



Using bespoke evaluation tools & creating your own measures

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Brighton & Hove Food Partnership is a hub for information, inspiration and connection around food.

A non-profit organisation that helps people learn to cook, to eat a healthy diet, to grow their own food and to waste less food.

- Work with individuals
- Work with groups
- Work at a strategy and policy level

These are interconnected.



Sharing the Harvest project

- Building on previous work to setup & run community gardens
- New project aims to help more vulnerable adults to benefit from gardening
- **Activities:** volunteer advice, taster sessions, regular garden workdays, training & workshops
- **Outcomes:**
 - Improved physical health
 - Improved mental wellbeing
 - Increased skills & confidence
 - Improved sustainability of community gardens working with vulnerable adults



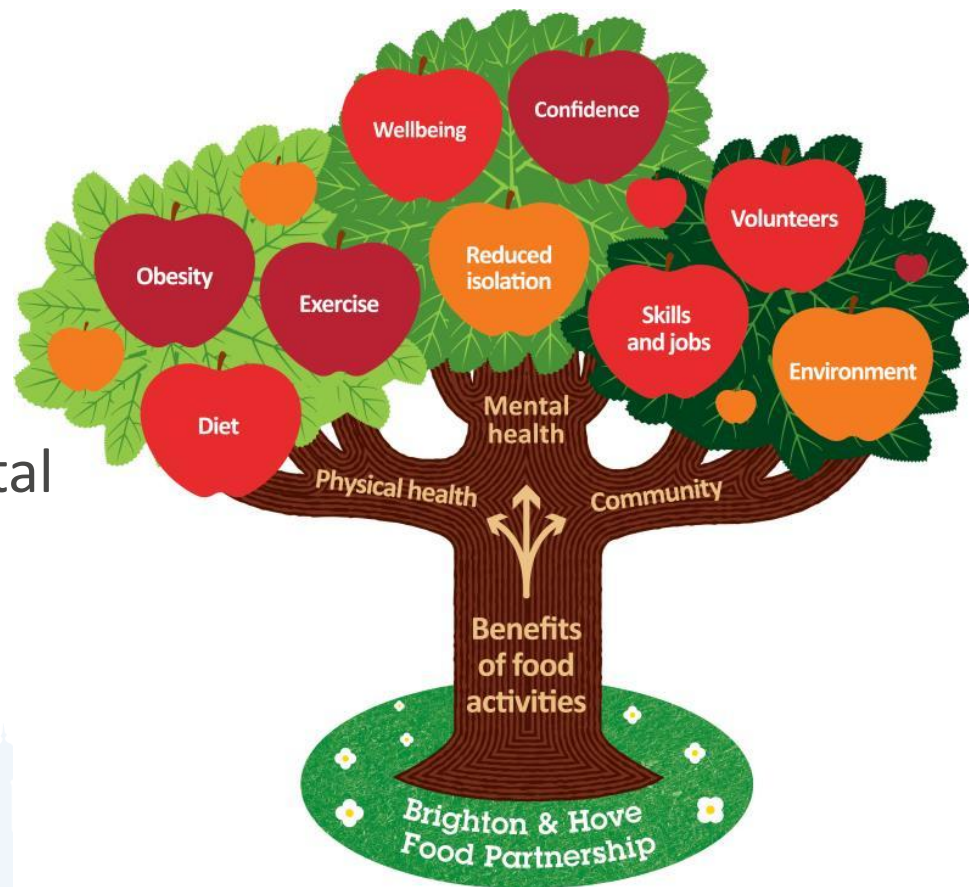
Client groups

- Adults with learning disabilities & autism
- Adults with experience of mental health issues, homelessness, abuse, substance/ alcohol misuse
- Other volunteers
- Over 1500 people involved so far!



Monitoring & evaluation: Why

- Demonstrate impact to current funder
- Demonstrate impact to potential funders / other audiences
- Validate & measure anecdotal changes experienced
- Increase the evidence base (still needed?)
- Improve services
- Understand who benefits most



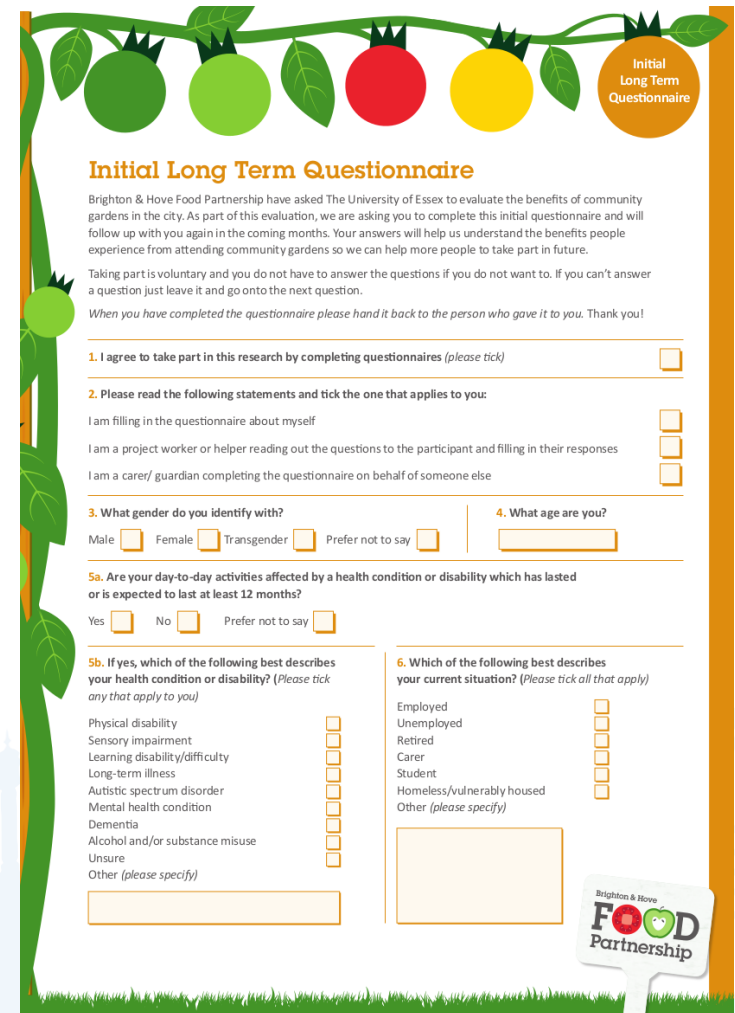
Monitoring & evaluation: Plans

- Collaboration with **University of Essex experts** with significant experience of nature-based evaluation
- Combination of **standardised & bespoke** tools (robust, flexible, not too onerous)
- **Evaluation payment and/or staff support** for projects to recognise time needed!



Monitoring & evaluation: Methods

- **Qualitative:** In-depth interviews, focus groups, informal feedback, quotes
- **Quantitative** evaluation: Five questionnaires, with guidance for staff and volunteers
 - **Snapshot:** Baseline and follow up
 - **Longer term changes:** Baseline and follow up
- **‘Group’ questionnaire** – accessible & discussion-based, but attributing change...
- **Funder report** and engaging **interim report/case studies** in mind from the outset



Initial Long Term Questionnaire

Brighton & Hove Food Partnership have asked The University of Essex to evaluate the benefits of community gardens in the city. As part of this evaluation, we are asking you to complete this initial questionnaire and will follow up with you again in the coming months. Your answers will help us understand the benefits people experience from attending community gardens so we can help more people to take part in future.

Taking part is voluntary and you do not have to answer the questions if you do not want to. If you can't answer a question just leave it and go onto the next question.

When you have completed the questionnaire please hand it back to the person who gave it to you. Thank you!

1. I agree to take part in this research by completing questionnaires (please tick) ☐

2. Please read the following statements and tick the one that applies to you:

I am filling in the questionnaire about myself ☐

I am a project worker or helper reading out the questions to the participant and filling in their responses ☐

I am a carer/ guardian completing the questionnaire on behalf of someone else ☐

3. What gender do you identify with? Male ☐ Female ☐ Transgender ☐ Prefer not to say ☐

4. What age are you?

5a. Are your day-to-day activities affected by a health condition or disability which has lasted or is expected to last at least 12 months?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Prefer not to say ☐

5b. If yes, which of the following best describes your health condition or disability? (Please tick any that apply to you)

Physical disability ☐

Sensory impairment ☐

Learning disability/difficulty ☐

Long-term illness ☐

Autistic spectrum disorder ☐

Mental health condition ☐

Dementia ☐

Alcohol and/or substance misuse ☐

Unsure ☐

Other (please specify)

6. Which of the following best describes your current situation? (Please tick all that apply)

Employed ☐

Unemployed ☐

Retired ☐

Carer ☐

Student ☐

Homeless/vulnerably housed ☐

Other (please specify)

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Monitoring & evaluation: Tools

Validated tools

- Brief Resilience Scale
- Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale

National survey questions

- ONS Life Satisfaction
- ONS Happiness
- Single-item physical activity

Local survey questions

- Fruit & veg
- Physical health

Bespoke: Self-esteem (adapted), meal prep, skills gained, social skills



Monitoring & evaluation: Methods - learning

- Redesigned and reworded to make them **clearer, more consistent, more positive** in their tone and **more visually appealing**
- Changed **questionnaires names and colour coded** to make it more obvious how they should be used
- New **guidance and face to face training** for staff and volunteers (highlighting importance of matched questionnaires)

Initial Long Term Questionnaire

16. Please tick the box that best describes your experience of each over the last week

	None of the time	Rarely	Some of the time	Often	All of the time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future					
I've been feeling useful					
I've been feeling relaxed					
I've been dealing with problems well					
I've been thinking clearly					
I've been feeling close to other people					
I've been able to make up my own mind about things					

Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well Being Scale (WEMWBS) © NHS Health Scotland, University of Warwick and University of Edinburgh, 2009, all rights reserved

17. On a scale of 0-10, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays? (Please circle one number only)

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Completely

18. On a scale of 1-10, how connected to nature do you feel? (Please circle one number only)

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Completely

That's all! Thank you very much for taking the time to complete our questionnaire. Please hand it back to the person that gave it to you.

If you have any questions about this research please contact the key researcher Mike Rogerson, by email: mike.rogerson@essex.ac.uk

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Monitoring & evaluation: Overall learning

- Validated tools can appear complex/difficult to answer.
- Challenges of asking negative questions
- People skipping questions
- Conflicting answers compared to qualitative data? Distance travelled...
- Obtaining 'match' data can be tricky
- Baseline data for ongoing volunteers
- Low sample sizes may mean strange results
- Retrospective option
- More accessible tools needed!
- Benefits & challenges of using an external evaluator



Results: Wellbeing

- 96% reported improved happiness, mood or wellbeing (sample size = 232)
- Statistically significant 11% increase in reported happiness (sample size = 32 vulnerable adults, 10% significant increase for all participants, 68 sample)
- 80% reported that coming to the garden would have a long-term impact on them in future (sample size = 62)



“I suffer from anxiety and the gardening sessions are calming and boost my mood. I leave feeling more relaxed.”

“Sometimes when I am depressed I miss coming but I know that if I make the effort to get here I will instantly feel better.”

Results: Physical health

- 86% reported improved physical health (sample size = 160)
- 18% average improvement in health for vulnerable adults. (sample size = 36 vulnerable adults, compared to 5% increase for non-vulnerable adults)
- 11% reported an increase in portions of fruit & veg consumed (sample size = 18 vulnerable adults)



“Coming up to the allotment has influenced my diet changes. I now eat healthier food... Before I was coming to the allotment I was basically eating junk food.”

“I feel more confident, more healthy, I’m using every single muscle in my body. It’s exercise. I sleep better at night.”

Results: Skills & confidence

- 88% improved their skills or confidence (sample size = 236)
- 41% increase in 'I often eat meals cooked from basic ingredients, either by myself or someone else.'
(sample size = 22 vulnerable adults)
- 69% increase in teamwork skills
- 49% increase in communication skills (sample size = 74 vulnerable adults)

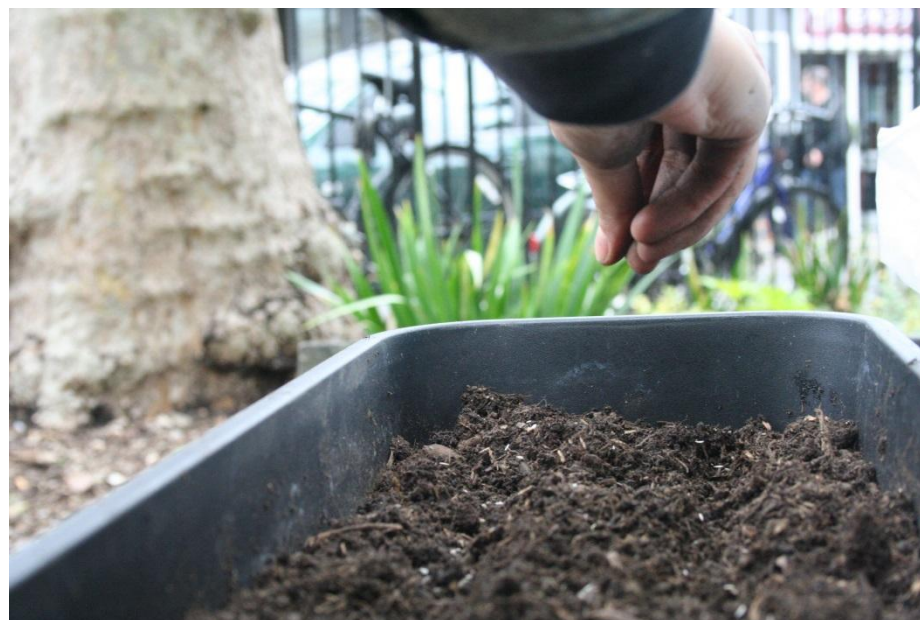


"If I look back to how I was when I first started I have changed so much in my confidence and social skills so yes, that will change my future life."

"I want to do more cooking. I made flat bread for the first time today and I never knew I could do that!"

Next steps

- Keep tweaking the forms
- Aim to get more matched data
- Keep improving accessibility
- Share our results
- Don't forget qualitative data and stories!



“This garden is great because it’s accessible for all types of people. If someone has a disability you can always find something for them to do. There’s not many environments that there is such a variety of things that need to be done, that there’s something that everybody can do.”





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