



gateway collective.

Social Impact Report

July 21 - June 22

Prepared By

the connectives 



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Introduction

As an organisation with a social purpose, it is important for Gateway Collective to know it is achieving its objectives, what impact it is having on society and on the environment, if it is living up to its values, and if the objectives and values are relevant and appropriate. Social accounting facilitates this assessment and enables a Social Impact Report to be produced. The Connectives has been commissioned to produce a Social Impact Report for Gateway Collective including:

- Identifying the likely areas of social value produced by Gateway Collective and producing a Theory of Change i.e. a clear identification of the activities, outputs and outcomes that lead to the successful delivery of social and/or economic and environmental impact
- Conducting stakeholder consultations to secure qualitative evidence of change
- Gathering relevant data and analysing this to secure quantitative evidence of change
- Preparation of this social impact report that captures the social and economic impact delivered by Gateway Collectives both for the individual, and wider community partners and/or service providers including health, education etc.



About Gateway Collective

Gateway Collective works to see thriving people and communities in Bootle. They aim to increase well-being and create lasting social connections using the tool of community gardening.

They are based in North Park Community Garden in Bootle, Merseyside. All year round they open up their garden to volunteers and community gardeners. Every session involves the group coming together to grow and eat, cooking with what they grow, all the while building relationships and quickly building personal connections. They share food, produce and recipes to promote healthy eating. Everyone who attends the sessions takes home a share of the produce at harvest.

Gateway Collective was founded by Ali Horton and Janet Hughes who are committed to Bootle and love being a part of the community there. Both Ali and Janet have strong Christian faith and the work of Gateway Collective is an expression of their motivation to follow the Christian principle 'love your neighbour'.

The work of Gateway Collective is open to people of all faiths and people of none, however, the value of loving your neighbour remains a strong part of their ethos.





Methodology

The Connectives have undertaken the Social Audit Network process of social accounting as a method of social impact assessment and carried out a process of qualitative and quantitative data collection in order to assess whether Gateway Collective has had a positive impact on the lives



of the people using the service, staff and wider community. Such data was gathered from 1-2-1 interviews, case studies, focus groups and outcome data.

The report also utilises Social Return on Investment methodology introducing financial proxies to enumerate the social value derived from the services and activity. These approaches were selected because we believe that in combination these methods:

- Capture quantitative and qualitative data to provide narrative and economic measures appealing to a mixed audience
- Hear the voice of the person served and the partners in the delivery
- Consider the materiality of evidence – what matters most when considering the impact of each service
- Have credibility in a crowded marketplace - secured from international recognition of the Social Audit Network accreditation
- Be based upon clear and transparent principles



Vision, Mission & Values

Vision

To see thriving people and communities in Bootle.



Mission

To grow food, people and communities. People need to belong. Gateway Collective connects people to each other and their community, offering opportunities for people to invest in themselves and their personal well-being and providing access to fresh, locally grown produce.



Values

People - Planet - Prosperity

Love your neighbour



Look after our world

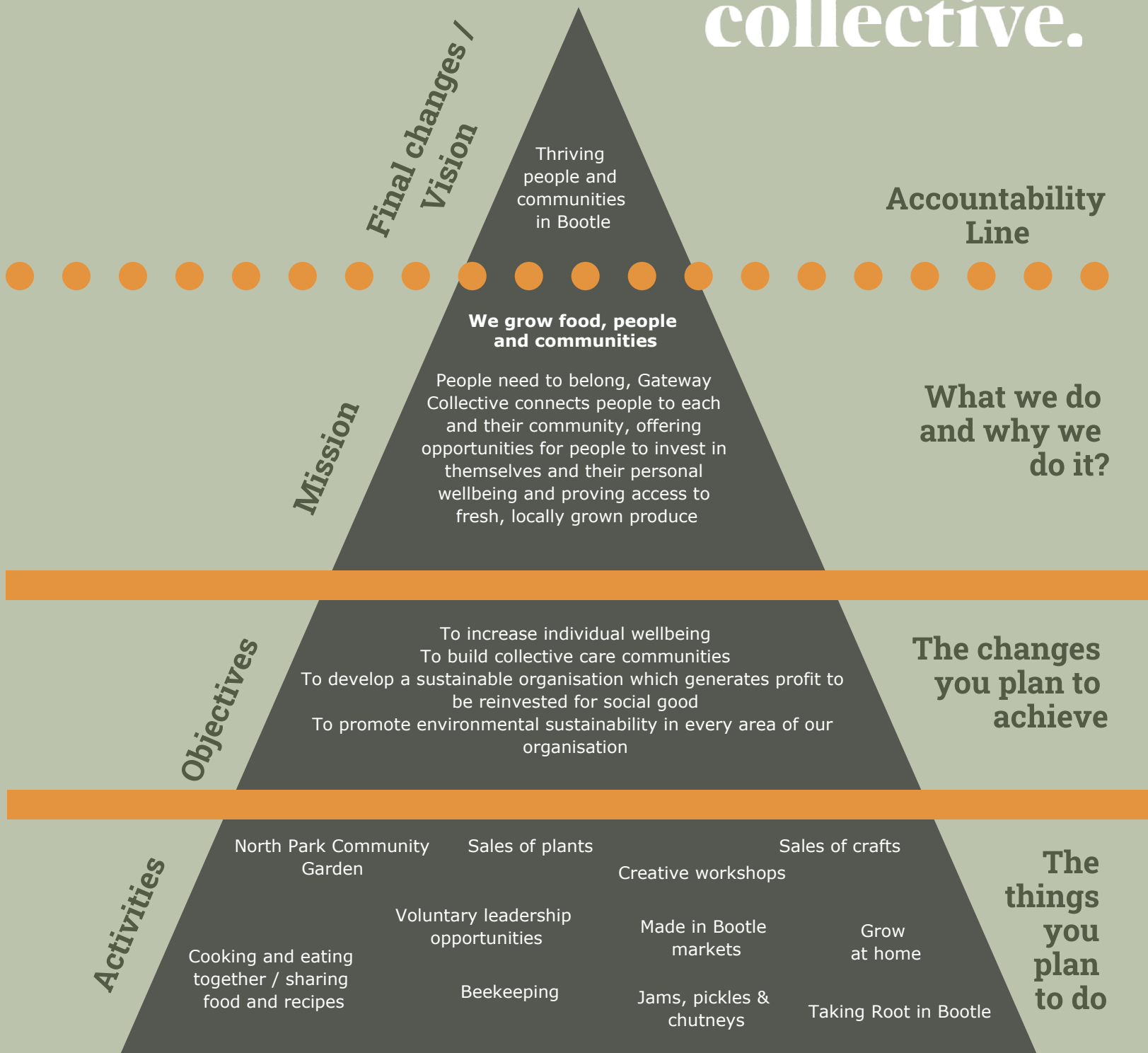


Invest in our community





gateway collective.





The Story of Gateway Collective



The Gateway Collective was started by two friends, Ali and Janet, who shared a passion for people and their community. Together they wanted to do something with purpose for their communities in Bootle, and so this was the birth of the social enterprise, Gateway Collective.

They constituted a Community Interest Community back in 2014 and then managed to secure a site with 10 raised beds on a narrow strip of land in North Park Community Garden, Bootle. The gardens opened to their community in 2015 and since then they expanded to encompass a disused 5-a-side football pitch next door.

Janet brings the green fingers with a background in horticulture, originally growing veg in her own garden. Ali comes from a background in youth work previously working at Ykids in Bootle and looks after all things operations.

They both started to work with local families to help them grow their own fresh produce, eventually allowing them to take over full responsibility for the raised beds. The work that goes on increases well-being, creates social connections and makes Bootle a better place for everyone using the tool of community gardening.

Visitors and volunteers to the garden have grown year after year and as the world changes so do people's reasons for being involved. The Covid-19 pandemic had a huge impact on people's lives and their mental health. The gardens provided a place where people could reconnect, making those important social connections which were seen in the increase in numbers we saw following the loosening of restrictions.

Outside of growing the food and gardening, the most important part of every session is lunch. The community gardeners meet around the table to share food, cooking with what they grow as much as possible. These meal times are an opportunity to chat, learn what is going on in each other's lives and support each other.

Alongside the community garden, Ali also got busy in the kitchen turning the garden's fruits and vegetables into homemade jams and chutneys. These are sold at local markets and on the Gateway Collective's online store, with all the profits going back into the development of the community garden. Following the growth of Gateway Collective, this role was later passed to a new member of their team Paul.

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GC Activity



1040 Visits to the Garden



4100 Volunteer hours



79 Community Gardeners



540kg Food Grown



430kg CO2e saved*



1 Green Flag Community Award

*based on comparisons to buying from a supermarket



The Gateway Garden

The North Park Community Garden opens every Monday and Wednesday 10-2pm. During the Summer months, an additional session is added every Thursday evening. Every week the community gardeners and volunteers meet to garden, chat, grow food and eat together. The garden is at the core of everything Gateway Collective do. It is a place of sanctuary, a place of rest and also a place of laughter. The most important part of every session is lunch where they meet around the table to share food, cooking with what they grow as much as possible. These meal times are an opportunity to chat, learn what is going on in each other's lives and support each other.

The garden provides many benefits to those attending, with growing evidence that suggests being outdoors can have significant benefits to a person's physical and mental well-being.



Following a visit to the garden, you could get a real sense of the community that has been and continues to be built there. You are instantly made to feel welcome and someone is always on hand to offer support whether this is physically in the garden or a chat over a brew. Following the morning in the garden, we had lunch together which was a perfect opportunity to speak informally to the gardeners and volunteers about their experience since attending the garden and how it has impacted their lives.

It was abundantly clear just how much of a lifeline the garden is for some of the attendees. Following the impact of Covid-19, many had felt a sense of social isolation and loneliness, especially among those that had experienced loss in their lives. Some of the positive outcomes we heard were:



- **Increase in confidence**
- **Improved diets from access to fresh fruit and veg**
- **Better knowledge of healthy eating and balanced diets**
- **Improved social connections**
- **Reduced feelings of stress**
- **More active lifestyle leading to better physical health**
- **Gives life a sense of purpose**

All of the above lead to **improved health and wellbeing** both physically and mentally.

I think it is harder for men but it really has changed my life. I've grown so much in confidence, I'm now able to talk without a stutter. It has also provided structure to my life, I can now enjoy time at home knowing that I'm out 2-3 times a week.

I heard a comment made on TV about the elderly and being in 'God's waiting room'. That made me angry. Life is about choices and gardening gives me a purpose and a reason to keep on living.



Paul's Story

Paul first began attending the garden weekly in 2015 alongside his Mum after leaving mainstream school due to anxiety, at age 13/14. During his time at the garden, Ali & Jan encouraged him to create a social media presence, For a while, he created and edited photos to be uploaded to twitter.

His time at the community garden was used as part of his homeschool curriculum.

"I believe this helped me grow my love for gardening and British wildlife."

Poor mental health in 2016/2017 stopped Paul from being able to attend the garden. He lost interest in all his hobbies and had little enjoyment in life. Paul eventually had a 6-month stay in an inpatient mental health hospital. During this time Ali sent personalised newsletters of updates on what was happening in the garden.

The volunteers at the garden continued to ask about Paul and were eager to receive updates regarding his health.

"I'm incredibly proud of how Ali & Jan handled this period of my life and how supportive the volunteers were during this time"

During 2020 Paul was given the opportunity to be involved in a Kickstart project with Andrea Ku from B4Biodiversity and Gateway Collective. This was part of the scheme created by Universal Credit to kickstart young unemployed people into employment. Prior to this Paul was unemployed and claiming PIP. The project involved working alongside Ali, Jan and Andrea to create "Made in Bootle". This allowed Paul to grow in confidence and develop his employability skills.

"I feared I would be no use in any job due to missing out on so many school years due to my mental illness experience. After the kickstart project ended, Ali & Jan decided to trial employment within Gateway Collective. Ali & Jan encouraged me to see that I am capable of various things, trial out things that I would have been anxious to fail at and support me during times of self doubt. I gained skills such as; social media management, project promotion and advertisement, graphic design, spreadsheet/excel literacy and learning that I actually do quite like talking to people!"

As a person with Autism, I have personal difficulties that can often become disabling if not correctly supported. Ali & Jan have always offered support in so many ways to assist me in not becoming overwhelmed and allow me to work in my best possible headspace, these include things like; allowing me to create and work at my own pace, making note of situations that often overwhelm me and give me the opportunity to work around them or work together to create a space I can comfortably work in and always giving me time to think about decisions rather than requiring an answer on the spot. Ali & Jan's knowledge of how to support neurodiversity comes so naturally to them and I don't know if they're aware of how incredible of a skill that is."

The confidence and personal skills Paul has gained during his time with Gateway Collective, have allowed him to apply for another part-time job and given him the opportunity to further develop his CV.

"As a 16-year-old I thought I would never be able to hold a job due to lack of self-confidence and employability skills. Ali & Jan have and continue to help me build a fantastic toolkit full of skills I thought I never had or never even thought I had the capability of doing."

They have impacted my life in such an immense way that I will forever be grateful for."





What do their Gardeners Say?

"After moving up north with just me and my daughter I felt quite isolated, but these guys now feel like an extended family"

"I know that I can leave and take a break when I'm going through a rough patch but when I come back I feel immediately welcomed back"

"Being here really helps you build confidence, everyone really values each other"

"It's a little oasis in the middle of the park"



"I know that when I come to the garden I'm not going to feel alone"

"I think it has really helped with my social anxiety and I know that if I'm not feeling that up to gardening that I can just sit and have a brew and a chat with somebody"

"I've completely changed my way of eating, having access to fresh fruit & veg has really improved my diet. I've seen lots of health benefits"



Bernie's Story

Bernie has been aware of the area where North Park Community Garden is now located but didn't know much about what went on there. She then moved home and was closer to the garden. Despite always loving gardening never had the space to do it at home. Following an open day, she was welcomed with open arms and has since become an active member of the community.

Bernie is on the autism spectrum and as such suffers from some social anxiety, making it quite challenging in social situations and often feels incredibly shy. However, since attending the garden, her confidence has grown massively. She now confidently introduces herself to new volunteers and is always happy to help them out. Bernie feels at home at the garden, and the supportive environment has helped her to overcome her anxiety and feel more comfortable in social situations.

Her experience in the garden has allowed Bernie to develop her gardening skills over the years. She loves how the garden caters for volunteers' different energy levels and abilities, allowing her to choose a job that suits her physical and emotional needs. Bernie enjoys learning new gardening techniques and is now confident in growing her own fruit and vegetables.

Bernie now loves the social aspect of the garden and being part of a team. She enjoys meeting and mixing with a diverse group of people, which gives her a sense of community and belonging. Bernie finds it rewarding to share the harvest with others and feels a sense of achievement in being able to provide food for her family.

Ali and Jan, have also been instrumental in making Bernie feel welcome and supported at the garden. They provide helpful guidance and encouragement, which has empowered Bernie to take on new challenges and develop her skills.

Bernie now has plans to get her own space in another community garden so she can continue to grow her own fruit and vegetables. She hopes to expand her gardening skills and provide more fresh produce for her family.

Bernie's experience at the North Park Community Garden illustrates the power of community gardening in promoting social connection, skill development, and personal growth. Despite her anxiety and shyness, Bernie has flourished at the garden.



Building the Community

Gateway Collective is an organization that is focused on creating a sustainable model for their work. They want to be able to continue investing back into their communities without relying solely on external funding sources. To achieve this, they engage in various activities that contribute to their financial sustainability.

One way Gateway Collective contributes to its financial sustainability is by offering services to the community. For example, they host workshops, for individuals or organisations in their community. By offering these services, they are able to generate revenue that can be reinvested into their organization.

Another way Gateway Collective contributes to its financial sustainability is through partnerships with other organisations. By collaborating with like-minded organisations, they can share resources, expand their reach, and leverage each other's strengths to achieve their shared goals. This can help them to generate additional revenue streams that can be invested back into their community.

Here are some further activities they do to contribute to the profit that is invested back into the local community and supports them in building a collective care community.

Made in Bootle



Made in Bootle originally started as a collaboration between Gateway Collective and B4Biodiversity, as a way to showcase Bootle's independents, makers, creatives and social enterprises. The first Made in Bootle gift box was launched on Earth day 2021 featuring a collection of products made by Bootle local small businesses, with each box's profits going back to supporting Bootle as a community. In May 21, Gateway Collective held their first Made in Bootle market **generating sustainable income** that is **reinvested in the local community**.

In January 2022 Gateway Collective took on full responsibility for the Made in Bootle project. The markets are designed to celebrate Bootle's independents, makers and creators whilst also attracting new visitors to North Park Community Garden.

Everyone who partners with Made in Bootle is a local South Sefton based independent business that signs up to their principles of environmental sustainability and agrees to operate with carbon-zero principles. That means all purchases that are made through Made in Bootle contributes to the local Bootle community and the wider world.

Gateway Workshops

There are a number of different workshops available throughout the year at Gateway Collective. Such as:

- Christmas Wreath making
- Notebooks & Rolled candle making
- Gardening & Outdoor Cooking

In 2021, the Christmas Wreath making workshop proved extremely popular with over 100 wreaths made. Not only do these workshops help Gateway Collective generate unrestricted income, but they are also an opportunity for them to reach a wider audience and for participants to get creative and enjoy time out from the hustle and busyness of the festive period.



Taking Root in Bootle



Taking Root in Bootle is an organisation that connects community growing, food and health projects across South Sefton. Gateway Collective has partnered with Taking Root in Bootle to green up Bootle's streets and to create a supportive network of growing organisations and local residents. As part of this, they lead their towns 'in Bloom' entry working with local groups and people to coordinate Bootle in Bloom. In 2021, they were delighted with gaining a silver award in the urban community category, their best result yet!





Joe's Story

Joe had lived abroad for a long time before returning to the UK for what he thought at the time would be a temporary visit. Circumstances changed which meant that the trip back became a permanent move.

On his regular walks, he would often be intrigued as he walked past the North Park community garden because it was always deserted until one day he saw people working in the garden. Out of curiosity, he went in to speak to the people working and asked if he could join them.

At the gardens, Joe found a welcoming community of people and quickly became friends with some of the regular gardeners and began to feel like he was part of a community. Joe had never really had an interest in gardening but has always loved the outdoors. Volunteering at the gardens gave him a new interest and purpose and a sense of being at one with nature and his love for gardening grew from there.

Through his involvement in the community garden, Joe also discovered new opportunities. For example, he learned about other local community groups doing similar things, so he became involved in a whole network of community groups. He found his whole sense of community kept on growing, something that he hadn't felt since he was younger.

In addition to the social benefits, he loved getting his hands dirty and working with the soil and plants, and he found that the act of gardening was a great stress reliever. He also enjoyed the sense of accomplishment that came with seeing plants grow and thrive.

Over time, Joe also developed new gardening skills from his experience at the community garden. He learned about proper soil preparation, planting techniques, and plant care. This new knowledge not only helped him grow healthier and more vibrant plants in the community garden, but it also led to further opportunities which ultimately led to him gaining employment with a local gardening business, and later on, the council's Green Sefton department.

The council took Joe on as a seasonal ranger in the parks and gardens division thanks in no small part to the skills and knowledge he had gained from voluntary experience in the community garden.

In addition, the gardening experience gleaned from volunteering at North Park has helped him to grow things on his allotment.

On top of the hands-on experience, Joe also got to enjoy other experiences through his connection to the garden, such as visiting and subsequently participating in the RHS flower show at Tatton Park.

The only downside for Joe is that when he is in employment he's only able to attend in the Summer evenings.

In summary, Joe's experience at the community garden had a variety of positive impacts on his life. He felt like he was part of a community, it opened doors to new opportunities, he enjoyed being at one with nature, and even found employment through his newfound gardening skills.

"What I like about the garden is it's somewhere I know I can always go and feel welcome."



£434,520

Social Value

For every £1 spent...

£7.34

**social value is
created**



Social Return On Investment

Social return on investment (SROI) is a methodology used to evaluate the social impact of an investment, program or organisation. It aims to measure an initiative's social, environmental and economic outcomes, and provide a quantitative analysis of the financial value created for society.

SROI involves identifying and valuing the inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes of a social intervention, and then comparing the social value created to the cost of the intervention. The result is expressed as a ratio of social value to investment cost, similar to a financial return on investment.

The limitations of SROI include the difficulty in quantifying and valuing social outcomes, as they may be intangible and have varying degrees of significance to different stakeholders. It can also be challenging to identify the appropriate counterfactual (i.e. what would have happened without the intervention), which is necessary to estimate the impact of the intervention. As such we have applied attribution and deadweight to our figures.

Outcome	Proxy Value	No. of outcomes	Attribution	Social Value	Deadweight	Social Value
An individual that has started gardening	£1411	79	100%	£111469	20%	£89,175
An individual who is more confident, more independent and more active in the community which leads to better quality of life	£1037.74	79	50%	£40,990	25%	£30,743
A person who has made new friends, formed better relationships and are therefore less lonely	£770	79	40%	£24,319	20%	£19,455
A person who has started volunteering regularly	£3249	79	100%	£256,671	0%	£256,671
A person starts to take up new hobbies and interests	£761	79	80%	£48,095	20%	£38,476



Conclusions & Recommendations

Conclusions

- The gardeners and volunteers value the space and the activities with everyone we spoke to reporting some form of a positive outcome. There is a real sense of community which we felt almost instantly after our visit to the North Park Community Garden.
- People feel a sense of pride and achievement from the activities that they participate in. It has helped some people build their confidence whilst also learning new skills. As well as skills, people are learning about the importance of a balanced diet, leading to healthier decisions around diet.
- It is a great place for people to build relationships/friendships, people feel comfortable there and are surrounded by like-minded individuals who can provide a shared understanding and empathy for each other's lives. This really helps reduce those feelings of social isolation.
- Gateway Collective have been incredibly successful at building those connections in the community, especially with other similar community groups such as Taking Roots and the South Park garden. It is common for the volunteers at NPCG to also volunteer elsewhere. People are taking real pride in their local community.
- It is possible to see the real-life impacts of climate change through the changing seasons and the impact it can have on growing fruit and veg. This encourages the volunteers to be conscious and aware of their carbon footprint and make better decisions about the environment. The gardens also provide an opportunity for the volunteers to compost their food at home and bring it to the gardens to be used.

Recommendations

- We would recommend that those in paid positions and some volunteers undertake a mental health first aider course to feel prepared to support any individuals that require immediate assistance at the gardens.
- Have a look into the possibilities of hosting Carbon Literacy training for the regular volunteers to further the education around sustainability for interested individuals.
- Explore opportunities for social prescribing via local GP's and other primary health care providers.
- Embed the process of social impact reporting to demonstrate year on year achievements of the gardens and its gardeners.