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**Salford**  
MANCHESTER



# CARe

CENTRE FOR APPLIED RESEARCH  
IN HEALTH, WELFARE AND POLICY

# Alternative Gardeners Question Time

December 2017

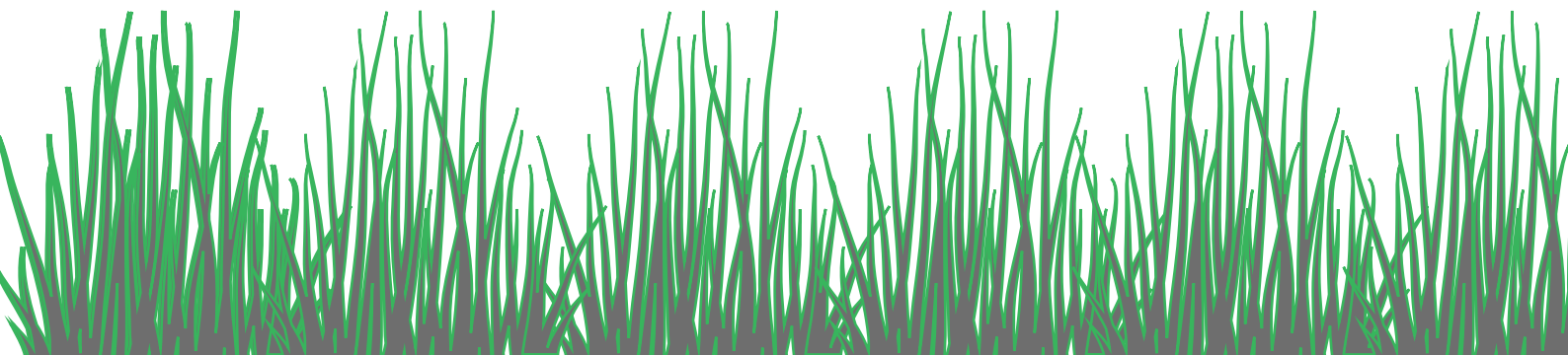
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Dr Michael Hardman, Dr Michelle Howarth,  
Dr Graeme Sherriff



There is a growing recognition that Green Care can positively influence health and well-being at an individual and community level. However, this knowledge has had limited reach to those who it may impact most in the community. The promotion of health and well-being through alternative approaches such as Green Care presents realistic, alternative methods. Our 'Alternative Gardeners Question Time', part of the 2017 ESRC Festival of Social Science, was designed to facilitate debate with local communities, charities, public health and environmental organisations about what constitutes significant health and wellbeing outcomes for the community and individual. This debate helped identify pertinent well-being outcomes that Green Care could provide for residents within Salford & Manchester.



**Figure 1 - Presentations by Prof Philip Brown and Dr Michelle Howarth**



## Sharing the Science Based on Green Care

A team from the University of Salford shared recent research about the emergence of social prescribing and impact of gardening on health and wellbeing. The event was introduced by Professor Philip Brown and the audience worked in small groups to consider key questions (Figure 2). An overview of social prescribing and influence of nature based activities on health and wellbeing was presented by Dr Michelle Howarth and Dr Mike Hardman followed by a presentation of the findings from a scoping review that explored the evidence base about the impact of gardens on health and wellbeing (Figure 3).

## Health & Wellbeing

In 2017, the World Health Organisation Global Health Observatory reported that non-communicable diseases (NCD's) present a significant cause of death. It is estimated that in the UK alone, there are 15 million people living with a long-term condition (Kimberlee 2015). Subsequent high levels of heart disease, mental health and obesity, create increasing concerns for Public Health, CCGs and the NHS. Moreover, people with long-term conditions need to use primary and secondary care services more frequently (Newcastle Social Prescribing Project, 2013). Salford is identified by the National Indices of Deprivation as being one of the most deprived areas in the UK; this is further compounded by the recorded levels of inactivity - a key cause of obesity and heart disease - as it is estimated that 63,000 residents are inactive.

Do you garden or grow? If so where?



What are the key nature-based activities in our area?



Figure 2 - Output from online voting as word clouds.

### What is Social Prescribing?

Social prescribing is “a formal means of enabling primary care services to refer patients with social, emotional or practical needs to a range of local nonclinical services and provides a framework for developing alternative responses to meet need” (Brandling & House, 2009) and has been actively promoted through recent DH policy (DH 2015, HNSE 2016).

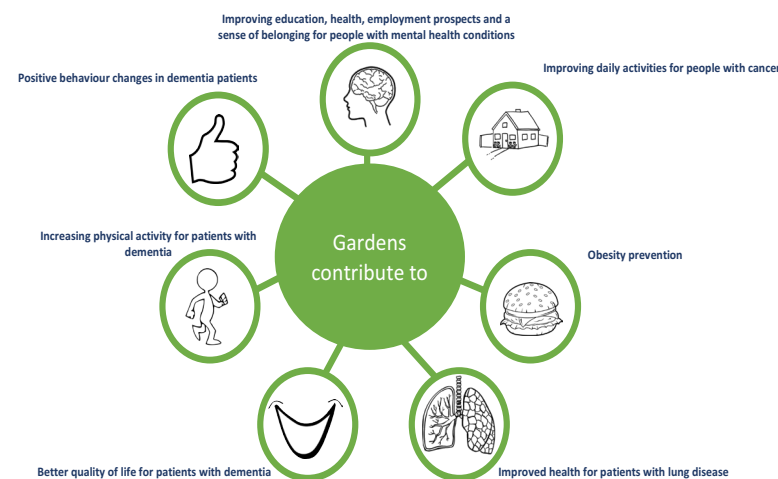
Locality plans (Salford 2016) and the wider GM Population Plan (2017) highlight the potential of social prescribing to activate health and wellbeing incentives within the community through utilising the voluntary sector to link with primary care with support for residents in local communities (Kimberlee et al 2014).

It is suggested that social prescribing facilitates community referral to interventions, which enable people to become confident and able to manage their conditions.

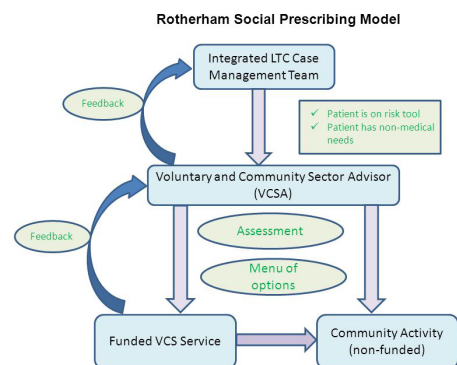
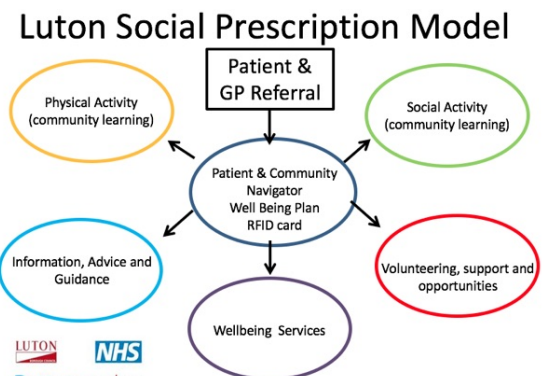
A range of social prescribing interventions exists such as ‘Arts on Prescription’, ‘Books on Prescription’ and ‘Exercise on Prescription’ – all designed to support people to manage their own health and wellbeing (Figure 4).

### Role of Nature Based Activities in Social Prescribing

It is suggested that nature-based activities offer an alternative approach that could help promote health and wellbeing for individuals local communities (Sempik & Bragg, 2013). Nature based activities can positively influence a wide range of health and wellbeing outcomes such as reduction in anxiety (Gonzalaz et al 2011), general health (Wood et al 2016), heart rate (Wichrowski 2005) and reduced social isolation (Howarth et al 2016). Nature-based activities are often referred to using a range of terms such as ‘ecotherapy’, ‘green care’, ‘therapeutic horticulture’ and ‘social horticulture’ and can include gardening, farming, walking, community or allotment gardening, running and a range of other activities traditionally undertaken in green and blue spaces within a natural context.



**Figure 3 - Summaries of the contributions of gardens to health and wellbeing**



**Figure 4 - Example social prescribing logic models**



## Nature Based Activity in Salford

A diverse range of nature based activities and green care are located within Salford and surrounding geographical areas. The extent of this activity is currently unknown, the University of Salford is working with local organisations, and the RHS to map existing provision to enable a comprehensive picture of nature based work. Mapping existing provision will help to determine a more coordinated approach and enable CCGs, local authorities and public health to understand the extent of support and asset-based community nature-based approaches. This will help to develop a community referral process and support decision-making processes for those health and social care professionals who work in the NHS and community sector. Figure 5 below illustrates some of the local organisations and the includes similar national organisations that are currently using nature based activities to support health and wellbeing.

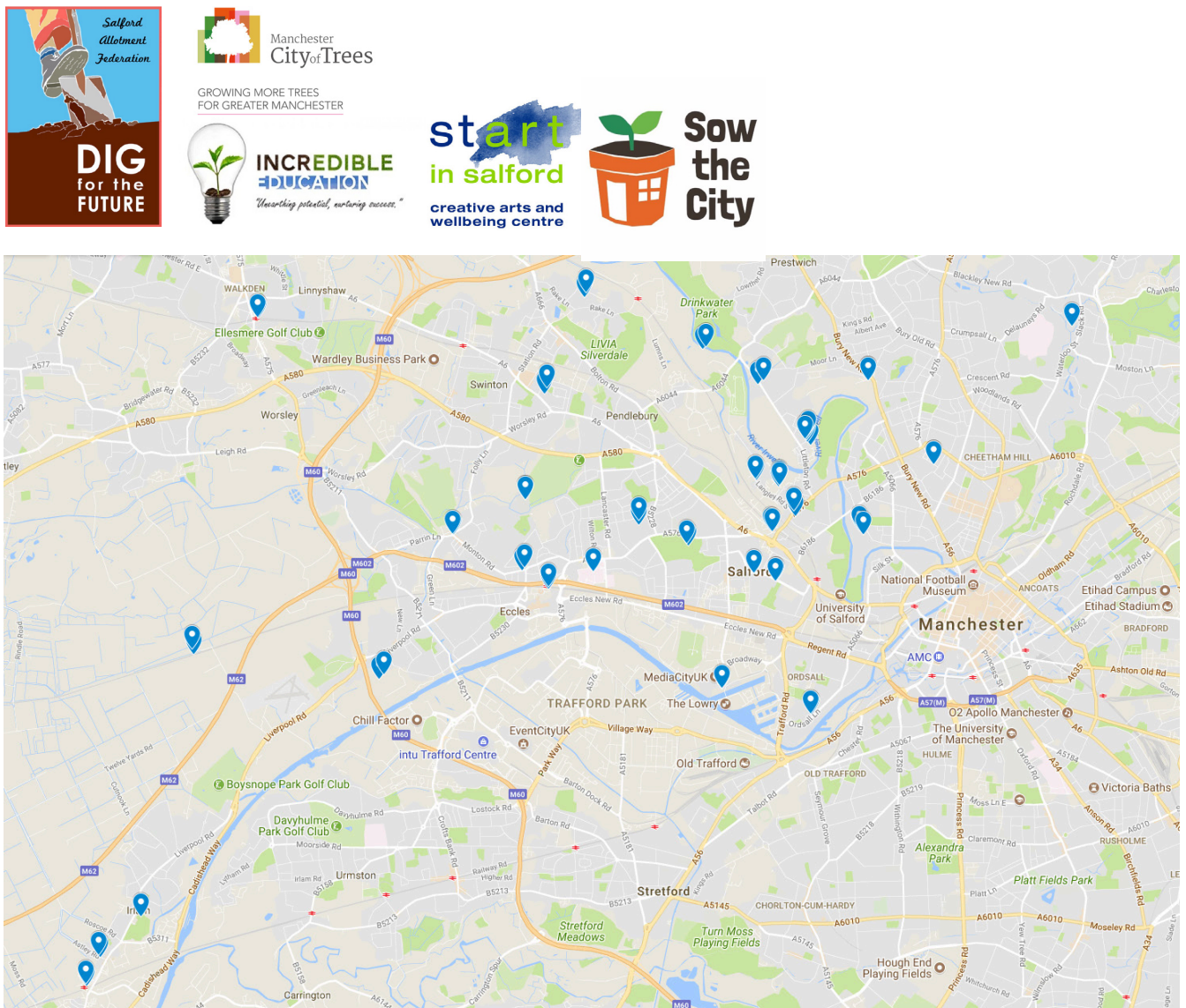


Figure 5 - A map of nature based activities in Salford

## Event Structure

The Alternative Gardeners Question Time was structured in three parts: Sharing the science base about Green Care, Discussing Green Care and key questions (see below) and finally, developing questions for an expert panel for wider discussion.

### Part 1: Audience Questions

We asked the audience to consider the following questions.

- Do you garden or grow? If so, where?
- Are you wearing an organisational hat to day – if so, what?
- What are the key nature based activities in your area?
- How should we take this forward after this workshop?

The responses were shared via an online feedback system (Menti) that created word clouds. The initial question asked the audience to state whether and where they 'Garden' or 'Grow'. The responses highlighted a range of places where people gardened and the activities that they took part in (see figure 2).

### Part 2: Discussing Green Care

The second part of the event involved small group work facilitated by an academic or organisation that used nature based interventions. The workshop facilitators obtained feedback from the smaller groups using flip chart paper to note the key ideas and comments. All comments and ideas were be used to support a debate and be discussed by the expert panel.

### Part 3: Debate with the Expert Panel

The final part of the workshop consisted of an expert panel invited from the Royal Horticultural Society, local CCG representative, Inspiring Communities Together, the University and members from Public Health & the Environment Department (Figure 6):

- Marcus Chilton-Jones - RHS Bridgewater Curator
- Jessica Thomson - City of Trees
- Bernadette Conlon - CEO of Startin Salford
- Jon Ross Director -Sow the City
- Chris Lotus - Business Development Director Social Adventures
- Gillian McKlauchlan - Public Health Consultant
- Ian Bocock - Director Incredible Education

Following panel discussion:-

The key questions put to the panel included:

- What could be provided or what existed in terms of support for those working or volunteering in spaces suitable for green care?
- How do we prevent gardens and activities from becoming medicalized?
- How do you reach non-usual suspects?
- How to transform a local green space?



Figure 6 - The panel

## Panel Feedback

What could be provided or what existed in terms of support for those working or volunteering in spaces suitable for green care?

- There seemed to be agreement that one of the benefits of a green network would be to coordinate such support and provide it on a peer to peer basis, but a central point of contact was needed.

How do we prevent gardens and activities from becoming medicalized?

- Partnerships with the NHS were working well but only just starting to be commissioned.
- Need to make sure that people don't wait for a prescription to engage, or think they had to have one. This was just one more way to let people know about what was out there, encourage gardening and experiencing nature, nothing to prevent others with an active interest from engaging. Interest in exploring how model can ensure against this, particularly using a link worker.
- Funding needed to make nature based health promotion work, however there are challenges in the voluntary sector as those in the room are collaborators but also often competitors for the same funding streams, a need to be open, to work together,
- For people with complex needs it was important to have as many options and points of contact open as possible, because one organization or approach would not be enough.
- Need to show value for money to funders remained.

How do you reach non-usual suspects?

- Marketing, but people felt personal relationships more important, creating opportunities and events to get people through the door – if they like it they will come back.
- Placemaking, and people everywhere always have a deep interest in that.

- Partnership working, bringing different groups together and inviting others in.
- A participant shared how he became involved in Incredible Edible – had visited local library and talked to librarian about joining the computer club, she had pointed him towards a gardening group, he went along and now an active member.
- Others described the importance of connecting everything up, someone mentioned the old Salford slogan of 'make every contact count'. Above all people emphasised the importance of face to face contact.

How to transform a local green space?

- Biggest problem always where to start, but talk to councillors, local tenant groups, always very well clued in to pots of money and things, talk to agencies, there is so much that can be done with even small pieces of ground.
- Funding is always the challenge.

## Next steps: A 'Natural Health Service'?

The audience were asked to consider how nature-based activities and the findings from the event could be taken forward to support ongoing work across Salford. The word cloud illustrates some of the key suggestions. Unsurprisingly, there was a real appetite for the communication to be continued and formalised either through a Green Care Partnership or equivalent. It was suggested that a follow up event and continued communication could support this.

It was also noted that Salford CVS had developed a Voluntary Community & Social Enterprise Forum, of which a 'Greener Salford' formed a key aspect. It was felt that this could provide a platform to share innovative developments and provide a coordinated approach to nature based service provision which could be used to support local social prescription and a Salford 'Natural Health Service'.

How should we take this forward after this workshop?



Figure 7 - Output from online voting as a word cloud



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