



Gardening **Choices**

Evaluation and Impact Portfolio

This portfolio describes and evaluates the experience and impact *Gardening Choices* has created and had upon the individuals, groups and organisations it has been delivered to.

Gardening Choices

The *Gardening Choices* project has been generously funded by Wates giving the charitable arm of the Wates group from July 2009 to July 2012. The aim of the project was to develop and extend the offer of training and education provision to relevant professionals and organisations in the use of gardening and Social and Therapeutic Horticulture. In addition Thrive and Wates sought to target professionals and organisations involved in the provision of care for those with dementias.

The delivery of 100 days of practical skills based training has been provided to 1,215 professionals across England and Wales. Attended by a range of people involved in care for those with dementias from Volunteers to Clinical Psychologists from a full spectrum of services involved in dementia care including Care Home organisations, NHS Assessment services and Community based groups such as Alzheimer's associations and groups from AGE UK.

The training days were delivered according to the individual needs of the professionals attending, and drew from the user involvement process that highlighted lack of time, knowledge and confidence, and resources as the key barriers to utilising Social and Therapeutic Horticulture with their disabled groups. Alongside the training, a 'Guide' that illustrates how to use gardening activities and a Wall Planner to create activity programmes was designed and developed for professionals to utilise.

A portfolio of experience and impact

This portfolio demonstrates the use of the 'Full value approach' as recommended by the National Council for Voluntary Organisation. This approach demonstrates how the *Gardening Choices* project has created:

- 1. Primary experience**
- 2. Primary impact**
- 3. Secondary experience**
- 4. Secondary impact**

Gardening Choices will have created and had a primary experience and impact upon the professionals who directly accessed the project, those professionals have then created and provided secondary experiences and impacts for those they care for. The portfolio uses the evaluation of feedback from questionnaires and the creation of case studies to highlight some of these experiences and impacts.



Evaluation

A monitoring and evaluation process was implemented at the beginning of the project. This consisted of a number of questionnaires designed to appraise the quality of training delivery to enable reflective practice and continue to improve training provision and describe and evaluate the experience and impact created by the project. This process began with a user involvement process which sought to discover what success and difficulties there are when trying to provide gardening activity programmes in dementia care settings. This process along with the application of specific adult learning theories enabled *Gardening Choices* to begin delivering training days based on the needs of likely professionals.

Questionnaires were then circulated at the end of a training day, at the three month point and at the one year point after attendance of a course.

The user involvement process highlighted key barriers often encountered, Time – specifically time to plan, knowledge and confidence, and resources as many suggested working from limited budgets and/or not understanding how to make gardening activities less expensive.

The response to questions directly linked to these barriers were as follows:

- Q Do you think the training will save you time planning and running gardening activities?**
A Yes = 93% Maybe = 3.5% No = 3.5%
- Q Do you think the training will help you save money and resources running your gardening activities?**
A Yes = 87% Maybe = 4% No = 9%
- Q Do you think the training will give you greater confidence to plan and run gardening activities?**
A Yes = 98% Maybe = 1.5% No = 0.5%

These questions were repeated in the three month follow up questions and the responses were:

- Q Do you think the training will save you time planning and running gardening activities?**
A Yes = 90.5% Maybe = 4% No = 5.5%
- Q Do you think the training will help you save money and resources running your gardening activities?**
A Yes = 85% Maybe = 6% No = 9%
- Q Do you think the training will give you greater confidence to plan and run gardening activities?**
A Yes = 96% Maybe = 2.5% No = 1.5%

This response confirms that overwhelmingly the three barriers identified by the professionals were overcome by the impact of *Gardening Choices*.

To achieve greater confidence, understand how to effectively plan and work in a cost effective way requires skills and knowledge of Social and Therapeutic Horticulture and an understanding of this improvement was specifically sought. When the professionals were asked specifically about this they responded:

Q Do you feel the training has helped develop your skills and broaden your knowledge of Social and Therapeutic Horticulture?

A Definitely = 91% Mainly = 7% Slightly = 2% No = 0%

Although all training should be a positive and motivational experience, the monitoring process did not seek to understand this area. However through the questionnaires and unexpected feedback many alluded to being motivated by the experience.

- **15% of professionals used words such as ‘inspired’ or ‘enthused’ to describe what they liked best about the day, or in additional comments.**

The three month and one year follow up questionnaires sought to understand the impact of the Guide and Wall Planner. Respondents answered as follows:

Q On this scale does the Guide and Wall Planner help running a gardening activity easier?

A

Very easy		→			Not very easy	
1	2	3	4	5		
12%	45%	43%	0%	0%		

Q How useful is the Guide and Wall Planner in helping you to:

- 1) Garden;
- 2) Work with clients;
- 3) Organise gardening activities?

A

	Not useful	Useful	Very useful
1)	0%	72%	18%
2)	0%	64%	36%
3)	0%	42%	58%

In addition, the evaluation process asked about the impact of *Gardening Choices* overall; encompassing the training, Guide and Wall Planner. The following response was given:

Q On this scale how much has the training, Guide and Wall Planner helped in running a gardening activity?

A

Not at all	0%
A little	0%
Somewhat	35%
Very Much	57%
Tremendously	8%

Three questions were posed in the one year follow up covering:

What do you like about the gardening activities?

Do you think the activities benefit you in any way?

What words best describe how you feel about the gardening activities?

The most frequent response to these questions was around enjoyment, social interaction, and purpose.

“definitely more involved in planning and decision making, other residents who don’t take part like to gather round, watch and chat”

“residents in care homes have led a life and many have fascinating and interesting experiences to share, the garden is a great source for triggering an afternoon of story telling”

From the three month and one year follow up; each professional facilitates gardening for 5.4 disabled people within their setting for an average of 35 minutes per week.

If extrapolated across the professionals who accessed *Gardening Choices* this would give an indirect reach of 6,561 disabled people.

This evaluation suggests that *Gardening Choices* has assisted professionals to overcome the likely barriers to using gardening within their setting, gained in relevant skills and knowledge, found the training motivational, and then used the training to create enjoyable experiences that will have impacted on the health, well being and quality of life of those they care for.

Conclusion:

Overall, evaluation suggests the *Gardening Choices* project has been successful not only in attaining outcomes, but also in achieving success in both experiences and impact that have worked to affect the lives of over 1,200 professionals and potentially over 6,000 disabled people.

The following pages also provide 5 case studies that demonstrate people’s experiences and the impact of the *Gardening Chocies* project.

Acknowledgements

Thrive wish to extend our grateful appreciation to ‘Wates giving’ for their sponsorship of *Gardening Chocies*. We would also like to acknowledge the contributions and support from all those who agreed to tell us their stories.

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Thrive is grateful to everyone involved in providing photographs for this portfolio.

Case Study 1

This case study demonstrates the type of **primary experience** and impact the *Gardening Choices* project can have with a single professional.

One professional's journey

When I started working for London Wildlife Trust (LWT) I took on a horticultural project for people with learning disabilities and after a few months funding was released to start a similar project for elderly people suffering from dementia. My teaching background greatly helped in devising sessions and material which catered for the individual as well as group needs, but I felt I needed a better insight into horticultural therapy and how to use gardening to benefit my service users. I also needed to provide the volunteers supporting my projects with adequate training to help deliver the sessions and got in contact with Thrive for advice. I was offered a free training session as part of their *Gardening Choices* project on Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (STH) to support people suffering from dementia. This opportunity was also provided to Volunteers of LWT.

The session was delivered by Damien Newman and gave us a wonderful insight into what STH is and how it can benefit those suffering from dementia from a physical, emotional, psychological and social point of view. I think the essence of the session was the realisation that it is the garden that needs to meet service users' needs and not service users that need to meet the garden's needs, which is often what happens in practice. That consideration set the base for the whole day and practical activities coupled with discussion, case studies and role plays provided us with the necessary tools to assess service users, and devise a structured programme with lesson plans and activities which truly cater for individual needs and make sessions more inclusive.

What I learnt from the workshop had a positive impact on me and my volunteers and my own ability to deliver tailor-made horticultural therapy projects, and in particular to better support the elders who garden at the Centre for Wildlife Gardening. As a result we were able to propose activities which were better adapted to each service user and made them feel more included and able to achieve something concrete each time. One of the outcomes of the project was 'Remembered Recipes', a book of recipes that celebrated a year of gardening, laughter, sharing and getting healthier, and which made participants feel very proud.

A better insight into dementia also prompted London

Wildlife Trust to try and combine horticulture and reminiscence which resulted in further impact for LWT as we developed a project called *Potted History*, which currently uses STH as well as reminiscence to benefit people suffering from dementia.

On a more personal side, the *Gardening Choices* training was truly inspiring and opened up a whole new world of possibilities, as well as giving me the necessary confidence and inspiration to pursue more work within the STH sector. As a result I was able to independently set up a horticultural project in a residential home managed by Leonard Cheshire Disability where all service



users are wheelchair-bound. Working on several STH projects emphasised the need to further my professional development and London Wildlife Trust agreed to fund my training. I took part in the two-day course on 'STH to support people with learning disabilities', as well as the training focusing on mental ill health. I also gained The Thrive undergraduate Award in 'Using STH to benefit people with learning disabilities' and having gone through the whole process of learning, devising and implementing a practical STH programme was revealing in showing the true potential of STH.

Thrive has been key in providing me with the confidence, knowledge and inspiration to professionally run a variety of horticultural therapy projects and when I look back it all started with *Gardening Choices*.

Case Study 2

Gardening Choices has been delivered to many voluntary groups and as this case study demonstrates their input can be as important as a professional. The study is all about the **primary and secondary experiences**, both for those who attended the course and those who they care for.

Volunteers provide Gardening Club

At the end of 2010, activity organiser, Chloe Evens from the Sanctuary Care home in Watlington, Oxfordshire approached a local community volunteers group seeking help to introduce a range of new activity groups at the home. Two volunteers, Pauline Verbe and Anna Thomas stepped forward 'As a volunteers group we want people who reside in care homes to feel that they are still part of the community'. At the same time the *Gardening Choices* training project had sent out invitation cards to over 300 care homes in Berkshire, Hampshire and Oxfordshire for free training in how to use gardening to benefit those with Dementias. Chloe returned the invitation and both Chloe and Pauline attended the day on the 13 January 2011.

With the knowledge and skills acquired on the course added to their own inspiration they set out to start a gardening club. First on the agenda was to create some aims for the club, they wanted to encourage residents to think of the garden as their own and for the residents to enjoy sharing time with others, a time to talk and laugh. They also wanted the residents to have access to fresh air and exercise with as much involvement and decision making as the residents would be happy to have. Anna explained, "We plan at every stage and this really helps the residents to get the most out of our time together". Chloe has since left the care home and now Anna and Pauline run the gardening club independently with some support from the care home staff, particularly new activity organiser Liza Simon. They have grown lots of



different vegetables cucumbers, courgettes, potatoes and tomatoes to name a few and regularly have six members joining in almost every week. The club runs for an hour or two every Tuesday. Both Anna and Pauline talk enthusiastically about the gardening club: "We both look forward to coming along and I feel privileged to call all the residents who come along friends," says Anna. Pauline also clearly feels the social side of the club is very important, "We have great fun every week, some of the best days have been when we have had many more residents than the regular attendees out in the garden as well, some get involved with others chatting and enjoying being part of a group, we often have a sing song as we work". Anna says that, "it's important the residents decide what to do it helps personalise the garden, many of the residents had gardened all their lives so they're the experts and they tell us how it should be done."

Liza Simon and care home manager Julia Cooper are enthusiastic about the impact the gardening club has had on their care home, "The impact the gardening club has had on the whole home has been tremendous with the residents involved in all aspects right from the start including being active and decisions being made on the direction we will take in the future. We have just





made plans for outings for the gardening club including decorating a Christmas tree at the local church and for next year we have planned trips to see the snowdrops in February and to see the daffodils in March. These trips are also so important in keeping in touch with the local community.”

Equally they are very clear about how the gardening club and the volunteers have made a difference to the residents at the home. “The benefits of gardening with the residents have been many including exercise, stimulation, social contact and a feeling that they are making a difference to the place in which they live. Anna and Pauline have put so much into the club and the residents look forward to seeing them every week, one of our dementia residents mentioned to me that, ‘the two ladies that come for gardening club are so lovely’. It is a testament to the both of them that she remembered who they are.”

Looking back to where the club started Pauline says that the training “Fired my enthusiasm, it was an interesting and encouraging course and I wouldn’t have had the confidence to help start a gardening club without it. We took lots of ideas away the importance of planning, involving the residents at every stage and how to make gardening accessible. Some of the tools we looked at in

the training have been really useful. It’s great that we have been able to achieve our aims and everyone has had such a lovely time together. The success of the club has been shared and regularly features in the Parish News so it really has helped make the care home even more a part of the community.”



Case Study 3

In this case study a care centre manager describes how a collaborative approach to meeting the needs of those accessing training, has enabled *Gardening Choices* to create **secondary impact** on the lives of disabled people.

A care centre manager's perspective

In March 2010 whilst manager of the Kenrick centre, one of four care centre's built by the Wates group for Birmingham City Council (BCC) I was made aware of Thrive's *Gardening Choices* Project. I was told how this project would enable us to gain from training specific in how to garden with people who have dementia. Through contact with the project coordinator we collaborated to create a programme specific to the needs of those accessing the care centre. In May of that year a days training was provided for staff of the centre, the day would concentrate on providing the skills and inspiration so that staff could begin to use the garden spaces effectively with the residents. Later that month a second day took place in which staff, residents and relatives all took part and along with continued learning we created a herb and vegetable bed and began planting vegetables and strawberries in containers. During that summer the gardening yielded amazing results which included herbs, succulent tomatoes, cucumbers, courgettes, strawberries and other produce. All involved and most importantly residents and relatives were very positive about the success achieved. We used pictures of the produce to create pictorial menus that were used to support residents to make a choice of meals particularly those who have problems with speech and language. Overall the benefits were:

- The creation of a rolling programme of gardening activities;
- All involved gained a real sense of well being and achievement;
- Enabled the promotion of user involvement;
- Enabled the process of building/maintaining relationships.

In 2011, I moved to the Perry Tree Centre, another of BCC's four care centres and quickly seized the opportunity to start this amazing project here. I arranged a meeting with residents, relatives and staff to introduce the project and to assess ideas an interest. Following on from this I made contact with the coordinator and arranged a similar programme suited to the needs of those at Perry tree. Again, a day's training for the staff gave them the necessary skills but in this new context I was also keen for



the project to contribute to the changing of ethos required at the centre and promote activity, choice, involvement and community. Following the *Gardening Choices* two days training with staff, residents, relatives and advocates, we made improvements to the garden areas to make them more appropriate in enabling our residents to be involved. We re-planted two raised beds with plants to bring back memories, and then created two new raised beds for vegetables and herbs. We are now all excitedly looking forward to a summer of activity and rewards.

The true essence of the work we have done can be identified with the increase of wellbeing for both our residents and relatives alike. The gardening experiences have helped stimulate the Heart and Mind and provide a sense of purpose and great satisfaction. Residents who experience dementia were engaged in longer periods as compared with other activities offered. Behaviours that would ordinarily present challenges were channelled in a constructive and positive way which added to the quality of life for the resident. On one of the days a family member told me that, "It was great to see his mum outside in the garden; she had always loved gardening at home and seeing a care home understand the importance of gardening to my mother told me everything about the consideration given to her."

Case Study 4

Gardening Choices sought to create relationships with relevant organisations and targeted organisations such as the Orders of St John Care Trust to work with. The case study shows how **primary experiences** of the training day has supported professionals to feel confident in starting gardening activities within their care settings and with their enthusiasm this can create wide ranging impacts on many involved in the setting.

A Region of Care Homes

The Orders of St John Care Trust (OSJCT) provides care to older people including those with dementia across Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire and Lincolnshire. Three regions accessed training with activities staff from all homes attending.

Across the region of Oxfordshire the (OSJCT) provide care for 865 older people in eight homes. The activities staff for this region are managed by Karen Johnson Activities and Volunteers manager and she has been delighted at its success. "Everyone who attended enjoyed it and went away with more confidence and enthusiasm. They engaged the residents in gardening activities of their choice and created some lovely gardens – most have a vegetable garden and all year round are awash with colour," she says.

OSJCT homes provide a variety of different services including residential, nursing care, and specialist dementia care and aims to provide a person-centred approach.

The Thrive training has really helped us achieve this aim in the gardens, explains Karen Johnson.

"Since the course our residents have become more involved in garden planning and decision-making. It's really important to offer them as much choice as

possible and they are gaining a real sense of belonging through the gardening clubs we have set up.

"During our training we also talked about how gardens in care homes should remind residents of their own garden to prompt reminiscence and get everyone chatting. So in one care home I was really pleased to go in and find as well as growing vegetables, flowers, and herbs they had also installed an old fashioned washing line running the length of the garden – just as it would have been in some of the residents' old homes!"

"The whole region has made the most of their gardens and the successful flower and vegetable show held last year for all the care homes really demonstrate this. Also the team approach which is so important to how we work is helped by the garden as well, in some homes even the house keepers get involved, but it's the huge difference it makes to some of the residents that reminds me that all the staff's effort is worthwhile. One of our residents, Sid has been battling depression and health issues, but with support he has started to Garden again and has really blossomed, he goes out everyday to do something in the garden. Both his district nurse and consultant agree that his emotional well being has flourished since he became our 'Head Gardener'."



Case Study 5

This case study demonstrates how *Gardening Choices* created a ripple of impact across older people's services. Alongside the other case studies it demonstrates how the **primary experience** of high quality training is the key to ensuring dedicated professionals make the most of opportunities to utilise gardens and gardening as an effective therapy **primary experience** for those with dementia.

NHS Trust begins to value gardening

Sally Baker a Health improvement practitioner works with the NHS for the South West Yorkshire Partnership Foundation Trust (SWYPFT). She attended a *Gardening Choices* day hosted by AGE UK in Leeds as part of their *Fit as a Fiddle* project (*Fit as a Fiddle* aims to promote healthy living opportunities to older people) in May 2010.

Sally explains how the day shaped her work. "I had read a lot about the benefits of gardening for those with dementia but wanted to gain the practical skills that would enable me to deliver a gardening project successfully. I found the course really helpful in lots of ways, it helped me to understand the challenges client would face and how to break tasks down and adapt them to meet the client needs. Alongside this I was able to network with others in the area trying to achieve the same things. The course gave me the skills to put together a suitable programme of Social and Therapeutic Horticulture."

"The course led me to further investigate opportunities for developing gardening for health service for the SWYPFT. I was successful in gaining an innovation fund from the trust and with this developed a pilot project called *The Memory Garden*. The pilot scheme was successful

and the participants all gained something from being involved. For some it was the chance to be social when they were otherwise isolated, and so new friendships began. Others gained a sense of well being able through growing and then sharing what they grew."

"The benefits of *The Memory Garden* were there for all to see and our evaluations were very positive. The Trust became enthusiastic about similar schemes starting across the trust and with this in mind a second day was arranged so that my colleague from across South West Yorkshire could gain from the training as I had."

"The second day in March 2012 was attended by 20 professionals working within hospitals and in the community. I was delighted to be able to arrange a day for free as it would have been a significant chunk from the budget created for Memory Gardens across the Trust. The day was a huge success and feedback very positive many participants explaining that they had gained in very similar ways to the way I had the previous year."

"So now we have over 20 of us across the Trust all beginning to use gardening as an effective way of supporting those we care for."





using gardening to change lives

Thrive is a national charity, founded in 1978, that makes use of gardening to change the lives of disabled people.

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