

# Thank you from Grow for Life

Impact report prepared for The Ninevah Charitable Trust



**Grow for Life**  
Transforming lives through gardening

**Last year, the Trustees of The Ninevah Charitable Trust generously supported Grow for Life (GFL), with a grant in support of our work - thank you. We hope that as you read highlights from over the last year, you'll be inspired and encouraged, at the way your gift has positively impacted the lives of our Gardeners and the increased beauty and biodiversity of our gardens and green spaces. We are so grateful for your commitment to our work - thank you!**

## Vision and mission

GFL's vision is a world where people experiencing low confidence, anxiety, depression or isolation are restored to **live life to the full**. Our purpose is to nurture people so that they flourish. We do this by welcoming people into the safe space of a garden where we inspire, build skills, create connections and provide a pathway to work.

## Our approach

We provide therapeutic horticulture for Bath & NE Somerset residents who are struggling with mental health issues, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression or isolation. Our project participants are known as our Gardeners. Each attends a block of therapeutic horticulture with us. Sessions are held in private and public gardens, or at our beautiful Walled Garden and orchard. Gardeners learn horticultural skills and gain experience of gardening in various settings. Recovering from mental health issues takes time. Therapeutic horticulture requires a high ratio of staff to Gardeners to listen, talk, encourage and to share horticultural and social skills. Our skilled team of staff and volunteers create an environment where Gardeners can overcome isolation & increase their confidence and self-esteem.

## Walled Garden updates

Over the last year the Walled Garden has truly flourished! What was once an abandoned and overgrown green space is almost unrecognisable. A major milestone has been the completion of our pond. This was a key feature identified by our Gardeners, when we began to co-create the space with them. Water always brings life, and our new pond has brought new wildlife in abundance. It's been wonderful to see dragonflies hovering across the water, alongside bees and wasps using it as a watering hole. The pond offers a calming atmosphere and sense of tranquillity in the garden, providing a focal point for moments of quiet contemplation.

Our 'Friends of the Walled Garden' group meets fortnightly. This group aims to keep those Gardeners who have completed the series of therapeutic sessions connected with the Grow for Life family and allows those Gardeners who feel they want to give-back, along with volunteers, an opportunity to support the work of the Garden, for others.



In May we held our Open Days at the Walled Garden, which were a great success. We were fortunate to welcome Charles Dowding, who kindly shared a no-dig demonstration in the vegetable garden. We shared orchard and garden tours, alongside plenty of tea and cake and a plant sale!

Our ever popular Apple Day returned in the autumn. All who attended were able to pick apples, wash, bosh and scrat those apples before having them added to the layered of apple pulp in the press. The fresh apple juice we tasted was delicious!



## Our impact

We are incredibly proud of and grateful to our growing volunteer community, who partner with us to deliver our mission. Over the last year GFL volunteers have generously donated time and support in the following ways:

**1500**  
hours of supported,  
therapeutic gardening



**432**  
hours of volunteers -  
supporting the work  
of the garden



**179**  
hours of specialist  
admin, mentoring  
and training support

This equates to a whopping **2100 volunteer hours** - all adding capacity and skills to our programme work and strengthening relationships across our local community.

## Grow for Life supporting employment

The therapeutic nature of our approach, is a key factor in supporting Gardeners back into work, following a time of mental ill health. Here, one of our Gardeners kindly shares their positive experiences of working with the GFL team as part of their recovery and return to work:

*'It's good because I think it makes me realize how important my other work is... It made me a bit more enthusiastic about my work whereas I was getting a bit bored and tired of it. I've found that I've gone back to my work feeling a bit more inspired... I think gardening is quite therapeutic for me. The benefits were when you completed a task. It was a real good feeling, like when the time to finish came it was very rewarding to see the work you had done and it gave you confidence that you were able to do so much work... it was very rewarding.'*

Now back at work, this Gardener is positive about recommending GFL support to others who might be experiencing a difficult time:

*'I would definitely recommend it (Grow for Life) and I would say that it would really help their confidence, their motivation and their passion for their work. It would inspire them, working with other people . . . I'm grateful to you for looking after me.'*



## Therapeutic horticulture sessions

Our core activities and outputs centre around weekly sessions, delivered by our team of part time staff and dedicated volunteers have enabled 75 people to benefit from our therapeutic horticulture services this year.

Our regular sessions include a starter group at the Walled Garden for new referrals, helping us to restore the beautiful Walled Garden and orchard. We lead a popular 'Herbs and Nature' course, focused on learning about and growing herbs, and connecting with nature through tree walks in Royal Victoria Park, Bath.

Our peripatetic group moves from venue to venue - the Walled Garden, our coppice and orchard, Haycombe Cemetery, private gardens of care homes and needy individuals. This group is focused upon preparing the Gardeners for employment.



## Growing our Own

We value the opportunity to nurture every Gardener's growth and development. Here, a member of our team shares the impact that Grow for Life has had on their life. Since joining in March 2020, during a period of mental ill health, they have embraced every opportunity to grow in confidence and learn new skills. First transitioning to become a core volunteer, they are now working as a much valued, paid Session Leader.



**“ My favourite thing about my role is working with people who are in a position similar to the one I was when I joined, and seeing the positive impact it has on their lives. It is also a ceaseless opportunity to learn and to share my love and enthusiasm about all aspects of nature. Above all, Grow for Life is in my view, an ever-changing community of friendly people who come together in ever-changing gardens, to share or re-discover their love for gardening, but more importantly, to spread and rekindle their love for life.”**

Kindly shared by a Grow for Life Session Leader

### Partnerships

We are delighted to have continued our partnerships with Genesis Trust in Bath and Boys in Mind (BiM). Over the last year we've led a course specifically designed to support 12 adults supported by the Genesis Trust, to gain new skills and develop confidence at the Walled Garden as part of their pathway to work.

We've welcomed 30 boys from Beechen Cliff school through BiM. These lively sessions engage the boys with positive activities, increase their confidence and calm anxieties through connection with nature. Comments from the boys attending these sessions include:

**'I have learnt how to calm myself'**

**'Being outside and getting fresh air helps me not to get stressed'**

**'I am getting better at working in a team and learning new skills'**

### Challenges and opportunities

We continue to focus upon ways to enable Gardeners to take the positive step from referral to active engagement with our support services. We are experiencing increased demand for our service and a growing number of referrals which shows us that awareness of our service and positive impact is increasing. However, we continue to observe that prospective Gardeners find it challenging to take the first step in attending a course.

This year, we have increased the capacity of our Therapeutic Horticultural Lead, in order to further support this transition stage. With greater support at the point of referral, we hope to be able to see an uplift in Gardeners attending a group with GFL.



Thank you so much for your generous support for GFL over the past year. It is wonderful to see Gardeners benefit from the enhancements to the garden, and from the mentorship they receive from our dedicated team.

I have had the great pleasure of welcoming a number of our supporters into the Walled Garden and restored orchard this year, to enable them to see the impact of their kind support. We'd be delighted to welcome you to Grow for Life so that you can meet our teams and see the beauty of the garden for yourself.

*With warmest wishes, Alex*

Dr Alex Eldridge, Director of Grow for Life

