

## Creating a pathway to nature based activity for acute psychiatric and mental health services at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital

NHS Lothian Charity has been working with the Cyrenians at the Royal Edinburgh Hospital to create a pathway that supports people who are experiencing severe mental health problems to access nature based activities in the community garden.

Our experience has shown that these activities improve confidence, mood, motivation and physical activity, contributing to patients' health and wellbeing. In year two of this three year project we can see a positive impact across the hospital.



**I just feel better  
and calmer when  
I'm here in the  
garden, it's  
peaceful."**

Patient

### Person-centred approach

The Cyrenians person-centred approach is creating a clear progression pathway from first contact with patients on wards through to discharge, and beyond.

- Early-engagement activities – The green health journey starts by providing activities that can be done on the ward with activity bags and taster sessions. For many people this will be their first step into using the outdoors as a therapeutic environment.
- Supporting inpatients to access the community gardens – Patients who have the most to gain often need the most support to access the gardens. The patient buddying scheme develops relationships with the patients and NHS staff to support them to access 1:1 and small group activities.
- Bridging the gap on discharge – For people being discharged from hospital it is important that they have services in place to help them. Through a referral system, we offer sessions to support this transition and connect them to opportunities in their community.

## Progress so far

### Outcomes

Participants have told us the project is having an impact on their health and wellbeing in the following ways:

- Improved mood and confidence
- Sense of achievement
- Better connection to others and nature

The project is also having a wider impact on the hospital. NHS staff have learnt new skills and can work with patients to engage in a variety of activities in the gardens. Additional greenspaces across the estate have been adopted by the project and are thriving as a result. New wildlife areas have been created and the maintenance of the orchard enhanced.

Through the project, stronger relationships and better understanding have been built with the site and the estate management teams.

If you would like to take part or volunteer contact [RECG@cyrenians.scot](mailto:RECG@cyrenians.scot)

**85**  
In patients  
regularly  
participated



"It is easier for me to think properly and actually talk properly when I'm at the gardens."

Patient

**34**  
Volunteers  
recruited



"I've learned a lot about gardening but also people... about how to interact with people, people who are different or have different needs."

Volunteer

**800**  
Activity  
packs  
delivered



"This is what keeps me well, it gives me a sense of purpose and achievement."

Patient

