

Food Growing and Social Prescribing: a resource sheet

February 2023

Sustain is the alliance for better food and farming. We represent over 100 food and farming organisations. This resource sheet was compiled by London's food growing network, Capital Growth, to support more community gardens across London to link up with their borough's Social Prescription Link Workers and consider doing more food growing on prescription as part of their garden activities.

- Food growing and gardening are the most common green social prescribing activities
- There are 60+ activities across London taking Social Prescribing referrals or encouraging self-referral for health

Capital Growth hosted a **Community Food Growing Convo** back on Tuesday 21 February 2023 to discuss challenges and opportunities around growing food on prescription. We've compiled this resource sheet to make it easier for more community gardens across London to assess whether social prescribing is appropriate in their setting and what to consider when doing this work.

Top Tips from Hackney Herbal

1. When looking to fund these activities, don't just rely on specific Social Prescribing funding, but do mention you are working with Social Prescribers (SPs) in funding applications.
2. Have clear aims about your sessions, what you are offering and what you aren't. Provide as much information as possible e.g. facilities – if are there toilets, if is there shelter, what the sessions are like, how accessible the site is. Help people to understand what they are going to get from attendance.
3. Have a clear group agreement or working culture, and make sure everyone reads it and agrees on joining a group or session. It's much easier to refer back to this if there is an issue with someone's behaviour or any disagreements or incidents.

4. Take time to talk to referrers (e.g. link workers or GPs) to understand how they work, who they are supporting and what their needs are. Invite them to visit your project so they have all the information to explain it to their clients.
5. Create a really easy, clear and supported pathway for people to be referred, sign-up or register and then attend. Gather appropriate registration info via individual or link worker. Collect the appropriate level of information to make sure the person is accommodated for within the session and so that staff know their needs. This keeps everyone safe.
6. Ensure staff feel well equipped to work with referrals and have capacity for all the additional admin required. Have things like check-outs/supervisions in place for staff so they are well supported and have a supported outlet for reflection or when things are hard/need to be talked through with others.
7. Keep local organisations, SPs, VCS networks, health coaches, link workers up to date with your info/projects regularly.
8. Don't be put off by people not showing up or low numbers. You are still making a difference!

Best practice examples of London gardens doing Social Prescribing

- [Hackney School of Food](#) (Hackney)
- [Roots4Life](#) (Greenwich)
- [Coin Street Gentle Gardening](#) (Lambeth/Southwark)
- [Forest Farm Peace Garden](#) (Redbridge)

Useful links

- Download Sustain's publication about [food growing on prescription](#).
- Check out this [map detailing all the social prescribing link workers across London's councils](#).
- Useful resources and signposting on Social Prescribing and other aspects of community gardening from [Social Farms & Gardens](#).

Next steps

- [Sign up to London Plus Social Prescribing network](#) to receive regular updates, information about funding and how to be more strategic in your social prescribing work.
- Sign up to our community food growing rise-up mailing list to share and receive related opportunities via email by sending a blank email to communityfoodgrowing-subscribe@lists.riseup.net and you'll then be able to send and receive emails to/from the group via communityfoodgrowing@lists.riseup.net

- Follow [Incredible Edible's Right to Grow campaign](#) to support a parliamentary bill making it easier and more accessible for local residents to access land for food growing.
- Laura Brown, [Natural England](#) Regional Health Lead Advisor (London) – contact Laura to join her Social Prescribing newsletter and receive support around funding: Laura.Brown@naturalengland.org.uk