

Monitoring Visit Report: Single Homeless Project (10725)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION		
1.1 Date of visit 09/12/14	1.2 Name of visiting Grants Officer Tim Wilson	1.3 People met with Tamara Romanyk (Fundraiser) Jessica Murray (Green Coordinator)
1.5 Programme Area: London's Environment		
1.6 Grant value £69,000 over 3 years (£24,000; £23,000; £22,000)	1.7 What is the grant funding? The salary and on-costs of a part-time Green Coordinator (15 hours per week) to work with SHP clients and community volunteers on a food growing project (funding awarded in September 2011)	
1.8 Purpose of the award To enhance local biodiversity, support the integration of vulnerable people into their local communities, to improve vulnerable people's skills and to improve the target clients' well-being.		
MONITORING INFORMATION		
2.1 Project Outcome 1: To enhance local biodiversity. Progress made: This project delivers growing and greening activities at eight food growing hubs and 30 smaller growing spaces. In most cases, these sites have been transformed from overgrown and unattractive plots into well managed, fully organic sites where activities take place around the growing calendar. My visit was to SHP's Arlington Road site in Camden where I had the opportunity to see the garden space and the greenhouse which clients had built during the life of the project. Staff reported that the plot had been left to grow wild for many years, and that prior to the recruitment of the Green Coordinator, nobody had known how best to tame and improve the site. Most gardening and growing activities delivered through this project take place at SHP's hostels, but in some boroughs where SHP does not have property, the project works with local partners to run a floating support service. In addition, the charity is running a window box project for clients with no ground-level growing space.		
2.2 Project Outcome 2: To support the integration of vulnerable people into their local communities Progress made: The project aims to be as inclusive as possible, and many participating clients have longstanding problems of substance and alcohol misuse. Most lead chaotic lives, and are in receipt of a range of support services from SHP. The gardening project recognises		

that the majority of clients continue to drink, and so it conducts a risk assessment for every venue and participant. New clients are asked to sign an induction agreement and this specifies the basic ground rules for the project. Clients are not, for example, allowed to drink during sessions.

The project encourages interaction with local people through the recruitment and retention of volunteers. These are usually people who have a high level of gardening skills, but don't necessarily have their own gardens. As such, SHP is able to offer the volunteers an opportunity to practice their skills and the interaction with the clients gives people a basis for engagement who might not otherwise connect. Where sites are street-facing, or connecting to adjacent properties, SHP report improved interactions with neighbours and more positive perceptions of client capabilities. In addition, the charity also notes that many clients are now keen to turn their new skills to help local elderly people and disabled people who cannot manage their own gardens – SHP looking at ways this might be facilitated.

2.3 Project Outcome 3: to improve vulnerable people's skills and to improve the target clients' well-being

Progress made: The project encourages people who might otherwise spend a lot of time indoors to get out into the open and engage in a light form of physical exercise. It has engaged a good number of clients, and now has a waiting list of prospective participants.

The charity has built strong relationships with Organiclea and local nature reserves where clients can go to further develop their skills and gain qualifications. In several instances SHP has encouraged clients to study for horticulture qualifications. Where the growing activities take place at sites with kitchens SHP has taken the opportunity to teach cookery and encourage healthier eating. Clients' substance misuse has often taken a significant toll on their physical and mental health, so the encouragement to eat healthier diets is very important. Many of the vegetables grown are not items that clients are necessarily familiar with, but the charity report that if the clients grow it then they want to know how to cook it, and if they enjoy eating it they are more likely to want to grow it in the future.

GRANT OFFICER COMMENTS

Whilst SHP did have some initial difficulties recruiting a Green Coordinator, the project is now well-established and engages a good range of clients. The Trust agreed an extension in the life of the project to accommodate some of the initial delay. The project works with a client group with high support needs. As such, the Green Coordinator depends on a strong and committed network of volunteers to help run the activities and to keep clients engaged. I was able to witness some of the volunteer training and the client interaction and was impressed by the energy and enthusiasm of the Green Coordinator. SHP report that the project has enjoyed support from all staff members, and they are now looking to integrate the growing and greening activities as part of the charity's learning programme for clients.

The charity plans to maintain the project after the Trust's funding comes to an end in summer 2015.