



The Green Hub Project for Teens

Adult Volunteer Evaluation Feedback

January 2024

Introduction

The Green Hub Project (GHP) could not have grown or had the successes in the extensive way we have without the wonderful support of all our Adult Volunteers (AVs). Indeed, all strands of our work, including the all-important behind the scenes administration and business development, is undertaken totally by volunteers – at the time of writing there are no paid staff.

The GHP Board agreed to talk and listen to our AVs to hear about their experiences and lessons, to learn from them; and for them to feel they are valued and bring much experience, skills and knowledge to us.

Board Members undertook interviewing AVs in a short telephone conversation based on a set of questions. 35 were subsequently completed in the autumn of 2023. These provided a rich tapestry of feedback – much of it was positive with some suggestions for improvement. AVs involved were appreciative of being asked for their views and wanted feedback.

'This is a very good exercise - would be good to have some feedback.'

We would like to thank all our Adult Volunteers who took the time to share their views with warmth and honesty; and our Board members who spent time listening and recording their interviews.

This report is a summary of the main findings and actions that have since been taken based on some of the feedback. A copy of the full report is available in the Volunteer section of our website.

Your feedback and actions taken

Personal benefits for Adult Volunteers

Considering that the GHP is a relatively young project the feedback from our valued AVs suggests that they see many benefits both for themselves as well as for the Teens and families.

There are clearly significant personal benefits to mental wellbeing and sense of purpose for many. These include 'new pathways' following changed circumstances e.g. retirement, a sense of purpose, making a positive contribution to a cause they believe in.

'A sense of achievement and feel good feeling.'

'Volunteering with GHP has helped my sense of purpose working with teens with emotional issues.'



'I sometimes wonder if the benefit is for the teens or for me. I love it. It makes me feel valued. It is truly a delight. I love seeing the young people benefit from the garden work and getting happy.'

'It came at the right time - needed to find something a bit different and meaningful. Liked the concept and could see how it worked - small & local.'

Some appreciated working with likeminded people, particularly those who work in the garden either as assistants, helping with maintenance or as leaders.

'Finds the camaraderie at GH very valuable, lots of very likeminded and positive people with varied backgrounds.'

'I enjoy the sense of community & how it helps everyone. I feel my confidence has grown - doing public events, putting yourself out there, anyone could ask me anything – I was very shy before.'

Strategic development As the Charity develops there was feedback that further consideration of the strategic longer term context and vision would benefit from further exploration, as well as being more visible to Adult Volunteers. It was acknowledged that the recent event 'Understanding I am Ruth' had generated much interest and follow up with NHS and Social Care partners which is part of this strategic context. In addition, the expansion with offering the Parent Hub for parents has been welcomed.

ACTION TAKEN

- ✓ We already share the Chair reports – these are now all available to Adult Volunteers on our website.
- ✓ In all upcoming quarterly volunteer training sessions, one of our two Chair's will do a strategic update for attendees.
- ✓ See evaluation below regarding expanding our evaluation to include longer term outcomes, and greater focus on feedback for funders.

Evaluation A couple of AVs thought the evaluation could be expanded into capturing longer term outcomes for Teens and Parents. It was suggested that this might need to be funded work to ensure consistency and sustainability but would be worthwhile as it would help build the evidence base of impact and outcomes.

ACTION TAKEN

- ✓ We are currently reviewing the evaluation processes we use, with both Teens, Parents and referrers for the Teen Garden sessions and the Parent Hub. This includes a greater focus on feedback to our funders.
- ✓ We are dependent on feedback from participating Teens, Parents and Referrers. This has not been particularly forthcoming and we are reviewing how to increase feedback including making this a condition of participation.
- ✓ Once we have our part-time staff in place we can do more to consolidate our evaluation – particularly on longer term outcomes.



Communication AVs had a lot to say about the importance of timely, appropriate and clear information sharing and feedback. There were mixed views about communication, particularly the use of Whatsapp and to some extent email. Some felt it was useful whilst others found the volume of messages overwhelming as they did not see how they were relevant to them, or else they did not use this method of communication usually.

'The use of Whatsapp very effective in particular the communications informing volunteers of the tasks to be undertaken on a Saturday.'

'The emails work well. The what's app group can be a bit hectic, but it works.'

'Overload of Whatsapp. Prefer one email, keep it simple. Some can get lost, can miss things.'

'I am hopeless on tech, so what's app and e-mails don't work for me. As long as I can still be involved and use text with James I am happy. I like our informal Wednesday meetings in the garden.'

ACTION TAKEN

✓ WhatsApp groups are used NOT to engage with people on subjects that don't relate to them. The more subject specific, the narrower the group and more relevant the content. Hence, they can be very useful. We recommend WA group organisers to encourage users to only post relevant and timely information and to moderate accordingly.

Overall organisation The majority of AVs expressed admiration for the quality of the GHP as an organisation.

'Great organisation, well lead, superbly organised.'

'Value the GHP – the best organisation I have volunteered with.'

'Great job of building that culture.'

Over reliance and workload on some people A few AVs reflected that they felt as the Charity has grown so has the workload. They expressed concern that this was now placing a heavy workload on key Board and other AVs, as well as concerns for longer term sustainability should those people become unavailable.

ACTION TAKEN

✓ We are in the process, in the first place, of recruiting to a part-time Parent and Teen Coordinator. Next step is to explore funding and recruit to a part-time Executive Assistant to our Co-Founder – Vanessa.

Volunteer section of GHP website Some AVs felt that the Volunteer section of the GHP website could do with a reworking. Promoting greater awareness of 'Who's Who', in particular roles & responsibilities & referrals across the Charity was felt to be important.

'A 'Rogue's gallery' of Who's Who in the organisation as some not sure who to liaise with over certain issues.'



ACTION TAKEN

- ✓ The Volunteer section of the website has now has a full reworking and includes:
 - Who's who of the full Green Hub team (except those who haven't provided their info after 3 reminders)
 - Plan to update website structure in 1st Q 2024, to include more info for potential volunteers
 - Key communication processes.

Longer term planning of 'events or fundraising support'. This was asked for to enable AVs to plan their diaries well ahead and then be able to participate more.

'XXX would find it helpful to have a calendar of events to help her plan better.'

'Really wants us to sit down, plan ahead put an annual calendar together.'

ACTION TAKEN

- ✓ Structure of Annual plan in the process of being finalised
- ✓ Will be available by end Jan 2024.

On boarding Most Adult Volunteers found their 'on boarding' introduction and training requirements to the GHP to be positive and helped them feel more confident in the organisation as it has become a more thorough process. However, there were a few who found it to be a less than helpful experience (mainly 'technical which were quickly rectified by Vanessa), or in some early cases they had not had an introduction as they had initially had an 'informal' role such as garden watering.

'XXX appreciated the informal interview and on boarding process which was very good.'

Garden Team management AVs valued working alongside others and enjoyed team working. It was noted that the garden management had been through a number of changes due to illness or changes in life circumstances – but that it had become more stable this year and individuals involved were valued by AVs. However, there were some who spoke of 'tensions' in clarity of roles, communications and expectations of the Teens input to garden sessions.

'Garden leaders arrangements have improved... but still could be better.'

'Goals of each session, what is expected of the teens, what Volunteers should and should not do, such as ask personal questions.'

ACTION TAKEN

- ✓ We have worked hard to improve the communication between the midweek team and teen-facing volunteers – is now working more effectively.
- ✓ Suggestion box for ideas from Teens or Parents will be available in the gardens by Jan2024.

Arts and Crafts In order to expand the offer and opportunities both for Teens and to draw in new AVs expanding the Arts/Craft activities were suggested. This would also help to provide



activities throughout winter months in particular, and also to spread the work in the garden more evenly between different sessions e.g. Saturday morning and afternoon.

ACTION TAKEN

- ✓ Art and Craft training will be expanded in 2024.

Training needs The training that Adult Volunteers are already required to do and have experienced, online or provided, was valued. Additional training needs were identified by some AVs, particularly those directly working in the garden with teens or liaising with parents. These include:

- More understanding of mental health issues for Teens included more on range of neuro-diversity, and then how best to support teens
- Listening and talking with teens, particularly with emotional and social needs
- Working with anxious parents
- Awareness and understanding of transgender and use of pronouns
- Team working was felt by some to be important.

ACTION TAKEN

- ✓ Major restructuring of volunteer training with distinct pathways for 4 categories of volunteers
- ✓ Garden / teen facing
- ✓ Garden / non teen facing
- ✓ Parent Hub, Teen Talks and Support team / teen facing
- ✓ Support team / non teen facing.
- ✓ Planning for a phased launch starting end of February, 2024
- ✓ Will include mandatory training for all new Adult Volunteers including LGBTQ and Autism, and a commissioned bespoke Mental Health First Aid Course for working with teens
- ✓ An on-going quarterly 'volunteer continuing development' programme that aims to include topics such as Low Mood, Anxiety, Neurodiversity.

Anthea Cooke

Trustee & Evaluation lead



January 2024

