Impact Report 2026



Opening great gardens to fund nursing and health charities since 1927


NATIONAL OPEN GARDEN SCHEME

About us

The National Garden Scheme has been giving visitors unique access to thousands of exceptional private gardens in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands for almost 100 years, raising money for nursing and health charities through admissions, teas and cake.

Thanks to the generosity of garden owners, volunteers and visitors we have donated over £80 million to nursing and health charities since we were founded in 1927. In November 2026 we agreed total donations from of £3,799,949.

Originally established to raise funds for district nurses, we are now the most significant charitable funder of nursing in the UK and our beneficiaries include Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie, Hospice UK, Parkinson's UK, The Queen's Institute of Community Nursing and Carers Trust.

The National Garden Scheme doesn't just open beautiful gardens for charity, we are passionate about the physical and mental health benefits of gardens too. We run a Community Garden Grants programme and fund projects which promote gardens and gardening as therapy. In 2017 we launched our annual Gardens and Health Week to raise awareness of the topic.

Our funding also supports the training of gardeners and offers respite to horticultural workers who have fallen on difficult times.

This report looks at the impact of our donations throughout 2026 and how our beneficiaries use those donations to support thousands of people and improve lives across the UK.

We look forward to welcoming you to our gardens in 2027 and marking 100 years of the National Garden Scheme.

Front cover image:
Ulting Wick, Essex @ *garymorrisroe*

Photo (left):
The National Garden Scheme has been welcoming visitors to exceptional gardens for almost 100 years © *Julie Skelton*

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Chairman's and Chief Executive's review



Chairman, Rupert Tyler and Chief Executive, Dr Richard Claxton

Our warmest thanks go to our garden owners, supporters and county volunteer teams for all they have given in 2026. Relentless rain in February followed by successive heatwaves made this a challenging year. Garden income fell by some 5% but set against an approximately 10% decline across the leisure sector as a whole, this modest fall is a measure of the determination and generosity behind every opening.

At heart, what we do remains wonderfully simple: visitors enjoy inexpensive visits to thousands of exceptional private gardens across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands. Together, their admissions, teas and cake raise millions for nursing and health charities.

These funds support Carers Trust, Hospice UK, Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie, Parkinson's UK and the Queen's Institute of Community Nursing – by no means an exhaustive list. We also help care for the people who look after gardens, through Perennial, and training and apprenticeships.

Knowing they can count on our support helps our charity partners sustain their work and plan ahead. This year we celebrated 30 years with Hospice UK, Marie Curie and Carers Trust, and passed £20 million in donations to Macmillan Cancer Support over 42 years. We also marked 40 years with Perennial and a decade supporting the National Botanic Garden of Wales and the Professional Gardeners' Trust.

These partnerships show how gardens can make a difference to people's lives. From the world's first rooftop critical care unit garden at King's College Hospital to specialist training for Queen's Nurses, hospice staff and Parkinson's nurses, our funding supports care in many forms. Our Gardens and Health grants programme, annual *Little Yellow Book of Gardens and Health* and the forthcoming 2027 King's Fund Report help share the benefits of time in green spaces.

Gardens also bring people together and open new opportunities. Future Gardeners helps people into work, as do many of the other apprenticeships and training programmes we fund, while our Community Garden Grants, generously supported by the Julia Rausing Trust, help communities grow together, often in areas of deprivation.

Alongside this, our gardens, publications and beneficiaries encourage sustainable gardening, biodiversity and local food growing. For example, through the Country Trust's Food Discovery Programme disadvantaged children discover the connections between the land, the food they eat and a healthy environment.

As our Centenary approaches in 2027, more gardens than ever are opening. We hope this will mean more visitors, more funds raised and a real sense of celebration at every garden. With events across the country, including Gardeners' World Live, we look forward to carrying this simple, generous idea into its next century.

Thank you to our garden visitors, volunteers and supporters for making it all possible. Your generosity and resilience continue to champion the wonderful benefits that opening great gardens brings to us all.

Rupert Tyler
Chairman

Dr Richard Claxton
Chief Executive

Our donations

Established in 1927 to support district nurses, the National Garden Scheme now raises millions for nursing and health charities each year. We also support charities creating gardens to provide direct health benefits to people, grant bursaries to support gardeners at the start of their careers and run a grants programme for community gardens.

Throughout 2026 we worked with our main beneficiaries to help promote our partnerships, the importance of gardens to health, and to generate increased interest and support for the work of the National Garden Scheme and its portfolio of gardens. This report looks at how our donations made in November 2025 were spent throughout the year, and highlight below the amount we approved for donations at the end of the 2026 garden season.

In November 2026, we approved donations of £3,799,949 which includes:

Main beneficiaries:

Carers Trust	£450,000
Hospice UK	£450,000
Macmillan Cancer Support	£450,000
Marie Curie	£450,000
Parkinson's UK	£450,000
The Queen's Institute of Community Nursing	£450,000

Gardens and health:

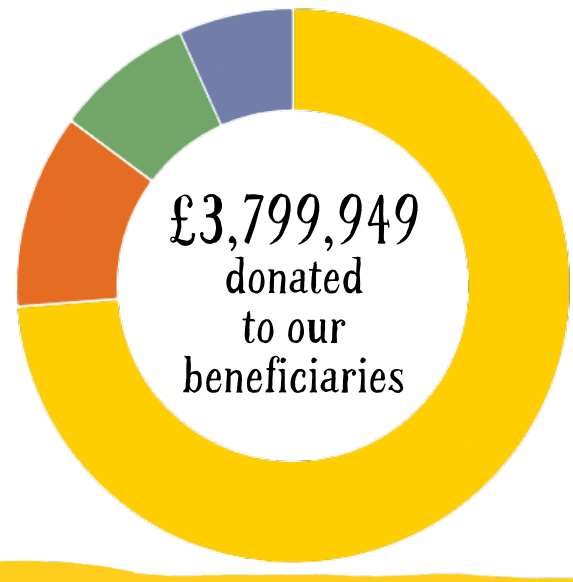
Maggie's	£125,000
Horatio's Garden	£110,000
Army Benevolent Fund	£80,000
The Country Trust	£35,000
The Whittington Hospital	£50,000
The British Home, care home	£25,200
Banbury Young Homelessness Project	£1,056
Lewis-Manning Hospice	£39,733

Support for gardeners:

English Heritage	£125,000
Perennial	£100,000
National Botanic Garden of Wales	£52,000
Bankside Open Spaces Trust	£25,000
The Garden Museum	£24,000
Professional Gardeners' Trust	£20,000

Community gardening projects:

115 projects funded	£287,960



Nursing and Health beneficiaries
£2,700,000

Gardens and Health
£465,989

Support for gardeners
£346,000

Community Garden Grants
£287,960

2026 in numbers ...



Our donations of £3,799,949 were generated from 3,522 gardens, and over 600,000 garden visitors, supported by almost 600 National Garden Scheme volunteers during the 2026 season. The numbers illustrated here are just some of the incredible things that the money raised supports.

£3,799,949
donated to our beneficiaries

76,300
People affected by cancer reached by Maggie's centres supported by the National Garden Scheme

The equivalent of
1,946
9-hours shifts of overnight hospice at home Marie Curie nursing care





5,000
outpatients and 360 inpatients supported at Horatio's Garden Sheffield & East

2,913
Individuals supported through our donation to the Army Benevolent Fund

11,000
people supported at the NGS Macmillan Information and Support Centre in Chesterfield

what our funding supports



3,398
Queen's Nurses supported by our funding



82
adult carers supported by the Carers Funds Grants Programme funded by the National Garden Scheme



115
Community Garden projects funded



12,000
People with Parkinson's supported across the UK by nurses funded by us

4,899
The number of hours of learning supported by our funding of The Country Trust's Food Discovery Programme



68
the number of Marie Curie professionals who have completed the bespoke leadership course the NGS Nightingale Challenge

Our audience reach in 2026 included: 76,626 subscribers to our weekly eNewsletter - 1.3 million visits to our website - 156,000 Instagram followers - 58,000 Facebook followers - 22,000 Threads followers and 23,480 YouTube subscribers. Over 20 National Garden Scheme gardens featured on BBC Gardeners' World.

Nursing and health beneficiaries



£450,000 donated in 2026 over £7 million since the partnership began in 1996

HRH The Princess Royal, Patron of Carers Trust, meets young carers at a reception at St James's Palace to mark 30 years of partnership with the National Garden Scheme © Ian Jones Photography

CARERS TRUST

The National Garden Scheme has been supporting Carers Trust since 1996, and has donated over £7 million in that time to help the charity raise the profile of carers' issues, and enable them to extend their reach and support to even more unpaid carers.

In 2026 the majority of National Garden Scheme funding, £395,000, was instrumental in supporting Carers Trust's core charitable activities, including policy, research and external affairs work, national awareness-raising campaigns and the ongoing support of the charity's UK-wide network of local carers centres.

The funding helped Carers Trust expand their reach and impact and ensures that they are able to consistently deliver quality support to unpaid carers. Thanks to the flexibility of unrestricted funding Carers Trust has been able to deliver and adapt its core work including:

- Campaigning for more support in schools for young carers at Westminster and the Senedd, and securing national media coverage.
- Supporting the development of the charity's five year plan 'A Fair World for Carers'.
- Influencing the Government's new Cross-Government Action Plan for unpaid carers.

During 2025-26, £25,778 supported 82 adult carers through the Carers Funds Grants Programme. Aimed at helping address financial barriers faced by individual carers and support carers' mental health and wellbeing through much-needed breaks and activities, these included 39 grants for essential household items to ease the caring role and 33 grants for respite breaks and outdoor activities.

£30,000 also enabled Carers Trust to undertake a major research project exploring how access to green spaces can support the wellbeing of unpaid carers. This UK-wide project involved 437 carers and provides an important evidence base demonstrating how gardens and green spaces can help reduce stress and support mental health. The findings will be published in 2027.

In 2026 the National Garden Scheme continued to facilitate a series of garden visits for carers. The year also marked 30 years of partnership with Carers Trust and was celebrated with supporters and carers at St James's Palace hosted by Carers Trust Patron HRH The Princess Royal.

£450,000 donated in 2026 and over £8.8 million since the partnership began in 1996



Providing care at Royal Trinity Hospice © Ben Langdon

HospiceUK

The National Garden Scheme has supported Hospice UK since 1996 donating over £8.8 million in that time, enabling them to provide guidance, advocacy, and resources that help hospices thrive in communities across the UK.

In 2026 National Garden Scheme funding enabled Hospice UK to:

- Invest £25,000 into Professional Development Grants for 13 hospice staff.
- Invest £50,000 in improving equity of access, ensuring every person gets the end-of-life care they need.
- Invest £150,000 to enhance the quality of care, through the provision of clinical advice and support, and the development of knowledge sharing resources for the hospice network.
- Invest £225,000 to achieve sustainability, fighting for hospice services, advocating for fairer funding, and launching a national legacy campaign.

The impact of this National Garden Scheme funding was felt through restricted grants directly reaching 13 hospice professionals, through media TV campaigns reaching 16 million adults, and by the hospice members that provide care to around 310,000 people each year who are approaching the end of life or diagnosed with a terminal illness, a number which will increase in the coming years.

Eleven hospices in the network opened their gardens for the National Garden Scheme in 2026, inviting the local community to enjoy these special places and to engage with hospice staff and volunteers to better understand the role of hospices. Hospice UK continues to champion the National Garden Scheme and works to raise awareness of the benefits of opening hospice gardens throughout their network.

In 2026 the National Garden Scheme marked 30 years of support for Hospice UK celebrating with an event at St Cuthbert's Hospice in Durham and a series of videos highlighting the positive impact of the partnership and of opening through the National Garden Scheme.

Thanks to the National Garden Scheme's continued support Hospice UK has been able to help hospices and their staff across the UK.

Nursing and health beneficiaries



£450,000 donated in 2026 and over £20.5 million since the partnership began in 1984

The Yarm Wellness centre in North Yorkshire hosted a celebration of £20 million donated to Macmillan Cancer Support by the National Garden Scheme © Fabio De Paola

MACMILLAN CANCER SUPPORT

The National Garden Scheme is Macmillan Cancer Support's longest standing partner having donated more than £20.5 million since the partnership began 42 years ago. During 2026 National Garden Scheme funding of £450,000 has been invested in Macmillan's Professional Development Grants and Service Improvement Grants programmes with funding being distributed throughout the year. Based on the average grant value awarded to date, ranging from £100 to £15,000, National Garden Scheme support will fund an estimated 600 grants.

Professional Development Grants are helping nurses and other Macmillan Professionals across the UK access specialist training, education and development opportunities that directly improve patient care. While Service Improvement Grants are helping nurses and other Macmillan Professionals to launch new services, test innovative approaches to care, and improve support for people affected by cancer within their communities.

National Garden Scheme funding is helping create a lasting ripple effect across cancer care. Through better-equipped healthcare professionals and stronger local services, thousands of people living with cancer are experiencing improved support, better quality of life, and access to the expert care they deserve. In 2025 alone, it is estimated that Macmillan professionals supported around 480,000 people across the UK.

By supporting these two grant programmes, National Garden Scheme funding is being invested in the people who support patients at some of the most difficult moments of their lives, ensuring they have the skills, knowledge and confidence to provide the very best care, when they need it most.

Previous funding helped build NGS Macmillan Information and Support Centres in Chesterfield and Bristol, and the Y Bwthyn NGS Macmillan Specialist Palliative Care Unit in Wales, all of which continue to provide vital support to people living with cancer and illustrate the direct impact that investment in healthcare professionals and service improvement is having.

Across the year, Y Bwthyn supported 235 inpatients, providing specialist palliative and end of life care, alongside outpatient services focused on complex pain and symptom management. Twenty-one Professional Development Grants were also awarded. Bristol saw more than 300 people access support every week, and 43 grants were awarded. And in Chesterfield more than 11,000 people received support and two grants were awarded.

£450,000 donated in 2026 and over £12.7 million since the partnership began in 1996



Marie Curie Hospice Care at Home: A patient is supported by a Marie Curie registered nurse and a carer © Phil Hardman/Marie Curie

Marie Curie
Care and support through terminal illness

The National Garden Scheme has been supporting Marie Curie since 1996, with over £12.7 million donated in that time including £450,000 in November 2026.

Having a partner in the National Garden Scheme that allows Marie Curie unrestricted use of the majority of their donation is vital for keeping services open and responding to emerging needs. It also means they can invest funding in areas that need it the most.

The lion's share of National Garden Scheme funding - £402,425, enables Marie Curie nurses, healthcare assistants and support line officers, as well as bereavement services, researchers and campaigners to do the vital work needed to support those at the end of life.

To give an idea of the impact of the donation it is equivalent to:

- 44 days of full hospice costs
- 17,521 hours of nurse hospice at home care
- 10 nurse hospice at home posts for a year
- 15,500 hours of bereavement support by phone or webchat

During the year, £47,575 was spent directly on funding the National Garden Scheme Nightingale Challenge. This is a bespoke leadership challenge that nurses, healthcare assistants and Caring Services colleagues across Marie Curie can apply to. It supports their development and helps train the next generation of nursing leadership.

The Nightingale Challenge continues to be hugely impactful with 100% of participants from the 2025/26 cohort recommending the course to others. This year saw the fifth cohort of participants bringing the total number of graduates to 68.

2026 also marked 30 years of partnership between Marie Curie and the National Garden Scheme. To celebrate, Marie Curie commissioned research into the public's attitude to gardens and outdoor spaces in difficult life moments, including diagnosis and the final months of life, as well as the recently bereaved. With support from Marie Curie Ambassador Jim Carter, the report achieved widespread media coverage.

A special 30th anniversary garden event at Scape Lodge in Yorkshire, a partnership video, and a silver award for the 'Most Effective Long-Term Commitment' in the Corporate Engagement Awards rounded off a successful year of celebration.

Nursing and health beneficiaries



© Parkinson's UK

£450,000 donated in 2026 and over £3.4 million since the partnership began in 2012

National Garden Scheme volunteer and garden opener Alison Jordan, was one of the 'Head Gardeners' who helped design and man the Parkinson's UK show garden at RHS Chelsea in 2026

Parkinson's UK
For every Parkinson's journey

The National Garden Scheme has been supporting Parkinson's UK since 2012 and at the end of 2025 made its largest ever donation of £450,000 to the charity. The funding played a pivotal role in helping Parkinson's UK achieve its most ambitious fundraising appeal to-date aimed at transforming access to specialist Parkinson's care across the UK.

National Garden Scheme funding strengthened the specialist Parkinson's workforce within the NHS, supporting each of the following new roles for two years:

- A Band 7 Parkinson's nurse at NHS Tayside
- A Band 7 Parkinson's nurse at East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust
- A Band 7 Physiotherapist at Central London Community Healthcare

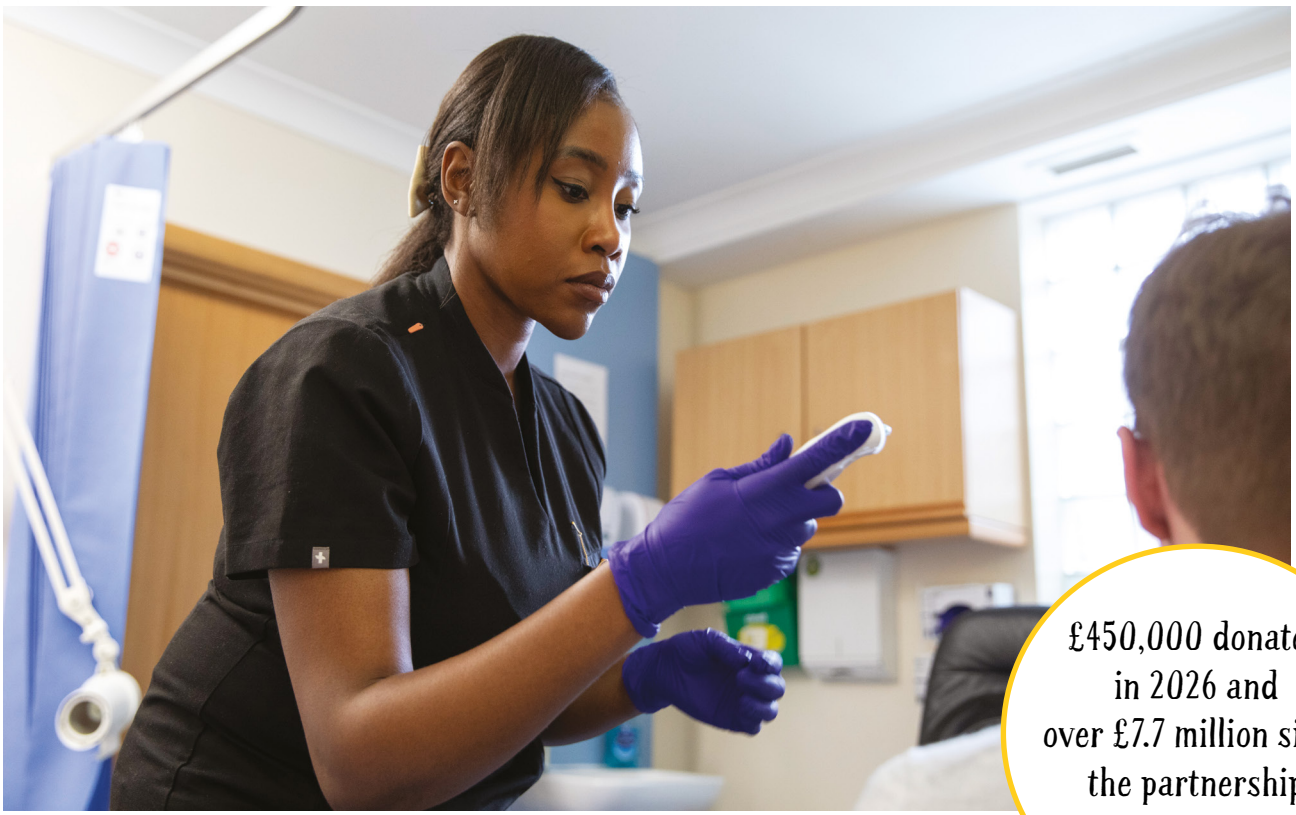
An estimated 1,200 people living with Parkinson's are now being supported through these new roles. These latest posts brings the number of nurses and allied health professionals funded by the National Garden Scheme to 29 and the number of people with Parkinson's being supported to 12,000.

£25,000 of the remaining funds from the National Garden Scheme played a crucial role in the Parkinson's UK Nurse Appeal by enabling the charity to take part in the Big Give Christmas Challenge. The National Garden Scheme's pledge unlocked matched funding which helped reach the £100,000 target.

Funding was also allocated to support the 2026 Excellence Network Awards which celebrates outstanding practice in Parkinson's care.

Thanks to the National Garden Scheme's generous support, thousands of people living with Parkinson's have gained access to life-changing specialist care in the past year, and are no longer facing their diagnosis alone.

Parkinson's UK also engaged National Garden Scheme garden openers and volunteers as 'Head Gardeners' contributing to the design of their RHS Chelsea Show Garden funded by Project Giving Back. Designed by National Garden Scheme Trustee, Arit Anderson, the garden built on lived experiences of Parkinson's and helped promote the link between gardens and health for those living with the disease.



© Kate Stanworth

£450,000 donated in 2026 and over £7.7 million since the partnership began

Queen's Nurses like Teresa Southwark are funded by the National Garden Scheme and have been supporting patients across the UK since 1887

The National Garden Scheme was founded by The Queen's Institute of Community Nursing (QICN) in 1927, when 600 gardens opened at one shilling a head. The charities became independent of one another in 1980 with The QICN remaining a valued partner. The National Garden Scheme has donated over £7.7 million during their partnership and is the sole funder of Queen's Nurse (QN) activities.

During 2026 the majority of funding supported the Queen's Nurse network – a national community of nurses working across England, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Channel Islands, and the Isle of Man. The QICN provides these nurses with professional development, learning events, and career opportunities that improve nursing care in the home and community. Funding supports the QN title, the QN Day and three flagship strands:

- £70,000 supports 12 fully funded places each year on the Leading Strategically programme for Queen's Nurses working at Director, Deputy, Associate or Assistant Director level in the community setting. Since the programme began in 2017, 90 senior community nurse leaders have been funded.
- £25,000 supports five NGS Elsie Wagg (Innovation) Scholarships, nurse-led projects promoting the health benefits of gardening and garden visiting. 25 projects have now been funded. You can read more about the scholarships on page 24.
- National Garden Scheme funding also supported three professional nursing networks during 2026 reaching a combined membership of 6,189 nurses and healthcare professionals. Across the year the networks delivered 14 meetings and learning events with approximately 700 attendees. The networks funded in 2026 were:
  - General Practice Nurse network
  - Community Children's Nurse network
  - Homeless and Inclusion Health network

National Garden Scheme funding underpinned the QN network of over 3,398 Queen's Nurses working in community settings. Added to the network membership the funding reached over 9,000 nursing and healthcare professionals in 2026, each of whom in turn supports patients, families, and carers in the community, meaning the fundings ultimate reach extends to many thousands of service users.



£465,989 donated to gardens and health projects in 2026

A one-off donation of £37,828 supported the planting of the world's first rooftop critical care unit garden at King's College Hospital, London that opened in May

Gardens and health beneficiaries

Our Gardens and Health Programme raises awareness of the physical and mental health benefits of gardens and gardening for everyone. Celebrated in May each year with a dedicated Gardens and Health Week, we also work to promote gardens and health throughout the year, linking service users from our beneficiaries with free garden visits, and funding gardens and health projects.

The charities we fund create gardens with health benefits and promote gardens and gardening as therapy. Each year additional smaller grants are made for one-off projects. We also give grants for community gardening projects that support the wellbeing of local communities and groups both through our Community Garden Grants and our NGS Elsie Wagg (Innovation) Scholarships with QICN. Our annual digital publication *The Little Yellow Book of Gardens and Health* shines a spotlight on the importance of gardens to everyone's health and wellbeing and links us to our beneficiaries and the important work they do in this field.

The following pages report on the impact of our gardens and health funding in 2026.

£80,000 donated in 2026 and over £1 million since the partnership began in 2010



© David Allwright

Veterans Outdoors - funded through National Garden Scheme support for the Army Benevolent Fund - supports mental wellbeing through horticulture

Army Benevolent Fund

In 2026 The Army Benevolent Fund used its donation of £80,000 to continue to support members of the Army family through horticultural therapy and training, outdoor activities, and access to green spaces. This continued funding provides a lifetime of support to serving soldiers, former soldiers, and their immediate families, including the bereaved, when they are in need, so they can avoid hardship and live with independence and dignity.

The bulk of the funding - £65,809 - supported ten organisational grants for trusted horticultural charity partners who provide wellbeing support utilising horticultural or green spaces.

In total, these organisational grants helped support 2,900 direct, and over 900 indirect beneficiaries. Examples include: Root Cause Project CIC, which received £5,000 for outdoor-based wellbeing that reached 840 service users; Woody's Lodge, which received £20,000 to support the Wales Warrior Pathway project aimed at providing dedicated wellbeing, social, and practical support for Army veterans across Wales, which reached 550 direct and 500 indirect beneficiaries, and Veterans Growth which received £21,100 helping to fund the Sow Grow Eat horticultural therapy project supporting 66 service users.

The remaining £14,192 funded 13 individual horticultural grants, supporting veterans to access fulfilling second careers in horticulture and helping veterans enjoy the physical and mental wellbeing benefits which gardening and being in a green space provides.

Gardens and health beneficiaries



Horatio's Garden Sheffield & East © Eva Nemeth

Horatio's Garden
Nurturing lives after spinal injury

In 2018, the National Garden Scheme committed funding for the completion of gardens at all 11 spinal injuries units across the country. The £110,000 donated in 2026 contributed to the soft landscaping and plants for the eighth Horatio's Garden which is based at The Princess Royal Spinal Cord Injuries Centre at the Northern General Hospital in Sheffield. As the second largest spinal injury centre in the UK, the garden supports an extensive geographical area from the West Midlands to East Anglia, South Yorkshire to Lincolnshire.

Horatio's Garden Sheffield & East opened in Spring 2025 and has made a significant difference to people rehabilitating at the centre during the toughest of times. More than 360 inpatients, their family and friends, over 5,000 outpatients, as well as over 250 NHS staff looking after them, benefit from the garden every year.

In a recent impact survey 91% of patients using the Sheffield garden said that spending time in the garden had 'a great deal' of positive impact on their mental health and 88% said that the garden makes them feel less lonely. Staff feedback was similarly positive with 100% saying that the garden helps patients make faster rehabilitation progress and 82% saying time in the garden helps them feel more effective at work.

In addition to Horatio's Sheffield & East, National Garden Scheme funding has to-date supported Horatio's Gardens at The Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore, London; The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital, Oswestry, Midlands; The James Cook University Hospital in Middlesbrough; The Musgrave Park Hospital, Belfast Northern Ireland; The Duke of Cornwall Spinal Treatment Centre in Salisbury District Hospital; Stoke Mandeville Hospital, Buckinghamshire; and The Welsh Spinal Cord Injury and Neuro Rehabilitation Centre in University Hospital Llandough, Cardiff.

During the year, seven Horatio's Gardens also held open days for the National Garden Scheme, giving wider access to these special gardens.

£125,000 donated in 2026, over £900,000 since the partnership began in 2017



Maggie's Manchester © Philip Durrant

MAGGIE'S

The National Garden Scheme has been supporting Maggie's centres since 2017 helping the charity offer the best possible support free to anyone with cancer and their families who walk through their doors. For each centre, architects and interior and landscape designers work closely together to create a strong connection between the outside and inside space.

During 2026, £125,000 of National Garden Scheme funding was allocated to Maggie's Coventry. With the capital target reached the Maggie's team is tendering for a main contractor for the build with the aim of opening the new centre towards the end of 2028.

The Coventry garden was designed by Nigel Dunnett who sadly died in spring 2026. A pioneer of a new ecological approach to planting gardens and public spaces, known for *Superbloom* at the Tower of London and *The Meadows* at Olympic Park the garden will honour his memory and create an environment that increases biodiversity and wildlife habitat opportunities in the grounds of the busy, built-up campus of University Hospital.

Previous funding has enhanced Maggie's gardens in Swansea, Oxford, Newcastle and Cheltenham and supported new gardens in Yorkshire, Southampton and Northampton. Each garden is enjoyed by thousands of service users every year and collectively these centres supported more than 76,300 visits from people with cancer, and those they love.

During the year, work also started on Maggie's Cambridge where the National Garden Scheme's RHS Chelsea Flower Show garden, designed by Tom Stuart-Smith, will be relocated. The centre is due to open at the end of 2027.

Fundamental to the partnership is the opening of Maggie's gardens as part of the National Garden Scheme and in 2026, four gardens at Maggie's centres opened. These popular openings help provide wider access to these wonderful spaces.

Gardens and health beneficiaries



National Garden Scheme Ambassador Danny Clarke joined the children at Ghyllgrove Primary School, Essex for a Country Trust Food Discovery day which helps reach children from areas of high social and economic disadvantage for hands-on food and gardening experiences

Country Trust
Connecting children with the land that sustains us all

In November 2025 the National Garden Scheme made a donation of £35,000 to support The Country Trust deliver its Food Discovery Programme to seven schools across the country in the 2025-26 academic year. In total, 358 children in areas of deprivation across England took part in the immersive, year long programme building a positive relationship between growing, cooking and their health. Participants were from schools in Bolton, Cambridge, Essex, London, Newcastle and Suffolk.

In total 4,899 hours of learning were delivered across the participating schools including:

1,585 hours in the garden
1,033 hours cooking
908 hours on the farm
310 hours in the playground market
453 hours preparing and enjoying the harvest feast
60 hours of family sessions

In addition over 1,238 meals were cooked and enjoyed.

Nationally, the programme is associated with broader changes in children's relationships with nature and wellbeing with over 97% saying they were more interested in spending time outdoors in nature, 93% saying they cared more about their local environment and the health of the planet and over 97% saying they felt happier and/or healthier than before taking part.

The Food Discovery Programme also developed teachers' capabilities with 89% of teachers feeling more confident leading cooking sessions and over 94% feeling more confident teaching about food, farming, planting and growing.

In May 2026, National Garden Scheme Ambassador, garden designer and TV presenter Danny Clarke, joined the team in Essex to experience a Food Discovery session first-hand. He said it was a fantastic experience, saying: "The passion was unbelievable; witnessing the children eulogizing about what they have done in the garden was amazing."

Support for gardeners

The National Garden Scheme raises money from opening exceptional gardens many of which are looked after by professional gardeners. As well as helping gardeners and others working in horticulture through our donations to Perennial, we also recognise that it is often hard for people to get started in a gardening career so we also fund a variety of training and apprentice schemes.

In November 2026, our donations in support of gardeners totalled £346,000 and were distributed to Perennial, the National Botanic Garden of Wales, the Professional Gardeners' Trust, the Garden Museum, English Heritage's Historic and Botanic Garden Training Programme and Bankside Open Spaces Trust. These pages give a taster of how our donations are being used.



Graduates of English Heritage's Historic and Botanic Garden Training Programme at Wrest Park, Bedfordshire in August

English Heritage

The National Garden Scheme's £125,000 funding of English Heritage in support of their Historic and Botanic Garden Training Programme (HBGTP) enabled five trainees to take part in the programme during the 2025-26 academic year and also supported a grant for one Apprentice Gardener.

Each year, this support makes a significant contribution to developing the next generation of skilled horticulturalists and to helping trainees progress into rewarding careers within the heritage and horticulture sector. In turn, this helps ensure the future of historic and botanic gardens by addressing skill shortages in the sector.

The 2025-26 cohort has secured exceptional next steps, demonstrating the quality and impact of the training they have received. These include places on the prestigious Cambridge Botanic Gardens Training Scheme, as well as horticulturalist roles at leading gardens including Trentham Estate and Aldourie Castle.

During their training programme participants were placed at Walmer Castle, Kent; Osborne House, Isle of Wight; Wrest Park, Bedfordshire; Audley End House & Gardens, Essex, and Brodsworth Hall and Gardens, South Yorkshire. In August the trainees graduated at Wrest Park, with National Garden Scheme Chairman Rupert Tyler and CEO Richard Claxton in attendance.

Also graduating in 2026 was the apprentice from Brodsworth Hall and Gardens, who achieved their Level 2 Horticulture Operative qualification.

The Programme (HBGTP) is extremely competitive at the recruitment stage with over 450 applicants for just 16 places. In addition to directly supporting five trainees and one apprentice, the National Garden Scheme's funding also benefited the wider HBGTP team including 14 professional gardeners who mentor trainees, receiving management and mentoring training and guidance through the year, supporting their own professional development.

Indirectly, the impact extends beyond the placements to the 762,365 visitors who enjoy the gardens and landscapes in which the trainees work during the year.

Support for gardeners

The Garden Museum



Trainee Amy Thomson planting exhibition beds at the Museum

The National Garden Scheme has been funding the Horticultural Traineeship programme at The Garden Museum since 2013. In 2025/2026, £24,000 funded four day a week Horticultural Trainee, Amy Thomson. Learning under the museum's unique and longstanding Horticultural Traineeship programme, the trainee:

- Expanded her practical horticultural experience.
- Gained new skills from floristry to volunteer management.
- Spent time on developmental placements at gardens including Gravetye Manor, Benton End and Sarah Raven's Perch Hill.
- Contributed to The Garden Museum's public programme by conceiving and running multiple practical workshops and talks.
- Designed a planting scheme to coincide with the museum's summer exhibition.
- Developed a sense of direction for her horticultural career - the key objective of the traineeship.

Additional beneficiaries of the funding include the 12-15 weekly gardening volunteers, workshop attendees, and 50 Lambeth residents using the community garden, all of whom received advice and support from the trainee alongside the garden team.

National Botanic Garden of Wales



Apprentice Kate Cobley © National Botanic Garden of Wales

The National Garden Scheme has been funding an apprenticeship in Botanical Horticulture at the National Botanic Garden of Wales since 2016. To date, funding has supported ten, two-year apprenticeships, with each going on to work in a variety of horticultural roles in Wales and around the world.

Kate Cobley completed her apprenticeship in September 2026, excelling in all professional qualifications and gaining specialist experience at Kew, Glasnevin, and Picton Castle. She also took part in community horticultural show judging, BioBlitz and other public workshops, and professional links with botanic gardens and conservation work internationally. In her final months she also delivered an external workshop on braiding and rope-making using natural grasses.

An additional £26,000 this year from the National Garden Scheme helped to fill a shortfall in funding, and supported new apprentice Jake Reedman who started in September and commenced the RHS Level 2 Certificate in Principles of Plant Growth and Development at Gelli Aur. He has also begun working towards his City & Guilds Level 2 Diploma in Work-based Horticulture. Jake has started plant-identification tests and is achieving top marks, a promising start to his training.

Professional Gardeners' Trust

The Professional Gardeners' Trust (PGT) plays a unique role in providing in-service training for professional gardeners which helps enhance their careers and in turn the pool of professional maintenance skills available to garden owners. Supported by the National Garden Scheme since 2016, a donation of £20,000 funded 21 training grants in 2026. The money covers course fees including short hands-on courses to more technical courses either in college or remotely. The PGT's ability to help freelance, self-employed gardeners is invaluable as without the right paper qualifications, some careers cannot move forward even if the practical skills are in place.

Bankside Open Spaces Trust



BOST students on work experience in London

The Bankside Open Spaces Trust (BOST) was awarded £25,000 in November 2025 to fund eight students to take part in the Future Gardeners course in 2026. A London-based programme, it is aimed at providing horticultural training to people who have been long-term unemployed, cannot afford other courses, and people with learning needs or disabilities. The eight students were accepted on the 10-week employability course providing them with everything they need to take their first steps in a career in horticulture.

The funding was used in a number of ways:

£15,000 enabled BOST to pay the salaries and related costs to resource the programme with experienced staff.

£2,000 funded travel expenses for the students, enabling them to attend the course in person and a two-week work placement at partner gardens across London.

£3,000 provided the students with steel cap boots suitable for outside work and tools to use for practical learning in the educational garden and while on work experience.

£5,000 was used for administration expenses including accreditation costs for the students to gain the Level 1 horticulture qualification from City & Guilds.

All students completed the course and have gone on to work with employers including the Horniman Museum and Gardens, St Katherine's Dock, Chelsea Physic Garden, L&S Landscapes, Cultivate Colindale and The Wildlife Trust.

Perennial



© Tima Miroshnichenko/Pexels

Perennial helps support people working in all areas of horticulture

The National Garden Scheme is Perennial's has gifted over £2.5 million since the partnership began in 1986.

During 2026 £100,000 enabled Perennial to expand preventative services, reach more people working in horticulture and develop new ways of supporting wellbeing, resilience and long-term career sustainability across the industry.

The funding helped Perennial to:

- Introduce specialist family relationship counselling in partnership with Family Action, and incorporating Relate expertise.
- Develop networking opportunities for horticultural workers who often work in isolation, particularly in rural communities.
- Enable webinars, workshops and mental health awareness initiatives for managers and supervisors.
- Establish a partnership with Carers UK, strengthening support for horticultural workers balancing employment with unpaid caring responsibilities.
- Contribute towards early intervention physiotherapy and health-related support.

The funding has helped Perennial expand its reach, strengthen preventative services and support a growing number of people across horticulture at every stage of their lives and careers. And, over the last 12 months, the impact of National Garden Scheme funding was seen across Perennial's services, including a 30% increase in contacts to the Perennial helpline, a 55% increase in careers and training support, and a 221% increase in health-related support.



Community Garden Grants

£287,960 donated in 2026 funding 115 community garden projects

As part of the charity's wider Gardens and Health Programme the National Garden Scheme awards grants to help community gardening projects thrive, celebrating with the presentation of a special plaque on completion of the work. In 2026 we funded 115 projects with a total of £287,960.

The funding for 2026 was once again announced in April to coincide with Community Gardens Week and was the second year that utilised generous funding from The Julia Rausing Trust.

From social welfare and gardening projects that help the isolated, the disabled and the disenfranchised to support for community orchards, food banks and social prescribing projects at GP surgeries, the funding provides a much-needed boost to those working on or initiating community garden projects throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Danny Clarke - aka The Black Gardener - National Garden Scheme ambassador said: "It's really heart-warming to see the continuing generosity of Community Garden Grants awarded by the National Garden Scheme. In a time of uncertainty and ongoing cuts to health services, community gardens provide vital green spaces that enhance food security, improve mental and physical health, and foster social cohesion by connecting diverse communities. Not only that, but they also act as educational hubs for all ages. Without funding support these hugely important green spaces would not flourish."

Many of the funded community projects in turn open for the National Garden Scheme completing a virtuous circle of giving and giving back. Some examples include:

Growing Space, Gwent received a £3,653 grant for the gardens tended by the Growing Space team of volunteers who range from 18 to 96 years old. Many have a history of mental ill health, have learning difficulties, are on the autism spectrum or suffer from physical disability.

Herefordshire Growing Point received £1,600 to support its purposefully designed therapy garden, for those living with mental and physical challenges to gain the benefits of therapeutic horticulture. It's a fully accessible garden featuring a range of mixed plantings, to facilitate a variety of activities that promote mental wellbeing.

The Wonky Garden, Cheshire received a £2,730 grant to support its work in horticultural therapy and nature-based activities that support those living with physical and mental health, isolation and loneliness.

Chitts Hill Allotment & Garden Society, London used its £2,000 grant to help build a community hub at its culturally diverse 260 plot allotment site in North London.

Since the Community Garden Grants began, over £1,500,000 has been donated to support more than 600 community projects.

Funding for the next tranche of grants which is being generously supported by the Julia Rausing Trust over the next three years, will be announced in April 2027.

These grants form part of the wider National Garden Scheme's Gardens and Health Programme which in 2026 saw the total funding for Gardens and Health projects exceed £4.7 million.

To find out more about the Gardens and Health Programme, including recent funding for nurse-led community projects visit our website ngs.org.uk



© Marina Walker

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Main picture: The Wonky Garden in Cheshire Above right: Olden Community Garden in North London used its Community Garden Grant to replace disintegrating structures with new raised vegetable planters at the two-acre site which gives local people opportunities for education and recreation aimed at increasing involvement and reducing isolation. It now opens for the National Garden Scheme



NGS Elsie Wagg (Innovation) Scholarships

In 2021, The Queen's Institute of Community Nursing (QICN) and the National Garden Scheme created a scholarship programme for community nurses, the NGS Elsie Wagg (Innovation) Scholarship. It is open to all nurses working in the community, with five scholarships available for the best applications each year. The projects, which receive £5,000 each, are nurse-led community garden projects that promote the health benefits of gardening and garden visiting.

Each scholarship comes with a year-long programme of individual and group support, as well as funding to implement the project to improve healthcare.

Since the Scholarship began, £125,000 has funded 25 projects. The five scholarship projects in 2025/26 supported a diverse range of people, including mothers experiencing mental health challenges during the transition to parenthood, people experiencing homelessness, adults with learning disabilities, autistic adults and women in prison. Although each project addressed different needs, all demonstrated the powerful role that access to green spaces and meaningful outdoor activity can play in supporting physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

Participants reported reduced isolation, improved wellbeing, greater confidence and stronger social connections. Many developed new skills, discovered a renewed sense of purpose and belonging, and built relationships within their communities. The projects also strengthened partnerships between health services, voluntary organisations and local communities, creating lasting resources that will continue to benefit people beyond the lifetime of the Scholarship funding.

The 2025/26 projects were:

Circle Garden Haven, Surrey – a therapeutic garden supporting mothers experiencing mental health challenges during the transition to parenthood. The project aims to provide a safe space for new mothers to meet others and explore their mental health and wellbeing in nature. Taking a neglected library garden in Sutton, volunteers brought it back to life with used and recycled materials to create a colourful and peaceful environment. To-date, the new space has helped to increase parental self-worth and wellbeing, address health inequalities and reduce social harm, creating a positive impact on parents, babies, service users and staff.

One young mother 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.

Gardening for Growth, Stockton-on-Tees - a project aimed at transforming 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.

Twinwoods Sensory Garden, Bedfordshire – an accessible sensory garden that promotes wellbeing, inclusion and meaningful activity for people with learning disabilities, while supporting personalised, preventative and community-based care. Co-produced with service users and carers who continue to help shape future developments has meant a huge improvement in wellbeing, confidence and engagement.

Using Nature to Make Connections, Wales – a nature-based programme supporting autistic adults through outdoor activities and social connection has become a thriving therapeutic space with 100% attendance and programme completion. There has also been a 45% reduction in anxiety and 50% reduction in low mood indicators.

Supporting Women with Horticulture, HMP Styal, Cheshire – a gardening project helping women in prison improve their mental health, confidence and wellbeing was co-designed with 12 women and was developed as part of plans for a prison-wide social prescribing pathway. The result was an improved feeling of calm, purpose and wellbeing, greater social connection, peer support and ownership.

The experience of participants showed how access to nature, meaningful activity and community can promote recovery, wellbeing and hope for the future.

For a full report on the projects supported through this programme visit the National Garden Scheme or QICN websites.

Photo: Mothers and babies enjoying the rejuvenated library space at the Circle Garden Haven project in Surrey

Special thanks ...














Across the year, garden owners and volunteers worked together to welcome visitors to 3,522 gardens and helped raise awareness of the National Garden Scheme to diverse audiences

The success of the National Garden Scheme and the significant amounts of money that it donates to its beneficiaries would not be possible without the dedication and generosity of the charity's garden owners and volunteers.

In 2026, 3,522 gardens opened for the National Garden Scheme supported by almost 600 volunteers. The enthusiasm, expertise and joy of sharing that our garden owners and volunteers exhibit is at the heart of everything the charity achieves.

As well as helping to open gardens, National Garden Scheme volunteers also represented the charity at RHS Chelsea and regional flower shows, connected with beneficiary partners, led on local PR and social media and engaged new garden owners.

Thanks to garden owners and volunteers working together to welcome visitors to gardens in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands the charity was able to donate £3,799,949 to its beneficiaries.

Who's who

Patron
His Majesty King Charles III

President
Alan Titchmarsh CBE

President Emerita
Dame Mary Berry

Chairman
Rupert Tyler

Deputy Chairman
Sue Phipps

Honorary Treasurer
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Trustees
Arit Anderson
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Raoul Curtis-Machin
Elisa Davies
Alex Denman
Lucy Hall
Maureen Kesteven (to Nov 2026)
Helen Marsden
Professor John Newton OBE
Susan Paynton
Mark Porter (to March 2026)
Vernon Sanderson
Heather Skinner
Debbie Thomson

Ambassadors
Emma Bridgewater CBE
Fiona Bruce
Danny Clarke
Rachel De Thame
Adam Frost
Hazel Gardiner
Anya Lautenbach
Martha Swales
Joe Swift
Jo Whiley

Additional thanks

Core sponsor

RATHBONES

We are incredibly grateful to Rathbones, our core sponsor for 33 years. Their long-standing commitment plays a vital role in helping us share the joy of exceptional gardens while raising much-needed funds for the nursing and health charities at the heart of our work. We are enormously grateful for their continued support.

Our corporate partners

Our sincere thanks also go to Agriframes, Crocus and Parasol-UK, whose loyal support over a number of years has helped raise both awareness and valuable funds for the National Garden Scheme through donations and sales of selected products. We are hugely grateful for their commitment and friendship.

Agriframes Garden Inspiration

PARASOL-UK HEAVEN AT HOME

crocus

We are equally delighted to be working with a number of new brand licensees whose centenary-themed products have supported the National Garden Scheme in 2026 and will continue to do so in 2027. Their enthusiasm and generosity will help us celebrate this special milestone while raising vital funds for the nursing and health charities that benefit from our work. Those who have already supported us in 2026 include:

DCUK
Elitetins
Harkness Roses
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Raymond Evison Clematis
Woodmansterne Publications Ltd



Above: Visitors enjoy a visit to Shalford House, West Sussex © Julie Skelton

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The National Garden Scheme is a charity registered in the UK. Charity Number 1112664

We look forward to welcoming you to our gardens in 2027