



Annual Report 2014 –2015

Personal development in a garden setting





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.

Since April 2015 Strong Roots has had no funding and has been relying on payments by participants who attend sessions.

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 [1/7/14-30/6/15] Strong Roots took referrals from: Broadland Meridian; Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services [CAMHS], Gateway Adult Community Team [Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Mental Health Foundation Trust]; Families Unit, Norwich City Council; Genesis Housing Association, Norwich; General Practitioner, Norwich; Job Centre, Norwich Julian Support [Norwich]; Learning Employment Accommodation Project [LEAP], Norwich; Norwich City College; Norwich Social Services. Eight of these agencies made referrals prior to this time. There were twelve self referrals.

Aims and objectives

Strong Roots combines psychological therapy with being in a garden setting. It provides a safe and supportive environment that encourages participants' personal development through:

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

A secondary aim is personal development for volunteers.



A participant:

"Being here is helping me to look at every day things and situations differently – I have taken a very keen interest in gardening since [coming] here and love to be in my own garden. I feel much more at ease with myself and others around me."

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; Broadland Area Team, Central Norfolk Early Intervention Team, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service [CAMHS], City Outreach Team, Forensic Mental Health Service, Gateway Adult Community Team, South Norfolk Team, Recovery Team [all part of Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust]; Eaton Hall School; Families Unit, Norwich City Council; 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; Norwich Social Services; 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 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 individual and/or group 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:

"Attending Strong Roots is helping me to be able to communicate clearly with others and to be able to take time to understand what other people are saying/feeling. Being kinder to myself is also starting to become a bit easier [with] taking time to understand myself. Also wanting to take care at myself not just emotionally but physically and considering my health within healthy eating."

The sessions

An individual session lasts 50 minutes. A group session will last according to numbers and need.

The co-ordinator welcomes clients and invites them to say whether they want to talk and/or do some gardening. Some people just want to talk whilst others might switch from one mode to another according to how they feel at the time. During the sessions individuals choose whether to talk or not, and what to talk about and, if they choose to do something, the nature and level of activity, depending on what is on offer.

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, if appropriate, and interacting with everyone in a respectful, non-directive manner. Participants are invited to contribute to the evolution of the borders and to express themselves in whatever way feels appropriate to them.

There is a summer house providing shelter, and a wealth of materials to research all aspects of horticulture and wildlife. At any point refreshments are available. At the end of each session time is set aside to tidy away and to reflect on how the session has been.

Volunteers

During this accounting period [1/7/14-30/6/15] eight volunteers have worked on the project, five of whom joined prior to this time, and five people left. Two are training or working in the field of horticulture. 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:

“As a volunteer at Strong Roots I look forward to exercise, fresh air and the calm I feel after a day of uninterrupted absorption in what is around me and in the tasks that I do, hearing and seeing, sometimes smelling and tasting, being a part of what is happening on the allotment as it changes.

The changes do not only apply to the surroundings - it makes for a special day when I can observe that often the quiet, tense and drawn faces of those who come for sessions tend to blossom too, step by step, into a different quality of quietness that is more relaxed, self-possessed and assured.”

Anne Goodhew

Volunteer image here?



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. 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:

“Taking part in the project helps me to feel that I can quickly sort out any of my own insecurities that I may become aware of and have more confidence in dealing with others who may upset me... I enjoy coming to the allotment for a generous helping of fresh air, and the exercise keeps me supple and helps me to stay stronger...”

A participant:

“...just feeling that I have permission and freedom to express myself in releasing anger or sorrow, or to be able to say the words 'I made a mistake', releases so much pressure that it makes me less anxious about the future and better able to deal with awkward situations, because it reinforces my trust in myself.”

The benefits

Numbers engaged

In this accounting period [1/7/14 - 30/6/15] forty-two people have attended. Seventeen people were referred prior to this time. Two people were funded by individual Direct Payments made through Equal Lives and one person was funded through Norfolk County Council.

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



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.

A volunteer:

“I have only recently become a volunteer for the Strong Roots project. After my first visit I was struck by the therapeutic atmosphere that has been created on the allotment space. It felt quite tangible to me as soon as I walked into the garden. After my few hours gardening and interacting with Lucy, Clients and other Volunteers I invariably leave feeling calm and uplifted. It feels like everyone coming to Strong Roots welcomed and valued as equals.”

David Wrenn

A participant:

“Strong Roots has enabled me to become more confident within myself. I can now look at situations differently and am less stressed about certain aspects. It has made me realise that there is a lot more to do and achieve in life. I feel now able to take on a new project – I have space in my head to do it now. I now have my own allotment and so can enjoy the outdoors once again.”

Since Strong Roots started in 2008, 222 participants have attended for 4,201 hours. In this accounting period 42 have attended. 71% 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	.4	Male	.22	U13	.3
NR3	.7	Female	.20	13-16	.0
NR4	.7			17-24	.9
NR5	.7			25-40	.13
NR6	.8			41-55	.9
NR7	.3			56-65	.7
NR8	.3			65+	.1
NR17	.2				
NR21	.1				

Changes made

Existing borders were developed and new borders were created. New compost bins were built. The composted material was distributed throughout the site. Produce included a variety of vegetables, fruit, herbs and flowers. As far as possible everything was grown organically.



A participant:

“During my time at Strong Roots I have become more able to deal with difficult situations, both past and present. I have also become more active and have taken a further interest in gardening. I greatly appreciate the calm nurturing environment of the project. Having volunteers at the garden creates a natural and friendly environment.”

A participant:

“By coming here helped me to feel a lot more confident in myself. I feel my thoughts and feelings are important and speaking through everything with Lucy is helping me to be able to make decisions and it isn't hard to cope with difficult situations [it was before]. My relationship with [my child] has changed and we spend every day with laughing and enjoying. By coming here opened my eyes to new ways to problem solving and help [my child] to feel safe and get calm. We also enjoy visiting here together and discovering about gardening together.”

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; Eastern Daily Press, 18th July 2014; Well-Being in the East Bulletin No 12, 28th July 2014.

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 2015

Funds	2015		2014	
	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Restricted Funds (£)	TOTAL (£)	TOTAL (£)
Receipts				
Receipts from generated funds:				
Voluntary income	2,001	–	2,001	944
Activities for generating funds – fund raising	4,426	–	4,426	1,494
Investment income	18	–	18	7
Receipts from charitable activities:				
AB Charitable Trust	–	–	–	5,000
Well-Being in the East	–	17,700	17,700	22,960
Direct payments from participants	2,000	–	2,000	2,000
Allotment fees and beverages	202	–	202	144
Total receipts	8,647	17,700	26,347	27,549
Payments				
Payments for generating funds:				
Marketing and publicity	43	168	211	176
Payments for charitable activities:				
Staff salary costs	1,710	14,613	16,323	19,994
Staff costs – supervision	120	360	480	480
Travel costs	30	206	236	309
Garden materials and tools	69	706	775	522
Capital expenditure	–	–	–	1,515
Payments for administration and governance:				
Office stationery, postage, telephone and computer	193	540	733	238
Insurance	270	–	270	406
Rent and membership fees	30	345	375	410
Criminal records check	18	32	50	65
Independent examiners fees	–	330	330	–
Total payments	2,483	17,300	19,783	24,115
Surplus of receipts over payments	6,164	400	6,564	3,434
Surplus brought forward	7,851	(400)	7,451	4,017
Surplus carried forward	£14,015	–	£14,015	£7,451

The receipts and payments accounts were approved by the Trustees on [] September 2015 and were signed on their behalf by:

A Reeve

T Belton

Statement of Assets and Liabilities – as at 30 June 2015

	2015 (£)	2014 (£)
Assets		
Tangible fixed assets at cost:		
Unrestricted fund – used for charitable purposes	755	755
Well-Being in the East – used for charitable purposes	4,649	4,649
Well-Being in the East – used for administration purposes	1,207	1,207
Debtors	–	19
Cash at bank	14,015	7,451
Total assets	£20,626	£14,081
Liabilities		
Unrestricted fund – Independent examiners fees	330	330
Total liabilities	330	330

The statement of assets and liabilities was approved by the Trustees on [] September 2015 and signed on their behalf by:

A Reeve

T Belton

Notes to the Accounts – for the year ended 30 June 2015

1. Funds summary

The charity has the following restricted funds:

Well-being in the East – This project, which provides therapeutic horticultural activities, is funded by the Big Lottery Fund.

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

Funds	1 July 14 (£)	Receipts (£)	Payments (£)	30 June 15 (£)
Restricted funds:				
Well-being in the East	(400)	17,700	17,300	–
	(400)	17,700	17,300	–
Unrestricted funds	7,851	8,647	2,483	14,015
Total funds	£7,451	£26,347	£19,783	£14,015

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 2015 or during the year ended 30 June 2014.

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 [1/7/14-30/6/15]: Well-Being in the East.

A volunteer:

“Strong Roots is a place of healing. It is not just the gardening and being outside in the open space, but the people - participants, volunteers, Lucy. 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:

“...the Strong Roots project has given me a lot more confidence to get me involved with other people such as volunteering groups and feel more confident at being there with other people. Also my fitness levels have improved due to the exercise I am getting.”