

AN INNER CITY COMMUNITY GARDEN PROVIDING THERAPY AND FRESH PRODUCE FOR VULNERABLE ELDERLY PEOPLE AND THOSE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

There is a vital need to provide those living with dementia with social interaction and stimulating activities to encourage participation and increase their sense of self-worth and accomplishment.

Project need:-

Brent is one of London's poorest inner city boroughs with a high deprivation rate. Over the last decade the dependency rate has increased as has the percentage of residents over 60. We see more elderly and vulnerable people living alone and an increase in loneliness. The Centre has identified an ever increasing need to provide a specialist service to elderly people living with dementia either independently in their own homes or with their families.



The Sudbury Neighbourhood Centre provides up to 7,000 specialist daycare places per year to some of the most vulnerable people living in Brent (one of London's poorest boroughs) as well as a further 3,900 lunch club places. At least 50% of the clients attending the Centre are living with dementia or early forms of dementia and a further 18% have learning difficulties.

When a person with dementia finds that their abilities are declining, they often feel vulnerable and in need of reassurance and support. Loneliness and isolation are among the leading causes of depression, sickness and decline in overall health and wellness in older adults. All of these issues can trigger dementia. Social engagement, recreation, living well and just having fun are the keys to life-balance, stress reduction, health and life.

A Community Garden for All:-

All of our elderly clients live in deprived communities in North London and the majority do not have access to a garden and, due to mobility and transport issues, may not have access to any green spaces. Our existing garden provides a safe, accessible outdoor space where they can relax and socialise with their friends as well as take part in physical activities. In warmer weather the garden is also used for exercise sessions, our annual Garden Party and other social events.



To the rear of the Centre there is a plot of waste ground measuring approximately 25 x 28 ft (700 square feet or 65 square metres). We would like to create a Community Garden to grow a range of fresh vegetables for the Centre kitchen and community use.

We plan to clear all the vegetation, level the site, put in raised planters and pathways for access by wheelchair users. In addition we would like to purchase a greenhouse/potting shed to bring on seedlings and more delicate vegetables as well as a secure storage shed for tools and compost etc., materials etc. We already have a team of volunteers who are keen to take part in the project and would also like to employ an experienced Project Leader on LLW for one year to lead the project.



Once established the Community Garden would be accessed by our own service users and volunteers as well as local community groups including Sudbury Town Residents Association (STRA) who will partner with us on this project. We would also work with the local churches (St. Georges RC Church, St. Andrews C of E, and Sudbury Methodist Church) as well as Sudbury Court Residents Association. In addition we hope to provide a local foodbank SUFRA with fresh produce to support disadvantaged families suffering food poverty in the local area

Outcomes:-

One specific area of mental health in which access to a garden and taking part in gardening activities has found a place is the care and treatment of patients living with Alzheimers and other forms of dementia. Access to a garden and taking part in gardening has many benefits for overall health and wellbeing, particularly in the elderly and those living with dementia:-

- + Gardening encourages use of all motor skills; walking, reaching and bending; through activities such as planting seeds and taking cuttings resulting in improvement of motor skills.
- + It can reduce stress levels and allow the person to relax, which promotes better sleep for improved health.
- + It can help prevent or reduce problems with diseases like osteoporosis, which benefit from exercise.
- + It helps improve mental awareness due to the fresh air and can help the elderly maintain the ability to focus and concentrate.
- + It provides social interaction and feelings of self-worth



All our clients would benefit from the Community Garden, not only from the physical and mental benefits of gardening but also from the fresh produce which would be used in our kitchen to prepare up to 1,000 lunches per month. In addition up to 150 people from local community groups would also benefit from access to a working garden and the fresh produce provided.

Cost:-

Our team of volunteers provide their services free of charge however we will need to provide materials, equipment, and a greenhouse/potting shed:-

Project Lead Salary - 16 hrs per week @ £9.40 (London Living Wage) for 1 year	£ 7,821
Raised bed kits, Soil, Materials for Pathways	£ 7,500
Potting shed/Greenhouse	£ 3,000
Secure Storage Shed	£ 2,000
Range of tools and wheelbarrows	£ 500
Total	£20,821