



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Psychological therapy
in a garden setting



Annual Report 2024–2025 & 2025–2026

Background

Strong Roots is delighted to celebrate our 20th Anniversary in 2026. We offer psychological therapy in a garden setting 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 shelter, for volunteers to sit and/or work in during inclement weather, a sheltered seat with a wooden bench, which provides a welcoming and a much appreciated seating area in the garden, two fruit cages, a wood store and a wooden frame for training climbers to create a screen. There are also two ponds which attract diverse wildlife.

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.



A participant

“Coming here has been very useful both physically and mentally. I’ve never really been one to spend a lot of time outdoors despite being an animal/nature lover! Being able to talk about my experiences in such an open and peaceful environment has been so calming for my mind. Just the act of talking and not being stuck in a clinical room has been a joy.”

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 14 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.

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

Interested individuals and referral agencies 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

“Walking and talking as part of the session is a good way to start. The allotment is like a safe haven. Lucy always asks questions and requests clarity in the most helpful ways that is supporting me to feel better about many things that I have struggled with.”

Participants

Potential participants self-refer or are 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
Citizens Advice [part of Living Well Team, Norwich]
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]
Norfolk and Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust
Norfolk and Waveney MIND
Norfolk Autism Adult Support Services
Norwich and Broadland Living Well Team
Norwich City College
Norwich Community Learning Difficulties Team
Norwich Social Services
Rest Hub [MIND]
Shelter [part of Living Well Team, Norwich]
Special Advisory Team, Job Centre, Norwich
Specialist Support Team, Norwich City Council
Sue Lambert Trust
Sure Start [Bowthorpe and West Earlham, Norwich]
Treatment of Drug and Alcohol Services [TADS]
WONDER Project, Norfolk
Youth Mental Health Team, Norwich Central Norfolk
MIND Youth Mental Health Team, Norwich 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 the accounting periods [1/7/24–30/6/25] and [1/7/25–30/6/26] one volunteer has worked on the project.

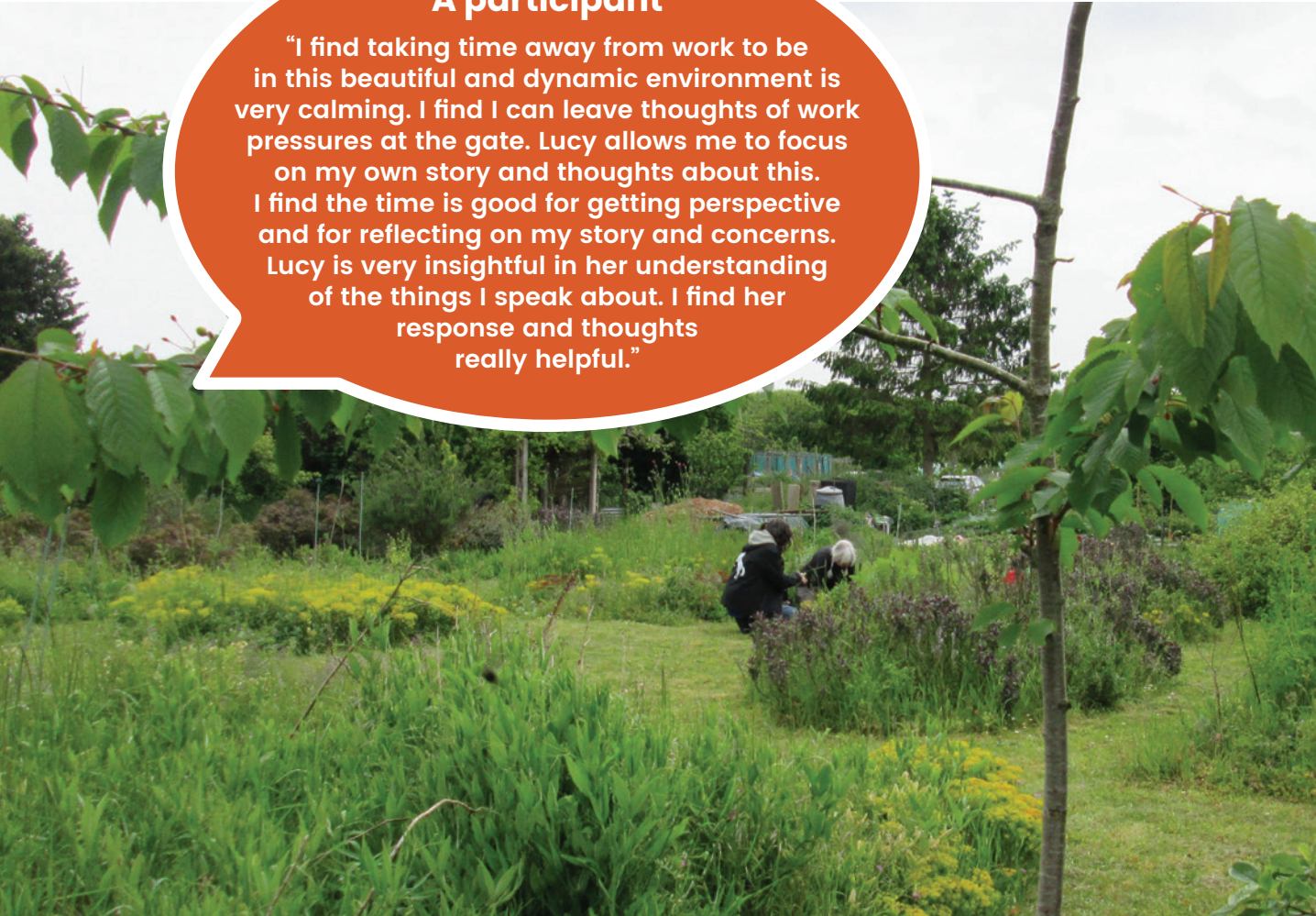
Volunteers are vital in ensuring the independent, innovative nature of Strong Roots. Volunteers support the Co-ordinator in the delivery of all aspects of the project. The nature of the tasks undertaken by each volunteer will depend on their skills and interests.

A participant

“I find it very calming. It keeps me grounded and helps me take responsibility. Before my sessions I sit on the sheltered seat and look around me to see what wildlife I can see. It helps me to relax and calm down before my session.”

A participant

“I find taking time away from work to be in this beautiful and dynamic environment is very calming. I find I can leave thoughts of work pressures at the gate. Lucy allows me to focus on my own story and thoughts about this. I find the time is good for getting perspective and for reflecting on my story and concerns. Lucy is very insightful in her understanding of the things I speak about. I find her response and thoughts really helpful.”



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. 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 details can be found in Appendix 2.

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

A participant

“At the moment my life can be overwhelming, with many thoughts racing in my head. Talking to Lucy helps me to focus on what’s more important and to prioritize. When I leave the session, I am energised and more positive about life. I can tell Lucy my innermost thoughts and know I’m in a safe place.”

A participant

“This project has helped me by being positive and thoughtful, and assisted me in being part of a team taking initiatives when required. Also the talking has helped lower the dominance of the mental health illness that affects me by being occupied at home organising and doing tasks and has lowered the effects the illness has.”



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 the period 1/7/24–30/6/25, 12 people attended, six of whom carried over from the previous year. Strong Roots took six referrals – one from MIND, one from Better Together and four self-referrals (two via flyers and two word of mouth). One person was funded by Norfolk County Council Direct Payments.

In the period 1/7/25–30/6/26, 13 people attended, nine of whom carried over from the previous year. Strong Roots took four referrals – one from Norfolk Autism Adult Support Service and three self-referrals through word of mouth. One person was funded by Norfolk County Council Direct Payments.

A participant

“Over five plus years coming here my mental health and resilience have improved massively from being unable to leave the house alone to making new friends. Being around nature calms me down and helps me open up. This year a robin has been nesting in a hollow tree. I like seeing it flying out.”

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

“My sessions help me explore how I feel about issues that come up in my life. I find it easy to have ideas, but hard to really connect with my own and other peoples’ feelings, especially if they are upset and take it out on me – whether deserved or not. I am getting better at coping more constructively when someone is feeling upset and taking it out on me.”

Since Strong Roots started in 2008, 355 participants have attended for 7,925 hours.

In the accounting period 2024–2025

12 participants have attended. 67% have completed evaluation forms. All of these have reported some benefits.

Details of demographics of people who attended during this time:

Postcode [No. of participants]: NR2 [4]; NR3 [1]; NR4 [2]; NR5 [2]; NR6 [1]; IP26 [1]; Germany [1]

Age	Participants
0–16.....	0
17–24.....	0
25–40.....	6
41–55.....	2
56–65.....	2
66+.....	1
Unknown	1

In the accounting period 2025–2026

13 participants have attended. 69% have completed evaluation forms. All of these have reported some benefits.

Details of demographics of people who attended during this time:

Postcode [No. of participants]: NR1 [1]; NR2 [3]; NR3 [2]; NR4 [2]; NR5 [1]; NR6 [1]; NR7 [1]; London [1]; Germany [1]

Age	Participants
0–16.....	0
17–24.....	0
25–40.....	5
41–55.....	4
56–65.....	2
66+.....	2

Publicity Drive

A publicity drive was undertaken and the website was updated. On 18 September 2024, the Co-ordinator Lucy Scurfield gave an online presentation to the Mental Health Providers Forum (MHPF). In January 2025 she was interviewed by Future Radio and there is a link to the interview on the Strong Roots website.

Updated flyers were printed in November 2025 and are being distributed on a regular basis to various locations. During this accounting period these have included: Earlham and the Millennium Libraries, eight medical practices and a pharmacy in the local area, the Rest Hub (MIND), and five shops in the Earlham Shopping Centre.



A volunteer

“My years volunteering at Strong Roots continue to be a joy. Personally I’ve gained so much first hand experience and knowledge about working with plants, the wildlife around them, the soil and our food. More recently, in adapting to different weathers associated with climate change, I am learning to seek alternative practical solutions to this and prioritise, which helps me to accept and keep going, rather than feel overwhelmed by it.”



A participant

“Lucy always checks whether I want to discuss my difficult thoughts and emotions as she knows it can be painful and overwhelming. I think it is better to look at my difficult thoughts/ feelings in a safe place with Lucy rather than keep suppressing them.”

Accounts – 30 June 2025

Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 30 June 2025

	2024-25			2023-24
	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Restricted Funds (£)	TOTAL (£)	TOTAL (£)
Receipts				
Receipts from generated funds:				
Voluntary income donation	1,750.00	–	1,750.00	–
Activities for generating funds – fund raising	–	–	–	–
Gift Aid on donations	–	–	–	–
Receipts from charitable activities:				
Session fees including direct payment	8,183.00	–	8,183.00	5,965.00
Total receipts	£9,933.00	–	£9,933.00	£5,965.00
Payments				
Payments for generating funds:				
Marketing and publicity	366.00	–	366.00	532.00
Payments for charitable activities:				
Staff salary costs	3,600.00	–	3,600.00	3,600.00
Staff costs – supervision	480.00	–	480.00	480.00
Travel costs	–	–	–	–
Garden materials and tools	108.00	–	108.00	417.00
Capital expenditure	240.00	–	240.00	–
Payments for administration and governance:				
Office stationery, postage, phone & computer	598.00	–	598.00	537.00
Insurance	158.00	–	158.00	141.00
Rent & membership fees	412.00	–	412.00	307.00
Criminal records check	–	–	–	–
Total payments	£5,962.00	–	£5,962.00	£6,014.00
Surplus of receipts over payments	+3,971.00	–	+3,971.00	–49.00
Surplus brought forward	8,226.00	–	8,226.00	8,275.00
Surplus carried forward	£12,197.00	–	£12,197.00	£8,226.00

The receipts and payments accounts were approved by the Trustees on 11th August 2026 and were signed on their behalf by:

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

Statement of Assets and Liabilities – as at 30 June 2025

	2025	2024
	£	£
Tangible fixed assets at cost:		
Unrestricted fund – used for charitable purposes	–	–
Debtors	–	–
Cash at bank	12,197.00	8,226.00
Total assets	£12,197.00	£8,226.00
Liabilities		
Unrestricted fund – Independent examiners fees	–	–
Total liabilities	–	–

The statement of assets and liabilities was approved by the Trustees on 11th August 2026 and signed on their behalf by:

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

Notes to the Accounts – for the year ended 30 June 2025

1. Funds summary

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

Funds	1 July 25 (£)	Receipts (£)	Payments (£)	30 June 24 (£)
Restricted funds	–	–	–	–
Unrestricted funds	12,197.00	9,933.00	5,962.00	8,226.00
Total funds	£12,197.00	£9,933.00	£5,962.00	£8,226.00

2. Trustees remuneration, benefits and expenses

The Trustees received no remuneration or benefits during the year ended 30 June 2025 or during the year ended 30 June 2024.

Accounts – 30 June 2026

Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 30 June 2026

	2025-26			2024-25
	Unrestricted Funds (£)	Restricted Funds (£)	TOTAL (£)	TOTAL (£)
Receipts				
Receipts from generated funds:				
Voluntary income donations	2,800.00	-	2,800.00	1,750.00
Activities for generating funds – fund raising	-	-	-	-
Gift Aid on donations	-	-	-	-
Receipts from charitable activities:				
Session fees including direct payment	8,605.00	-	8,605.00	8,183.00
Total receipts	£11,405.00	-	£11,405.00	£9,933.00
Payments				
Payments for generating funds:				
Marketing and publicity	126.00	-	126.00	366.00
Payments for charitable activities:				
Staff salary costs	5,325.00	-	5,325.00	3,600.00
Staff costs – supervision	800.00	-	800.00	480.00
Travel costs	-	-	-	-
Garden materials and tools	334.00	-	334.00	108.00
Capital expenditure	480.00	-	480.00	240.00
Payments for administration and governance:				
Office stationery, postage, phone & computer	654.00	-	654.00	598.00
Insurance	158.00	-	158.00	158.00
Rent & membership fees	376.00	-	376.00	412.00
Criminal records check	-	-	-	-
Total payments	£8,253.00	-	£8,253.00	£5,962.00
Surplus of receipts over payments	+3,152.00	-	+3,152.00	+3,971.00
Surplus brought forward	12,197.00	-	12,197.00	8,226.00
Surplus carried forward	£15,349.00	-	£15,349.00	£12,197.00

The receipts and payments accounts were approved by the Trustees on 11th August 2026 and were signed on their behalf by:

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

Statement of Assets and Liabilities – as at 30 June 2026

	2026	2025
	£	£
Tangible fixed assets at cost:		
Unrestricted fund – used for charitable purposes	-	-
Debtors	-	-
Cash at bank	15,349.00	12,197.00
Total assets	15,349.00	£12,197.00
Liabilities		
Unrestricted fund – Independent examiners fees	-	-
Total liabilities	-	-

The statement of assets and liabilities was approved by the Trustees on 11th August 2026 and signed on their behalf by:

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

Notes to the Accounts – for the year ended 30 June 2026

1. Funds summary

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

Funds	1 July 26 (£)	Receipts (£)	Payments (£)	30 June 25 (£)
Restricted funds	-	-	-	-
Unrestricted funds	15,349.00	11,405.00	8,253.00	12,197.00
Total funds	£15,349.00	£11,405.00	£8,253.00	£12,197.00

2. Trustees remuneration, benefits and expenses

The Trustees received no remuneration or benefits during the year ended 30 June 2026 or during the year ended 30 June 2025.

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

Clients are asked every three months to reflect on how the project might be helping them in the following areas:

- 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?



A participant

"The project has helped me by providing a place to be in touch with nature and has increased a level of awareness of myself and the world around me. Also it made me able to talk about any issues I have about my mental health and how the environment I am in affects me."



A participant

"Lucy helps me to understand my emotions and thoughts, especially negative ones – to learn to be kind to myself and to be aware of old patterns of thinking."

Thanks and Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our generous supporters who help Strong Roots to deliver our services. We are enormously grateful for their support.

In the accounting period 1 July 2024 – 30 June 2025, the following donations were made:

- John Jarrold Trust donated £1,000.
- The Sir Gerard Newman Charitable Trust donated £750.

In the accounting period 1 July 2025 – 30 June 2026, the following donation was made:

- Eaton Park Community Association donated £2,000.
- The Sir Gerard Newman Charitable Trust donated £800.

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

AAB Charitable Trust
Acorn Grant [European Social Fund]
Chris Sellers
Community Champions
Community Matters Waitrose Norwich
East Anglian Rambling Society
Eaton Park Community Association
John Jarrold Trust
John Lewis
Kettle Foods Ltd
Marks and Spencer
Mills & Reeve LLP
Mrs H R Greene Charitable Settlement
NELM
Norwich Learning City [Making It Happen]
Norwich Quakers
The Sir Gerard Newman Charitable Trust
Well Being [Big Lottery] Fund
Well-Being in the East
...and various individual donors

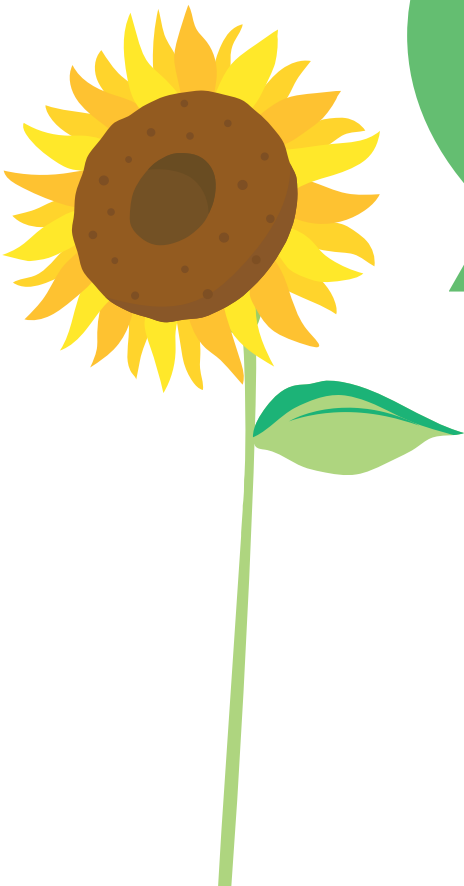
Thanks also go to our fellow allotment holder who so generously donates wood for our wood-burner.

Thanks are due to all volunteers past and present for their vital contribution to the development of Strong Roots.

Thanks are also due to the following for their support over the years:

Assist Trust
BBC Radio Norfolk
Bizz Fizz
Bluebell Allotment Holders Association
Bridge Plus
British Red Cross
The Chronicle [Newsletter of WEETU – The Women’s Employment, Enterprise and Training Unit]
City of Norwich Partnership
Clive Evans
Eco Echo
Freerange Creations
Future Radio
Growing Places [newsletter of the Federation of Community Farms and Gardens]
Dave Guttridge [DJ78]
Karen Hill

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



A participant

“Coming to Strong Roots has been so helpful in making me understand myself better. A lot of challenges in my life have made it difficult for me to understand my reactions to things but being able to talk them through in an environment such as this is really making a huge difference to my mental health. Being out in the open makes it feel like my troubles are spoken into the ether and don’t leave me feeling so bewildered. Doing the evaluations helps to prompt deeper thought about how the project helps and how I personally benefit from it.”

Trustees: Teresa Belton, Anne Goodhew, Jane Olivier and Jane Warren
Staff: Lucy Scurfield, Co-ordinator
Design: Anne Reekie
Web developer: Adrian Barker



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The John Jarrold Trust