



Annual Report 2010–2011

Personal development through gardening





Background

Strong Roots evolved following a successful pilot project that worked with young people recovering from mental illness and with asylum seekers. Evaluation of the pilot demonstrated the potential psychological and physical health benefits of the project, which appeared to also play a role in reducing social isolation. Strong Roots adopted a constitution in March 2006 as an Unincorporated Association and became a registered charity in July 2008.

Strong Roots received ten months funding from Acorn Grant in July 2006, and was awarded three years Well Being (Big Lottery) funding in January 2008. This funding ran out at the end of February 2011.

Strong Roots is based on a quadruple allotment plot on the Bluebell Allotment site in Norwich. The project has borders which are designated for sole use of each individual group, in addition to shared areas which participants from all groups are able to help develop. All aspects of the project promote personal development.

Facilities include a composting toilet and four wooden benches which provide a welcoming and much appreciated seating area in the garden.

Lucy Scurfield, the Strong Roots co-ordinator, has a BSc (Hons) in Integrative Therapy and counselling and is registered with the United Kingdom Council of Psychotherapy (Psychotherapeutic Counselling College). She is also accredited through the Independent Practitioners' Network process. She has extensive experience of the therapeutic use of horticulture with vulnerable groups of people, including boys excluded from mainstream education, ex-offenders, adults with learning difficulties, those experiencing mental illness and asylum seekers and refugees.

In this accounting period [1/7/10-30/6/11] Strong Roots took referrals from: Adult Education; Age Concern (Norwich); Base Line (Future Projects); Families Unit, Norwich City Council; Central Norfolk Early Intervention Team, City Outreach Team, South Norfolk Team, Recovery Team (all part of Norfolk and Waveney Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust); Julian Housing; Long Stratton High School; Meridian East; TADS [Treatment of Alcohol and Drug Services]. Seven of these agencies made referrals prior to this time.

Aims and objectives

Strong Roots provides a safe and supportive environment that encourages participants' personal development through:

- making connections with nature, themselves and others through group work
- learning new skills, enhancing existing skills and building confidence
- learning through experience, including making 'mistakes'
- contributing to decisions that determine how the plot and project evolves
- promoting good physical and mental health
- reducing social isolation and enhancing social interaction
- breaking down prejudices and fears and tackling stigma



A beneficiary:

"The one to one discussions are more suited to me than a group... The gardening has helped the talking, as being in a natural environment... in an open space is less confining. The talking has helped me to be more open."

Beneficiaries

Potential participants are referred by both statutory and non statutory agencies within Norwich and the surrounding area. Participants are experiencing social exclusion for a variety of reasons. There is no upper or lower age limit for potential participants.

To date such organisations include: Adult Education; Age Concern (Norwich); Base Line (Future Projects); Blackhorse Centre; Families Unit, Norwich City Council; Broadland Area Team, Central Norfolk Early Intervention Team, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service [CAMHS], City Outreach Team, Forensic Mental Health Service, South Norfolk Team, Recovery Team (all part of Norfolk and Waveney Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust); Eaton Hall School; Julian Housing; Long Stratton High School; Mancroft Advice Project; Meridian East; Norfolk and Norwich Scope Association (NANSA); Norwich City College; Norwich Community Learning Difficulties Team; SeVa [Sexual Violence Alliance]; TADS [Treatment of Drug and Alcohol Services].

How referrals are made

Potential referral agencies make contact with the co-ordinator to arrange an informal visit to the site. This provides an opportunity to explain the aims of the project, and explain what happens during a session. Potential participants are given written information about the project to help inform their decision making about whether Strong Roots is for them. Once the participant, referrer and co-ordinator are in agreement that the person will attend, the referrer completes a referral form (including risk assessment and risk management plan), and the client signs an agreement to confirm that they have read and accepted the Code of Conduct (see appendix 1).

A beneficiary:

"I find small rooms claustrophobic but I feel more open in an outside space. I find it easier to talk because it is peaceful but not completely silent."

The sessions

Each session lasts two hours. The co-ordinator welcomes all participants and encourages discussion about work to be done, and participants choose what to work on. In addition to working outside to develop the borders and shared areas, there is a summer house providing shelter, and a wealth of materials to research all aspects of horticulture and wildlife. There is usually a refreshment break of about twenty minutes during the session. At the end of each session there is time set aside to reflect on how the session has been, and to tidy away.

During the sessions individuals choose the nature and level of activity, whether to talk or not, and what to talk about. Everyone is accepted for their input, whatever that might be. The unconditional acceptance of every participant is fundamental. The co-ordinator, co-facilitators and volunteers lead by example, working alongside participants and interacting with everyone in a respectful, non-directive manner. Participants are encouraged to contribute to the evolution of the borders of both their own group and shared areas, and are invited to express themselves in whatever way feels appropriate to them.

Volunteers

During this accounting period [1/7/10-30/6/11] eleven volunteers have worked on the project, six of whom joined prior to this time. Volunteers are integral to the project. Strong Roots works closely with agencies active in promoting volunteering, including the University of East Anglia and Voluntary Norfolk.

Volunteers are vital in ensuring the independent, innovative nature of Strong Roots. Volunteers support the co-ordinator in the delivery of all aspects of the project. The nature of the tasks undertaken by each volunteer will depend on their skills and interests.

Jamie Laurence, volunteer:

“I liked how people were allowed their input into the project and were always listened to and respected. To me, the sessions seemed to be about giving people a few hours to just be in the moment and focus on a physical activity in the open air. The garden space itself is beautiful and feels like a calm and safe place to be.”





Evaluation and monitoring

Evaluation methodology

Evaluation of the project is vital to the continuing development and success of Strong Roots. It includes feedback from the referral agencies, co-facilitators and on site volunteers.

However the most important feedback is from participants who, having decided they want to attend, are given an initial evaluation which serves as a baseline assessment. Participants are subsequently given an evaluation form on a quarterly basis and final evaluation form when they leave. Evaluation is to assess whether attendance at the project is beneficial to the participant, with particular focus on confidence, teamwork, assertiveness and social interaction skills.

It is important that the beneficiaries understand that the evaluation is of Strong Roots and not of themselves but may reflect their development. To ensure impartiality the co-ordinator, volunteers and trustees of Strong Roots are not involved in the evaluation process. Participants are encouraged to complete evaluation forms independently or with the help of their referral agency. Participants are also encouraged to comment on their experience at Strong Roots.

Evaluation forms can be found in appendix 2.

Whilst in receipt of Well Being (Big Lottery) funding Strong Roots reported back to the fund managers to ensure that the project fulfilled its contractual obligations, and met agreed outcomes.

Trustees meet monthly to ensure that Strong Roots remains true to its governing document/constitution.

Katie Breakspeare – impressions of volunteering with Strong Roots:

“The allotment remains a constant, safe environment, slightly tucked away from the rest of the world... what is so special about Strong Roots is [that] there are no deadlines or mistakes. It took me a few weeks to realise what Lucy meant [when saying] it was about the ‘being not the doing’ – the allotment space and the session time is used how ever it will benefit people most that day.”



The benefits

Numbers engaged

In this accounting period [17/10-30/6/11] five people have attended the Central Norfolk Early Intervention group funded by individual Direct Payments made through Independent Living Norfolk. Three of the group were referred prior to this time.

Forty-eight people have attended the remaining groups funded by Well Being (Big Lottery). This is part of the Eastern Development Centre. Fourteen people were referred prior to this accounting period.

Since the end of the Well Being (Big Lottery) funding in March there have been eight new referrals. The group for Base Line (Future Projects) continued. Other groups became open to any referral agency. Two people paid through personalised budgets and some made donations.

The project has been evaluated on a continuous basis since 1st January 2008. The results of this are given below.

A beneficiary:

“I like coming to Strong Roots because it is quiet, therapeutic and makes me feel good about myself. I also like watching the butterflies and the bees fluttering among the flowers... I like the winter when we have a nice warm bonfire. I feel good about myself when I talk about different issues.”

A beneficiary:

“The group is open to ideas/suggestions, and makes you feel relaxed about relaying ideas. I feel at ease talking about problems or how I have been feeling of late. I don't feel any pressure to do anything I don't want to... I have learned a lot, and feel a lot more confident after a session.”

Outcomes

Everyone who attended the allotment even if only once will have benefitted from the project in terms of getting fresh air, having space and walking. Therefore there may have been positive effects which are not possible to record.

People often comment on how calm they feel whilst at the allotment. This is an example of a benefit to mental well being which might arise from just one visit but is not measurable.

From 1st January 2008 up to the 30th June 2011 – 129 attended for a total of 2,544 hours

	Beneficiaries	Significant change	Some change
Improvement in Well being	129*	63%	37%

*63% of Beneficiaries have given feedback

Summary of demographic details of groups – 1/1/08 – 28/2/11

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service Group

(part of Norfolk and Waveney Mental Health Foundation Trust)

Gender

Male	.8
Female	.7

Age

U13	.4
13-16	.5
17-24	.0
25-40	.3
41-55	.3
55+	.0

Long Stratton High School

Postcode/area

Newton Flotman	.1
NR15	.18
NR16	.1

Gender

Males	.17
Females	.3

Age

U13	.6
13-16	.14

Eaton Hall School

(boys with social and emotional difficulties)

Gender

Males	.6
Females	.0

Age

U13	.0
13-16	.6
17-24	.0
25-40	.0
41-55	.0
55+	.0

Julian Housing (supports adults with long term mental health problems)

Recovery Team

(part of Norfolk and Waveney Mental Health Foundation Trust)

Postcode/area

NR1	.2
NR2	.4
NR3	.2
NR4	.1
NR5	.1
Not known	.2

Gender

Males	.11
Females	.1

Age

U13	.0
13-16	.0
17-24	.0
25-40	.8
41-55	.1
55+	.1
Not known	.2

Meridian East

Group (support adults with long term mental health problems and/or learning difficulties)

Postcode/area

NR1	.2
NR2	.5
NR3	.4
NR4	.1
NR5	.1
NR7	.3
Not Known	.3

Gender

Males	.13
Females	.6

Age

U13	.0
13-16	.0
17-24	.1
25-40	.7
41-55	.7
55+	.3
Not Known	.1

Base Line

(Future Projects – working socially disadvantaged people)

Postcode/area

NR1	.1
NR2	.1
NR3	.1
NR5	.11

Gender

Males	.5
Females	.9

Age

Under 13	.2
13-16	.1
17-24	.1
25-40	.4
41-55	.3
55+	.1

Open Group

(any referral agency)

Postcode/area

Attleborough	.1
Dereham	.1
Diss	.1
NR1	.3
NR2	.3
NR3	.5
NR4	.2
NR5	.5
NR6	.1
NR7	.2
NR9	.1
NR10	.2
NR14	.2
NR17	.1
NR20	.2
Not Known	.11

Gender

Male	.30
Female	.13

Age

U13	.0
13-16	.2
17-24	.9
25-40	.11
41-55	.6
56+	.5
Not Known	.10

Events

Strong Roots held a successful fundraising concert featuring the local community choir Big Sky. It was held at St Thomas Church, Earlham Road and was promoted by BBC Radio Norfolk.



Plans for the future

Trustees are working to secure future funding. From Spring 2012 there will be a charge which will be flexible and decided on an individual basis. The charging policy will be available to all interested parties.

Strong Roots runs weekly sessions. In future, group and/or one-to-one sessions will be offered in order to meet individual emotional well being needs. It is anticipated that the focus will be on preventative work with referrals made through schools and GPs. From Spring 2012 Strong Roots will also take self-referrals. It is hoped that other kinds of creative activities such as painting and writing will be offered for greater flexibility.

Changes made

An area for wildlife is being developed.

Media/Publicity

Articles about Strong Roots have appeared in The Central Norfolk Early Intervention Team Newsletter, the Chronicle [the newsletter of WEETU], April 2009, CSIP Knowledge Community, 11 December 2008, Eastforward, Issue 30 – October 2008, Eco Echo, September 2008, Growing Places [the newsletter of The Federation of Community Farms and Gardens], Issue 4, November 2008 – January 2009, Issue 3 August 2010, Norwich Evening News, 13 October 2008, 11 July 2009, 5 July 2010, The Norfolk Carer, Winter 2008, Norfolk and Central Norfolk MIND Carer Support Service Newsletter, Summer 2009, City of Norwich Partnership newsletter, Issue 5-6 April 2009. Strong Roots is a member of the local Bluebell Allotment Association and had an article in its Summer 2009 newsletter. St Thomas Church Newsletter, October 2010.

Strong Roots has a website www.strongroots.org.uk which gives information about the project and is regularly updated to show the progress and changes throughout the seasons of the site.



Accounts

Statement of Assets and Liabilities – as at 30 June 2011

	2011 £	2010 £
Assets		
Tangible fixed assets at cost:		
Well being in the East – used for charitable purposes	3,889	3,889
Well being in the East – used for administration purposes	1,207	1,207
Cash at bank	2,887	3,573
Total assets	£7,983	£8,101
Liabilities		
Well being in the East – staff costs and expenses	–	78
Early Intervention Service – staff costs	–	–
Total liabilities	–	£78

The statement of assets and liabilities was approved by the Trustees on [] 2011 and signed on their behalf by:

Notes to the Accounts – for the year ended 30 June 2011

1. Funds summary

The charity has the following restricted funds:

Well-being in the East

From 1st January 2008 to 28th February 2011 this project, which provides therapeutic horticultural activities, was led by the Eastern Development Centre with funding provided by the Big Lottery Fund.

Early Intervention Service

This project, which provides a service to young people with mental health problems, is funded by the Central Norfolk Early Intervention Service, part of the Norfolk & Waveney Mental Health Partnership.

An analysis of the movement in funds is set out below:

Funds	1 July 10 £	Receipts £	Payments £	30 June 11 £
Restricted funds:				
Well-being in the East	801	23,933	24,734	–
Early Intervention Service	1,901	2,000	3,901	–
	2,702	25,933	28,635	–
Unrestricted funds	871	3,171	1,155	2,887
Total funds	£3,573	£29,104	£29,790	£2,887

2. Trustees remuneration, benefits and expenses

The Trustees received no remuneration or benefits during the year ended 30 June 2011 or during the year ended 30 June 2010.

Travel and stationery expenses of Nil (2010: £50) were re-imbursed to Trustees during the year.

Appendix 1: Code of Conduct

It is important that Strong Roots maintains a good relationship with neighbouring allotment holders and the local community.

Please be aware of the following allotment regulations:

- Take care not to cause any nuisance or annoyance to other allotment holders or anyone living in the area surrounding our allotment.
- All paths must be kept clear, tidy and free of obstructions.
- There must be no rubbish or waste dumped on the site.
- Nothing must be burnt except for garden waste from the allotment which cannot be composted.
- It is forbidden to use a sprinkler water system or use excessive water when irrigating the plot
- Do not enter other allotments unless invited to do so by the allotment holder.

Ground Rules for the group

- Please treat other participants with courtesy at all times.
- There is no one 'right' way of doing things – how the plot evolves will be determined by all participants – please treat other people's suggestions as you would want others to respond to your suggestion.
- What is said in the group remains confidential within the group*.
- Please give consideration to using language that is appropriate to the situation.
- Please keep voices to a moderate volume.
- No intoxicating or illegal substances are allowed when working on the allotment.

** in exceptional circumstances confidentiality may be breached by the co-ordinator; this will be explained to you in more detail during your first visit.*

Health and Safety

- A first aid kit is kept on site, in the summer house. Lucy Scurfield is the trained first aider.
- Please wear shoes and clothing that are appropriate for the weather/work to be done. We have a limited amount of protective footwear and rainproof clothing that can be borrowed.
- You are responsible for ensuring that you are vaccinated against tetanus. Tetanus is prevalent in Norfolk so vaccination is strongly recommended.
- You are responsible for taking necessary precautions against insect stings, wounds by plants or other material, exposure to sun and inclement weather.
- Please bring any drink or food that you may require.
- You are responsible for telling the co-ordinator if you have any allergies that may be relevant to participating in Strong Roots.
- All tools must be stored away safely after use.
- All hazardous materials eg. metal with a sharp edge, glass or nails will be stored safely or removed off site as soon as possible.
- All hazardous materials will be clearly labelled, in their original containers, stored in a locked shed.
- Children may only attend if accompanied by an adult (over 18), and remain the responsibility of that adult the entire time that they are on site.
- Please be responsible when using tools and handle them with care.

Appendix 2: Evaluation Forms

Initial evaluation:

Clients were asked what they like to achieve through taking part in the Strong Roots Allotment project:

- I would like to increase my confidence
- I would like to find it easier to get on with other people
- I would like to feel more able to take initiatives
- I would like to feel positive about new challenges
- I would like to feel more able to fit in with other people
- I would like to feel more confident in group situations
- I would like to be better at organising myself
- I would like to be better at getting my views across to other people
- I would like to be able to work more effectively as part of a team
- When I don't understand something I would like to be able to ask
- I would like to be more able to listen to other people and understand what they are saying

Final evaluation:

As three month review plus:

Goals achieved

Clients were asked if they had changed since starting the project, and what goals had been achieved, whilst considering the following:

- Times when you felt confident
- An occasion when you have achieved something
- Examples of how you have helped other people
- How you felt when you came to the project
- Good ideas that you've had
- Different things you've done on the allotment
- How you felt when meeting people on the project for the first time
- How you feel when asked your opinion in a group situation

Three month review:

Clients were asked to choose on a scale ranging from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree':

- Taking part in the project is helping me to increase my confidence
- Taking part in the project is helping me to find it easier to get on with other people
- Taking part in the project is helping me to feel more able to take initiatives
- Taking part in the project is helping me to feel positive about new challenges
- Taking part in the project is helping me to feel more able to fit in with other people
- Taking part in the project is helping me to feel more confident in group situations
- Taking part in the project is helping me to be better at organising myself
- Taking part in the project is helping me to be better at getting my views across to other people
- Taking part in the project is helping me to be able to work more effectively as part of a team
- Taking part in the project is helping me to be able to ask when I don't understand something
- Taking part in the project is helping me to be more able to listen to other people and understand what they are saying
- Personal Goals: Are there things you would like to achieve before the end of the project?

- How you felt the first time you did something new
- How you feel about yourself and other people
- Times when you've been able to get your opinions heard
- Times you've asked for help
- Think about health and safety issues on the allotment
- Your rights and responsibilities on the project

General comments:

- What could we do better?
- Is there anything that you have found particularly enjoyable?
- Would you recommend participation in Strong Roots to somebody else?
- Please give your reason for your answer.

Acknowledgements

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Assist Trust, Bizz Fizz, Bluebell Allotment Holders Association, Bridge Plus, British Red Cross, The Chronicle (Newsletter of WEETU), Eco Echo, City of Norwich Partnership, Clive Evans, Freerange Creations, Future Radio, Growing Places (newsletter of the Federation of Community Farms and Gardens), Dave Guttridge (DJ78), Karen Hills, BBC Radio Norfolk, Norwich Mental Health Providers Forum, Norwich Asylum Seekers and Refugees Forum, Norwich City Council, Norwich Evening News, Norwich Food Web, Raising the Roof (newsletter of Space – East), Norwich Third Sector Forum, St. Thomas' Church Earlham Road, University of East Anglia Volunteers, Voluntary Norfolk and Workshop Café Bar.

Thanks are due to all volunteers past and present for their vital contribution to the development of Strong Roots: Henry Allen, Barnaby Andrews, Katie Breakespeare, Katie Brooks, Helen Burgess, Jonathan Chamberlain, Alan Corlett, Suse Day, Daniel Edwards, Bridget Garrard, Anne Goodhew, Adam Green, Emma Hart, Amy Johnson, Jonny Jones, Jamie Laurence, Gavin Marghitson, Wendy Premachandra, Anne Reekie, James Spacey, Sue Spooner, Kerry Watts, Josh Weatherill, Hannah Wells.

Trustees: Harry Arnott, Teresa Belton, Sam Chapman, Emma Corlett, Lisa McKenna, Jane Olivier, Alison Reeve, Jane Warren.

Staff: Lucy Scurfield, Co-ordinator

Website design: Stuart Pigram (Freerange Creations)

Accountant: Barnard Sampson LLP (Chartered Accountants)

Our thanks to all those who have given grants and donations to Strong Roots since its inception:

They include: Acorn Grant (European Social Fund), Community Champions, East Anglian Rambling Society, John Jarrold Trust, John Lewis, Kettle Foods Ltd, NELM, Marks and Spencer, Mills & Reeve LLP, Norwich Learning City (Making It Happen), Norwich Quakers, Well Being (Big Lottery) Fund, and various individual donors.

Suse Day, volunteer

“...The communal gardening focuses attention and ensures that people... can at any point turn their energies to the work to be done should they wish. Strong Roots succeeds in providing a safe and supportive environment... I enjoy working on the garden and have learnt a lot about this too.”



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