



Impact Report 2025: Community Wellbeing Garden
Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)

Charity Registration Number: 1212007
Patron: Lady Caroline Egremont

‘It’s a place where you walk through the gate and life feels more balanced’
project participant

Introduction

The Community Wellbeing Garden (CWG) is a beautiful, wheelchair-accessible therapeutic wellbeing garden in Petworth, West Sussex. It is home to inclusive and non-judgemental groups for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds. Created by the community for the community in 2005, CWG proudly celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2025.

That same year marked another milestone: the transition from a CIC to a CIO (registered charity) and the establishment of a Board of Trustees and senior leadership team. The team comprised five Trustees appointed in February 2025 (with two additional trustees in June 2026) and a new Charity Manager, Dr Ros Ebdon (joined July 2025), working alongside Founder Kate Green. The charity continues to be led collaboratively according to its founding ethos – everyone contributes according to their skills and capacity – ensuring CWG remains accessible, relevant and genuinely community-led. The staffing team comprised six part-time staff (2.75 FTE) and more than 30 volunteers. In March 2026, an additional part-time Cook was recruited.

Highlights of Our Impact in 2025

Our 2025 Impact Survey shows that the Community Wellbeing Garden has had a profound impact on local people's lives. Over the year, we supported more than 120 people each week through social and therapeutic horticulture projects and community outreach. Participants formed friendships, felt welcomed, and experienced meaningful social connection:

100% said inclusion and integration is Excellent or Good

81% said their mental health and wellbeing had improved

97% think accessibility is Excellent or Good

63% felt less isolated or lonely

97% made new friends

94% said support at the garden was Excellent or Good

97% rated their overall experience as Excellent or Good



Through our community outreach and Harvest Food Deliveries, we supported families at risk of food poverty – approximately 70 people each week – who were referred by the Foodbank, ensuring reliable access to nutritious food.

Our support also continued to build skills and pathways into work: 58% of participants in our Learn and Grow project gained volunteering, learning or training opportunities, and 73% in our Thriving Thursday mental-health support project developed workplace-related skills.

The garden is a cherished community space, as evidenced by these participants' voices:

"Humanity exists here in this community group. It is a unique place and service, especially compared to other services in the community that do not meet these standards by miles"

"I love the gardens, the people, the reason why the gardens exist and what the garden grows...it's plants, fruits, vegetables and people! It's a magical place. It's inclusive, supportive, incredibly well organised and much enjoyed by so many grateful participants"

Our main activities

While other organisations in Petworth offer important support to certain groups, none offer an inclusive, mixed-ability therapeutic space in nature such as that offered by the Community Wellbeing Garden. Our wheelchair-accessible setting, trained staff team, weekly volunteers and integrated approach mean participants who are often excluded elsewhere – particularly those with disabilities or mental and physical health support needs - can take part safely and confidently.



The garden has provided a welcoming space for inclusive weekly activities that support mental and physical well-being, connection and practical skills for people of all ages and abilities through the following projects:

Learn & Grow: a social & therapeutic gardening group for locals of all ages and abilities including people with learning or physical disabilities, or who are isolated, enabling accessible gardening and Plot-to-Plate cooking sessions, using our seasonal produce to cook healthy meals together.

Men's Shed: supported woodwork & rural craft sessions for locals of all ages and abilities, including disabled, vulnerable or isolated men, helping to build confidence, connection, self-esteem and woodcraft skills. Participants are signposted by local Social Prescribers and MIND.

Thriving Thursdays: a bespoke therapeutic horticulture project for participants referred by Social Prescribers and other organisations to support adults & young people with mental health and other support needs, utilising the garden & nature to enhance health & wellbeing & nourish recovery.

Harvest Food Deliveries: distributing our seasonal fruit & veg & bread donated by SØDT bakery to those at risk of food poverty in our community, in partnership with Petworth Food Bank.

Stepping-Stones-To-Work: supported volunteer placements for all abilities to help people gain skills & experience towards the workplace.



Our Achievements in 2025

Learn & Grow

With thanks to generous grants and funds from the Gerald Micklem Trust, Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust, Sackler Trust, Reed Foundation, Rotary Club of Midhurst & Petworth, and Egremont Charitable Trust we successfully ran 46 community food-growing, wheelchair-accessible Learn and Grow sessions during the year. These were accessed by 32 participants.



Participants included people with physical or learning disabilities, older people, those with additional needs, mental-health support needs or neurodivergence, carers, and unemployed people engaged in our Stepping Stones to Work initiative.

Although winter flooding caused the kitchen floor to rot and limited our Plot-to-Plate cookery sessions, we adapted by bringing our 'kitchen' outside into the garden while awaiting the repairs to happen.

Despite the disruption, we continued chopping vegetables for chutneys, organising harvest shares and deliveries, and enjoying tea and homemade cakes at each session. During November and December, while the activity shed was rebuilt, our groups met at a local community centre and we enjoyed Christmas crafts, cooking and activities together.

Survey Results

Our survey results show the meaningful impact this project had for participants:

- **88 %** reported increased mental health and well-being
- **71 %** reported increased physical health and well-being
- **50%** reported increased confidence
- **58%** received volunteering, learning and training opportunities that helped with workplace skills
- **63%** reported eating more fruits and vegetables
- **71%** reported feeling less isolated and more connected to their community
- **75%** gained sustainable gardening skills
- **75%** reported knowing and caring more about nature
- **96%** reported making friends

When asked '**Overall, how would you rate your experience of coming to the Garden?**' participants responded: **88% Excellent, 12% Good**

Learn & Grow Participants' Feedback

'It's a friendly welcoming and uplifting group, in a calm and beautiful garden. It's very easy to forget the outside world and external pressures. However different we may individually be, we are made to feel equal and welcome.'

'My life is being regenerated in every way from the natural environment, the style of wellbeing support and types of respect, diversity, inclusivity, and humanitarian values present here.'



'I look forward to my garden days ...we leave at the end of the session, happy and sleep better too. They are very fair to us all. The support is very good, it covers all areas of emotional and physical support, choices and give equal help and support across all elements. It has helped me with confidence, and lots of my projects become real here.'

'The garden has helped my mental health over the last year through a marriage breakdown. It's been great to take my mind off things and de-stress'



'I have enjoyed all the training and workshops. It's a wonderful place, we all blossom like flowers and our branches of knowledge we have gained, we can take it to other parts of our wellbeing like home. In my experience, this is the only place in the county (apart from Pallant House Gallery and UK Harvest,) that addresses all abilities and disabilities with true respect and high standards.'



Men's Shed

The sessions ran for 42 weeks during the year (46 as standard, minus four weeks not run due to funding restrictions). Ten men attended regularly – or, in the case of a couple of participants, “regularly irregular.” Participants included men of all ages, some with mental-health support needs, additional needs, neurodivergence, physical disabilities or social challenges. They have been signposted through Social Prescribing, MIND and CDC Choose Work, as well as finding us through local knowledge.

At the beginning of 2025, funding was low, and sessions had to be restricted to every other week for a short period. This caused concern among attendees, but thankfully the issue was resolved quickly, and weekly meetings resumed from March. We are very grateful for the Awards for All grant and support from Alpha Track Systems that enabled us to continue.

Throughout the year, participants made garden and wildlife products such as bug houses, bird houses, bird tables and bat boxes, alongside smaller items inspired by their own ideas. The group was regularly commissioned to make various pieces - commissions that were always appreciated and boosted everyone's self-esteem. Skills and craftsmanship improved steadily, and the quality of work rose throughout the year. The comradeship of the group, its relaxed and supportive atmosphere, and the deepening friendships formed have been central to its success. Being able to create something valued by peers or sold to the public has fuelled confidence, pride and a sense of belonging. The project's positive impact extends beyond the sessions themselves: many participants take projects home to continue working, keeping them connected to the group “outside of hours” and bringing new ideas they have researched themselves. Seeing the positive impact extend beyond the sessions reinforces just how meaningful this space has become.

As we look ahead, we remain committed to nurturing this strong, inclusive community where men can feel valued, connected and proud of what they create together. We are deeply grateful to all our partners and supporters, new and longstanding, whose encouragement, funding and belief in the project make this work possible.



Survey Results

Our recent Men's Shed survey results reflect the culture and experience of the group:

75% of respondents said one reason they joined was to "Meet new people/make friends and socialise."

100% said "Since joining the Shed I have made new friends."

When asked "What areas of life have improved because you come to the project?" every respondent mentioned making friends.

Participants' feedback

More than statistics or survey results, it is the voices of the men themselves that show what the Shed truly means :

'I have been a member of Petworth Men's Shed for about 10 years and have enjoyed every minute of it. For me, it is a lifeline, and gets me out of my bungalow every Wednesday morning to do something I enjoy and to meet other men who are in the same position as me. We can talk about any problems we may have and also help each other with what we are making. It is a relaxing morning, being able to be together and share each other's ideas. The Men's Shed needs to stay open for the men to be able to relax and forget any problems they have for a few hours. It's a tonic we cannot do without.'



Thriving Thursday

With thanks to the generous support from Hyde Foundation, Awards for All, Shanly Foundation, Match My Project and private donations, in 2025 we successfully ran our Thriving Thursdays Social and Therapeutic Horticulture Sessions for 46 weeks. Thriving Thursdays was accessed by 19 participants. Thirteen were signposted to the group by local Social Prescribers, MIND, Petworth Food Bank, the CDC 'Choose Work' initiative and the Family Support Work charity, while six found the group through word of mouth. 45% of participants said they accessed the Food Bank in the last year.



Participants included people with a range of mental health support needs, physical health or mobility issues, children and young parents, neurodivergent people, as well as unemployed locals engaged in our Stepping Stones to Work initiative.

During the year, the team supported participants to improve their mental health and physical wellbeing, reduce isolation, create friendship and community, alleviate food poverty, increase skills and confidence, and provide a safe place for a young mother and child to thrive. While our activity shed was being rebuilt during November and December, we moved sessions to a local community centre and enjoyed crafts, gardening games and activities together.

The food grown in the garden, along with donated artisan fresh bread, supported weekly participants, all of whom benefited greatly from free fresh healthy produce. Refreshments, tea, cakes, a seasonal soup and savoury dishes were provided at each session.



Participants were supported with wellbeing and recovery through therapeutic gardening and activities in nature according to need and ability, with progress monitored through individual testimonials and survey results.

Our team consists of a trained and experienced Social and Therapeutic Horticulture practitioner, a one-to-one support worker, a children's worker, and a care and support volunteer, all of whom are Mental Health First Aiders and appropriately trained in Safeguarding, Health and Safety, First Aid, and DBS checked to enhanced level.

Survey Results

Our recent Thriving Thursday survey results show the meaningful impact for participants:

100 % reported increased mental health and well-being

82 % reported increased physical health and well-being

82% reported an increase in confidence

73% received volunteering, learning and training opportunities that helped with workplace skills

90% reported eating more fruits and vegetables

82% reported feeling less isolated and connected to their community

82% gained more sustainable gardening skills

82% reported knowing and caring more about nature

100% reported making friends

When asked **‘Overall, how would you rate your experience of coming to the Garden?’** participants responded: **100% rated it as Excellent.**



Participants' Feedback

The voices and feedback of participants clearly demonstrate how valuable the sessions have been to them:

‘My life is being regenerated in every way from the natural environment, the style of wellbeing support and types of respect, diversity, inclusivity, and humanitarian values present here.’

‘Its a friendly welcoming and uplifting group, in a calm and beautiful garden. Its very easy to forget the outside world and external pressures. How ever weird and wonderful we may individually be, we are made to feel equal and welcome.’

‘It is the most calming and joyful environment. If there is a problem physically, accommodations are always offered or tried. There are varied and interesting activities and always open to ideas. The social atmosphere is always open and welcoming. Very inclusive. I find it uplifting to be a part of. The one to one mental health support here, as well as just being part of the group has saved my sanity. Everyone is always, kind, supportive and genuinely caring. All ages are welcome and accommodations made to make it enjoyable for everyone. The variety of food is always varied and open to suggestions of new crops to try or grow.’

Harvest Box Delivery

The food grown in the garden and fresh bread generously donated by SØDT bakery & other partner organisations has been shared amongst garden participants and households through our weekly Harvest Fresh Food deliveries. During 2025, we delivered once weekly to 10 families, and twice weekly to 8 families at risk of experiencing food poverty, **totalling around 70 people**. All families were signposted to us through Petworth Foodbank.

Acknowledgements

We are profoundly grateful to all who have supported the Community Wellbeing Garden throughout 2025 – our funders, supporters, partners, volunteers, trustees and of course our participants. Together, you have helped us celebrate twenty years of growth, inclusion, and wellbeing, ensuring the garden continues to thrive for everyone it serves.



Petworth's Community Wellbeing Garden is proud to be a Living Wage employer.



If you are reading this digitally please follow the link to watch a short film about the garden: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oh1gdFNDc2I>