

Annex 7: Case studies

(a) Cyrenians - Royal Edinburgh Hospital Garden

1. Introduction to activity and delivery organisation

Cyrenians is an organisation that serves those on the edge, working with the homeless and vulnerable to transform their lives by beginning with their story, helping them believe that they can change their lives, and walking with them as they lead their own transformation.

The vision of Cyrenians is an inclusive society in which we all have the opportunities to live valued and fulfilled lives. The organisation works to make that vision by supporting people excluded from family, home, work or community.

Cyrenians were selected to manage the Royal Edinburgh Hospital garden in late 2009. The community garden site was overgrown and had been used for dumping. Cyrenians and partners managed to bring the site back into use and have since re-located to a more central location due to the re-development of the hospital.



The gardens are staffed four days a week with involvement from patients and volunteers from the across the local community and are open to visitors every day. The garden is laid out in a way that is accessible and welcoming, with spaces for people to relax, have quiet time to walk and reflect, or to take part in group activities.

Elderly patients with dementia are introduced to sensory experiences like smelling flowers, touching and tasting, and have particularly benefitted from the introduction of the 'All Ability Area' which has raised and wheelchair accessible spaces for gardening.

Cyrenians staff along with occupational therapists and patients built a cob pizza oven in the community garden; with patients from the ward getting involved twice a week, developing new skills and working as part of a team. The oven is used to make lunch in the gardens on a weekly basis, which is a highlight for many using the garden. A Rehab cookery group is run once a week thanks to the outdoor kitchen.

An art therapist also works with Cyrenians staff and patients on a weekly basis to focus on the greenspace and community garden from an arts perspective. This activity is contributing to John Muir Awards for inpatients - an environmental award scheme for people from all backgrounds.

The garden holds a drop-in each week for people with higher support needs to get involved in gardening; the sessions are run by a staff member and supported by volunteers.

These are just some of the activities that take place in the busy garden, others include woodland management, beekeeping, a range of gardening skills training, and one-off events such as the Big Lunch, Doors Open Day, Burns lunches and a Mental Health Arts Festival.

2. User group

All members of the public, the hospital community including in-patients, visitors and staff, local charities, users of mental health services, community associations and environmental groups are encouraged to get involved and visit.

Over 80 volunteers each year from across Edinburgh help with the gardening, cooking, administration, and also help to deliver the patient outreach programme that takes place across hospital wards. Cyrenians also host occupational therapy students from Queen Margaret University on placement.

An outreach programme is delivered by a sessional team who run gardening and nature-based activities with patients on wards at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital within the Learning Disability Unit and Older People's Services. They also run activities on three Physical rehab wards at the Astley Ainslie hospital, and work with The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) to help improve the outdoor spaces on wards.

3. Geography

The garden is situated within the grounds of the Royal Edinburgh Hospital. The hospital provides acute psychiatric and mental health services, which includes treatment for learning disabilities and dementia, with specialist services including centres for treating eating disorders, alcohol problems and younger people's mental health. The site also has the Orchard Clinic which is a medium secure care unit for the small number of patients with mental illnesses who require treatment in a more secure environment.

The hospital is being re-developed on its site; with two new buildings being recently opened in which all the wards have a courtyard garden so that patients can have safe and secure access to some greenspace everyday by using or viewing it.

4. Key learning

Staff described a wide range of benefits for patients of getting out into the hospital greenspace and through visiting and working in the community garden. This includes:

- *Physical wellbeing* – gaining strength from undertaking manual gardening activities or from walking, getting Vitamin D while outdoors, sleeping better after expending energy, being out in the fresh air
- *Skills and knowledge* – gaining knowledge of plants and tools, learning to take responsibility, to develop routines and be on time for activities and learning to work as part of a team
- *Doing something different and meaningful* – not all of the patients were familiar with gardening activities or nature craft activities, doing something they had not done or were not particularly familiar with could be invigorating and stimulating
- *Sensory experiences* – being outdoors hearing sounds, touching, tasting and smelling can be important; although smells do not always work with older patients as their sense of smell may be reduced
- *Social connections* – spending time with other people, mixing with non-hospital patients, having positive things to talk about to others on the ward

'I could not have managed my time any better. I wouldn't have thrived as much in hospital without this place – it's my haven, the centre of the world that exists to me at the moment. It has been fantastic, pure brilliant.' In-patient

The community garden is also a place where staff can go for lunch, on breaks and to unwind. However, not all staff are aware of this opportunity and sometimes ward culture means that staff don't take breaks outside. Interventions that help improve the quality of life for NHS staff as well as patients is increasingly recognised as beneficial – taking measures to do this is well received but can be hard to action.

Some significant barriers to use of the community garden by in-patients have been identified:

- some services and wards within the hospital are less keen to engage with the community garden, possibly due to the pressures they felt they were under and/or staffing levels
- staff often don't feel they have the time to take patients to the garden or they don't feel it is their role to do so
- managers and planners are often not aware of the spaces and the benefits they can provide, and how they can aid patient recovery
- access is a challenge for those with mobility issues, disabilities and/or wheelchair users

In terms of use of the garden by the wider community the following learning has been:

- Volunteers from the wider community are essential to running the garden and volunteers come to the garden for the social interaction as well as the therapeutic benefit of gardening
- Working with students in healthcare is extremely beneficial – students gain experience of working in a community setting and appreciation for this type of activity; they in turn provide feedback and contribute research and evaluation projects that mean better outcomes for patients. Experiences to work alongside patients is highly sought after by volunteers/students

'I love coming here – the people, the space, the food...it makes me happy and it's relaxing' Community volunteer

5. Future plans

Cyrenians would like to widen opportunities for people in the community to volunteer in the garden, especially linking in with GPs and social prescribing, and with Self Directed Support. They would also like to increase the opportunities for people to develop new skills and to learn about wildlife and sustainability gardening.

Across Edinburgh and the Lothians, Cyrenians would like to roll out the NHS staff training programmes and encourage more staff to relax in the garden spaces. The organisation also has an ambition to improve the ways they demonstrate impact by using stories and research.

6. More information

Cyrenians <https://cyrenians.scot/>

Gardens and health: Implications for policy and practice – The Kings Fund <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/gardens-and-health>

Acknowledgement: This brief case study is based on the *NHS Greenspace in Scotland Report to the Green Exercise Partnership on the Royal Edinburgh Hospital greenspace demonstration project* by Liz O'Brien (2018)

(b) Cyrenians – Midlothian Community Hospital Gardens

1. Introduction to activity and delivery organisation

Cyrenians is an organisation that serves those on the edge, working with the homeless and vulnerable to transform their lives by beginning with their story, helping them believe that they can change their lives, and walking with them as they lead their own transformation. The vision of Cyrenians is an inclusive society in which we all have the opportunities to live valued and fulfilled lives. The organisation works to realise that vision by supporting people excluded from family, home, work or community.

Cyrenians was successful in applying for a grant from Central Scotland Green Network which enabled them to open the gardens in the grounds of Midlothian Community Hospital in 2012. The garden site occupies a large space at the front of the hospital which originally was potato fields. The garden has a large greenhouse, workshop area, and ornamental and vegetable beds.



Cyrenians staff and volunteers run a weekly group 'buddying' session with patients and occupational therapists. This has been running since 2016 and has been a great success. For many of the patients it is the only time they get off the ward each week, having a chance to get involved in something meaningful, have a blether and learn new skills (or give others the benefit of their own experience) In addition to activities in the garden Cyrenians staff are helping to make improvements in one of the dementia ward gardens, and regularly run nature-based activities on two of the wards.

Cyrenians also run regular group sessions with local groups including the Orchard Centre (Health in Mind), Alzheimers Scotland, Garvald, Newbattle Rural College and Edinburgh College, local primary and secondary schools as well as young people excluded from school. From the garden a range of accredited and non-accredited courses are delivered including the John Muir Conservation award and SVQs. The garden also hosts to an annual Open Day and one-off educational events such as willow weaving and wheat threshing.

2. User group

All members of the public, local charities, schools and colleges, users of mental health services and community organisations use the garden. The garden is particularly enjoyed by patients, visitors and staff in the hospital.

Over 60 local people volunteer regularly every year, with community groups and local schools attending group sessions, as well as patients, staff and visitors from the hospital. Some of the volunteers have been with the project since it began.

3. Geography

The garden is situated within the grounds of Midlothian Community Hospital, in Bonnyrigg, Midlothian.

The Community hospital provides 88 beds - 40 frail elderly continuing care beds and 48 frail elderly mental health beds. These include 24 assessment beds for older people with mental health problems and 24 continuing care beds for older people with mental health problems.

The community hospital also includes a day hospital for older people with mental health problems; a dedicated physiotherapy and occupational therapy service; an out-patient department, including x-ray service, child health clinics; and a range of other health services including Lothian's GP Out-of-Hours service (Lothian Unscheduled Care Service).

4. Key Learning

A wide range of benefits for garden users – volunteers, patients, young people have been identified since the garden opened:

- NHS staff working in partnership with Cyrenians staff leads to better outcomes for patients, and helps to build a sense of community

'Over time you create a sense of community and a sense of belonging. Many of the patients have been isolated so it is about finding the social skills to spend time with other people, to be comfortable' - Occupational Therapist

- Opportunities for social interaction and exercise are as essential to the group as the gardening activity

'People there are rehabilitating, and at the same time working with other people, so it is definitely a way of achieving social reintegration if you think about it. I think that is the basis of the success of these gardens' - NHS staff member

- Working together, doing something meaningful is essential to wellbeing

'People have something to talk about, gardening with other people can be an ice-breaker, you start talking about plants, and end up telling stories about your childhood' - Garden volunteer

'I have found another way to feel part of something' – Course participant

- Sensory activities can help improve the communication of patients with dementia and Alzheimer's
'The smells for instance, of the flowers and herbs help people to recall places, memories and experiences. People with dementia can have problems communicating with other and being at the garden helps them to overcome that' - Occupational therapist
- An outdoor learning environment allows some young people to participate and flourish
'Often the young people arrive in the morning tired and lethargic, when they get outdoors their mood changes and they enjoy the activities'
- Youth worker
'It has been refreshing for these young people to be given so much positive feedback as they are not used to it. Staff have enjoyed seeing the young people out of context and seeing them flourish' - Youth worker
- It's essential that both volunteers and garden users have a choice of activity/influence over garden decisions to ensure they feel involved and to encourage a sense of ownership

For the garden to continue to deliver benefits for the varied user groups the following must be in place:

- Funding - decisions on health-related spend is often reactive rather than about prevention
'When the Government comes to the hospital to do inspections they are always impressed, but when it comes to spending money, they see other priorities' - NHS Staff member
'You find that everybody is happy to have a garden, but not everybody is happy to pay for it. It is a long way to go before we accept that the healthcare service should be fully paying for that, and therefore, longer to assume that gardens should be mandatory' - Stakeholder
- The garden needs trained staff to support the volunteers
'Ten years ago, it was thought that these initiatives were just about finding some volunteers, with no paid staff, and over time it's been proved that it isn't always the case that volunteers cannot take all the responsibility' - Stakeholder
- Land – not all hospital grounds would be able to host a community garden
'The land is very expensive here, it's difficult to acquire land for that purpose. The old facilities have gardens, as the MCH and the REH, because the sites are big. Gardens were out of fashion on the 20th century. And it's only recently been revived' - NHS staff member

5. Future plans

Cyrenians want to develop the gardens as a place where more young people from schools can gain outdoor learning experiences and widen opportunities for people to be referred through social prescribing.

The staff want to continue to build links with the hospital and run more sessions from the ward gardens. They would also like to further develop the potential of the garden as a nature garden.

6. More information

Cyrenians <https://cyrenians.scot/>

Gardens and health: Implications for policy and practice – The Kings Fund <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/gardens-and-health>

Acknowledgement: This brief case study is based partly on *'Healing gardens. Two case studies: Edinburgh Royal Hospital and Midlothian Community Hospital gardens and their potential replication in other mental health facilities'*, Victoria Syrewicz Echeverría, MSc Environmental Sustainability, University of Edinburgh (2018)

(c) TCV Green Gym programme with West Lothian Schools - Inveralmond Community High School

1. Introduction to activity and delivery organisation

Green Gym is a nationwide scheme run by The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) that combines physical activity with local environmental projects.

In West Lothian, TCV responded to a tender from NHS Lothian's health improvement fund to increase physical activity with young people. The invitation to tender was not green-health focused but TCV responded with the school green gym project. Funding for the project is committed for three to four years and enables TCV to employ a project officer to work with schools. The project began 1 April 2018 and will run to 2020, with a possible extension to 2021.

2. User group

In the first year, the TCV Project Officer is working with four schools: two high schools, one primary school and a special needs school. Each school project is also reaching out to existing community greenspace projects and/or community greenspaces.

It is a rolling programme, and so TCV will train teachers to take the projects on themselves and then move on to next cluster of schools. The project officer will still be there to support earlier schools. This gives continuity and increases the likelihood of projects continuing without full TCV involvement.

The Green Gym at Inveralmond Community High School is comprised of five pupils and two teachers. Pupils who struggled with daily school life are using the Green Gym to build their skill set and confidence.

3. Geography

The Green Gym programme was launched in 1998 and there are now more than 100 Green Gyms in the UK. Green Gyms are run in two ways: directly by TCV and by community groups under licence from TCV. The current programme covers West Lothian.

4. Key learning

TCV research into the impact of Green Gyms has shown that participating as a volunteer in a Green Gym improves and maintains physical and mental health by increasing physical activity levels and reducing social isolation, by creating opportunities for people to work together in worthwhile outdoor activities.

The challenges and benefits of the school programme are:

- Older pupils are harder to work with than younger pupils. They have a lot more going on and high school can be stressful for them. Spending time outside is often not a priority at their age.
- It is easier to engage Primary School staff than High School staff - they seem to have more freedom and time. High School staff are often focused on one subject and have similar pressures on time and from exams as the high school pupils.
- Existing groups and wider community have shown fantastic support to the projects.
- The general support and information sharing from local regeneration groups facilitated by West Lothian Council regeneration officers was unexpected, but a great advantage.
- Green Gyms link very well to all areas of the Curriculum for Excellence, but work is required to make teachers aware of this, so that the benefits are clear to all.

Specific health benefits for the young people involved:

- Physical activity levels increase - the pupils don't realise themselves how much it positively affects their bodies to be part of the Green Gym.
- There is no competitiveness, which appeals to a lot of young people, instead they play games etc when they are cold or bored.
- The pupil's mental wellbeing increases - they share what they are thinking and feeling in the outside space. Often the project officer hears them saying that they are happy and feel and relaxed. She even has pupils tell her [unprompted!] that they enjoyed the sessions.

5. Future plans

Good school engagement from new schools would help the project develop. Not all schools would need to sign up for the 8-week block of sessions; it could be one-off and/or with themed/seasonal events across all West Lothian schools or in a cluster.

The project will also look at developing lunch time clubs so that the whole school can get involved instead of a single class or group.

Access to community greenspaces and groups looking after these areas outside the school grounds is important for the success of the project as it needs the community link to become sustainable.

6. More information

TCV Green Gym <https://www.tcv.org.uk/greengym>

(d) Paths for All Health Walks – Mums Walk Midlothian and Woodland Wanderers

1. Introduction to activity and delivery organisation

Paths for All's vision is for a happier, healthier Scotland where physical activity improves quality of life and wellbeing for all.

Paths for All runs the Scottish Health Walk Network which is made up of over 100 projects from across Scotland. Each project delivers free, safe and sociable Health Walks in their local area each week. The Health Walks are supported by Paths for All Development Officers and delivered by trained Walk Leaders.

This case study focuses on two health walks in Midlothian which aim to improve the mental health of the participants - Mums Walk Midlothian and Woodland Wanderers.

2. User group

The user groups of the two projects are very different but all are experiencing mental ill health issues. Mums Walk Midlothian began as a peer support Health Walk for mums who are experiencing mental health difficulties and Woodland Wanderers was set up by a sister/carer of a young man with paranoid schizophrenia.

Mums Walk is promoted via Facebook and social media is used to advertise the group and reach local mums. Flyers are distributed around local agencies where mums who are struggling can be reached, such as GP surgeries, local mental health teams, Health Visiting teams, local supermarkets, libraries and nurseries. Mums Walk is attended by up to 10 individuals each week.

Woodland Wanderers receives referrals from health professionals connected to Bonnyrigg Primary Care Centre which supports people who have been diagnosed with a chronic mental health condition. The Woodland Wanderers have 12 regular walkers who are supported by support workers or carers while on the walk.

3. Geography

Both walking groups are active in Midlothian. Mums Walk meet at the local community high school/leisure centre in Bonnyrigg and then the group usually walk in a local park or along a local cycle path/walkway. This is followed by coffee, cake and chat.

The Woodland Wanderer walks usually take place around Dalkeith Country Park but sometimes walkers use their bus passes to venture further afield. The hour-long Health Walk is split into two halves with a break in the middle during which they can point out things of interest, look at objects up close through hand lenses and enjoy the sounds and sights of nature. The group meets fortnightly for a walk in the woods, to enjoy nature, look at leaves and seeds through hand lenses and listen to birdsong and the wind in the trees. After the walk, the fun is often extended when participants have a chance to stay on to play outdoor games or even meet reptiles and exotic insects!

4. Key learning

Mums Walk

- Meeting with other mums who were experiencing something similar is an important part of recovery.
'The walk helps me take my mind off my worries, but I also feel that if I need a chat and to shed a tear or two, I know that I am surrounded by people who understand what I am going through. I really enjoy it.'
- Exercise is another aspect of recovery, and so the walk combines peer support with gentle exercise. It is important that any exercise is accessible for mums who are unwell, as lack of energy and motivation can be a major obstacle for people struggling with depression
- It is important that the group facilitators, who all have experience of mental ill health, feel safe and supported in their role.
- The walk leaders identify suitable venues for the walking group to start from. The venue has to be accessible for local mums by car, foot and bus, and should not be an intimidating place to walk into for the first time. It needs to be baby and child friendly, have toilets, a café and nearby walks.
- The group has been able to signpost women to other local agencies helping them to access mental health and practical support.
- The women who come along are also supporting each other outside of the group which means that the group now reduces the day-to-day loneliness and isolation of mental ill health.

Woodland Wanderers

The walk leader and the walkers' carers and support workers have noticed changes in the participants. Over time they can walk faster and further - but the benefits aren't just physical:

'They're more talkative. They're quite willing to open up now. They can talk about their problems and things like that. They know they're not the only one out there. There are others in the same boat as you. There are friendships being made. I don't know what they're like in their own house or whatever but when they're with us they're laughing and smiling, they're giggling.'

The walk also benefits the walk leaders and the carers/support workers find it rewarding to run the group and enjoy going on the walks:

'Seeing them smile - it makes me happy actually. I feel I've done something and everybody's happy. This is something I never thought I'd do. I look forward to it – I feel exhilarated when I go back home! I love taking them out, I really do.'

5. Future plans

The Mums Walk group are happy that women who had felt isolated because of their mental ill health are meeting others in a similar position and the group has developed into a group of supportive, welcoming mums.

The Woodland Wanderers walk leader is keen to start up another Health Walk for the wider community. She would like to start a separate walk that would be open to anyone, because anyone and everyone can benefit from a Health Walk.

6. More information

Mums Walk Midlothian <https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/walking-for-health/health-walks/health-walk-projects-in-your-area/walk-project/mums-walk-midlothian>

Woodland Wanderers <https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/walking-for-health/health-walks/health-walk/woodland-wanderers>

Paths for All Health Walks <https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/health-walks>

(e) Edinburgh and Lothian Greenspace Trust - Whinpark Community Garden

1. Introduction to activity and delivery organisation

The Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust (ELGT) is an independent charity dedicated to improving the quality of life for communities by re-connecting people with their local greenspaces.

Whinpark community garden has been developed as part of the Whinpark Medical Practice which offers a wide range of clinics to their patients as well as running a community room which is accessed by a number of local groups and services. ELGT consulted with staff from the practice, as well as people from the local groups and services, to make plans for the garden and develop a programme of workshops to encourage local people to make use of their outdoor space



2. User group

42 community members were involved in the consultation process to ensure a space was created that would be useful to everyone. During Summer 2017, ELGT ran several planting sessions with staff, patients and members of the local community to fill the space with fruit, vegetables and herbs, as well as a selection of plants to create a fantastic sensory space. ELGT worked in partnership with local organisations such as the Broomhouse Centre and Health All Round.

3. Geography - Whinpark community garden is based at the Whinpark Medical Practice in Broomhouse, Edinburgh

4. Key learning

- The design is great and reflects what the people who took part in the community consultation said they would like in the space
- Local voluntary organisations are still using the garden as part of their programmes
- The practice manager was very supportive of the project, but it was harder to get the GPs involved in using the space

5. Future plans

In future projects, ELGT would bring together Link workers, GPs and the practice manager to establish patient/client pathways to the garden and a working relationship for when ELGT is no longer involved. ELGT would like to attract funding to establish more gardens like this but for future projects will build in a longer timeframe to establish relationships with GPs and to run regular sessions in the garden space once the design is complete.

6. More information <http://www.elgt.org.uk/projects/community-gardening/health-inequalities-gardens>

(f) Edinburgh and Lothian Greenspace Trust - Branching Out

1. Introduction to activity and delivery organisation

The Edinburgh & Lothians Greenspace Trust (ELGT) is an independent charity dedicated to improving the quality of life for our communities by re-connecting people with their local greenspaces.



ELGT's Branching Out provides a programme of activities for people experiencing mental health issues, and their support workers. It is run using two ELGT staff who have had extensive Branching Out training.

Each programme is structured over 12 sessions and activities include: tree identification, shelter building, knot tying, woodland arts and crafts, bush craft skills, cooking on a fire, woodland walks and bird watching.

ELGT has provided Branching Out programmes for over 9 years funded by NHS Lothian and Forestry Commission Scotland. In 2018 ELGT was awarded a service level agreement by NHS Lothian to deliver 1 programme a year for three years and FCS has provided year on year match-funding.

2. User group

In 2017, ELGT ran two programmes of Branching Out: one in Summer with Cambridge Street House, and the second in Autumn with Pilton Equalities Partnership (PEP).

In 2018, ELGT provided Branching Out sessions for Cambridge Street House and CHANGES, a Community Health Project which promotes the positive wellbeing of people living in East Lothian based in Musselburgh.

The participants were referred by support staff to the Branching Out programme and fill out a standard application form with help from staff.

3. Geography

ELGT has identified suitable locations that involve quiet woodlands that are accessible for people with mobility issues. The first programme was run at Carberry Estate, and the second at the Hermitage of Braid. Meadowfield Park has also been used.

4. Key learning

Relationship with NHS staff and support workers

ELGT has built up a good relationship with NHS staff who really see the benefit of their service users taking part in the programme. The staff have been brilliant. They are cooperative and committed, and appreciate the opportunity to get clients and themselves outdoor.

The support staff get to see their clients in a different way and have the chance to develop a different relationship with them when they are away from the environment of the centres or ward. The staff just muck in with everyone else.

Good outcomes for homeless people with mental ill health

Over the last six years, ELGT has had two programmes with the Access Practice with very positive results. Life at the Hostel is very chaotic and full of drama, so Branching Out is like a release for the participants, a bit of quiet away from the chaos. Unfortunately, the Access Practice has not been able to commit to a programme this year due to staff shortages.

Participants to influence the programme

ELGT would like the participants to have greater input into shaping and leading the programme. Logistics mean that ELGT staff plan the programme after one initial meeting. Later, the staff get to know the special skills that participants have which it would have been good to know at the outset. It would also empower the participants and lead to greater commitment.

More celebration/networking events

It would be great to be able to have more celebration and 're-union' events like the one in Musselburgh at the opening of the John Muir Way. It brought participants and staff from different programmes together and people really enjoyed meeting up and got a lot of inspiration from each other.

Chose which greenspaces and parks to use wisely

- Have woodlands large enough to feel secluded/secure/undisturbed
- Show the seasonal changes
- Allow for a bit of conservation work – not too manicured
- Be aware that dog walkers can be a problem, especially dog walker businesses

Go with the flow and the participants

Don't get too hung up on your plans for the day. The weather and the mood of clients sets the agenda. Don't worry about completing every activity – the process is the important bit. Have lots of spare activities ready in case something doesn't work out. Never forget your tarp and have waterproofs etc. that the participants can borrow.

Important to be part of the Branching Out brand

It is very useful to be part of Branching Out as it is well known in the mental health sector. Having Forestry Commission Scotland and NHS as partners gives credibility, much more than if it was only ELGT who promoted the activities.

'Branching Out has helped me in ways I never thought possible. Spending time outdoors, exploring, thinking and feeling in touch with nature, has made me feel different about life.' - Branching Out participant

5. Future plans

ELGT staff are looking forward to new input from facilitators on site in Holyrood Park when working with participants from Ballenden House. The Historic Environment Scotland Ranger in Holyrood Park is trained as a Branching Out Ranger and will join the team working with Ballenden House. It's always good to hear from new volunteers – their ideas shake you up a bit and make you look at things differently.

ELGT would like to have a dedicated Branching Out Officer to allow for more lead in time and planning of each course. With a dedicated officer it would also be possible to develop up a volunteer programme and build relationships with GPs. It would be exciting to develop a programme focusing on 18-25-year olds as part of the preventative work ELGT does with Link workers.

6. More information

Branching Out <https://scotland.forestry.gov.uk/supporting/strategy-policy-guidance/health-strategy/branching-out>

Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust <http://www.elgt.org.uk/>