



Annual Report 2013–2014

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.

In 2012 £5,000 came from the AB Charitable Trust, £1,000 from the Mrs H R Greene Charitable Settlement and £981.85 from a plant sale, hosted by Rose and David Baulcombe.

At the end of May 2013 Strong Roots was able to announce that funding for 21 months, starting in July 2013, would come from Well-Being in the East [Big Lottery Fund] – www.enableeast.org.uk.

Strong Roots is based on a quadruple allotment plot on the Bluebell Allotment site in Norwich. The project has borders which all participants are able to help develop. All aspects of the project promote personal development.

Facilities include a composting toilet, a summerhouse 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 [www.i-p-n.org].

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.

Since March 2012 Strong Roots has been charging for attendance. The amount paid is flexible and decided on an individual basis.

In this accounting period [1/7/13-30/6/14] Strong Roots took referrals from: Base Line [Future Projects, Norwich]; Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services [CAMHS]; Families Unit, Norwich City Council; Genesis Housing Association, Norwich; Hellesdon Hospital, Norwich; Learning Employment Accommodation Project [LEAP], Norwich; Special Advisory Team, Job Centre, Norwich. Five of these agencies made referrals prior to this time. There were six self referrals.

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 and/or individual sessions.
- learning through experience, including making 'mistakes'.
- contributing to decisions that determine how the plot and project evolve.
- promoting good physical and mental health.
- reducing social isolation and enhancing social interaction.
- breaking down prejudices and fears and tackling stigma.

A secondary aim is personal development for volunteers.



A participant:

"Talking at Strong Roots... has helped me in some ways to see that I'm not all to blame and it has taught me to not put myself down all the time. For me that is a big step."

Participants

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

To date referring organisations include: Adult Education; Age Concern [Norwich]; Base Line [Future Projects, Norwich]; Blackhorse Centre; Broadland Meridian; 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 Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust]; Eaton Hall School; Genesis Housing Association, Norwich; Hellesdon Hospital, Norwich; Julian Support [Norwich]; Learning Employment Accommodation Project [LEAP, Norwich]; Long Stratton High School; Mancroft Advice Project [MAP]; Norfolk and Norwich Scope Association [NANSA]; Norwich City College; Norwich Community Learning Difficulties Team; SeVa [Sexual Violence Alliance]; Special Advisory Team, Job Centre, Norwich; Sure Start [Bowthorpe and West Earlham, Norwich]; TADS [Treatment of Drug and Alcohol Services].

How referrals are made

Potential referral agencies and self referring individuals 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 information about the project to help inform their decision making about whether Strong Roots is for them. They will be told that group and/or individual sessions are on offer in order to meet individual well being needs.

Once the individual decides they wish to attend the referrer completes a referral form [including risk assessment and risk management plan], and/or the client signs an agreement to confirm that they have read and accepted the Code of Conduct [see appendix 1]. The individual is asked to think about how much they would like to pay in preparation for the following session when a charge will be made.

A participant:

"I like this space because there's not just something beautiful to look at but because it makes me feel like I can open up and talk about anything. It also is healthy for not just my mind but body because of the fresh air. This space makes me feel like I can open up because I can see how open it looks... and I don't feel like I'm being put in a box or room."

The sessions

An individual session lasts 50 minutes.
A group session lasts 1 hour and 50 minutes.

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 other 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 group session. At the end of each session time is set aside to tidy away and to reflect on how the session has been.

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 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 and are invited to express themselves in whatever way feels appropriate to them.

Volunteers

During this accounting period [1/7/14-30/6/14] nine volunteers have worked on the project, four of whom joined prior to this time, and five people left. One is going to do a horticulture course at Easton College. 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.

A volunteer:

“I learn more and more how much I can relate to the experience of others. The quality of calmness of the place helps towards this too. I can observe how I am and how others appear with more honesty and depth, which still leaves room for some surprises, and I can learn from these too. It's a simultaneously empowering and humbling experience to realise that the more I exercise this facility, the deeper is my own connection to and influence in the world.”

Anne Goodhew





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 and on site volunteers.

However the most important feedback is from participants who, having decided they want to attend, are given an initial evaluation form which serves as a baseline assessment and asks what participants hope to gain from their involvement. Participants are subsequently given an evaluation form on a quarterly basis and a 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 participants understand that the evaluation is of Strong Roots and not of themselves but may reflect their development. Where possible, evaluation forms are administered by referral agencies. Where this is not possible every attempt is made to make the evaluation process as independent as possible and participants are encouraged to feed back fully on their experience of the project.

Evaluation forms can be found in appendix 2.

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

A participant:

“I feel more at ease with myself at Strong Roots. I have found that talking about what is on my mind has helped me be more open and to think positively about my future. It helps me be more physically active as I have a bus journey and a walking distance. I find that I feel more awake by being outside. Being here helps me feel calmer because it is surrounded by nature.”

A volunteer:

“It is difficult to describe Strong roots without spending time there... The feeling of space, the natural surroundings and the fluidity of the sessions make the setting of Strong Roots unique. There is no pressure on anyone... The safe, calm quiet surroundings of the allotment provide a tranquil space which seems to help people feel secure. As a volunteer, I have learned a lot...”

Suse Day

The benefits

Numbers engaged

In this accounting period [1/7/13-30/6/14] twenty-four people have attended. Seven people were referred prior to this time. Two people were funded by individual Direct Payments made through Equal Lives.

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



A volunteer:

“I found... Strong Roots was a place that was secluded from the city buzz, in which I could have some quite time to myself or meet new people. I heard about the project online, while looking to gain experience within horticulture.”

Charles Seymour

A participant:

“Since coming to Strong Roots I feel I have more positive thoughts and can work things out for myself most of the time. If I have problems or anything that makes me stressed talking... is a very big help and things seem much clearer. I drive here to Strong Roots on my own... I feel very proud of myself as that wouldn't have happened at the beginning of this project.”

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.

Since Strong Roots started in 2008, 197 participants have attended for 3,754 hours.

In this accounting period 24 have attended. 79% of participants have completed evaluation forms. All of these have reported some benefits.

Details of demographics of people who attended during this time:

Postcode	Participants	Gender	Participants	Age	Participants
NR2	.1	Male	12	U13	4
NR3	.3	Female	12	13-16	2
NR4	.7			17-24	7
NR5	.9			25-40	6
NR7	.2			41-55	2
NR8	.2			56-65	3
				65+	0



Changes made

A wood burning stove was installed in the summerhouse, for the comfort of people coming to the allotment during inclement weather. Existing compost bins were in poor condition and needed replacing. They have been dismantled and new ones built. Existing borders and areas are being developed.

A participant:

“The Strong Roots project has helped talking about private issues in a protective more private environment outside in the open not behind thin walls where issues could be overheard.”

A participant:

“Coming to Strong Roots has helped me express myself and to be able to ask for help and [be] less afraid of saying how I’m thinking or feeling. Walking to the allotment and being in the outdoors has helped me to be more physically active.”

“It helps me to be present and connected by enjoying the nature.”

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 [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; Triangle Norwich magazine, April/May 2012; Lifestyle Family Chiropractic Newsletter, Issue 5; The Associate Magazine, Norwich MIND, July 2013; Well-Being in the East Bulletin No 3, 14 October 2013.

Promotional flyers were distributed.

Strong Roots has a website www.strongroots.org.uk which gives information about the project. It includes a link to an interview on Future Radio [Future Projects, Norwich] featuring the Co-ordinator, a beneficiary and a support worker from Base Line [Future Projects, Norwich].

Accounts

Receipts and Payments Account For the year ended 30 June 2014

Funds	2014		2013	
	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Restricted Funds (£)	TOTAL (£)	TOTAL (£)
Receipts				
Receipts from generated funds:				
Voluntary income	944	–	944	1,162
Activities for generating funds – fund raising	1,494	–	1,494	1,022
Investment income	7	–	7	6
Receipts from charitable activities:				
AB Charitable Trust	–	–	–	5,000
Well-Being in the East	–	22,960	22,960	–
Direct payments from participants	2,000	–	2,000	2,000
Allotment fees and beverages	144	–	144	1,489
Total receipts	4,589	22,960	27,549	10,679
Payments				
Payments for generating funds:				
Marketing and publicity	–	176	176	758
Payments for charitable activities:				
Staff salary costs	–	19,994	19,994	6,400
Staff costs – supervision	–	480	480	–
Travel costs	–	309	309	6
Garden materials and tools	–	522	522	292
Training	–	–	–	259
Capital expenditure	755	760	1,515	–
Payments for administration and governance:				
Office stationery, postage, telephone and computer	–	238	238	260
Insurance	–	406	406	100
Rent and membership fees	–	410	410	220
Criminal records check	–	65	65	65
Independent examiners fees	–	–	–	–
Total payments	755	23,360	24,115	8,360
Surplus of receipts over payments	3,834	(400)	3,434	2,319
Surplus brought forward	4,017	–	4,017	1,698
Surplus carried forward	£7,851	£(400)	£7,451	£4,017

The receipts and payments accounts were approved by the Trustees on [] September 2014 and were signed on their behalf by:

A Reeve

T Belton

Statement of Assets and Liabilities – as at 30 June 2014

	2014 (£)	2013 (£)
Assets		
Tangible fixed assets at cost:		
Unrestricted fund – used for charitable purposes	755	–
Well-Being in the East – used for charitable purposes	4,649	3,889
Well-Being in the East – used for administration purposes	1,207	1,207
Debtors	19	–
Cash at bank	7,451	4,017
Total assets	£14,081	£9,113
Liabilities		
Unrestricted fund – Independent examiners fees	330	–
Total liabilities	330	–

The statement of assets and liabilities was approved by the Trustees on [] September 2014 and signed on their behalf by:

A Reeve

T Belton

Notes to the Accounts – for the year ended 30 June 2014

1. Funds summary

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

Funds	1 July 13 (£)	Receipts (£)	Payments (£)	30 June 14 (£)
Restricted funds:				
Well-being in the East	–	22,960	23,360	(400)
	–	22,960	23,360	(400)
Unrestricted funds	4,017	4,589	755	7,851
Total funds	£4,017	£27,549	£24,115	£7,451

The deficit on restricted funds represents monies spent by the charity in excess of the restricted fund income during the year. The funding for these costs has been received in the next financial year and the fund is no longer in deficit.

2. Trustees' remuneration, benefits and expenses

The Trustees received no remuneration or benefits during the year ended 30 June 2014 or during the year ended 30 June 2013.

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.
- Fires cannot be made between March 31st and October 1st.
- 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 respect.
- There is no one 'right' way of being or doing things.
- What is said in the group remains confidential within the group. Individuals can talk about their own experience in the group but not about other individuals' experiences. Individuals must not name other group members. In exceptional circumstances confidentiality may be breached by the co-ordinator; this will be explained to you in more detail.
- Please keep voices down.
- Please switch off mobile phones and any other electronic equipment.
- No intoxicating or illegal substances are allowed when working on the allotment.

Health and Safety

- You are responsible for telling the co-ordinator if you have any allergies that may be relevant to participating in Strong Roots
 - You are responsible for telling the co-ordinator if you have any medical conditions eg diabetes, asthma. This information will be required if Strong Roots needs to call the emergency services.
 - 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.
 - Please be responsible when using tools and handle them with care.
 - 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.
- Strong Roots reserves the right to terminate the attendance of any individual at any time.**

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
- I would like to be more physically active
- I would like to know more about healthy eating and the benefits of fresh produce
- Do you think there is anything else the project might be able to help you with? If so, please say what.

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
- Taking part in the project has helped me to be more physically active
- Taking part in the project has helped me to know more about healthy eating and the benefits of fresh produce
- 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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Trustees:

Teresa Belton, Lisa McKenna, Jane Olivier, Alison Reeve, Jane Warren.

Staff:

Lucy Scurfield, Co-ordinator

Website design:

Stuart Pigram (Freerange Creations)

Website Update:

Jan Haley [Online Impact]

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Our thanks to all those who have given grants and donations in this accounting period [1/7/13-30/6/14]:

Well-Being in the East, Mrs HR Green Charitable Settlement and various individual donors.

A volunteer:

“Strong Roots is a place of healing... It is the balance of everyone and everything and the conversations that take place in that space at that moment in time. Strong Roots enables an increased awareness which in turn is nurturing. I feel this in myself, and observe it in others.”

Alice Martineau

A participant:

“Since coming here I have wanted to create a fresh start and being physically healthy is one part of it. Strong Roots has helped me understand this. Being around the fresh veg and fruit has also helped me eat better like including more fresh and organic produce in my diet. My mental health has greatly improved. I am now able to deal with most aspects of my past better and I'm able to use this better understanding with my own family life.”