

NGS Elsie Wagg Innovation Scholarship

Final Report Summary 2026



In 2021, the QICN and the National Garden Scheme created a scholarship programme for community nurses, the NGS Elsie Wagg (Innovation) Scholarship.

The scholarship was launched by George Plumptre, Chief Executive of the National Garden Scheme, speaking at the Queen's Nurse Annual Meeting on 12th May 2021, Nurses' Day.

The Scholarship is open to all nurses working in the community and are awarded to five nurses submitting the best applications each year, for projects that promote the health benefits of gardening and garden visiting among a group of people.

The QICN has a long track record of supporting nurses to develop and implement their own ideas to improve the nursing care of the people they care for in the community. Project leaders receive a year-long programme of individual and group support, as well as funding to implement their project to improve healthcare.

The scholarship is named after Elsie Wagg MBE, the QICN council member who originally had the idea to open gardens to raise funds for the charity, which led to the creation of the National Garden Scheme in 1927.

The successful projects were based in Wales as well as in England: London, Stockton on Tees, Bedfordshire and Cheshire.

The following is a summary of their final reports.

All names in case studies have been changed for confidentiality purposes.



Contents

4 **Background**

5 **Circle Garden Haven project**

Kathy Pelc, Team Leader and Practice Assessor, Sarah Lockyer, Community Nursery Nurse; Surrey

8 **Gardening for Growth project**

Linda Antunes, Primary Care Outreach Nurse and Emma Richardson, Deputy Manager; Stockton-on-Tees

11 **Twinwoods Sensory Garden project**

Project team

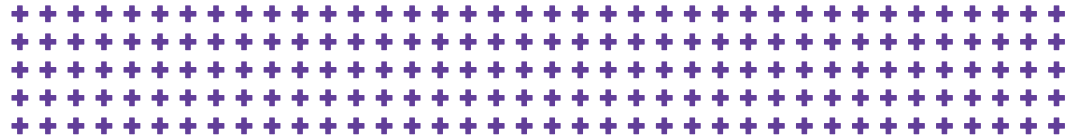
Simone Mingay, Clinical Nurse Manager and Nina Macrae, Assistant Psychologist; Bedfordshire

14 **Using Nature to Make Connections project**

Claire Norman, Senior Nurse Specialised Service and Lucy Bolton, Team Lead; Rhondda Cynon Taf, Wales

17 **Supporting Women with Horticulture project**

Emma Beniston, HMP Styal, Cheshire



Background

The Queen's Institute of Community Nursing and the National Garden Scheme have worked in partnership for many years to champion the health and wellbeing benefits of gardens, gardening and connection with nature. Through the NGS Elsie Wagg Innovation Scholarship, community nurses are supported to develop and test innovative ideas that use nature-based approaches to improve health and wellbeing in their local communities.

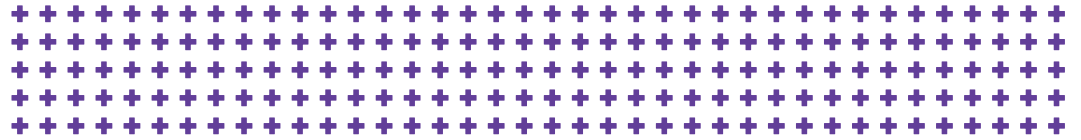
The projects featured in this report demonstrate the remarkable impact that can be achieved when nurses combine compassionate care with creativity, partnership working and the restorative power of nature. Although each project worked with different groups of people and in different settings, they share a common belief that access to green spaces and meaningful outdoor activity can support better physical, mental and emotional health.

The projects supported a wide range of people, including mothers experiencing mental health challenges during the transition to parenthood, people experiencing homelessness, adults with learning disabilities and adults with autism. In each case, gardens and outdoor spaces became more than simply places to spend time; they became environments where people could build confidence, develop new skills, form relationships and reconnect with themselves and others.

Participants reported reduced isolation, improved wellbeing, greater confidence and stronger social connections. Many also experienced a renewed sense of purpose and belonging. The projects demonstrated how gardening and nature-based activities can create opportunities for therapeutic conversations, peer support, physical activity and personal growth in ways that feel welcoming, accessible and non-clinical.

The benefits extended beyond the individuals directly involved. The projects strengthened partnerships between health services, community organisations and volunteers, creating lasting resources that will continue to support local people. They also highlighted how relatively small investments can deliver meaningful improvements in wellbeing while supporting prevention, reducing inequalities and promoting more personalised, community-based care.

As the NHS continues to focus on prevention, neighbourhood health and care closer to home, these projects provide compelling examples of how community nurses are leading innovative approaches that improve lives and strengthen communities. They demonstrate that nature-based interventions are not an alternative to healthcare, but an important complement to it, helping people to thrive through connection, participation and meaningful activity.



Circle Garden Haven project



Project team

Kathy Pelc, Team Leader and Practice Assessor, Sarah Lockyer, Community Nursery Nurse; Surrey

Aim of Project

To create a therapeutic garden and support group for mothers experiencing mental health challenges during the transition to parenthood, combining peer support, wellbeing activities and connection with nature in a safe community setting.

Project Journey

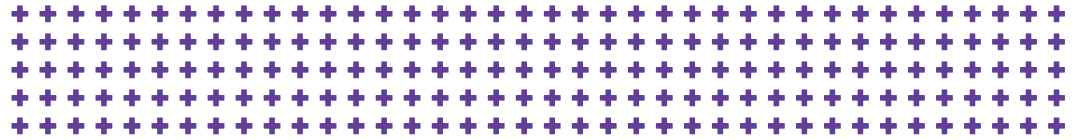
The project transformed an underused garden into a welcoming therapeutic space where mothers and babies could meet, build relationships and access support. Alongside physical improvements to the garden, the team developed a programme of wellbeing activities, gardening sessions and opportunities for social connection. The project relied on strong community partnerships, donations and collaboration with local organisations.

Then

Many mothers reported feelings of loneliness, isolation and poor mental wellbeing during the early months of parenthood. Existing support options did not always meet their needs, and some lacked confidence to attend traditional baby groups. The garden space itself was underused and offered little opportunity for therapeutic activity.

Now

The project received 20 referrals, with 10 mothers and babies attending regularly. Participants reported improved wellbeing, increased confidence and stronger social connections. Mental health assessment scores improved over the course of the project, while the garden became a vibrant and peaceful environment for both families and staff.



The Future

The garden will continue to be used as a community wellbeing resource. Discussions are underway with local organisations regarding ongoing delivery of the group. The team hopes the model will inform future garden projects across Sutton's Integrated Neighbourhood Teams and Primary Care Networks.

Lessons Learnt

The project reinforced the importance of listening to lived experience and using digital tools to capture feedback. It demonstrated how environmental sustainability, community partnerships and personalised care can work together to improve wellbeing. The team also learned the value of collaborating with local organisations to create lasting change and support sustainability.

Key Activities

- Transformation of the garden into a therapeutic outdoor space.
- Delivery of gardening and wellbeing sessions for mothers and babies.
- Collection of feedback through digital surveys.
- Creation of peer-support opportunities.
- Partnership working with local charities, volunteers, Talking Therapies, youth training organisations and community groups.
- Development of ongoing plans for sustainability and future use.

Key Outcomes

- 20 referrals received and 10 regular attendees.
- Improved mental health and wellbeing scores +
- Increased social connection and peer support.
- Restoration of the garden into a welcoming community asset.
- Stronger links between local services and community organisations.

Supporting the 10 Year Plan

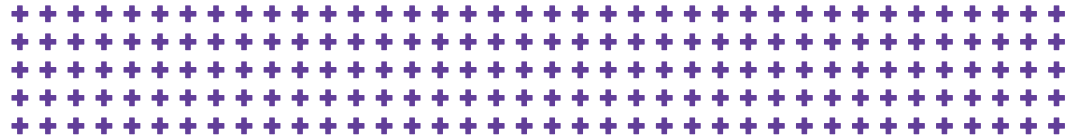
The project aligns strongly with the NHS ambition to shift care into communities and focus on prevention. It provided early wellbeing support in a community setting, helping mothers manage challenges before they escalated. Digital feedback tools were used to gather insights and support future service planning.

Patient Voice

The voices of mothers and babies were central to the project. Health visitor assessments, digital feedback questionnaires and an active WhatsApp group enabled participants to shape the project throughout. Feedback continues to inform future planning and service development.

Difference made

The project helped mothers feel less isolated and more confident in their parenting journey. Participants valued having a safe space to meet others, discuss challenges openly and focus on their own wellbeing. Many described the group as a vital source of support, with one mother saying it helped her rediscover herself beyond being a parent. The project directly benefited at least 10 mothers and their babies, with wider benefits for families and local services.



Financial Impact

The use of donated materials, recycled resources and community support enabled the project to expand providing additional meaningful activities that the parents benefited from. The garden has created a lasting resource with minimal ongoing costs, demonstrating excellent value for money.

Impact on Staff

The project strengthened confidence in delivering innovative community-based support. It created new partnerships, expanded skills and reinforced the importance of integrating wellbeing, nature and public health approaches. Staff reported satisfaction from seeing mothers gain confidence and build meaningful connections.

Highlight of the Project

Watching mothers grow in confidence while seeing babies thrive within a nurturing outdoor environment was a particular highlight. The project also demonstrated the power of bringing together health, wellbeing, nature and community support in one shared space.

Unintended Outcomes

The project generated stronger partnerships than originally anticipated, including collaborations with youth training organisations, volunteers, local authority services, Talking Therapies and community groups. These relationships have created opportunities for future joint working and sustainability.

If Money Were No Object, What Would Happen Now?

The group would continue beyond the initial project period, enabling more mothers and babies to benefit. Additional garden spaces could be developed across Sutton, creating a network of therapeutic community gardens linked to local neighbourhood teams and primary care services.

Case Study

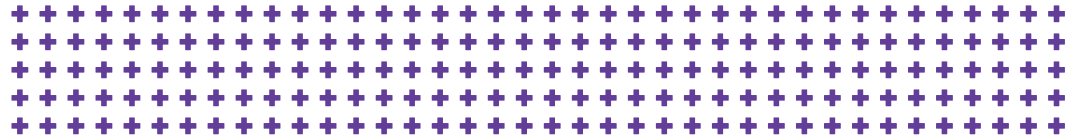
Lucy joined Circle Garden Haven with her baby son, Thomas, aged six months. Following the birth of her son, Lucy experienced loneliness and anxiety and found it difficult to attend traditional parent-and-baby groups. Much of her time was spent at home, leaving her feeling isolated and disconnected from others.

Through Circle Garden Haven, Lucy met other mothers facing similar challenges and found a supportive environment where she could talk openly, build confidence and focus

on her own wellbeing. Gardening activities provided a welcome opportunity to spend time outdoors, learn new skills and take a break from the pressures of daily life while still enjoying time with Thomas.

Over the course of the project, Lucy reported feeling less isolated, more confident and better able to manage the challenges of early parenthood. She described the group as a place where she felt supported, understood and able to reconnect with herself as well as her baby.

“Watching mothers grow in confidence while seeing babies thrive within a nurturing outdoor environment was a particular highlight.”



Gardening for Growth project



Project team

Linda Antunes, Primary Care Outreach Nurse and Emma Richardson, Deputy Manager; Stockton-on-Tees

Aim of Project

To transform an underused outdoor space at Bridge House Hostel into a therapeutic, railway-themed garden that would improve wellbeing, reduce social isolation and provide meaningful activity for residents experiencing homelessness, substance misuse and poor physical and mental health.

Project Journey

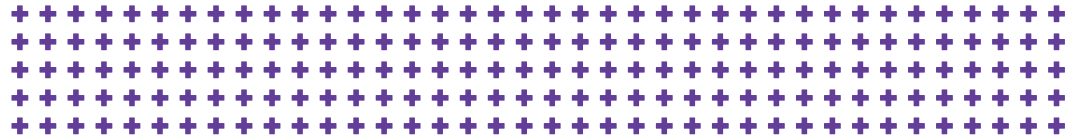
Gardening for Growth transformed an underused outdoor area at Bridge House Hostel into a railway-themed therapeutic garden celebrating 200 years of the Stockton and Darlington Railway. Designed with residents, the project created a welcoming space that encouraged participation, social connection and improved wellbeing. Support from community partners helped bring the project to life and fostered a strong sense of ownership among residents.

Then

Before the project began, outdoor spaces at the hostel were rarely used. Many residents experienced homelessness, substance misuse, poor physical health and poor mental wellbeing, with low engagement in traditional healthcare services and structured activities.

Now

The garden has become a valued part of hostel life. Residents are actively involved in its maintenance and development, creating a sense of pride, identity and shared purpose. The railway theme has encouraged conversation and improved social interaction.



The Future

The garden will continue to develop through seasonal planting, structured activities and further community involvement. The team hopes it will remain a shared space for residents, visitors and local enthusiasts.

Lessons learnt

The project demonstrated that informal, creative approaches can be highly effective in building trust and encouraging participation. Residents responded positively when involved in decision-making and practical activities. It also highlighted the impact of digital exclusion and the importance of face-to-face engagement.

Key Activities

- Designing and creating a railway-themed garden.
- Involving residents in planning and development.
- Planting vegetables and creating growing areas.
- Delivering gardening and wellbeing sessions.
- Encouraging ownership and maintenance of the space.
- Working with volunteers and community partners.

Key Outcomes

The project engaged around 18 residents, with a core group participating regularly. It improved wellbeing, reduced isolation and increased confidence. Relationships between residents, staff and the wider community strengthened, while sustainability was promoted through gardening activities and environmental awareness.

Supporting the 10 Year Plan

The project supports prevention and community-based care by improving wellbeing, reducing isolation and encouraging meaningful activity. It also highlights the need to provide accessible support for people who are digitally excluded.

Patient Voice

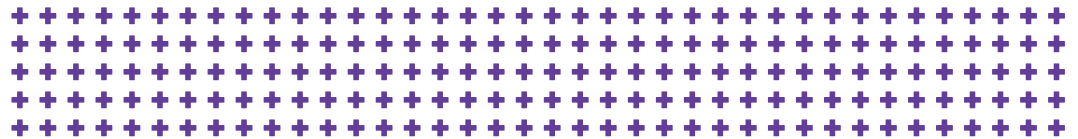
Residents helped shape the railway theme, garden design and future developments. Ongoing feedback and involvement have created genuine ownership of the space and will continue to guide its development.

Difference Made

The project gave residents a sense of purpose, achievement and belonging. They developed new skills, built relationships and engaged in meaningful activity at their own pace. One resident commented: "I am loving helping – if I wasn't doing this, I would be in my room smoking crack."

Financial Impact

Funding enabled the purchase of key items, including mature plants and a greenhouse, while donations, repurposed materials and volunteer support ensured excellent value for money. The project was designed to be sustainable beyond the funding period.



Impact on Staff

The project enabled staff and residents to engage in a positive, non-clinical way. It strengthened relationships, reduced traditional hierarchies and increased confidence in creative, personalised approaches to care.

Highlight of the Project

Seeing residents celebrate the opening of the garden and take pride in what they had achieved together was the highlight of the project.

Unintended Outcomes

The project led to stronger peer support, improved relationships between residents and staff, greater engagement with community organisations and a noticeable reduction in litter around the hostel.

If Money Were No Object, What Would Happen Now?

The garden would be expanded with additional therapeutic spaces, structured programmes, volunteering opportunities and community events. The model could also be extended to other hostels across Stockton-on-Tees.

Case Study

Craig became homeless following eviction from his home and was struggling with alcohol dependency. Arriving at Bridge House Hostel, he found the environment overwhelming and spent much of his time isolated in his room.

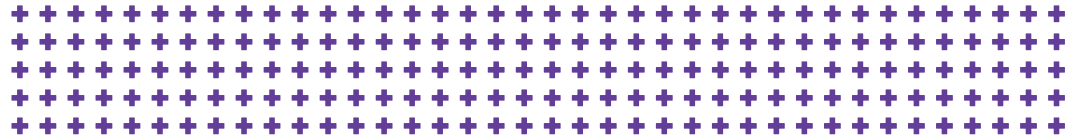
Recognising his previous career as a landscape architect, the team encouraged Craig to help design and develop the garden. He contributed ideas for the layout, planting schemes and construction of features within the space. The project gave him a renewed sense of purpose and helped him reconnect with skills

and interests that had been lost during a difficult period of his life.

As his confidence grew, Craig began attending regularly and developed trusting relationships with staff. This created opportunities to discuss his alcohol use and access additional support. Through engagement with both the gardening project and specialist services, Craig stabilised his situation and successfully moved into his own accommodation.

The garden became an important stepping stone in his recovery and renewed independence.

“I am loving helping – if I wasn’t doing this, I would be in my room smoking crack.”



Twinwoods Sensory Garden project



Project team

Simone Mingay, Specialist Healthcare Team Manager and Nina Macrae, Assistant Psychologist; Bedfordshire

Aim of Project

To create an accessible sensory garden that promotes wellbeing, inclusion and meaningful activity for people with learning disabilities, while supporting personalised, preventative and community-based care.

Project Journey

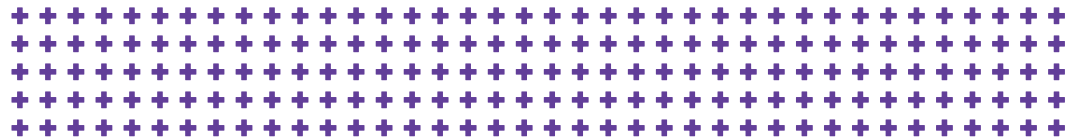
The project was developed following feedback from service users and staff, who identified the need for an accessible outdoor space for relaxation, therapeutic activity and social connection. People using the service helped shape the design, selecting plants and influencing how the garden would be used. The result is a welcoming space that supports wellbeing, confidence and inclusion.

Then

There was no dedicated outdoor space that met the sensory, accessibility and wellbeing needs of people using the service. Opportunities for therapeutic outdoor activity and relaxation were limited.

Now

The garden is a valued part of everyday life. It is used for relaxation, social interaction, gardening activities and therapeutic conversations. Service users have developed new skills and confidence, while staff report improved engagement, wellbeing and stronger relationships.



The Future

The garden will continue to evolve through ongoing feedback and collaboration. Future plans include expanding planting areas, increasing opportunities for therapeutic activities and strengthening community involvement to ensure the space remains sustainable and responsive to people's needs.

Lessons Learnt

The project reinforced the importance of co-production and lived experience in service development. Involving people in decision-making created stronger engagement, ownership and better outcomes. The team also learned that sustainability relies on shared responsibility and long-term planning, while personalised care can be embedded through simple everyday activities that offer choice and meaningful participation.

Key Activities

- Engaging service users and carers to gather ideas and feedback.
- Co-designing the garden with accessibility and sensory needs in mind.
- Preparing and planting the garden space.
- Supporting participation in gardening and wellbeing activities.
- Using digital tools to record progress and gather feedback.
- Encouraging social interaction, confidence and skills development.

Key Outcomes

The project improved wellbeing, confidence and engagement among people using the service. Individuals reported feeling calmer, more connected and more motivated to spend time outdoors. The garden reduced barriers to participation by providing an inclusive and accessible environment tailored to different physical, sensory and communication needs. Sustainability was built into the project through shared ownership and ongoing maintenance arrangements, with no significant safety concerns identified.

Supporting the 10 Year Plan

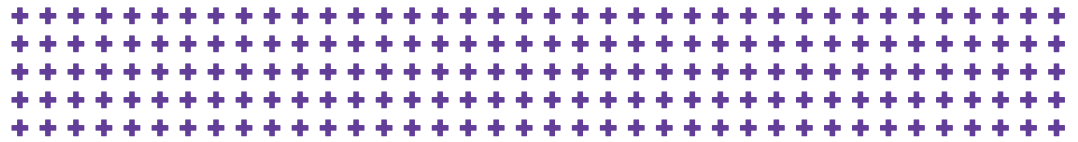
The project supports all three NHS shifts. It delivers preventative care by promoting physical activity, emotional wellbeing and social connection. It provides a community-based, non-clinical intervention that helps prevent deterioration and reduces reliance on crisis services. Digital tools were used to gather feedback, monitor outcomes and support quality improvement, helping demonstrate impact and inform future service development.

Patient Voice

The garden was co-produced with service users and carers from the beginning. Their views influenced the design, layout, planting and purpose of the space. Ongoing feedback, informal conversations and structured reviews will continue to shape future developments, ensuring the garden remains relevant, accessible and meaningful.

Difference Made

The project created a calm, supportive environment that reduced anxiety, improved emotional regulation and increased confidence. People used the space for quiet reflection, sensory stimulation, social interaction or therapeutic support, according to their individual needs. The project directly benefited eight service users, six carers and family members, and staff supporting four individuals, positively impacting around 27 people overall.



Financial Impact

The garden was a low-cost, high-value intervention delivered using modest funding, donated resources and existing staff support. Ongoing maintenance costs are minimal. By supporting wellbeing, reducing distress and improving engagement, the project has the potential to reduce demand on more intensive services and represents strong value for money.

Impact on Staff

The project strengthened confidence in co-production, personalised care and preventative approaches. Staff reported increased job satisfaction and greater awareness of how physical environments influence wellbeing, anxiety and engagement. It also encouraged wider conversations about reasonable adjustments across the service.

Highlight of the Project

The highlight was seeing people who often found clinical environments overwhelming choose to use, enjoy and take ownership of the garden. Watching individuals use the space independently to regulate emotions and engage with others demonstrated the value of truly personalised care.

Unintended Outcomes

The garden improved staff wellbeing and morale, strengthened relationships between staff, carers and service users, and prompted wider consideration of environmental adjustments across the service. It also attracted interest and support from colleagues and community partners beyond the original project scope.

If Money Were No Object, What Would Happen Now?

The garden would be expanded into a fully accessible wellbeing space with year-round facilities, specialist therapeutic areas and structured programmes focused on anxiety reduction, health promotion and social inclusion. The model could be replicated across the wider service to create a network of therapeutic outdoor spaces.

Case Study

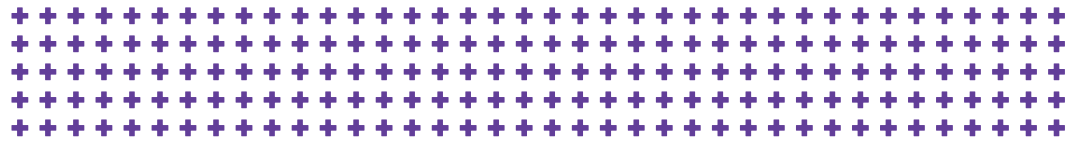
John is a non-verbal adult with a learning disability who became increasingly withdrawn following the death of his father. He rarely left his room, stopped taking part in activities he had previously enjoyed and showed signs of anxiety and distress.

Staff introduced John to the sensory garden using a gentle, choice-led approach. Initially, he observed from a distance before gradually spending time outdoors, exploring the space and helping with simple tasks

such as collecting sticks for the bug garden.

Over time, John became calmer, more engaged and more willing to interact with staff and family members. His mother reported that he was “starting to come back to himself”. Staff observed improved emotional regulation, increased participation in activities and greater engagement with appointments and support.

“Watching individuals use the space independently to regulate emotions/engage with others, demonstrated the value of truly personalised care.”



Using Nature to Make Connections project



Project team

Claire Norman, Senior Nurse Specialised Service and Lucy Bolton, Team Lead; Rhondda Cynon Taf, Wales

Aim of Project

To develop a nature-based programme for autistic adults that improves wellbeing, confidence, social connection and emotional resilience through structured outdoor activities.

Project Journey

The project transformed an overgrown, unused garden at Ysbyty George Thomas into a therapeutic outdoor space. Working with Down to Earth, the team delivered a five-session programme incorporating gardening, green woodworking, outdoor cooking and sensory activities. Attendance was 100% for those who enrolled, with participants reporting improved wellbeing, confidence and connection. The garden is now an established therapeutic space and additional funding has been secured.

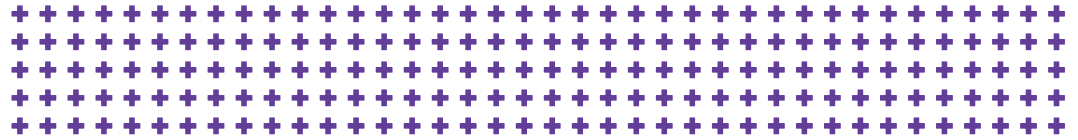
Then

Support within the Integrated Autism Service (IAS) was largely clinic based, with limited opportunities for practical activity, sensory regulation or confidence building. Many autistic adults reported isolation, anxiety and reduced confidence following diagnosis.

Now

The garden has become a thriving therapeutic space. Outcomes included:

- 100% attendance and programme completion
- 100% Agored Cymru accreditation completion



- 46% reduction in anxiety
- 50% reduction in low mood indicators
- Increased self-esteem, confidence and social connection
- Improved nature connectedness

The Future

Funding has been secured to deliver three further programmes. The garden will support a new 'waiting well' pilot, while staff training and community partnerships will help ensure long-term sustainability.

Lessons Learnt

The project reinforced the value of co-production, peer support and nature-based approaches. Participants shaped the programme and garden design, creating greater ownership and engagement. Digital wellbeing monitoring provided an accessible way to evaluate outcomes regardless of literacy level.

Key Activities

- Partnership working with Down to Earth
- Garden transformation
- Delivery of a five-session outdoor programme
- Green woodworking and reflection seat creation
- Outdoor cooking and fire safety activities
- Wellbeing and nature-connection monitoring
- Agored Cymru accreditation

Key Outcomes

The programme improved emotional wellbeing, confidence, belonging and resilience. It provided an accessible, sensory-informed intervention for autistic adults who may find traditional group activities challenging. Sustainability was supported through workforce development and community partnerships. No patient safety concerns were identified.

Supporting the 10 Year Plan

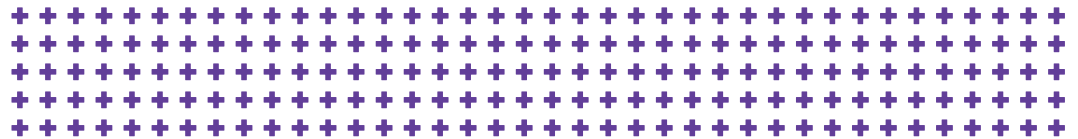
The project supports prevention, community-based care and digital innovation. Improved wellbeing and resilience may reduce the need for crisis support, while digital outcome monitoring strengthened evaluation and service improvement.

Patient Voice

Participants helped shape the garden and programme throughout. Feedback was gathered during sessions and through QR-code surveys, ensuring future developments remain informed by lived experience.

Difference made

Eight participants completed the programme. Benefits included reduced anxiety, increased confidence, stronger social connections, practical skills and greater willingness to engage in community activities.



Financial Impact

QICN funding enabled delivery of the pilot and helped secure additional Regional Partnership Board funding. The programme is now being incorporated into a 'waiting well' pilot, supporting access to intervention earlier and potentially reducing future demand on services.

Impact on Staff and Teams

The project increased confidence in delivering innovative, person-centred care. Staff reported renewed enthusiasm and a greater appreciation of the benefits of outdoor healthcare.

Highlight of the Project

The removal of traditional power dynamics between staff and participants. Shared learning and collaboration created genuine connection and equality.

Unintended Outcomes

The project improved staff morale, strengthened cross-service collaboration and created a wellbeing space that benefits both participants and staff.

If Money Were No Object, What Would Happen Now?

The team would create a covered outdoor facility, expand outdoor healthcare across specialist services and establish a dedicated therapeutic outdoor lead role.

Case Study

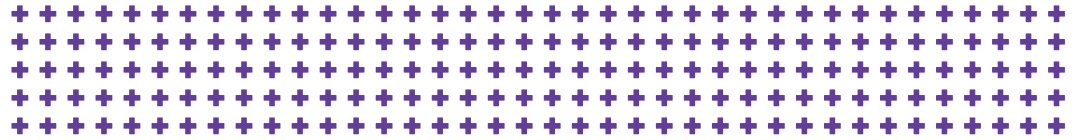
Mark, who was diagnosed with autism in 2013, joined the garden workshop hoping to learn more about gardening and spend time with other people. He described finding social situations difficult and often felt isolated, spending much of his time alone working on his allotment or pursuing other hobbies. Although interested in gardening, he felt anxious about attending the workshop because he did not know anyone.

The introductory taster session helped Mark feel comfortable enough to join the full programme. He quickly became an active member of the group, contributing ideas, helping with practical tasks and

supporting other participants. Drawing on his background in engineering and construction, he played a key role in building a reflection chair and enjoyed opportunities to problem-solve and share his knowledge.

Mark particularly valued the camaraderie, sense of belonging and chance to meet people with similar experiences. He reported feeling more confident, especially in group settings, and enjoyed seeing the garden develop over time. The project helped improve his wellbeing during the winter months and strengthened his connection to both the group and the wider community.

"The project improved staff morale, strengthened cross-service collaboration and created a wellbeing space that benefits both participants and staff."



Supporting Women with Horticulture project



Project team

Emma Beniston, HMP Styal, Cheshire

Aim of Project

To create a salutogenic horticultural environment within the Substance Free Living House at HMP Styal that promotes wellbeing, recovery, social connection and personal agency through nature-based activities.

Project Journey

Then

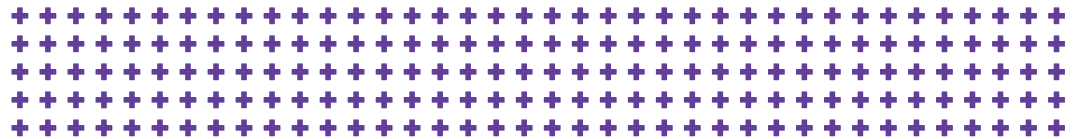
Women living in the Substance Free Living House had limited access to therapeutic outdoor environments and meaningful engagement with nature. Outdoor space was underused, overgrown and difficult to access at weekends. Many women experienced significant health inequalities linked to trauma, homelessness, poverty, substance misuse and social exclusion.

Now

Twelve women co-designed a therapeutic horticultural environment with safe, sensory-positive garden zones supporting both group and individual activities. Women actively nurture plants, support one another and have improved access to outdoor space. A social prescribing pathway is being developed to extend the benefits across the prison.

The Future

Plans include implementing a prison-wide social prescribing pathway, embedding outcome measurement, strengthening release planning through multi-agency working and expanding nature-based interventions to support recovery, prevention and wellbeing.



Lessons Learnt

The project reinforced the importance of understanding health through the social determinants of health. Women described how healthcare, education, safe accommodation, meaningful activity and community support had enabled recovery, while concerns about release highlighted how quickly progress can be undermined when these factors are removed. The project also demonstrated the value of co-production, personalised care and creating environments that generate health.

Key Activities

- Co-designed the garden with 12 women.
- Applied salutogenic design principles.
- Created indoor and outdoor sensory-positive garden zones.
- Developed spaces for individual and group horticultural activities.
- Improved access through collaboration with prison security teams.
- Reviewed uptake of national screening programmes.
- Developed plans for a prison-wide social prescribing pathway.

Key Outcomes

- 100% compliance with public health screening pathways.
- Improved engagement with preventative healthcare.
- Increased feelings of calm, purpose and emotional wellbeing.
- Greater social connection, peer support and ownership.
- Improved access to therapeutic outdoor environments.
- Foundations established for a prison-wide social prescribing pathway.
- Improved partnership working between healthcare, prison staff and wellbeing services.
- Identification of a gap in support for women involved in sex work.

Supporting the 10 Year Plan

The project supports prevention through improved screening uptake, wellbeing and recovery support. It reflects community-based care principles by delivering support in a non-clinical environment and promotes personalised care through co-design and individual choice. It also addresses health inequalities by focusing on women experiencing multiple disadvantages.

Patient Voice

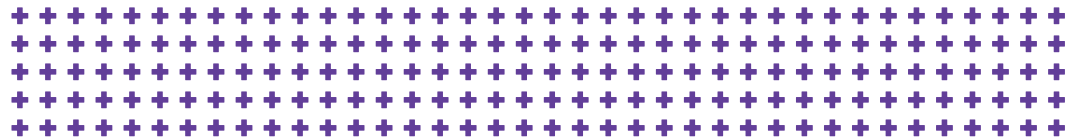
Women were involved throughout, identifying priorities, designing the garden environment, providing feedback on access and usability, sharing lived experience and influencing future developments, including the social prescribing pathway.

Difference made

The project benefited 12 women directly and has potential to reach many more. Participants reported increased confidence, self-worth, wellbeing, social connection and opportunities to engage in meaningful activity. Improved weekend access to the garden has enabled women to spend more time outdoors and engage with the space.

Financial Impact

The project utilised existing resources and partnerships. Potential longer-term benefits



include improved screening uptake, earlier intervention, reduced demand on healthcare services and improved wellbeing outcomes. Future social prescribing pathways will support outcome measurement and value assessment.

Impact on Staff and Teams

The project increased understanding of the relationship between environment, wellbeing, recovery and the social determinants of health. It strengthened awareness of co-production, prevention, social prescribing and multi-agency working, while highlighting the value of nature-based interventions in supporting recovery.

Highlight of the Project

A powerful full-circle moment occurred when Emma met a participant she had previously encountered while the woman was homeless and seriously unwell. Seeing her actively engaged in recovery and contributing to the project demonstrated the impact of compassionate, person-centred support.

Unintended Outcomes

The project identified a gap in support for women involved in sex work, resulting in a paper being submitted to NHS England. It also increased understanding of social determinants of health, highlighted opportunities to strengthen release planning and led to the development of peer-led horticultural activities and a wider social prescribing pathway.

Case Study

One participant became highly engaged in the project and developed a planting pack which she introduced into the Vulnerable Prisoner Unit. She supported others to grow strawberries and other plants, demonstrating leadership, confidence and peer support. Another participant used

the garden and horticultural activities to spend time outdoors, reflect and support her transition onto buvidal treatment. Their experiences showed how access to nature, meaningful activity and community can promote recovery, wellbeing and hope for the future.

“This project is about far more than gardening. It is about salutogenesis – the creation of health. Traditional healthcare focuses on illness. Salutogenesis focuses on what helps people thrive purpose, connection, environment, hope.”



30 Euston Square
London NW1 2FB
020 7549 1400

www.qicn.org.uk

Charity no: 213128
Founded 1887
Patron: HM The Queen

With thanks to our funder:

