



ART & CRAFT



GARDEN



GROWING  
TOGETHER



SOW & GROW



PRACTICAL ORGANIC  
GARDENING



FLOWER FARM



# Sydenham Garden

A growing community



CORPORATE  
DAYS



MUD (for 18-25 year olds)



AFRICAN & CARIBBEAN



COMMUNITY LUNCH



FAIRS, FESTIVALS  
AND PLANT SALES



GROWING LIVES



WILD WALKS CLUB



WILDLIFE CLUB



TEXTILES CLUB



SCHOOL GROUPS

Illustrations by El Hardwick

# About Sydenham Garden



Sydenham Garden is a unique wellbeing centre utilising its gardens, nature reserve and activity rooms to help people living with mental and physical ill-health.

We aim to promote inclusion and reduce prejudice by bringing together co-workers with different degrees of mental and physical ill health, volunteers and members of the local community to work together.

Sydenham Garden enables people to improve their quality of life, social interaction and physical and mental health in a supportive community environment.

Sydenham Garden's co-workers are referred by a variety of local health and support services and are at the heart of everything we do.





# Sydenham Garden Mission



Sydenham Garden's mission is to promote the physical and mental wellbeing of residents living in South London by providing:

- Community gardens where horticulture is used for therapy and rehabilitation
  - Opportunity for training for work and education
  - Opportunity for artistic and creative expression principally in our resource buildings
  - The protection and preservation of the environment for the benefit of the public through nature conservation and the promotion of biological diversity
- 



At Sydenham Garden, we promote health and wellbeing, support recovery and build connection with nature, gardening, creative expression, and with each other.

We provide therapeutic group activities for co-workers who are referred to us, with group sessions supported by volunteers.

We nurture and grow our community by providing community activities and enabling other local groups to benefit from spending time in our gardens.



# Our Context



People living with mental ill-health and people living with dementia in our south London community experience social isolation and limited opportunities for creative and outdoor activities that connect them with nature. People living with mental ill-health are less likely to work, more likely to be isolated and more likely to use NHS services. Loneliness and isolation are risks for people with dementia. An Alzheimer's Society survey reported that over half of people living with dementia surveyed experience loneliness (58%) and isolation (56%) and are losing touch with people since being diagnosed (56%).

Evidence shows the significance of access to green spaces for our health. Gardening projects have been shown to reduce demand on NHS services (including mental health admissions, The Kings Fund 2016) as they increase people's ability to manage their health (Nesta and the Health Foundation 2016). In recent years, studies have shown that

being in nature can help manage anxiety and depression. Our two sites are important green spaces in our local area and are integral to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our co-workers and wider community. Covid-19 and the cost-of-living crisis have impacted our community's mental health, exacerbating socio-economic issues, increasing isolation and impacting disproportionately on black and minority ethnic groups. The pandemic highlighted the importance of social connection and time outdoors and in nature for living well, which is central to our approach. Our co-workers say that Sydenham Garden is a sanctuary which supports their wellbeing and provides a supportive community. In this context, we have developed our 3-year strategy to ensure our work continues to meet the needs of our co-workers and wider community.





# Our Impact



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

*I've enjoyed the **fresh air** and **being outside**, and **connecting with others**. Everyone is very **supportive**. I've gained better **confidence**, more **independence**, and **less anxiety** about speaking with people. I feel more **assertive** and **confident** now.*

*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**.*

**93%** of our co-workers and **100%** of our volunteers reported **increased contentment with life**

**72%** of our co-workers reported **more fulfilling relationships**

**95%** of our co-workers reported **increased confidence to advocate for themselves**

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



# Our People

**Volunteers** support group sessions, site maintenance, office functions and events

**Co-worker carers, friends and family**  
support our co-workers to participate, champion our work and participate in events.

**Supporters** champion our work, make connections and give donations.

**Co-workers**  
are our primary beneficiaries. Co-workers are referred to us by local health and support services and are placed in a project group.

**Trustees** provide strategic direction and oversight, governance and overall accountability.

**Staff** lead group sessions, office functions and development.

**Our Community** – we support and nurture each other to grow.

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

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

**Social & therapeutic  
group for people of  
African and Caribbean  
heritage**

**Our Activities -  
Nurturing the Sydenham Garden  
community**

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

**Social & therapeutic  
groups for young  
people aged 18-25**

**School group  
outdoor education** –  
for children with special  
educational needs

**Clubs, Community  
Lunches and  
Events**

**Volunteering**

**Groups to  
participate in  
vocational  
training**

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

# **Sydenham Garden Strategic Plan 2023-2027**

## **1. Our Activities**

## **2. Our Learning and Sharing**

## **3. Our Volunteers**

### **Overall strategic objectives**

1. To develop Sydenham Garden's services to reach a larger cohort of co-workers
2. To continuously improve the effectiveness and impact of Sydenham Garden's activities
3. To solidify and diversify Sydenham Garden's funding sources
4. To increase Sydenham Garden's diversity at all levels

## **4. Our Environment**

## **5. Supporting Our Activities**

## **6. Resourcing Our Activities**

**Our Values: Empowerment, Accountability, Inclusivity**



# 1. Our Activities

**In the next 3 years we will:**

## **1a. Continue to deliver our current activities and continuously improve their effectiveness and impact:**

- Maintain and develop our referral partnerships.
- Conduct outreach activities to support people from diverse backgrounds to access our services.
- Support co-workers to participate in local visits and host visits from other organisations.
- Increase learning opportunities for co-workers.
- Collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative data on our impact.

## **1b. Increase the number of people we support:**

- Conduct a review of services and consider options to further develop our model.
- Expand activities to consider further supporting:
  - people living with young-onset dementia, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people living with dementia and carers supporting people living with dementia.
  - people living with mental health difficulties who will benefit from evening or weekend activities.
  - Strengthen existing partnerships and raise our profile locally.

## **1c. Maintain positive outcomes for co-workers:**

- Deliver an increased number and range of community activities.
- Improve our engagement with co-workers after the end of their therapeutic placement.
- Develop the supported pathway for co-workers to become volunteers.

## **1d. Promote co-worker involvement and voice to influence services and decisions that affect them:**

- Hold regular co-worker advisory sessions.
- Support co-workers to create and take opportunities to influence health services.
- Engage co-workers in session planning and support co-workers to influence our services.

## **2. Our Learning and Sharing**

**In the next 3 years, we will:**

### **2a. Continue to collaborate, learn and share with other groups and organisations:**

- Participate in local networking meetings.
- Hold open day sessions and visit other organisations.

### **2b. Facilitate use of our sites to increase access to green space and nature:**

- Promote hire of our sites locally and prioritise bookings which increase access to green space for the local community.

### **2c. Improve how we understand and share our impact:**

- Improve our collection and analysis of services data to help us achieve targets and make improvements.
- Conduct a review of the impact tools we use.
- Publish and share an annual impact report.

### **2d. Extend our impact beyond our community:**

- Explore how we can share our model more widely through open day sessions, external communications and contributing to local and national dialogue about creative and horticultural therapeutic activities.



### **3. Our Volunteers**

**In the next 3 years, we will:**

#### **3a. Continue to recruit and support volunteers to contribute to Sydenham Garden:**

- Recruit volunteers via a range of methods.
- Further develop our volunteer pathway including volunteer induction, reviews and leavers processes.
- Provide organisation-wide volunteer forums and training in core areas including anti-racism, safeguarding and data protection.
- Provide more opportunities for volunteers to meet and share experiences across projects.
- Provide appropriate training and support to volunteers for their development.

#### **3b. Increase the ethnic diversity of our volunteers, to better reflect the ethnic diversity of Lewisham:**

- Develop supported pathway for co-workers to become volunteers.
- Develop relationships with a wider range of organisations and groups for volunteer recruitment.
- Explore how we can provide more flexible volunteering opportunities.

#### **3c. Increase the proportion of volunteers with lived experience of mental health difficulties:**

- Collect and analyse data on lived experience of volunteers.
- Develop supported pathway for co-workers to become volunteers.
- Develop relationships with targeted organisations and groups for volunteer recruitment.

## **4. Our Environment**

We have two sites (Wynell Road Garden and Nature Reserve and De Frene Market Garden) which we manage aiming to protect the environment and promote biodiversity.

**In the next 3 years we will:**

### **4a. Ensure we continue to manage both our sites to protect the environment and promote biodiversity.**

- Update management plans for both sites and engage co-workers and volunteers in their implementation.
- Improve organisational procurement processes to minimise waste.

### **4b. Create nature advocates by sharing our knowledge and expertise to influence practices outside Sydenham Garden:**

- Inform and educate the Sydenham Garden community about actions we are taking to protect the environment and promote biodiversity and how they can contribute.



## **5.Supporting Our Activities**

**In the next 3 years we will:**

### **5a. Maintain good governance:**

- Complete a Trustee Board skills audit and training/recruiting to address gaps.
- Provide training in core areas including anti-racism, safeguarding and data protection.
- Provide opportunities for trustee training and development.
- Maintain up-to-date organisational policies which support our activities.

### **5b. Maintain a high-performing staff team who are flexible, resilient and happy at work:**

- Provide supportive line management, clinical supervision and an employee assistance programme.
- Support staff to identify appropriate training and development opportunities.
- Promote staff wellbeing by providing team-building opportunities.
- Provide training in core areas including anti-racism, safeguarding and data protection.

### **5c. Ensure our sites are safe and appropriate for our activities by:**

- Re-design and develop our Wynell Road Garden.
- Improve accessibility at De Frene Market Garden.

### **5e. Develop HR, Finance and IT systems which are fit-for-purpose:**

- Introduce an online HR management system.
- Review and develop our procurement processes.
- Review our IT contract.

## **6.Resourcing Our Activities**

**In the next 3 years we will:**

### **6a. Maintain a good reputation as a trusted local provider:**

- Deliver against requirements in current grants and contracts.
- Produce high-quality reports on time.
- Proactively maintain strong relationships with funders.

### **6b. Draft and implement a fundraising strategy:**

- Develop our approach to increase statutory funding, core multi-year grant funding and high net worth individual giving.
- Maintain our income from community fundraising and corporate partnerships.
- Underpin our fundraising with the principles of building relationships, utilising expertise and experimentation.

### **6c. Develop communication materials and use of social media to support implementation of our fundraising strategy.**

- Maintain active presence on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.
- Maintain range of up-to-date leaflets and posters.
- Maintain an up-to-date and accessible website.





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