

Grow with Hextol Project Report 2025

In 2025 we delivered the second year of **Grow with Hextol**, a wellbeing gardening project based in the grounds of a local care home. The Nineveh Trust's support enabled five beneficiaries to participate, supported by two volunteer supervisors and Hextol Gardening staff.

Grow with Hextol was developed to broaden gardening opportunities for our beneficiaries. Our gardening team previously focused solely on client gardens within our social enterprise, maintaining high standards to justify fees. We recruited volunteers capable of meeting these standards, appealing to those who enjoyed the challenge.

Recognising that not all interested individuals possess these skills, and valuing the mental health benefits of outdoor work, **Grow with Hextol** offers accessible gardening opportunities without strict quality expectations. The nurturing, slower-paced approach means that individuals who are unable to participate in our commercial gardening service could still take part and thrive.



5

beneficiaries

42

**hours of
gardening**

3

**Intergenerational
workshops**

Project Expenditure

Plants and materials - £90

Garden supervisor delivery and preparation
(64 hours at £15ph) - £960

Beneficiary engagement manager
(60 hours at £20ph) - £1200

Management salary
(10 hours at £25ph) - £250

Total: £2500

The new model also allows greater creative input and opportunities to grow plants from seed - an essential component of therapeutic horticulture that nurtures skills and delivers rewarding results with food and flowers.

Our beneficiaries continued to grow and harvest crops that were then used in our café and catering service. They had a particularly fruitful raspberry harvest! They also built an A-frame to grow peas and took part in a workshop about composting.

Continuing the project into a second year has been a really positive experience, as beneficiaries have been able to see the long-term results of their hard work.

Another element of the project has involved our gardeners and beneficiaries delivering workshops for the care home residents. These have been opportunities to bring the benefits of gardening inside, for example by planting up herbs in windowsill pots.

We have seen huge benefits for our beneficiaries through the **Grow with Hextol** project. The focus on nurturing plants has opened up our gardening work to a broader range of participants. We've found that working with a small group has led to some unlikely friendships developing. The project has strengthened our commitment to expanding our gardening projects to more of our beneficiaries.

'Gardening on Wednesday was all that I hoped for with this project - happy and productive!'
(Volunteer Supervisor)

Challenges

While the gardening element of the project thrived and continued to offer therapeutic, social and practical benefits, the partnership work with the care home was significantly affected by staffing changes following a CQC inspection and "requires improvement" rating. This meant we could not deliver the full programme of intergenerational workshops as planned. Our team were able to deliver three workshops that involved both our beneficiaries and care home residents and we engaged with care home residents and families in other, more organic, ways. In Year 1 of the project, we had struggled to keep plants watered while not on site, but this year the husband of one of the residents volunteered to help us with this and donated equipment. One of our participants who communicates using sign language also enjoyed regular conversations about the garden with a resident.

Despite the external challenges, the project still delivered valuable outcomes for our beneficiaries, strengthened friendships, enhanced wellbeing, and reinforced our commitment to widening access to gardening opportunities

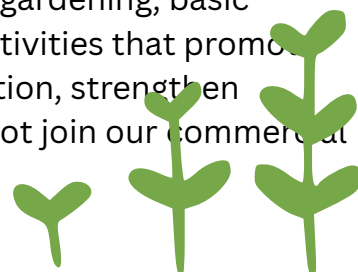
Lessons learned

As with many projects, partner-dependent elements can be vulnerable, especially when working in sectors with high levels of staff turnover. The initial success of the project was heavily reliant on committed care-home management, and the changes this year highlight the risks of depending on a single partner and project site.

However, the therapeutic gardening component remains robust. Even without resident involvement, our horticultural work continued uninterrupted and the nurturing, small-group model has proven to be highly beneficial to participants.

Moving forward, we have decided to mitigate these risks by expanding **Grow with Hextol** across multiple community settings through partnerships with Chrysalis, Grow Hexham, Gap Supported Housing and Adapt. Working with these partners will enable us to deliver inclusive horticulture sessions in a wider range of accessible spaces, each shaped by the needs of local participants.

Sessions will follow our proven, supportive model, offering hands-on gardening, basic horticultural learning, opportunities to grow food and flowers, and activities that promote social interaction. Working across several sites will increase participation, strengthen community links, and create more opportunities for people who cannot join our commercial gardening teams.



Case Study

One of our beneficiaries, who has been with us since 2007 and never expressed an interest in gardening, took part in **Grow with Hextol** and now has the confidence to come along on gardening jobs with a support worker. His family told us:

“It was certainly a step outside his comfort zone. He was very proud of his hard work!”

Jonathan told us that the project made him feel ‘Happy, involved and useful’ and that he enjoyed harvesting crops, making new friends and learning how to make beetle boxes.

