

CABINET

DATE OF MEETING: 2 JULY 2020

TITLE OF REPORT: **COMMUNITY GARDEN AT EDENBROOK COUNTRY PARK**

Report of: **Head of Technical and Environmental Services**

Cabinet member: **Cllr David Neighbour, Strategic Direction and Partnerships**

I PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To agree the release of capital funding to enhance the current allotment area at Edenbrook to a “Community Gardens” facility and to inform Cabinet of the proposed mechanisms for delivering the Community Gardens.

2 OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That Cabinet agree, that £120,000 of earmarked (Hartland Park) S106 capital funding and £40,000 of general leisure S106 contributions are released to deliver the proposed Community Garden enhancement and to provide a sinking fund for its long-term maintenance.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Land to the north east of Edenbrook County Park (EBC) has recently been transferred to the Council and adopted for the provision of allotments. It comprises a cleared fenced, area with a basic water supply, and some parking spaces. As part of the Edenbrook extension planning permission there was agreement to deliver a skate and bike track within this location too.

4 THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The proposed is to enhance the allotments project by making it a Community Garden Community gardens have significant wellbeing benefits – they can provide fresh fruit and vegetables, a place for wildlife, improved play areas, an outdoor classroom and safe public spaces that are well-maintained.
- 4.2 The project will be delivered by a partnership of Hart Voluntary Action (HVA), the Hart Allotment Association (HAA) and overseen and administered by Hart DC’s Countryside Service (HDCCS).
- 4.3 HVA will provide and manage the wider “community” facing (see appendix A “Edenbrook Community Garden Vision and Delivery Model”) element as part of their “Minding the Garden” programme. This will focus on delivering the many benefits of a community garden approach (listed within appendix 3 “Benefits of Community Gardens”) has on the wider community and those with alternative needs.

4.4 The management of the allotment plots will be administered by HDCCS with support from HAA. They have worked in partnership to agree a pricing structure that will cover the revenue costs of running the allotment plots.

4 CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 The overall project the long-awaited skate and bike facilities indicated in the Draft Masterplan. Final design and implementation will be subject to a tender process that will deliver a turnkey solution in consultation with the key partners.

5 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Is the proposal identified in the Service Plan?	Yes
Is the proposal being funded from current budgets?	Yes
Have staffing resources already been identified and set aside for this proposal?	Yes

5.1 Total project costs to provide the enhancement is expected to be £106,634. It is proposed to provide a sinking fund of £75,866 to cover the replacement of capital items over a 20-year period. However, where additional grant funding can be secured, this will be used to minimise the draw on the sinking fund.

5.2 HVA have secured £4,000 in additional funding of or the delivery of this project

Proposed Funding Source

Hartland Park Earmarked S106	£120,000
General Leisure S106	£40,000
Countryside Service Environment Grant	£18,000
HVA Grant	£4,000
Total Funding	<u>£182,500</u>

6 ACTION

6.1 Subject to approval, the funding will be released and added to the approved Capital Works Programme for the Countryside Service.

Contact Details: Adam Green / 774083 / adam.green@hart.gov.uk

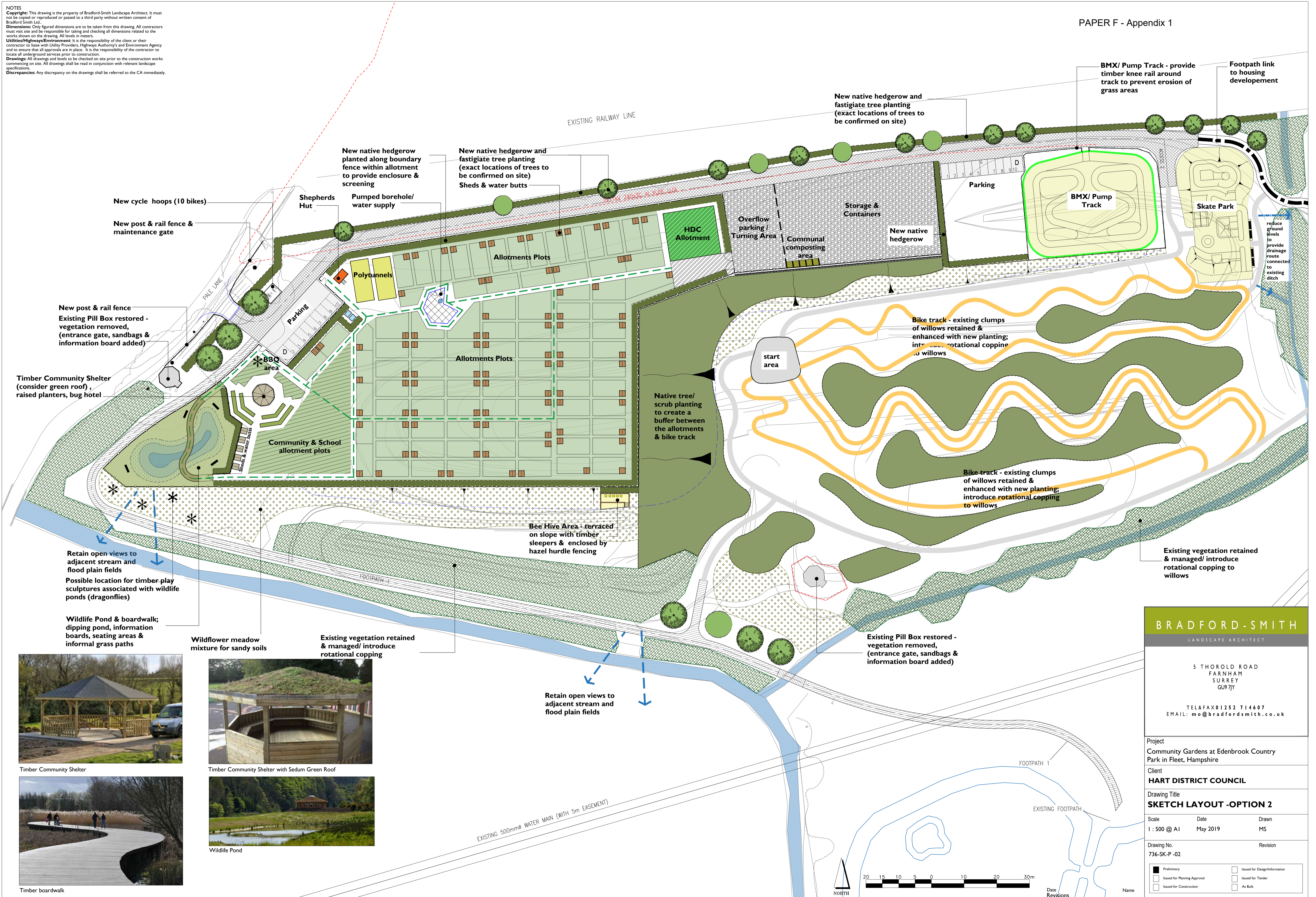
APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Draft Masterplan

Appendix 2 – Edenbrook Community Garden Vision and Delivery Model

Appendix 3 – Benefits of Community Gardens.

NOTES
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Timber Community Shelter



Timber Community Shelter with Sedum Green Roof



Timber boardwalk



Wildlife Pond

BRADFORD-SMITH
 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

5 THOROLD ROAD
 FARNHAM
 SURREY
 GU9 7JY

TEL/FAX 01252 714607
 EMAIL: mo@bradfordsmith.co.uk

Project
 Community Gardens at Edenbrook Country Park in Fleet, Hampshire

Client
HART DISTRICT COUNCIL

Drawing Title
SKETCH LAYOUT - OPTION 2

Scale 1 : 500 @ A1	Date May 2019	Drawn MS
Drawing No. 736-SK-P-02	Revision	

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preliminary	<input type="checkbox"/> Issued for Design/Information
<input type="checkbox"/> Issued for Planning Approval	<input type="checkbox"/> Issued for Tender
<input type="checkbox"/> Issued for Construction	<input type="checkbox"/> As Built

Date Revisions

Name

Appendix 2

Edenbrook Community Garden Vision and Delivery Model

The 'Minding the Garden' area

Our vision is to create a welcoming and inclusive 'Minding the Garden' space integrated within the Edenbrook Community Garden, where Hart residents from diverse backgrounds can come together around a shared purpose of gardening.

This unique space will provide social and therapeutic horticulture opportunities for disabled people and people living with a range of conditions including mental health problems.

The project will help the Council to deliver on its health & wellbeing priorities and realise its Vision to 2040 ambition to 'Build a great sense of community, reducing social isolation, celebrating our diversity, and strengths and through this increasing community connectedness and resilience'.

The 'Minding the Garden' area will sit alongside the individual plots available to rent, together forming the Edenbrook Community Garden. Shared facilities and spaces including a covered area and wildlife pond will encourage connections between all site users. The Community Garden will form a vibrant part of the Edenbrook Country Park, with 'Minding the Garden' volunteers cultivating plants and getting involved in maintenance and conservation activity across the country park.

We are ambitious in our vision and will work towards an award from the RHS Britain in Bloom 'It's Your Neighbourhood' competition.

Delivery model

The 'Minding the Garden' area will be managed by Hart Voluntary Action (HVA) who will work in close collaboration with Hart District Council (HDC) and Hart Allotment Association to ensure the success of the Edenbrook Community Garden.

These partners will work together to promote an ethos of respect and inclusivity including encouraging the sharing of skills, knowledge and produce among site users.

HVA will lease the space from Hart District Council for a peppercorn rent and a service level agreement will be put in place to set out key performance measures such as accessibility, range of users, impact on wellbeing, and sustainability of delivery.

HVA will develop and deliver social and therapeutic horticulture activity within the space including weekly 'Minding the Garden' supported volunteering sessions for people with a range of needs such as mental health issues, autism, or learning disabilities. The 'Minding the Garden' sessions will be supported by paid staff and a group of community volunteer buddies. This project will build on the successes of the original 'Minding the Garden' project delivered by HVA until 2016.

People will be able to access the 'Minding the Garden' project through self-referral, as well as referral by GPs and other professionals. This GP referral or 'gardening on prescription'

approach is not new¹ but is gaining increased traction due to the NHS Long Term Plan² published in 2019, which commits to supporting more people to access activities within their local community as part of efforts to promote their health and wellbeing.

HVA will also facilitate involvement of other community groups and organisations in the 'Minding the Garden' area, for example, local charities working with disabled people. This aspect will evolve as the community garden becomes established.

HVA's strong links into the community mean it is ideally placed to engage a broad cross-section of the community, adding value to the Edenbrook Community Garden by reaching members of the community who may experience additional barriers to engaging in gardening.

There will be opportunities for the wider community to engage in the 'Minding the Garden' area through regular volunteering days to help maintain the garden, as well as a range of one-off workshops on topics such as gardening, the natural environment, sustainable living, and wellbeing.

The space will be designed to be as accessible as possible to disabled people and people with mobility issues, drawing inspiration from other successful community gardens such as Thrive in Berkshire.

Sustainable gardening practices will be adopted as far as possible and planting will be selected to promote biodiversity and provide year-round activity and interest. There will be a focus on productive planting (fruits and vegetables), sensory planting, and plants which encourage pollinators.

Resources and funding

Funding of the main capital costs to establish the 'Minding the Garden' area would be met by S106 monies, with any additional costs being covered through fundraising from other sources.

HVA has already secured £4000 towards facilities for the community garden and is well placed to access funding from external sources including those not open to local authority applications.

HVA will seek external funding for a project coordinator to deliver the 'Minding the Garden' programme, as well as any other paid staff time or revenue costs required to run the community garden.

Some funds to support the ongoing sustainability of the 'Minding the Garden' area will be raised through the delivery of workshops and events within the garden.

Ongoing maintenance of the site will be a shared responsibility and will be where possible financed through grant funding and local leisure receipts.

Tasks such as maintenance of the paths, hedges and other shared facilities of the site will be a joint effort between community garden volunteers and individual plot holders, with

¹ https://www.nsalg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Gardens_and_health.pdf

² <https://www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/>

support from the Council's Countryside Ranger team. This model will help ensure longevity and sustainability for years to come.

Appendix 3

Benefits of Community Gardens

The benefits

Community gardens continue to grow in popularity, with schemes such as the RHS Britain in Bloom 'It's Your Neighbourhood' competition celebrating and rewarding the best of community gardening, and the NHS increasingly recognising the potential health and wellbeing benefits for patients¹.

A community garden can bring a wide range of benefits – from connecting people with each other to growing fresh food to enjoy.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a light on the hugely important role gardens play in our lives, providing a space for exercise, relaxation and creativity. During the pandemic we have also witnessed how vital the connections between individuals and groups within our communities can be. Connected communities are more resilient and research shows, they are happier and healthier².

Community gardens promote positive community interactions and make gardening accessible to a broader spectrum of the community by engaging diverse groups. They provide a space for social and therapeutic horticulture for people living with mental health problems, learning disability, autism and other conditions or disabilities. They can provide valuable volunteering experience and enable people to develop skills and confidence they can apply in other aspects of their lives³.

Social inclusion

Research shows that social isolation and loneliness are as harmful to health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day⁴. Some groups within our community including disabled people and people living with mental health problems are at greater risk of loneliness and social exclusion.

Community gardens provide opportunities for people to engage in meaningful activity and connect with others in a gentle, non-invasive way, gardening side by side and working towards a shared purpose.

Physical health

Being involved in a community garden can help people be more active⁵, reducing the amount of time spent sedentary, raising the heart rate, strengthening muscles and educating people about healthy eating. Gardening tasks can be chosen and tailored according to physical ability and available energy.

¹ <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/health-and-wellbeing/articles/social-prescribing>

² <https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/01/14/can-we-build-healthier-more-resilient-and-connected-communities/>

³ https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/system/files/true_value_report.pdf

⁴ Holt-Lunstad (2015) <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25910392/>

⁵ <https://www.rhs.org.uk/advice/health-and-wellbeing/articles/why-gardening-makes-us-feel-better>

Mental health

Community gardens can promote mental health and wellbeing by enabling people to achieve their Five Ways to Wellbeing, an evidenced based set of actions everyone can take to improve their mental health and wellbeing. These are: connect with others, be active, keep learning, give your time, and take notice of the things around you (being mindful).

They also provide a space for social and therapeutic horticulture: regular, structured activity led by trained and supportive professionals to improve health and wellbeing. For example, the original 'Minding the Garden' project led by HVA until 2016, was established as part of a lottery funded Ecominds⁶ programme led by the national charity Mind. Evaluation data collected from all projects within the programme discovered that:

- seven in 10 people had a significant improvement in their mental wellbeing
- self esteem was boosted by an average of 11 per cent for six of out 10 people, and
- almost eight in 10 saw their mood improve by six per cent.

Environmental benefits

Community gardens can support biodiversity, and involvement in community growing can act as a powerful tool to encourage people to adopt greener behaviours. Research carried out with 22 projects in England by the Federation of City Farms & Community Gardens found that community-growing projects offer opportunities to connect with nature and increase knowledge of environmental issues, which can lead to positive changes in behaviour⁷. Food and growing activities are a good 'hook' for engaging the public with the wider sustainability agenda⁸.

Community gardening in action

Community gardens come in all shapes and sizes, with varying levels of formalised activity being hosted in the gardens. In many community gardens, a combination of paid staff and volunteers help to facilitate activity for a variety of groups, and collaboration with other local organisations and community groups is common.

One legacy of HVA's original 'Minding the Garden' project was the creation of the **Whitewater Garden for Health**. This allotment plot in Hook gives patients the opportunity to help themselves improve their mental and physical health by being outdoors, being part of a team with the same goals and being active.



⁶ <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/your-stories/ecominds-putting-ecotherapy-on-the-map/>

⁷ https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/system/files/true_value_report.pdf

⁸ https://www.sustainabilitywestmidlands.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CLS_Growing_and_Green_Space_learning_summary_10.07.14.pdf



The **Space2Grow** community garden (www.space2grow.space/) in Farnham has become a hub of community activity for therapeutic gardening and learning through nature.

The garden hosts weekly gardening sessions, outdoor classes and school trips, a cooking club, parenting courses, and a men in sheds project.

Activities are facilitated by a paid member staff and a team of volunteers.

Colleagues from Hart District Council and Hart Voluntary Action have visited the project to hear about the wide-ranging benefits to the Farnham community.

Colleagues from Hart District Council and Hart Voluntary Action visited the **Thrive** garden near Reading in 2019 to learn more about their social and therapeutic horticulture projects for people living with or recovering from a wide range of conditions. Thrive's projects support people to overcome challenges and barriers they face providing hope, purpose and meaningful activities. Referral routes into the project include via the GP, social care and other professionals, as well as self-referral.

The Therapy Garden in Normandy, Surrey provides clients with a calm, protected space and a supportive environment, in which they can begin to allow new experiences in, reconnect with nature and really benefit from the healing power of the garden. A team of paid staff and volunteers deliver a varied programme including young people, disabled people, and survivors of stroke and brain injury.



Other local projects include **Blooming Marvellous** led by Rushmoor Voluntary Services for people with or recovering from mental health issues, as well as Mencap's **Greenfingers** project in Basingstoke for people with mental health issues or learning disabilities. Both projects provide supported volunteering opportunities using plots situated within allotment sites.

The **Plot 22** community garden (www.plot22.org/) in Brighton hosts dementia-friendly gardening sessions, grow and play sessions for pre-school children and families, sessions for female survivors of sexual violence, and general community gardening sessions. The garden also hosts workshops ranging from meditation to cookery and crafts. The garden team of paid staff and volunteers work collaboratively with local charities and services to facilitate these activities and engage diverse groups within the community.

