



University of Essex

Brighton & Hove



Sharing the Harvest project: Interim evaluation results

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Brighton & Hove Food Partnership is a hub for information, inspiration and connection around food.

A non-profit organisation that helps people learn to cook, to eat a healthy diet, to grow their own food and to waste less food.

- Work with individuals
- Work with groups
- Work at a strategy and policy level

These are interconnected.



Sharing the Harvest project

- Building on previous work to setup & run community gardens
- New project aims to help more vulnerable adults to benefit from gardening
- Aim to improve:
 - physical health
 - mental wellbeing
 - skills & confidence
 - Sustainability of community gardens working with vulnerable adults



Who's involved

- Adults with learning disabilities & autism: over **350** people involved so far
- Adults with experience of mental health issues, homelessness, abuse, substance/ alcohol misuse: over **1,000** people involved so far



“I need to do stuff like this. I’m a year off the drink and I’m moving into my own flat out of the hostel. So I need a routine, doing stuff regularly, working like this... So this has a massive impact on my future and it’s an important part of my recovery plan.”

Where activities take place

Over 75 community gardens across the city, we work closely with:

- 5 ‘open’ partner gardens that work with vulnerable adults & the wider community
- 9 ‘specialist’ partner gardens based in services (eg hostels, community centres)
- 3 garden projects run by the FP (Preston Park, Saunders Park, Fulfilling Lives)
- 8 new gardens have been setup so far



“My head goes crazy with nothing to do due to the ADHD. Here I am peaceful, calm... people accept me, I can just be chilled and not stressed about my life and social situations.”

“When I first moved in I felt quite isolated but now having this garden space which we all share, it feels to me like having a family.”

Volunteering advice

- Personalised advice/ referral service to help people find the right gardening experience for them
- **330+** vulnerable adults received **1-2-1 advice & support**
- **300+** vulnerable adults attended **talks** about volunteering
- Growth from 13 to 35 **referral organisations**
- 64% of vulnerable adults come to the FP via referral from a service.



“Many thanks for referring me to volunteer... the whole thing exceeded my expectations... I felt that working with my hands and doing something practical was very therapeutic for me.”

Other activities

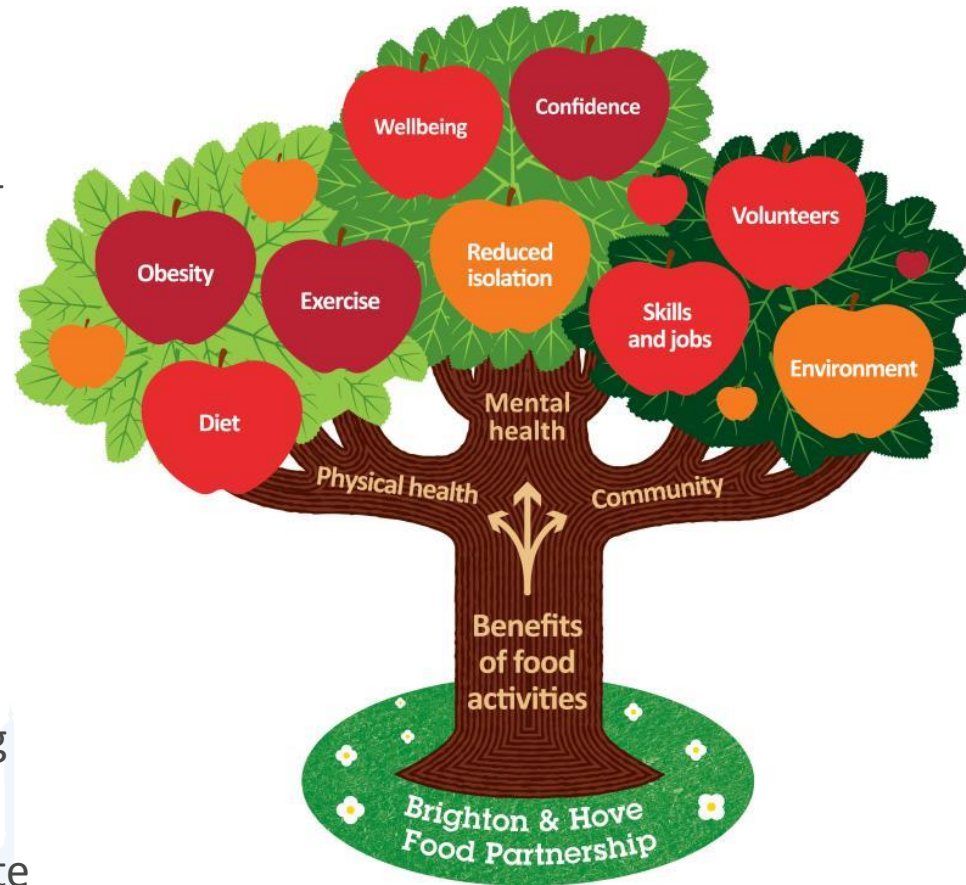
- 29 **'taster sessions'** for groups of vulnerable adults interested to try gardening (reaching 160+ people)
- 35 **training courses & workshops** reaching over 300 people (eg first aid, food hygiene, outdoor cookery and how to tailor garden activities to particular client groups)
- This also includes **visits** between gardens to share knowledge & ideas



“It lifts my mood and I feel like I’ve done something useful for the day. It sets me up for the day, I feel energised for the rest of the day.”

Monitoring & evaluation plans/ challenges

- National leaders, University of Essex, conducted independent analysis of questionnaires from almost 500 people
- Interim evaluation results from Oct 2014 to Sept 2016 (one more year left)
- Reaching the same people to get 'matched' questionnaires to measure before & after = some low sample sizes
- Accessibility of the measures is a challenge. Validated scales often appear complex to answer.
- Low sample size for people with learning disabilities due to the above, so some strange results / negative changes despite qualitative measures showing positive change.



Results: Wellbeing

- 96% reported improved happiness, mood or wellbeing (sample size = 232)
- Statistically significant 11% increase in reported happiness (sample size = 32 vulnerable adults, 10% significant increase for all participants, 68 sample)
- 80% reported that coming to the garden would have a long-term impact on them in future (sample size = 62)
- 11% improved life satisfaction after 3-6 months (sample size = 23 vulnerable adults)



“I suffer from anxiety and the gardening sessions are calming and boost my mood. I leave feeling more relaxed.”

“Sometimes when I am depressed I miss coming but I know that if I make the effort to get here I will instantly feel better.”

Results: Physical health

- 86% reported improved physical health (sample size = 160)
- 18% average improvement in health for vulnerable adults (compared to 5% for non-vulnerable). (sample size = 36)
- 5% to 19% increase in physical activity level (sample size = 36 vulnerable adults, greater impact for those with learning disabilities)
- 11% reported an increase in portions of fruit & veg consumed (sample size = 18 vulnerable adults)



“Coming up to the allotment has influenced my diet changes. I now eat healthier food... Before I was coming to the allotment I was basically eating junk food.”

“I feel more confident, more healthy, I’m using every single muscle in my body. It’s exercise. I sleep better at night.”

Results: Skills & confidence

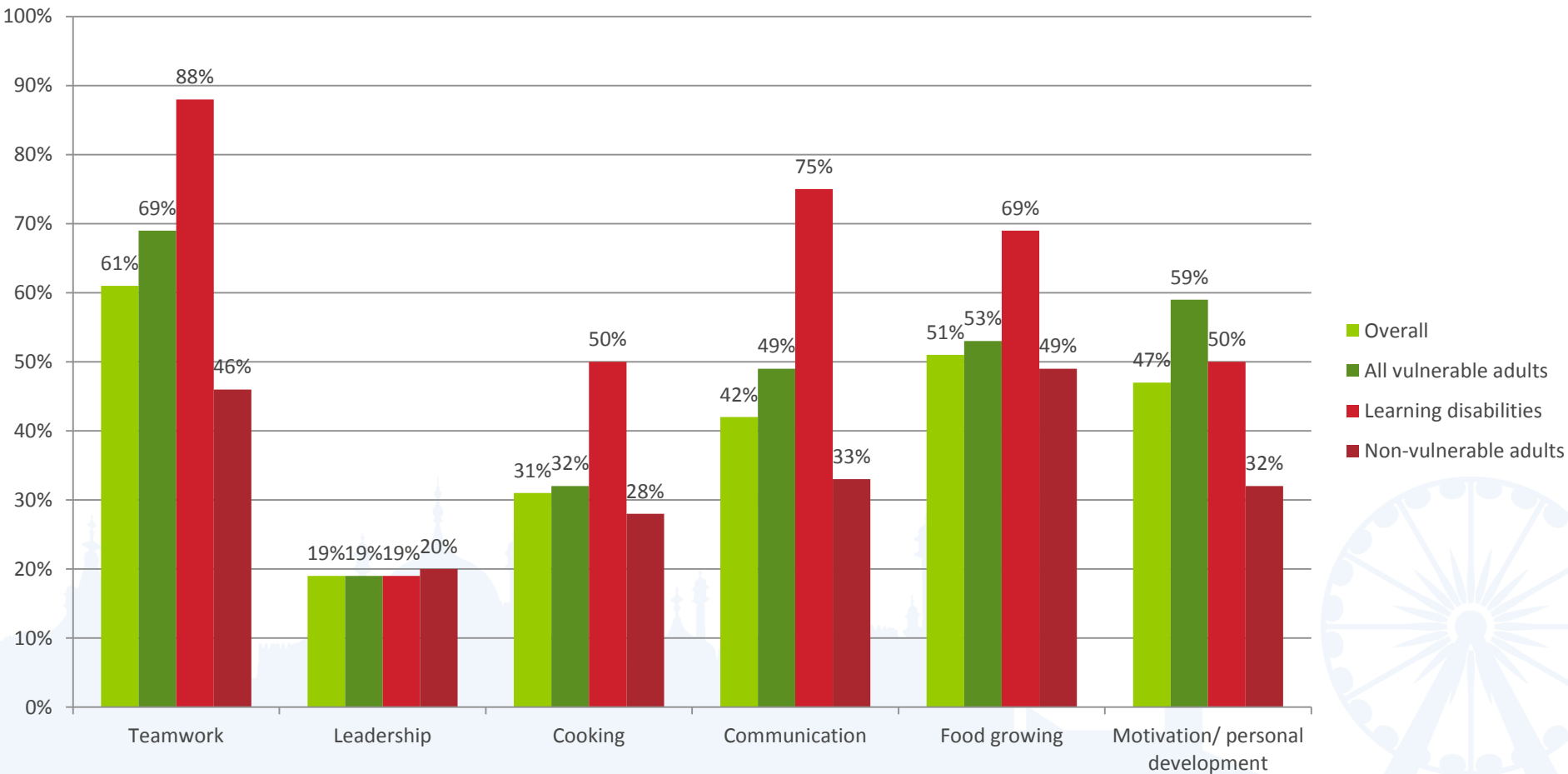
- 88% improved their skills or confidence (sample size = 236)
- Between 3% and 16% increases in self esteem (sample size = 40 vulnerable adults, greater impact for those with learning disabilities)
- Between 5 and 24% increase in feeling that ‘there are people in my life who really care about me’ (sample size = 21 vulnerable adults, greater impact for those with learning disabilities)



“If I look back to how I was when I first started I have changed so much in my confidence and social skills so yes, that will change my future life.”

Results: Skills & confidence

Skills gained at community gardens
for different client groups



Cookery skills

- 32% increase in 'I enjoy putting effort & care into the food I eat'
(sample size = 22 vulnerable adults)
- 41% increase in 'I often eat meals cooked from basic ingredients, either by myself or someone else.'
(sample size = 22 vulnerable adults)
- 22% increase in 'I feel confident cooking & preparing my own meals.'
(sample size = 23 vulnerable adults)



"I want to do more cooking. I made flat bread for the first time today and I never knew I could do that!"

"The garden gives me confidence to try new foods and I'm more open minded... eg eating a bit of leaf."

Next steps

- Keep taking referrals / interest from people wanting to volunteer!
- Keep running regular garden activities across the city
- Work with partners on sustainability and plans for the future.



“This garden is great because it’s accessible for all types of people. If someone has a disability you can always find something for them to do. There’s not many environments that there is such a variety of things that need to be done, that there’s something that everybody can do.”





Thank you

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www.bhfood.org.uk

