
changing opportunity"

"Very beneficial, it has whetted my appetite to learn more"

Seven co-workers participated in this project in the year with four out of five units taught during the year. The project is now expanding with two groups running concurrently.

Our Practical Organic Gardening course offers people a direct transition route into horticultural work or further study through gaining an Open College Network (OCN) accredited qualification. The course is delivered at both our De Frene and Wynell Road sites and covers five different learning units. Our aim is to help people gain transferable horticultural skills in an inclusive and supportive environment.

"It has exceeded my expectations.
I can really be myself. I love learning
and it is made so interesting. I love
having assessment objectives and
relating them to what we learn"



New project: m.u.d



MUD (for 18-25 year olds)

m.u.d is a group for Lewisham-based 18-25-year-olds wanting to commune with the natural world. We work with the plants, soil, humans, and non-humans around us to find community and wellbeing in the city.

“Being part of mud is a wonderful experience in a lovely environment with lovely people.

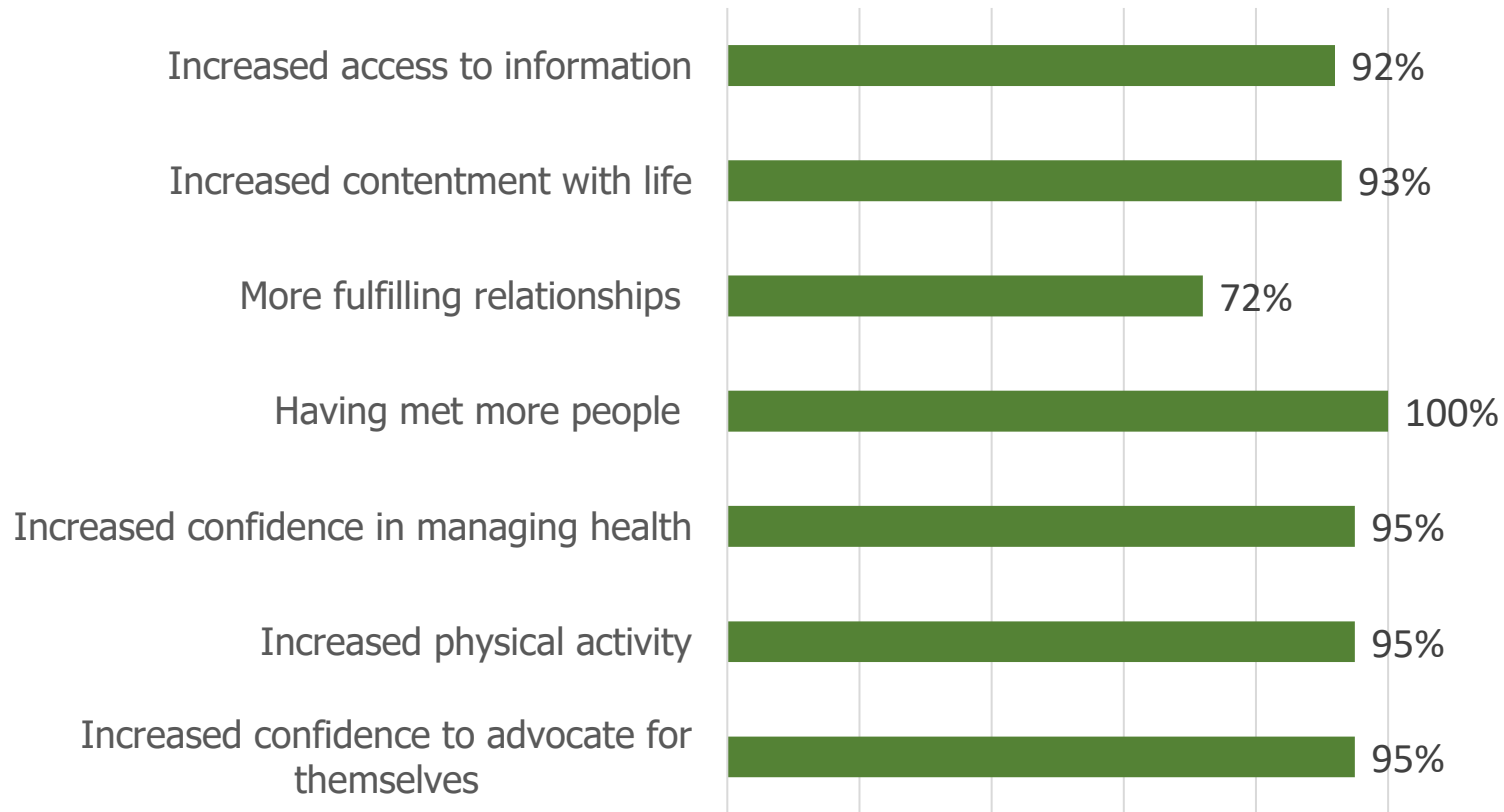
My mental and physical health have gotten a lot better and I am overjoyed and feel very lucky to be a part of mud. Let's keep on creating!!! What a world <3 ”

“How m.u.d combines creative arts, horticulture, cookery skills, and social gatherings, all key aspects to improving mental and physical health, I feel is genius, and offers a well-rounded learning experience for anyone who engages with the programme” – Linda Coiradas, Youth Programmes co-ordinator, TATE galleries



Impact on Mental Health and Wellbeing

In our annual survey, our co-workers reported:



*46 co-workers with complete data

WEMWBS (Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale)

WEMWBS has a mean score of 51.0 in general population. In 22-23, at the start of placements, the group average for 46 Sydenham Garden co-workers was **40.7**.

At the end of placements, the group average for Sydenham Garden co-workers increased to **45.3**.

This shows that our co-workers remained below the general population average at the end of their placement but wellbeing scores improved by **4.6 points**.

A change of **3 or more points** is considered significant.



"I've enjoyed the fresh air and being outside, being with and connecting with others. The staff have all been very supportive. I have gained better confidence, more independence, and less anxiety about speaking with people. I feel more assertive and confident now."

"It's taken a while but I've made relationships here. I've thoroughly enjoyed being in the group – I've come out of my shell. There isn't pressure in the group, which has been helpful. I feel better about myself now; I feel much more positive about who I am. I've noticed that I have more energy and am more motivated."

I try to be more sociable with others. It's still hard, but I feel less awkward and vulnerable when I'm in social situations than I used to."



Outdoor education for children with special educational needs



SCHOOL GROUPS

We worked in partnership with Brent Knoll and Greenvale schools to provide outdoor education sessions for their pupils. Sessions include looking after the chickens, exploring the garden, learning about wildlife, watering plants, making crafts and games!

Brent Knoll: 128 pupils participating in approximately 9 sessions each

Total: 163 sessions delivered benefiting 144 pupils

Greenvale: 16 pupils participating in approximately 12 sessions each



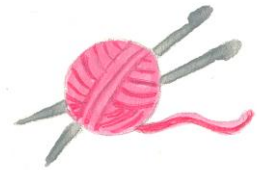
“What I like most about the sessions is Sekha’s gentle, caring and empathetic attitude to the children and his willingness and desire to learn Makaton signs, the best way to communicate with the children and wish for them to fully access and enjoy each session.” Brent Knoll tutor



Community Activities: Clubs



Clubs are an opportunity for current and ex-co-workers to take part in group activities during and after their placement. This year we delivered **three clubs**, meeting weekly through the year or on a seasonal basis, with **25 co-workers** participating in activities.



TEXTILES CLUB



WILDLIFE CLUB



WILD WALKS CLUB



"I enjoy getting out in the fresh air, meeting people, learning about wildlife and getting exercise. It's a totally different experience."

Community activities: Lunches & Events



"Community lunch feels like coming back to family"

"For me it's important because it's a chance to return to the garden. Any excuse to come back to Sydenham Garden"

"Don't forget the food, it gives us a chance to taste so many different foods"

Community activities provide an opportunity for current co-workers and co-workers who've moved on from their Sydenham Garden placement to meet socially and participate in our community. We held bring and share **community lunches** monthly during spring and summer, each attended by approximately 20-30 people.

COMMUNITY LUNCH



We also held four successful events, **De Frene Summer Festival**, **Sydenham Artists Trail** and our **Spring and Winter Plant Sales**. Co-workers volunteered at our events to show local community members around the gardens, running activities and selling tea, coffee, cake, food, our produce and craft items!

Social enterprise



Through our **Flower Farm** social enterprise, we provided ethical and sustainable flowers to seven local florists during the year, earning nearly **£4,000** to support our therapeutic work. We provided a **supported employment placement** with associated training for someone who had experienced barriers to work due to mental health issues. Flower Farm activities were integrated into therapeutic sessions to increase opportunities for co-workers to **develop vocational skills**, including floristry, horticulture, business and trading and digital marketing.



“I absolutely love being able to buy flowers from Sydenham Garden. It’s great to be in partnership with another local business, working together to support the local economy. My customers are excited each week to support Sydenham Garden and my little shop is made even more unique by these wonderful flowers and the story they tell” Yolly, local business owner.



Corporate Days & Premises Hire



We provide opportunities for corporate groups to spend time together outdoors while making a meaningful contribution to Sydenham Garden. This year we hosted **five corporate group days** with teams from Go Contaminated Land Solutions Ltd; Clifford Chance; Deutsche Bank & Deallus, with **80 people participating** in activities. The groups undertook vital work on our sites, including levelling ground to improve wheelchair access, construction of picnic tables and cladding outdoor kitchen areas, site clearance and rebuilding a woodstore.

We also provide a venue hire, enabling local groups to meet in our well-equipped resource centre, benefiting from access to our peaceful garden and nature reserve. This year, we had a total of **83 hire bookings**, including church meetings, children's nature parties, reiki workshops, art workshops and charity training.

We generated income of **nearly £11,000** from these activities which supports our charitable work.



Volunteering

Our team of dedicated volunteers are integral to our work. Volunteers work alongside co-workers in all our therapeutic sessions; **listening, supporting, encouraging, and helping to create our supportive community**. Volunteers also support with our clubs, events, office functions and garden maintenance. We offer short and long-term volunteer placements where volunteers gain new skills and knowledge, build confidence and support our co-workers to improve their quality of life.

91% of
volunteers
reported
**improving their
skills**

100% of our
volunteers
reported
**increased
contentment
with life**



"I've talked with and learned from co-workers and volunteers from so many different walks of life and always walk away from the garden feeling happier and more confident than when I arrived."



82 volunteers
providing over
10,000 hours
of support

Partnerships

We worked closely in partnership with **Bromley, Lewisham and Greenwich (BLG) Mind** during the year in delivery of **Lewisham Community Wellbeing** and **Lewisham Dementia Hub**. to ensure Lewisham residents received wraparound support.

We also worked with **BLG Mind** on the **Culturally Diverse Communities project** which supported our Mud project, aiming to increase the number of young people from diverse backgrounds benefiting from Sydenham Garden.



Summer Pride celebration with guests from Metro and Brixton Umbrella Circle

Partnership with **Community Connections Lewisham** and **Voluntary Services Lewisham's** transport service were important to ensure local residents knew about our services and could access them.

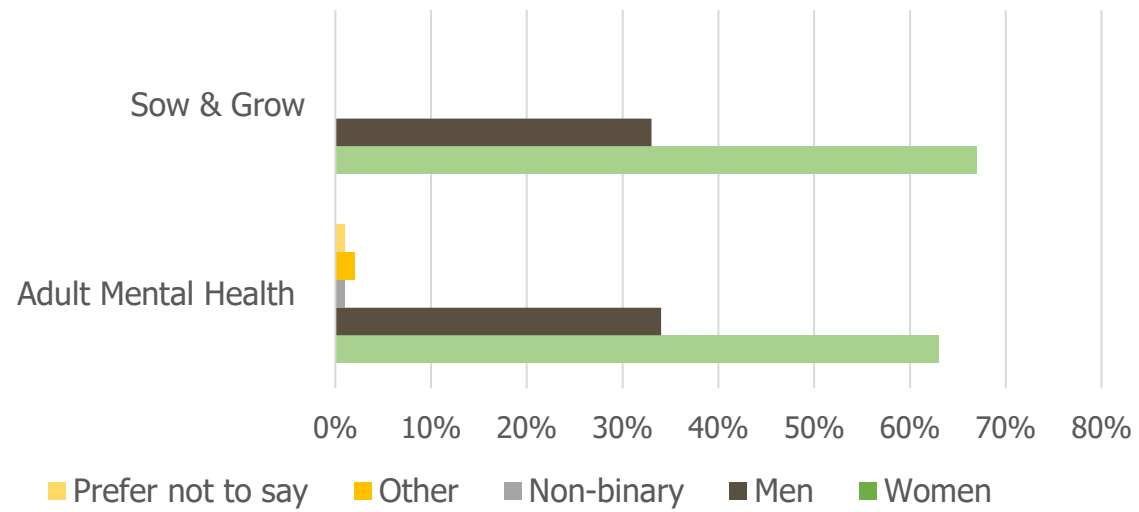
We were pleased to start a new partnership with **Greenvale school**, increasing access to outdoor education for their pupils and hosting groups from **Grow Wild**, which provides education alternatives for SEN students.



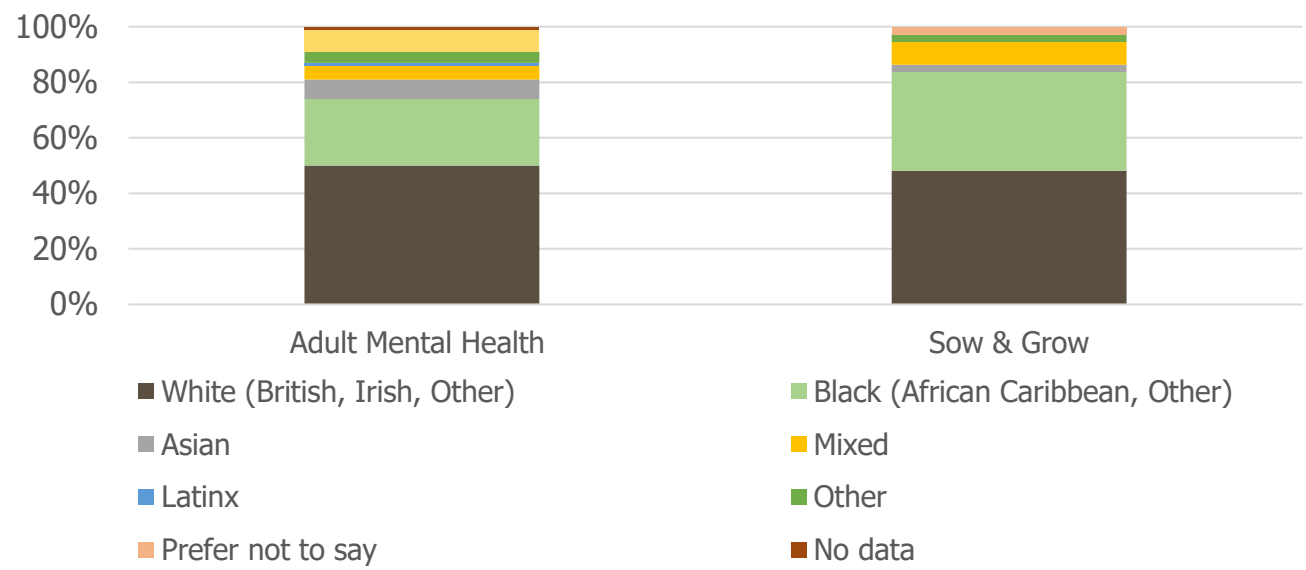
African print book covering made during workshop with Holistic Well Women Project for Black History Month

Our Co-workers: demographic profile

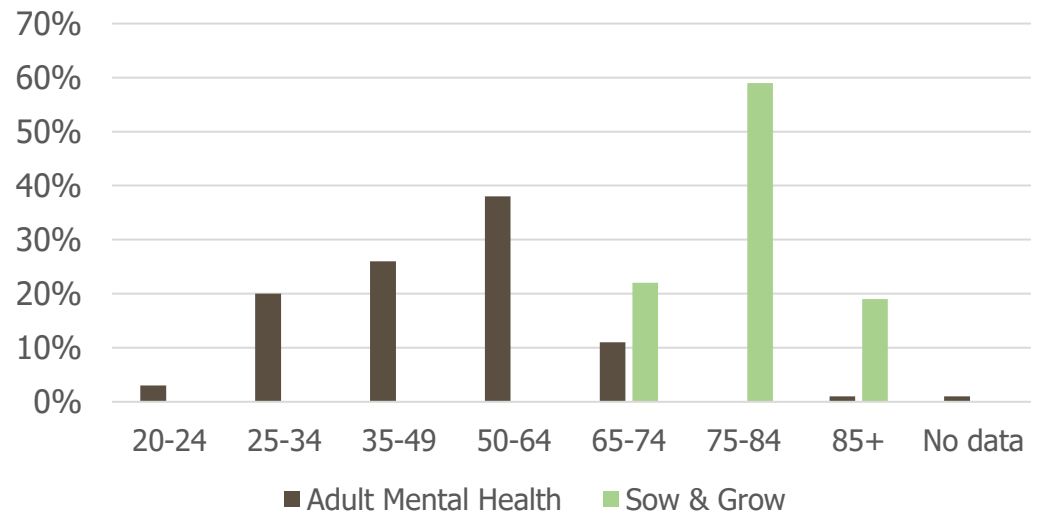
Co-worker Gender %



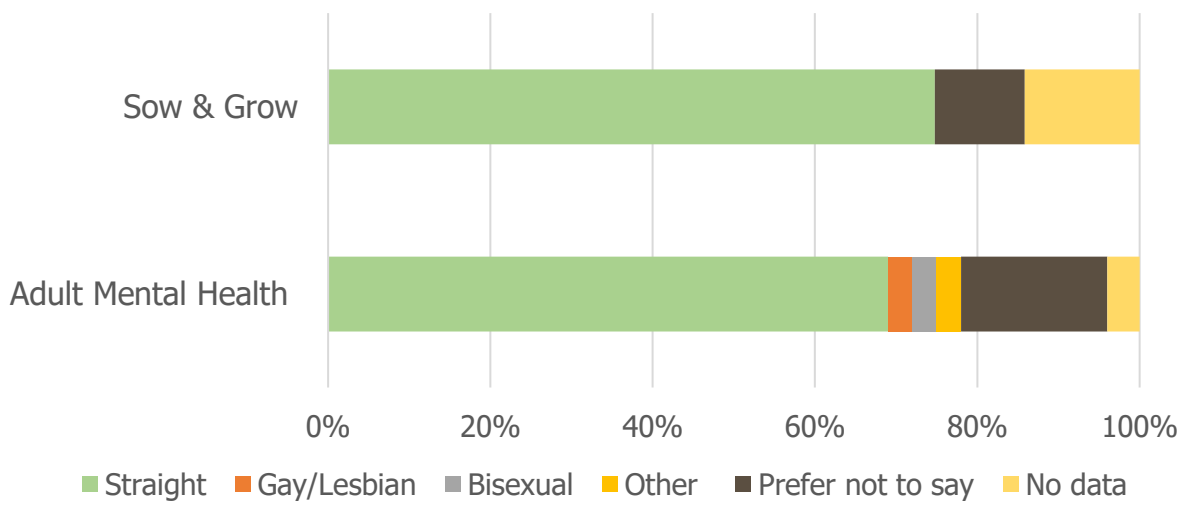
Co-worker Ethnicity %



Co-worker Age %



Co-worker Sexuality %



Our Funders and Supporters

We would like to say a huge **THANK YOU** to all our **funders** and our many **individual supporters**. Our work would not be possible without your support.



Looking to the future



From our Chair of Trustees

I hope you've enjoyed reading about all the activity at Sydenham Garden over the last year and the difference it has made to our co-workers.

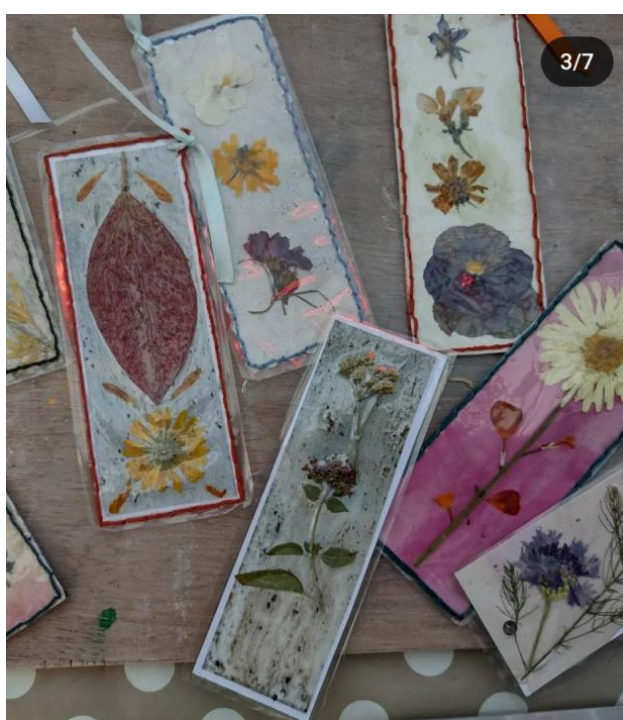
We've been working on a new **3-year strategic plan** which is nearly completed and will be launched in the autumn. We've been talking to our co-workers, volunteers, staff, supporters and stakeholders about what Sydenham Garden means to them and how we can develop our services to support more people and meet our community's needs.

We know that **partnerships** are important in achieving our mission to promote the physical and mental wellbeing of residents living in south London and we're excited about our new partnership with [**Together for Mental Wellbeing**](#) in delivery of Lewisham Wellbeing Hub.

In the next 3 years we'll also focus on creating and supporting opportunities for our **co-workers to influence mental health services**, including our own service, and **increasing ethnic diversity** at all levels of our organisations. We think both these areas are integral to providing a responsive and empowering service to our co-workers.

I hope to see you at the gardens soon, **Julia Brandreth**





Sydenham Garden
A growing community