

Beacon Report: Growing Health recipe for success

Sydenham Garden



Key factors for success - summary

- Identify and respond to a local need, but be flexible
- Ensure the service, and why it matters, is clearly communicated with focused aims and objectives for particular users e.g. mental health
- Involve health care professionals in the set up
- Measure and evidence outcomes and demonstrate value for money
- Provide a service which is highly rated by its service users (and carers if relevant), using case studies
- Provide support to all involved and facilitate a sense of ownership for the project
- Invest in relationship and partnership building

	Key factors for success	Lesson learnt
Service provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A defined and articulated service with meaningful activities including gardening, nature conservation, plus arts and crafts. ● Weekly sessions developed for people with defined needs with a low dropout rate including adult mental health and people with early stage dementia and underpinned by Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide a real alternative to talking therapies and often a solution for those who don't fit into any existing pathway. ● Remodelled the service, based on experience and in line with the CCG commissioning requirements.
Route to commissioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Originally set up by a GP and mental health lead in response to an identified gap in the mental health services. ● Created a strong relationship with CCG (adult mental health and dementia leads) ● Commissioners invited to see the project for themselves and talk to co-workers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Services fit with local need and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. ● Building an ongoing relationship and trust with the commissioners and contract manager is vital. ● Understanding the local health landscape, being imaginative and flexible has contributed to the success.
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Established a health professional referral network, covering over 20 agencies and supported by Sydenham Garden's own Outreach and Development Worker. ● Had a partnership with Mind's Ecominds project and now collaborate closely with Bromley, Lewisham and Greenwich Mind. ● Sow and Grow (dementia sessions) are run in partnership with MindCare and Lewisham CCG ● Partnerships with the local Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service (offering activity taster sessions to groups undertaking low level psychological interventions). ● Partnership with South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust Psychotherapy Service offering gardening sessions to Tamil asylum seekers with severe Post Trauma Stress Disorder (PTSD). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Having a good referral process and having criteria for acceptance onto a project has been key. ● Seeks to embed partnership working in order to future-proof its place in the local health economy.
Evaluating outcomes and impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Yearly evaluation of services with full results available on the website. ● Evaluations have become more thorough and implemented recognised measures e.g. Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale, a widely recognised patient reported outcome measure ● Case studies and user feedback is extensively used. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create robust and transparent monitoring systems that use standardised outcome measures. ● Commissioners recognise the value of patient reported experience measures. ● Able to evidence positive outcomes and demonstrate value for money ● Ability to 'resell' the service and provide evidence of success has underpinned the ongoing commissioning.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Project leaders provide supervision and there are forums for discussion, training and appraisals. ● An annual away day for staff and volunteers provides a focus for feedback and input into future plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create ways for volunteers and staff members to feel supported and valued.

Background

Growing Health is a national project set up in 2012 by Garden Organic and Sustain; the alliance for better food and farming with funding from the Tudor Trust. The primary aim is to see how community food growing can be routinely used 'on prescription' by the health and social care services as a way of promoting health and wellbeing.

During the current phase of Growing Health – Recipe for Success, we are focusing on case studies of community food growing projects from around the country. These are case studies that have established, or are building funding relationships, with the local health service, including Public Health, CCGs and/or Social Service Departments. The aim is to identify and explore **key success factors** for developing these relationships, and **to share the lessons learnt** with other community growing groups around the country. Sydenham Garden is one of these case studies.



Case Study

Sydenham Garden

Service provision

Sydenham Garden is a charity and wellbeing centre utilising its gardens, nature reserve and activity rooms to help people in their recovery from mental ill-health in Lewisham and Bromley, in a way that is accessible and open to all. Sydenham Garden provides green care, nature-based activities and arts and crafts for different client groups (called co-workers) including adult mental health and people for early stage dementia.

They run four main projects, across its two sites in Wynell Road and De Frene, plus many supplementary activities and clubs. There are a variety of therapeutic gardening sessions throughout the week for co-workers run by experienced staff and supported by volunteers. Three of these projects The Garden, Art and Craft and Growing Lives are focused on Adult Mental Health and include gardening, art and craft, cooking and opportunities to achieve recognised qualifications.

A typical placement lasts between 6-12 months with the possibility to extend this by changing projects, which enables co-workers to fully benefit from their personal development programme. Sydenham Garden has an established health professional referral network in place built up over the last 12 years, covering over 20 agencies and supported by an Outreach and Development Worker. A clear and effective referral process and criteria for acceptance onto a project, has been an important part of the services. During 2016-17 Sydenham Garden received 421 referrals with 349 individuals attending at least one session.

The fourth project, Sow and Grow, is focused on the early stages of dementia which is underpinned with Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST). The commissioners recognise the importance of CST which is recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) guidance.

Sydenham Garden has been successful as it has focused aims and objectives (see previous case study) and a culture that recognises these and allows for individualism and honesty. As a community based organisation, they promote inclusion and reduce prejudice as co-workers with different degrees of mental and physical ill health work with volunteers and members of the local community. The service is run by over 75 team members, 10 of whom are paid employees and the rest are volunteers. With a 1:6 ratio of paid staff to volunteers, the volunteers are crucial in terms of running sessions and providing office support. The project leaders provide supervision and there are forums for discussion, training and appraisals so that volunteers and staff members are supported and feel understood which underpins a low turnover of volunteers.

"I believe one key to our more recent success is to focus on character and culture. Our team is made up fundamentally by characters rather than competencies or qualifications. These characters then help intentionally establish the kind of culture we would like. We want a transparent culture, one that is focussed on solutions and is open, hospitable and honest. Therefore we look for team members who exhibit those character traits!" Tom Gallagher, Director, Sydenham Garden

"Develop strong community ownership - a locally committed Board can be very helpful. Trustees with a personal history of mental ill health can offer an important voice in developing the direction of a project." Jim Sikorski, Founding Member and Chair, Sydenham Garden

Route to commissioning

Sydenham Garden was originally set up by a GP and mental health lead, with extensive/valuable knowledge and contacts in the health service. Initially the gardening sessions were held at a GP practice and run by volunteers before moving to its current site. The founder GP built up awareness of the service by presenting at a local GP learning event. Whilst the gardening sessions have been commissioned by Lewisham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) since May 2013 the commissioned work accounts for 33% of the total cost but only 12% of the income. The majority of the funding comes through grants, trusts and foundations, development organisations and the local council. 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. Sydenham Garden provides a real alternative to the talking therapies and often a solution for those who don't fit into any existing pathway. "A key ingredient is our open door policy. We want to make time for others, we want people to arrive and see our "normal selves" rather than a presentation. I think the commissioners have appreciated that over the years." Tom Gallagher, Director, Sydenham Garden

Partnership working

Partnership working and relationship building underpins Sydenham Garden's success. A strong relationship has been built up with local NHS and is evolving into a partnership with more traditional therapy models such as Improving Access to Physiological Therapies (IAPT). Key individuals, such as the founder, Dr Jim Sikorski, who was a GP and mental health lead in the borough, have helped shaped this, and some relationships have been maintained through networks such as the mental health partnership board.

Sydenham Garden also has an Outreach Worker who works 3 days a week and directly approaches organisations and individuals and also signposts co-workers at the end of their time at Sydenham Garden. Being able to understand the local health landscape, being imaginative and flexible has contributed to their success. Annually Sydenham Garden invite trainee GPs to visit to help explain and demonstrate the benefits. Commissioners are also encouraged to visit and inviting people to see the project for themselves and talk to participants has

been key to relationship building and getting people to understand the benefits.

Evaluating outcomes and impact

The yearly evaluation of its services enables Sydenham Garden to demonstrate the need and value for money, as the service is cheaper than other providers with larger expensive models. These evaluations have become more thorough and have implemented recognised measures over the past three years using The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS); a widely recognised patient reported outcome measure (PROM) and bespoke Likert Scales. Commissioners also recognise the value of patient reported experience measures (PREMS), so case studies and user feedback are extensively used for the evaluation. The Garden Project and Art and Craft have successfully improved the health, wellbeing and, to some extent status of its co-workers. The co-workers themselves have identified the Garden project as a vital part to the improvements they've experienced and this is validated by the results reported through WEMWBS. The results are publicly available in full on the charity's website. They also had a qualitative evaluation published in the British Journal of General Practice in 2012 co-authored by Dr Sikorski, so used the appropriate professional journal to promote their success. (Primary-care based participatory rehabilitation: users' views of a horticultural and arts project. Elizabeth A Barley, Susan Robinson and Jim Sikorski, Br J Gen Pract 2012; 62 (595): e127-e134).

"There are now strong grounds for confidence that these activities contribute to measurable recovery and that there is a place for them in any good community mental health provision." Jim Sikorski, Founding Member and Chair, Sydenham Garden

Other

Sydenham Garden was originally inspired by the Blackthorn Trust garden in Maidstone, Kent, but was set up without the underlying anthroposophical (Steiner) approach to therapeutic activities.

Successfully adapting an existing model helped with the initial set up as has their flexibility to change and improve the service. As the service has developed the importance of signposting co-workers at the end of their placement has meant that there has been a focus on improving the transition experience on leaving the project.

Next steps

- Looking to negotiate a fuller, longer term contract with the CCG
- Looking at other gaps in the mental health service e.g. family intervention and perinatal mental health.
- Currently exploring extending partnership work to include a local youth charity to cover a younger age group
- Opportunities to expand the service overall in terms of staff and space including weekend sessions.

Further information

For more information please see the Growing Health case study on Sydenham Garden

www.sydenhamgarden.org.uk

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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.

To sign up to the Growing Health network visit

www.growinghealth.info

