New Shoots Impact Report 2022-2023

Part-funded by HCC's Physical Activity Grants Programme

Introduction:

New Shoots was first designed as a 15 week programme of weekly two hour nature-based activities, using the five ways to wellbeing to aid mental health recovery.

It is aimed at people with mild to moderate mental health conditions such as stress, anxiety and depression although the first two blocks attracted several people with severe and enduring mental illness.

After two blocks of 15 weeks, the programme was modified to **six week blocks**, see poster right. The last fully-attended block ran in September 2023.

The five ways to wellbeing include physical activity, connecting with others, learning new skills, giving to others and mindfulness. The impact of the project has been presented here with these five themes in mind.

Are you struggling? Could being in nature help?

Join us at New Shoots for two hours a week, gardening together for wellbeing, at the Triangle Community Garden.

New Shoots is a six-week course focusing on natural ways to improve wellbeing - including physical activity, connecting with others, helping each other, learning new skills and mindfulness. All sessions will be outdoors in nature. No gardening experience needed.

New Shoots

www.trianglegarden.org

The Triangle Community Garden · Connect, grow, enjoy! · 20 years

Starting soon - Please enquire

Six weeks of gardening together for wellbeing at the Triangle Garden, Ransom's Rec SG5 1RB

Fridays 1-3pm

Please email julie@trianglegarden.org to book a subsidised place
Cost: £5/session (refunded on attendance), includes free entry to Cambridge Botanical Gardens

This is one of a series of projects run by the Triangle Garden each year, to enable people taking part to "Connect, Grow, Enjoy!"

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Company No 7676360
Regd Charity No 1145243

Being Physical

We were able to offer gardening activities that were adaptable and could provide different physical activity for people of all abilities. eg Walking to the garden, hoeing, mulching, digging wheeling barrows and sieving.

Feedback from daily notes - ‘Had a good day today. I enjoy getting up doing a bit of exercise in the fresh air and walking into town’.

How impact was measured: Participants completed survey sheets using the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, WEMBWS, and Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale, MAAS, at the beginning, middle and end of the blocks. Step count was measured and daily notes were recorded.

Connecting with People

Individuals came from different backgrounds and abilities and had different life experience and skills to offer.

Feedback from daily notes – ‘Amazing place and lovely people, feels like therapy’, ‘Great session in beautiful surroundings, meeting lovely people’, ‘I enjoyed engaging with people’

WEMWBS impact: improved scores for ‘feeling closer to other people’, ‘feeling good about themselves’, ‘feeling interested in other people’ and ‘feeling more relaxed’.

Learning New Skills

People reported that they had learnt new skills whilst attending sessions. Using gardening, cookery, art, as well as visits to Cambridge Botanical Gardens provided people the opportunity to learn new skills.

Feedback from daily notes - 'I enjoyed learning about the different herbs in the garden and the plants in the Forest Garden. This was particularly noticeable in the spring and summer', 'It was also productive to make a book on weeds, and include the detail on the weeds, such as the Latin and also common names', 'I have enjoyed learning about weeds and horticulture in general''.

WEMWBS impact: improved scores for **'**dealing with problems well', 'being interested in new things' and 'feeling useful'.

Giving to Others

Whilst attending, people gave their time, volunteering and making improvements to the community garden, Forest Garden and allotment.

Opportunities to volunteer at our Apple Day and Open Day events were taken up by 4 individuals.

Four people joined the TCG Garden Club on Friday mornings and three continue to volunteer their time to the project (one moved away).

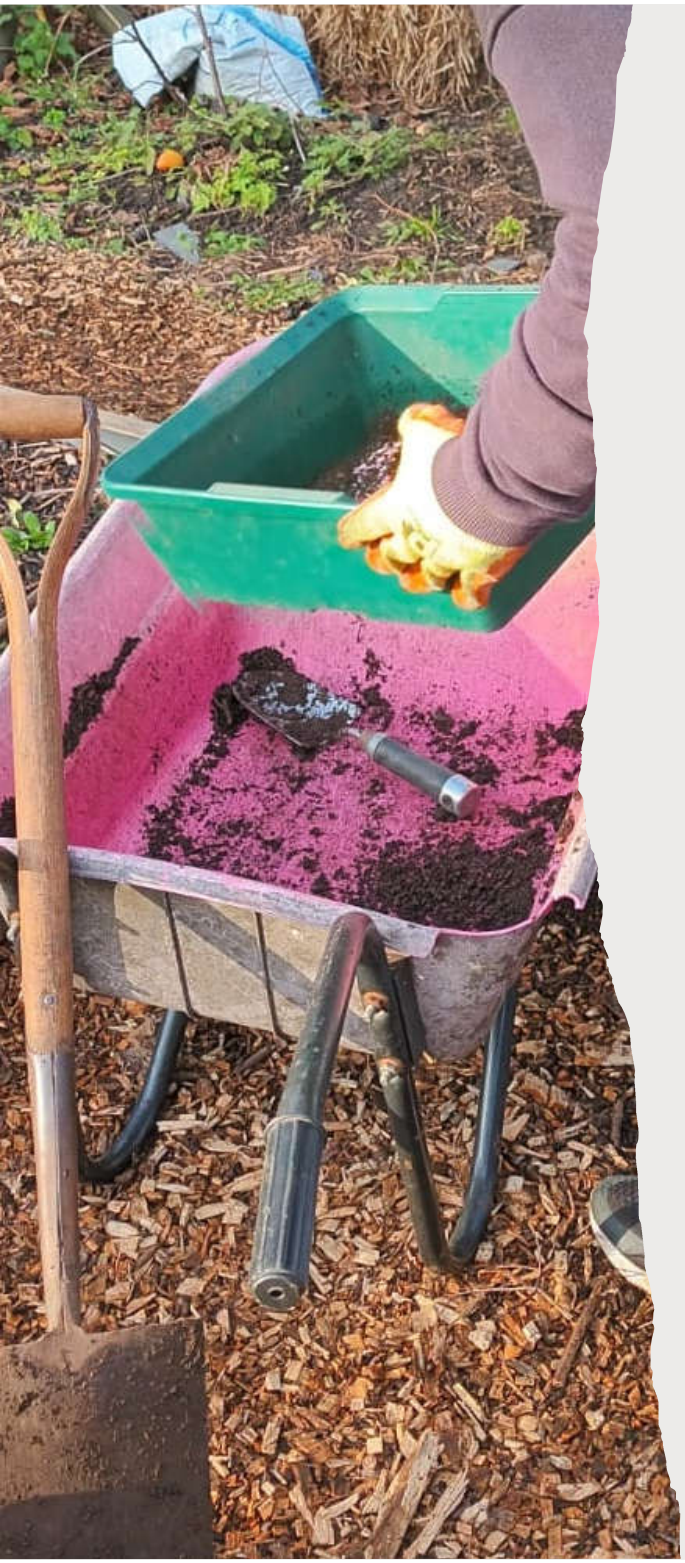
One joined our Growing Ability project (for people with long term support needs) following his time at New Shoots. One has become a support volunteer with Growing Ability, assisting at sessions.

WEMWBS impact: improved scores for ‘I’ve been interested in new things’, ‘I’ve been feeling useful’.

Experiencing Mindfulness

During sessions there were walks to the community garden where people were able to look at the seasonal changes, to taste and smell herbs, fruit and even Szechuan pepper corns. Activities using art and gardening activities such as hoeing presented opportunities for people to appreciate and observe and be self-aware of their environment; to connect with nature. Building confidence to be outdoors in all seasons and weather

Feedback from daily notes - ‘When I used the shears, it took the weight off my shoulders’, ‘There was a smell of mint from the cut plants’, ‘Felt happy and encouraged at the end of the session’



Impact

The greatest impact participants recorded over the whole programme were:

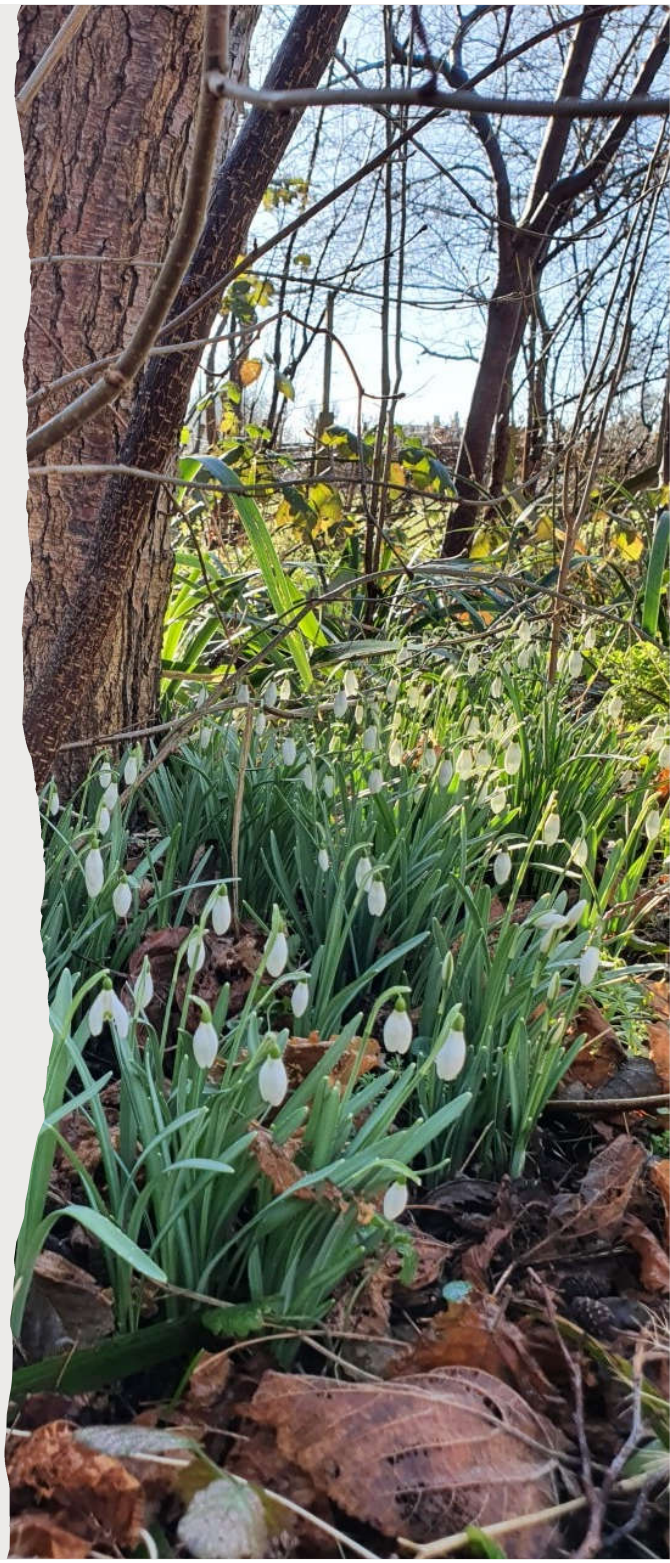
‘I’ve been feeling useful’ and ‘‘I’ve been interested in new things’ which scored 5 (average additional score at the end of the block) and ‘I’ve been feeling confident’ scored 4.5

‘I’ve been feeling optimistic about the future’ scored 4.

Where a lower impact was shown:

‘I’ve been feeling interested in other people’, and ‘I’ve been feeling loved’, both scored 3, however their original rating scored 14 which was very high to start with.

‘I’ve been feeling good about myself’, ‘I’ve been feeling closer to other people’ also had a lower impact of 3 but scored highly at the beginning.



Here's what people said:

'Amazing place and lovely people, feels like therapy'

'Great session in beautiful surroundings, meeting lovely people'

'Very grateful for the opportunity'

'Lovely to reconnect with nature and to do some exercise and something useful, with lovely people. Also enjoyed being shown the plants and tree that are starting to bud and release pollen'

More of what people said:

‘Had a good day today. I enjoy getting up doing a bit of exercise in the fresh air and walking into town. I enjoy engaging with people.’

‘It started to get a bit cold. I enjoyed making the fat ball for the birds’

‘I really enjoyed the soup and cutting the willow using secateurs and taking them home to put in some water (willow)’

‘I enjoyed planting garlic and putting it in the soil. I enjoyed working with the group.’

More of what people said:

‘On the Cambridge trip, it was useful to learn about the different plants in the winter garden such as the winter aconites and the flowering snowdrops.’

‘I enjoyed learning about the different herbs in the garden and the plants in the Forest Garden. This was particularly noticeable in the spring and summer.’

‘Last weeks trip to the CBG, was amazing. So, engrossing to look at the beautiful plants with knowledgeable staff and volunteers. It was such a happy day’

More of what people said:

‘It’s helpful for me to come’

‘I would like to do another New Shoots on a Friday’

‘I like to talk to people and to meet new people’

‘I like to be around other people, growing seeds and things.’

‘I have enjoyed learning about weeds and horticulture in general’

‘I would like to come to Friday mornings (Garden Club). I would like to do more weeding and planting, propagation and grow herbs.’

‘Coming to an end now, I would like to carry on’

Case Study:

‘When I came to the Triangle Garden my mental health was poor, I constantly felt tired and anxious and felt I had no time or motivation to do anything about it.

Initially, just meeting the staff and volunteers was reassuring, as they were all friendly and calm with a passion for the project that was contagious.

Steve spent time showing me around the forest garden and sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm about the different plants, their purpose within the garden, what they produced and how this was used. It was fascinating and inspiring, a magical place to forget the stresses of daily life and feel at one with nature.

I joined the New Shoots programme and started to look forward to this time every week when I could feel calm and energised. As someone with a sedentary lifestyle these sessions provided a good variety of activity to improve my physical as well as my mental health. I learn something new each week about gardening and nature, which has motivated me to get out walking more in nature and grow my own food this year.’

Appendix - Statistics

Member	Total Steps	Recorded Weeks	Average
A	11087	8	1386
B	9253	7	1321
C	14709	9	1,634
D	8844	7	1263
E	19793	8	2474
F	15650	10	1565
G	6800	4	1700
Average	**86136**	**53**	**1625**

October 2022-
February 2023-
Average steps
recorded

Group Scores:

As well as individual scores we looked at group averages to see where improvements were generally being felt

Mindfulness Assessment Of Day To Day Experiences Group Impact From 10.6.22 to 23.9.22

Summary of MAAS	Start	End		Difference
I could be experiencing some emotion and not be conscious of it until some time later	35	19		16
I break or spill things because of carelessness, not paying attention, or thinking about something else.	35	27		8
I find it difficult to stay focused on what's happeming in the present	32	26		6
I tend to walk quickly to get where I'm going without paying attention to what I experience along the way.	32	25		7
I tend not to notice feelings of physical tension or discomfort until they really grab my attention	28	20		8
I forget a persons name almost as soon as Ive been told it for the first time	22	19		3
It seems I am running on 'automatic' without much awareness of what I am doing	27	22		5
I rush through activities without being attentive to them	36	30		6
I get so focused on the goal I want to achieve, that I lose touch with what I am doing right nowto get there	35	28		7
I do jobs or tasks automatically without being aware of what I'm doing.	33	26		7
I find myself listening to someone with one ear, doing something else at the same time	26	22		4
I drive places on automatic pilot and then wonder why I went there	33	20		13
I find myself preoccupied with the fututre or the past	28	18		10
I find myself doing things without paying attention	25	27		-2
I snack without being aware of what I am eating	29	29		0
o score the scale, simply compute a mean of the 15 items. Lower scores reflect higher levels of dispositional mindfulness.				

Group Scores:

As well as individual scores we looked at group averages to see where improvements were generally being felt

The Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (WEMWBS) overall groups Group impact from June 22 to Feb 2023	**Group impact from 10.6.22 to 23.9.22**	**Group impact from Oct-Feb 23**		Overall Average Impact
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	+4	+4		+4
I've been feeling useful	+5	+5		+5
I've been feeling relaxed	-2	+4		+2
I've been feeling interested in other people	+1	+2		+1.5
I've had energy to spare	+2	+3		+2.5
I've been dealing with problems well	-2	+3		+0.5
I've been thinking clearly	+4	+3		+3.5
I've been feeling good about myself	+1	+3		+2
I've been feeling closer to other people	0	+4		+2
I've been feeling confident	+4	+5		+4.5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	+1	+5		+3
I've been feeling loved	+1	+3		+2
I've been interested in new things	+8	+2		+5
I've been more cheerful	+5	+1		+3
Total				

WEMWBS Scores

Individuals' WEMWBS scores were recorded for each block and tested for statistical significance using Wilcoxon's Matched Pair Signed Rank Test (which is suitable for low sample numbers).

The results show that the overall improvement in wellbeing between before and after the programme was statistically significant.

Attendees of all three blocks were offered a follow-on place at Friday Garden Club if they wished to take it up. Several are now regular Friday Garden Club attenders, one has joined our Growing Ability project as an attendee and one is now a regular support volunteer with Growing Ability.

For those who work on Fridays we also offer Sunday Garden Club once a month which is regularly attended by former New Shoots participants.

April-22 to Sept-23 New Shoots Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Health Well-being Scale (WEMWBS)				
Individual Number (anonymised)	Score Before Programme	Score After Programme	Total Difference in Score	
1	48	54	6	
2	38	56	18	
3	38	47	9	
4	46	43	-3	
5	58	59	1	
6	43	45	2	
7	46	49	3	
8	48	57	9	
9	50	50	0	
10	46	45	-1	
11	54	43	-11	
12	37	47	10	
13	31	35	4	
14	42	47	5	
15	33	45	12	
Statistical Analysis:	Wilcoxon's Matched Pair Signed Rank		**4**	median
p value:	0.03			
Confidence Level:	95%			
	Statistically Significant ✓			