

Groundwork UK Learning Partnership

Communities Living Sustainably

Learning Report: Growing and Green Space



MARCH 2014

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Executive Summary

This report draws out learning from the Communities Living Sustainably (CLS) programme up to March 2014 and is based on telephone interviews with the twelve CLS projects. It looks specifically at activities related to biodiversity, food, growing and green space activities and aims to highlight key issues and experience from the CLS projects as well as reviewing the range of differing activities.

Key Findings

Food and growing activities are proving to be practical, fun and the most accessible part of CLS projects for involving people. All groups report high local interest and good attendance at any food, growing or cooking related events. It confirms that food and growing activities are a good 'hook' for engaging the public with the wider sustainability agenda and projects are using this opportunity to engage these people with their wider project activities and local sustainability issues.

Projects are using the CLS funding to map available land for growing. This mirrors the findings of the energy learning report where projects used the funding for renewable energy feasibility studies. It demonstrates that CLS is providing valuable project development funding for planning and enabling projects to build strong, well informed foundations for future plans. Feedback from groups shows that this development funding can be more difficult to attain than funding for project delivery.

Projects have found working with a range of local partners to be beneficial. This validates the thinking behind the CLS programme to fund a partnership of organisations in an area, as opposed to individual groups. Projects with strong partnerships have made stronger, faster progress. CLS is predominantly a revenue funding programme and it was hoped that groups would use these partnerships to enable them to source capital materials to add value and further progress their activities. There is evidence that this appears to be happening and that groups are beginning to find innovative ways to source these materials.

Projects have found food and growing based projects to be harder to progress than originally envisaged. Many have underestimated the time, resources and expertise needed to set up a growing project. The CLS programme allowed groups to choose the length of time over which they wished to deliver their project. Groups who chose a shorter delivery period have concerns that this could cause problems in delivering their outcomes. Learning suggests that community projects would benefit from guidance on the time and resources needed to deliver growing projects, prior to applying for funding.

There is some early indication that changes in external circumstances appear to be having an impact on the food growing projects funded through the CLS programme related to the rise in food poverty, and the increase in the need for and use of food banks locally. Communities funded by CLS are growing and distributing food to tackle food poverty locally within their area.

Projects report little activity to support biodiversity. They place higher emphasis on the social and community benefits of their growing activities than the environmental benefits. The food and growing activities run to date have proven successful and are producing obvious community benefits which projects find easier to articulate. There appears to be less understanding of how to measure and evidence biodiversity benefits.

Projects delivering food and growing activity are concerned about how to ensure a sustainable legacy for their activities, once their CLS funding period is completed. Projects are beginning to consider various ways to ensure sustainability of their activities, including time banking and enterprise development, but this could be constrained by funding rules relating to profit generation.

Projects are focused on changing behaviour by training people to grow their own food, to cook and eat healthily, to source locally grown food and to make better use of green space locally. They are engaging successfully with their local community around these issues, but are currently struggling with how to evidence the impact of their activities on long term behaviour change.

Recommendations

This report makes a number of recommendations; for the CLS Learning Partnership, for the Big Lottery Fund and other funders and for wider growing and green space stakeholders, including national and local government. These are summarised below:

- **Understanding Change & Impact:** Projects are facing challenges around how to evidence behaviour change and especially how to attribute this to their activities. The Groundwork UK Learning Partnership should provide examples of metrics and monitoring specifically for food and growing projects, should bring together the academic partners working on evidencing this across the programme and investigate project behaviour change activity in more detail in the September 2014 Learning Report.
- **Learning how communities learn about sustainability:** Learning is emerging around how communities prefer to gain knowledge, skills and experience in relation to sustainability issues. The CLS communities prefer to access this through knowledgeable local partners who provide specific expertise, advice and support. Future sustainability funding streams would benefit from taking a similar partnership approach to the CLS programme. They also value face to face peer contact between other communities delivering similar projects. Future programmes encouraging sharing of learning between communities should focus on face to face interaction perhaps complemented by free social media platforms rather than a bespoke web presence.
- **Peer to Peer Learning:** There is a strong appetite for peer to peer networking from projects and there are a number of areas of crossover activity where it would be beneficial to bring projects together to share experiences. These include working with volunteer advisors and food champions, mapping and securing available land for growing, building a sustainable legacy for growing projects, growing and distributing local food and enhancing biodiversity benefits of growing projects.
- **Informing The Big Lottery Fund's decision making:** Food and growing projects are an effective way to engage local communities in sustainability issues and future community sustainability schemes should include a food strand to facilitate this involvement. Clarification is needed by projects around generating revenue to enable the sustainability of growing projects as well as a meeting between the Learning Partnership and the new Big Lottery Fund Power to Change programme to share the emerging findings from CLS in relation to supporting community enterprise activity. CLS funding has proven valuable in project development activity and proves the importance of this development funding to progress quality capital project plans, particularly when helping communities to address the complex area of sustainability. Funders should look to support more planning and feasibility activity with local communities around sustainability issues to build knowledge and capacity and enable well developed plans to be produced.
- **Disseminating learning to wider stakeholders:** The CLS activity in local mapping of open space reinforces the findings of Policy Exchange report 'Park Land' that a lack of publicly available data about open spaces is hampering community involvement and provides interesting examples for government of how open space can be mapped at a local community level. Learning is emerging for local councils and housing associations about the need to support communities with mapping and identifying land that can be used for growing purposes, as well as making more land available and simplifying lease and land ownership arrangements. Some projects are successfully using 'Meanwhile' arrangements with their local authorities and this learning could encourage other authorities to do the same. The involvement of CLS projects in growing local food for food bank distribution would be useful to share with local authorities and other organisations supporting food banks to see if value could be added to their services.

1.0 Introduction

This report draws out learning from the Big Lottery Fund's Communities Living Sustainably (CLS) programme up to March 2014. It looks specifically at activities related to growing and green space and aims to highlight key issues and experience from the CLS projects as well as reviewing the range of differing activities. It draws out learning to inform and influence key stakeholders including the Big Lottery Fund and other funders, local and national government and key green space and growing stakeholders.

This report is based on telephone or face-to-face interviews with all the CLS projects carrying out activities related to growing and green space. The interviews were planned using background information on these activities under CLS, gathered by Groundwork.

The Groundwork UK Learning Partnership will produce quarterly reports capturing the learning emerging from CLS projects. The reports will focus on three key themes, Energy, Growing and Green Space and Climate Change. The first Energy Learning Report was produced in November 2013 and can be found at www.communitieslivingsustainably.org.uk

About Communities Living Sustainably

Communities Living Sustainably (CLS) is a £12 million programme funded by the Big Lottery Fund. Twelve communities in England have received funding to help deal with the potential impact of climate change and build the sustainability and resilience of their local community. The programme will run for five years, with these communities providing inspiration to other communities across England and sharing what they have learned with each other. A full list of these projects can be found in Appendix A and a map showing their location can be found in Appendix B.

The Groundwork UK Learning Partnership is made up of five organisations each with expertise in tackling climate change and helping communities to live more sustainably. The partnership comprises Groundwork UK, the Energy Saving Trust, the Federation of City Farms and Gardens, the New Economics Foundation and Building Research Establishment (BRE).

This partnership has been brought together to encourage and support the funded local communities to capture and share any lessons from their projects. A learning network has been established to encourage peer learning between communities, to better understand how communities can successfully live and work in a sustainable way and to provide information to inform and influence policy and practice both within the CLS programme and within the wider sustainability arena.

2.0 Background

Green space, growing, food production and increasing biodiversity have enormous benefits to building sustainable and resilient communities with a wealth of evidence available in terms of benefits of health and wellbeing, community cohesion, ecology and climate change adaptation. CLS is operating at a time when policy making by central government and agencies such as Natural England and the Environment Agency has been scaled back. There is no clear departmental focus from national government and much is delegated to local authorities to progress within constrained budgets. Changes to public health can be seen as an opportunity with emerging trends around health service referrals to growing projects and open space activities to improve physical and mental health.

Community Gardening and Local Food

In recent years there has been a rapid expansion in initiatives and projects aimed at tackling the demand for community gardening and food growing. This has been due to an upsurge in interest in 'growing your own', as well as an awareness of other issues such as health and well-being and climate change. Existing provision of land, particularly allotments, has proved inadequate in the face of this demand, so groups and organisations at national, regional and local levels have begun creating a variety of initiatives. As a result, membership of the Federation of City Farms and Community Gardens has risen to nearly 580 groups and FCFCG estimates it supports up to 1,000 community gardens in the wider movement¹.

At the same time, there has been a rise in the local food movement. A Local Food Coalition can be defined as groups of organisations, from the voluntary, statutory and private sectors working together towards a common goal, which generally revolves around the creation of a local sustainable food system. Local food coalitions tend to cover a wider area than smaller community initiatives and have become prominent in large towns and smaller cities². There are successful examples of local food such as Incredible Edible Todmorden(IET), which has encouraged many similar schemes in Northern England. Concerned about sustainability issues and with a desire to make the town of Todmorden more self-sufficient in food production, IET began with several small community gardens and a seed exchange. It has now blossomed into a much larger scheme, planting two orchards, liaising with public bodies and a local social landlord to use their land³.

Two major programmes funded by the Big Lottery Fund with a focus on local food have recently drawn to a close. 'Making local food work'⁴ which supported community food enterprises ended in 2013 and 'Local Food'⁵ which distributed grants to projects which help make locally grown food available to local communities ended project delivery in March 2014. Together these schemes supported over 2,000 local food initiatives and have collated evidence and information from these which provide a body of evidence for the emerging sector.

On January 5th 2010, the Government launched their new food strategy Food 2030⁶. The strategy, the first in over 50 years, sets out their vision for what the food system in the UK should look like in 2030 and what steps are required to get there. The local food sector responded to express their concerns that the report lacked a strong focus on the rise in communities across the UK taking control of food production and the opportunities that this could present⁷. There remains a challenge of connecting this emerging grass roots activity with the mainstream agriculture and food production and distribution sector, although there are evolving signs that business is keen to engage with local producers with some leading supermarkets committing to stocking a percentage of local produce in stores.

Food Poverty and the increase in use of food banks

Food bank use has been increasing steadily since 2005. In the period April – September 2013 alone, over 350,000 people received food from Trussell Trust food banks, triple the number helped in the same period in 2012. This surge led to the Trussell Trust to call for an inquiry into the causes in food poverty and the surge in food bank usage. A new All Party Parliamentary group on Hunger and Food Poverty is now investigating the ‘root causes of hunger and food poverty’ and the increase in demand for food banks in Britain⁸.

In January 2013, the Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) launched a food redistribution working group that has been tasked with developing a better understanding of the barriers to surplus food redistribution and the solutions to overcome those barriers. The research found that whilst tonnages of surplus food available at store level are small in comparison to the whole supply chain, the volumes are sufficient to deliver real benefit to those who need it. The report also highlights that the barriers to rolling out redistribution from stores on a nationwide scale are still significant due to current capacity and resource limitations within both charity and retailer processes⁹.

Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity

Green infrastructure includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, wetlands, grasslands, river and canal corridors, allotments and private gardens. The many benefits that green infrastructure provides are well understood. A report produced by the Forestry Commission for Defra and CLG in 2010 provides evidence of these social, economic and environmental benefits. Green space can make positive impacts on both local and regional economic regeneration, especially for job creation, business start up and inward investment. It also provides a myriad of social benefits including improvements in levels of physical activity and health, promotion of psychological health and mental well-being and the facilitation of social interaction, inclusion and community cohesion. Environmental benefits include reduction in air pollution and flood risk and mitigation against high summer temperatures caused by the urban heat island effect. Ecological benefits are largely related to the provision of habitat¹⁰.

The Policy Exchange report ‘Park Land’ published in November 2013 warns that budgetary pressures could have a major impact on the quantity and quality of our urban green spaces. Financial constraints have led to local authorities in towns and cities across England reducing the amount of money they spend on parks and other green spaces. The cuts were felt most deeply in the North East with councils cutting the amount they spend on green spaces by almost 40% over the past three years. This compares to just a 3.4% reduction in spending in the South East. The report also found that a lack of publicly available data about Britain’s open spaces is hampering improvements and community involvement. The report calls for a national, comprehensive green space mapping exercise to be undertaken¹¹.

The Green Infrastructure Partnership (GIP)¹² is a network of over 320 organisations and individuals which aims to enhance the development of green infrastructure in England and following the production of the Natural Environment White Paper in 2011 will be coordinated by the Town and Country Planning Association from March 2014. It aims to provide learning to influence and advise Defra in their green infrastructure planning and policy.

The Government published their strategy for wildlife in England in 2011¹³. ‘Biodiversity 2020’ recognises the importance of local action to enable Government targets to be met and includes Biodiversity Indicators¹⁴ to encourage essential improvements to be made in all communities.

Access to Nature is a grant scheme within the Big Lottery Fund’s Changing Spaces, which was created to help communities enjoy and improve their natural environments. The 115 projects supported by this scheme encourage people who have little or no experience of the natural environment to benefit from the outdoors. Support to projects ceased in March 2014 and the programme has built up a body of learning in this area¹⁵.

3.0 Main findings

3.1 Food growing is proving to be an excellent way of engaging people in sustainability projects

Growing and food related activity forms a major part of the Communities Living Sustainably programme. All twelve of the CLS projects are carrying out growing, cooking, healthy eating or green space related activity and groups find these activities are proving to be the most accessible part of CLS projects for involving people. They are seen as a practical, fun activity and all groups report high local interest and a good attendance at any food growing or cooking related events. Green Prosperity in Hull work with a community farm to run growing activities and regularly have 100 people attending these activities whilst L8 Living Sustainably in Liverpool have identified ten priority sites in the area for growing and have succeeded in establishing volunteer community gardeners on a number of these sites. Sustainable Sheppey work with a prison on their previously unused community farm and currently have 40 plot 'owners' involved with growing.



Transition Town Dorchester Community Farm

Practical growing activity is proving a good way to introduce people to healthy eating and sourcing food more locally and is providing an effective way to engage a range of people, young and old, in areas which may have multiple deprivation issues including high unemployment and low educational attainment.

This confirms that food and growing activities are a good 'hook' for engaging the public with the wider sustainability agenda. CLS projects should ensure that they maximise this opportunity to engage these interested people with their wider project activities and local sustainability issues. This provides useful learning for other communities struggling to engage their local public in the local sustainability agenda. This learning should influence funders and policy makers trying to facilitate community engagement and action around sustainability to include a focus on food and growing activity.

3.2 Mapping

Projects are using the CLS funding to map available land for growing. This mirrors the findings of the energy learning report where projects are using CLS funding to progress renewable energy feasibility studies. It demonstrates that CLS is providing valuable project development funding for planning and help projects to build strong, well informed foundations to allow them to implement future plans.

Feedback from groups shows that funds for these feasibility studies and initial planning studies can be more difficult to attain than funding for project delivery. There appears to be an opportunity for more funders to offer funding for early project planning. This would enable stronger, better thought out proposals to be developed for when communities move on to bid for capital funds to implement these project plans.

Case Study: Real Food Wythenshawe. The project has made substantial early progress with their mapping activity. They compiled a list of approximately 70 suitable sites for growing in the local area, owned by Wythenshawe Community Housing Group and listed key staff involved in their management and maintenance. This list was then refined through a series of site visits and meetings with these key staff to identify the most suitable sites for growing fruit and vegetables. The sites were assessed against key criteria including proximity to community groups to manage the site, level of maintenance required, potential for future development and a favourable cost benefit analysis. Twenty key sites were identified and they now plan to match local interested growing groups with these spaces and canvass local residents near to these sites to encourage their involvement. One growing project has been successfully established, a garden site for sufferers and those recovering from cancer.

The Wythenshawe case study shows the importance of support from local land owners, especially local authorities and housing associations to make land available for community food growing projects. Those CLS projects that are making good early progress are those with substantial land for growing already identified. For example, Liverpool has a number of gardens in small plots around their project area, Dorset has two food growing sites (an expanding community garden working with a housing association, and a school in Bridport) and Green Prosperity, Hull grows on an existing community farm. However, it can be difficult for communities to find suitable land and progress often complex lease and land ownership negotiations. The CLS Learning Partnership can support groups with these issues locally, but there is learning emerging for local authorities and wider policy makers as to whether these procedures could be simplified to empower communities to take responsibility for unused sites.

Some CLS projects are employing innovative ways of finding land for growing, allowing them to bypass complex lease and land ownership procedures. The Irwell Valley project has set up a 'meanwhile garden', on a traffic island. These gardens can only be located on a site temporarily as the land is usually earmarked for other purposes in the future. They allow for the short term use of land as they can be set up with little financial and physical outlay and are easily dismantled and moved in the future if required.

Case Study: L8 Living Sustainably in Liverpool carried out a mapping exercise to identify areas of unused land that are appropriate for community growing activity. They found a number of suitable sites locally situated on land owned by Liverpool City Council. To avoid lengthy leasehold or land transfer processes, the project has negotiated meanwhile use of these project sites with the council, meaning that they are free to use the land unless it is needed for development in the future. This arrangement is allowing community growing to take place within the project timescales and at a number of sites locally. One of these sites, 'Fern Grove', now has 16 local residents growing there on a regular basis. Local young people have worked to create a sign for the garden and the site will shortly be receiving a bee hive.

These projects could provide inspiration for other community groups struggling with land issues and provide the opportunity to showcase what can be achieved by a local community should land become available. The McDonalds example also showcases what can be achieved with a supportive local private sector partner. Community groups in other areas of the country could consider approaching private businesses in their area to progress community growing initiatives.

3.3. Partnership working is proving successful and is supporting projects to gain skills and knowledge and the potential to access materials and in kind support

Projects have found working with a range of local partners to be beneficial to deliver successful growing and green space projects. This validates the thinking behind the CLS programme to fund a partnership of organisations in an area, as opposed to individual groups. Projects with strong partnerships have made stronger, faster progress. CLS is predominantly a revenue funding programme and it was hoped that groups would use these partnerships to support them to source capital materials to add value and further progress their activities. There is evidence that this appears to be happening and that groups are beginning to find ways to progress this. L8 Living Sustainably is sourcing disused baths to use as planters from their local housing association while Wythenshawe has sourced topsoil from the company developing the tram system in their area.

Case Study: SustainEden in Cumbria funded their local Freegle group to facilitate the swapping of gardening tools and materials between local people. They expanded their list of available items to include surplus produce and gardening tools with 400 people having taken part to date. Freegle now also promote grow your own activities and the success of this in Cumbria has led to the national Freegle network running similar local projects in other areas.

Projects are also benefiting from the support of knowledgeable local partners around food and growing activity. Half of projects funded are working with existing growing projects within their area to deliver the food strand of their project and practical experience and training from other local groups working in this field appears to be one of the most widely used methods of learning by projects.

Case study: Green Prosperity, Hull. Working closely with their partner, East Hull community farm, the project promotes growing your own food and healthy cooking and eating to the local community through practical gardening activities. 100 people regularly take part in introduction to gardening sessions, composting and horticulture training, food growing activities and a seed swap event. They also run courses for families, schools and youth clubs on how to harvest, prepare and cook the produce grown on the farm.

3.4 Food growing is proving more difficult than initially envisaged

Groups have found food and growing based projects to be harder to progress than originally thought. There appears to have been some underestimation of the time, resources and expertise needed to set up a growing project. The CLS programme allowed groups to choose the length of time over which they wished to deliver their project. Groups who opted for a shorter delivery period are now concerned that this may cause them problems. There appears to be a need to properly inform community projects of the reality of delivering growing projects prior to applying for funding. The Groundwork UK Learning Partnership should share the learning from the experiences of groups involved in this programme with funders to enable future communities delivering similar projects to be aware of the time and resources necessary. This would enable better informed funding applications to be delivered for future community sustainability projects.

3.5 Addressing changes in external circumstances and emerging issues

There is some evidence that changes in external circumstances appear to be having an impact on the food growing projects funded through the CLS programme. For this particular theme, this relates to the rise in food poverty, the growing awareness of this as an important issue and the increase in the need for and use of food banks locally. Eleven projects have plans to, or are already involved in food distribution. This is either through food banks, food co-ops or their own distribution mechanisms. Wythenshawe is currently distributing the food they grow through FareShare and to eleven food banks in the local area. Green Prosperity supplies Food for Thought and Food for Hull, a hub for storing food for food banks. They also plan to run training in food growing for food bank recipients. Some projects report they are less keen to get involved with directly supplying food banks, preferring to teach people to cook and eat for less, rather than encourage a reliance on food banks. Others encountered problems as food banks could not accept the fresh food they produce. The increase in food poverty is also causing challenges for behaviour change activity. As people become more concerned about how to afford food, projects report it is harder to engage them with the local, seasonal food agenda.

With food poverty increasing across the country and the rise in food banks, successful local initiatives such as Green Prosperity featured above have potential to be replicated in other areas. They provide an example of how a community can build their local resilience to food poverty. We would recommend following the progress of the projects supplying food banks as they begin to produce more to determine the potential for up scaling this initiative elsewhere and use these findings to determine the impact that small scale local growing projects can hope to have on food poverty issues locally.

As well as food poverty, it could also be expected that changes in external circumstances will be having an effect across the other CLS themes. Rising fuel prices may be impacting on energy projects whilst recent flooding may impact on communities delivering Climate Change adaptations. The Learning Partnership will investigate this further across all themes to understand the challenges faced by communities building their resilience in the face of changing external circumstances.

3.6 Projects are focused more on the social benefits of food and growing activities rather than environmental benefits and increasing biodiversity

Part of the remit of this report is to evaluate biodiversity activity. However, the majority of projects reported little activity in this area. Projects place more emphasis on the social and community benefits of their growing activities than the environmental benefits. The projects delivering biodiversity activities are predominantly working with children and schools to develop outdoor classrooms, making equipment to attract wildlife such as nest boxes and bug hotels or teaching conservation skills to help protect biodiversity.

Sustainable Sheppey is working with children's clubs to make nest and worm boxes for installation in the local area. L8 Living Sustainably has plans to develop a beekeeping project and wildflower meadow area. School engagement includes the development of an outdoor willow classroom in Hull and a tree whisperer project run by SustainEden. The food and growing activities run to date have proven successful and are producing obvious social and community benefits to the area, which are consequently more straightforward for projects to report on. These food growing activities will undoubtedly be also having biodiversity benefits, but few projects are currently focusing on these or actively monitoring these biodiversity impacts.

Groundwork UK Learning Partnership could have an important role to play, firstly in helping projects to understand the biodiversity benefits their current activities could be delivering and how to monitor and record these. Secondly, the partnership could raise awareness of the available opportunities to maximise biodiversity within green space and growing projects and encourage groups to take steps to include these.

3.7 Sustainable legacy for growing activities

Projects delivering food and growing activity are concerned about how to ensure a sustainable legacy for their activities, once their CLS funding period is completed. This has emerged as an important issue for food and growing projects early in the programme, perhaps because of the tangible nature of the gardens and growing areas set up. A number of projects, particularly those running for three years expressed concern about the sustainability of their project and the likelihood of finding future funding once the funded period is over. In line with the Big Lottery fund guidance, the majority of projects are not currently charging for training and events or are charging very little. This is causing them to consider other ways of making their project sustainable such as timebanking. The thinking behind this method is that projects would provide free training to participants in return for a commitment to volunteer on the project in future, thus increasing the sustainability of the project.

Case Study: Timebanking has been around in the UK since 1988 and there are now 250 timebanks nationally. Timebanking is a means of exchange used to organise people and organisations around a purpose, where time is the principal currency. For every hour participants deposit in a timebank, perhaps by giving practical help and support to others, they are able to withdraw equivalent support in time when they are in need. Although timebanking for individuals is well established, little has been done so far on group-to-group timebanking and especially within the community gardening sector. The Federation of City Farms and Gardens, along with some of their members have recently joined a timebank in Carmarthenshire working across the county to gain more experience in this area. Both this example and the CLS groups considering timebanking as an option could provide evidence of the potential of timebanking to ensure the sustainability of food growing projects.

Many projects have a long term aim to develop self sustaining Community Interest Companies (CIC's) or Social Enterprises to ensure the sustainability of their projects after the funding period is over. However, there is some confusion from projects over what surplus making activity is allowed and if allowed, how this surplus could be used. CLS represents a new way of working for the Big Lottery Fund and by its nature of encouraging communities to think about the long term sustainability of their area, means that some of this thinking from projects challenges the current grant making constraints. The Big Lottery Fund have already recognised the importance of supporting self sustaining social enterprises through Village SOS and Making Local Food Work and have set up Power to Change, a funding stream which will come into effect in late 2014. The learning from CLS around the importance of supporting social enterprises to be self sustaining validates the need for such a funding stream and presents an opportunity for this learning to influence Power to Change. There is also a need to clarify the projects situation for CLS.

3.8 Evidencing impact: Projects are focused on changing behaviour and are engaging successfully with their communities, but are struggling with how to evidence the impact of their activities

There is a strong focus from the food, green space and growing strands of CLS projects on changing people's behaviour. Projects are working with communities to demonstrate and support them with behaviour change by:

- Developing people's skills to grow their own food and to cook and eat healthily
- Encouraging people to buy locally grown food where possible
- Enabling people to make better use of green space locally, both for growing and for the social, wellbeing and community benefits
- Educating people to make greener food choices, buying seasonal and locally grown food where possible and reducing food waste
- Working with schools to educate young people about the above issues

Projects are using a range of interactive events and activities to engage people with these issues including running cookery and growing training sessions to promote growing and eating healthy sustainable food, running foraging and wildlife walks, using local champions as advocates for growing and engaging with the community at established local events. These activities are proving very successful at engaging with the local community and have all seen a high level of interest, involvement and participation.

Projects are also using a wide variety of methods to try and understand behaviour change, but these remain at an early stage. They include working with universities and PhD students as well as recruiting and training community researchers to lead on monitoring behaviour change. Other methods include monitoring of behaviour change through community questionnaires and developing online tools.

Projects have expressed concern that behaviour change is a difficult area to monitor and there currently appears to be some disconnect between being able to demonstrate the number of people engaged with and evidencing that this engagement has changed behaviour. It would be useful for projects to share with each other how they are planning to evidence behaviour change in the near future and for the learning partnership to provide support in this area.



Real Food Wythenshawe Community Event

4.0 Recommendations:

4.1 Understanding Change & Impact

Projects are facing challenges around how to measure the impact of their activities regarding behaviour change. There is a need emerging for the Groundwork UK Learning Partnership to provide support to projects around this area, firstly to understand more about the different methods they are using or intending to use and secondly to support them to evidence their impact more effectively. There are four areas that would be beneficial to progress.

- *Metrics and monitoring specifically for growing, cooking and healthy eating activities.* Showcasing user-friendly ways to measure the impact of these activities by providing examples from previous project evaluation.
- *Stimulating and monitoring behaviour change across all areas of sustainability.* The challenges facing projects in evidencing behaviour change are not exclusive to their food and growing activities, with these findings also echoing those of the Energy Learning Report. It would be beneficial to bring together the individuals working on measuring behaviour change within projects to share experiences and best practice. This should include the university and PhD students contributing to evaluation activities.
- *Working with academic partners.* A number of projects are currently at varying stages of working with students to support evaluation and there appears to be some confusion in how to ensure their input is of optimum value. It would be useful to provide projects with advice on the support that could be available, how to identify students, departments and universities to approach and how to manage their input successfully to ensure the correct output is achieved.
- *Ensure focus on behaviour change for September 2014 Learning Report.* As both learning reports to date have identified a strong focus on behaviour change activity and the challenges associated with this, it will be beneficial to investigate this in more detail in September's learning report.

4.2 Learning how communities learn about sustainability

It is becoming apparent that the communities delivering sustainability projects through CLS prefer to learn from the experiences of the other communities involved in the programme through face to face contact rather than online activity. They also use local partners as valuable sources of learning taking advantage of their specific areas of expertise.

- Communities report gaining valuable learning and support through local partnership working. Many have engaged new partners as their project progresses. Although not without its challenges, working in partnership appears to be necessary to allow groups to tackle the wide scope of activities within sustainability. Future sustainability funding streams would benefit from taking a similar partnership funding approach to Communities Living Sustainably.
- The Online Learning Hub continues to be less well used by the CLS projects. This reflects their preference for face to face contact. There is also evidence that the majority of the services that the hub offers to projects can be found easily elsewhere online. Each project has their own website and in the majority of cases their own Facebook page and twitter account which they update and use to publicise events and activities. The learning partnership is considering trialling a CLS Facebook page to ascertain if this is a more effective way of linking projects together on a medium that they are already engaged with. If successful, future programmes could look to make use of existing free web resources rather than commissioning a bespoke web presence.

There is also an opportunity to share learning around food, growing and green space activity with communities wider than the twelve CLS projects, to allow lessons learnt from this programme to support future projects.

- Projects with less knowledge and experience in food growing programmes have stated that they have found delivery more difficult than they envisaged. It appears that there was some idea that this strand of sustainability would be an easier option to deliver. This has not proved to be the case and in some cases time, resources and budget needed have been underestimated. This provides an opportunity for the Groundwork UK Learning Partnership to develop a 'programme legacy document' for groups applying for future growing, food and green space funding to give an accurate picture of what is required using working examples from the twelve CLS projects. This could be used for future applicants to funding streams.

4.3 Peer to Peer Learning

There is a strong appetite for face to face peer networking from the majority of groups with many projects specifically requesting that meetings be arranged to discuss issues related to growing, cooking and green space. The Groundwork UK Learning Partnership should develop a programme of peer to peer learning workshops themed around the practical issues identified in this report. This would provide opportunities for exchange of experience between groups, input from external experts and may stimulate further collaboration. Possible subjects for workshop sessions include:

- *Volunteer and Community advisors / champions* – Many of the projects currently delivering food and growing training and advice through their paid staff, also have plans to train volunteers to become community food and growing champions. It would be beneficial for projects to share these plans and their ideas for how to train, support and manage volunteers and for the learning partnership to provide advice on how to ensure quality of advice is robust and consistent.
- *Mapping and securing available land for growing* - A number of projects are currently in the process of mapping available land for growing locally. The networking event could provide an opportunity for them to share their experiences and the outcomes of this work. Expert advice could also be provided on how to progress leases and licenses required to obtain land, how to identify who the land owners are and the best way to approach them.
- *Making your project sustainable and building a lasting legacy* – Allow groups to share their concerns and provide support around how to develop food and growing projects to make them sustainable and able to continue, once the funded period is over. This could include charging for activities, timebanking, and local currency ideas. It would be essential to liaise with the Big Lottery Fund on this to ensure that information given to groups is accurate and achievable within Lottery regulations.
- *Biodiversity* - It seems that biodiversity activity is lacking or at least is not seen to be a focus by projects. Groups might be encouraged to add more of a biodiversity aspect to their growing projects using practical examples.
- *Growing & Distributing Local Food* – The majority of projects are beginning to, or have future plans to distribute the produce they grow either to local businesses or through food banks. They would benefit from sharing their experiences and hearing from other communities who have progressed successfully in this area.

As well as a desire for peer networking around areas of crossover on sustainability themes, projects also appreciate networking by location. The five north eastern projects meet informally. Throughout research for this report, the four southern projects expressed feelings of isolation and it could be beneficial to encourage a southern network of projects in the same way that the northern cluster has developed.

4.3 Informing The Big Lottery Fund's decision making

In its drive to be an intelligent funder, The Big Lottery Fund wants to understand better how it should invest money to support sustainability and resilience but also how it should underpin and complement its investments with support to ensure its money delivers maximum impact, has a transformational effect and, in the process, builds the capacity and capability of the voluntary and community sector. The findings from this report recommend progressing the following:

- Some projects have expressed concern about the future sustainability of their activities once the Big Lottery Funded period is over. There is confusion over how revenue can be generated and used to create a surplus to ensure future sustainability of their projects. This echoes findings from earlier in the development phase of CLS and will most likely become more prevalent within the programme as projects progress their plans to develop Community Interest Companies and social enterprises. It would be useful to explore with the Big Lottery Fund what options are available for groups to raise funds from running events to invest back into their CLS projects to support future sustainability.
- The launch of Power to Change shows that the Big Lottery Fund recognises the importance of supporting community enterprise activity and the need to work in a different way to achieve this. The learning emerging around this from CLS aligned with the launch of Power to Change in late 2014 presents an opportunity to share and influence the future work of Power to Change. We would recommend a meeting between the Groundwork UK Learning Partnership and Power to Change to share CLS experiences in this area.
- Projects have identified that the food and growing related activities they are progressing are the most accessible part of their CLS project for encouraging people to get involved. Some projects are using this as a 'hook' to engage people with other aspects of their CLS programme and it seems to be an effective way to get people to engage with wider sustainability issues. If the Big Lottery Fund is looking to fund future community engagement or sustainability initiatives, then looking to fund food growing projects as part of this will be beneficial.
- Projects have highlighted the usefulness of being able to use CLS funding for background planning activity including the mapping of green spaces for growing. This is proving to be an effective use of revenue funding which is allowing communities to develop their plans to a stage to apply for well developed capital projects. The Big Lottery Fund could look to support more funding of planning and feasibility activity in relation to sustainability to build the capacity of local communities to progress initiatives in this often complex field.
- Feedback received shows that some projects underestimated the complexity of food growing projects when applying for the funding and are discovering a need for more resources and a longer timescale to progress their aspirations. The Big Lottery Fund could share this learning from the CLS groups delivering food projects with future applicants for similar programmes. It would be beneficial to fund longer project lifespans for future food and growing projects which due to their nature need time to set up, become established and yield produce.
- A number of the groups interviewed felt that, following additional expert input into project planning, their targets or delivery models may need to be revised. Some projects may need to review their budgets as they may not be adequate for the kinds of work they want to deliver. We would recommend highlighting this learning to the funding officers managing the grant agreements with groups.

4.5 Disseminating Learning to wider stakeholders

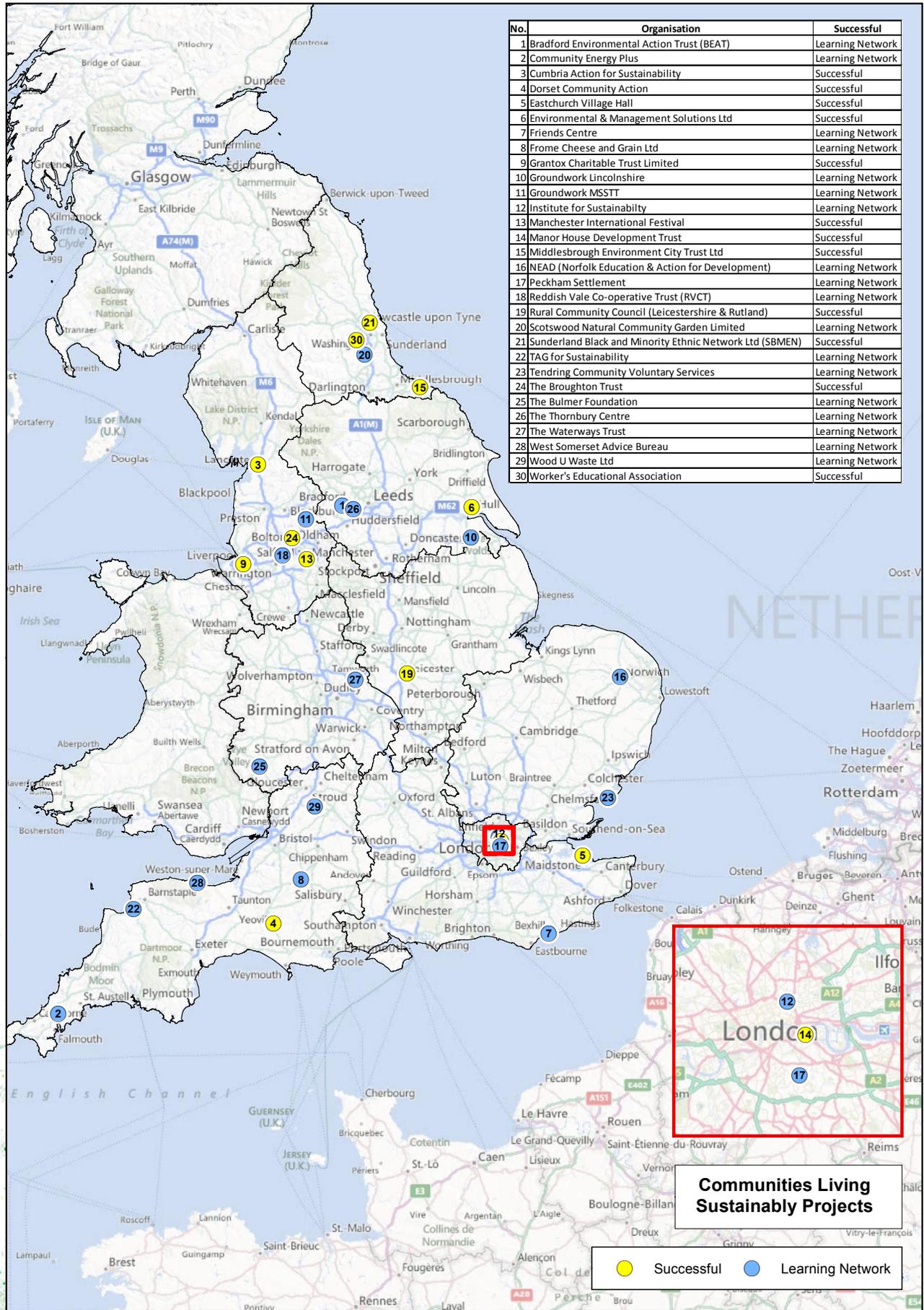
- A number of CLS projects are engaged with mapping land available for growing in their area. The Policy Exchange report 'Park Land' published in November 2013 found that a lack of publicly available data about Britain's open spaces is hampering improvements and community involvement. The report calls for a national, comprehensive green space mapping exercise to be undertaken. The CLS activity in this area reinforces the findings that data mapping is needed to progress community involvement in open spaces. The programme will provide interesting examples of how open space can be mapped at a localised community level. DEFRA and CLG should be made aware of these examples and the learning partnership will progress this.
- Local councils and housing associations should be encouraged to support community groups with land mapping and identify areas that could be used for growing purposes. The Wythenshawe and Liverpool projects show the progress that can be made in this area with a supportive local authority or housing association and should be used as case studies for dissemination by the learning partnership to other councils and housing associations for how this can be progressed successfully.
- Although the CLS groups are still at the stage of mapping land at the moment, it is the experience of FCFCG that land lease and ownership procedures to enable community growing once land has been mapped can be complicated and difficult to progress. It will be interesting to follow the progress of any of these negotiations through the CLS programme and the learning from these should be used to influence local authorities and housing associations to simplify these procedures to facilitate more community growing. The policy landscape around localism and community empowerment means there is greater opportunity for communities to shape how local services are delivered. Community ownership and upkeep of land could link in successfully with this agenda and CLG should be encouraged to think further about how to facilitate this.
- The rise in food poverty has emerged as an important issue for many projects, particularly those in areas of high social deprivation. Some of the projects growing their own food are supplying local food banks or distributing their produce themselves to local people. The small scale projects happening as part of CLS could act as test cases to inform future planning for how to tackle food poverty at a local level and provide an opportunity to track impact against activity. This would be useful learning for the learning partnership to share with those local authorities and other organisations supporting food banks to see if value can be added to their services. This should include highlighting opportunities to source fresh food locally, but also to provide skills to their service users in food growing and preparation.
- Changes in external circumstances are having an impact on project delivery. For the CLS food, growing and green space projects, these changes currently relate to the increase in food poverty since their projects commenced. It is inevitable when funding longer term programmes such as the 5 year CLS programme that external circumstances will change, policy will develop and new local issues will emerge. Funders should ensure that their grant management procedures have the flexibility to empower communities to respond to these issues as they arise.

Appendix 1 - Table of CLS projects

Project Name	Amount awarded	Project description	Duration	Location
SustainEden	£955,270	Working with the remote, dispersed community of Eden in Cumbria. The project will look to tackle fuel poverty, address flood risk issues through effective planning and investigate potential sustainable transport models. There is a strong emphasis on community resilience and skill sharing with particular focus on older people as a demographic most at risk	3 years	Penrith, Cumbria
Green Prosperity	£812,956	The project looks to support a 'Green Homecare Service' which aims to promote sustainable transport options for care workers. The project will also support communities to become more energy efficient, reduce waste and tackle fuel poverty through practical advice and home visits. The project will also create an Eco-house demonstration project which forms an interactive element of the project.	3 years	Hull
Manor House PACT	£999,049	Aims to deliver the PACT (Prepare Adapt Connect Thrive) programme. The PACT will work under the strands aimed at promoting access to open spaces, providing 'Green' vocational training opportunities and promoting interaction in the local neighbourhoods with a focus on climate change	3 years	London Boroughs of Hackney and Haringey
Sustainable Sheppey	£946,275	This project aims to promote the importance of local resources, making greener choices and developing new skills. The project will look to promote sustainable living through a Sustainable Homes Initiative; a community food initiative and renewable energy sources particularly a waste oil recycling scheme. Employment and skills will also be increased through the provision of an environmental awareness courses and training opportunities for energy champions.	3 years	Isle of Sheppey
Sustainable Sunderland	£999,066	A partnership approach across Sunderland. The project aims to increase the awareness and understanding of climate change through activities aimed at reducing fuel poverty; increasing environmental awareness particularly among social housing tenants and school children. Volunteers will also be provided with certified training which aims to improve their employability. The project will also look to engage BME communities who are often less aware of climate change issues.	4 years	Sunderland
L8 Living Sustainably	£917,045	Operates across the Princes Park and Riverside areas of Liverpool. The project seeks to promote energy efficiency and sustainable energy sources including Solar PV and encourage local food growing through the creation of a patchwork farm. A community energy venture will also seek to provide local households with electricity at a reduced rate, including potential savings of around 30 per cent on household bills	5 years	Liverpool
One Planet Middlesbrough	£998,928	Promotes the principles of One Planet Living across Middlesbrough. The main focus of the project will be on sustainable transport; local and sustainable food; sustainable water; climate change adaptation; zero carbon and zero waste. The project looks to achieve behaviour change among deprived communities, those with low educational attainment and people living with a variety of health issues.	5 years	Middlesbrough
Sustainable Harborough	£999,962	This project has a focus on the town of Market Harborough as a 'test bed' for sustainable living, and looks to improve the environmental sustainability and resilience to climate change of an entire town. The project also aims to make an impact in water and energy efficiency, food growing and bio-diversity, as well as look to make an economic impact through the launch of a sustainable energy company and the Harborough Currency for example. Sustainable Harborough will also develop a demonstration house which will be retro-fitted for more sustainable living. The property will be used as show home for sustainable living with events held to highlight the changes that can be made.	5 years	Leicestershire & Rutland

The Irwell Valley Sustainable Communities Project	£999,986	A community-led project based in Salford. The project will increase awareness of climate change issues through community based working and interaction with local people to develop solutions which are most applicable to them. A key element of the project will be to develop land for the community to use for food growing initiatives. A carbon impact tool will also be used by local residents to raise awareness of the impacts behaviour change can have with a focus on fuel bills and energy savings. Green Champions will also support the community by promoting sustainable living.	5 years	Salford
Greening Wingrove	£978,147	Based in the Wingrove district of Newcastle. The project activities will focus on three main strands which are the maximisation of community assets, conscious consumption and a community innovation fund. The work areas include demonstration projects on topics such as food growing, water usage and energy generation. The community innovation fund will support the local community to develop initiatives and activities which will form part of the wider project with each initiative being responsive to the needs of the local community and be designed by them.	5 years	Newcastle upon Tyne
Real Food: Wythenshawe	£1,000,000	Based in Wythenshawe, Manchester this project aims to promote greater community cohesion and engagement with climate change. The project will include five flagship projects which draw on local resources. The five flagship projects include an indoor growing system; outdoor growing spaces; a walled community garden and sustainable eating. The project will also launch five community hubs to provide support and advice with a focus on the individual flagship projects. Examples of the community hubs include the Manchester College and University Hospital South Manchester.	5 years	Manchester
Dorset Communities Living Sustainably	£960,523	This project aims to improve resilience to climate change across Dorset by delivering a range of activities to address the greatest needs. It will involve engaging communities and businesses to adopt 'green' behaviours, supporting schools to achieve 'eco-school' status, recruiting residents as volunteers to help people in their community improve their resilience to climate change and developing social enterprises such as a wood fuel enterprise that uses local woodland resources. We aim to build a cross sector food partnership along the lines of the Sustainable Food Cities model to bring the public, private and community sectors together to consider the Future of Food in and around Bridport and Dorchester and to promote sustainable diets.	5 years	Dorset

Appendix 2 - Map of CLS projects



Appendix 3 - Real Food Wythenshawe: Case Study

The **Real Food Wythenshawe** project encourages local residents to source, grow and eat healthy, sustainable food. The project is led by Wythenshawe Community Housing Group and encourages and supports residents to take control over what they and their families eat. They promote ways that people can grow their own produce and learn to cook healthy, economical meals using local, seasonal produce. It demonstrates that healthy eating and 'real food' is possible for everyone, regardless of age, budget, ability or time.

Health statistics in Wythenshawe are poor. The area has some of the highest levels of long term illness, disability and heart disease. Levels of childhood obesity in Wythenshawe are high, with many families relying heavily on processed food because they lack the skills to cook meals and perceive cooking from scratch to be too expensive. The area also experiences high levels of unemployment, especially youth unemployment. The project aims to address these issues by offering access to affordable food and by providing volunteering opportunities for young people.

One year in...

The first year of project delivery has been very busy for the Real Food Wythenshawe team. Here are some of the activities that they have been delivering.

Raising the profile of the project and engaging with local people



Real Food tent at the Wythenshawe games: August 2013

The project has established a strong profile amongst the community and regularly distributes information to over 900 local people. The team has attended 44 public events to publicise the project and offer practical information and advice around growing food, sourcing good healthy local ingredients and sharing cooking tips. This activity has enabled them to engage face to face with 2,654 local people.

Mapping of local space to enable community growing

In order to identify suitable available land for community growing, the project compiled a list of approximately 70 suitable sites in the local area, owned by Wythenshawe Community Housing Group. This list was then refined through a series of site visits and meetings with key staff to identify the most suitable sites for growing fruit and vegetables. The sites were assessed against key criteria including proximity to community groups to manage the site, level of maintenance required, potential for future development and a favourable cost benefit analysis. Twenty key sites were identified and they now plan to match local interested growing groups with these spaces and canvass local residents near to these sites to encourage their involvement. One growing project has been successfully established, a garden site for sufferers and those recovering from cancer.

Establishing a network of volunteers



Volunteer afternoon at Wythenshawe Park

Empowering the local community to take part and have true ownership of project activity is central to Real Food Wythenshawe. The project has recruited 22 local volunteers who are actively engaged in growing sessions at the open spaces across Wythenshawe. Together, these volunteers have given 1,026 hours to the project. Liz Grant, a volunteer with Real Food, said: “This Project is something that Wythenshawe needs and is already bringing lots of people together. I love getting involved and learning about gardening. It’s really encouraging me to grow my own food now!”

Building the capacity of local people to grow their own food

Practical growing sessions have been extremely successful in engaging with local people and stimulating ‘grow your own’ activity. Real Food Wythenshawe has run 24 growing workshops in their first year, enabling 250 people to develop new skills to enable local growing of food. These workshops have covered the essential skills needed to grow fruit and vegetables, apple tree grafting, composting and how to plan an edible garden. Other topics have included how to keep chickens, create wildlife habitats and grow medicinal herbs. The project encourages participants to share evidence of their growing activity after the workshops through their Facebook page.

The future...

Plans for year two of the project include the installation of a kitchen at Wythenshawe market to deliver cook and taste sessions, the development of more green space for food growing and the launch of an indoor growing system at the Geodome. The Real Food project has also developed links with Salford University to measure the impact of their project activities and will be launching a baseline survey to help evidence this behaviour change.

Real Food. Wythenshawe.

Workshops

Need support to grow, cook and eat sustainably?
If you live in Wythenshawe, book now for these free sessions
Book: 946 7548/946 9168 or lewis.ornw@wchg.org.uk

Friday 7th March	Planning your edible garden	A practical and interactive workshop covering the essentials of how to grow fruit and veg naturally, using low-cost, low-input methods
Sunday 9th March	Produce your apple tree (grafting)	Graft (insets) your own heritage fruit tree, and a second for a local orchard, learning about this fascinating art and how to take care of your new tree
Wednesday 12th March	Produce your apple tree (grafting)	Graft (insets) your own heritage fruit tree, and a second for a local orchard, learning about this fascinating art and how to take care of your new tree
Thursday 13th March	The art of composting	Making and using compost is the cornerstone of producing good fruit and vegetables, come along to find out what you can compost and how to make an ideal mix
Saturday 15th March	Planning your edible garden	A practical and interactive workshop covering the essentials of how to grow fruit and veg naturally, using low-cost, low-input methods
Sunday 16th March	Produce your apple tree (grafting)	As above
Thursday 27th March	Grow your own crop in a pot	Enjoy a practical session sowing your own crops in pots (or bags, recycled containers, tyres, boots...) and be inspired - from pot to plate!

April and May to come

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