

How can public health, GPs and health commissioners work with food growing projects?

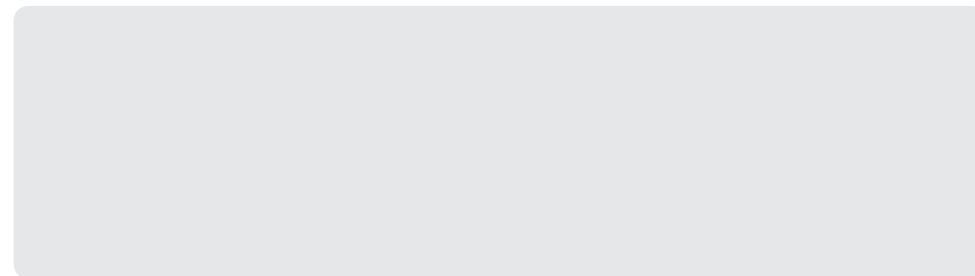
The Growing Health project has seen how health professionals, the NHS and others with responsibility for delivering health are using food growing to meet their outcomes. Investing and supporting this work results in a cost effective way to improve health as well as prevent ill health.

Examples of how this has worked include:

- Commissioning community food growing projects to deliver health outcomes.
- Supporting the setting up or development of projects, including funding.
- Providing access to land and other resources such as staff support.
- Encouraging and putting in place referral systems e.g. social prescribing.
- Training on using food growing for health professionals as part of NHS staff skills and continuing professional development.

Find out more

If you are interested in finding out more about how you or your service or department could be using food growing as a way to deliver health outcomes get in touch.



Growing Health is a national project run by Garden Organic and Sustain, which is funded by the Tudor Trust, to see how community food growing can be routinely used by the health and social care services as a way of promoting health and wellbeing for a range of individuals and population groups.

www.growinghealth.info



Growing Health: The health and wellbeing benefits of food growing

How the health service can use food growing to deliver health outcomes

Why support food growing activities?

It is widely recognised that gardening and food growing has a positive impact on people's health and wellbeing and there is a growing body of evidence to support this*. Regular contact with plants and the natural environment can improve mental wellbeing and combined with the activity of growing food it can help improve physical health for wide range of abilities and ages.

Regular involvement in gardening can:

- Improve psychological health, by reducing stress, the severity of stress and associated depression.
- Increase physical activity, burn calories and contribute to maintaining a healthy weight and reduce the risk of obesity.
- Help with rehabilitation or recovery from surgery or other medical interventions.
- Alleviate the symptoms of illnesses like dementia and Alzheimer's disease, such as agitation and aggressive behaviour.
- Contribute to improved social interactions and community cohesion.
- Provide access to locally grown, fresh produce and help increase the consumption of fruit and vegetables, as well as improving attitudes to healthy eating.
- Introduce a way of life to help people improve their wellbeing in the longer term.

The public health benefits of community food growing

As the wider determinants of health model shows there are many social, economic and environmental factors that impact on health. Community food growing projects can have positive benefits on these:

- **Individual lifestyle:** supports a healthy lifestyle with regular outdoor activity and contact with nature which helps improve physical and mental health. Provides access to healthy, affordable, locally grown food.
- **Social and community:** engages the community and enhances mechanisms for getting people involved in things that matter to them.
- **Activities:** promotes health and wellbeing as well as an opportunity for learning new skills.
- **Built environment:** physical exercise is designed into the local area.
- **Natural environmental factors:** enhances the natural environment and engages people with nature.

* Schmutz U., et al (2014). *The benefits of gardening and food growing for health and wellbeing*. Garden Organic and Sustain. [online] www.growinghealth.info

NHS commissioned service

Sydenham Garden in London is commissioned by Lewisham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to provide garden sessions for adults experiencing mental ill health and sessions for people with early stage dementia. It has an established health professional referral network in place, covering over 20 agencies.

Sydenham Garden's services fit with local need and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment as the prevalence of mental illness is higher in Lewisham compared to the rest of England and for most of London. This poor mental health in turn has a great social and economic impact as well as leading to range of negative health outcomes. Lewisham have highlighted that prevention of conduct disorder through social and emotional learning programmes result in total returns of £83.73 for each pound invested. (Knapp et al, 2001)

Public health commissioned project

Gardening for Health (G4H) which is part of the Bradford Community Environment Project (BCEP) is currently commissioned by Public Health (part of Bradford Metropolitan District Council). The work has been funded through NHS/PCT since 2008. The Bradford District exhibits significant health inequalities and the aim of G4H is to reduce these inequalities by encouraging food growing and healthy eating particularly among residents from high risk or 'hard to reach' groups. It has 16 regular groups in all kinds of locations and participants can refer themselves, although particular groups are targeted directly, for example school children, refugees/asylum seekers, patients in mental health units.



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