



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Psychological therapy
in a garden setting



Background

Strong Roots offers psychological therapy in a garden setting. It is based on a quadruple allotment plot on the Bluebell Allotment site in Norwich. The site has garden borders which all participants are able to help develop. All aspects of the project promote personal development. It is pleasing how well established Strong Roots is and how it continues to provide a stable service.

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

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.

Lucy Scurfield, the Strong Roots Co-ordinator, has a BSc [Hons] in Integrative Therapy and counselling.

She has extensive experience of working in this setting 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.

Strong Roots adopted a constitution in March 2006 as an Unincorporated Association and became a registered charity in July 2008.

We received ten months funding from Acorn Grant in July 2006, and were 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, and £1,000 from the Mrs H R Greene Charitable Settlement. 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 not had any major grants.

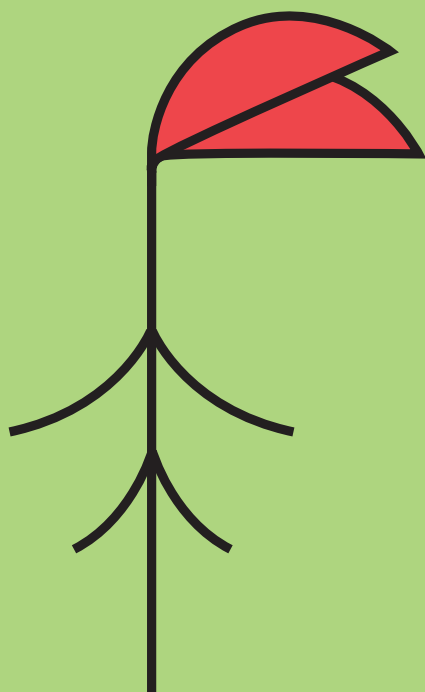
We have also received donations from a range of other organisations and individuals [see page 12 for details].

From March 2012 Strong Roots has been charging for attendance. We are a registered charity and depend on payments and donations to help cover our services and running costs. The amount paid is flexible and decided on an individual basis – we ask our clients to contribute as generously as possible.



A participant:

“It is a really good open forum. Speaking with Lucy had helped me talk about some deep seated issues. Being outside certainly helps wellbeing. It has been over the phone in recent months due to anxiety with driving. It has been a Godsend during times of personal crisis. I’m really impressed and pleased about all the hard work that goes in to Strong Roots. It’s been invaluable.”



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

A secondary aim is personal development for volunteers.

HOW REFERRALS ARE MADE

Referral agencies and self-referring individuals make contact with the Co-ordinator to arrange an exploratory session. This provides an opportunity for potential participants to decide whether Strong Roots is for them. It is explained that individual and/or group sessions are on offer in order to meet individual needs.

In the second session the individual signs an agreement to confirm that they have read and accepted the Code of Conduct [see appendix 1].



A participant:

"Lucy gives me the confidence to speak about difficult issues ... Now have the confidence to speak freely and more openly and can be myself. I like visiting this space – appreciate the nature, colours, sounds and in winter the smell of the woodburner."

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]; Better Together Norfolk; 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 and Broadland Living Well Team; Norwich City College; Norwich Community Learning Difficulties Team; Norwich Social Services; SeVa [Sexual Violence Alliance]; Special Advisory Team, Job Centre, Norwich; Specialist Support Team [Norwich City Council]; Sue Lambert Trust; Sure Start [Bowthorpe and West Earlham, Norwich]; TADS [Treatment of Drug and Alcohol Services]; WONDER Project, Norfolk; Shelter [part of Living Well Team, Norwich]; Citizens Advice [part of Living Well Team, Norwich]; Youth Mental Health Team, Norwich and Central Norfolk MIND.



THE SESSIONS

An individual session lasts an hour. 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 or other activity. Some people just want to talk whilst others might switch from one mode to another according to how they feel at the time. If the individual/s wish to do something, the Co-ordinator and volunteers work alongside participants, if appropriate, and interact with everyone in a respectful, non-directive manner.

The acceptance of every participant is fundamental.

There is a summer house providing shelter, and a wealth of materials to research all aspects of horticulture and wildlife.

People are asked to bring their own refreshments to safeguard their own and others' safety and minimise cross-infection, post-Covid.

VOLUNTEERS

During this accounting period [1/7/21-30/6/22] two volunteers have worked on the project. 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 participant:

"I feel accepted and encouraged by Lucy and I feel I can discuss things with her that I cannot with others. I really enjoy attending the allotment, see how the landscape changes and discussing my important thoughts and feelings with Lucy in this calm and beautiful place. The fire place is especially nice when it is very cold outside, it gives an extra heartfelt warmth to the sessions."



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 volunteer – Anne Goodhew

“Being a part of Strong Roots allows me a beautiful space and opportunity to observe nature and reflect on things in a calm way, and I’m very happy to be a part of it.”

A participant:

“Coming to the sessions has helped me by providing a safe space to talk and to get out of my head, as well as it has provided me with a great deal of insight into my own unconscious mechanisms and ingrained patterns, which in turn helps me in my attempt to ‘free’ myself from them.”



THE BENEFITS

Numbers engaged

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

In this period [1/7/21-30/6/22] Strong Roots took one referral from Youth Mental Health Team, Norwich and Central Norfolk MIND . In total, twelve people have attended during this accounting period, eleven of whom carried over from the previous year. One person was funded by Norfolk County Council Direct Payments.

OUTCOMES

Everyone who has 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 participant:

“Regularly coming to Strong Roots really helps me to balance my daily challenges and dealing with it much more proactively than before. I feel accepted and listened to which makes me feel more confident, and I can deal with very challenging situations and get better outcomes than I would have in the past. I feel I can discuss anything with Lucy and it helps me with my home life and college studies as well. I learnt a lot about myself especially in the past few months which helps me to look forward to future possibilities.”

A participant:

“I feel coming to Strong Roots has really helped my confidence and is helping my mental health to improve. It is wonderful coming for therapy in the allotment setting. It is very grounding and there is something very reassuring and almost ‘primal’ about reconnecting with the outdoors. I also feel that Strong Roots is a wonderful project and I am finding it extremely valuable.”



Since Strong Roots started in 2008, 338 participants have attended for 6848 hours.

In this accounting period 12 have attended. 64% 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
NR2	4
NR3	2
NR4	0
NR5	1
NR6	1
NR7	1
NR10.....	1
NR17	2

Gender	Participants
Male	5
Female.....	7

Age	Participants
0-16.....	0
17-24.....	2
25-40.....	7
41-55.....	2
56-65.....	1



Neighbouring allotment holders expressed their delight over the appearance of the site whilst dandelions were in flower. So mowing was undertaken less frequently in order to attract bees.



A participant:

“I find it helpful to have therapy sessions in a more natural environment as opposed to an office somewhere. It’s nice to walk through the allotment on my way to and from the sessions, as it helps calm me and clear my mind.”



ACCOUNTS

Receipts and Payments Account For the year ended 30 June 2022

	2021-22			2020-21
	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Restricted Funds (£)	TOTAL (£)	TOTAL (£)
Receipts				
Receipts from generated funds:				
Voluntary income donations inc beverages	–	–	–	–
Activities for generating funds – fund raising	–	–	–	15
Gift Aid on donations	–	–	–	–
Receipts from charitable activities:				
Allotment fees including direct payment	7,821	–	7,821	8,542
Total receipts	£7,821	–	£7,821	£8,730
Payments				
Payments for generating funds:				
Marketing and publicity	–	–	–	96
Payments for charitable activities:				
Staff salary costs	7,720	–	7,720	7,506
Staff costs – supervision	480	–	480	480
Travel costs	–	–	–	4
Garden materials and tools	336	–	336	369
Capital expenditure	–	–	–	–
Payments for administration and governance:				
Office stationery, postage, telephone and computer	850	–	850	978
Insurance	131	–	131	131
Rent and membership fees	270	–	270	280
Criminal records check	–	–	–	–
Total payments	£9,787	–	£9,787	9,856
Surplus of receipts over payments	–1,966	–	–1,966	–1,126
Surplus brought forward	11,025	–	11,025	12,151
Surplus carried forward	£9,059	–	£9,059	£11,025

The receipts and payments accounts were approved by the Trustees on 21st August 2023 and were signed on their behalf by:

P A Goodhew..... **T Belton**.....

Statement of Assets and Liabilities – as at 30 June 2022

	2022	2021
	£	£
Assets		
Tangible fixed assets at cost:		
Unrestricted fund – used for charitable purposes	–	–
Debtors	–	–
Cash at bank	9,059	11,025
Total assets	£9,059	£11,025
Liabilities		
Unrestricted fund – Independent examiners fees	–	–
Total liabilities	–	–

The statement of assets and liabilities was approved by the Trustees on 21st August 2023 and signed on their behalf by:

P A Goodhew..... **T Belton**.....

Notes to the Accounts – for the year ended 30 June 2022**1. Funds summary**

The charity has no restricted funds. An analysis of the movement in funds is set out below:

Funds	1 July 22 (£)	Receipts (£)	Payments (£)	30 June 21 (£)
Restricted funds	–	–	–	–
Unrestricted funds	9,059	7,821	9,787	11,025
Total funds	£9,059	£7,821	£9,787	£11,025

2. Trustees remuneration, benefits and expenses

The Trustees received no remuneration or benefits during the year ended 30 June 2022 or during the year ended 30 June 2021.

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.

COVID-19

During the first lockdown, sessions with individuals were conducted by phone. From then on, individuals had the option of attending Strong Roots in person or having sessions on the phone. Most people resumed on-site sessions, where government guidelines were followed, including social distancing and the provision of hand sanitiser.

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.

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?

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
- 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, Nick Marsham [Barnard Sampson Accountants LLP], Norwich Mental Health Providers Forum, Norwich Asylum Seekers and Refugees Forum, Norwich City Council, Norwich County Council, Norwich Evening News, Norwich Food Web, Raising the Roof [newsletter of Space – East], Norwich Quakers, Norwich Third Sector Forum, St. Thomas' Church Earlham Road, University of East Anglia Volunteers, Voluntary Norfolk, Workshop Café Bar, Triangle Norwich magazine, Lifestyle Family Chiropractic Newsletter, The Associates Magazine, Norwich MIND.

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Trustees:

Teresa Belton, Anne Goodhew, Jane Olivier, Jane Warren.

Staff:

Lucy Scurfield, Co-ordinator

Website design:

Stuart Pigram (Freerange Creations)

Website Update:

Jan Haley (Online Impact)

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They include: Acorn Grant [European Social Fund], Community Champions, Community Matters Waitrose Norwich, 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, AB Charitable Trust, Mrs HR, Green Charitable Settlement, Well-Being in the East, Chris Sellers and various individual donors.

Thanks also go to our fellow allotment holder who so generously donates wood for our wood-burner.



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