

## City Bridge Trust – Monitoring Visit Report

<b>Organisation:</b> Southbank Centre	<b>Grant ref:</b> 10967	<b>Programme area:</b> Improving Londoners' Mental Health\c) Homeless people, transient people & rough sleepers
<b>Amount, date and purpose of grant:</b> 26/04/2012: £120,000 over three years (3 x £40,000) towards the Southbank roof garden project, improving the mental health of homeless volunteers.		
<b>Visiting Grants Officer:</b> Karisia Gichuke accompanied by Alison Gowman	<b>Date of meeting:</b> 7 January 2014	
<b>Met with:</b> Alison Bowyer Head of Grants and Trusts & Rebecca Preston, Director of Development, Paul, Head Gardener		
<b>1. Introduction to the organisation:</b> The Southbank Centre's unique 21 acre site comprises outdoor riverside space and three major buildings – the Royal Festival Hall, the Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room and the Hayward Gallery as well as the Saison Poetry Library and the Arts Council Collection. These provide the base for a world-class programme encompassing a range of different art forms. Drawing on the heritage of the 1951 Festival of Britain, the Southbank Centre's artistic programme is based on a series of one off and annual themed festivals, which enables the Centre to explore a particular theme or issue in depth across a range of different art forms. The Centre has an extensive programme of learning and participation work that is at the heart of every single festival. This provides opportunities for people of all ages to learn and take part in art forms in both one off and long term projects. The Centre gets over 20 million visitors a year and holds hundreds of free events.		
<b>2. The project funded:</b> The Trust is supporting a horticulture-based volunteering programme in the Queen Elizabeth Hall Roof Garden, which aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of homeless people. The project is a collaboration between the Southbank Centre and the Eden Project, which has experience of creating gardens with teams of homeless volunteers. The other partners in the project are the Providence Row Housing Association, St Mungo's and NOAH, who work with the 50 homeless people who participate in the project. The programme centres on building and maintaining the garden during the period March – September 2012. During the winter months there is a more limited programme for volunteers.		
<b>3. Work delivered to date:</b> 65 volunteer gardeners have built and maintained the Queen Elizabeth Hall Roof Garden, and over 200 volunteers recruited from the local community and Southbank Centre visitors have helped to maintain it. All volunteer gardeners have had skills training. All of the lead gardeners have been supported by Grounded Ecotherapy, a specialist mental health support team who provide multi-disciplinary therapy and rehabilitation for adults who have experienced homelessness, substance abuse and mental health issues.		

The Centre has also provided opportunities for seven local schools to visit and maintain the garden and 420 school children have taken part in workshops led by volunteer gardeners. In addition, the Roof Garden has provided a new accessible green space for London, with opening hours from the morning until evening during April – October. The surrounding land has been improved and trees planted, and 150,000 visitors have used the garden for relaxation and recreation.

#### **4. Difference made:**

The gardeners involved have reported improved mental health and wellbeing from involvement in the project. Daily and weekly involvement has helped the gardeners develop routines, creating a structure to their lives which has resulted in improvements in their mental health. Working with members of the public has also improved the confidence of the gardeners. Forging relationships with each other, the public, and SC employees has been a central part of the project, and many of the gardeners have reported reduced isolation.

The gardeners have had full responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of the garden and many have reported an increase in knowledge and skills in horticulture as a result of involvement in the project.

#### **5. Grants Administration:**

The organisation is one and a half years into a three year grant, and monitoring to date (year one report received) has been of a high standard, with the team staying in regular contact with the Trust and being very open about learning, planned changes to the project, and some challenges encountered.

#### **6. Concluding comments:**

The Queen Elizabeth Hall Roof Garden is now Southbank Centre's longest established volunteering project. Working with the volunteer gardeners has given the Centre staff valuable new expertise in working with volunteers and involving the community. To develop this, the Centre has invested in a new full time position, the Garden Volunteer and Participation Coordinator who will manage the future development of the volunteering programme. It has become clear that the longer duration of the project, enabling the development and maintenance of routines has led to maximised engagement with the gardeners, allowed unexpected things to be achieved such as successful public interaction with a huge impact on confidence and wellbeing.

Alderman Gowman and I spent an extremely enjoyable afternoon being shown the space which has been so carefully created and cultivated. It is clear that the garden is a unique partnership with lessons to share for organisations interested in developing London's green spaces while working with vulnerable communities and the Trust should be very proud to be supporting the venture.