

# **A summary report of an Evaluation of the Master Gardener Programme at HMP Rye Hill: An Horticultural Intervention with Substance Misusing Offenders**

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# A Summary Report of an Evaluation of the Master Gardener Programme at HMP Rye Hill

An Horticultural Intervention with  
Substance Misusing Offenders



## CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	2
Introduction .....	3
Summary of Key Findings.....	3
Background .....	4
The Core Master Gardener Programme.....	4
Horticultural Interventions in a prison setting.....	4
Prison Context .....	4
Methodology.....	6
Aims and Approach.....	6
Research Tools.....	6
Evaluation Participants .....	7
Data Collected.....	8
Key Findings.....	9
Building an environment that supports recovery.....	10
Building health and wellbeing.....	12
Building a recovery Master Gardener community .....	14
Building opportunities for learning .....	16
The Master Gardener Programme in a prison setting .....	22
Summary of Key Findings.....	24
Moving forward with the Master Gardener Programme.....	24
Final Reflections .....	25
References.....	26

### Acknowledgements

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This evaluation was commissioned by Garden Organic. The research team would like to thank all the staff at Rye Hill prison for supporting us with our evaluation. We are especially grateful to the participants for generously sharing their time, views and experiences with us.

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## A summary report of the main findings of an evaluation of an horticulture intervention with substance misusing offenders at HMP Rye Hill

### INTRODUCTION

Drawing on our main evaluation report (Brown et al, 2015), this summary report presents key findings from the evaluation of Garden Organic's MG programme delivered at Rye Hill prison. The report firstly outlines the background and context to the study including an overview of the MG programme as well as the current context of prisons in England. The report then details the evaluation framework, including the methodology and an overview of the participants and data collected.

The main body of the report is grounded in data generated from the evaluation including prison data, survey data, observational data, focus group data, and data from participant's reflective diaries and circles of change; and is structured around five key themes:

1. Building an environment that supports recovery and change
2. Building health and wellbeing
3. Building a recovery Master Gardener community
4. Building opportunities for learning
5. The MG programme in a prison setting

#### Summary of Key Findings:

The MG programme led to a range of positive outcomes, the MG programme:

**Provides an environment that supports substance misusing offenders with their recovery journey and is conducive to addressing offenders wider health and wellbeing.**

**Offers a space in which participants can work together towards a shared goal. This helps to create a sense of community between substance misusing offenders, but also between participants and staff delivering the MG programme**

**Facilitates opportunities for learning, and developing skills and peer support**

**Encourages substance misusing offenders to consider and make wider behavioural changes both in and outside prison.**

**Offers a positive contribution to HMP Rye Hill's strategic goal to establish a recovery unit**

**Is an example of HMP Rye Hill Substance misuse team proactively tackling substance misuse, in line with the direction proposed in the current Drug Strategy; Reducing Demand, Restricting Supply, Building Recovery (2010)**

## BACKGROUND

### The Core Master Gardener Programme

The Master Gardener programme was launched as a pilot in 2010, based on Garden Organic's 'Master Composter' programme. The overall aim of the programme was to 'provide local support and advice for growing food' ([www.mastergardeners.org.uk](http://www.mastergardeners.org.uk)). Through the core programme, volunteer Master Gardeners (trained by Garden Organic) mentor registered 'households' and provide free food growing advice for a period of around 12 months.

The national evaluation of the programme which demonstrated a range of impacts for the households and volunteers involved in the (interconnected) areas of: health and wellbeing; skills base and employability; community life; food eating and buying; and food recycling and composting on the households and volunteers involved as encapsulated in the following quote:

*"Growing food within the realm of the MG Programme contributes towards building community and resilience in a range of settings, enabling people to learn, to succeed (and fail) through the supportive, informal, flexible and personal mentoring offered. It provides the opportunity for physical, outdoor activity, the consumption of healthy produce and leads to greater understanding and awareness of a range of topics as well as improved wellbeing."*

(Bos and Kneafsey, 2014: 6).

### Horticultural interventions in a prison setting

In 2002, Grimshaw and King published a pioneering study which examined issues facing 104 horticultural projects operating in 104 prisons and secure psychiatric facilities across the UK. Key findings identified the importance of horticulture in the lives of participants in creating a sense of ownership and the development of life skills, educational, occupational and rehabilitative benefits. The engagement of participants in horticultural activities also facilitated an improvement in relationships between participants and the wider community and was an important factor in improving individual's physical health

International evaluative research further provides some additional insights about a range of positive outcomes of a MG Programme for offenders in a prison setting in the US, including: increased self-esteem and self-control; improved life satisfaction and communication with fellow offenders; a therapeutic effect; intellectual stimulation; a sense of accomplishment and an opportunity for learning (Polmoski, et al., 1997).

This evaluation contributes to this evidence through offering a unique insight into the delivery of the MG programme at Rye Hill prison.

### Desistance

The concept of desistance is highly relevant to this evaluation. Maruna & Immarigeon (2004) see the term 'desistance' in relation to understanding 'why and how former offenders avoid continued involvement in criminal behavior'. However, to understand the complexity of desistance Glynn (2012) argues for research undertaken in this area to:

- Offer the opportunity for offenders to have a voice as a way of capturing this complexity.
- Consider how desistance is affected by personal and social circumstances which are space and place specific (Flynn, 2010).
- Consider how offenders are active participants in their own reformation (Maruna, et al., 2004).

The evaluation of the MG programme with substance misusing offenders at Rye Hill prison is located within this explanatory framework. In addition to identifying the multifaceted positive outcomes for individuals/groups of engaging in horticulture in terms of the physical, emotional, behavioural and social wellbeing impacts, it further provides a better understanding of the factors that contribute to individual's decisions to change their offending behaviour.

### Prison Context

As the delivery of the programme at Rye Hill prison is the first time the programme has been delivered in a prison setting in England, it is important to understand and outline the general prison context. An annual report by the Prison Reform Trust (2014) provides an overall insight into the state of prisons in 2014, from which the following information is taken.

### Ethnicity

In 2014, 26% of the prison population was from a minority ethnic group<sup>1</sup> in comparison to around one in 10 of the general population<sup>2</sup>.

### Age

In 2014, 12% of the male prison population in England and Wales were aged 50 or over.

### Education, work and reoffending

In 2012, 47% of prisoners said that they had no qualifications (compared to 15% of the working age general population in the UK<sup>3</sup>). 21% of prisoners reported needing help with reading and writing or ability with numbers, 41% with education, and 40% to improve work-related skills<sup>4</sup>. Some 9,700 prisoners are employed in workshops across the prison estate from printing to commercial laundry, textile production, manufacturing and distribution. The most recent annual report by HM Chief Inspector of Prisons found that both "the quantity and quality of purposeful activity in which prisoners are engaged [has] plummeted" in 2012-13, reporting the worst outcomes in six years. In over half of prisons results were judged to be not sufficiently good or poor<sup>5</sup>. 68% of prisoners thought that 'having a job' was important in stopping reoffending<sup>6</sup>.

### Mental Health

An estimated 36% of 1,435 prisoners interviewed in a MoJ study were considered to have a disability when survey answers about disability and health, including mental health, were screened<sup>7</sup>. 23% of male prisoners in an MoJ study were assessed as suffering from anxiety and depression (compared to 12% of the general UK male population<sup>8</sup>) and 16% of men said they had received treatment for a mental health problem in the year before custody<sup>9</sup>.

### Self-Harming

Between December 2012 and December 2013, there were a total of 23,183 incidents of self-harm in prisons, 25 more than in the previous 12 months<sup>10</sup>. 27% of self-harm incidents occurred within the first month of arriving in a prison - 10% in the first week<sup>11</sup>. 21% of male prisoners reported having attempted suicide at some point in their lives; men recently released from prison are eight times more likely than the general population to take their own lives<sup>12</sup>. In a recent large scale study, Hawton et al., (2014) found that self harm was more prevalent among white males who are un-sentenced, or have a life sentence.

### Drug Use

Levels of drug use are high amongst offenders, with highest levels of use found amongst more prolific offenders. 64% of prisoners reported having used drugs in the four weeks before custody<sup>13</sup>.

### Health in Prisons

In 2011 responsibility for funding for substance misuse services (SMS) in prisons changed from the Ministry of Justice to the Department of Health (including funding for CARAT<sup>14</sup>, drug and alcohol and compact based drugs testing) with National Offender Management Service (NOMS) remaining responsible for mandatory drug testing. However, partnerships with contracted prisons were provided with advice and support in commissioning drug treatment services within these prisons (which includes Rye Hill) (MoJ, NHS and DoH, 2011). The use of legal highs (such as Spice also known as Black Mamba) in prisons has been identified as a threat to the order of prisons in England and Wales; Ministers are concerned the use of the drugs is fuelling disruptive and violent behaviour as well as bullying (The Telegraph, 2015). Furthermore, prisoners face a number of issues trying to access appropriate services (such as CARAT) (UK Parliament, 2012).

### HMP Rye Hill

HMP Rye Hill is a private training prison run by G4S which opened in 2001. Whilst other horticultural interventions in prisons are not rare (Dartmoor (cat C), Suffolk (cat D) and Market Harborough (cat B)), Rye Hill prison is the first prison in the UK to adopt the Master Gardener model as an intervention to work with substance misusing offenders<sup>15</sup>. Rye Hill has a capacity of 635 and acts "as a national resource for sentenced male adults who have been convicted of a current or previous sex offence(s)." ([www.hmpryehill.co.uk](http://www.hmpryehill.co.uk), 2014). Furthermore, Rye Hill is for offenders who have been sentenced to over 4 years and have at least 12 months left to serve on their sentence.

It is important to note that the first phase of our evaluation was undertaken when Rye Hill was a Category B mixed prison housing mainstream and vulnerable offenders, including sex offenders. However, at the mid-point of the evaluation the prison became a designated Category B prison for offenders convicted of a sexual offence. Rye Hill Prison is the only Category B prison designated for offenders convicted for a sexual offence in the UK.

The MG Programme forms part of a suite of interventions introduced at HMP Rye Hill to support substance misusing offenders. The current strategic direction is to develop a Recovery Unit that provides a safe, secure unit where offenders receive appropriate care, from the Substance Misuse team, who provide psychosocial interventions and support. The aims of the unit is to support offenders in developing skills, become productive members of society and to ultimately move away from misusing substances.

<sup>1</sup>Table 1.4, Ministry of Justice (2014) Offender Management Statistics Quarterly Bulletin October to December 2013, London: Ministry of Justice 80 Table A3.5.2, Equality and Human Rights Commission (2010) How fair is Britain? Equality, Human Rights and Good Relations

<sup>2</sup>Table A3.5.2, Equality and Human Rights Commission (2010) How fair is Britain? Equality, Human Rights and Good Relations

<sup>3</sup>Ministry of Justice (2012) The pre-custody employment, training and education status of newly sentenced prisoners, London: Ministry of Justice

<sup>4</sup>ibid.

<sup>5</sup>HM Chief Inspector of Prisons (2013) Annual Report 2012-13, London: The Stationery Office

<sup>6</sup>ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ministry of Justice (2012) Estimating the prevalence of disability amongst prisoners: results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) survey, London: Ministry of Justice

<sup>8</sup>Ministry of Justice (2013) Gender differences in substance misuse and mental health amongst prisoners, London: Ministry of Justice

<sup>9</sup>Ministry of Justice (2013) Gender differences in substance misuse and mental health amongst prisoners, London: Ministry of Justice

<sup>10</sup>Table 3, Ministry of Justice (2014) Safety in Custody Statistics Quarterly Update to December 2013, London: Ministry of Justice

<sup>11</sup>Table 2.5, ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Pratt, D. Piper, M, Appleby, L. Webb, R. Shaw, J. Suicide in recently released prisoners: a population-based cohort study, The Lancet - Vol. 368, Issue 9530, 8 July 2006

<sup>13</sup>Ministry of Justice (2013) Gender differences in substance misuse and mental health amongst prisoners, Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) longitudinal cohort study of prisoners, London: Ministry of Justice

<sup>14</sup>Counselling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Through care worker.

<sup>15</sup>The programme launched in Rye Hill prison in 2013.

# METHODOLOGY

## Aims and Approach

The aim of the study was to evaluate the MG programme as an intervention for substance misuse offenders. By exploring prisoners' personal experiences of engaging in the horticultural intervention and understanding the processes by which the intervention is provided, the study aimed to identify the potential benefits and challenges associated with an horticultural intervention in a prison setting for prison staff, G4S and participants' families. In addition, the aim was to consider the support needs going forward for the future provision of horticultural interventions within a prison setting and post release.

The evaluation utilised an interpretive framework and was designed to capture offender's self-perceptions of being involved in the MG programme.

The full report (Brown et al, 2015) is based on an analysis of data collected over a twelve month period and an analysis of data routinely collected by the prison. Respondents included:

- Offenders engaged in the horticultural intervention
- Substance Misuse staff
- Staff not involved or engaged in the intervention but who come into contact with participants as part of their daily role.
- Prison management team
- Garden Organic staff
- Offenders' family members.

The decision to primarily adopt a number of qualitative methods to our evaluation of the MG programme is in acknowledgment of the limitations associated with research designed to uncover fixed patterns. A mixed method approach drawing on a range of qualitative tools is in recognition that human behaviour is complex and fluid and that these are factors that are often overlooked in research that primarily focuses on uncovering fixed patterns alone.

**Table 1: Research Tools**

<p><b>Participant observation:</b> This enabled the research team to spend time with the participants and staff, and to familiarise themselves with the environment at Rye Hill prison. The purpose of participant observations is to observe the delivery of the Master Gardener scheme in a prison setting and to capture first hand participants' views, behaviour and interactions.</p>	<p><b>Circle of Change:</b> On a monthly basis participants were asked to record their perceptions about how the programme encouraged and/or supported them to make changes in areas of their lives.</p>
<p><b>Semi structured interviews:</b> The research team conducted semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders from Rye Hill prison and Garden Organic. This included; the coordinator of the Master Gardening programme at Rye Hill, Garden Organic project lead, G4S garden staff, G4S Substance Misuse Lead and a representative from G4S Management. Semi structured interviews allow the research team to explore issues arising from participant observations and other methods used.</p>	<p><b>Prison Data:</b> This is information that is routinely captured as part of the prison management regime; this data includes adjudications, earned privilege level, and category.</p>
<p><b>Focus groups:</b> Focus groups were conducted with staff working in the Substance Misuse Team and participants in Group 1.</p>	<p><b>Demographic survey:</b> A one off survey used as a way to gather socio-economic data when participants on the programme consent to take part in the evaluation.</p>
<p><b>Portfolio of Work:</b> As part of the MG programme participants were required to complete a work based portfolio. The portfolio contained information relating to: personal development, practical, factual and transferable skills learnt or developed, worksheets – record of skills covered as part of the gardening intervention, plans and descriptions around areas of work in Phase 2, motivation and expectation in relation to involvement in the gardening intervention and also included some biographical information.</p>	<p><b>Staff Survey:</b> Used as a way of gaining an insight to the perceptions of changes observed by members of staff not directly involved in the MG programme but who may come into contact with participants, as part of their role. A short survey was administered to a random selection of staff on a bi-monthly basis.</p>
<p><b>Reflective Diaries:</b> On a monthly basis participants were asked to complete a reflective diary. The diary was designed to capture individual participants' feelings and experiences about being on the programme. Participants were asked to consider sharing their experiences, feelings, and what they felt had changed over the month.</p>	<p><b>Family Survey:</b> Used as a way of gaining an insight as to the perceptions of changes observed by participants' family members a short survey was administered to family members attending a Family event as part of the MG Programme</p>

## Evaluation participants

The evaluation was conducted over two phases between August 2013 – January 2015. The reason for this was the outcome of the decision to designate Rye Hill as a prison for offenders who had committed a sexual offence. The 're-roll' took place six months into the evaluation. As a result, Phase 1 was conducted with offenders from the general population (also see interim report, Brown et al., 2014). After the evaluation was halted for a period of time due to the re-roll, Phase 2 began in August 2014 with the new prison population. The evaluation engaged with the two groups for an equal amount of time – a period of 6 months. In total, data was collected from 11 participants in Phase 1 and 14 participants in Phase 2.

### • Age

Figure 1 shows that participant's in group 1 are generally younger than group 2 participants. Within group two there is a wider spread of age groups on the programme ranging from 20-59, whereas group one participants are generally aged 20-39, with one participant aged 40-49.

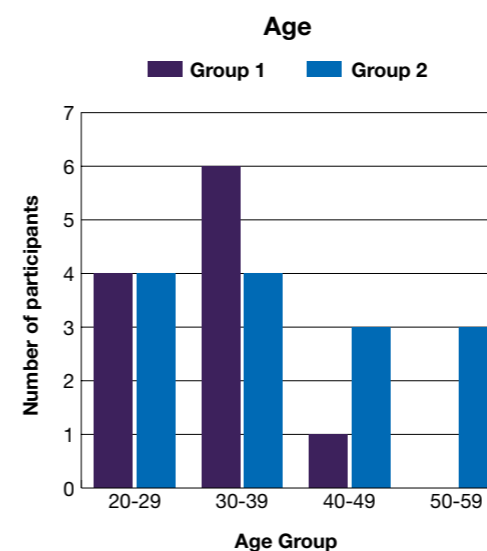


Figure 1: Age

### • Ethnicity

The demographic data shows that 91% of group 1 respondents classified themselves as British/English/Welsh/Northern Irish/Scottish and 9% indicating they are Irish. Group 2 comprises a more ethnically diverse range of participants with 57% being British/English/Welsh/Northern Irish/Scottish (n=8), 21% Irish (n=3), 7% Indian (n=1), 7% Gypsy or Irish Traveller (n=1), and 7% White and Black Caribbean (n=1).

### • Disability

Generally, respondents reported not having a disability. A higher proportion of respondents in group 2 reported having a disability; 29% of group 2 respondents (n=4) reported having a disability compared to 9% of group 1 (n=1). Small number in each group preferred not to say (9% group 1 and 7% group 2).

### • Education

Figure 2 shows that a higher proportion overall in group 1 have GCSEs (50% group 1 n=5, 36% group 2 n=5) as their highest qualification. Similar numbers have A Levels (30% group 1 n=3, 29% group 2 n=4) or no qualifications (20% group 1 n=2, 21% group 2 n=3). However, participants in group 2 possess an apprenticeship (7%) or a degree (7%) (n=1). Therefore, a general conclusion to be made is that group 2 as a whole are slightly more educated in comparison to group 1.

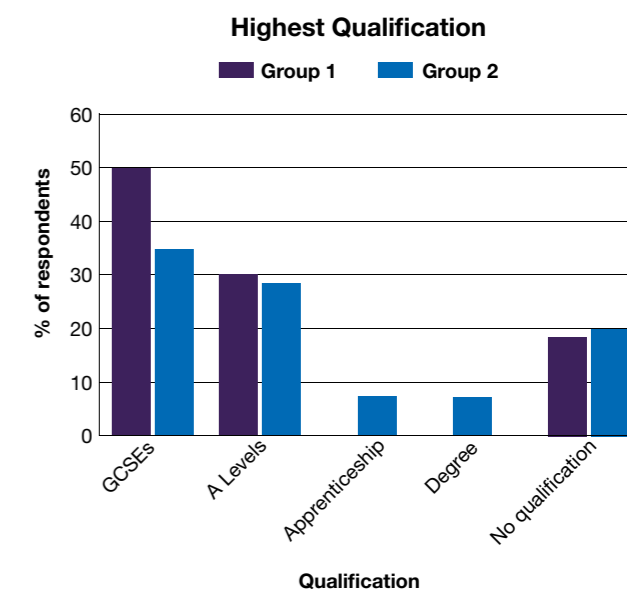


Figure 2: Highest Qualification

The demographic data shows that Phase 1 participants were a diverse group in terms of age. The group differed in terms of; offence committed, number of times they had been imprisoned, length of sentence and type of sentence. However, what was common is that they all reported to have substance misusing issues and were not deemed to have committed a sexual offence. Whilst the type of offences committed by participants in Phase 2 varied, they were all imprisoned for having committed a sexual related offence. Similarly to the offenders in Phase 1, there were variations in this group related to age, offence, substance misused, and length of service. However there was more diversity in terms of ethnicity and religion. A noticeable difference with Phase 2 participants was the increased number who reported having a mental health need. At the time of conducting the field work in Phase 2 at least three participants were being monitored by staff as they were perceived to be at risk of 'self-harming' or suicide.

## Data Collected

During Phase 1 and Phase 2 (P1 and P2) of the evaluation<sup>16</sup> data was collected from programme participants and programme staff using the same methods. However, we did not collect data from family members in Phase 2 and whilst portfolios were analysed in Phase 1, we took the opportunity to include plans and descriptions around areas of work in Phase 2.

In total, the research team:

- Spent around 152 hours conducting participant observations
- Facilitated 3 focus groups (with participants)
- Conducted 7 staff interviews
- Collected 50 completed staff feedback forms
- Gathered 58 completed reflective diaries, 46 completed circles of change, 25 demographic surveys
- Analysed 3 portfolios
- Collected 4 family surveys.

## Ethics

Application for ethical approval was granted by Coventry University Ethics lead in August 2013. Prior to the collection of data, the research team spoke at length to participants about the study and written consent was obtained from all participants. A request was made for access to data routinely collected by G4S, which included information associated with incentives, security and adjudications.

<sup>16</sup>Phase 1 data was collected September 2013 – March 2014 and Phase 2 August 2014- December 2014.



Image of the garden taken at the end of summer 2014

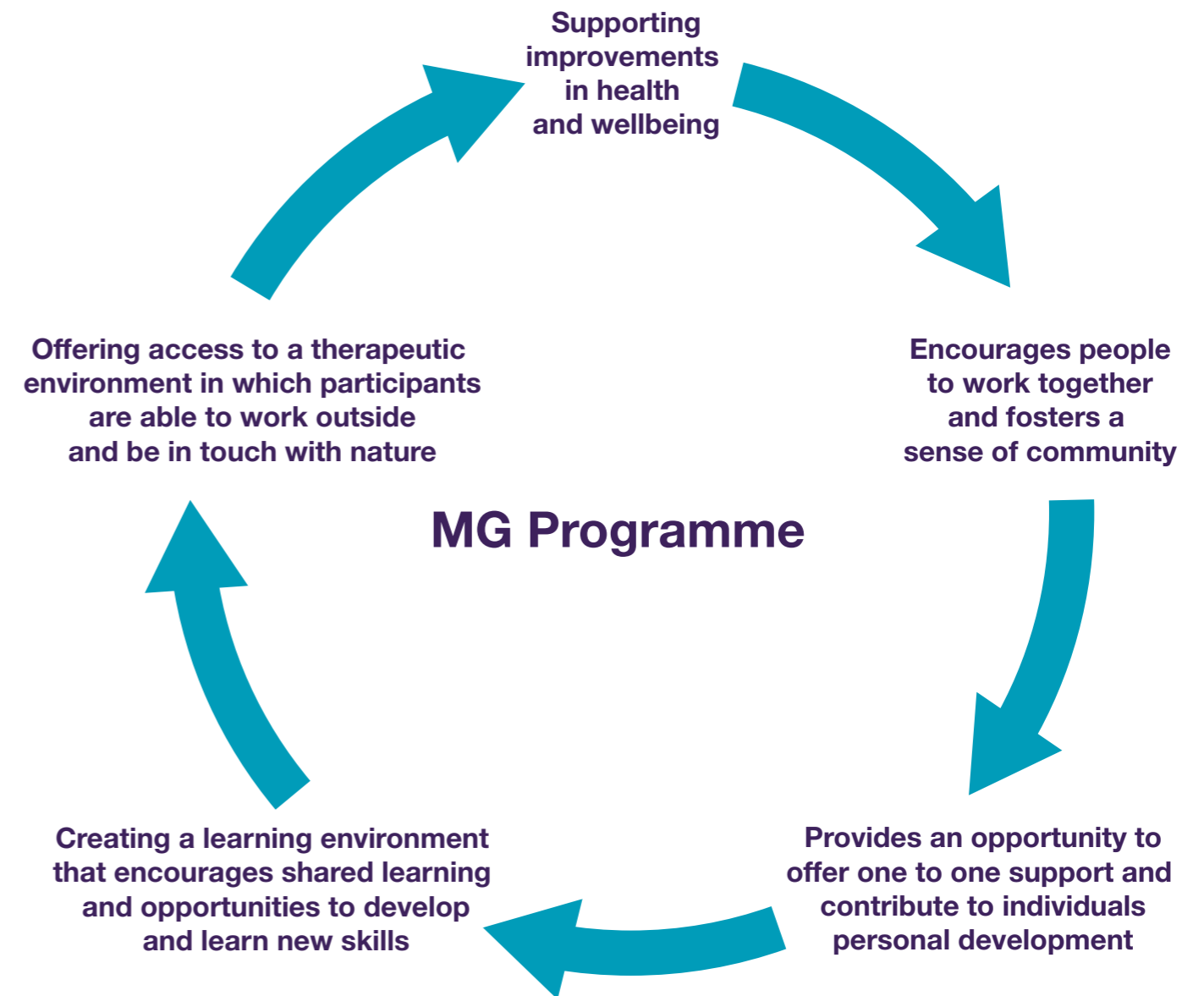
## KEY FINDINGS

Presenting data under 5 sections demonstrates the multiple ways in which the MG programme is understood as having an impact on participants and the delivery of the programme in a prison setting.

1. Building an environment that supports recovery and change
2. Building health and wellbeing
3. Building a recovery Master Gardener community
4. Building opportunities for learning
5. The MG Programme in a prison setting

In organising the data in this way, it is important not to ignore the interconnections between each of these key findings and how they contribute to creating an environment amenable to supporting offenders with a substance misuse issue and their pathway to recovery.

Whilst participants in Phase 1 and Phase 2 reported common experiences about their involvement in the MG programme, there are also differences and contradictions to be found between the two groups.



# 1. BUILDING AN ENVIRONMENT THAT SUPPORTS RECOVERY

Overwhelmingly, the data identifies the significance of working in the garden to participants' recovery journey, illustrating the relationship between the environment and recovery. This relationship is captured under the following themes.

## 1.1 Space

### 1.2 Growing and related activities

### 1.3 Nature and recovery

## 1.1 Space

Building on the work of Grimshaw and King (2002) who identify the important role of horticulture in the lives of participants in secure environments, findings from this evaluation have demonstrated the diverse ways in which the MG programme and working in the garden offers substance misusing offenders a therapeutic space that supports their recovery journey. In their reflective diaries and circles participants repeatedly write about the pleasure, tranquillity and sense of freedom they feel as a result of working outdoors. Participants frequently reported feeling better for being outside and in touch with nature (even during the winter months). Also of importance is how the garden offered participants access to a space where they are able to reflect about life inside and outside of prison, providing an element of solace.



This image was taken in summer 2014

The MG environment was perceived as something very different from life in other parts of the prison estate and as an ideal environment for recovery which was also attributed to the staff working in the garden. A benefit of conducting our evaluation over a 12 month period was having the opportunity to capture the changes that took place in the garden over this period. During our monthly visits we observed the on-going transformation of the garden across the four seasons and the thought and consideration given to use of the space.

During our observations in October we noted the following:

*In terms of the appearance of the garden, it had changed as it does every visit. The polytunnel had new things growing in it and was at a much lower level compared to the summer when there were vertical poles with plants growing up them and looked very full. The patch near the entrance looked nearly finished, and there was a sign 'SMS garden' there too. There were lots of salad leaves growing around the portakabin and the compost area was being transformed. The pond was nearly finished with [name] painting the bridge as one of the last activities that needed doing.* (Observational notes, October 2014)

Participants in their reflective diaries and circles repeatedly wrote about the pleasure, tranquillity and sense of freedom they felt as a result of working outdoors:

*Makes my head feel clearer being in the garden. I like the fresh air so I'm not always inside. I like the people on the project. I like to be moving around, I like the principle of work and don't like being still.* (P1)

*I find the whole experience extremely positive and helpful in lots of ways. The most prominent factor is the freedom. It's fantastic for me to get off the wing; it feels to me as though I'm working outside of jail.*

What was important about the MG environment was that it was something very different from life in other parts of the prison estate. The data identified a disparity between experiences reported on the prison wing and in other areas of the prison such as working in industries. The outside space was perceived as an ideal environment for recovery:

*Takes you away from the wing.* (P1)

*Working in industry ...tapping away, burns your head out, made most of us go on drugs.* (P1)

*Head change over here, can just drift off, no officers, you forget where you are.* (P1)

## 1.2 Growing and related activities

The positive role of engaging in growing and other gardening related activities was a reoccurring theme in the data. Participants shared information with the research team relating to all stages of the growing process including decisions about selection of seeds for planting, germinating, replanting and tending and cultivating. What was also of importance to participants was that they were allowed to harvest and eat the fruits and vegetables. The physical nature working on the garden required was a source of physical and satisfying activity:

*Work is rewarding. We can taste what we're growing. I've never done gardening before this prison. I didn't know I liked it, but I love it.* (P1)

*Watching our salads grow from scratch and tasting organic quality salads.* (P1)

Participants were encouraged to eat the fruits and vegetables grown in the garden.

## 1.3 Nature and recovery

The data illuminates various ways in which participants spoke about the impact of the MG programme on substance misuse behaviour. Capturing the extent to which MG programme has led to a reduction in substance misuse is complex and reflects the diversity of participants' experiences however, participants commonly reported that, being in the garden led to them making changes in their substance misusing behaviour for a number of reasons. Participants reporting being abstinent and drug free, making adjustments and reducing the quantity of drugs taken, (this was both prescribed medication like methadone or illegal substances), replacing a substance they abused with something they viewed to be less addictive and/ or harmful and for those who were at the very early stages and still misusing drugs accessing support and being on the garden was perceived as a first step on the recovery journey.

*It's changed my behaviour and drug taking; things are changing without even realising it.* (P1)

*The garden is looking a bit better; there is a change in myself where I'm not taking nowhere near as much drugs as I was.* (P2)

This is not to suggest that the trajectory to becoming drug free was a linear process as in our data we also capture setbacks. However, the journey to dealing with their substance misuse issue was positively impacted by individual's positive feelings about the programme, wanting to work in the garden, be part of a community and recognition of the wider health and well-being benefits as detailed above.

*It's about recovery. It's one of the hardest things you can do, addiction...hardest thing you can do.* (P2)

## Summary: Building an environment that supports recovery

Building an environment that supports recovery is important to the new direction of Drug policy in the UK (HM Government, 2010). A central tenet of current policy is the need for a holistic approach in recognition of the relationship between context and individuals' substance misusing behaviour. A key aspect of the current drug strategy identifies how a pre-requisite for recovery rests on individuals being willing to take the necessary steps to address their drug and/or alcohol misuse Attempts to put recovery at the heart of drug interventions cannot be divorced from a consideration of the environment in which the journey to recovery takes place.

Data from our evaluation identifies that what participants view as unique about the MG programme is that it is delivered in an environment amenable to creating the conditions that support their recovery. For participants, there is a sense of freedom and autonomy gained from being outside in the garden and having the opportunity to engage with nature. This contributes to their sense of wellbeing as it offers an opportunity for participants to spend time in a space in which they are able to reflect, be part of a community, access support and engage in purposeful activities. These findings support earlier research (see for example, (Berto, 2005) which show that access to restorative spaces (e.g. gardens) helps to restore people's directive attention on tasks and thereby improve mental insight Despite differences in participants' experiences and personal journeys what is evident is a clear relationship between the MG programme and individuals making changes to their substance misusing behaviour. This was reported by both participants and staff.

## 2. BUILDING HEALTH AND WELLBEING

A key theme identified in the data related to how engagement in the MG programme has a positive impact on participants' health and subjective sense of wellbeing. Health and wellbeing encompasses a range of factors which include; issues associated with health care provision, ill health, health experiences and issues specifically related to substance misuse. What is evident across the data is the relationship between the MG programme and participants in three key areas, these include:

- 2.1 Physical health**
- 2.2 Mental health**
- 2.3 Subjective sense of Wellbeing**

It is important to note that participants rarely spoke about health, be it physical or mental, without consideration of their general wellbeing or in terms of its relationship to working outside, engaging in purposeful activity and feeling supported by both their peers and staff. So, as with all the themes explored in this section they should not be viewed in isolation but as working in conjunction with each other and, together creating the conditions important for the individual and their recovery.

### 2.1 Physical Health

A key finding is the positive relationship between the MG programme and physical health; reoccurring themes in the data relate to issues associated with sleep, diet, and fitness. Participants identified how engaging in the MG programme offered an opportunity to engage in work requiring varying amounts of physical activity. Participants reported that engaging in physical activity contributed to improvements in their appetite and health benefits stemming from improvements in their daily diet.

The increase in physical activity also led to an improvement in sleeping patterns, in keeping with other research findings in this area (Grimshaw and King, 2003). Participants reported outcomes from engagement in the MG programme such as improved sleep, increased energy and 'feeling healthier' resulted in participants making changes to behaviour such as going to the gym<sup>17</sup> more regularly and giving up smoking:

*Improvement in my eating habit (P1)*

*Healthy and putting on weight (P1)*

*Sleep better after a hard days' work and being outside. Also helps with better health and fitness, sense of achievement (P2)*

During the evaluation we were aware of participants with a health related issue that required them to be referred to hospital outside the prison. On their return to the MG programme, they shared how being in the garden and in a supportive environment was beneficial to their recuperation. In their reflective diaries participants wrote how being able to work in the garden, at their own pace and in a calm environment were factors which positively contributed to their physical recovery.

In addition, the MG programme is viewed as complimenting the limitations of the prison health service. In the data a number of criticisms were levelled at the length of time it can take to receive an appointment, the insufficient amount of space allocated to the service and limitations associated with the care provided. Hence, it is important to note that the MG programme offered substance misusing offenders access to additional support and a means of minimising the impact of current limitations of the health care provided at Rye Hill.

*Is it going to take a death before they buck up their ideas? The only time you see a nurse on the wing is when people cut up, or at night when everyone's locked up, to dispense night meds.(P2)*

### 2.2 Mental Health

Overwhelmingly, participants (in numerous entries in their reflective diaries and circles) identified the mental health benefits of participating in MG programme. Policy has highlighted the increasing number of offenders with mental health issues and the pressing need for prison services to better address the needs of offenders:

*It's a great emotional journey for me as someone who has a number of underlying mental health issues it's had a great impact on me, this week so far has been no exception with some new issues going on it's helped me not to explode (P2)*

*Since I've been on the gardens I feel better in myself and have been a lot happier (P1)*

Participants reported how the MG programme was supporting them to manage mental health issues such as depression, self-harm and suicidal thoughts. The MG programme helped to divert participants' attention away from their individual health related issues through engaging them in purposeful activities. The programme was delivered in an environment that was viewed to be supportive and considered 'safe'. This support was provided by peers, programme staff and the wider substance misuse team.

<sup>17</sup>As part of the MGP participants also get additional access to the gym.

### 2.3 Subjective Wellbeing

Wellness and wellbeing are emerging as major organising concepts used to both analyse and enhance the quality of life of populations, communities, families and individuals. The benefits of capturing data associated with wellbeing is that it allows us to capture notions of health beyond the absence of disease and moves towards a conceptualisation of health that incorporates subjective feelings (Knight and McNaught, 2011). Subjective wellbeing (SWB), people's emotional and cognitive evaluations of their lives, includes factors such as; happiness, peace, fulfilment, and life satisfaction. SWB can be impacted by factors such as personality dispositions, life circumstances and cultural variables (Diener et al., 2003), it is a positive concept in which the emphasis rests on social and personal resources/resilience as well as physical capabilities. Wellbeing provides a more holistic way of understanding the impact of the MG programme on participants. Across the data there are numerous examples of participants sharing how the MG programme has facilitated access to a space in which they experience positive, mental, physical and social states and how this leads to them having a sense of purpose, a goal and nurtures their willingness and motivation to engage in development of the garden alongside access to other SMS activities:

*This is a bad month due to an anniversary and birthday. I sometimes feel stress coming into the garden but it helps to keep my head clear and is a welcome relief from the nightmares. (P2)*

Such positive impacts of the programme on participants' wellbeing are also reported by staff:

*I think it focuses them and diverts their minds from boredom within the prison, they come out to work at 8.30am in the morning and they've got things to constantly think about, ideas of their own that they can put into practice and their mind is constantly, so that when they go back at lunchtime they're still thinking about what they did in the morning and thinking about what they're going to do in the afternoon and it kind of diverts their attention away from misbehaving and from the substance misuse. (Staff P2)*

### Summary: Building health and wellbeing

Offenders are amongst one of the most socially excluded groups. The health and social characteristics among offenders include:

- Significantly poorer physical health compared to non-offenders
- A greater level of mental health problems that are not being adequately addressed
- Poor educational attainment
- At least ten times more likely to commit suicide and self - harm
- Unlikely to have been registered with a primary care practice prior to commencing sentence
- Significantly greater incidence of drug and alcohol abuse (IAPT, 2013).

There is now a body of research establishing the link between horticulture and health and wellbeing (Davies et al., 2014). Davies et al. (2014) in their review of the benefits of gardening and food growing for health and wellbeing, show that gardens, as well as the activity of gardening, have a positive impact on individuals' health and wellbeing due to both the physical activity and the use of the garden as a space for mental relaxation and stimulation. Moreover, they claim that, alongside the activity of gardening, viewing green space and being in green space in itself, is positive in terms of the support it provides individuals in dealing with mental health issues and stress. This is of particular importance as it is estimated that approximately 12% of the prison population report a mental health need, which includes suffering from depression. Increasingly research conducted in this area validates the link between physical health, psychological wellbeing to positive emotional environments and the natural environment, our analysis of the data confirms this relationship. Our data illuminates a myriad of ways in which participants report the MG programme as having a beneficial impact on their health and subjective wellbeing. Furthermore, the link between health, specifically mental health and substance misuse is commonly acknowledged and as suggested by Pretty et al. (2011) facilitating nature based activity and social engagement positively influences health and offers a catalyst for behavioural change in relation to encouraging individuals wanting to adopt healthier lifestyles (Pretty et al., 2011), which also supports the recovery journey. The evidence generated through the evaluation therefore acknowledges the MG programme as providing a key aspect of a recovery journey to positive mental health.





## 4. BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING

A key theme from the evaluation is how engagement in the programme promotes the development of a learning environment relating to a number of key areas:

### 4.1 Shared responsibility – creating common values

### 4.2 Learning new skills

### 4.3 Developing existing skills

### 4.4 Co-sharing of skills and activities

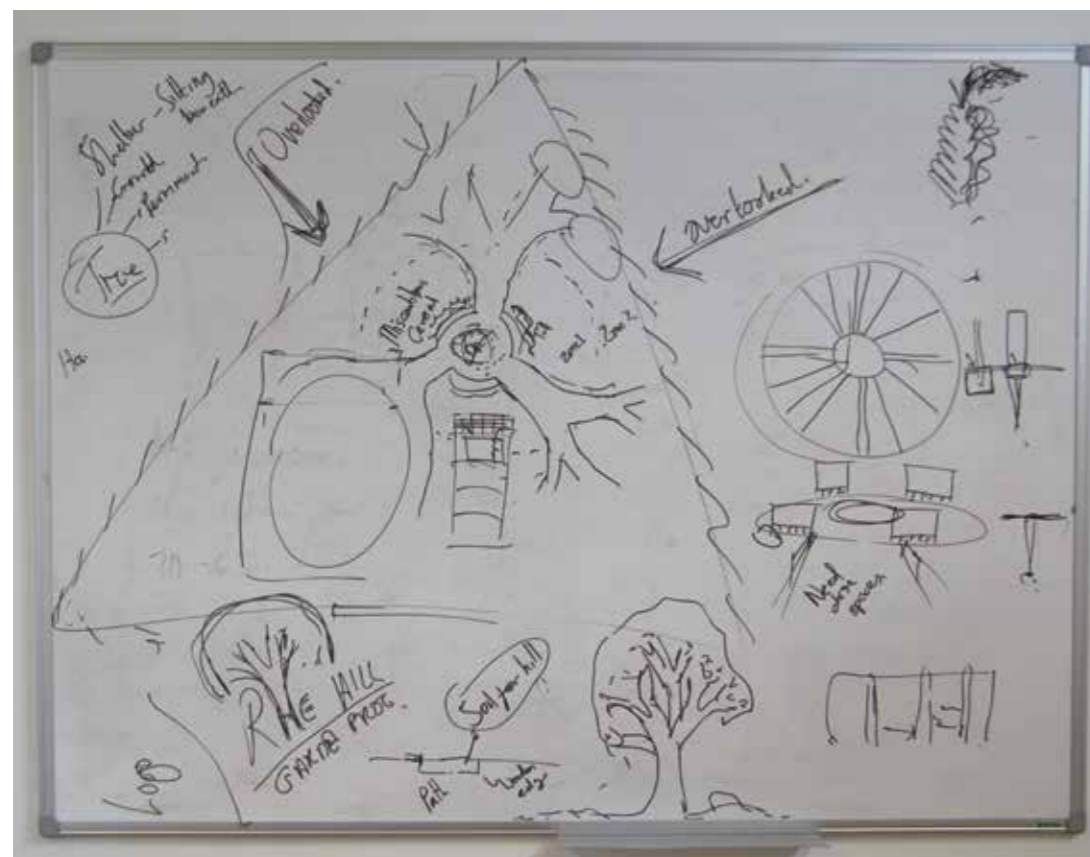
### 4.5 Using skills for recovery

Engagement in the programme promotes the development of a learning environment which is achieved by the informal and supportive environment of the garden. Whilst developing a range of gardening and land-based skills as well as team working skills, the garden also provides a space to develop coping skills within the prison environment. Participants welcomed the opportunity to develop and learn new skills and saw this as a key part of their rehabilitation, or opportunity for rehabilitation, whilst in prison. The range of skills learnt and developed whilst on the programme encompass both soft and harder skills. The flexibility of the delivery of the programme creates both formal and informal learning where participants actively sought information, were keen to apply what they had learnt, and to also share about these experiences.

### 4.1 Shared responsibility – creating common values

The ethos of the garden project is fundamental in creating a positive space. The data indicates that sharing responsibility at all stages of developing the garden was important in motivating participants to engage with the programme and to sustain their interest in the garden. Staff actively encouraged participants to take ownership of the garden, facilitated their engagement and this led to them initiating ideas for developing the space, utilising skills such as; planning, designing, costing, learning about the material needed and how to carry out relevant tasks.

The image below shows the initial design ideas for the garden by participants in Phase 1. The garden was designed and created essentially on a blank canvas; the space previously was flat un-used land with poor-quality soil. In order to grow in the garden and construct different things for the garden, a lot of effort was put into removing the bricks and clay from the soil, to make it workable. In the following image it can be seen that the participants considered different uses for the garden, not only as a space to grow food, but also as a place for them. This can be seen by the design of the seating area, and consideration of where they would be 'overlooked'. The initial plan also encompasses different zones, showing a consideration for using the garden for different purposes. Finally, the plan shows that the participants were proud to be part of the programme, as they wanted to design a logo for it to represent something they were proud to be part of. It should be reiterated that the design was undertaken by the participants, as a group, which helped to promote team working and a shared vision.



Example: Initial Garden Design (P1)

The ability to see progression and development is a key strength of this type of activity, not only contributing towards motivation but also an interactive and evolving environment. Participants in Phase 2 also engaged in a range of activities leading to further development of the garden. This reflects the garden as a continually transforming space, providing new opportunities for different activities, a changing space which contrasts from the predominantly 'static' space of the prison.

The following observational notes from a group conversation demonstrates how the garden offers a positive and supportive environment.<sup>20</sup>

*There has to be a system, just to produce stuff for economic benefits means nothing, people in here know how to make money. You don't get any interpersonal development. Working together is important; everyone's been in the same boat. Here, we've all be in the same addictive area... there's no judgement.* (Observational notes of a group conversation, July P2)

This explicitly shows that it is not solely about food growing or being outside, but a range of factors supporting and contributing towards person centred therapeutic recovery. It is therefore important to recognise that it is not only the aspect of being involved in a garden that results in these positive experiences, but it is the atmosphere and environment associated with the garden, as well as a positive space of recovery.

### 4.2 Learning new skills

Learning new skills is something participants spoke about, new skills they had learnt around creating a garden, the infrastructure needed for this as well as knowledge of food growing and of different plants. As such, participants reported learning new (harder) skills around food growing, gardening, landscaping, construction and building:

*There's a lot we've learned. Laying edging, making a path from scratch, know how to mix.* (P1)

*Learn more about planting new plants and also learnt how to do block paving.* (P2)

In their reflective diaries and a focus group participants spoke about a range of 'softer' skills they were gaining from their involvement in the MG Programme. These are skills to do with self-reflecting, as well as reflecting on their interaction with others (including other participants, other offenders, staff and wider people). These skills, also considered 'core' skills, promote resilience, self-esteem as well as the ability to cope and forward plan. Not only does the garden environment provide a constructive space for informal mentoring support, it also provides further opportunities for positive interaction (personal or interaction with meaningful activity) away from the routine environment of the wing.



Example: Blocked Paved Paths (P1)

One of the first constructs in the garden was the creation of a curved rather than straight-lined path to contrast with the static prison environment. As well as the path, the image below also depicts a circular area which the participants designed to be a seating area which they then made benches for.

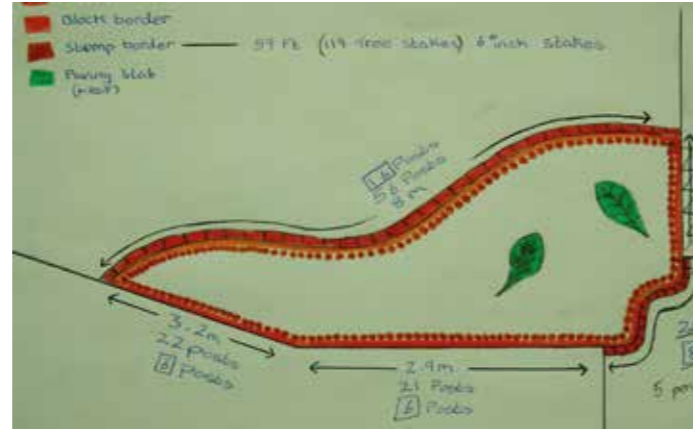
<sup>20</sup>Whilst the MG Programme at Rye Hill prison is the first example of this type of intervention with substance misuse offenders, there was already a garden established at the prison. This garden is used as a work-based activity, and is not related to the substance misuse service at the prison.



Example: Polytunnel (P1)

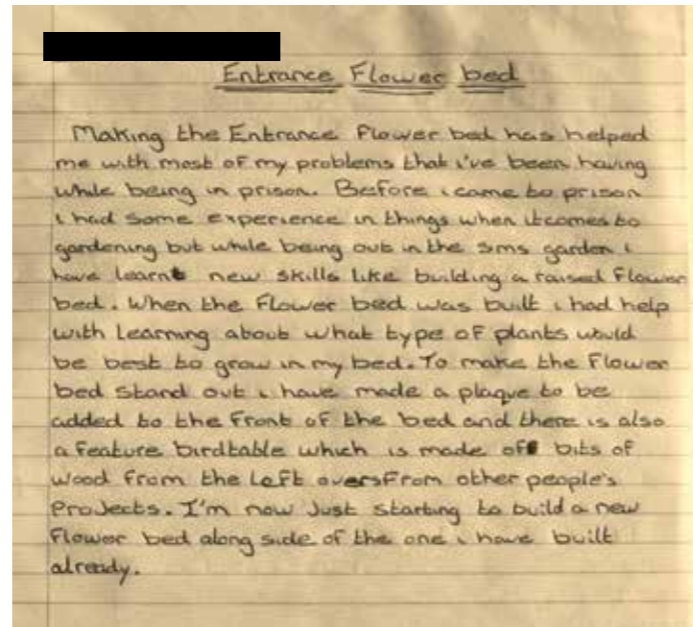
The polytunnel was constructed by participants in the first phase of the evaluation. The polytunnel provides a space for participants to grow a variety of produce, such as cucumbers, strawberries and melons, an illustration of the different spaces within the garden that contribute towards learning.

Completing the raised beds, learning how to lay a path, also being able to grow and enjoy our own veg. We had fun putting up the polytunnel. (P1)



Example: Flowerbed Design (P2)

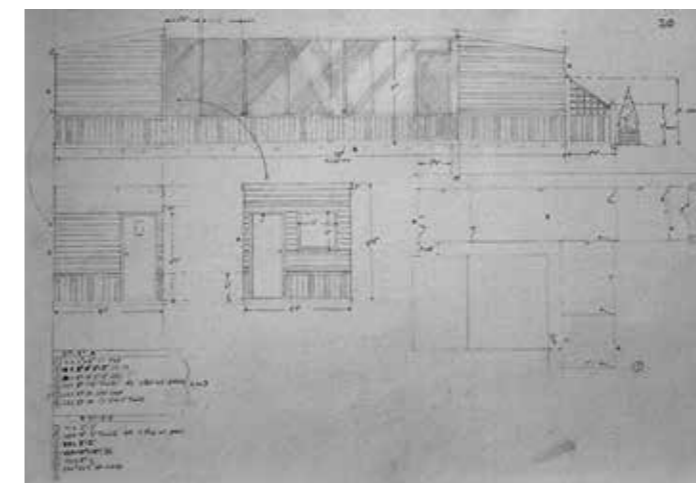
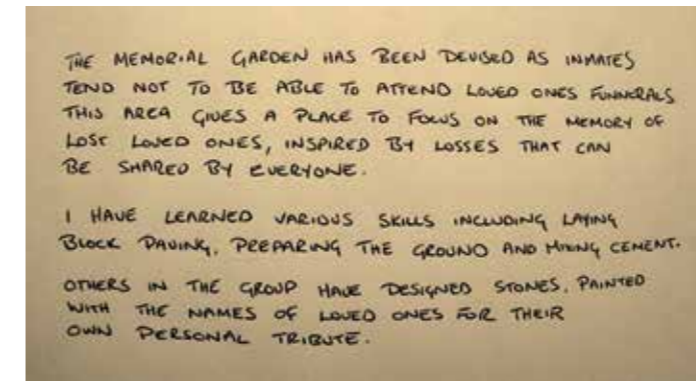
This example of the flowerbed design demonstrates how participants are involved in the whole process from coming up with an idea, designing it and then building/creating it, as well as maintaining it. The image below shows the plan for the design of the flowerbed, considering the measurements and materials. This new skill, developed by many of the participants, not only allows them to plan for an idea they have had, it gets them to consider what it should be used for, and how it fits in to the overall garden. This example was for a flower bed, with a bird table and a sign, all of which are appropriately considered for a space at the front entrance of the garden. During the visits, participants were eager to show what they had been working on and to ask us what we had noticed changing, demonstrating how proud they were of their work, something which comes from being able to take ownership of the whole process, seeing an idea through to the finished product.



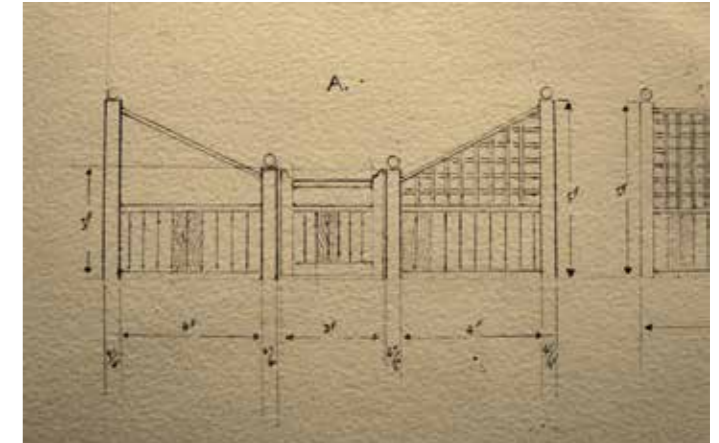
### 4.3 Developing existing skills

Some of the participants already had some experience of gardening-based activities before joining the programme. Involvement in the programme provides the opportunity for participants to use their skills in a productive and constructive environment, which in turn helps them to develop existing (and new) skills, contributing towards their recovery. Some of the participants in Phase 2 of the evaluation in particular, already possessed skills and have mentored others.

Participants in the second phase of the evaluation wanted to create a composting area. The area was designed by a participant who was particularly skilled in carpentry and gave him the opportunity to put his mind to focusing on something constructive. It can be noted that as well as utilising his skills to create something significant for the garden, in turn, he has also had the chance to learn something new (i.e. the concept of composting). The construction of this new area also involved other participants allowing for informal mentoring as well as a shared activity and vision.



Example: Design for an Aviary (P2)



Example: Design for Composting Area (P2)

Participants in Phase 2 of the evaluation wanted to create an aviary in the space towards the back of the garden as an additional area. Again, the same participant who created the compost plan also put together the following aviary design in collaboration with another participant.



Example: Composting Area (P2)

#### 4.4 Co-sharing of skills and activities

As well as working on individual spaces, a lot of the participants worked with others on various tasks. This facilitated co-learning, peer-mentoring, in addition to promoting friendships and working as a group. Some of the more skilled or experienced participants informally mentored others through working on a shared task. The environment of the garden, whilst being a space of production, also created the space for participants to talk about things they would not normally talk about. In particular, the garden provides a space for participants to 'be themselves' and to have time to think about some of the issues they are facing, for example issues raised from undertaking some of the required courses. Whilst this informal peer-mentoring was apparent between participants it is also a key feature of staff delivering the programme role. The atmosphere of the garden (different from the dominant atmosphere of the wing) is very much underpinned by the support and encouragement offered by the garden staff, which is acting as a catalyst for change in terms of the SMS team and the wider prison. Not only have the garden participants benefited from learning whilst on the programme, this has also given the opportunity for staff to learn and reflect. For example, one of the staff members reported an increase in work satisfaction, and a change in working style since the garden started.

*The participants got on with their jobs in the afternoon. Steve and [name] were outside making a bench. Steve was telling me how they are making a bench for [name's] family member who had recently passed away. There wasn't much conversation between [name] and Steve but more non-verbal communication; [name] was copying what Steve was doing and Steve would be observing [name] and getting him the right tools he needed (without verbal communication).*  
(Observational notes, January, P1)

*It doesn't matter, our backgrounds, the similarities when we are talking, I see myself in others in the group, just being around someone, by talking about things... 'I think like that as well'. Feel freedom down here [in the garden], to do things, out here I feel comfortable to ask for help, then I get the help I need. It's the freedom. (P2)*

#### 4.5 Using skills for recovery

There is also some evidence to indicate that there is potential for the skills learnt to be used upon release, however, further work is needed to explore the extent to which the MG programme fosters an interest in gardening that extends beyond the prison (see desistance section). Within the data it was apparent that some participants were starting to think about the future outside of prison and how they could take forward learning from the programme on their release; this was particularly evident within Phase 1. Having something positive to focus on and being able to undertake meaningful and practical activity which supports skill development (outside the formal class room setting) was apparent within the data:

*I need to learn something new which I can use on release, something I'd enjoy doing as a job plus I need to do something constructive here and now in order to maintain my recovery. (P1)*

#### Summary: Building opportunities for learning

It is clear to see that engagement in the programme allows for the development of a building environment by allowing participants to gain new skills or develop and put to use existing skills. The type of activity also promotes the opportunity for informal peer (and staff) mentoring in terms of hard and soft skills, and to use the activity to aid their recovery, including thinking about their release. Most of the participants could see an opportunity to be able to use the skills they had learnt in the garden in the future. Finally, the creation of common values, group working and a shared responsibility helps in fostering a therapeutic and supportive environment and encourages the development of skills and mentoring as well as a sense of achievement.

All of the findings highlighted here inter-connect with other themes such as mental health, subjective wellbeing, physical health and desistance for example.



SINCE JOINING THE GARDEN PROJECT I HAVE BEEN VERY BUSY. I DO A FAIR AMOUNT OF WORK DIGGING A 2 FEET WIDE AND ABOUT 2 FEET DEEP AND ABOUT 450 FEET LONG. I LEARNED ABOUT WORKING IN A CONFINED SPACE, I LEARNED ABOUT THE BEST TOOLS TO USE IN DEALING WITH DIGGING OUT CLAY + ROAD STONES. (THE REASON FOR THE DITCH WAS TO LAY ARMED CABLES SO THAT THERE COULD BE ELECTRIC TO THE POLY TUNNEL AND GREEN HOUSE.

I AM PREPARING A LARGE AREA FOR GROWING VEGETABLES. THE GROUND HAS BEEN VERY DIFFICULT TO WORK WITH BECAUSE I HAVE TO TAKE OFF A THIN LAYER OF MUD, THEN DIG OUT ROADSTONE & TAKE THE ROADSTONE OUT, BREAK UP THE CLAY, COVER THE GROUND WITH COMPOST & MIX TOGETHER A NUMBER OF TIMES. I THEN COVER THE GROUND WITH TOPSOIL FOR THE VEGETABLES TO GROW IN. ALTHOUGH THIS HAS BEEN HARD WORK I HAVE ENJOYED EVERY SECOND AND WILL BE SOBBY WHEN I AM FINISHED, I HAVE FOUND THIS VERY REWARDING. IT HAS HELPED ME MENTALLY AND I FEEL CALMER AND SLEEP MORE. I FEEL STRONGER PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY. I FEEL I CAN DEAL WITH PROBLEMS IN A MORE POSITIVE WAY. I AM LOOKING TO THE NEXT CHALLENGE. BUT ALSO LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING OTHERS HARVESTING THE VEGETABLES FROM THIS AREA.

## 5. THE MASTER GARDENER PROGRAMME IN A PRISON SETTING

As we detail in previous sections, the journey to recovery by participants is not without its challenges. As our analysis of data routinely collected by Rye Hill prison in Phase 2 shows, the context in which the MG programme is delivered is important to achieving positive outcomes for participants. The vision for the Substance Misuse Service at HMP Rye Hill involves developing a comprehensive support mechanism that wraps around individual offenders. Key factors need to be considered when locating a community project in this secure setting. This is because the data shows how the MG programme is impacted by working practices and decisions taken outside the direct control of Garden Organic and as such the following factors are essential to the delivery of the programme:

### 5.1 Partnership working

Kirby et al. (2011) argue that the importance of partnership working within the criminal justice system is long established in policy. This reflects a recognition that offenders have complex and multiple needs that require a multi-agency response. They further argue that expansion of court ordered drug treatment sanctions and a renewed focus on recovery and rehabilitation underlines the continued need for partnership across statutory and third sector agencies. Moreover, they claim that this is reiterated in the current drug strategy which calls for 'an 'integrated approach' to substance misuse treatment and better continuity of case management between prison and community. Our findings indicate that there are specific issues that need to be considered in relation to positive partnership working specifically in circumstances in which the partnership arrangements are across sectors where partners bring different organisational cultures and values to the partnership. This is not to suggest that such partnerships cannot work effectively but acknowledging the effort, time and adaptability required to establish and sustain strong partnership working. Our data indicates that this is of particular importance in a prison setting.

### 5.2 Setting up

The importance of the setting up stages of the MG programme within a prison setting highlights practical issues such as allocating sufficient time for staff security clearance and the general ability of staff to orientate to working in a prison. Furthermore, the importance of integrating the MG programme into the wider strategic goal to address substance misuse was a key finding. The challenges encountered were not insurmountable and there is data that demonstrates how the iterative evaluation process supported on-going learning and space for reflective learning which supported positive developments in partnership working. However learning from the evaluation can be summarised by the following points, as identified in our interim report:

- Time is required for establishing parameters of partnership working
- Understanding rules, regulation and constraints encountered when working in a prison setting
- Communicating with key personnel within the prison, but also sharing plans widely with prison staff about the programme
- Time to ensure staff go through security procedures
- Ensuring resources are in place
- Importance of a shared responsibility for the programme
- Consideration of how to ensure the MG programme is integrated into the wider prison strategy for substance misuse
- Management of partnership processes
- Training opportunities for all Substance Misuse Staff which includes time set aside outside of the work environment for team building and sharing of ideas
- promoting the MG programme with potential participants

### 5.3 Recruitment of participants

The vision for the SMS at HMP Rye Hill involves developing a comprehensive support mechanism that wraps around individual offenders. Currently, recruitment to the MG programme uses the following criteria:

- Participant located on Recovery Wing
- Willing to engage in SMS interventions and undergo drug testing
- Be cleared by security to participate in the programme.

However, not all participants on the recovery wing meet the criteria or want to engage in the MG programme. The importance of having participants who are committed or at least want support with their recovery journey is also recognised by participants as a pre-requisite to building an environment that supports recovery. Our findings identify that having a clear, transparent and robust recruitment process is important for both participants and staff. Factors such as environment, sense of community, individuals' willingness to engage, access support and provide support to others are all factors that contribute to individuals' recovery journey. As such, it is essential that participants recruited to the MG programme are clear about the aim and objectives of the programme, expectations of staff and their peers already on the programme and importantly, have made a conscious decision to embark on a recovery journey.

### 5.4 Working with offenders in a prison setting

A key finding is the important role played by staff with responsibility for delivering the MG programme. While it is important for staff to have good horticultural skills and knowledge (from food growing to poly tunnel construction for example) they also need to be equipped with interpersonal skills and experience and have some knowledge about the context in which they are working and this includes some basic knowledge about substance misuse.

There are numerous examples in which participants spoke about placing significant value on the relationship established between staff and participants. They wrote about how much it meant to them to feel that staff were non-judgemental, approachable, enthusiastic, motivated, good listeners and trustworthy, - characteristics they viewed as important attributes when working on the MG programme. For participants, having staff who they perceived as having their interests at heart was viewed as positively contributing to their experiences of the MG programme in terms of instilling a sense feeling valued and being treated in an humane way. A key aspect of the positive interaction between staff and participants resided around the long term nature of the MG Programme intervention rather than an intervention delivered over a short period of time. This provided an opportunity for staff and participants to get to know each other and also provided participants with access to a longer periods of support with their recovery.

Observational data identifies how the relationship between staff and participants was central to creating an environment that was supportive to individual's recovery. This is not to suggest that adhering to rules and ensuring that participants was not a pre-requisite for those engaged in the MG programme, but how staff engaged and worked with participants was important to maintaining a calm and safe environment. Feeling staff were trustworthy was identified as important to decisions about what was shared with staff: This sense of trustworthiness and being supportive appeared to also have a positive impact on participants' willingness to maintain rules and discipline and during our time carrying out the evaluation, the majority of our observation of the interaction between staff and participants was overwhelmingly positive. A wider impact of the MG programme has been the way in which it led to changes in the wider prison environment and has had some impact on staff working in other areas of the prison estate.

### Summary: The Master Gardener Programme in a Prison Setting

Offenders represent one of the most socially excluded groups and there are often a number of challenges encountered in terms of encouraging their access and engagement with services and initiatives (IAPT, 2013). Kirby et al. (2011) argue that there is increasing interest in improving the 'quality' of the relationship between the therapist and substance misusing 'client' as a key method of ensuring engagement and sustaining retention in treatment long enough for the client to derive benefit and facilitate behaviour change. They acknowledge there is a lack of research on effective strategies for sustaining relationships beyond the initial engagement stage. Whilst recognising that staff delivering the programme are not professional therapists, it is possible to view their relationships with participants as a 'therapeutic alliance' (Kirby et al., 2011), based on a relationship of trust and mutual respect in which participants are willing to share their experiences and talk about their substance misusing behaviour alongside other health and wellbeing issues. As such, our data illuminates the importance of positive working relationships between staff and participants which is also an important aspect of participants' recovery journey. Hence, as identified by Kirby et al. (2011) factors such as motivation and readiness to change need to be considered in relation to the quality of the relationship between staff and participants

## Summary of Key Findings:

The MG programme led to a range of positive outcomes, the MG programme:

**Provides an environment that supports substance misusing offenders with their recovery journey and is conducive to addressing offenders wider health and wellbeing.**

**Offers a space in which participants can work together towards a shared goal. This helps to create a sense of community between substance misusing offenders, but also between participants and staff delivering the MG programme.**

**Facilitates opportunities for learning, and developing skills and peer support.**

**Encourages substance misusing offenders to consider and make wider behavioural changes both in and outside prison.**

**Offers a positive contribution to HMP Rye Hill's strategic goal to establish a recovery unit.**

**Is an example of HMP Rye Hill Substance misuse team proactively tackling substance misuse, in line with the direction proposed in the current Drug Strategy 2010; Reducing Demand, Restricting Supply, Building Recovery.**

## 5.5 Moving forward with the Master Gardener Programme

Since situating the MG programme in Rye Hill prison (2013) there have been a number of changes to the model partly in response to having to adapt to working in a secure environment and supporting individuals with a wide range of needs; the model offers a holistic approach to working with substance misusing offenders. Initially the primary focus of the work was moving forward with development of the garden space, hence; growing and planning and building the infrastructure required such as, green house, poly tunnel, paths and the pond. The programme going forward has the potential to contribute to development of the wider prison estate.. Widening the activities has created new learning opportunities for participants and the prospect of expanding the parameters of the programme, introducing new and innovative ideas and the potential for the MG programme to contribute to income generation. At the end of Phase 2 of the evaluation we observed participants engaging in activities such as making bee hives and wreaths, for example.



The possibility for the programme to generate an income that supports its delivery may be important for its future development and sustainability. In moving forward what has become clear is how the MG programme sits readily within wider strategic goals to address substance misuse at Rye Hill prison and increasingly forms an important part of the wider work planned and being delivered as part of establishing a recovery unit. Whilst there is some way to go to fully operationalise the unit, what is evident from the data is the willingness of all parties - Garden Organic, SMS team and G4S to build on the unique approach the MG Programme offers to working with this prison population.

## Final Reflections

Adopting a multi-method approach and conducting the evaluation over a 12 month period generated a wealth of data that enabled the research team to gain a valuable insight about the multi-dimensional experiences of engaging with the MG programme. Participants were keen to be part of the evaluation and candidly shared their views and experiences about the MG programme with the evaluation team. Overwhelmingly, participants reported a range of positive factors about their engagement in the MG programme. They perceived the MG programme as contributing to their recovery journey and wanted to make wider behavioural changes both in and outside of prison.

The data also draws attention to the relationship between delivering an intervention in a prison context and participants experiences; this highlights a number of factors to be taken into consideration at an operational and delivery level. Consequently, of importance is the need to recognise that there are challenges encountered in transferring the MG programme from a community to a prison setting, as such, there is a need for a shared vision and / or goal. This necessitates time to be taken to build effective working relationships between all partners which rests on good channels of communication, an understanding of each organisational culture, opportunities for shared learning and a willingness to respond to practicalities associated with delivering an intervention in a prison.

Findings show the potential benefits and value of the MG programme at HMP Rye Hill, which is evidenced by the various ways in which participants report changes in: health and wellbeing, learning, self-confidence and esteem and sense of community. As set out in our literature review such factors have also been identified as outcomes reported in international and national research exploring the use of horticulture in secure settings. Our evaluation offers further evidence to demonstrate how such factors are prerequisites in creating an environment that is conducive to substance misuse recovery by supporting participants with their recovery journey by:

- **Building an environment that supports recovery**  
Having access to a space in which participants feel a sense of freedom, autonomy and are able to access support is important. In conjunction with being outside it gives participants an opportunity to engage in purposeful activity. Building an environment that is perceived by individuals as supportive and safe helps to restore people's directive attention on their substance misusing behaviour and behaviour more generally.
- **Building Health and Wellbeing**  
Being outdoors in the garden and engaged in growing or other related purposeful activities positively impacts on individuals' physical and mental health and subjective wellbeing. Of equal importance to working in the garden, working with nature, is the space that is unlike other parts of the prison estate. This creates opportunities for participants to engage in physical activity, mental relaxation and stimulation (Davies et al., 2014) leading to positive health and wellbeing outcomes.
- **Building a recovery Master Gardener community**  
Bringing people together to share a vision and goal around development of the garden offers an opportunity to gain a sense of purpose. Our data shows a relationship between development of the garden and participant's self-perception, confidence and motivation. The MG programme encouraged participants to work together, support each other and to share ideas, views and experiences (in the widest sense). Building a sense of community was not solely amongst the participants but also extended to staff working on the programme.
- **Building Opportunities for learning**  
Engagement in the MG programme allows participants to gain new skills or develop and apply existing skills. This promotes opportunities for informal peer learning (and staff), peer support and mentoring. This is alongside skills that can be transferred to the world of work on release from prison.

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