







PLANT AND SHARE

AN EVALUATION FOR FOOD FOR LIFE GET TOGETHERS'
SMALL GRANTS

FEBRUARY 2023

This is a follow-up survey of the 2022 round of Plant and Share grant holders. It builds upon the UWE's survey of the Cook and Share grant programme. It provides additional evidence on the small grants component of FFLGT with respect to growing. It also includes evidence on the future interests of community food activity organisers.

Main research questions for the evaluation

The main research questions for the Plant and Share Small Grant Evaluation are:

- What are the perceived effects of small grants for award holders, and how were they achieved?
- What are the future priorities for grant holders?

Methods

All holders of the 2022 Plant and Share small grant award (n=240) were emailed through the Soil Association's mailing list. Recipients were invited to take part in an online survey and were provided with ethics and data protection information about the evaluation. Survey respondents had the opportunity to enrol for a £50 voucher prize draw.

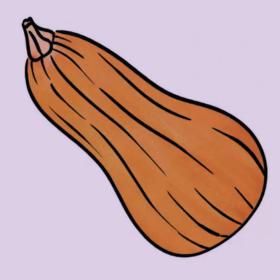
The survey was distributed in November 2022, approximately six months after Plant and Share month in April–May 2022.

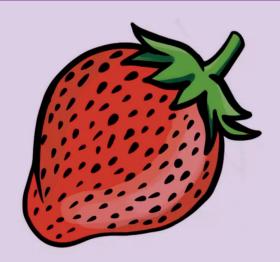
The online survey was developed using Qualtrics. The analysis of the results used Excel and SPSS

The six case studies in this report were initially developed between the Food for Life Get Togethers team and Plant and Share participating groups. These were then edited by the UWE team. They represent grant holders from both 2021 and 2022 funding rounds.

KEY POINTS

- In early 2022 Food for Life Get Togethers programme made grants of £150 to 240 groups across the UK to promote plant and share activities.
- Of the 240 grant holders, 83 (34.6%) leads completed a UWE online survey about approximately six months after Plant and Share month (April–May 2022).
- A wide range of groups were recipients of the plant and share grants. Given the focus of the grants on food growing, it was not surprising the leading description of type of organisation was for 'allotment, community garden or community farm'.
- In terms annual income, the leading category of grant holding groups was an income under £5000 (n=26, 40%), a proportion of grant recipients (n=15, 23%) had an income of over £100,000.
- Survey respondents were 83% female and 16% male¹, the modal age bracket was 40–49 years, and 85% identified themselves to be of a White ethnic background. Respondents were active in groups from all four home nations.
- For most organisations, this was the first occasion on which they had run a Plant and Share type activity (81%). Only 27% of groups had been involved in organising community food activities for more than 3 years.





- Survey respondents were asked to estimate the total number of participants in their Plant and Share activities. From 73 respondents' answers, the mean was 33 participants (minimum 5, maximum 180, standard deviation 28)²
- A wide range of different social groups were engaged in the Plant and Share activities, with 'older people', 'children and younger people' and 'families' the three most frequently selected options. There was also representation from groups that might experience social disadvantages such as those experiencing mental and emotional distress.
- Respondents named growing a wide range of produce, including at least 61 different types of fruit and vegetables. Based upon the leading varieties reported, many grant holders had a good season for courgettes, tomatoes, potatoes, pumpkins, strawberries, multiple types of salads and herbs.
- The majority respondents felt that their Plant and Share activities helped participants connect with other in the community (97%³), enhance positive attitudes towards diversity (60%) address isolation and loneliness (89%), and improve attitudes towards ageing (53%). All four of these perceived effects are significantly associated with one another.

^{1 1%} of respondents preferred not to say

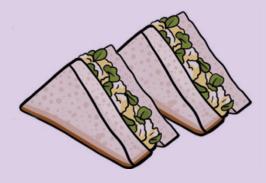
² One respondent estimated 1000 participants based upon the total number of pupils in their school. As an extreme outlier this estimate was excluded from the analysis.

^{3 &}quot;Strongly agree/somewhat agree". N = 73

KEY POINTS continued

- Event organisers themselves benefit from plant and share activities. It was evident that there are important impacts for organisers in terms of bringing people together, helping people obtain healthy, low cost (or free) food and developing connections with other organisers.
- As part of Plant and Share in 2022 (particularly for April and May), Food for Life provided resources that might be helpful for small grant holders. Of these resources, 39% (n=32) accessed the Facebook community site for Get Togethers, 57% (n=47) made use of the Plant and Share toolkit, and 11% (n=9) engaged with Get Growing online training events.
- The strong commitments set out in the original applications for the small grant were also reported at the point of this post event survey. These included engaging new people, bringing people together through food growing and raising funds. This provides further evidence that the grants had benefits that extended beyond the funding of the initial plant and share activities. Only two respondents reported that they did not continue with a similar activity after the event.
- Survey respondents were asked to state how important a range of options for future support for groups that they represent or serve, their organisations and their own development.
 Of the options presented, 'more funding opportunities' and more local opportunities to network with like-minded groups' featured most strongly.





- In terms of size of grant opportunities relevant to their needs, respondents were equally split between an option for very small grants of up to £1,000 and the option for grants between £1,000 to £10,000 (41% for both options).
- Small organisations (annual income under £5,000) are more likely than larger organisations to state that the following issues are important to them:
 - Better access to local facilities (kitchens, growing spaces etc)
 - Better access to volunteer support
 - More help to campaign on community food issues

Small organisations are more likely than larger organisation to state that small grants of £100–£1K (rather than larger grants over £1K) are most relevant to their needs.

- On issues of mentoring and peer support, training and information resources, networking opportunities there were no significant differences when comparing different scales of organisation by income.
- Regarding future priorities and scales of grant, there were no significant differences between organisations that had previously run plant and share type activities and those that had not.
- After their Plant and Share award, organisations that have not raised more funding are more likely than those that have to state that they are seeking small grants of £100-£1K. But are otherwise not significantly different in term of their other priorities.
- Individuals that reported that they have learnt new skills in growing food/gardening are more likely to state that small grants of £100-£1K are important for them as a future priority, but a no different in terms of their prioritisation of other issues such as training and mentoring.

FINDINGS

Survey responses

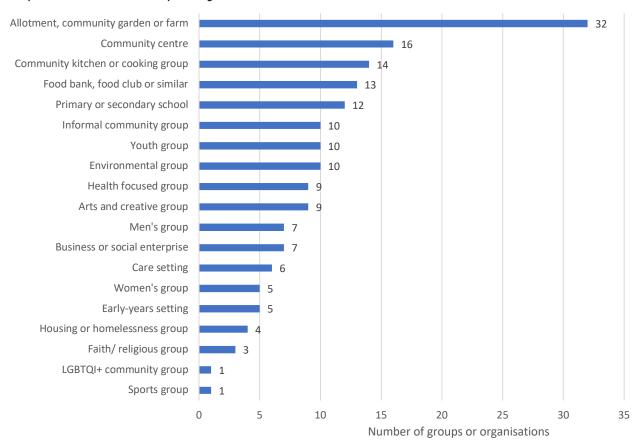
Of the 240 grant holders contacted by email, 83 completed the survey. This equates to a 34.6% response rate.

Types of groups receiving plant and share grants

A wide range of groups were recipients of the plant and share grants. Given the focus of the grants on food growing, it was not surprising the leading description of type of organisation was for 'allotment, community garden or community farm'. Respondents were able to select multiple categories and it was notable that many groups covered different intersecting areas of interest.



Figure 1: Types of groups or organisations represented in the survey responses. Respondents could select multiple categories.



Demographic characteristics of respondents

The following charts set out the demographic characteristics of respondents in terms of sex, age, ethnicity and nation location.

Annual income of groups or organisations

While the leading category of groups receive a small annual income (under £5000), a proportion of grant recipients (n=15, 23%) had an annual income of over £100,000.

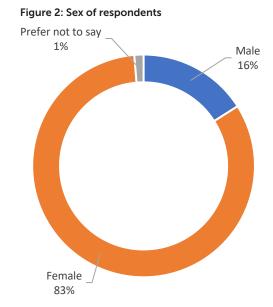


Figure 3: Annual income of organisations responded to the survey

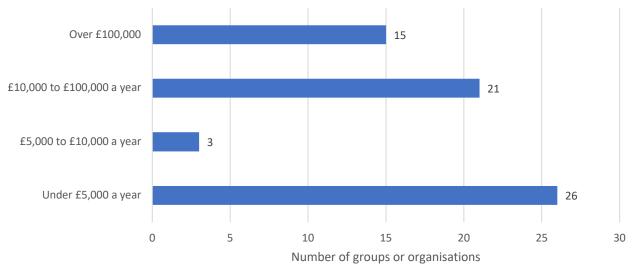


Figure 4: Age bracket of respondents

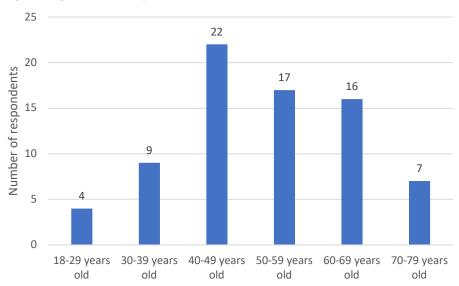


Figure 5: Ethnicity of respondents

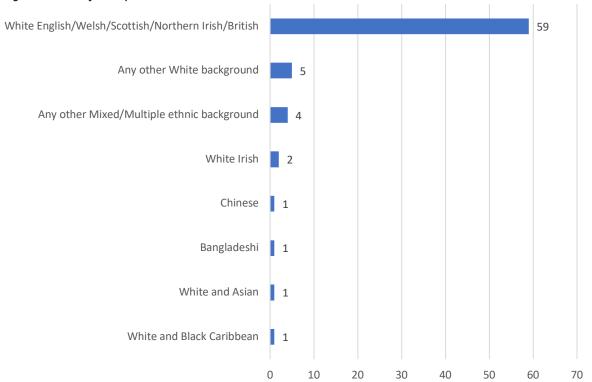
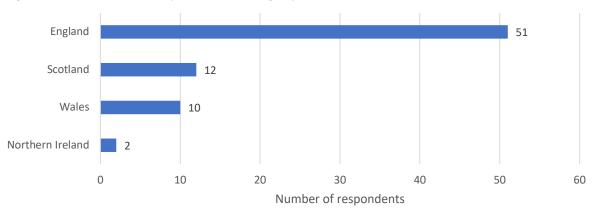


Figure 6: National location of respondents and their groups





Friends of George's Park, Birmingham

Lozells in the heart of Birmingham is a diverse community, with over 80% of the residents from a minority ethnic background. Local residents, many second or third generation migrants, have been working hard to change negative perceptions of the area and make Lozells a brighter, more connected, and welcoming part of the city.

Afzal Goni, treasurer for a community park project, explained that before lockdown he and other families would drive to other well-kept outdoor spaces and parks around Birmingham and they didn't give their local patch of green, Georges Park, much thought. But with staying home becoming the new going out in 2020 the residents realised that their neglected and overlooked park was in need of some love. Residents formed a park group to clean up the area and hold community events: "We quickly realised that the park brings people together, you meet people who have lived here for years, you stop and chat as your children play and in time it has made the area feel a bit safer and a bit more alive too."

The group realised that whilst there have been memorable events, the one thing they had yet to use the open space for was planting and growing. The Friends of Georges Park successfully applied for a small grant and have been working with Martin from Anglesey Primary School to plan their Plant and Share event in the park. The free event saw residents come together, whatever their ability, to plant vegetable seedlings and learn the basics on how to look after them. A social media group was set up so the participants can keep in touch and check-in with each other and share their experiences. The idea is that the more experienced growers can support those growing for the first time.

Afzal admits he was a new gardener, but he was excited at the prospect of growing some food from scratch and then sharing the journey. He explains: "In the late summer we are planning to have another event where we can swap the veggies we will hopefully be harvesting – if I have a glut of onions, I can give them to someone else and maybe grab some beans or carrots. Maybe if we are really successful, we can have a community meal." He continued: "The Plant and Share grant has meant we can purchase all our seeds, compost and pots for the community to all get together and learn together and that is what community is all about – the warmth of togetherness."



Experience of organising community food activities

For most organisations, this was the first occasion on which they had run a Plant and Share type activity (81%). Only 27% of groups had been involved in organising community food activities for more than 3 years.

Number of participants involved in Plant and Share activities

Survey respondents were asked to estimate the total number of participants in their Plant and Share activities. From 73 respondents' answers, the mean was 33 participants (minimum 5, maximum 180, standard deviation 28)⁴

Characteristics of social groups taking part in Plant and Share get togethers

A wide range of different social groups were engaged in the Plant and Share activities, with 'older people', 'children and younger people' and 'families' the three most frequently selected options. There was also representation from groups that might experience social disadvantages such as those experiencing mental and emotional distress.

Table 1: Previous experience organising Plant and Share type activities

Previous experience	Frequency	Valid Percent
First time group has run a Plant and Share type activity	61	81.3
The group has previously run a Plant and Share type activity	14	18.7
Total	75	100.0
Missing	8	
Total	83	

Table 2: Length of time involved in organising community food activities

Length of time involved in organising community food activities	Frequency	Valid Percent
Less than 1 year	25	33.3
1 to 3 years	30	40.0
More than 3 years	20	26.7
Total	75	100.0
Missing	8	
Total	83	

⁴ One respondent estimated 1000 participants based upon the total number of pupils in their school. As an extreme outlier this estimate was excluded from the analysis.

Figure 7: Social groups of those taking part in Plant and Share activities

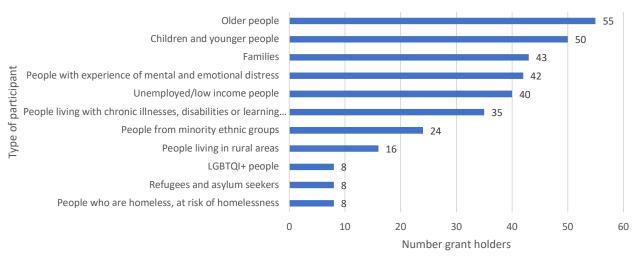
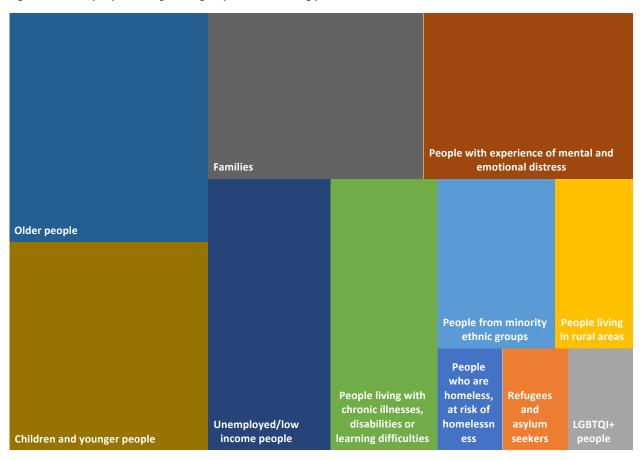


Figure 8: Treemap representing social groups of those taking part in Plant and Share activities (n=83)



Fearon Hall, Leicester

The Urban Gardeners is a gardening group based in Leicester. Many of the group are classed as vulnerable. They have transformed green spaces into allotments, growing an abundance of seasonal food, which they shared with their community.

The Urban Gardeners project began when Catherine, a trained horticulturalist, approached Fearon Hall about setting up a gardening group to give something back to the community. They applied for a Get Togethers small grant to buy gardening tools, seeds, plants and seed trays. Fellow member Dawn was also able to use the money to publicise the Urban Gardeners – Therapeutic Gardening Group.

Every Saturday morning, a small group gathered in Fearon Hall's café and began their gardening session with food and a hot drink. This gave people an added incentive to attend the garden group. The group welcomed people with a range of different skill levels and abilities, who came to learn and build confidence in growing. Some people could dig, weed and tidy whilst others could sow seeds.

As Fearon Hall's back garden started to take shape, their enthusiasm for improving the green space around them grew. The Urban Gardeners began cultivating six raised pallet planters situated outside the front of Fearon Hall. Other service users and groups that met in the hall, such as the Cub Scouts, also were encouraged to get involved.



After gaining permissions from the council, they removed some unsightly shrubs from an area next to the road and improved the soil before they got planting. They created an allotment area on the beds along the road offering free vegetables for residents and passers-by to help themselves to. "It is not just for us to use, we did it to look pretty for everybody. We will use [the produce] in the café ... but it is for anybody who is walking past and all these vulnerable people that come to Fearon Hall. If they need some broccoli, they can just go and pick and take it home and eat it." The achievements of Dawn. Catherine and Urban Gardeners volunteers has been praised by judges from the Royal Horticultural Society Britain in Bloom Awards.

Dawn had the idea to start a 'Swap Drop' at Fearon Hall to share the seasonal and local food grown by Urban Gardeners with the community. Teaming up with other community stakeholders, Transition Loughborough Community Allotments and Loughborough University's Landscape and Gardening Society, they refurbished a second-hand market cart that was placed outside Fearon Hall every Saturday.

The Swap Drop was so popular that the market cart was opened for three days a week throughout the summer and autumn. They were contacted by another local community group, Lions, who brought so many apples they were overspilling out of the barrow.

Dawn hopes that the Swap Drop can become a permanent feature at Fearon Hall. She explained that the small grant has helped connect so many people through gardening, saying "we couldn't have done it without that initial input." With this support they had the resources to transform green spaces into beautiful allotments, while bringing people together: "What started off as a gardening group became a lot more. We didn't ask for formal feedback but the fact they kept coming was enough for us. It's amazing how far £150 has gone" The Urban Gardening group was able to kickstart their growing activities again at the beginning of the Spring 2022.

Types of fruit and vegetables grown

Respondents named growing a wide range of produce, including at least 61 different types of fruit and vegetables. Based upon the leading varieties reported, many grant holders had a good season for courgettes, tomatoes, potatoes, pumpkins, strawberries, multiple types of salads and herbs.

Perceived effects of plant and share get togethers

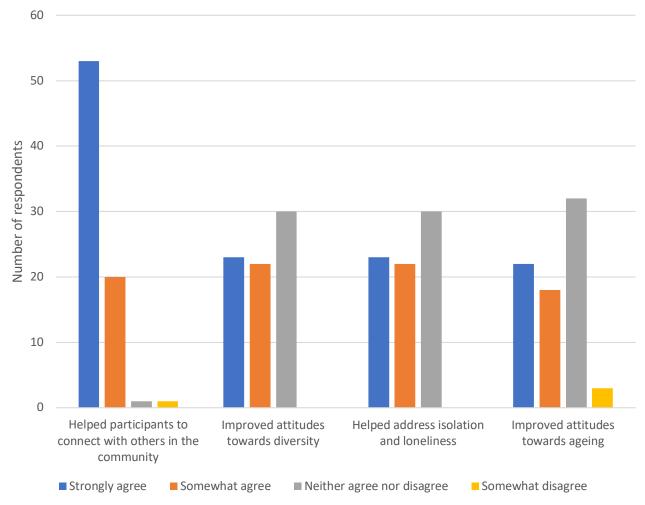
The majority respondents felt that their Plant and Share activities helped participants connect with other in the community (97%5), enhance positive

attitudes towards diversity (60%) address isolation and loneliness (89%), and improve attitudes towards ageing (53%). All four of these perceived effects are significantly associated with one another (multiple tests, all X^2 >16.000, p < 0.05).

Benefits of plant and share get togethers for organisers

Activity organisers themselves benefit from plant and share activities. While the main categories set out below are likely to also reflect the goals of their agencies, it was evident that there are important impacts for organisers in terms of bringing people together, helping people obtain healthy, low cost (or free) food and developing connections with other organisers.

Figure 9: A bar graph showing the number of respondents and the extent to which they agreed with various outcomes that participants derived from the plant and share event



Rainbow Biz CIC, Flintshire

Sarah Way is one of the 4 Directors of RainbowBiz CIC, and also the Project Facilitator for Digging Deeside and the Manager of the Hippy Shop (a trading arm) in Mold, a market town in Flintshire. RainbowBiz CIC has been incorporated as a Social Enterprise since January 2015.

The mission of the social enterprise is to promote equality, diversity and to minimise isolation within our community. According to Sarah, running the Plant and Share helped to achieve these goals through inviting local organisations to come along. The event was shared out in advance in the local community and many people dropped by to plant some organic vegetable seeds and to give some to their friends too. "Some other allotment holders attended the event and brought flowers and vegetables to share with others which was really lovely. We had some drop-in visitors who are originally from Romania and Hungary. We hope that the links we have made will continue to come along to our projects in the future." It was the first time that RainbowBiz CIC had run an event like this.

The plant and share day ran from 10am until 2pm on Tuesday, 19th April. They were able to purchase organic seeds, peat free organic potting compost, biodegradable plant pots, plant labels, and pens with our funding. RainbowBiz CIC purchased many special items for refreshments for everyone who would attend. Cakes, biscuits, crisps, fresh fruits, teas, coffee, water and juices. The day was free to attend for anyone. They invited a local organisation along who support adults with additional learning needs and long-term health conditions and several local Councillors. The event was shared throughout the community via social media in advance of the day. During the event, visitors were invited to choose some pots, fill with soil, choose some seeds, and plant some pots up to start growing on their window ledges, they were also encouraged to plant more so they could give some away to friends and family. Everyone was given refreshments and talked about how to grow the vegetables and how to re-pot them. Some of the visitors had never planted a seed before in their life, being able to show people how to do this and hopefully encourage them to grow their own food was special.



RainbowBiz CIC has supported numerous individuals to socialise and become less isolated, to grow in confidence, make new friends and connections and learn new skills. The people they support are from a variety of backgrounds and protected characteristic groups, often they have been isolated due to being marginalised by society in general. These groups include people with additional learning needs, people with long term health conditions, older people who live alone, people living with mental health barriers, anxiety and depression. They work with people from other statutory groups who have been referred, for example from substance dependency units, through social services or the job centre.

RainbowBiz CIC has plans to make this a regular occurrence due to the huge success and popularity of this one. They are thinking of a community planting day every three months where anyone can drop in with their own packed lunch and join us to plant up some vegetables for the next growing season and to hopefully sample some of the vegetables that have grown already. Overall, Sarah felt that the Plant and Share event encouraged many people to come along who will hopefully attend future events and projects.

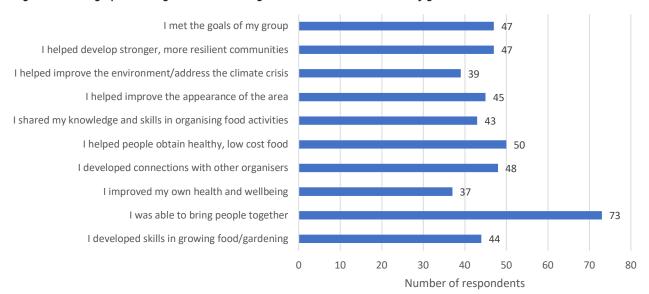


Figure 10: A bar graph showing the number of organisers who indicated what they got out of the Plant and Share event

Greave House Farm Trust, Sheffield

Greave House Farm Trust is a smallholding that supports adults with learning disabilities or autism through farm work. Located on the outskirts of Sheffield, the farm is home to animals, bees, an orchard and a fruit garden. The food they grow on their land is sold locally. Greave House Farm Trust received a Get Togethers small grant to run a Plant and Share day to welcome the local community in May 2021.

After attending a virtual Food for Life Get Togethers event, Barbara Bristow, co-founder of Greave House Farm Trust, was inspired to run a Plant and Share activity. Barbara set about planning a community event. She said: "It was the first event for over a year because of the COVID pandemic ... I felt confident that we could do it safely."

The Plant and Share Day welcomed a diverse mix of local people with a wide range of growing skills. The setting was perfect for skill sharing, friendships to form and confidence to grow. Those with more experience taught a young girl how deep to plant carrot seeds. They also showed a parent how to sow seeds, step by step, as she had never done it before. A 5-year-old boy was also able to grow his favourite veg, broccoli, from seed for the first time. Barbara had the creative idea to thread seed packets on a piece

of string to make bunting. The bunting not only looked pretty and welcoming at the entrance of the farm, but also showcased all the seeds in a covid-safe way. They could browse the seeds from a distance and tear off the packet of their choosing.

As part of the event, Barbara organised a 'Best Planter' Competition: "These two young girls brought their grandmother's old walking boots they had already planted up ... which I thought was really nice, so they got the prize!" Barbara also gave out recipe cards so that people could cook a healthy and delicious dish with ingredients they had grown. They were so popular they had to photocopy more. Barbara's husband, Chris, cooked both a spicy pumpkin soup and roasted pumpkin and garlic soup. He used pumpkins grown on their land, aiming to inspire people to reduce food waste during Halloween: "We gave everybody a taste of the soup with a bread roll. And we said, if you like it, take a recipe away with you."

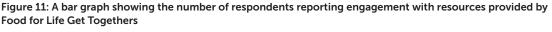
Since the Plant and Share Day, Greave House Farm Trust have continued to connect with local people. They've also set up a vegetable trolley and hope to run cooking sessions using their homegrown produce in a custom built portacabin kitchen.

Use of additional resources provided by Food for Life Get Togethers

As part of Plant and Share in 2022 (particularly for April and May), Food for Life provided resources that might be helpful for small grant holders. Of these resources, 39% (n=32) accessed the Facebook community site for Get Togethers, 57% (n=47) made use of the Plant and Share toolkit, and 11% (n=9) engaged with Get Growing online training events.

Effects of grants building the capacity of organisers and groups after the funded activities

The strong commitments set out in the original applications for the small grant were also reported at the point of this post event survey. These included engaging new people, bringing people together through food growing and raising funds. This provides further evidence that the grants had benefits that extended beyond the funding of the initial plant and share activities. Only two respondents reported that they did not continue with a similar activity after the event.



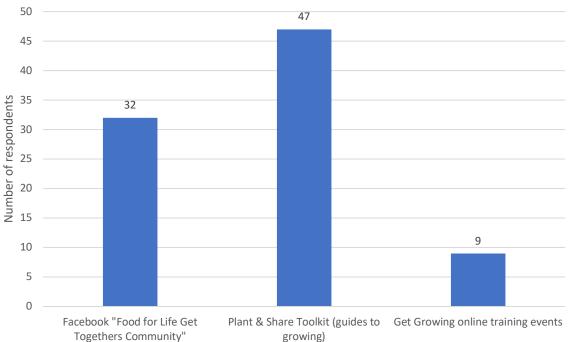
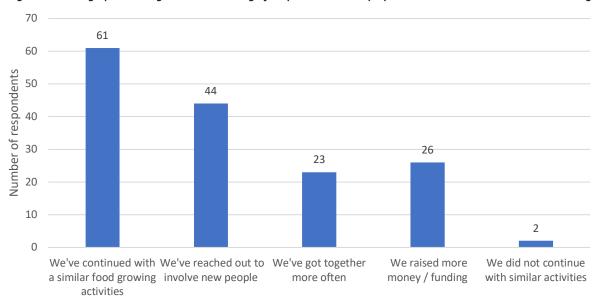


Figure 12: A bar graph showing the actions taking by respondents to keep up the momentum of their work after the grant



Wing Hong, Glasgow

Established in 1989 in Glasgow, Wing Hong exists to promote equal opportunities for the Chinese older people in accessing various social, health, welfare, and housing services. The purpose of Wing Hong is to improve the health and wellbeing of the Chinese elderly who live in the Glasgow area. Jaime Lee, the Development Officer, explained that the organisation aims to reduce loneliness and isolation, maintaining, and improving their independence. The Centre also promotes healthy lifestyle choices and raising awareness of the needs of the Chinese elderly. Wing Hong has offered health and wellbeing sessions which include cookery and crafting workshops which some service users lead and make suggestions.

As a first-time growing project, Jamie ran the Plant & Share activity to bring others together from different heritage, backgrounds and ages. He and the team sought to engage with the local community and during this activity and talked about the different types of common Chinese vegetables and which ones work best in Scottish weather. The team provided some insight and share ideas on how to tend the garden. Wing Hong also hoped the produce would allow others to try different types of vegetables that are not available in a typical grocery store.

Jamie reflected that: "It's always hard to get people involved, but with persistence and dedications, much like gardening, it will be very fruitful in the end as new friendships have been established... At the end of this process, we would like to plan and host lunch socials during our lunch club days to share with those who are involved... Depending on the success of the event, we would like to continue as it will allow to build community connections. At the end of the growing season, we will cook with what's grown for our lunch club."



Future priorities for plant and share grant recipients

Survey respondents were asked to state how important a range of options for future support for groups that they represent or serve, their organisations and their own development. The responses are set out in the graph below.

Preferred financial scale of grants

Given the importance of grant funding for many groups, survey respondents were asked to select what size of grant opportunity was most relevant to the current needs of their group. It was clarified that larger grant opportunities typically entailed a more complex application process, monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements. Respondents were equally split between an option for very small grants of up to £1,000 and the option for grants between £1,000 to £10,000 (41% for both options).

Figure 13: Importance of a range of forms of support for the goals or the respondents' group (n=83)

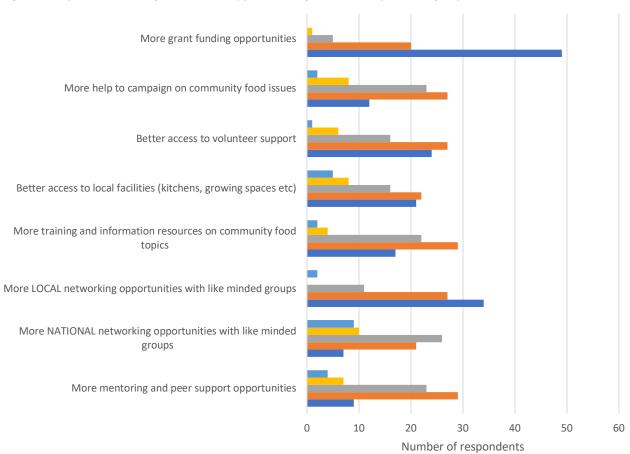


Table 4: Grant opportunities – priorities for respondents

Grant size option	Frequency	Percent
£100-£1K (that includes minimal admin.)	34	41
£1K-£10K	34	41
Over £10K (that includes more complicated admin.)	15	18

Letting in The Light, Stoke-on-Trent

Anne Kinnaird and Rachel Ballard are artist/gardener practitioners with Letting in the Light supported by Festival Stoke working on a project called Greening Stoke. Letting in the Light arts organisation was founded in 1997. Greening Stoke Project started in 2017.

Letting in the Light is a participatory arts organisation working in collaboration with our local communities who often find themselves on the margins of society. They develop and facilitate projects that directly engage people in creative activity and promote physical and mental wellbeing. Over the Covid Lockdowns they struggled to engage with groups who are not all digitally connected and to begin to overcome this they acquired a community allotment at Richmond Street Allotments very close to their base. Since then, they have worked to engage with local communities at Plot 33 engaging new people in the Greening Stoke Project. The Plant and Share event was important to promoting the work of Letting in the Light, sharing their ethos of growing, cooking and sharing food in an outdoor setting and to attracting new people to work with the organisation.

The Greening Stoke Team are held a Plant and Share event at Plot in the form of a plant swap. They were busy growing plants from seed, leading on from our seed swap in February 2021. The local community and interested parties were invited through a social media campaign and a physical poster and flyer campaign come along to: swap plants or choose plants; up-cycle and decorate containers to grow plants in to take away and as inspiration to replicate at home; sample fresh produce cooked on site by a local chef; have a hot drink and a chat; explore Plot 33; and meet new people.



The project focuses on engaging with people from the local community. The groups are very mixed in age, they may have a learning disability, be a carer, have a long-term health condition, a physical and or mental, be isolated. The area is socially deprived, and many people only have very small dark back yards. Participants all support each other and benefit from being outdoors together.

They have had the allotment for 15 months and their advice would be: to spend short, concentrated periods to get going; ask for advice from other gardeners; ask for assistance with the offer of tea and cake; and start sharing to encourage others to do likewise. Letting in the Light envisage that their plant swap will become a yearly event along with other yearly events such as a seed swap and a community meal.

Further analysis comparing priorities between different types of organisations and community organisers

Small organisations (annual income under £5,000) are more likely than larger organisations to state that the following issues are important to them:

- Better access to local facilities (kitchens, growing spaces etc) (X^2 =28.901, p<0.001)
- Better access to volunteer support (X^2 =20.392, p=0.009)
- More help to campaign on community food issues (X^2 =17.561, p=0.025)

Small organisations are more likely than larger organisation to state that small grants of £100–£1K (rather than larger grants over £1k) are most relevant to their needs (X^2 =21.835, p=0.001).

On issues (mentoring and peer support, training and information resources, networking opportunities) there were no significant differences when comparing different scales of organisation by income.

With regard to future priorities and scales of grant, there were no significant differences between organisations that had previously run plant and share type activities and those that had not

Organisations that have not raised more funding after their Plant and Share award are more likely than those that have raised funds that they are seeking small grants of £100–£1K (X^2 =7.155, p=0.028). But are otherwise not significantly different in term of their other priorities.

Individuals that reported that they have learnt new skills in growing food/gardening are more likely to state that small grants of £100–£1K are important for them as a future priority (X^2 =8.586, p=0.014), but a no different in terms of their prioritisation of other issues such as training and mentoring.

To explore whether different types of organisations might have specific priorities, we compared allotment and community garden/farm groups with others. There were no significant differences in terms of each priority issue.

"What started off as a gardening group became a lot more. We didn't ask for formal feedback but the fact they kept coming was enough for us. It's amazing how far £150 has gone."

Dawn Page, Activities Manger, Fearon Hall, Leicester



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