

The development of Grangemead Gardens: Phase one Summary Nov 2017-Oct 2018

The Background

The partnership between ESCC Adult Social Services and Community 21 the University of Brighton is a connection that was initially brokered by Culture Shift and the process of the development of the gardens in collaboration with staff and learning disabled participants is receiving ongoing support from Culture Shift. An aspect of this support is to collate evaluative material, capturing the process, outcomes and learning.

Project Objectives

Project planning began in November 2017, aiming to;

- engage the staff and service users (guests) at Grangemead in the design process
- nurture a sense of ownership/responsibility/respect for the garden within the community of Grangemead
- create a garden which fulfils the aspirations of the Grangemead community and is fit for purpose and sustainable

Evaluation Objectives

Through direct engagement, observation and individual stakeholder interviews, evidence has been gathered to evidence;

- the impact of project activity to date
- the value of the project in relation to academic learning and research
- the potential of future developments to ensure the sustainability of the project

Impact on wellbeing

In 2018, the staff team at Grangemead received mental health first aid training and have begun using the Action For Happiness '10 Keys to Happier Living' as a reference point in their work. This provides an interesting framework to consider the the impact of the garden project on the wellbeing of all involved;

10 keys to happiness	Description	In relation to the garden project...
Relating	Connecting with people	<p>Involvement of academic team (including students), Grangemead service users, care staff, managers and other staff; with a significant contribution from the site caretaker, Brett.</p> <p>Ongoing regular project meetings the process to ensure shared decision making and clear communication throughout.</p>
Exercising	Taking care of physical needs	<p>"I think the biggest impact of the garden will be for some people just wondering around, touching, smelling, sensory experience of the garden" - Grangemead staff</p> <p>The garden offers opportunities for guests to make noise freely and participate in messy activity.</p> <p>One guest likes to roll on the grass.</p>
Awareness	Living life mindfully	<p>One member of staff stated; "In the past, people often didn't take breaks but had a sandwich at their desks etc but they are taking breaks now. Just enjoying getting outside is a good thing. Our work can be pretty intense sometimes and the garden will be a great place to go, just to get out for a change of air."</p>

Giving	Doing things for others	<p>There is evidence that a key outcome of the co-design process is that empathy is being developed.</p> <p>Tamsin (guest); "People in wheelchairs come here and they can't get out sometimes and it's boring. The raised flower beds in the garden will be good for them."</p>
Trying Out	Learning new things	<p>The garden project has inspired new activity, including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - trips to garden centres - smelling herbs, looking at plants, touching leaves, drawing up a wishlist of plants "much better than looking at magazines and google." - the allotment was directly inspired by this project. "It gave us a kick up the bottom! We've got in touch with Lyndon Court and visited a few times, just so people have an idea of what an allotment is." - Monday evening screen printing sessions have been introduced and a T shirt printer has been purchased so that this group can develop the use of recycled carrier bag printing
Direction	Having goals to look forward to	<p>The nature of the Grangemead community is unusual and ever-changing and staff are consistent element. The Manager stated that "The garden is solidifying the transient nature of the service". The garden is a metaphor and a point of reference for the service itself.</p>

Meaning	Being part of something bigger	<p>The garden has provided a point of focus for purposeful, creative activity at Grangemead for staff and guests and has inspired an interest in nature generally, encouraging everyone to think beyond the immediate environment of Grangemead.</p> <p>Staff report that they have enjoyed working to a brief - they have been given projects (like "homework") to undertake between meetings and they have enjoyed responding to these tasks - people find the blank page very difficult, it seems easier to be creative when there is a sense of purpose/value.</p>
Resilience	Finding ways to bounce back	<p>The garden project has prompted many conversations about loss, memory, change etc in accessible and creative ways. For example;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a plant hospital for dying plants has been initiated. - memory stones have been created in response to the death of Julie and an idea has emerged that a designated place in the garden could be created as a 'sacred' memory spot.
Emotions	Focussing on positivity	<p>What we are NOT doing is pure garden design! Freedom and choice are at the core of the service that Grangemead provides and the garden has been designed in order to reflect this, providing a flexible, creative space. The nature of the garden party event on the 12th September, evidenced the non-prescriptive potential activity encompassing games, relaxation, active participation and passive enjoyment.</p> <p><i>"I think the garden will promote independence, enable people to do things that they may not otherwise be able to." - Parent rep</i></p>
Acceptance	Being at ease	<p>A member of Grangemead staff remarked; <i>"I feel like I've got a completely new job!"</i>. A manager stated; <i>"this project has changed the dynamics of the service at Grangemead"</i>.</p>

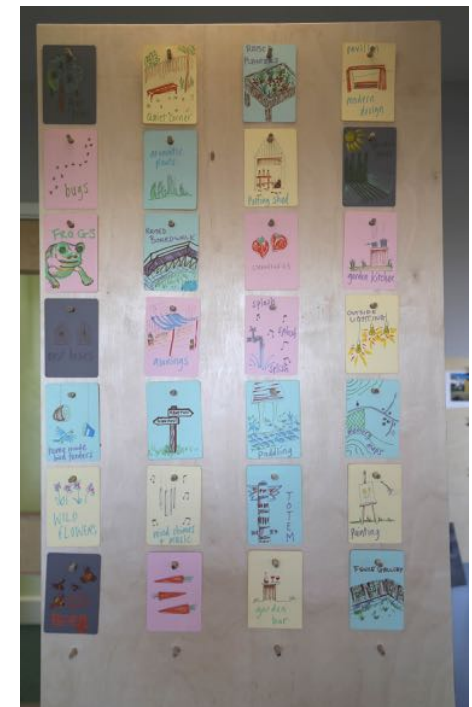
"Layers of learning"

•Accessibility

The challenge of making the complex and joyful process of designing and realising the ambitions of this project is at the heart of this project. The challenge of bringing together the design expertise of Community 21 and the social care and lived experience of the staff and guests at Grangemead and mediating sophisticated discussion between all parties was approached with care and the very first workshop session was based on first principle thinking. Consideration was given to creating resources to serve as accessible prompts; for example, a visual 'seed' box to stimulate imaginative ideas and a scale model to facilitate placing and surface and colour choices three dimensionally.

It became apparent that the design critique process is one of the most challenging elements of the design process to facilitate in a way that is authentically accessible. For people with limited experience of this and therefore limited confidence and vocabulary, it can be intimidating and disempowering to be asked to voice an opinion and very often in a bid to promote access, particularly for people with limited verbal communication, a simplified LIKE/DISLIKE, 👍 and 👎, choice is offered.

In order to promote a deeper level of engagement in this process, an idea came about to create a visual representation of ideas and a physical 'ranking system'. Working to a brief developed in an early workshop session, Community 21 created a resource which became known as the Cool Wall which allowed for everyone to compare ideas and make informed choices and compromises within the design process. The Cool Wall has become symbolic of the core accessibility challenge in this project and the plan is for it be used as a permanent fixture of the project, being re-sited in the Cabin, as a visual planner.



• Institutional learning

This project involves the meeting of two 'heavy duty' beaurocratic bodies - a Local Authority and a University. Clearly, for both parties there are well established formal protocols and cultural 'norms' within which this project developed and mutual respect, understanding and patience was a basic requirement; the University ethics process took six weeks to complete, for example!

It should also be acknowledged that the commissioning of this project was in itself something of a bold decision on the part of East Sussex County Council in the context of an economic and political climate where there is significant nervousness around expenditure and perceived tensions caused by cutbacks being made in some budgets whilst spending in others. Therefore the Public Relations aspect of this project had to be handled sensitively, with an emphasis on demonstrating best value for all parties.

Part of the 'best value' element of this project has been the cross-sector staff development and there is evidence particularly for members of the core project team that practice has been influenced both for care and academic staff.

Developing the co-design model is a priority interest for the University and this project has driven the learning in relation to moving away from the designer as the singular expert in the process. Interestingly, it is noted that the University Contract requires that there is a named Designer for the project which runs counter to the notion of co-design and suggests that administration needs to develop to sit alongside the creative process in a more complementary way.

On a micro level, there has been some unexpected, incidental learning across the institutions. For example, Sue mentioned that she had used the University University suncream policy as "*a good example of how to address Health and Safety issues without becoming overly risk averse*".

University staff and students have reported that the experience of working on this project has provided unique



insight into the care sector and there have been several "light bulb moments". One student reported that they had not previously considered that it might be possible to employ their skills creatively within the care sector. Through this project it became apparent that the sector offers aspiring designers freedom and scope to develop their practice in a meaningful way that "makes a difference".



One of the graduate students involved in the first phase of the project reflected;

"From my experience at the University of Brighton many of my peers would have been interested in working on a more unusual project, such as this one. Design doesn't always have to be cutting edge, and as a young creative person who is trying to establish myself I would say the more varied the projects you work on, the better. It has also been great to work on a project where profit isn't the aim, client happiness, enjoyment and engagement in a designed space is more rewarding for me. Being set in a care home where design and making isn't practiced didn't mean making the garden aesthetically pleasing and functional any easier. Working on site with the clients and staff being able to see you work meant that I became more invested in the project, changing their outdoor space become more important and I could imagine their daily experiences changing for the better. The varied needs of the clients were considered

all of the time, whereas in other projects I've worked on peoples specific needs haven't been the priority. It was great to have the experience of working on a project like this. Coming from a making background I really enjoyed the physical work, as well as the social design aspect of the whole project. It was definitely worth taking part and it has informed some of my new work for my MA in Sustainable Design. I have always been interested in social design projects and it was great to have the experience of working on one that was local to me, where I could see that the work we carried out will have a positive impact on the clients."

From a teaching perspective, Nick reported that the project presented some very simple 'real world' challenges for students to address; ranging from "how do we make this safe and accessible?" to "here is some rubble...how can we use it?" In the forthcoming second phase of the project, Second Year University students will be contributing as part of the Matters project and each of them will be presented with a box of actual waste material from Grangemead to work with.

The Local Authority management team approached this project having recently completed the refurbishment of the Grangemead building and Kay Holden stated that the experience of co-designing the garden project led her to believe that she would now undertake an internal refurbishment project differently and involve service users in the functionality of the building and not just the look/feel/colour choices etc. In other words, this project has enhanced the skills and confidence of the team in relation to the co-design process and in future this would be undertaken at a deeper level.

• **Artistic license**

It is apparent that the identity of 'Designer' is loaded with assumptions about status. The involvement of the University in this project has brought a perceived value, especially from the perspective of Grangemead staff; *"Working with Nick and Jim has given me insight that even though I work within local government, we can work with 'outsiders'. They have come into our world and I want to snoop around their workplace and enter into their world!"*

There is some evidence that this relationship is inspiring a confidence and bravery in staff; *"We've pushed boundaries. We didn't just want nice paths and flowers in pots! We've said to Nick and Jim, hit us with your ideas! This also relates to pushing other boundaries in other ways...eg Don't take the peas out of my pasta!"*

At a research level, this project has explored the notion of how creative capacity is developed. At what point does someone acknowledge their artistic license?

Through consistent communication and consultation and the development and use of accessible engagement resources, the project team have worked hard to reinforce the notion that everyone involved has an authentic voice in the design process and there have been many moments in the process which have evidenced the shared ownership of the Designer mantle.

One Grangemead guest stated; *"I've never been a designer before, it feels weird."*

Nick Gant of Community 21 remarked how powerful it was to witness Grangemead project partners explaining and at times defending choices that had been made, thereby demonstrating that the process had been driven by genuinely collaborative, reasoned critical thinking.

• Meaning

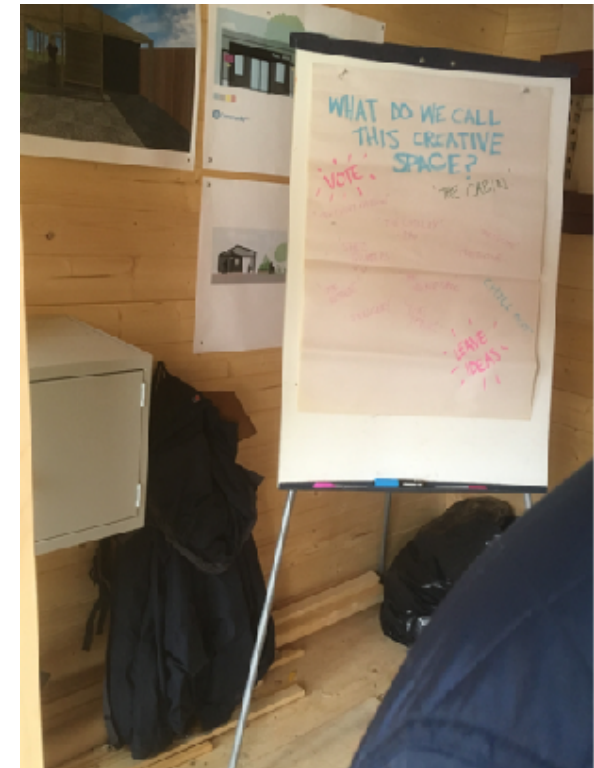
The concept of 'meaning making' has been central to this project. Throughout, there has been discussion and care to ensure that all the design elements of the garden have meaning, "emotional durability".

In terms of accessibility, this has presented some challenges particularly in relation to language used to describe the garden elements and efforts have been made to ensure that an age appropriate (ie adult) approach is adopted. There has been great debate around what the garden maker space should be known as (avoiding just becoming 'The Shed') and after a vote at the Garden Party event in September the Creative Cabin was agreed upon.

• Recycling

The University and Community 21 in particular has a strong interest in the development of recycled materials and in the context of a Local Authority which is also very conscious of a culture of waste this has become a key aspect of this project which aspires to be a Zero Waste project.

On reflection, it is clear that the impact of the recycling element of the project goes well beyond the material value. It is apparent that there is a developing sense of agency and wellbeing is amplified through recycling. There is a sense that the perceived value of objects is somehow greater than it would be if they were made of non-recycled materials. Recycling in itself provides a very powerful positivity injection! For example, bunting made from recycled carrier bags has an almost magical quality; like making something out of nothing. On a metaphorical level, this is very life affirming for people who may feel vulnerable and lacking in social value. Re-use of materials also promotes a feeling of authentic purpose and this has extended to the Grangemead caretaker, Brett who was inspired through this project to use discarded fences posts to build storage boxes, for example. Another consequence of the recycling aspect of the project is that different levels of conversation generally have been provoked, beyond the superficial. Staff and guests are now having conversations prompted beyond the level of "what is this?" to "what is this made of? What did it used to be?". This awareness and interest in materials and the process of making is a major development in relation to wellbeing and future learning.





The Future

The following summary represents the emerging opportunities for potential future development of the garden project;

- **Venue partnership** with Emmaus Community in Brighton (<http://www.emmausbrighton.co.uk/>) and Guy Weber Parc in Dieppe (<https://www.apeidieppe.fr/parc-guy-weber>) which Culture Shift has brokered initial contact with. Both have much in common with the Grangemead garden and shared values etc and there could be potential for reciprocal visits, joint projects etc in future. There might also be potential to develop similar partnerships with other venues across services such as older people and other day service and residential service providers.
- **Fundraising partnership** (with Grangemead as a venue partner) for Culture Shift and Care For Carers (Grangemead has a Carer Friendly Community Award.) There is a current potential DRILL tender which offers a potential opportunity.

- **Corporate partnership** with Tesco at Hailsham (with particular focus on the recycling aspect of the garden). Potentially, Grangemead could host an Open Space consultation event to invite ideas from the local business community. N.B. Thought needs to be given to the ethical implications of potential corporate involvement.
- **Social Enterprise** is a potential development of this project as the management team has an aspiration to create work opportunities for guests at Grangemead and the garden and maker space concept has inspired ideas of creating items for sale using recycled materials etc (perhaps on a party/festival theme, creating invitations, bunting, flags etc?) Sue is very keen to explore this idea and a link with Emmaus in Brighton could support this too.
- **Showcase opportunities ...**
 - Could the project be entered into design competitions?
 - Prince Harry? (In his role as Duke of Sussex)
 - Design show, Sept 2019?
 - Eco Build, March 2019?
 - Chelsea Flower Show - the garden as a maker space?
 - TV shows?
 - Care Providers - The national care homes providers network?
 - Care Management Matters magazine?
 - Learning Disability Today?
 - Social Care showcase, Spring 2019 at Brighton Racecourse?
- **Garden activity;**
 - a pop-up garden gallery
 - production of a Grangemead Garden recipe/activity book (The Grangemead Grub book?)
 - artwork on the theme of plant and animal life to be reproduced on printed fabric/ceramic tiles/memory coffee table etc
 - a digital archive of the project to be created and shared online/projected on display screens at Grangemead
 - afternoon teas
 - outdoor cinema events
 - reminiscence music events

- **Cross sector partnership** with cross sector partners such as Occupational Health and other NHS teams, schools, older people and prison services. There is potential, for example, for shared learning events to use the garden as a prompt for transferable approaches to support services.
- **Professional development** within the Local Authority service such as a series of workshops based at Grangemead, training staff on themes such as recycling, creating mini gardens, the garden as a metaphor for life etc. There is also a potential opportunity for the Grangemead team to mentor the Hookstead Day Centre to deliver a co-designed garden there.

Appendices

- Grangemead Impact 'snapshot' May 2018
- Grangemead Garden Party poster