

Good afternoon,

Our community garden project opened in June 2021 and is accessible to everyone, providing a focal point for the area where connections can be made, social isolation and loneliness improved, nutritious food grown and shared, and we can make a positive environmental impact as waste is reduced. Thanks to generous funding from yourselves and others, our part-time project leader, Dawn, is working to establish connections with local Mental Health Charities and agencies, and local people of all ages to build relationships, encouraging everyone to come along and enjoy the garden, to relax or grow fruit and vegetables, being guided in tasks in accordance with their ability. Our community garden has been designed to be easily accessible to all with a level path to aid the elderly, disabled and those with prams/buggies. The garden looks attractive and there is seating onsite with tea & coffee available. The project caters for individuals of all ages and abilities. There is also plenty of space around the garden for social distancing if needed.

The addition of a Community Fridge/Freezer in December 2021 has been very well received and is already well used. We have developed a good relationship with the local Co-op store and we collect food from them 5 days per week.

When the garden opened, as it was school holidays, we started a weekly children's group, allowing families to enjoy time together in the garden planting seeds, doing some craft activities and playing garden games. We have continued this through each school holiday in this disadvantaged area, and we are now holding a 'stay and play' group for young children and their carers too. In addition, we have run 'ArtStreams' which is fun and therapeutic for all ages, well-being groups and Children's Holiday Cooking Sessions.

The garden is open to all, so it's a safe space for all ages to come and relax or help out in the garden, with good access for everyone. It is a safe haven for older people, those with a wide variety of issues and disabilities, as well as families and individuals who may be feeling isolated. Regular visitors include Project 49, which provides day services to adults with learning disabilities and associated needs.

Many visitors are directed to us by foodbanks and word is spreading. With the Community Fridge we are making a great impact in reducing food waste as well as supporting our community's needs. We are building relationships with those attending. Dawn has spent some time with some of our users who are struggling with personal issues and offered them a safe space to talk and share their problems without judgement. Issues include homelessness, bereavement, loneliness, unemployment and financial issues.

We are achieving great outcomes from our project. Many thanks for your generous award of £3000 made earlier this year towards this work. It's truly appreciated in this disadvantaged area.

With thanks and kind regards,

Sharon Stone

On behalf of Revd Colin Baldwin