



**Resilience Gardens Evaluation Report 2024**  
**Funded by Green Shoots**



## **Introduction**

Resilience Gardens is a project funded by the Green Shoots Grant from Warwickshire County Council and ran from Jan 2023 – Jan 2024 based primarily at Mary Anne Evans Hospice in Nuneaton, providing Green Therapy.

Green Therapy is a horticultural therapy group for individuals who are inactive or long term unemployed, experiencing social isolation and/or poor mental health. We use gardening to help with individual's personal growth and support them to thrive as gardening is incredibly beneficial for both physical and mental health.

The group offers a non-judgmental safe space to meet others, be outdoors amongst nature and do such positive community work that really makes a difference.

## **Achievements**

### **Overview**

With Mary Anne Evans Hospice in Nuneaton we helped to empower the local community with skills to design and plant gardens that demonstrate sustainable gardening practices and resilience at home, whilst providing biodiverse, wildlife friendly public green spaces that are adaptable to climate change.

### **Outputs**

1. Recruited 12 new volunteers from the community
2. Distributed 300 mini veg garden kits
3. Created 3 new fruit tree guild gardens at Pathlow
4. Planted 100 trees as a hedge at Pathlow
5. Planted 1000 spring and autumn flowering bulbs to attract pollinators
6. Seeded a 100 sq metres of wildflower lawn area with at least 10 native wildflowers
7. Created 10 miniature sustainable succulent planters to boost biodiversity
8. Grew 10 types of vegetables in 30 square metres of raised beds
9. Installed 12 sq new living wall to sequester Nitrogen Dioxide and increase biodiversity
10. Worked with 2 local corporate companies to deliver 100 hours of volunteering to the project

### **Benefits to the community**

The project reached at least 3000 people in the local area through a programme of community engagement which was free and accessible to all. We rolled out the project at the Mary Evans Hospice in Nuneaton. Local residents were given seed kits and the instructions as to how to plant and harvest the produce. We held seasonal events in the Hospice garden to demonstrate the benefits of resilience gardening and we will use the events to recruit new volunteers. We worked with two corporate clients from the area to make use of their volunteers days and work with them to do the gardening work and get the raised beds ready at the hospice for planting. The hospice garden area is fully accessible to all patients, visitors, families, staff and volunteers and the garden area outside the hospice is accessible and free to all.



## Case Study



### John

- “The session that really got me hooked was planting the seeds in the Grid Garden and seeing them flourish.
- I really look forward to going now but I was skeptical at first as I am not a gardener.
- You can relax and let your mind clear – it’s great!”

## Gallery of activities – working with The Princes Trust volunteers



## **Tree planting**

The group planted trees at our nature reserve to add hedgerow around the outer edge of the Field of Life and create the beginnings of a woodland area in a bid to boost biodiversity and help combat climate change.

With the tree planting season beginning in November, the group donned gloves, grabbed spades and started planting tree saplings, fuelled by hot drinks and biscuits.

We planted apple and plum trees in the orchard area and each dedicated a tree to a loved one with a memorial plaque.

The tree planting sessions worked really well with them being in an open space amongst nature and proved to be very beneficial for their mental health as well as physically being a good source of exercise.

They really felt the strong sense of community as they were helping create a greener space that's local to them and the feedback and conversations really emphasised the value of how being outdoors and doing something beneficial had a positive effect on their mood and overall outlook.

"I loved coming to plant the trees, it was great for the body and mind and it's really nice to leave a lasting legacy here".

"Tree planting is something I've always want to try so that I can give back to the earth. It made me feel all warm and fuzzy afterwards knowing I'd done something worthwhile and to be out doing exercise left me feeling much better than I had all week".





## Veg Boxes

We created and distributed 300 veg boxes through the hospice shop and also helped young families grow their own veg in small raise beds at the local community centre.











### **Benefits to the wider community**

The project has also engaged the wider community with the involvement of volunteers at IAR (Inspiring Addiction Recovery) and another successful partnership programme with Bam Construct UK, who's Prince's Trust volunteers created 10 new square planter frames for the hospice to support decorative alpine beds.

It's been great to facilitate a project that has brought so many people together to socialise, develop new skills and create such a positive impact at the hospice.

## **Butterfly Bank**

Our group at the nature reserve helped to create a butterfly bank which will be an open habitat to attract butterflies as part of a biodiversity action plan for Warwickshire. We worked with a local corporate group from Cadent who did a fantastic job pulling up all the thistles and weeds to clear the area then planted it up with pollinator friendly plants and seeded it with a wildflower seed mix.



“Doing activities on the butterfly bank was peaceful. I love being at the nature reserve and planting plants that will attract butterflies”.

“It feels good to get out in the fresh air and be in a nice green space. It helps me feel less tense. Working with the plants on the butterfly bank gives me a great feeling and it’s something I couldn’t have imagined doing a few months ago. I feel in a much better place mentally”.

## **Garden maintenance**

As in previous months, we continued to help maintain the gardens by regularly pruning, weeding, mowing, strimming, planting Autumnal plants and filling up the self-watering planters.

The continuation of these gardening activities has developed a sense of normality and routine with many of the participants and has encouraged teamwork whilst also allowing those to work independently when they want to.



“It’s very satisfying to keep the gardens looking nice and to see the before and after of what you’ve done. Looking after the gardens has become part of my weekly routine. Before I wasn’t really doing anything and now I’m part of this and it makes me proud”.

### **Bulb planting**

Our groups planted lots of Spring bulbs including Daffodils, Tulips, Crocus and Bluebells to bring colour and beauty to many different locations in the Springtime.

Not only will these plants brighten up many areas when they bloom, but they will also be great for our pollinators as bees need our help in early spring. The planting of these bulbs will now guarantee the bees in the area will have a source of pollen and nectar when there's little else in flower.

One participant mentioned that yellow was his favourite colour because of his love for seeing the daffodils bloom, so was particularly pleased about this activity.

“Seeing all the lovely colours of the plants in Springtime always makes me smile and boosts my mood so to help plant the bulbs was nice as it will make the place look so pretty this Spring”.

“Planting bulbs is great because you are giving this area life, and I can’t wait to show people when they bloom and tell them that I helped to plant them”

### **Garden creation**

As we began to create a new garden area at Stratford hospital, we delivered many Green Therapy sessions getting the input and ideas of the group to help design the garden.

With many of the group having an interest in landscaping, we involved them in every stage from helping measure the garden, drawing up designs and devising planting plans including things they’d like to be grown in the garden.

“I like being active in the gardens, so I was happy that I can help make another nice garden area”. “I don’t have a garden at home so having the opportunity to be in the garden here is great and planting so many colours will be cool”.

### **Creating our own compost**

Those who were interested in woodwork were given the materials and tools to create compost bays in the Kitchen Garden so we could make our own compost from garden and kitchen waste. We also enjoyed a workshop learning about the sustainable ways of composting and making good use of waste products to prevent more going to landfill.

After learning the theory behind the creation of compost, we made a plan and listed the items that were suitable for the composter. The group then made a conscious effort to collect and bring their kitchen waste from home and we could continue recycling the garden waste to make our own fresh, organic seed compost.

With leaves being such a valuable resource in the garden and as the leaves started to fall from the trees, the group also began collecting them to create useful soil improving mulch and leaf mould, perfect for the garden.

“I’m so pleased to help create something using skills I’ve learned here”.

“I’ve enjoyed learning and trying new things. It’s really given me a passion for gardening and has made me think more about how to be more sustainable in things I do”.

### **Willow weaving**

The hospice gardening group enjoyed indoor sessions of willow weaving to create small willow structures to take home and put on display in their homes. Many of the group decided to create willow angels for Christmas and everyone felt very accomplished by their creations. The craft sessions have been successful, especially with this group who are all experiencing bereavement, as it gives them an opportunity to get talking therapy whilst enjoying a nice tactile activity.

“This was a really calming and relaxing activity, where we could sit down, socialise and create something lovely”. “I found the willow weaving activity very therapeutic, and I was so pleased with the end result of my creation”.





## Participant Outcomes

We continued our focus on measuring the impact of Green Therapy on participants in four key areas of personal improvement and progression. We did this via another survey of questions with a rating system out of 5. Comparing this to the previous survey, there has been an increase in the average scores in all 4 areas, which is pleasing as participants are not only noticeably showing their improvement but feel this from a personal point of view too.

Survey Question	Average score (out of 5)
Please rate Green Therapy in <b>improving your wellbeing</b>	4.6
Please rate Green Therapy in <b>helping you to make new connections</b>	4.4
Please rate Green Therapy in <b>learning new skills</b>	4.4
Please rate Green Therapy in <b>helping to build your confidence</b>	4.5

## Participant Demographics

**Total participants:** 54

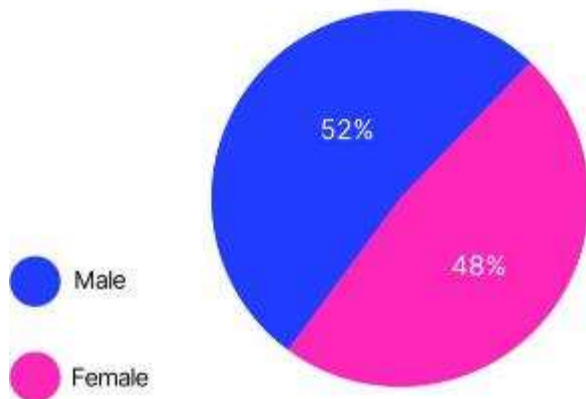
**Number of new participants to the service during this period:** 2 new participants.

**Discharges:** 0

**Hours of Green Therapy Delivered:** 68 hours

**Gender:** 52% of our participants are male, with 48% being female.

## Participant's Gender



**Age:** The table below demonstrates the different age ranges that attend Green Therapy sessions by percentile.

Age Range	Total
0-16	13%
17-24	6%
25-34	24%
35-44	18%
45-54	15%
55-64	18%
65+	6%



## **Case Study**

**Participant C** attends our weekly Green Therapy sessions and joined through one of her carers who found out about our service via signposting.

Participant C is diagnosed with schizophrenia and struggles with periods of low mood. She joined the group as her carer wanted her to get out of the house more during the day as she was very socially isolated.

She was very quiet and shy when first attending the Green Therapy sessions and would only reply with yes or no answers but has come out of her shell so much recently she will now start conversations and engage with all members of the group.

She began attending sessions accompanied by a carer but has recently gained the confidence to attend by herself and this freedom has really helped her thrive socially.

She's made friends with others in the Green Therapy group who she now socialises with outside the group and has branched out within the town to start attending other activities during the week at a swimming club and a drama group. When asked 'What are the best aspects of Green Therapy', she replied; "It is somewhere I feel comfortable, and it has given me a reason to get out of the house. I feel less lonely now and coming here helps to improve my mood and feel more independent".

**Photo Gallery**







