GROWING LOCALITIES AWARDS 2016

SHORTLISTED ENTRIES - PROJECT SUMMARIES

Bethwin Road Adventure Playground
Bethwin is an open-access and free adventure playground in south London for children aged 5 to 15 and their families with play, cooking, gardening, community beekeeping and youth work services.

Activities and achievements

The development of the playground garden and community beehive, has over several years, increased the participation and understanding in the local community of food growing, supporting pollinators and wildlife. There is now a better knowledge and interest of bees and growing fruits, vegetables and herbs by children using the playground, their families and both volunteers and staff. Local honey and seasonal produce are shared by residents and this links the playground firmly with the community. Before the beekeeping children were cruel and frightened of the bees and children are now noticeably more gentle and interested. Children using the playground know where their food comes from and have tried new tastes and understand that it is cheaper and fun to grow their own. The children are shown how to clean and prepare the home-grown veggies and cook them together. The children also gain fresh air and physical activity at the playground – playing together and digging, and building together. The children choose to attend the playground and are free to go, so their participation is voluntary and our workshops follow the children’s interests and are made accessible for ages and abilities. Children have also gained experiences of planning the gardens, co-operating in groups, following safety instructions with tools and the beehive and are proud of their beautiful garden, their bee colony and their new knowledge.
**London Dragon Finder: Swimming with Dragons - Froglife Trust**

This Froglife Trust project converts public swimming pools into pond habitats for family fun sessions.

**Activities and achievements**

The project converts public swimming pools into pond habitats using props and delivers a range of educational games at Saturday family fun sessions. As ponds and the surrounding terrestrial land are essential habitats for a wide range of aquatic species they provide an excellent means of educating people about wildlife conservation. Froglife has a specific remit for the conservation of amphibians and reptiles and for this reason the activities that we deliver as part of these sessions all relate to amphibians and reptiles. Activities include: Frog Lifecycle Relay Race; Newt Challenge; Tadpole Treasure Hunt; Great Crested Newt Egg Hunt; and Snakes & Frogs.

Froglife’s fun, educational and interactive games are free to join. It is an excellent opportunity for families to have fun as a family and to join other families. Children can also join the activity on their own or with siblings and/or friends. People can stay for the duration of the activity or join/leave at any stage during the activity. This informal approach greatly facilitates learning. On leaving the session’s participants are given a goody bag (black swimming bag with Froglife logo etc.). Each bag contains information about other Froglife events that are taking place in their borough and giving them some very attractive and informative booklets. We also include our own children’s story book (written and illustrated by Froglife staff). The knowledge that we have imparted during these sessions has greatly exceeded our expectations with most participants leaving the sessions with a greater awareness of nature conservation and particularly amphibians and reptiles. We have also increased the knowledge amongst pool staff which is an added benefit. Some of the participants have attended other Froglife events such as Dragon Days and this broadens their wildlife journey. To date we have delivered sessions in Bexley, Westminster, Hillingdon, Havering, Tower Hamlets, Croydon and Harrow. Parents feedback: “Our children thoroughly enjoyed the session, and they were talking about it for a long time after. I think that what you’re doing to promote frog and reptiles works well for children. The children can really pretend that they are a frog or a tadpole, when in the pool and relate to what you are teaching them. We really enjoyed it.”
Loughborough Farm - Marcus Lipton Youth Centre outreach

Loughborough farm is a volunteer-led community food growing project, which aims to promote health, wellbeing and resilience through food growing and community engagement.

Activities and achievements

We hold a monthly market stall at the farm gate which allows us to supply healthy, cheap, locally produced food to the local community. We regularly sell farm produce at three local GP surgeries, followed by farm tours. This is part of our ‘Wish You Were Here, project, which aims to improve the health and wellbeing of vulnerable people and those with various health issues. We arrange visits from vulnerable people, run informal growing activities, integrating visitors into the group encouraging contribution to the running of the farm. Last summer we ran a pop up community cafe, which sold produce from the farm, and local people. We also have an active DIY group, which runs many community events, making furniture and other structures such as a new live frontage to the farm. This is all carried out using recycled materials. We are also in the process of building ‘The Wild Mind Yard’ a place for relaxation and promotion of wellbeing and mindfulness. Events at Loughborough Farm include: Wildcraft event, Bug hunt, easter egg hunt, pizza and poetry event, Wyck gardens clean up and prairie gardens project, nutrition workshop, wassailing event, Pizza & Wild mind yard event, painting workshop, May project garden hip-hop event, Haiku writing for well-being, Beerhive local brewery launch, and a DIY event as part of national youth volunteering, Green Roof project.

Lambeth Council has recently secured £1.64 million from the Mayor of London’s Regeneration fund to build affordable workspace for local people. The funding includes the retention of the Loughborough Farm’s long-term future has recently been secured through the Mayor of London’s Regeneration fund, reflecting its importance to the local community. Our ‘Wish You Were Here’ project has NHS funding that reaches out to GP surgeries, hostels and a recovery centre. This project has promoted well-being and mental health engagement. We have provided local people with improved access to local healthy food. Loughborough farm has facilitated development of skills and interests in growing, cooking and DIY with some people going on to work in related fields and run their own projects on the farm. We currently have two outreach projects to local residents, in which we have developed growing spaces for them to use. One of these involved building planters for a wheelchair-bound lady living in a second floor flat, allowing her to start gardening again.
Mabley Green Edible Park - Mabley Green Users Group
This project developed by the Mabley Green Users Group is an edible park planted by schools and the local community for everyone to come in, pick some fruit and enjoy.

Activities and achievements

The edible park comprises three large planting zones, which we co-ordinate. The first zone has been planted by Kingsmead Primary School with our help. We found funding for a local gardener Stephanie to work with the school children to plan, plant and look after an area with about 15 large fruit trees (apples, pears, cherries, plums and more) and scores of fruit bushes and flowers for pollinators. The second zone has about 30 large fruit trees and huge numbers of fruit bushes, bulbs and flowers to attract pollinators. This has been planted directly by local people of all ages as part of the Mabley Green User Group. The final zone of similar size will be planted with our help by other local organisations including the other local primary school and the residents of the nearby housing estate through an outreach programme. Our activities involve promoting events, working with local schools and organisations to make the park inclusive and of course planting, watering, weeding and picking the fruit.

150 of children have come out and planted or been involved with planning so far. This represents about two thirds of the local primary school. Our first user group tree planting session in March this year saw over 60 local people come out over the two days and we hope to see around 10-15 for every session coming up at least. The free and open sessions connect people with young children, young adults and the elderly.

We forecast 300 local schoolchildren as well as hundreds of locals directly involved from one of the most socially-deprived parts of the country. Our digital reach is about 1000 people too. We are reaching a uniquely diverse group of adults and children and we are working with other groups to increase participation from the elderly and groups representing people with mental health issues. We are supporting a new NHS play area in the park for children with autism and look forward to engaging with them in the growing areas of the park.
Growing with our pupils - Northbury Primary School

To engage pupils in our large multicultural primary school with our garden, raising awareness of fresh produce being easy to grow and is a healthy option and to be involved with the outside in a fun and exciting way,

Activities and achievements

Firstly engaging pupils with our garden in the form of lunch time and break time clubs. Pupils have sown, watered and, grown and harvested produce. They have asked questions and are keen to join in. They see their produce being used in the school dinner and that has given them pride and has made them aware of how much it costs and how it is possible at home too. Secondly, we have tried to encourage growing as a family. All children were taken out and all planted a herb which they could take home. This was to encourage growing at home and also using the produce in their home cooking. Our school is very multicultural so we used coriander, parsley, chives and basil as they may be more familiar with these. We are also aware that our pupils do not have gardens and some have no balconies so they needed plants which could be grown indoors. This was very successful. We grow bamboo in the garden and use bamboo in a growing music project. Our year 6 pupils have made pan pipes with mature bamboo. It is something we have done over the last 2 years and we are hoping to continue this project every year. Pupils have worked outside and looked at the versatility of bamboo and how it grows. They then used mature bamboo to build pan pipes which were then tuned. The pupils then composed pieces of music which they played in a performance.

To have planted 900 herb plants and have them sent home is a great feat. The greatest impact was when pupils asked if we were doing that again this year. We responded and this is now an annual occurrence. The school pays for the compost, pots and seeds so 900 pupils can plant a herb and take it home. The growing music project is a successful project and we shared with a local school who also then made pan pipes.
Naturehood - Pooles Park Primary School

Pooles Park Primary School’s project provides many inner city people, from all age groups, abilities and backgrounds, with opportunities to engage and connect with our natural environment through growing organic food and gardening for wildlife in a beautiful, safe and inspiring school based, community garden – Naturehood in our childhood and for our neighbourhood.

Activities and achievements

We have seen thousands of children enjoy Pooles Park’s beautiful green space through participating in a wide variety of environmental themed activities, in particular: growing a wide variety of organic, food from seed to plate; planting fruit/nut trees and perennial fruits/vegetables; taking thousands of seeds home to grow, nurture to fruition and eat; taking lots of freshly harvested food home to cook and eat. Fried pumpkin leaves and savoury rhubarb is quite popular. More than 20 schools, Primary and Secondary, have visited our project over the past 36 months. Children and Staff, totalling approximately 600 + people, were given tours of the garden and engaged in workshops. Each school gave really positive feedback, were inspired and gained knowledge to start/advance their own nature projects. In addition, we were able to provide 8 schools with a food growing starter kit (funded by UCL) - a raised bed, compost and fruit/veg seeds. Our Saturday Volunteer events enable many people from our local and wider community to take part in nature themed activities. We often fire up the Cob Oven and cook pizzas/seasonal food for our helpers, using herbs/veg/fruit from our garden. We run regular and free training workshops for our parents and people from the local/wider communities, including food growing and edible window box/hanging baskets. Four plots in our garden are ‘leased’ each year, free of charge, to families in our school without gardens at home. This gives parents and children the opportunity to grow their own local, organic food.

Our main beneficiaries are people from our school community and local community, who live in Islington’s most deprived ward, where the majority do not have gardens at home. These people need this project most and are often hard to reach; children, young people, families/single parents, refugees, asylum seekers, from minority ethnic groups, elderly people, people with disabilities and/or special needs, on low incomes, under employed or unemployed. Our project offers these people a ‘mini oasis’ - a local, interactive and educational, garden which is in a safe, inspiring and productive environment. It continues to be accessible to as many people as possible during term time, out of school hours and during holidays, whether they are participating in workshops and/or volunteering. It provides an all inclusive project where people can participate in growing food ‘From Seed to Plate’, celebrate nature, further their knowledge and gain essential life skills and interact with their natural environment.
Providence Row Garden Project

Nestled among the concrete and glass skyline of London is a garden hidden from view, which grow herbs, veg and hope for people affected by homelessness.

Activities and achievements

Just a few years ago Providence Row, an East End homelessness centre, had plenty of outdoor space, not being used at all by staff and clients. One client described their courtyard as being more like a ‘prison yard’. The organisation embarked on a three year project to transform their spaces, with help from corporate partners, local volunteers and the charity’s beneficiaries themselves. Since then the courtyard garden has been completely revamped and has movable flowerbed planters, and a herb garden. The building’s unused roof, refurbished last winter, is now a flourishing allotment, growing a whole range of fruit and veg, and providing a home to the charity’s resident bee hives. The garden regeneration provided an excellent project for the organisation’s garden group. Regular volunteering days set up for companies has been getting local workers into gardening gloves and working with clients on a range of garden projects, does wonders for breaking down barriers and misconceptions of homelessness in the local area and helps raise vital funds for the charity’s work. On top of this these volunteer days have helped create the spaces which are now being used to help support our beneficiaries. With 150 hours of volunteer time and seed funding as well as skilled experts and consultancy from BBMV (part of Crossrail) the charity water-proofed, resurfaced and completely refurbished the rooftop garden. The courtyard garden is used for a gardening club, art projects and a meeting space for our clients to relax in a safe, supported environment. The English Class use the gardens in the summer months to discover aspects of the English language, through poetry and photography based workshops. The roof garden is now the official training space for the organisation’s accredited gardening trainee scheme. We also grow fruit, veg and herbs for use in the kitchen.

72 clients have grown 104.6Kg of 140 difference varieties of organic fruit and veg, helping to serve 1307 healthy nutritious meals to our clients affected by rough sleeping. In the last year 55 people affected by rough sleeping have taken part in the therapeutic gardening group. This helps engage clients in relaxing social activities whilst paving the way for positive relationships with onsite advisors in housing, benefits, health, mental health and substance misuse reduction. 14 have taken on the gardening trainee scheme, working towards a level 1 certificate in horticulture. Two clients have gone on to become gardening peer mentors, helping to run sessions and maintaining the gardens outside of gardening group and trainee scheme hours. 208 volunteers from local companies have joined them in our kitchen and garden to help cook and serve the food, build planters for growing the food and build sheds and a greenhouses (among other projects). And finally one gardening trainee has already moved on into work.
PTSD horticultural group at Vauxhall City Farm - SLAM NHS

Horticultural project organised by South London and Maudsley NHS to facilitate recovery from trauma among traumatised refugees and asylum seekers at Vauxhall City Farm.

Activities and achievements

SLAM NHS (South London and Maudsley) runs a 12-week psycho-educational groups for coping with trauma, with 3 to 8 attendees per group. Sometimes we have interpreters translating into other languages. In the sessions we use planting and growing at the beginning and end of each session to promote calm. Then we run sessions to teach people coping strategies for symptoms of trauma, such as coping with nightmares and flashbacks. People usually join our groups feeling very isolated and mistrusting. Sometimes they may even come from opposing sides of the same conflict, Nevertheless gardening helps bring people together and promotes team work. Often our service users are too frightened to attend mainstream services, or they may feel more at home in the garden if they are from more rural locations; doing gardening reminds them of home and family. For those who have pain and disabilities due to torture, gardening helps them to move their bodies. Once people have completed the 12 week course they are invited to a gardening only follow-on group. This involves planting, watering, growing from seeds, growing vegetables and harvesting. At the end of each group we eat a meal together, often consisting of vegetables grown in the garden. We have also involved service users in designing their own garden, making it accessible to people with disabilities including those with sensory impairment. We also engage our members in other ways of disseminating their wisdom, helping them feel valued and connected to others. For example, we are currently developing a resource book for staff and patients working with traumatised clients who wish to incorporate gardening into their work, we will be using photographs of our garden and the recovery stories they wish to share. The book will also include tips to cope with trauma using natural themes, plant and growing metaphors and illustrations, this will be published in 2016/2017.

In mainstream settings this client group can be extremely difficult to engage, we therefore feel engagement is a major achievement. We have extremely low drop-out rates from our group. We have also moved a lot of people on from the project into work and training due to increased confidence and well-being, this is also a major achievement as the project has helped people move on and integrate in the community. In our service evaluation our members report reduced stress, anxiety, depression and better emotional control. They also reported feeling less isolated, more connected and as if they belong. In addition they felt the group had helped them with pathways into recovery.
The Garden - Spare Tyre

The Garden, a multi-sensory interactive performance for people with dementia and a skills development tool for carers, brings the outdoors inside and creates moments of shared joy and inspiring imagination.

Activities and achievements

The Garden is a multi-sensory performance for people with dementia, and a skills development tool for carers. It is an innovative performance which brings the outdoors inside, creating moments of shared joy, inspiring imagination. During an interactive one-hour performance we take people with dementia on a journey through the sights, smells, tastes and senses of the seasons in an immersive garden environment. Participants with dementia are invited to participate in the action – playing conquers, touching snow and soil, throwing leaves, smelling fresh washing on the line, flying butterfly puppets, smelling fresh herbs like rosemary. Carers are also invited to participate, learning new sensory methods of stimulating and engaging imagination in the residents. Separate complementary skills development sessions explore creative methods of care-giving and communication for carers, building confidence to bring practical creativity into everyday activities, enhancing long-term well-being.

This model has been successfully toured across London during spring 2016. We will be touring again in Oct/Nov 2016 when we would like to bring it to more care homes in London. 5 people deliver the project. These include 3 performers, 1 senior trainer and a project manager. So far we have performed for over 250 people living with dementia and 80 carers. With the Oct/Nov 2016 tour we hope to reach at least a further 200 people living with dementia and 60 carers. The training sessions we deliver inspires carers to replicate and incorporate elements of the performance in their daily interactions with people with dementia. As well as performing in care homes The Garden has also visited London community venues and theatres including Roehampton Methodist Church Hall and New Diorama Theatre: “It has really inspired my classes in care homes and future work. I have been trying to focus on changing the space/environment that we dance/play in, stepping into the garden really justified how important environment really is.”
The Clink Gardens at HMP High Down

The Clink Gardens is a prisoner rehabilitation initiative that trains serving prisoners in horticulture and provides a dedicated mentoring and support service leading to employment opportunities upon release.

Activities and achievements

The Clink Gardens at HMP High Down has a greenhouse with heating system, six poly tunnels for growing produce and 12 beehives. Fryer oil is turned into bio diesel for the project’s tractors and an onsite wind turbine generates 9000 kilowatt-hours of electricity. The prisoners grow, cultivate and harvest crops such as seasonal fruits, vegetables and salad items to gain experience and achieve their City & Guilds level 2 NVQ qualification in Horticulture. The produce is then transported to The Clink Restaurants at HMP High Down and HMP Brixton where kitchen trainees use it to create fresh, seasonal dishes which are available for the general public to enjoy. Food waste from the restaurants is then composted for the prison gardens taking the process full circle.

To date The Clink Charity’s training initiatives have seen more than 500 prisoners being trained to industry standard with 46 graduates being released into employment this year alone. As a not-for-profit organisation the charity relies on the generosity and unwavering support of the surrounding communities, philanthropic individuals and businesses and the general public. The plan moving forward is to continue to grow The Clink concept with the aim of having 20 prisoner training schemes in operation across the UK by the end of 2020. The projects at HMP High Down have won numerous awards since the restaurant opened in 2009 and the gardens opened in 2012. Recent awards for the Sutton-based projects include the Surrey Life ‘Services to the Community’ award in 2015 and the Sustainable Restaurant Association’s 3-star award in 2016.
Sprout There! - Uniting Friends Ltd

Sprout There! is a healthy lifestyle organic horticulture project for adults with learning disabilities, which encompasses a diverse range of activities promoting and sourcing the natural environment.

Activities and achievements

The linchpin of Sprout There! involves all knowledge and practice of horticultural tasks and skills from propagation, the cultivation and maintenance of plants through to the harvest. Under the guise of this horticultural knowledge and due to the seasonal demands restraints of the project we have developed other activities which we can do all year round. A healthier lifestyle for all members is of prime importance, not just physically but emotionally. From some of the herbs and plants we grow, we produce cosmetics. Individuals are party to the growing of the plants and these are incorporated with various base materials to make massage oils, shampoos, shower gels, bath bombs body creams and soaps. Members are taught to identify the plants associated with their essential oils through smell and discuss their therapeutic values. Members are taught to distinguish the plants associated with their essential oils using easy read and pictorial identification sheets. By using smell and appropriate touch, all activities within Sprout There! are able to be followed through step by step instruction and support. Using easy read and pictorial instruction sheets, individuals are able to proceed step by step to complete a finished product. Assessing the essential oil through smell and counting the correct combination of oils, to mixing materials and packaging the products. Finally after the product has been completed it is sold to raise funds for the project. We do this through a brochure or from a stall at one of the fairs we attend throughout the year. On a practical level many of the individuals will follow every step of the process of making cosmetics whilst others may have a preference for a specific task.

Producing the cosmetics gives individuals the space to discuss the therapeutic values of herbs and plants to balance emotions and develop a sense of well being. This has in turn led to an increased emotional awareness of others and themselves by sharing thoughts, feelings and experiences. By simply working with the essential oils and herbs, individuals may have a calming and uplifting experience, either by touch whilst using the massage oils, or by the aroma which can evoke memories, happy or sad and the stories that can be and are shared. Some of the combinations are made to reflect the individual requirements of an individual which gives a wonderful personalised product. The activity has offered a group experience that gives an increased sociability, a notable opportunity to develop interpersonal relationships and a sense of common purpose; an acknowledged contribution to a finished saleable product. The project has many facets attributed to it under the umbrella of horticulture, but the making of natural products is an activity independent upon the growing season so sustainable throughout the year, which makes it an attractive and accessible activity.
Urban Picking - Company Drinks CIC

Urban Picking offers a year-round public programme for local residents across the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham to actively engage with and make use of nature and existing green resources in their locality by picking together, producing healthy seasonal drinks and contributing to a social enterprise that supports community development.

Activities and achievements

Urban Picking is part of Company Drinks, which started in May 2014, as a commission of the arts and social impact charity Create London, running a community rooted and community-led green enterprise, involving more than 2,000 residents in the making of locally grown and picked drinks. Our drinks range spans eight sodas, seven different cordials, juices and a green hop beer. Through our broad local communication and outreach work we have reached additional 11,000 residents who know about the projects and its ethos to communally use existing green resources. We regularly make use of existing natural environment and assets by running green events and nature workshops (from plant identifying and learning about their health benefits and medicinal qualities, to community picking and foraging trips) across 12 green spaces in the borough and four farms nearby. We have 10 permanent local partners who co-produce and support us in delivering our year long programme, for example Dagenham Library, Park Rangers, Studio3Arts and Barking and Dagenham College. The project directly contributes to a more positive image and perception of the borough and its green resources both amongst local communities (regular local press coverage, displays and talks) and through reviews in the national media.

Urban Picking is regularly invited to contribute to local, national and international conferences and events, as an innovative and inspirational best-practice approach to re-linking urban communities with their green and natural environments. Presentations and features include: Urban Resilience Conference during the World Climate Conference in Paris COP21; editorial feature in The Land Magazine as an exemplary urban harvesting project; keynote paper at the Re-imagining Rurality International Conference at Westminster University; workshops and presentations during Bristol’s Food Connection Festival; exhibition on innovative approaches to sustainable cities, at Arup HQ, London.

Last year, over 1,050 local people were involved in picking and producing drinks for the projects. Of these 240 were schoolchildren. 20,000 drinks were bottled. There have been 20,374 consumers of the drinks to date. There has been coverage including BBC London News, the Observer Magazine, the FT Weekend, Evening Standard, Barking and Dagenham Post and Harpers Bazaar produced a reach of at least 2m for all formats. There is a reach of 25,000 for Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.