



Five Year Evaluation of the Cultivate Project

By Jennifer Griggs, February 2014

Chair's comment

The mission of PROSPECTS is to support community action for the environment. This commitment is demonstrated through all our work in the benefits to individuals and community that are so inextricably linked with improving their own surroundings and circumstances.

The environmental benefits of locally produced food, especially if it is grown organically, are established and well known. The **Cultivate Project**, over the past five years, has shown the personal health and well-being benefits of involvement in organised co-operative effort and physical activity, as well as the quality of the food itself. The coming together of social and environmental benefits is truly sustainable development.

Feelings of improved self worth through being part of something valuable are confirmed by the actual improvements on the ground. You only have to walk around the sites referred to in this report – and listen to what people have to say – to see and hear the tangible evidence of renewed community and individual spirit.

Thanks are due to all funders, staff, partners and participants.

The key message that I take from this evaluation is that there is no substitute for integrity, honest commitment and the personal touch – the features that distinguish PROSPECTS' work and are really crucial to how successfully we engage with people.

The recommendations at the end of the report raise some interesting questions about how PROSPECTS should develop our approach in the future.

There is still so much to be done within Hyndburn. We must think very carefully about whether the Cultivate approach can be made to work on a wider scale – and if so, how?

Phil Barwood – Chairman



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Executive summary

Key statistics for the Cultivate Project against outcomes

Outcome	Key actions / achievements	Key partnerships	Has the outcome been achieved	Recommendations for future
Campaigns and strategies	7 national, 3 north west, 4 Lancashire and 6 Hyndburn strategies e.g. Change4life, 5 ways to wellbeing	Public Health East Lancashire	Yes – hard to conceive another Hyndburn third sector / community project that is as multi-faceted, tackling the social gradient that Marmot describes.	Connect to the change of footprint for public health to a county wide level. Link into the matrix to show best practice for “food poverty and sustainability.”
Work with hard-to-reach communities around health to improve skills and knowledge	5741 beneficiary opportunities 945 volunteers 1400 training 3396 food growing activities including schools	Hyndburn Council One Planet Planters Referral Organisations Local Schools Local community groups	Yes – significantly overachieved. Prospects Foundation skilled at encouraging allotments for mass participation, organic food growing training, developing food growing communities, schools work, back yard growing and events. The sustainability legacy increases as more local people are taught to grow food and peer mentor others.	Partners believing the Prospects Foundation brings benefit and real value to their existing activities. Prospects need to shout about this and publicise at a county wide level. Recognition of models like Social Return on Investment (SROI) showing financial benefits to the public purse of preventing ill health.
Increased wellbeing linked to “5 ways to wellbeing”	People with long-term enduring mental health conditions and those recovering from substance misuse reporting turning their lives around. All participants questioned showing improved wellbeing.	Hyndburn Council One Planet Planters Referral Organisations Local Schools Local community groups	Yes – feel good factor of access to nature, opportunities for physical exercise in the fresh air, improved diets and opportunities to socialise.	Ongoing monitoring of participants for wellbeing. Increased referral routes within the capacity of staff delivery.
Increased physical activity	All participants questioned showing better than Hyndburn averages.	Hyndburn Council One Planet Planters Referral Organisations Local Schools Local community groups	Yes – successful intervention for increasing exercise levels. Yes – successful intervention increasing fruit and vegetable consumption of allotment holders.	Ongoing monitoring of participants for physical exercise. Increased referral routes within the capacity of staff delivery.
Increased fruit and veg consumption	With allotments all participants questioned showing better than Hyndburn averages. More support for participants with long-term enduring mental health conditions and those recovering from substance misuse.	Hyndburn Council One Planet Planters Referral Organisations Local Schools Local community groups	More support is needed for people with complex needs who tend towards poor diets although there are “success” stories for this group.	Ongoing monitoring of participants for wellbeing. Increased referral routes within the capacity of staff delivery. Signposting of participants with complex needs to healthy eating / cooking sessions.

I.0 Introduction

The **Cultivate Project** is an ongoing health promotion project which has been preventing ill health through community food growing since 2008. The project is aimed at local people to Hyndburn who are likely to experience high inequalities in health, arising from poor diet, physical inactivity and poor mental health. It utilises a community development approach to motivate and enable confidence for participants to make lifestyle changes. Working with relevant partners, a referral service is offered to individuals catering for different needs as well as life stages.

The **Cultivate Project** has been assessed against its ability to contribute to key strategies especially public health strategies. Key partners and beneficiaries were identified and they were surveyed to see how effective the project has delivered its outcomes. The evaluator conducted face-to-face interviews, phone interviews and used standard internet survey techniques. Furthermore, throughout the project quarterly monitoring has enabled individual participants to be checked and key statistics revealed.



Participants progression through the Cultivate Project

PARTICIPANTS

Local residents from LSOA take on an affordable and manageable allotment tenancy

Referred participant via support organisations with complex needs e.g. mental health, veteran communities, substance misuse, domestic violence

Self managed community and voluntary groups with a community food growing site

Local schools with pupils from LSOA catchments

Local People

CULTIVATE PROJECTS INTERVENTION

Adhering to key Public Health, Environment and Social Strategies

Get involved with the allotment society

Attend beginners organic food growing training

Allotments week and wellbeing events

Ongoing support and advice

Attend weekly sessions

Facilitators role. funding; growing advice; site visits and audits; purchasing seeds, tools and materials; training; infrastructure volunteers; identifying keys partner to support projects

Identify opportunities for community-led trade

Facilitators role

Run regular school grounds or community based workshops

Help organise large events

Improved access to affordable, local, organic fruit and vegetables

LSOA neighbourhoods visually regenerated

Pick herbs from "Incredible Edibles" train stations

Pick fruit from community orchards

HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

Reducing the social gradient of the Marmot review (the poorer the person the worse their health)

Improved Wellbeing

Participants with complex needs can fully recover and transform their lives.

Everyone showing improvements with five-ways-to-wellbeing: connect to other people, be active, take notice (especially of nature), keep learning, give to others

More physical exercise

Digging involving cardio-vascular exercise

Improvements in mobility

Eating more affordable, local organic fruit and vegetables

Improvements in five-a-day

Signposting support e.g. healthy cooking for participants with complex needs

2.0 Campaigns and strategies

2.1 Key achievements

The **Cultivate Project** is at the fore in delivering tangible outcomes on key health improvement, greenspace and social inclusion strategies. This evaluation has identified 7 national, 3 north west, 4 Lancashire and 6 Hyndburn Strategies. Key ones include:

- Public Health England's Priorities 2013/14
- Fair Society Healthy Lives Marmot Review 2010
- Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Strategy for Public Health in England Nov 2010
- Change4Life 2008
- Five ways to wellbeing
- No Health Without Mental Health 2011
- Hyndburn Food Web Action Plan 2008



Public Health England has stated “we know the most significant factors that lead to poor health are obesity, poor diet, lack of exercise, smoking, high blood pressure and excessive alcohol consumption.” Change4Life and Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives Strategy 2011 are Department of Health initiatives which aim to tackle obesity and related degenerative diseases by encouraging everyone to increase their activity levels and improve their diet. The **Cultivate Project** has used the Change4Life nationally recognised branding.

The wider determinants of health have been described by Sir Michael Marmot in his review Fair Society, Healthy Lives and it is these that lie behind the marked health inequalities. There is a social gradient in health – the lower a person's social position, the worse his or her health. Marmot said action should focus on reducing the gradient in health which will require action on six policy objectives:

- give every child the best start in life;
- enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives;
- create fair employment and good work for all;

- ensure healthy standard of living for all;
- create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities;
- strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention.

Delivering these policy objectives requires action by central and local government, public health, the private and third sector community groups. National policies do not work without effective local delivery systems and participatory decision-making. This only happens by empowering individuals and local communities which is at the heart of the **Cultivate Project**; the drive for a sustainable change in public health.

2.2 Health is the worst statistic



The **Cultivate Project** is all about increasing access to services for underserved groups. This includes targeting people living in areas of high deprivation in Hyndburn, where health statistics show the greatest need for services and disadvantaged groups e.g. mental health referrals.

Unhealthy lifestyles are the norm for many Hyndburn residents. The following are worse than the national averages (2010):

- adults who smoke;
- health-eating adults;
- obese children;
- incapacity benefit for mental illness;

and at the national averages for:

- sedentary lifestyles and
- obese adults.

Consequently, Hyndburn has been recognised as a “spearhead” area where local partners are encouraged to co-ordinate action with Public Health East Lancashire in order to reduce the regional and local health inequalities.

2.3 Evaluator's comment

This evaluation highlights how the **Cultivate Project** is delivering Public Health England's priority campaigns and strategies. It is hard to conceive of another third sector / community project that is as multi-faceted in Hyndburn. For example, the project should have particular benefits for reducing Coronary Heart Disease (CHD), with more physical activity and healthier diets. Health improvements are done in an inclusive way, enabling hard-to-reach individuals and communities to grow and eat their own affordable, healthy organic vegetables.

2.4 Recommendations

As Marie Demaine, Public Health Co-ordinator for East Locality, stated

“there have been major changes following the transition of the Primary Care Trust to Lancashire County Council. The local footprint has changed from a “locality” of East Lancashire to the whole of Lancashire. This will affect the way in which projects outcomes are outlined in the future. There are several matrix areas within Public Health, both at a Lancashire county wide and at an East Lancashire level, where best practice can be shared. In particular Public Health East Lancashire have committed to focus on “Food Poverty and Sustainability” and there is an opportunity for the Prospects Foundation's level of expertise to be highlighted as best practice.”



3.0 Hard-to-reach individuals and communities improving health

3.1 Engaging hard-to-reach individuals and communities

Over the five years 5741 beneficiary opportunities have been provided which is significant when you consider that Hyndburn has a population of 80,700. These are opportunities to learn about food growing through long-term volunteering, formal training, food-growing workshops and taking on your own “manageable” allotment space:

- 945 volunteer opportunities on work parties;
- 1400 formal training places;
- 3396 participants attending one-off food growing workshops including schools.

The allotment sites were located in low-income neighbourhoods. For example, the nine most deprived Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) all fall wholly, or partly, within 1km walking distance of two of the key allotment sites at Meadowway and Woodnook in Hyndburn.



3.2 Allotments for mass participation

The five year allotment regeneration programme ran alongside the **Cultivate Project**, devised by the now defunct Hyndburn Food Web in which NHS East Lancashire (where public health was then located), was instrumental. It ensured that allotment regeneration was high up Hyndburn Borough Council's agenda. At the council there were departmental movements and capital and revenue budgets allocated. Several sites, including Heys in Oswaldtwistle and the east side of Meadowway, benefited from the input of five

teams of unemployed trainees from Bootstrap Enterprises funded through the “Future Jobs Fund.” From January 2012 to March 2014 the Big Lottery Local Food Programme funded improvements to the west side of Meadowway and Woodnook. These achievements are chartered separately in the People Pods Evaluation of the Prospects Foundation (2014).

In total All the allotments are surrounded by low-income neighbourhoods with high health deprivation statistics. Encouraging local people to take a plot has received widespread publicity across Hyndburn and as a result there are approximately 500 new allotment tenancies reducing waiting lists, an outline priority in this project. This does not reflect the fact that families and groups take on tenancies so the amount of people directly using allotments will be much higher, as reflected in the participation numbers. The plots were made “manageable” by either offering wheelchair accessible raised beds, boarded beds or 11-metre square quarter flat plots. Shared space in a communal polytunnel is offered on some allotment sites.

The per annum charges are £20 for the raised beds which can include a tool shed, paved footpaths and knee high fencing. The cost of the quarter plots is between £35 and £50 depending on the use of mains water and access to communal facilities. This is perceived as generally affordable, especially if you compare it to other council allotment rents. However, there have been occasions where the Prospects Foundation has intervened to help very low-income households start out with seeds, tools and training.



Heys Allotment Big Plot

Allotment holder, Stephen Lowe was interviewed about his work with the **Cultivate Project** over the last 4 years. Coincidentally, he is a BBC Radio Lancashire presenter and has done a lot to raise the profile of the project running outside broadcasts from the allotments and food growing sites.

Stephen said

"Heys used to be a massive derelict plot. So it was split into 30 quarter plots and "pods" which are small boarded raised bed. There are knee high fences and a polytunnel. Because everyone makes eye contact everyone says hello. It is a communal space that really works. I met the Prospects Foundation through attending a growing course. It was great for giving confidence but it also ensured that newcomers interacted afterwards. We had a soft fruit planting day in and around the edges of plots. So many turned up I think it was about thirty which is heart warming. So we dug a ditch and helped dig over some plots. Such a big group can do in ten minutes what one person can do in three weekends. We also find if someone is starting to neglect their plot, for example because they are ill, we all help out. So we are a community that has happened naturally. Working with Ian from Prospects in the early days was great. He has boundless enthusiasm. On our wishlist would be having a long-term relationship with the Prospects Foundation for ten years or more."

Anne Hourican, Senior Environmental Initiatives Officer of Hyndburn Borough Council said

"on Heys we have improved 55,000 m², that's nearly 14 acres, making it our biggest allotment site.

Through sub-division and improvement of overly large plots and provision of raised beds etc. there are now approx 220 lettable plots on Heys, compared to around 140 before."



Anne Hourican has been a key partner in the allotment regeneration and said

"this is a mass participation activity where hundreds if not thousands more people are still to be engaged. There is still much untapped potential and other ways and spaces that people could be encouraged to grow their own food. The allotment regeneration would not have achieved a fraction of what it did without the investment in working with hard-to-reach communities. The allotment investment and the people investment is the magic combination."

3.3. Evaluator's comment on allotments

Prior to the **Cultivate Project** and the HBC allotment regeneration programme, several allotment sites were mostly derelict, overgrown and an eyesore for local residents. People who attempted food-growing there complained bitterly about vandalism, theft, fly tipping, waterlogged soil, weed encroachment and unused plots. The improvements have been dramatic. Improving, securing, and using allotment space does indeed reduce vandalism and have a positive impact on neighbouring low-income neighbourhoods.

Critical to this has been the development of a food-growing community: local people who continue to watch over and care for the site and people who know their neighbours. Food-growing is a proven means of building capacity and changing lives. As seen from the experience of the tenants, it is very easy to gain a sense of achievement from food growing, and this empowerment can help in other areas of life. This evaluation makes a convincing case for policy makers and funders that investment in allotment regeneration in tandem for community development, can deliver across a range of themes for more sustainable communities. In particular allotment holders showed, via questionnaires, better diet and physical exercise statistics than the general Hyndburn population. This is discussed in sections 5 and 6.

3.4 Recommendations for allotments

- Whilst allotment infrastructure works are near completion it is important that Hyndburn Borough Council continues to invest in a dedicated Allotments Officer to keep the "allotments for everyone" culture alive.
- Other funders and public sector commissioners need to continue to invest in a dedicated officer to provide health & wellbeing and community development functions for hard-to-reach communities in Hyndburn.
- Together this forms the "magic combination"; allotments investment and people investment.



Woodnook before



3.5 Organic food growing training

All courses and workshops have focused on food growing potential in areas of high health deprivation. A key to the success has been offering newcomers training and ongoing support. This has naturally encouraged co-operation, self-help and self-management amongst food growers. There has also been a programme of "peer mentoring."

Informal training in organic food growing is offered to all the groups from container to allotment growing. Beginners Organic Food Growing courses, offered to groups and residents, have been held at various venues across Hyndburn, for example at target allotment sites in areas of health deprivation (Heys, Meadoway and Woodnook), Accrington and Rossendale College (ACCROSS) and Accrington Women's Centre. Accredited training such as "use of brushcutters", "healthy eating" and "how to grow herbs" has taken place across the borough and at various venues including



ACCROSS College, Mercer House and Inward House. Dedicated volunteers, many suffering from enduring mental health conditions and / or substance misuse, have been taken on inspirational visits across the North West and have attended formal training. In July 2012 two training courses "train the trainers" and "developing a growing social enterprise" were held at Fir Tree Community Growers near Skelmersdale. The training was at capacity and participants learned how to train other food growers looking at sample activities and also how to run the business side of a growing enterprise.

Mark Kerr, One Planet Planters and peer mentor

A deeply committed local horticulturalist, Mark first became involved with the Prospects Foundation before this project, through the One Planet Planters which began as a horticultural therapy project for those recovering from a mental health condition. At this time he began his own landscape gardening business and was recognising his potential not only to teach on-the-job practical skills e.g. building raised beds but also his ability to communicate with those teaching in a more formal classroom environment. To this end the Prospects Foundation supported Mark to get his "PTLLS" (Preparing to Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector) qualification at ACCROSS College.

With his new found skills he began a peer learning programme at the Woodnook allotments. The course was set up before the growing season and began in a nearby classroom. As Mark said "the course was an introduction looking at soil, crop rotation, when to plant seeds and how to look after crops. At times it felt like a bit of a bumpy ride in terms of making the teaching work and often you have to accommodate different personalities. I can say it has been life changing. It has been brilliant working with Ian and Julie (Prospects Foundation) as they are good at getting people involved and what they do is beyond a normal job. I have ambitions to do lots more food growing training. I like the whole spectrum from the building to the growing."

Prospects staff speak highly of Mark, Ian Hodgson says "every so often you find a person who you know will excel and really shine and Mark is such a person. His willingness to get involved and his gentle demeanour makes him ideal to work alongside in many varied settings and the fact he is a resident of the Woodnook area, a target area, is nothing short of perfect for all involved." Julie Livesey says "Mark's legacy is a network of schools and community groups who have benefited from his raised bed building, session delivery and training days. Also his willingness to promote organic food growing in Hyndburn has really given the project a welcome boost. The fact Mark is now a paid food growing employee of Springhill Primary school says it all really."



Mark in the foreground

3.6 Evaluator's comment on training

During the **Cultivate Project** experienced food growers were very much in the minority and many people were coming to community food growing for the first time. All courses and workshops have focused on food growing potential in areas of high deprivation. A key to the success has been offering newcomers training and ongoing support. This has naturally encouraged co-operation, self-help and self-management amongst food growers. There has also been a programme of "peer mentoring" of which volunteer Mark Kerr is an excellent example.



3.7 Recommendations for training

- Continue the diversity in informal short workshops and more formal longer courses.
- A significant shortage in skills is recognised nationally within horticulture and 18% of businesses in production horticulture report that their current employees are less than fully proficient in their current role. Organisations like Inward House and INSPIRE (rehabilitation from alcohol and substance misuse) have identified a need for accredited training in horticulture which the Prospects Foundation can facilitate in partnership with Accrington and Rossendale College (ACCROSS). Prospect's needs to research its ability to provide this type of training.



3.8 Development of food growing communities

Various community, self-help groups, schools and referral organisations have asked the **Cultivate Project** to support them in food growing. Over five years this has totalled 70. The Prospects Foundation provides a facilitators role:

- funding advice;
- growing / planting advice;
- organisational advice;
- site visits and audits;
- purchasing seeds, tools and materials if appropriate;
- organic growing courses and related one-off workshops;
- supported weekly, fortnightly or monthly sessions with participants;
- supplying volunteer labour initially with Bootstrap Enterprises and ongoing with the One Planet Planters group and
- identifying keys partners to support projects.





Key partnerships have included:

- Public Health East Lancashire
- Hyndburn Borough Council and many allotment sites
- Local Councillors
- Bootstrap Enterprises
- Community Re:start
- Health Improvement Team
- Hyndburn Voluntary and Community Resource Centre
- Rishton Prospects Panel
- Growing Wild
- BME Mental Health Team
- Asian Ladies Carer Group
- Women's Centre
- Inward House
- Red Rose Recovery
- Sandy Lane Centre
- Maundy Relief
- Mercer House
- Accrington and Rossendale College (ACCROSS)
- St Christopher's CofE High School
- Accrington Academy
- Norden High School
- Broadfield Specialist School
- Wildlife Trust
- Various railway stations
- Help Direct
- Harrington Street Community Garden
- Bridge Day Care Centre
- Milnshaw Residents Association

In total 45 organisations were consulted either via in-person interview, phone interview or online survey. In the online survey they were asked to rate their working relationship with the Prospects Foundation with 1 = poor, 2 = room for improvement, 3 = satisfactory, 4 = good and 5 = very good.

- 10 % said "satisfactory";
- 15 % said "good";
- 75 % said "very good".

95% said they would like to work with the Prospects Foundation again and the one respondent who did not was because the project had ceased due to funding cuts.



Inward House

One particularly successful case study has been Inward House which delivers high quality housing support to those in recovery from drug and alcohol addiction. It was borne out of some participants being also part of Maundy Relief (a homeless charity), who were already being supported by the **Cultivate Project** at Meadoway Allotments, identifying that work needed doing in the grounds of Inward House. Residents of Inward House were involved every step of the way with the redesign of their community garden into a food growing space and learned new skills, for example, planning a crop rotation.

Anthony Broderick, Supported Housing Officer said "new residents spend on average six months with us before we assist them into independent housing. Julie (Prospects Foundation) delivered food growing training which was accredited with ACCROSS college. This is great for confidence building. The training has enabled us to develop the grounds and we have two raised beds, herb garden, apple trees and wildlife area. We find many of our residents have transferable skills so this has helped with any construction work.

We were so proud to received a Britain in Bloom Level 3 "It's Your Neighbourhood Awards". Myself and one of the former residents, Gareth, attended the ceremony for Britain in Bloom. We are very much about changing lifestyles so we also do complementary activities like "cooking healthy food on a budget" and when we have our residents meetings two people have to cook for



Gareth receiving award from Britain in Bloom



everyone else and we use produce from the garden when it is available."

Inward House residents also get the opportunity to get out and about to help people on other food growing sites across Hyndburn. Some of their improvements in wellbeing are recorded as part of their work with One Planet Planters in section 4.

Rishton Train Station

The use of train stations as places for food growing has happened across Hyndburn. Rishton Prospects Panel have been given support to develop and maintain a community food growing area at Rishton Train Station. Whilst other station projects have taken



place on the platforms, at Rishton a derelict piece of land behind the station 10m by 50m was identified as suitable for food growing. It was full of weeds and thanks to volunteer help through Red Rose Recovery four raised beds were trailed. Red Rose Recovery gives people, in recovery from drug or alcohol misuse, the chance to contribute to their local communities by taking part in education, employment or volunteering. Plans are afoot to extend into more of the rough areas and the Rishton Prospects Panel are advertising to see if there are any takers for eight new raised beds. As Colin Cooper said "I don't know what we would have done without Julie's assistance. We are quite skilled at self-funding through Awards for All and the Green Partnership Awards. However, it was Julie who did all the costings and gave us the technical advice. Julie has also run training for us. She is absolutely brilliant."

Other best practice projects include Mercer House who asked for support to develop Harrington St Community Garden for local residents on a former derelict play area. Cultivate supported Mercer House in 2012/2013 with consultation, planning, site development and training with local residents. The site achieved a level 3 in Britain in Bloom It's Your Neighbourhood Awards. The Bridge Day Care Centre staff and clients asked for help with regeneration of their back garden and The Base Day Care Centre worked in partnership with the **Cultivate Project** and ACCROSS college joinery department to develop a sensory garden for clients to use.

3.9 Schools

Children's Centres and Youth groups are interested in food growing. Some have set up food growing areas on their own land with support and training in food growing from the **Cultivate Project**. Some schools supported run their growing activities as part of curriculum activities, others offer it in out of school hours clubs, and some have sold veg at school fairs or have links to their catering facilities to use the produce in school meals. Rishton Methodist School asked for support with a funding bid for development of their school grounds for staff and pupils to plant an orchard and grow veg in raised beds. Red Rose Recovery volunteers helped build the raised beds for the school.



Huncoat primary school children with Cultivate Project Co-ordinator Julie Livesey

St Christopher's CofE High School

St Christopher's Pledge4Veg campaign asked local people to promise to grow their own vegetables in return for a starter pot containing onions and garlic. They had already developed their own food growing facilities at the school including an orchard, polytunnel and raised beds. The Pledge4Veg scheme was devised by year seven (11 year old) children with one saying "the idea is really simple we wanted to do something that would change our community." The pledge was an agreement that "you will agree to grow one piece of veg this year."



A short film was created in 2011 and shows the recruitment of the local Accrington Stanley and Blackburn Rovers football teams, to promote their scheme. In all 2,000 starter pots were given away, which the students estimate saved 3,000kg of carbon by reducing the need to import produce. The children were amazingly enthusiastic and met people at the supermarket and went into other primary and secondary schools, getting press coverage to over 100,000 people.

The campaign also led to local primary and secondary schools setting up the Hyndburn and Ribble Valley Eco Cluster Group which meet every half term to discuss ways of improving sustainability. These allow sharing of ideas and support between schools, and more than 20 schools attend. Lancashire County Council has adopted this as a best practice model to roll across the region.

In May 2012, the school held a workshop on food growing in schools for primary school teachers. The workshop, organised and delivered by the Prospects Foundation, focussed on giving teachers practical gardening skills in both school grounds and on local allotments and advice on raising funds. This aims to encourage food growing in schools across the area. A year later this was stepped up when they ran the very first Lancashire Sustainable Schools Conference. The event was attended by 250 primary school children, along with their teachers. They were visited by the local MP and a range of newspapers and radio presenters. Wendy Litherland, Sustainability Co-ordinator at the school said "the work of Prospects is invaluable to the future of Hyndburn. You cannot put a value on the uniqueness of Ian and Julie. It has become far more than an Eco Group. We are teaching skills for the future, both careers and survival. That information is taken away from the school gates by the children."



Accrington Academy

Near to St Christopher's is another secondary school Accrington academy that have worked with Prospects and their more "at risk" pupils to develop food growing areas on the grounds alongside the volunteer group One Planet Planters. Some students are now growing food at home and taking part in more outdoor focused activities. It is mainly "hard-to-reach" boys that are being targeted and this has led to an increase in physical activity, increased fruit and veg consumption in a group that is difficult to engage with and other outdoor work has been developed with the Nature Walks programme around forest schools. As Michelle Cutforth said "Prospects have provided our students with a fantastic and amazing opportunity. Their knowledge is far greater than ours and they share this brilliantly with the students. They are confident in working with the students and passionate about the work they do. We are so pleased to have them on board and grateful for the support they offer us. Students have a very positive working relationship with Julie, Ian and Gemma [forest schools]." Accrington Academy are currently being supported with development of an orchard and food growing areas in school. Pupils helped plant up the raised beds at Milnshaw Park with the Friends Group with herbs, salads and fruit for people to pick as they walk through the park and use in cooking at home.



3.10 Evaluator's comment on schools

Best practice schools like St Christopher's and Accrington Academy are taking food growing beyond the school grounds and into the local communities. The **Cultivate Project** schools appear to show similar benefits to those charted by the Food Growing in Schools Taskforce (2012) :

- food growing encouraging a broad range of teaching styles;
- raising achievements across the curriculum, particularly for science learning, as well as language skills, maths and food technology;
- children and young people learning life skills such as:
- cooking and communication;
- financial and enterprise skills;
- skills for employment, e.g. team work, problem solving and horticultural skills.
- improved behaviour observed in and out of the classroom and
- environmental awareness and attitudes are enhanced and this is reflected in pro-environmental behaviours.

3.11 Back yard growing

Hyndburn Asian Ladies Carer group

The evaluator attended a consultation of the women's carer group to review the successes of the previous year and to see what they would like to grow in 2014. Present was also Jay Khan of Lancashire Women's Network who is carrying out a heritage project focusing on recording the achievements of those women who arrived from the south Asian subcontinent. This provided a lively discussion and also opportunities for partnership working with the Prospects Foundation.

Carers project co-ordinator Kubra Begum said "the growing of tomatoes, chillies sunflowers and coriander in 2013 was brilliant. We met up and started the plants and then the ladies brought them back each session to pot on. I visited many of the ladies in their homes and saw these plants growing brilliantly on the windowsills." The tomatoes chosen were those suitable for this kind of growing including gardeners delight and tumbler. One woman said "when I had my salads I chopped in peppers" and all were in agreement that "razzamataz", a multi-coloured chilli, pepper was a winner. One woman confided that her plants had died but on discussion this was because they had been put outside.

The growing of produce to take home is really valuable to these women whose time is very tied because of their caring responsibilities. Cultivate co-ordinator, Julie Livesey talked with them about their willingness to take on a raised bed and a space in the polytunnel at the Hyndburn Resource Centre which is a 5 minute walk from the carers centre. She brought photos so they could get an idea about the commitment. Reticence was mainly around whether the women would have the time, one woman confided that her mum was very ill, and so it was agreed that the

raised bed would be taken on and linked to the regular session when the women met anyway.

Then the consultation moved onto what produce they would like to grow and at this point everyone became animated. Food was obviously a real passion of all these women. Suggestions included tomatoes, peppers, strawberries, cucumber, kareli (bitter gourd), ladies fingers (okra), spinach, mint, coriander, garlic, mooli, radish, mustard leaf, methi (fenugreek), soye (dill) and the planting of fruit including cherries, plum and pear. Kubra spoke of how produce for your garden tastes so much better than from the shops. The women then began to discuss food preparation techniques including whether the stems should be removed from the methi, what spices to add to the saag and in which order leaves should be added, whether masala should have crushed peppercorns or chilli peppers and how the spice "hing" should be used with lentils, with some women saying use sparingly whilst others to taste. Many agreed that they followed the way their mothers had taught them. In summary the session was warm, friendly and there was lots of enthusiasm.

3.12 Events

The **Cultivate Project** regularly attends events and meetings around Hyndburn to promote and encourage food growing and healthy eating. For example: the annual Rishton Summer Festival, where they set up a stall with activities for children such as sowing salad seeds in pots to grow at home, displays of inspirational photos and signposting leaflets. Networking is also important at meetings such as the Health Operations Group to promote the work of the **Cultivate Project** and identify partnership opportunities. The project has also been active at Hyndburn Borough Council's Wellbeing week and Allotment Week.



Stall at Great Harwood, 50 Mill Bank

3.13 Evaluator's comment on engaging hard-to-reach individuals and communities

The Marmot review, discussed in section 2, states that the social gradient in health has to be tackled. It is hard to conceive a better third sector / community project than the **Cultivate Project** achieving this in Hyndburn. The achievements generally for local people and groups have been:

- an inspiring commitment from volunteers and co-ordinating staff;
- providing access to affordable locally-grown organic food;
- improving health and wellbeing;
- enriched lives, for example, creating more positive lives for those at the margin of our society;
- developing skills, knowledge and confidence in a non-threatening environment;
- creating informal networks of like-minded people;
- changed attitudes for the better;
- using derelict land and helping the environment and
- building and empowering communities.



3.14 Recommendations for community food growing

The success factors for community food growing that need to continue include:

- partners believing the partnership work with the Prospects Foundation brings benefit and real value to their existing activities;
- regular feedback mechanisms between partners about the progress, glitches, achievements and next steps for the partnership;
- communities are engaged in activities;
- the plots and gardens represent sociable space where newcomers and visitors are encouraged;
- the spaces are accessible;
- the plots and gardens have a good image and look like welcoming spaces and
- plots and gardens are maintained in the long-term.

Feedback from Public Health East Lancashire is that the Prospects Foundation needs to shout about its successes to a wider audience especially at the regional commissioning level via a newsletter. The evaluation is also part of this process.



4.0 Increased wellbeing

Throughout the consultation all participants and co-ordinators of projects have reported a marked improvement in wellbeing. The Cultivate Project increases health with:

- the feel-good factor of nature itself, which relaxes mind and body, relieves stress, with benefits to mental health;
- physical activity, which benefits both physical and mental health;
- access to healthy affordable vegetables, resulting in improvements to diet and
- more opportunities to socialise (people with good social networks enjoy better health).



Five-ways-to-wellbeing and the One Planet Planters

The evaluator met with long-term participants from One Planet Planters. The group grew from a gardening project at the Community Re:Start building (known as the Manchester Road Wellbeing Centre) and most are mental health referrals. Volunteers now work on projects throughout Hyndburn. The participants remained anonymous but their backgrounds include recovery from a nervous breakdown, a diagnosis of schizophrenia, living with agoraphobia and low-self esteem and recovery for substance misuse.

Using a questionnaire based on the five-ways-to-wellbeing the following questions were asked:

How did you rate your wellbeing and mental health before you started working with Prospects?

- "I was in a bad way."
- "I couldn't trust people and I couldn't go out."
- "I felt paranoid but am much better."
- "I wasn't very tolerant of other people."

Do you feel more connected to other people?

- "Yes helping others gives purpose to your day."
- "Yes, I have made new friends."
- "Yes it keeps me occupied and it is not just talking it is actually doing."

- "Ian and Julie are so good at allowing people to be themselves and put forward their own ideas. We all feel included."

Are you more active?

- "Yes really active even being in the middle of nowhere shovelling manure!"
- "Yes and I volunteer on a farm aswell."
- "It is good to have more activity and it is giving me a routine."
- "It is giving me some get up and go."

Has your diet improved?

- Three of them admitted that their diet was poor and it hadn't changed their eating habits dramatically. However, one participant said that he always took veg and he had seen a big improvement.
- "I am now growing stuff on my balcony the basics you know lettuce and salads. This is all helping build my confidence and helping me to lose the weight after my illness. The drugs that I was prescribed made me put on weight."
- All of them recognised that they were willing to try new foods especially the soups that had been cooked from produce from the sites.

Comments from other groups include:

"It is really in the informal chats with people and the friendly supportive atmospheres, that it becomes clear how much people benefit from the food growing activities."

Anne Hourican, Hyndburn Borough Council

"Ilan attended to promote the benefits that simple horticultural activities can have on a person's mental well-being. Links were made between growing edible plants that contain vitamins and minerals beneficial to a person's mood and well-being. These plants could be easily grown in pots on window sills."

ACCROSS College

"Residents have commented that they would not usually do activities outside but have enjoyed taking part and being out in the fresh air."

Hyndburn Homes, Social Landlord

"Those involved are pleased with the end results. There is not only a physical benefit but also a mental benefit too. People can relax and unwind and also take a responsibility in caring for what is a shared resource."

Milnshaw Residents Association

"With working together this has helped them have a sense of local community. This has given people a greater understanding of others problems."

Mercer 1842

"I certainly have a sense of satisfaction when I see our planters fully laden."

Handson Huncoat Station

"Parents were very very positive about their involvement in helping the school build raised beds."

Springhill Primary School

"Teenagers that helped expressed their enjoyment at helping and wanting to do more."

GrOWING WILD

Do you take notice of nature more? For example the changing of seasons.

- "Yes. I hadn't thought about it. I used to walk the dog a lot and get that feeling. I am now getting out and about."
- "I've always liked nature. It is hard to put into words the feelings you get when you are outdoors."

Do you have more moments that you savour and feel grateful for the life you have?

- "I have learned so many new things and I love most of them."
- "My mind has been opened to new ways of gardening."
- "I think I have a good outlook on life and I suppose I am a bit new agey"
- "Yes I understand those moments when community works and it feels special."

Have you learned new skills?

- "Flagging, building raised beds, landscaping. I always smile when I see the transformation and knowing that I am helping people."
- "I like starting things from seed. It's that nurturing feeling."
- "I was quite practical anyway but it is such a buzz doing those little transformations that make such a big difference."

Are you able to give more to other people?

- "Yes and I am hoping to help out at food bank too."
- "It is wonderful to give of yourself and not expect anything in return."
- "Yes I really have an ability to give more."

As support worker Kat Green from Community Re:start says "sometimes people will come whilst they are supported but dip when you ask them to go on their own. This hasn't happened with One Planet Planters and so there is your proof that it works. Some have been coming for several years, they are building new friendships and socialising outside the group."

5.0 Increased physical activity

Similar to the five-ways-to-wellbeing, there is anecdotal evidence to show an increase in physical activity for participants of the **Cultivate Project**. Over the five year evaluation detailed statistics as to health improvement were kept for 214 participants (with over 300 filling in questionnaires) on allotments. For comparative purposes this evaluation is using the Hyndburn Health Report (NHS East Lancashire) 2008. Within this residents throughout the borough were asked:

How often do you take vigorous exercise – which lasts for more than thirty minutes and makes you breathless?

As the borough wide survey shows, Hyndburn exercise levels are low and the older a resident gets the more sedentary their lives become. The intervention shows an increase in physical exercise to participants although it should be noted for comparison purposes participants in the **Cultivate Project** were only asked about exercise generally and not vigorous exercise specifically. Nonetheless, it can be stated with certainty that the **Cultivate Project** participants are more physically active than the average Hyndburn resident.

	Hyndburn Average (%)	Cultivate Project (%)
Never	36.8	1.4
< Once a month	13.1	8.4
Between once a month and once a week	14.2	12.1
1-3 times a week	26.2	34.6
4-6 times a week	6.6	23.4
Everyday	3.1	19.6



6.0 Increased fruit and vegetable consumption

As with physical exercise, over the five year evaluation detailed statistics as to health improvement were kept for 214 participants (with over 300 filling in questionnaires). For comparative purpose data from the Hyndburn Health Report (NHS East Lancashire) 2008 was used. The borough was asked On a typical day, how many portions of fruit and vegetables do you eat?

Portions of fruit and vegetables	Hyndburn Average (%)	Cultivate Project (%)
0	1.4	0.9
1	12.2	3.3
2	19.6	2.8
3	25.6	15.9
4	19.6	16.8
5	13.4	34.6
6	5.9	25.7
7 or more	3.5	

In Hyndburn the consumption of at least five-a-day is extremely low with only 22.8% of the population achieving this. However, for the **Cultivate Project** participants 60.3% were achieving 5-a-day and over and, according to self rating, this percentage increase was mostly as a result of growing at the allotments.

In the One Planet Planters case study (section 4) supported volunteers with complex needs were often still reporting poor diets, even though they had marked improvements in wellbeing and physical exercise. However, there have been success stories with one volunteer reporting growing salads on their balcony and improvements in reducing weight. Participants with complex needs require more signposting opportunities for healthy eating education, cooking skills and sharing communal meals together.



6.1 Evaluator's comment for wellbeing, exercise and diet

SUSTAIN: the alliance for better food and farming has documented academic evidence on the health benefits of community food growing and gives advice to public sector commissioners. There is a new movement to recognise the validity of Social Return on Investment (SROI) as a tool for analysis. SROI attempts to put a monetary value on projects by examining costs avoided to the public purse. It can take up to a year to evaluate just one project and is beyond the scope of this evaluation. Greenspace Scotland found that with just one community food growing project "Bridgend Growing Communities" found that every £1 invested would generate around £17 of benefits.

6.2 Recommendations for wellbeing, exercise and diet:

- Funders and public sector commissioners continue to recognise the wellbeing and health (diet and physical activity) aspects of community food growing.
- Commissioners look to evidence provided by other academic studies of community food growing especially Social Return on Investment (SROI) models to see the importance of preventative work on the public purse in line with recommendations of the Marmot review.



7.0 Conclusions

By developing different types of capacity, the **Cultivate Project** has contributed towards a sustainability legacy within Hyndburn through the development of community assets. In this process:

- allotments throughout Hynburn have been successfully regenerated alongside investment in the local people offering them manageable plots of land;
- hard-to-reach communities are better able to manage land sustainably for food growing locally;
- awareness has been raised and local people are experiencing healthier diets, physical exercise and improved wellbeing;
- a wide range of learning opportunities and the development of skills have been created, leading onto some participants gaining employment and
- the Prospects Foundation is successful at partnership working.

The case studies, in particular, have revealed that the **Cultivate Project** enables individuals and communities to build capacity at a social level to access and afford local food. This is significant for hard-to-reach individuals and groups. It is important that the outcomes around health and wellbeing are recognised to enable the continued resilience and diversity of Hyndburn communities.



Recommendations

The final recommendations are based on the “commission readiness” of the project. It is important to foster continued, strong working relationships with Public Health East Lancashire commissioners as part of Lancashire County Council.

“The key from a commissioning perspective is linking community food growing to the wider issues especially around weight management and wellbeing. It is about the added value. I have been impressed by the talent of the people from the Prospects Foundation, not just the paid staff but the volunteers and trustees and also that they are working with such a broad range of people, many with complex needs. This represents good value for public money. In the future collaborative working and the building of community assets will be key to sustainable development. Commissioners have learned that we need to maintain the skills talent within smaller organisations. Future directions for the Cultivate project includes integration with more organisations across East Lancashire especially those working with clients with complex needs including substance misuse and veteran communities.”

Steve Owen, Commissioner

“The Cultivate project has shown great skill at working with all groups in particular hard-to-reach groups. Following the transition of the Primary Care Trust to Lancashire County Council, the local footprint has changed from an East locality to the whole of Lancashire. Therefore, we would like to share this good practice and expertise, to work with a much broader range of groups, outside the geographical area of Hyndburn. Some of the hard-to-reach groups to concentrate on include Black Minority Ethnic (BME), more schools in deprived areas and engage children within the school holidays, in particular around food growing as some children only receive one good wholesome meal while in school. It would also encourage them to continue where possible the positive nutritional changes outside of school.

It is also important that these groups become sustainable, which in Hyndburn has been helped with access to the Windfall fund. Even in Hyndburn there are opportunities for stronger networking and a collaborative approach. This will make funding from the Big Lottery easier. The Prospects Foundation need to raise awareness, for example using a newsletter, about their work that can be taken to the wider audience within public health and a county wide commissioning level. Prospects is a fantastic organisation and I feel that in the future they will need to show a “willingness to think outside the box,” work collaboratively with wider organisations and effectively promote their examples of best practice.”

**Marie Demaine, Public Health Co-ordinator
East Locality**

thanks to support from our strategic partners



Endorsements of the Prospects Foundation

"So good at allowing people to be themselves and put forward their own ideas. We all feel included."

Graham, One Planet Planters

"Committed, thorough, forward thinking, locally involved, informative and helpful and supporting."

Glenys Oates, Harrington Street Community Project

"The sessions have proven the most successful way at engaging what has traditionally been a hard to engage client group with mental health recovery." Keith Gregson, Community Re:start

"I do not know what (Julie and Ian) get paid but it is not enough and if bonuses were paid for enthusiasm and involvement then they would be on bankers salaries."

Aidan Unwin, Milnshaw Residents Association

"The development of an unused area for community food growing and community engagement would simply not have happened without the Prospects Foundation knowledge, wider connections and support. The project would have been too outfacing and difficult to have gone ahead." GrOWING WILD

"The work of the Prospects Foundation is invaluable to the future of Hyndburn. You cannot put a value on the uniqueness of Ian and Julie."

Wendy Litherland, Sustainability Director St Christopher's CofE High School

"They provided our students with a fantastic and amazing opportunity. Their knowledge is far greater than ours and they share this brilliantly with the students. They are confident in working with the students and passionate about the work they do."

Michelle Cutforth, Accrington Academy

"The team are friendly, enthusiastic and very knowledgeable about food growing. After every workshop session pupils come away with a sense of achievement. Pupils now have the ability and understanding in how to grow food."

Norden High School

"We have nothing but praise for all our dealings with the Prospects Foundation. They are totally professional and yet warm and friendly. Our students are all special needs (some with physical disabilities) and they have all been included and dealt with appropriately and with affection. A particular mention for Julie Livesey who has been selfless in sharing her knowledge and her enthusiasm."

Lee Bentley, Broadfield Specialist School

"invaluable in giving guidance in both the practicalities of growing produce in our grounds but, also in the process of accessing funding and organising the required paperwork. Their advocacy for this work has definitely kept the project alive providing a consistent voice through staff changes."

Mr. C. Lonsdale Spring Hill Community Primary School

"an organisation which is easily accessed and the people running it are knowledgeable, helpful and friendly." Handson Huncoat

"excellent links with locally active communities. They are excellent at involving families in one-off events and creative activities."

Kim Coverdale, Lancashire Wildlife Trust

"A big thank you from friends of Milnshaw Park and to all the Prospects team for all your help in starting this community edible garden."

Cllr Paul Cox, Milnshaw Ward

"enables people to do good things."

Ann Hourican, Hyndburn Borough Council

"a good reputation across Hyndburn and their support with projects is always appreciated."

Hyndburn Homes, social landlord