

# Evaluation of the Master Gardener Programme

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Published PDF deposited in [Curve](#) February 2016

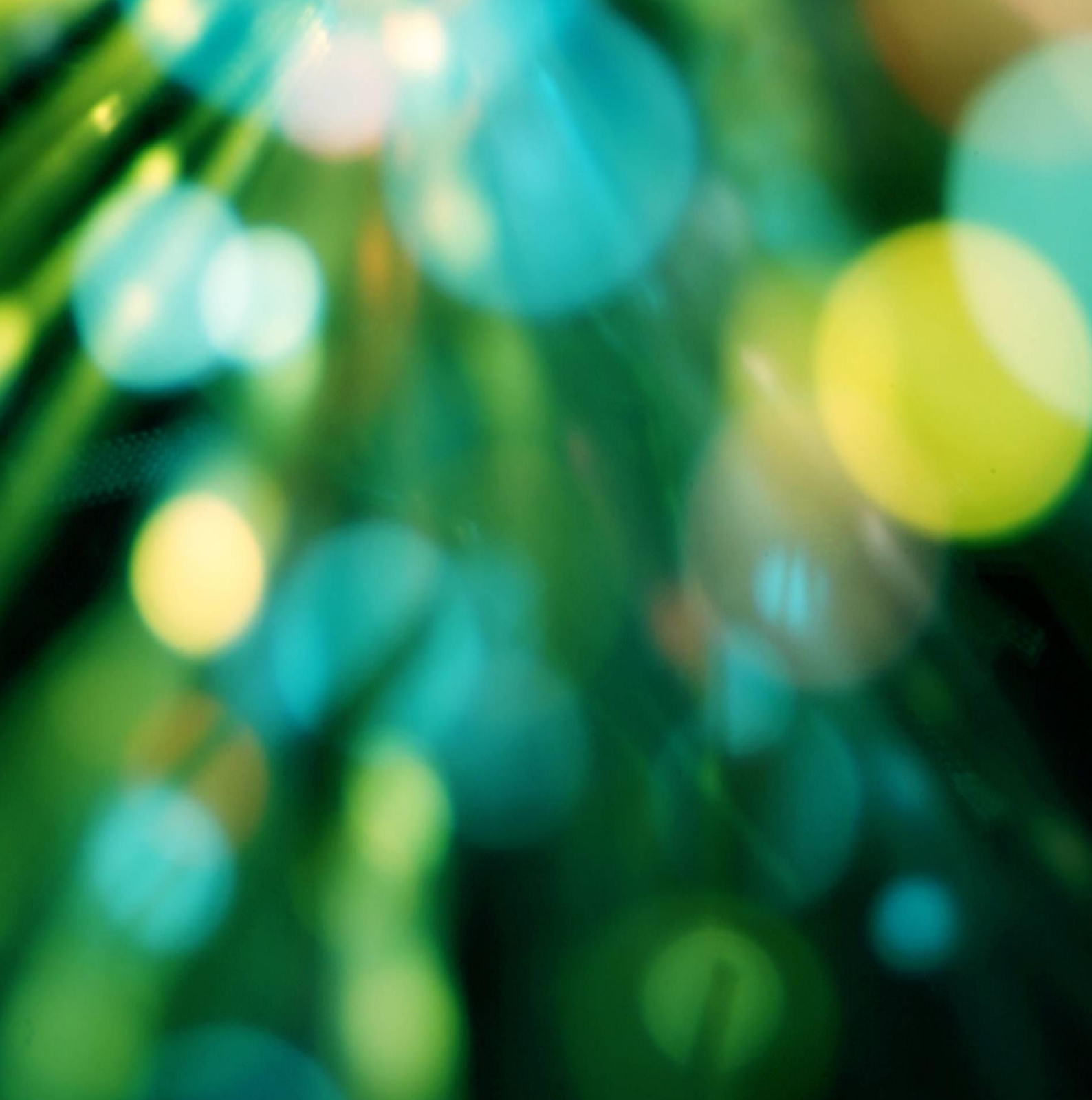
**Original citation:**

Bos, E. and Kneafsey, M. (2014) Evaluation of the Master Gardener Programme. Coventry: Coventry University.

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# **Evaluation of the Master Gardener Programme**

Final Report for Garden Organic  
November 2014



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The authors would like to thank Master Gardener households and volunteers who participated in the research, the Master Gardener Programme Manager Philip Turvil, and the Programme coordinators. The authors would also like to thank Jordon Lazell (CBiS) for his valuable assistance. Finally, the research team would like to thank the external transcription company, Underline Transcription, for their impeccable service.



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*Growing food within the realm of the Master Gardener 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.*

## Executive Summary

This report presents the analysis of four rounds of data collection undertaken with households and volunteers between 2011 – 2014, and interviews with volunteer coordinators (2014). The report initially focus on the first three rounds of the evaluation (2011 - 2013) which focused on households and volunteers who had been involved with the programme for approximately 12 months, and draws on data generated from 155 household questionnaires, and 144 volunteer questionnaires. In addition, the report also focuses upon qualitative data from 46 household interviews and 12 Master Gardener focus groups. In order to clearly address the requirements of objective 5 of the business plan<sup>1</sup>, each section is structured around environmental, health and social impacts, as well as views on the programme. The report presents results for the households first, followed by the volunteers; at the end of each section, the 'round 4' results are demonstrated. Round 4 focused on the households and volunteers who had taken part in the initial evaluation, 24 – 48 months later, to look at the longer term impacts of the programme. The analysis from the interviews with the five Volunteer Coordinators is also contained within the report and well as conclusions and recommendations.

The data presented in this final report, has provided some strong insights into the impact of the Master Gardener programme on the lives of those involved, and on local food systems. In terms of the fundamental aim of the programme, to encourage people to grow their own food, this has clearly being achieved with nearly 80% of household respondents having **increased the amount of food they grow**. Moreover, 76% of respondents have also **increased the range of food** they grow since joining the programme. The programme has also had an effect on volunteers as for 55% the **amount of food they grow has increased**, and for two thirds the **range of food they grow has increased**. Overall, 88% of householders agreed that their **knowledge of food growing has increased** substantially. Similarly, over 94% of volunteers informed that their **knowledge of food growing has also increased**. It is clear that the households value the knowledge and support of the volunteers – **78% were overall satisfied** with the advice. Again, the results show that **95% of volunteers are very satisfied** with the advice from their coordinator.

The findings provide some indications of the **health impacts** of the programme. Over two thirds of household respondents had **increased the number of hours spent growing food**

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<sup>1</sup> Objective 5 of the MG programme is “to demonstrate the health, environmental and social impact of the project on the lives of those households involved and on local food systems” (Master Gardener Business Plan, November 2008).

(this is also the case for 44% of volunteer respondents) which equates to increased physical activity (low and moderate intensity) in an outdoor setting. Around 24% of household respondents said their **satisfaction with their health had increased** since participating in the programme; this has also increased for 24% of volunteers. However, it is in terms of **life satisfaction and well-being** that some of the most interesting and potentially significant results have occurred. The household results show that the average life satisfaction score before taking part in the programme was 7.2 (out of 10). Around one year in to the programme, **the average life satisfaction score has increased** by 0.7, to 7.9. Focusing on the Master Gardener volunteers, the **average life satisfaction score** since participating in the programme for one year has **increased** by 1 point, from 7.1 to 8.1. When asked to state the extent to which involvement in the programme has influenced life satisfaction, **77% of household respondents and 84% of volunteer respondents stated that it had, to a little or large extent.**

In terms of **environmental impacts**, one of the key indicators is that one third of householders and 29% of volunteers had **increased the amount of food and waste composted.**

In terms of the **social impact** of the programme, some intriguing results are emerging in terms of expenditure on food, which has a strong potential impact on family budgets. When asked whether the amount spent on food has changed since participating in the programme, 65% of household respondents stated that it had not changed and around **29% stated that the amount they spend on food had actually decreased** since participating in the programme, which seems quite significant given the rising food prices generally over the last few years; 24% of volunteer respondents also stated that the **amount they spend on food has decreased.** The decline in expenditure for 79% of households and 67% volunteers was due to purchasing less food due to consumption of home grown produce. Only a small proportion of respondents stated that the amount they spend on food had increased and this was due to the increased cost of living and buying better quality produce.

Interestingly, 40% of household respondents and 47% of volunteer respondents stated that they **had made changes to where they buy their food**, buying locally being the main change. These findings suggest that the programme may be having an impact on local food systems by encouraging people to 'think local' in terms of food.

The evaluation has highlighted some strong impacts of the programme on the lives of the volunteers and the households. An important point to make is that a **number of impacts** are evident; the project seems to have a wide ranging impact on participants rather than in

just one particular area. The findings also point towards an **interconnectedness** of the benefits the programme delivers.

The findings focusing on longer-term behavioural change presented in this report also show quite a substantial difference in some of the volunteer's results in comparison to the household results, particularly in the areas of: food growing behaviour, fruit and veg consumption, food expenditure and food purchasing behaviour, and life satisfaction scores, as well as various components of life satisfaction. This suggests that the **longer-term positive impacts** are generally greater on the **volunteer's lives** compared to the lives of households involved. This difference could be due to the volunteers' prolonged involvement in the programme, which enables the impacts to be sustained.

It is clear to see that the **Volunteer Coordinators have been instrumental in the success** of the programme, as well as the programme Manager and volunteer Master Gardeners. From the core evaluation and the interviews with the VCs, it is clear to see that the volunteers, programme manager and volunteer coordinators all put an huge amount of effort, personal effort into their roles, which carries a personal and not just professional commitment to the programme and their roles. As one VC puts it *"it's not really the kind of job that you can do without being passionate and involved in it really."* (VC1). The data shows that the programme has **particularly impacted on the VCs themselves** (in addition to the volunteers and households) in terms of their own food growing behaviour and knowledge, peer-learning, relationships, development of personal and professional skill set, and encouraging and enabling further action / activity. The success of Volunteer Coordinators is based on 1) **local knowledge and connection to networks**, 2) a **diverse and adaptable skill set** including both professional and inter-personal skills, and 3) the skill to be **able to respond** to local changes and local needs, as well as VCs ascribing to the **values of the programme** as well as recognising the level of personal dedication and enthusiasm needed for the role.



## 1.0 Introduction

This report presents the results from the Master Gardener programme evaluation which took place between 2011 - 2014. The report firstly presents the findings from 155 questionnaires and 46 interviews with the households participating in the programme (during rounds 1 – 3 of the evaluation), followed by 36 household questionnaires undertaken during round 4. Secondly, the results from 144 questionnaires and 12 focus groups with Master Gardener volunteers are shown (from round 1 – 3 of the evaluation) as well as the results from 59 volunteer questionnaires (from round 4). The report is structured thematically, by the Key Evaluative Impacts (Table 4, page 15). The report then focuses on the analysis of the five Volunteer Coordinator interviews. The purpose of the interviews with Volunteer Coordinators was to gather their views on the impacts of the Programme on themselves and those involved, as well as to hear their experiences of working for the Programme. The interviews have provided further insight into the operation of the Programme. As the Programme has been operating in the pilot stage it is important to incorporate the views of the Volunteer Coordinators into the evaluation as their experiences of the Programme in different areas adds a valuable dimension. Following the analysis of household, volunteer, and Volunteer Coordinator data, the report concludes and proposes future recommendations for the programme as well as research considerations.

## 2.0 Household Results<sup>2</sup>

### 2.1 Questionnaire response rate

During rounds 1 - 3 (2011-2013), a total of 799 postal questionnaires were distributed by Garden Organic to Master Gardener registered households in Warwickshire, Norfolk, North London, South London and Lincolnshire<sup>3</sup> who had been involved in the programme for approximately 12 months. As Table 1 illustrates, there was an overall response rate of 19.4% which is typical for a postal questionnaire. Section 2.0 of the report focuses on the results from rounds 1 – 3 of the evaluation; the following section concentrates on the analysis of round 4 (section 3.0), before moving on to the analysis of the volunteer data.

Table 1: Household questionnaire response rate

Number of household questionnaires distributed		Number of completed questionnaires returned	Response Rate (%)
Round 1	250	54	22%
Round 2	298	60	20%
Round 3	251	41	16%
Total	<b>799</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>19%</b>

### 2.2 Sampling

Households were chosen for follow up interviews by using a selective purposive sample to explore behavioural change. Behavioural change during round one was assessed against five indicators of change. After round 1, the questionnaire was adapted to increase the number of indicators. Therefore, during rounds 2 and 3, calculating behavioural change was

<sup>2</sup> The following analysis is based on those respondents who provided answers to questions unless stated otherwise, and therefore may not always represent the overall population sample.

<sup>3</sup> Lincolnshire was not included within the first round of the research, as the Programme in this area was not fully established yet to enable a year on evaluation (please see Evaluation Strategy report).

based on nine questions (Table 2). This has allowed for a more significant sample base, reflecting behavioural change over a higher number of areas, for the follow-up interviews. The list of questions used in round one can be found in the 'Round One Results Report'.

**Table 2: Indicators of Behavioural Change (rounds 2 and 3)**

Q16. Has the amount of food you grow changed since participating in the programme?
Q18. Has the range of food you grow changed since participating in the programme?
Q20. Has the number of hours you spend growing food changed since participating in the programme?
Q22. Has your knowledge about growing food has changed since participating in the programme?
Q24. Has the amount of food and garden waste you compost changed since joining the programme?
Q31. Has the amount of fruit and vegetables you consume changed since participating in the programme?
Q34. Has the amount you spend on food changed since joining the programme?
Q36. Has your overall life satisfaction changed since joining the programme?
Q39. Has time spent with family and friends changed since joining the programme?

Table 3 shows the number of 'positive', 'negative' and 'no change' responses which were received during rounds 2 and 3, across the nine questions listed in Table 3<sup>4</sup>. By 'positive' behaviour change we mean behaviour which the Master Gardener programme hopes to encourage (for example, composting more, eating more fruit and vegetables). Conversely, 'negative' change would be a reduction in composting, time spent gardening or amount of fruit and vegetables consumed. The Table 3 shows that a total of 44 respondents had indicated 'positive' behaviour change across five or more questions. These respondents were prioritised for household interviews. The table also shows that 'negative' behaviour change was very small – only eleven respondents showed any evidence of this; nine respondents showed a 'negative' behaviour change for only one question, and two respondents showed 'negative' behaviour change across two questions. As there was so little evidence of 'negative' behaviour change, this was not followed up any further in the

<sup>4</sup> Table 4 only reflects behavioural change for round 2 and 3 respondents due to the fact that the number of questions measuring behavioural change was increased after round 1. The table illustrating 'Evidence of behavioural change across evaluative areas' for round one, is included in the 'Round one Results Report'.

interviews. In order to increase the number of potential household interviews, respondents who showed 'no behaviour change' were also included in the sample. The actual number of interviews conducted was largely dictated by time and resources but the main point to note is that the interviews were oriented towards understanding the relationship between involvement in the Master Gardener programme and behaviour change.

**Table 3: Evidence of behavioural change across evaluative areas (rounds 2 & 3)**

	Number of responses round 2 and 3										Total <sup>5</sup>
Across 9 key evaluative areas	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Positive Behavioural Change	3	6	6	11	15	14	10	9	9	2	85
No Behavioural Change	3	8	10	10	15	16	10	6	5	2	85
Negative Behavioural Change	74	9	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	85

### 2.3 Household Interviews

A total of 46 household interviews were undertaken during the evaluation process. Overall, 19 were undertaken in Warwickshire, 17 interviews in London, 8 in Norfolk; and 2 in Lincolnshire. This reflected the sample of respondents portraying positive or no behavioural change. Interviews were carried out by members of the research team (Coventry University) and Volunteer Coordinators (Garden Organic). Interviews were conducted using a pre-prepared interview schedule (discussed in the Evaluation Strategy Report). They were recorded, and then sent to the external transcription company, before being received by Coventry University for the analysis.

### 2.4 Key Evaluative Objectives

Table 4 illustrates the four 'Key Evaluative Impacts' which the evaluation of the programme is based on, in order to meet Objective 5 of the Master Gardener Business Plan. Within each of the 'Key Evaluative Impacts' there are a number of 'headline questions' which

<sup>5</sup> Table 4 reports on respondents who stated their name on the questionnaire to enable selection for follow up interviews. Therefore, Table 4 does not reflect the total number of questionnaires completed during rounds 1 and 2 which was 101 (16 respondents did not state their name)

structure this report in order to focus upon presenting the main findings. Additional questions from within the questionnaire will be included within this report where they provide useful supplementary information and accordingly, contribute to assessing the impacts of the programme.

Table 4: Key Evaluative Impacts and Headline Questions

Key Evaluative Impact	Headline Questions
Environmental Impacts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Composting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How much food or garden waste do you compost and has this changed since joining the programme?</li> <li>Is there anything which makes it difficult or prevents you from composting?</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>2. Amount of food grown</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the amount of food you grow changed since joining the programme?</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>3. Space where produce is grown</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where do you grow food?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
Social Impacts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>4. Food purchasing behaviour</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the amount you spend on food changed since joining the programme?</li> <li>Have you made any changes to where the buy food since joining the programme?</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>5. Social activities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How satisfied are you with their involvement in leisure activities / hobbies, and has this changed since joining the programme?</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>6. Social / community relationships</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How satisfied are you with feeling part of a community, and their personal relationships, and has this changed since joining the programme?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
Health and Wellbeing Impacts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>7. Life satisfaction</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How would you rate your overall satisfaction with your life now, and one year ago?</li> <li>To what extent do you feel that your participation in the programme has influenced your overall life satisfaction, and why?</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>8. Health</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How satisfied are you with your health, and do you feel this has changed since joining the programme?</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>9. Fruit and vegetable consumption</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On average per day how many pieces of fruit and vegetables do you eat, and has this changed since you joined the programme?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>
Views on the Programme	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>10. Enjoyment in the programme</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you enjoy being part of the Master Gardener programme, please state why?</li> <li>Would you change anything about the programme?</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>11. Advice from Master Gardener</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How satisfied are you with your advice from your Master Gardener?</li> <li>Do you have any comments you would like to make about your Master Gardner?</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>12. Benefits from participation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the main benefit you have gained from taking part in the programme?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

## 2.5 Profile of respondents

### 2.5.1 Profile of respondents: Age

Figure 1 illustrates the age range of participants. The highest proportion of respondents are aged 40-49; however participants generally fall between the ages of 30-69. The least common age of respondents are 16-29, and 70-80+. Results are based on 153 responses.

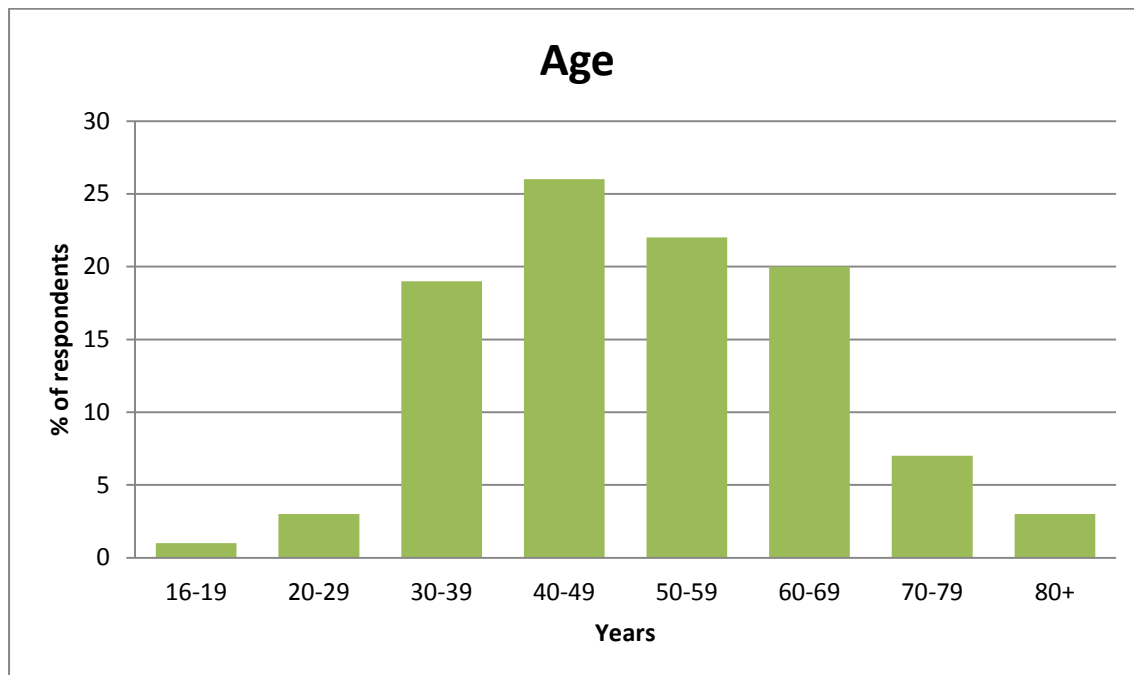


Figure1: Age of household respondents

### 2.5.2 Profile of respondents: Gender

A larger proportion of household respondents is female (78%) compared to 22% which is male. Results are based on 153 responses.

### 2.5.3 Profile of respondents: Ethnicity

The highest percentage of respondents (74%) describe themselves as English. Small numbers of respondents belong to other ethnicities; 6% classify themselves Irish and 6% from another White background, 2% are Scottish and the remaining ethnicities are represented by 1% of respondents in each group: Pakistani, Indian, Welsh, Caribbean, White and Asian, White and Black African, other mixed background, other Black background and other ethnicity. Three percent of respondents when presented with this question would rather not state their ethnicity. Results are based on 143 responses.

### 2.5.4 Profile of respondents: Faith

The majority of respondents are either of the Christian faith (44%) or follow no religion (36%). Smaller numbers of respondents describe their faith as Buddhist (1%), Baha'i (1%) or Jewish (1%). The remaining 8% of respondents comprise 'other' religions and 7% of respondents when presented with this question would 'rather not say'. Results are based on 150 responses.

### 2.5.5 Profile of respondents: Household composition

As Figure 2 demonstrates, around one third of respondents are married or cohabiting with no dependent children (34%) and around one quarter are either married or cohabiting with dependent children (24%), or live on their own (single occupancy) (24%). Lower numbers describe their household as a single parent family (11%) or an other multi-person household (7%). Results are based on 151 responses.

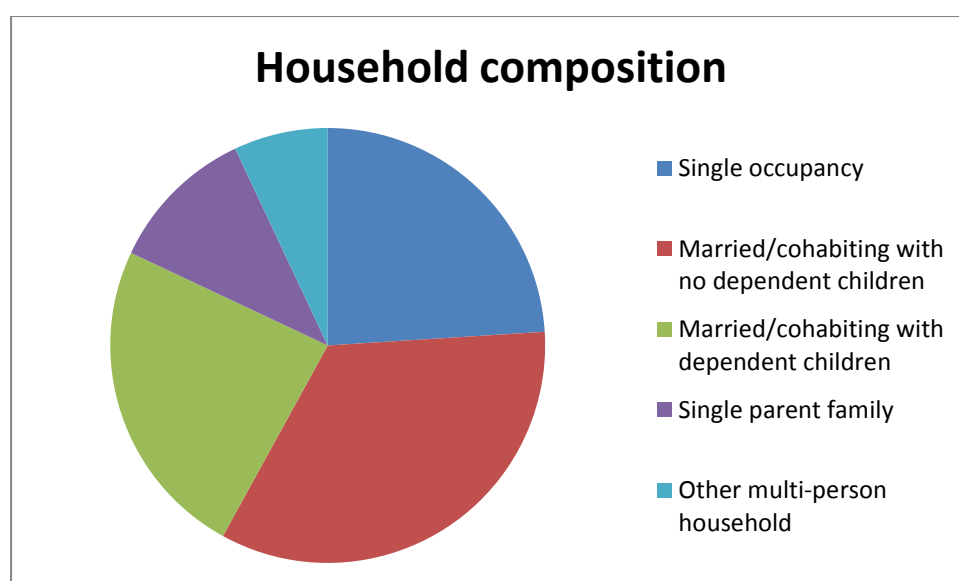


Figure 2: Household composition

### 2.5.6 Profile of respondents: Main occupation

The results reflect that the majority of respondents are in employment (65%); 38% are in full time employment and 27% in part time employment. Just less than one quarter of respondent are retired (23%). Smaller numbers of respondents are either unemployed (3%), long term sick (3%), a carer (2%), at home not seeking work (2%), doing unpaid or voluntary work (1%) or are in education or training (1%). Results are based on 151 answers.



### 2.5.7 Profile of respondents: Highest qualification

When asked of their highest qualification, a third of respondents possess a degree (33%) and nearly one quarter hold a higher degree (23%). A total of 13% of respondents have O Levels / GCSEs as their highest qualification, and 17% have A-Levels. Smaller proportions of respondents inform that they either have an 'other' qualification (6%), no qualifications (4%), an apprenticeship (2%) or foreign qualifications (1%). Results are based on 101 responses<sup>6</sup>.

### 2.5.8 Profile of respondents: Housing type and ownership

There is quite an even spread of respondents living in a flat (21%), a terrace (21%), a semi-detached house (25%), and a detached house (26%). Lower proportions live in a bungalow (5%) or another type of accommodation (such as a maisonette). Results are based on 155 responses.

Regarding housing tenure, the majority of respondents fully own their property (42%), or have a mortgage (36%). Similar proportions of respondents live in social housing (12%), or rented accommodation (10%). Results are based on 151 responses.

### 2.5.9 Profile of respondents: Household income

As demonstrated by Figure 3, the highest number of respondents receive an annual household income of between £28,001-£48,000 (32%). Similar portions of respondents receive a household annual income of between £14,001-£28,000 (23%), or £14,000 or under (26%). The lowest number of respondents (19%) receives a higher household income of £48,001 or more per annum. Results are based on 140 responses.

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<sup>6</sup> Respondents were asked to state their highest qualification during rounds 2 and 3 of the evaluation; therefore this question does not incorporate round 1 respondents.

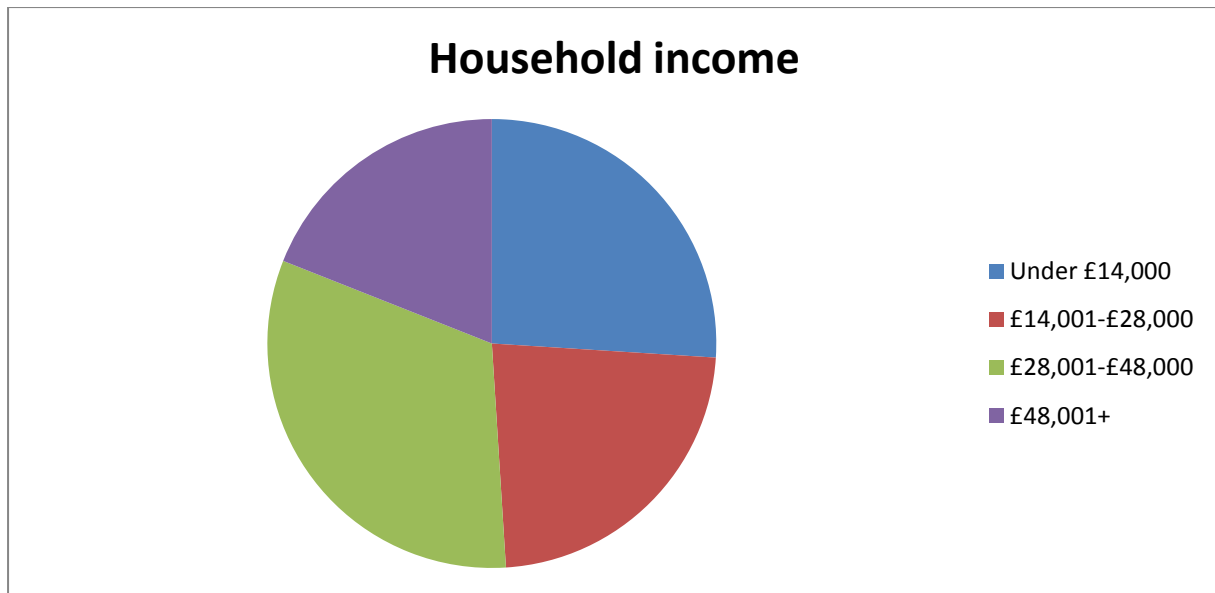


Figure 3: Annual household income

#### 2.5.10 Profile of respondents: Summary

Section 2.5 has given insight into the profile of respondents. To summarise, the typical profile of respondents is middle aged, female, English, Christian (or of no religion), married or cohabiting with no children or with non-dependent children. Section 2.5 reflects that respondents typically work on a full time basis and fully own their property or have a mortgage. Finally, for annual household income, the results showed no particular significance; therefore we can draw no particular trends from these findings.

## 2.6 Environmental Impacts

Key Evaluative Impact	Headline Questions
Environmental Impacts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Composting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How much food or garden waste do you compost and has this changed since joining the programme?</li> <li>Is there anything which makes it difficult or prevents you from composting?</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Amount of food grown</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the amount of food you grow changed since joining the programme?</li> <li>Has the range of food you grow changes since joining the programme?</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Space where produce is grown</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where do you grow food?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

### 2.6.1 Environmental Impacts: Home Composting

Figure 4 illustrates that generally, the amount households compost at home is fairly spread out. However, most noticeably, the highest proportion of household respondents (27%) compost 100% of their food and garden waste and 19% of respondents inform that they do not compost any of their food and garden waste at home. Results are based on 150 answers.

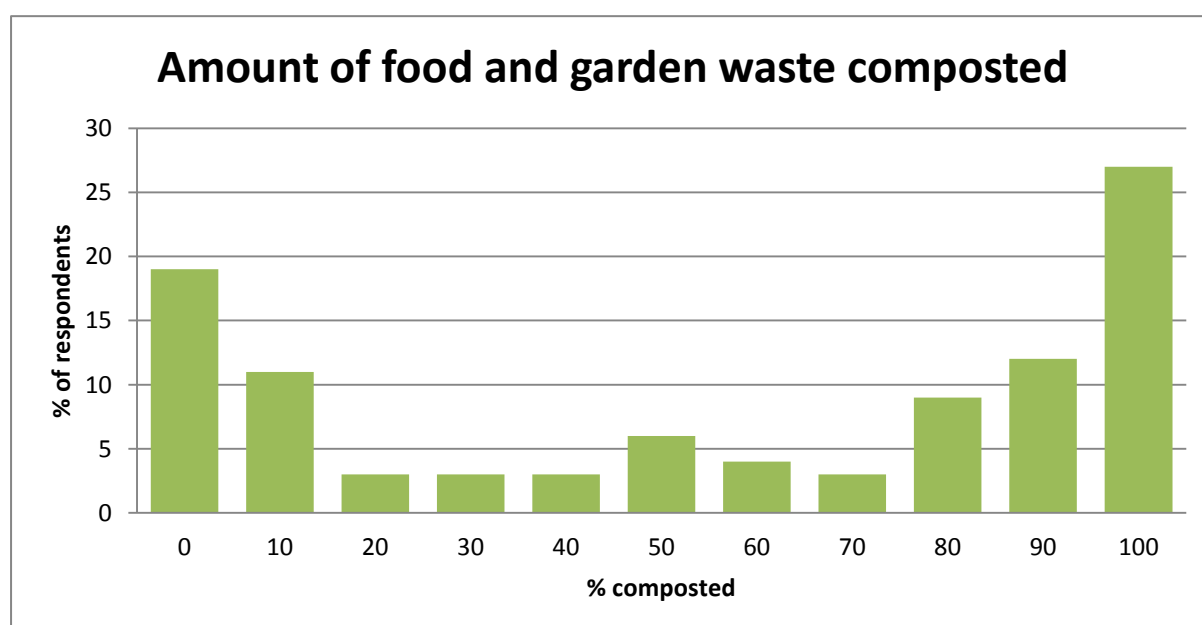


Figure 4: Food and garden waste composted at home

For over one third of respondents (36%), as show in Figure 5, the amount of food and garden waste they compost has increased since joining the programme, whereas for 63%, the amount they compost has stayed the same. For only one respondent this amount had decreased. Results are based on 152 responses.

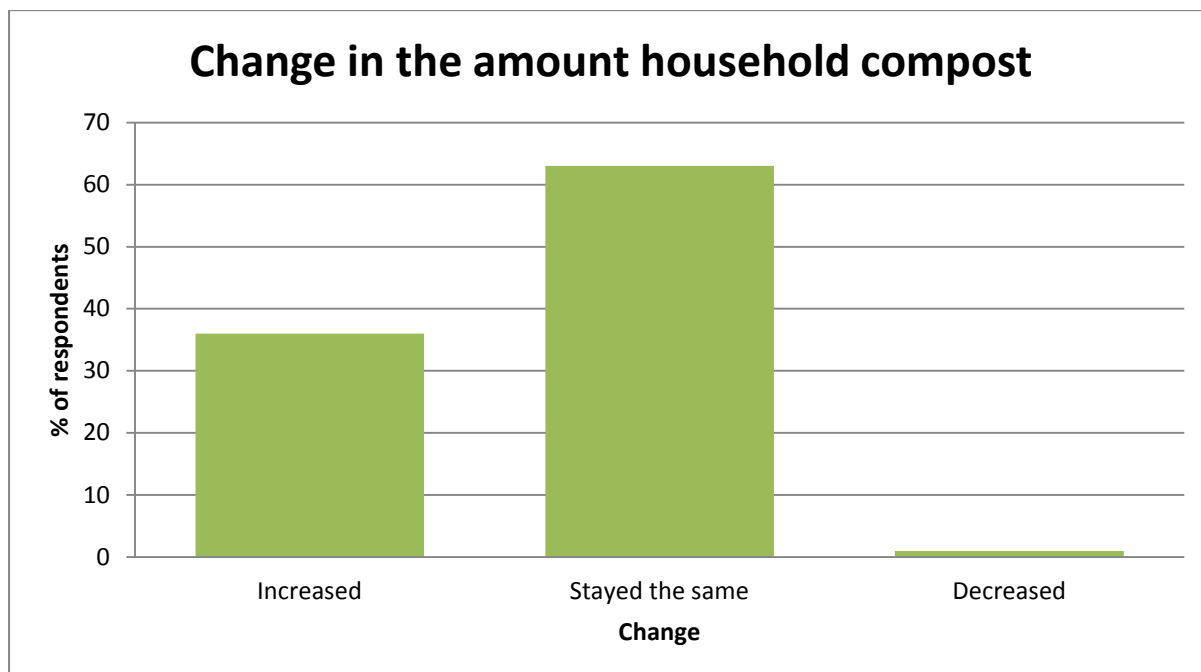


Figure 5: Change in composting

Respondents were asked whether there was anything that makes it difficult or prevents them from composting. Over one third (38%) stated that there was nothing which prevented them from composting or which makes it difficult for them. Twenty five percent of respondents informed that 'lack of space' was a barrier which makes it difficult or prevents them from composting more. Other limitations, for small proportions of respondents, include:

- 'External barriers (such as 'not permitted to compost', 'too shady') (10%)
- No desire (9%)
- Rats, or other pests (7%)
- Do not have the right equipment (3%)
- Do not produce enough waste (2%)
- Lack of time (2%)
- Lack of knowledge (2%)
- Distance (to garden) (1%)
- Rotating the compost (1%)
- Composting is the next step (1%)

Results are based on 112 responses for this open ended question.

The reasons why respondents compost more since participating in the programme have been explored via respondent interviews:

- From many of the interviews it is apparent that an underlying motivation for households to compost is concerned with the **wider notion of sustainability**. Reducing waste is important for a high number of those participants interviewed, and composting is one way of doing this. Putting their waste or nutrition 'back into the system' was described to be 'the right thing to do' by a number of respondents. Some thought that composting 'is part of gardening', another informed 'it is part of the system'. Such 'moral' attitudes were apparent through talking to other respondents, where they mentioned that composting is 'good for the planet' and is 'better than putting it on landfill'.

*"And at home, it's nice...you recycle the bottles and the plastic and everything else, so it's nice that food scraps and things like tea bags and things can go somewhere else as well isn't it? So very little actually goes into the general waste bin these days, which is good."* (Norfolk Respondent, Round 2)

*"[P]utting nutrition back into the soil in a natural way"* (Lincolnshire Respondent, Round 3).

- Another theme that came out of the interviews on the subject of composting was not only seen as a beneficial activity ecologically, it is also **economically beneficial** as 'composting saves money'. Respondents also highlighted that composting did not take much effort.

*"I mean what's the point in paying out money for fertilizer and compost etc etc when you can do it yourself for nothing."* (Lincolnshire Respondent, Round 3.)

*"You get stuff back for not really much effort."* (Warwickshire Respondent, Round 3).

- Since joining the programme, some have increased the amount they compost due to **more waste as a result of growing more**. This has resulted in some respondents

reaching their limit with composting. It is apparent that Master Gardeners have had an encouraging role to play in facilitating some respondents to start composting or to help those who already composted to compost more.

*“Well I mean, [my Master Gardener] was encouraging me to compost things that I wouldn’t have composted before and she gave me all sorts of ideas for things to put in like cardboard. So, yeah, so I’m quite meticulous about composting, everything is composted. I wasn’t sure about banana skins but now I put those in too.”*  
(Warwickshire Respondent, Round 1)

- **Master Gardener advice** has also informed respondents about what to compost which has also resulted in an increase in composting. The following quote is an example of a participant reiterating advice from their Master Gardener. The Master Gardener here also illustrates the benefits of composting to his household.

*“Again, it is coming back to that education that we got from [our Master Gardener] of ‘get your soil right and it will reward you’.”* (Norfolk Respondent, Round 1)

- Another point to note is that when discussing their composting behaviour, some respondents made reference to the use of a **wormery**, or the desire to use a wormery in the future. The use of a wormery was described by some respondents particularly for the inclusion of their children. A final point raised by some respondents in particular those from London, was the value of the food waste collection service they received from the council, as one respondent describes,

*“We’re fortunate because we live in an area that has a food waste bin provided by the council. I think we will use that primarily rather than composting the, simply because of the logistics of putting aside vegetable and fruit peeling and than taking them down to the bottom of the garden which is quite a long way actually, it’s easier just to tip it all into the bin that we’ve been given which then goes out every week and is collected.”* (South London Respondent, Round 3).

- For some, the amount they compost has **stayed the same** due to three main reasons: they have **reached their composting limit**, a **lack of space**, or a **lack of knowledge** about starting composting or what they can and cannot compost. Some participants are already engaged in composting but have reached their limit with what

they can grow and, in turn compost. For others, the amount of space available to them limits how much composting they can do. The barrier of a lack of space has been a particular issue apparent in the London interviews but is not confined to respondents from this area.

### 2.6.2 Number and types of compost bins

Households were asked to state how many compost bins they have. The majority of respondents (46%) have one compost bin; the same proportion of respondents have no compost bins (13%), two compost bins (13%) and three compost bins (13%). Fewer respondents and more compost bins, 6% have four, and 8% of respondents have five or more compost bins. Results are based on 52 responses, and this question was only included in rounds 2 and 3 of the evaluation.

As Figure 6 shows, the most common type of compost bin is plastic (36 responses). Less commonly used types are wooden (11 responses), open heap (8 responses), homemade (5 responses) and other (3 responses). Results are based on 63 responses and this question was only included in rounds 2 and 3 of the evaluation.

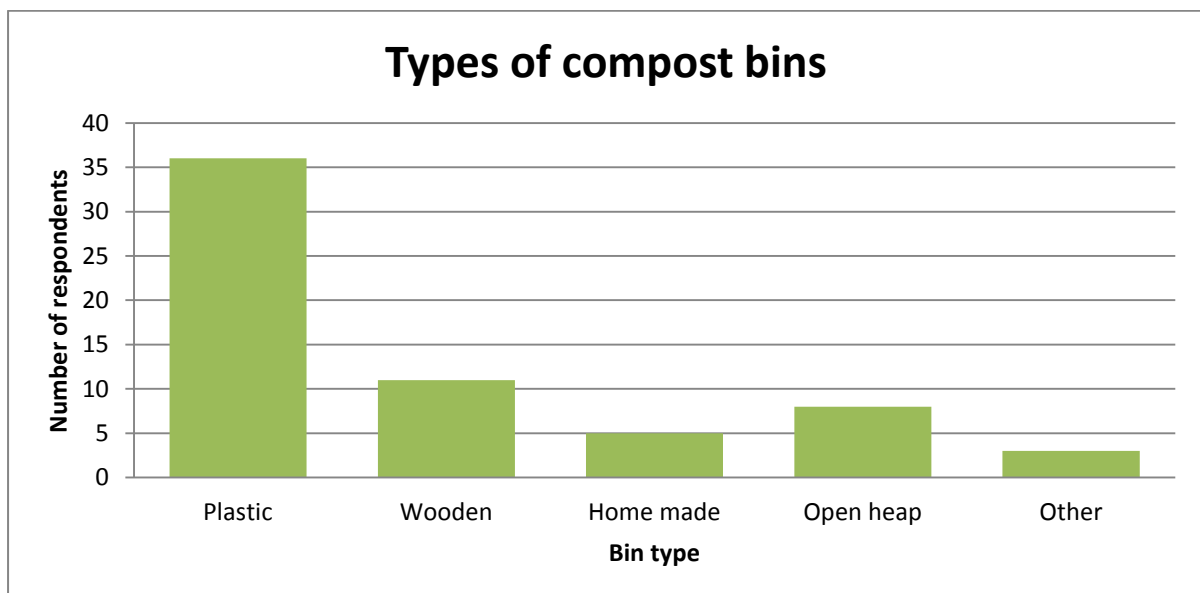


Figure 6: Types of Compost Bins

### 2.6.3 Environmental Impacts: Amount and range of food grown

For the majority of respondents, the amount and range of food they grow has increased since participating in the programme. As Figure 7 demonstrates, 77% of respondents have increased the amount of food they grow and the range of food grown has increased for 76% of respondents. For some, the amount of food they grow has stayed the same (21%) as has the range of food they grow (23%). For 2% of respondents the amount of food they grow has decreased and for 1% of respondent the range they grow has decreased. Results are based on 148 answers to the 'change in amount of food you grow' question, and 146 responses to the 'change in the range of food you grow' question.

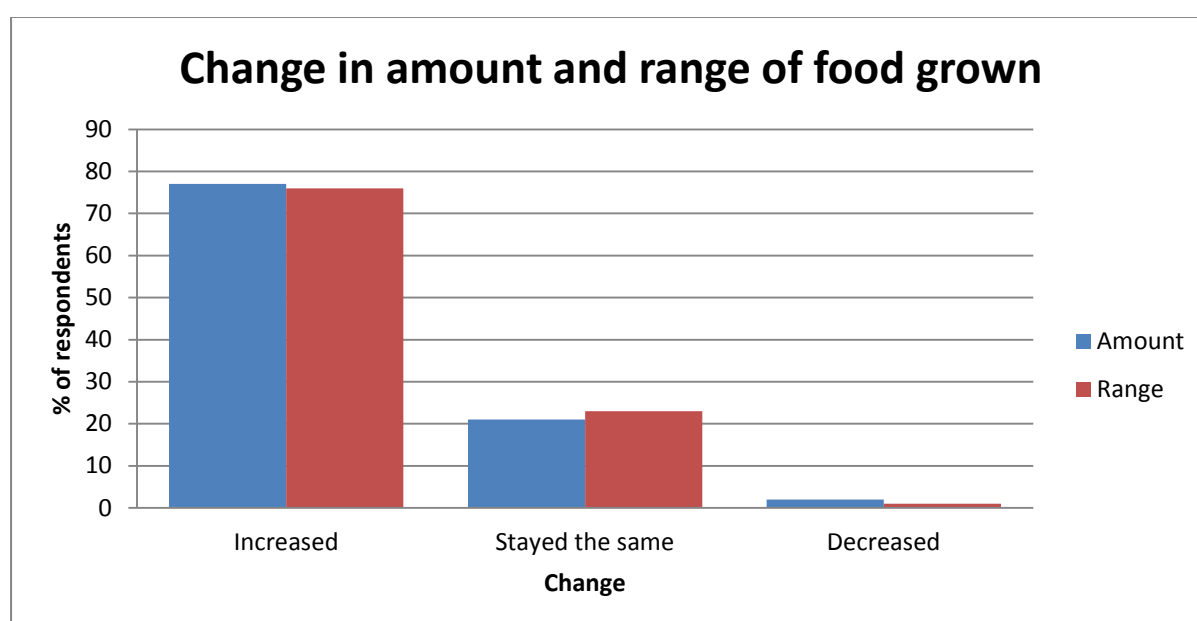


Figure 7: Change in amount and range of food grown

Respondents were openly asked the following question: "Is there anything that makes it difficult or prevents you from growing more food, or from growing what you would like to grow?" The results are displayed in Table 5.



**Table 5: Any difficulties or anything preventing you from growing more?**

	% of respondents
1. Not enough space	45%
2. Lack of time (25% of respondents)	25%
3. No difficulties	10%
4. Unsuitable growing space ('garden is too shady' and 'unsuitable soil')	7%
5. Lack of knowledge (5% of respondents)	5%
6. The weather (4% of respondents)	4%
7. Pests (4% of respondents)	4%
8. Physically unable (1% of respondents)	1%

#### 2.6.4 Environmental Impacts: Where food is grown

As highlighted in Figure 8, respondents mainly grow food in their garden or patio. Growing in a community garden, in an allotment or on window sill and/or balconies are also used by some respondents. Other growing spaces used by some participants include for example communal space, shared garden, greenhouse. Results are based on 187 responses and data is not displayed in percentages but by count, as respondents can grow food in more than one location.

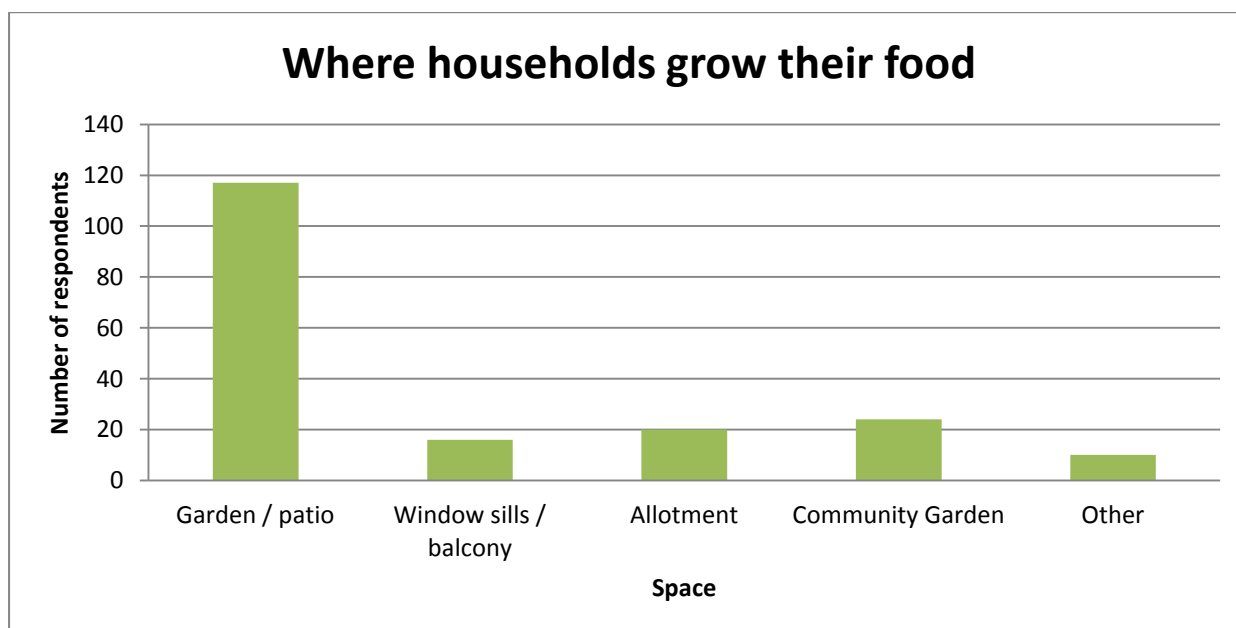


Figure 8: Where respondents grow food

## 2.7 Social Impacts

Key Evaluative Impact	Headline Questions
Social Impacts	<p><b>4. Food purchasing behaviour</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the amount you spend on food changed since joining the programme, why do you think this is??</li> <li>Have you made any changes to where the buy food since joining the programme?</li> </ul> <p><b>5. Social activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How satisfied are you with their involvement in leisure activities / hobbies, and has this changed since joining the programme?</li> </ul> <p><b>6. Social / community relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How satisfied are you with feeling part of a community, and their personal relationships, and has this changed since joining the programme?</li> </ul>

### 2.7.1 Social Impacts: Food purchasing behaviour

As illustrated in Figure 9, for 29% of respondents, the amount they spend on food has decreased since taking part in the programme. However, for 65% of respondents, the amount they spend on food has not changed, and for a small proportion (7%) the amount spent on food had increased. The results are based on 150 responses.

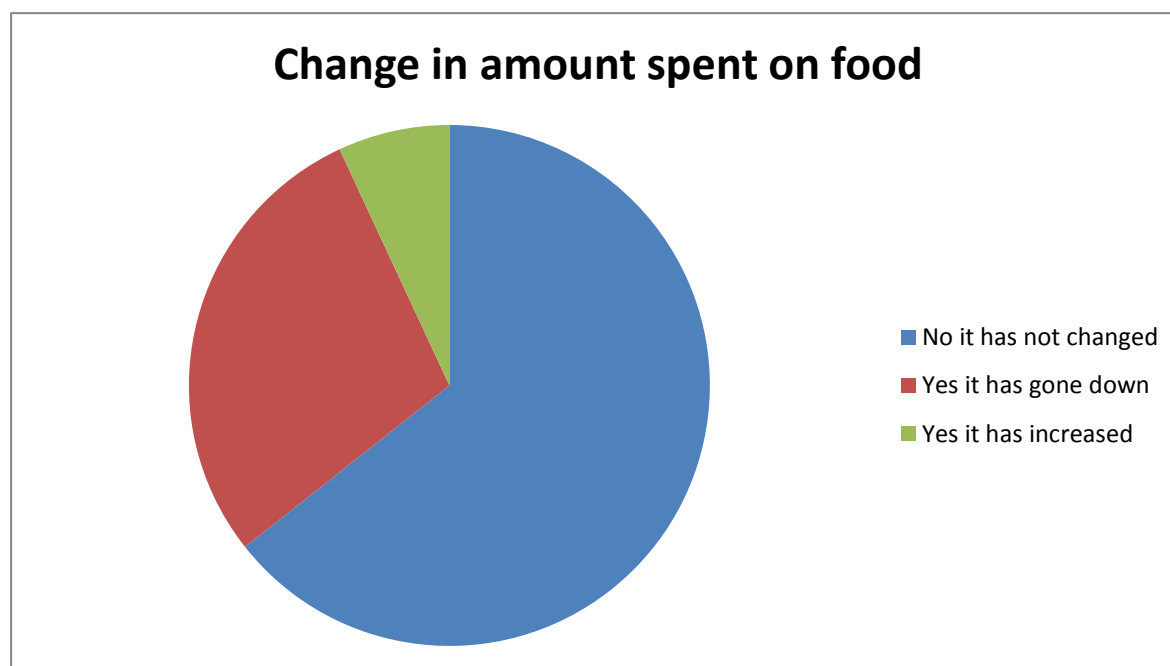


Figure 9: Changes in amount spent on food.

When respondents were asked to state why the amount they spend on food has *not changed* since participating in the programme, the following reasons were given. Out of the 97 respondents who stated that the amount they spent on food had not changed since joining the programme, 67 respondents gave a reason why. Therefore, 69% of respondents answered this question.

- 'I do not grow enough food' (45%)
- 'The increase cost of food outweighs savings made from growing own food' (16%)
- 'Only growing a small amount of food' (15%)
- 'My behaviour has not changed' (13%)
- 'Change in shopping behaviour (6%)
- 'I don't know' (4%)

For those respondents who had stated that the amount they spend on food has *increased* (10 respondents), half elaborated on why. Four respondents informed that the increased cost of living was the reason why they spend more on food, and one respondent stated it was because their children are growing and eating more, which therefore results in buying more food. Results are based on 5 responses.

For those respondents who had stated that the amount they spend on food has *decreased*, 88% of respondents informed why:

- 79% stated that they buy less food as they eat more home grown food
- 11% shop less at supermarkets or undertake more selective shopping
- 5% indicated that their diet has changed
- 3% are eating seasonally
- 3% said there is no reason

Results are based on 38 responses.

Still concentrating on food purchasing, respondents were asked whether they had made any changes to where they buy their food over the past year or so. Over one third of respondents (40%) had made changes; consequently 60% had not. Results are based on

147 responses. 92% of respondents who had made changes to where they buy food had provided further explanation. Results are based on 54 responses

- 47% are buy from local outlets (including Farmers' Markets)
- 18% buy more organic produce
- 14% are buying locally produced food or seasonal food
- 10% have changed supermarkets (mainly due to quality or price)
- 6% stated economic reasons (trying to source cheaper food)
- 6% have changed their shopping habits (are undertaking more selective shopping)

### *No change to shopping behaviour*

Through the interviews, respondents have a number of reasons why they *had not* made any changes to where they buy their food from since participating in the programme.

- It is apparent that some respondents undertake their current shopping behaviour due to **convenience**. These respondents predominantly shop at supermarkets as they lack time to undertake a different shopping schedule. However, this is not considered as 'moral' or 'ethical' behaviour by some respondents as demonstrated by the following quote from one respondent:

*"I blush now, I'll be ashamed. Tesco. Because it's easy. Because it's all there in one place and relatively low prices". (Norfolk Respondent, Round 3).*

- Throughout the interviews, some respondents informed that they already purchase food from '**alternative outlets**' (such as ethical outlets, Farmers Markets, veg box delivery scheme) or buy organic food. Therefore such respondents discussed no change in their shopping behaviour as they were already purchasing food in their preferred outlets. Again, the reference to moral or ethical behaviour is apparent.

*I've always, well since Waitrose has been here, I've always shopped at Waitrose. They are far more ethical than Sainsbury's. I wouldn't use Tesco's. I don't like Asda. So it's local shops or Waitrose. (North London Respondent, Round 3)*

- Throughout the interviews there is a sense of a **dualistic opinion** regarding supermarkets. On the one hand there is a negative perception of

supermarkets but on the other hand respondents seek to justify their shopping behavior even if they regard it as somewhere they are reluctant to shop. This demonstrates that 'choice' of shopping outlet may not be that clear cut for some respondents; there may be external factors (or perceived factors) influencing their shopping behavior.

### *Changes to shopping behaviour*

- The reference to supermarkets along with the aspects of time and convenience were also apparent in those interviews conducted with respondents who *had made changes* to where they buy their food from since participating in the programme. Some respondents expressed a desire to buy food from **local shops in addition** to supermarkets, and the 'additional effort' to do so was 'worth it'. Some respondents had started to purchase from local outlets to 'support them' (as opposed to supermarkets) or for 'better value' produce. However, purchases at supermarkets still continued and 'alternative outlets' were in addition. The following point demonstrates the intermittent use of 'alternative outlets'.

*"we are the Tesco's get your groceries delivered every month type people so that's fine, but the co op have a good business ethic I think so I go and use them and then I use the farm shop just down from Chippin Hill in Coventry. There's one in there and we've been there a few times because it's just a fresher product. [...] we've obviously noticed how things taste better when you've grown them yourselves and that small detour on the way home or something to pick up a few potatoes, carrots, whatever it is from that shop is fine and we sometimes look at the prices of some of it and we think is it always worth that effort"* (Round 3 Respondent, Warwickshire).

The aspects of **taste and price** as mentioned in the above quote are points that have been raised throughout the interviews and will be discussed accordingly. The following quote is from one respondent who informed that they predominantly shopped at Tesco but was 'making an effort' to shop at the local farm shop. From their experience, it was difficult to avoid Tesco due to a 'lack of time' and the convenience of shopping at Tesco with small children. This particular respondent expressed how the shopping experience at the local farm shop was different compared to the experience at Tesco.

*“Once I made the decision I wanted to go [to the farm shop] I haven’t gone back really she is very friendly. She knows you by name and you always have a chat an inevitably someone else from the village walks in while you’re there so you have a chat to them, whereas you don’t get that in Tesco because you get your trolley and you just race around as quick as quick as you can because it is just a necessary evil.” (Norfolk Respondent, Round 2).*

- Some respondents chose to purchase locally to support **local outlets**, in some instances in opposition to supporting supermarkets.

*“but what I really try to do consciously now is, I still use supermarkets sometimes but I really try, I’ve got quite a strict rule now where I try not to buy any fruit or vegetables in the supermarket just because I simply want to support local shops because it is heartbreaking how many shops are having to close, so yeah, it’s about that really.” (North London Respondent, Round 2)*

*“I think it’s better value and it’s nice to support local market stall guys, mainly from Whitechapel. At the end of Whitechapel Road you get a lot of Bangladeshi selling fruit and veg so... I mean I try to buy from them if I can, but if I can’t it’s Lidl next door.” (London Respondent, Round 1)*

In addition, from the interviews, there is a sense from some respondents that they **‘should’ be** purchasing from local producers or outlets even if they are not already doing so.

*“I keep talking to a friend who keeps going to a farmers’ market and keeps saying I really ought to be going to it. Not that she’s telling me, but you know, when I speak to her I think, yes, I must be going, I ought to be going there. It’s there! It’s on our doorstep! I ought to be doing that.” (London Respondent, Round 1)*

*“I’d like to go to, sort of like, the local farms that sell stuff, but its knowing where they are sort of.” (Warwickshire Respondent, Round 1)*

*“I’d like to do is to buy more local produce and more organic produce. It’s been difficult financially over the last few years. I think things are going to ease a little bit so... one change that I have made recently is that we have an orchard just on*

*the outskirts of Crayborough and I have made the occasional purchase of apples there in the past but I've made a concerted effort so this autumn all our apples are coming from there and they also recently expanded from just selling their apples to, kind of, a farm shop so they are selling a lot more vegetables and preserves things. So we...I've... their sacks of potatoes are quite cheap so we get all our potatoes from there as well now that our potatoes on the allotment have run out."* (South London Respondent, Round 1).

### Selective Shopping

- Some respondents informed that they has made changes to where they buy their food from (since participating in the programme) by making a choice to shop at **different supermarkets**. Changing between supermarkets, (more selective shopping) was a conscious decision taken to source either better *priced* food or better *quality* food. This is illustrated by the following quotes from respondents.

*"Well I used to go to Tesco. I don't anymore because I find that Sainsbury's do better food. They do better things so I go to Sainsbury's and get my stuff and sometimes I find that the price varies as well because sometimes the pricing is better in Sainsbury's."* (South London Respondent, Round 2)

*"We have switched from one retailer to another in the last year or eighteen months or so and that was simply driven by price, with the increases in particularly meats and cereals. We're trying to... we've got a young daughter as well so we're trying to minimise those outgoings"* (South London Respondent, Round 3)

*"Instead of mostly Tesco, it is now split between Tesco and Sainsbury's and the Co Op and Lidl which is locally, and that is pretty much price driven. Price is the most important thing. Convenience of access is important as well, according to where you have to be."* (Warwickshire Respondent, Round 1)

### Purchasing less from supermarkets

- Since respondents have been growing their own food, some **buy less food from supermarkets**. A number of reasons have been discussed; the comparison of taste between home grown fruit and veg and that brought at the supermarket, which some

respondents inform reflects seasonality of produce, and the price of fruit and veg at the supermarket.

### *Taste*

- Some respondents had made changes to where they buy their food from on the basis of **taste**. Within the interviews, some respondents drew comparisons with regards to the taste of produce from shops and supermarkets, and home grown produce, with home grown produce ‘tasting better’ The following quotes illustrate this point.

*“Well I hardly... I never buy food from the supermarkets these days, I mean it just tastes...now I’ve got used to eating organic vegetables, supermarket food just tastes as if it’s made of paper. That’s the main reason.”* (North London Respondent, Round 3)

*“Yes. Because I grow my own and it taste much nicer because there is no fertilizer in it so I find that it is fresh and is got that texture... you know, is really nice. Is completely different from what I get in the shops because somehow it doesn’t seem the same.”* (South London Respondent, Round 2)

Although the following respondent already purchased from ‘alternative outlets’ and therefore had not made any changes to where they buy their food from, it is important to note the reference to taste of supermarket and home grown, organic produce.

*“But I think I’ve become much much more aware of the taste of organic food and you... when you have something out of Sainsbury’s you just think... you know, it just, it doesn’t have substance. It’s not just taste, it’s a sense of eating of eating something substantial. I think my taste buds have become more refined.”* (North London Respondent, Round 2)

### *Seasonal produce*

- The aspect of **seasonality** was evident in some of the interviews. Since respondents had starting growing their own food, they were more aware of what time of year particular food grows. Therefore, for some respondents, they would prefer to buy seasonal produce, which some inform relates to taste.



*"Maybe I have changed because the things I grew I didn't want to buy at store any more. Let's say I had a lettuce and I finish lettuce, but still I go back to store, I didn't want to buy it, I want to buy the things in season so maybe that is a change."* (Warwickshire Respondent, Round 1)

*"Buy seasonal now. Different varieties, seasonal stuff as opposed to... I always used to think that well if I fancied this then I'd go and buy it, whereas now I'm thinking, well I'll wait and have it then and then it actually tastes a bit more special."* (Norfolk Respondent, Round 2)

### Price

*"When I go to Tesco's or Sainsbury's or Asda I sort of cringe at the price of what you're paying because, you know, we've quite successfully grown our own produce this year and I've ran out of something that I need for whatever, cooking, and I think I'll go and grab some from the supermarket and I look at the price thinking that I wished that I'd put an extra plant in or... I wish they were ready now and they haven't been. That sort of aspect has driven me mad really... the cost at the supermarket... it's cheaper to eat unhealthily and that's the problem you know. All the high carbohydrate, the high fat, the high sugar is more expensive... its cheaper than fruit and veg and it's horrible when you look at the prices. So I do avoid buying things that I can grow. If I can grow it then I will give it a go, but yeah. It has saved me a lot of money, growing our own definitely"* (Warwickshire Respondent, Round 1)

The above section has demonstrated that through the interviews, respondents are consciously aware of their shopping behaviour and the choices they make. Price and convenience appears to be the main considerations to some respondents who have not made changes to where they buy their food from. Respondent's reluctance to shop at supermarkets was identified throughout the interviews. Price is also a point of consideration for those respondents who have made changes to where they buy their food from; whether it is undertaking more selective shopping or the realisation of the price of produce that can be grown at home. It is apparent that since respondents have been growing their own food, they are more aware of taste and this is an important factor when they are considering where they purchase food from. Throughout the interviews, some respondents have illustrated comparisons between price, quality, availability, and the social experience of shopping at different outlets.

### 2.7.2 Social Impacts: Amount spent on food

The highest proportion of respondents (41%) spend between £40-£70 per week on food. Slightly lower proportions informed that they spend £40 or less on food per week (27%) , between £70-£100 per week on food (22%), and £100+ (9%). The results are based on 150 responses.

### 2.7.3 Social Impacts: Social activities

Figure 10 highlights that a high portion of respondents are generally satisfied with involvement in leisure activities/hobbies (70%), with 25% very satisfied and 45% fairly satisfied. A low proportion of respondents are 'neither satisfied or dissatisfied' (18%), 'fairly dissatisfied' (10%) or 'very dissatisfied' (2%). Results are based on 130 responses.

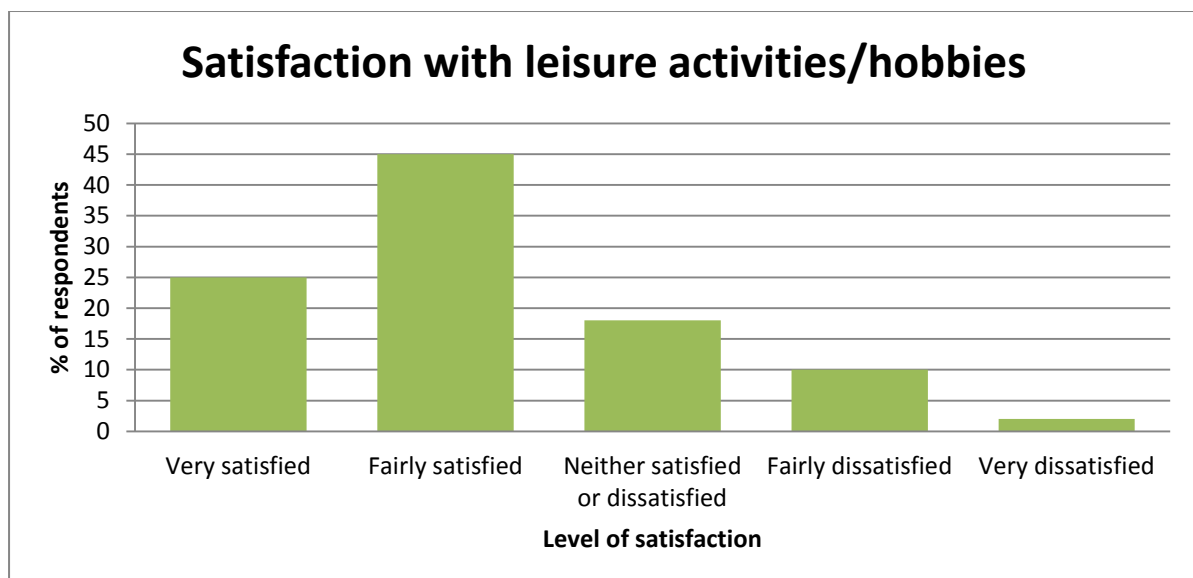


Figure 10: Satisfaction with leisure activities/hobbies

When looking at whether participant's satisfaction with involvement in leisure activities and hobbies has changed since taking part in the programme (Figure 11), 30% of respondents indicated that their satisfaction had increased. For 66% of respondents it had stayed the same and for only 5% it had decreased. Results are based on 125 responses.

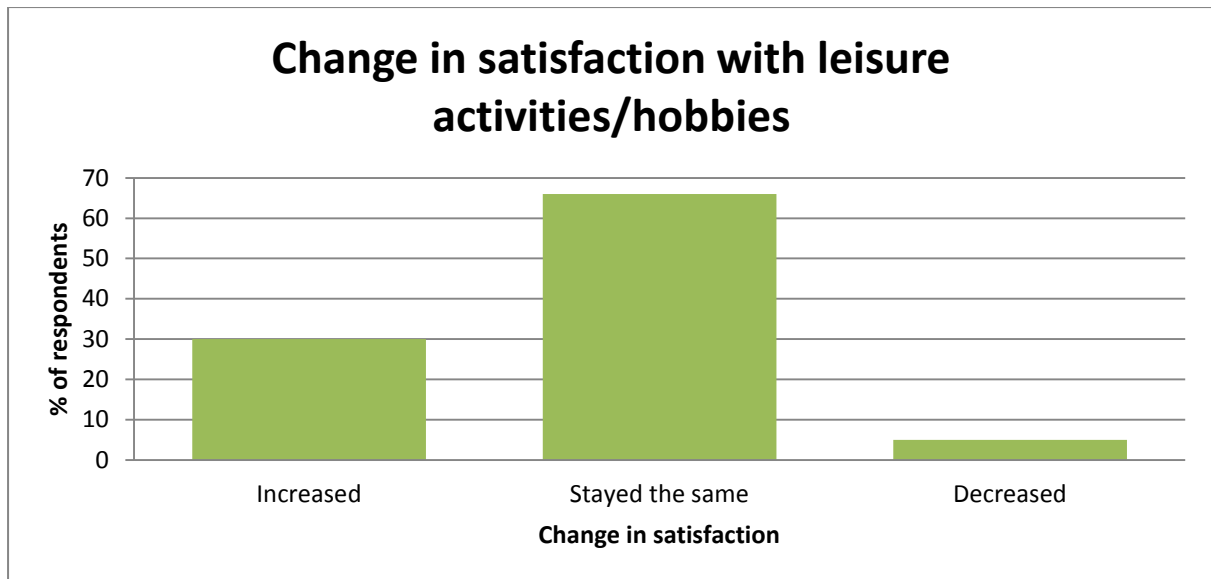


Figure 11: Change in satisfaction with leisure activities/hobbies

#### 2.7.4 Social Impacts: Social and community relationships

The general trend, as illustrated in Figure 12, shows that the highest proportions of respondents are generally 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with their personal relationships (83%) and feeling part of a community (70%). Some respondents are 'neither satisfied or dissatisfied' with feeling part of a community (23%) and with their personal relationships (12%). Low numbers of respondents are either 'fairly dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' with feeling part of a community (7%) and with their personal relationships (6%). Results are based on 131 responses (feeling part of a community) and 129 responses (personal relationships)

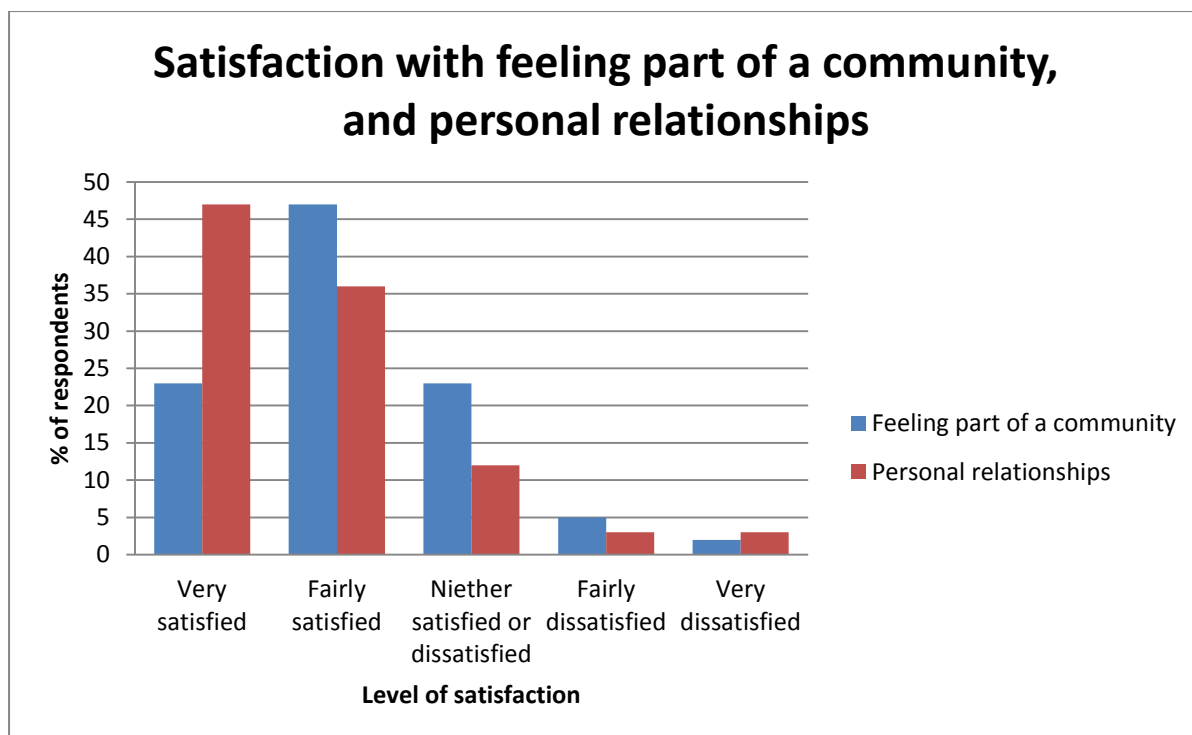


Figure 12: Satisfaction with feeling part of a community and personal relationships

When investigating whether there has been a change in satisfaction with feeling part of a community since taking part in the programme, Figure 13 shows that for over one third (34%) of respondents this has increased, for 62% it had stayed the same and for 4% it had decreased. Regarding satisfaction with their personal relationships for 24% this has increased, for 71% it had stayed the same and for a small number (5%) it had decreased. Results are based on 125 responses (personal relationships) and 126 responses (feeling part of a community).

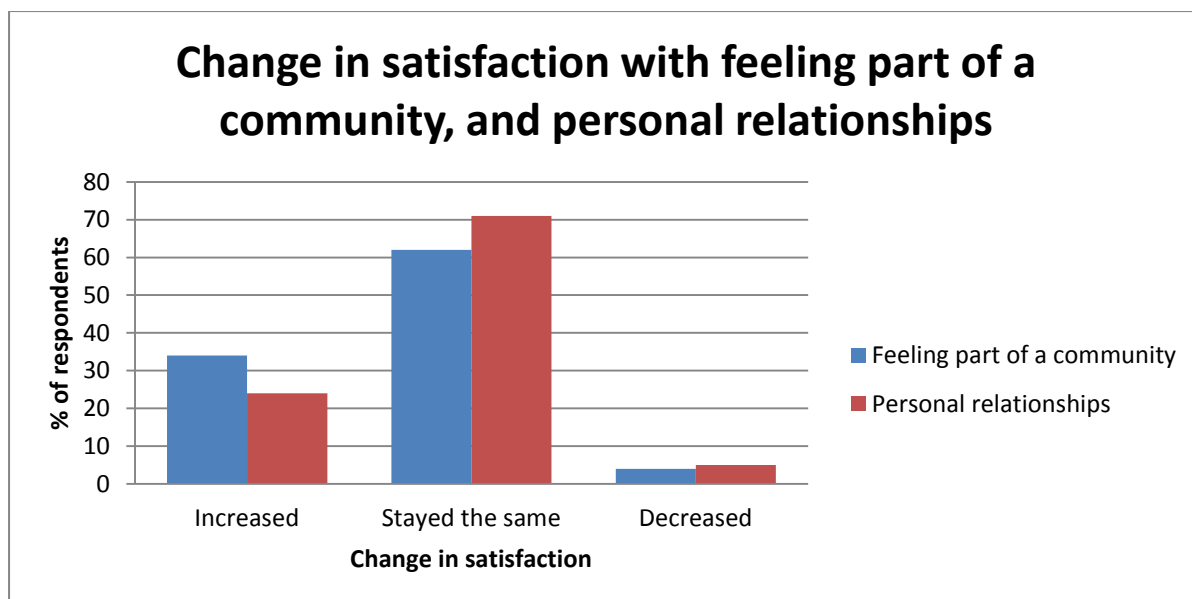


Figure 13: Change in satisfaction with feeling part of a community, and personal relationships

During the interviews, respondents were asked why 'feeling part of a community' for them, had increased, or stayed the same since participating in the Programme. Focusing on the reasons why 'feeling part of a community' had increased for respondents, the following themes were discussed in the interviews.

- Being part of a community garden or growing in a communal space (flats for example) not surprisingly increased peoples feeling part of a community. An increase in the amount of time spent with other people contributed largely to this. More **social contact** and **interaction** with their neighbours was also a reason why households' (who are not part of a community group) 'feeling part of a community' had increased. **Neighbours** were particularly mentioned, with sharing an interest with neighbours which resulted in more contact. In some instances, neighbours also provided supervision to plants whilst households were away.
- The reference to '**quality**' conversations and actual real, physical contact with people again around a shared interest was also another reason why people felt part of a community.
- **Meeting new and different people** was also discussed in the interviews. Some respondents felt as though that were in contact with people who they would have

never met before. Participating in the Programme for some has also increased networking and has opened up new contacts.

- Some respondents made reference to the actually **community** they felt part of. For some it was the growing community, for others it was their local community, or their family community. Although some respondents felt part of a growing community on an allotment, two respondents highlighted the fact, through their experiences, that allotment associations felt quite exclusionary.

### 2.7.5 Satisfaction with time spent with friends and family

Respondents were asked whether they feel that their time spent with friends and family had changed since joining the programme. For the majority of respondents it had stayed the same (87%), for 11% it had increased, and for 2% it had decreased. Results are based on 142 responses.

### 2.7.6 Social Impacts: Household participation

Regarding household participation, Table 7 illustrates that 71% of respondents undertake activities to do with the programme primarily on their own; 14% undertake activities with their spouse or partner. Smaller percentages are involved in the programme with their spouse/partner and child(ren) (8%), or just with their child(ren) (5%), Grandchildren (1%) or other family members (1%). Results are based on 111 responses<sup>7</sup>.

Respondents were asked whether anyone else was connected to their involvement in the Master Programme – results from the question are also displayed in Table 6. The results show that the majority of respondents (42%) indicated that a friend (or friends) are involved in the programme with them. Results are based on 48 responses.

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<sup>7</sup> By undertaking the analysis it appears as though this question may have been misinterpreted by a number of respondents. Answers to 'please specify who in your households is involved in the Master Gardener Programme' included some responses which have been excluded from the analysis such as 'community group' for example.

**Table 6: Household participation and involvement in the Programme**

	Percentage of respondents
<b>Who specifically in your household takes part in the Programme?</b>	
Myself	71%
Spouse / partner	14%
Spouse / partner and child(ren)	8%
Child(ren)	5%
Grandchild(ren)	1%
Other family member	1%
<b>Is there anyone else connected to your involvement in the Programme?</b>	
Friends(s)	42%
Community / voluntary group / organisation	29%
Family member	17%
Neighbour	8%
Carer	4%

### 2.7.7 Social Impacts: Number of hours spent growing food

Figure 14 show a general trend in hours spent growing food per week; as the number of hours increase, the number of respondents decrease. However, with exception to the general trend, a low proportion of respondents spend zero hours growing food (2%), and a higher number of respondents spend 8+ hours growing food per week (7%).

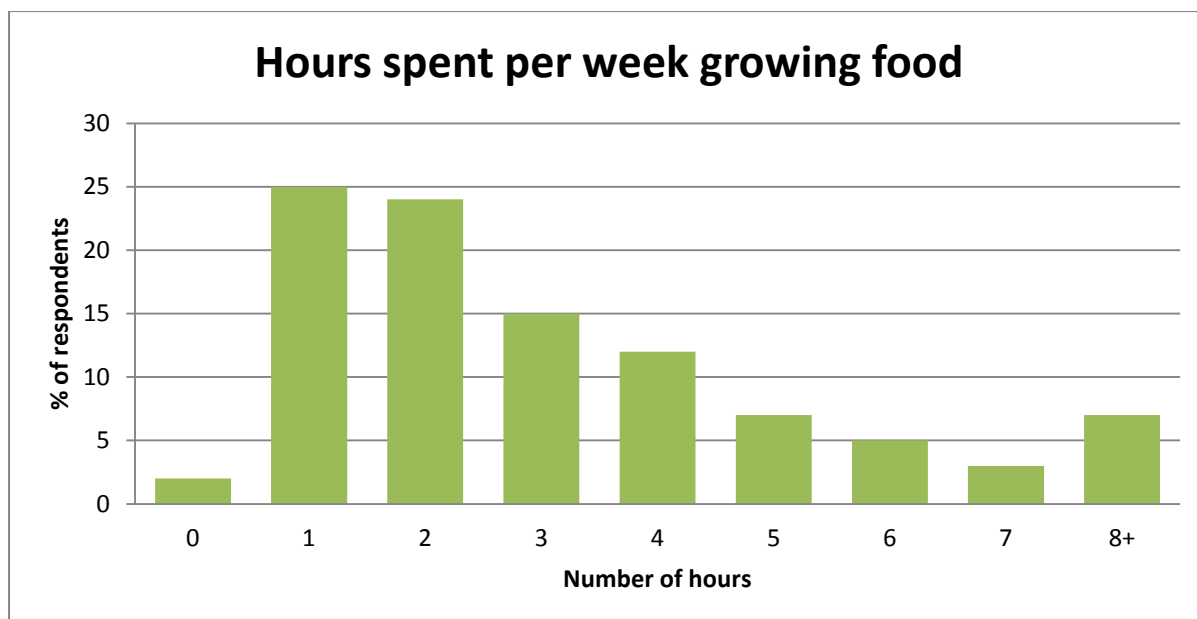


Figure 14: Hours spent growing food

Regarding the amount of time spent growing food on average per week (Figure 15), this has increased for a significant amount of respondents (67%) since taking part in the programme. For 32% the amount of time they spend growing food has stayed the same, and for a very low proportion (1%) it has decreased since joining the programme. Results are based on 144 responses. Hours spent growing food equates to the associated physical activity required, either low or moderate in intensity, in an outdoor setting which is very much connected to health impacts.

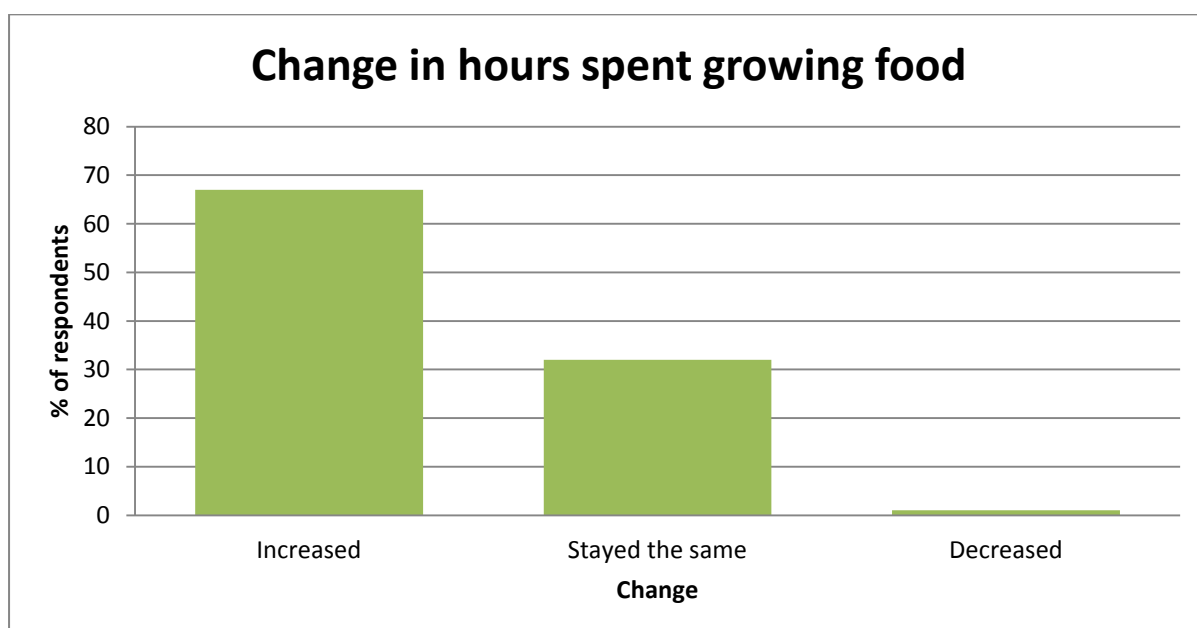


Figure 15: Change in number of hours spent growing food



### 2.7.8 Social Impacts: Communication with Master Gardener

The majority of respondents (30%) communicate with their Master Gardener on an 'as and when' basis. For other respondents, communication is more structured with 21% informing that they communicate weekly, 19% every fortnight and 13% on a monthly basis. Smaller proportions of respondents inform that they communicate with their Master Gardener more infrequently; 11% communicate 2-3 times a year, 9% every 2 months, 8% have no further contact with their Master Gardener. Results are based on 152 responses.

### 2.7.9 Social Impacts: Motivation for participating in the programme:

When asked why they decided to participate in the programme, respondents gave the following reasons. Results are based on 146 responses.

- Wanted to learn how to grow food/more about growing food (48%)
- For help and advice (19%)
- Wanted to improve garden space (10%)
- It was recommended (10%)
- Enjoy gardening/being outside / interested in programme (6%)
- I was asked by a Master Gardener (or another connection) (6%)
- To eat healthier food (1%)

### 2.7.10 Social Impacts: Personal goal

Based on 142 responses, 69% of respondents did have a goal at the beginning of the programme, compared to 31% who did not. Out of those respondents who did have a goal, 79% indicated that they had achieved it (but the remaining 21% of respondents did not indicate that they have not achieved their goal) (results based on 77 responses). Another point to make is that 98 respondents informed that they had a goal, however 108 respondents stated what their goal was. The answers displayed in Table 7 are based on 108 responses.

**Table 7: Household's goal at the beginning of the programme**

To grow own food	50%
To improve productivity of garden	11%
To gain a better understanding of growing	10%
To improve garden (aesthetically and/or productivity)	6%
To grow a variety of produce	6%
To become more confident in gardening	2%
To become self-sufficient	1%
To establish a composting system	1%
To eat more fruit and vegetables	1%
To pilot a local food scheme	1%

### 2.7.11 Social Impacts: Knowledge of food growing

Respondents were asked whether they felt that their knowledge of food growing has changed since participating in the programme. Figure 16 demonstrates that 88% of respondents informed that their knowledge of food growing has increased since joining the programme, whereas 12% stated it had stayed the same. Results are based on 145 responses.

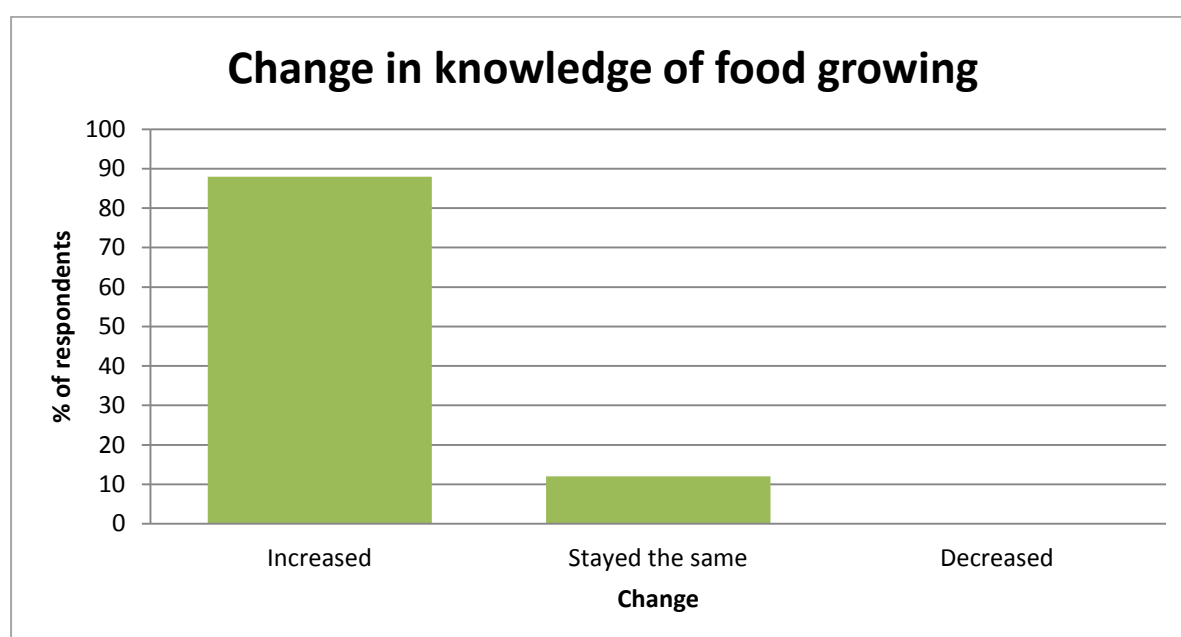


Figure 16: Change in knowledge of growing

## 2.8 Health and Wellbeing Impacts

Key Evaluative Impact	Headline Questions
Health and Wellbeing Impacts	<p><b>7. Life satisfaction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How would you rate your overall satisfaction with your life now, and one year ago?</li> <li>To what extent do you feel that your participation in the programme has influenced your overall life satisfaction, and why?</li> </ul> <p><b>8. Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How satisfied are you with your health, and do you feel this has changed since joining the programme?</li> </ul> <p><b>9. Fruit and vegetable consumption</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On average per day how many pieces of fruit and vegetables do you eat, and has this changed since you joined the programme?</li> </ul>

### 2.8.1 Health and Wellbeing Impacts: Life satisfaction

Respondents were asked to rate their overall life satisfaction on a scale of 0 to 10 at the time of questionnaire completion (1 year into the project) and one year ago. Respondents were asked to indicate whether their life satisfaction had changed since participating in the programme for one year. The results show that on average, since being involved in the programme for one year, the average life satisfaction score of participants has increased by 0.7. Further questions were asked to explore whether there is a relationship between involvement in the programme and life satisfaction. Table 8 demonstrated the average life satisfaction rating for each round of the evaluation, and the national average life satisfaction rating when available. Results are based on 136 responses.

<b>Table 8: Household average life satisfaction score</b>					
<b>Life satisfaction:</b>	<b>1 year before completing the questionnaire</b>	<b>Defra national average</b>	<b>Time of questionnaire completion (1 year in to the programme)</b>	<b>Defra national average</b>	<b>Change (-/+)</b>
<i>Round 1 Household*</i>	<b>7.5</b> (2010)	<b>7.5</b> (2010)	<b>8</b> (2011)	<b>7.7</b> (2011)	<b>0.5+</b>
<i>Round 2 Household**</i>	<b>6.9</b> (2011)	<b>7.7</b> (2011)	<b>7.6</b> (2012)	N/A <sup>8</sup>	<b>0.7+</b>
<i>Round 3 Household***</i>	<b>7.2</b>	N/A	<b>8.2</b>	N/A	<b>1+</b>

\* Results are based on 50 responses. Four respondents either did not answer the question, or did not provide a score for both 'one year ago' and 'now'.

\*\* Data excluded for five respondents who had not given their life satisfaction rating for both 'one year ago' and 'now'; or who did not answer the question. This equals a total of 55 responses for this question.

\*\*\* Data excluded for ten respondents who had not given their life satisfaction rating for both 'one year ago' and 'now'; or who did not answer the question. This equals a total of 31 responses for this question.

As Figure 17 highlights, 45% of respondents reported that their satisfaction with their life had increased since participating in the programme. For 54% of respondents, their life satisfaction had stayed the same and for 1 respondent it had decreased. Results are based on 93 responses; this particular question was included in the questionnaire at the round 2 stage and therefore only reflects round 2 and 3 responses.

<sup>8</sup> National average life satisfaction not available at the time of writing the report.

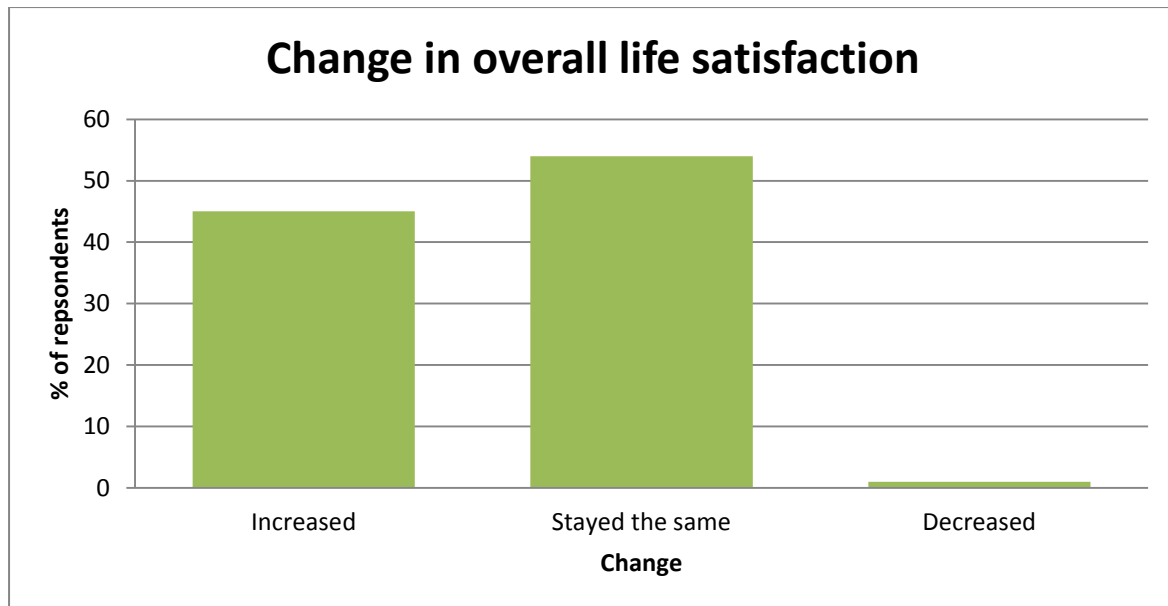


Figure 17: Change in overall life satisfaction

A total of 77% of respondents informed that their overall satisfaction with their life has increased to some extent (either to a little or a large extent) since participating in the programme, as shown in Figure 18. When breaking this down, 62% of respondents reported that their involvement in the programme had influenced their overall life satisfaction to a little extent, and for 15% of respondents to a large extent. For 23% of respondents, they felt that their involvement in the programme had not influenced their overall life satisfaction. Results are based on 144 responses.

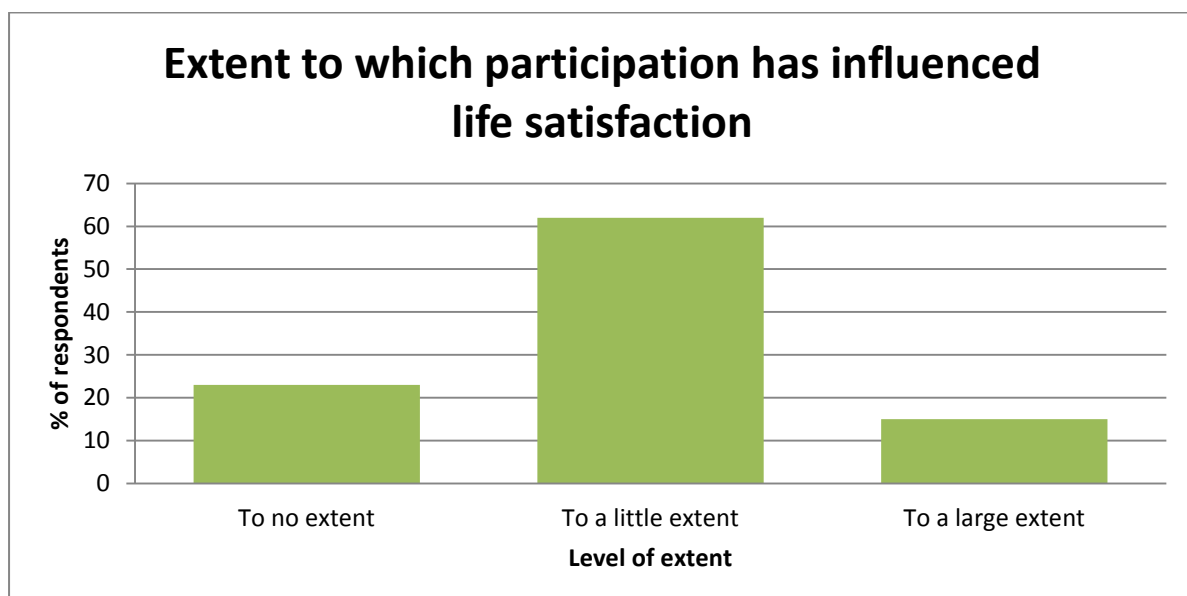


Figure 18: Extent to which participation has influenced overall life satisfaction

The reasons why respondents felt their involvement in the programme had influenced their overall life satisfaction to a *large* extent are summarised below:

- Satisfying activity (58%)
- Spending time with others (social activity) (21%)
- More confident (21%)
- Gardening is important to me (11%)

When looking into the reasons why respondents feel that their involvement in the programme has influenced their life satisfaction to a *little* extent, the following reasons were given (out of the 89 household who responded to the question, 65 gave reasons):

- Satisfying / rewarding activity (sense of achievement) (26%)
- Successfully growing own food (14%)
- Gained more confidence and motivation (14%)
- Interesting, worthwhile hobby (14%)
- More active (9%)
- Spending time with others (9%)
- Limited results (8%)
- Support / helpfulness of Programme (6%)

Moving on to investigate why participating in the programme has influenced respondent's life satisfaction to *no* extent, the following reasons were given (33 respondents answered the question and 21 gave a reason why):

- Not really an important part of life (38%)
- Social barriers (14%)
- Lack of support from Master Gardener (14%)
- Health problems (10%)
- Frustration with poor crops (19%)
- Lack of time (5%)

Through conducting interviews, participants were asked to expand upon why they feel their involvement in the programme has influenced their overall life satisfaction to some extent; a number of explanations transpired.

- On one hand, the social elements of programme provided a lot satisfaction for participants. For example, when presented with the question, many respondents focused on the **personal interaction and encouragement from the Master Gardener**. The personal element to the advice and support has been illustrated as a key part of the programme and for contributing towards people's life satisfaction.
- Another element to the 'social benefits' is the opportunities the programme has created for participants to **meet new people** who have similar interests, which has had an impact on people's satisfaction with their life.

*"I think the allotment helped as well as I made more friends of different generations because over there it tends to be a lot more older generations in the allotment so I have made a lot of friends there about sixty or seventy and there are some family as well. So I felt like part of a community a lot more once I joined."*

*It's meant that I've met people that I wouldn't have otherwise met."*

- Responses to this question also focused on how respondents feel the programme has impacted on their **family life** and how this has increased their life satisfaction:

*"And it's nice for us all to be out in the garden doing something productive and my husband... he likes the house, but he loves being in the garden."*

*"I feel it's created a bigger bond between me and my children because my little boy absolutely loves growing things and he did all his own strawberries from seed and we had produce in the first year from that and that was brilliant and the Master Gardeners were very helpful, they actually brought a strawberry plant round just in case his didn't so he wasn't disheartened... to sort of encourage him and show this is what will happen next year if it doesn't happen this year to keep the encouragement and enthusiasm..."*

- The **sense of achievement** of producing something meaningful, in particular food, is also a key feature within the interviews.

*“we’ve looked at different things we can grow as well as the things we know we can be successful with and it’s made us feel much better, and we’re really proud [...] we showed our friends whenever they came round.”*

*“It’s very satisfying isn’t it when you produce something that’s useable.”*

- The programme has also created opportunities for people to go **outside** and to experience nature. For one respondent it had made them feel more **connected** with the whole process of where your food comes from, producing and consuming food, which is important and makes me feel better.

*“I get the satisfaction of, particularly in the summer months, of getting outdoors and doing something with nature.”*

Seeing their children connect to nature was also a reason given by some respondents as to why their life satisfaction had increased.

- For some respondents their life satisfaction score was low for various reasons. However, the programme has enabled them to focus on something **positive**. Some respondents regarded food growing as an **enjoyable activity** which gives them a **sense of control** in their lives.

*“I was finding it quite difficult, not working very much, it really gave me something to get my teeth into, so it was very satisfying and it gave me something positive to focus on so I think that really did help.”*

*“I think at a variety of levels. You feel a little bit more in charge, and I do mean a little. It’s a perceptible small amount shall we say, in charge of your own life, it’s just a little bit more under your control and a little bit less under the control of outside influences. Your... there’s the sense of new adventure for me, I’ve not done this before and wouldn’t have done it if I hadn’t been pushed, so there’s a sense of... you’re widening your own experience of life”.*

- In addition to the social aspects influencing life satisfaction, some respondents focused on the **health** elements, including **physical and mental health**. Some respondents felt more satisfied with their life as they felt as though their health had



benefitted from participation in the programme. One respondent described that gardening made her ‘feel good’ and that gardening is ‘good anger management’. Another respondent has described how their life satisfaction rating has increased due to physical health reasons:

*“because we’re eating more fruit and veg that we grow ourselves and also because I spend more time out in the garden physically.”* (Norfolk Respondent, Round 3).

The above section demonstrates how the programme has affected how satisfied respondents feel with their lives, which encompasses an array of reasons. It is particularly difficult to illustrate the impact the programme has had on participants as many have unique lifestyle circumstances and therefore experience different benefits of the programme. It is however clear that involvement in the programme does have an impact on people’s lives (as demonstrated above) and the fact that it benefits it’s participants in different ways is certainly a visible strength of the programme.

### 2.8.2 Health and Wellbeing Impacts: Health

As Figure 19 shows, the majority of respondent (85%) are either very or fairly satisfied with their health at the time of questionnaire completion. When breaking this down, 26% of respondents reported that they were ‘very satisfied’ with their health, and 59% felt ‘fairly satisfied’. A small number felt ‘neither satisfied or dissatisfied’ (9%), ‘fairly dissatisfied’ (5%) or ‘very dissatisfied’ (2%) with their health. Results are based on 131 responses.



Figure 19: Satisfaction with health

When investigating whether respondent's satisfaction with their health has changed since participating in the programme, Figure 20 illustrates that 24% of respondents feel their satisfaction with their health has increased. The highest proportion of respondents feel it has stayed the same (71%) and few respondents feel it has decreased (6%). Results are based on 266 responses.

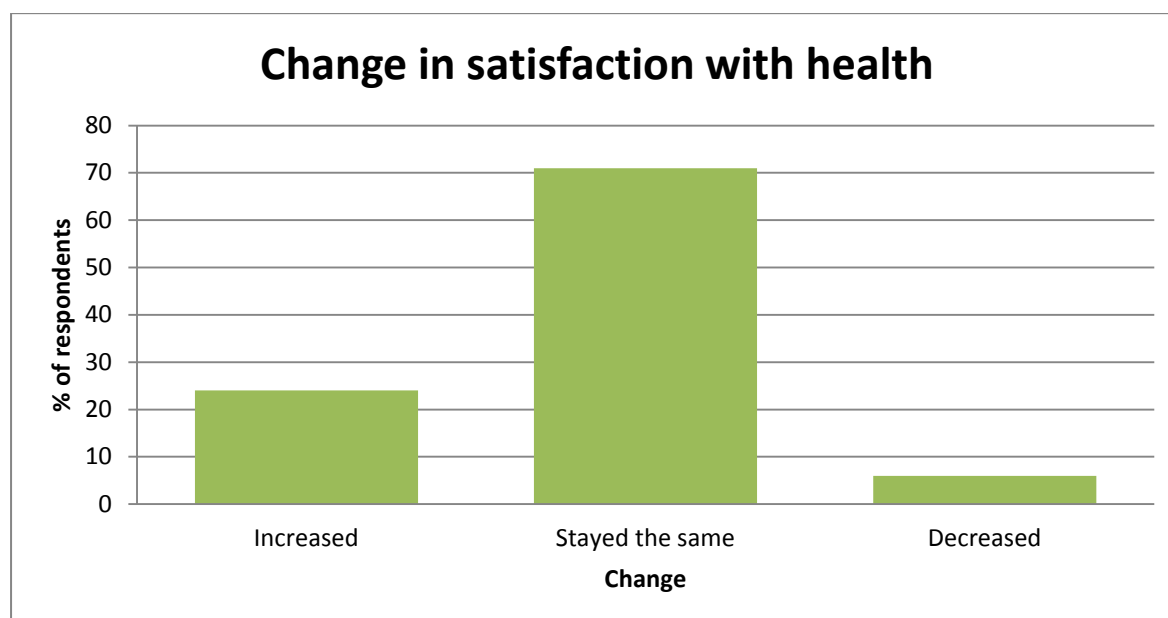


Figure 20: Changes in satisfaction with health

Respondents were asked to expand on why their satisfaction with their health increased or stayed the same since participating in the Programme. The report will now focus on and summarise the results from respondents who felt their satisfaction with their health had increased. Two main themes were apparent throughout the interviews, physical health and mental health, and were often discussed as interconnected 'dual benefits'.

- **Physical health** was one main theme discussed by respondents. Participating in gardening and food growing resulted in respondents an increase in exercising and **being active** (with particular reference to 'getting out of the house'), provided the opportunity to be outside and to get fresh air and sunshine. The consumption of more **fruit and vegetables** was also a change noted by respondents, which contributed to being healthier. The increased consumption of 'high quality' fruit and vegetables was also a point raised by many respondents. For some, involvement in the Programme had resulted in them having a generally '**healthier lifestyle**'.

*I mean gardening is, you know, when you first start gardening and you haven't for a while, you really feel it the next day, so I do think that it helps you, for me, it's helped my physical fitness, but also it was just about being in the garden and being in the sunshine and just enjoying that because it is quite quiet in the garden as well, so it's very peaceful, so just pottering about and you know, being engaged in sort of ordinariness rather than, you know, just the things that stress you out, so it's nice to just get outside and do that. (North London Respondent, Round 2)*

- Respondents also focused on the **mental health benefits** of being involved in the Programme. Respondents described gardening/food growing as a **relaxing**, and positive activity. For example, one respondent felt as though he was able to concentrate better at work due to spending time gardening. The fact that gardening was a social activity for some also contributed to them '**feeling better**'. Some respondents used the words 'psychologically beneficial, and '**therapeutic**' to describe why they felt their health had increased since being involved in the Programme.

*"It has taken some of the stress out of life as well. It's something that sort of forces me to relax."* (Warwickshire Respondent, Round 1)

*"Psychologically, you might be rather more... the psychological health might have improved rather more than the physical health because of the sensation of creating something"* (Warwickshire Respondent, Round 1)

### 2.8.3 Health and Wellbeing Impacts: Fruit and vegetable consumption

From Figure 21 it is clear that over 50% of respondents consume between 0-4 pieces of fruit and vegetables on average per day (56%). 22% of respondents reported that they consume 5 pieces per day; equally 22% consume 6 pieces or more per day. When calculating the average portion of fruit and vegetables consumed per day, this equals 4.5. When comparing to the national average of 4.1<sup>9</sup> (for adults aged 19-64), it is higher by 0.4 portions. Results are based on 153 responses.

<sup>9</sup> As measured by the DoH 2008/9-2010/11 (2012): <http://mediacentre.dh.gov.uk/2012/07/25/statistical-press-notice-national-diet-and-nutrition-survey-headline-results-from-years-1-2-and-3-combined-200809-201011/>

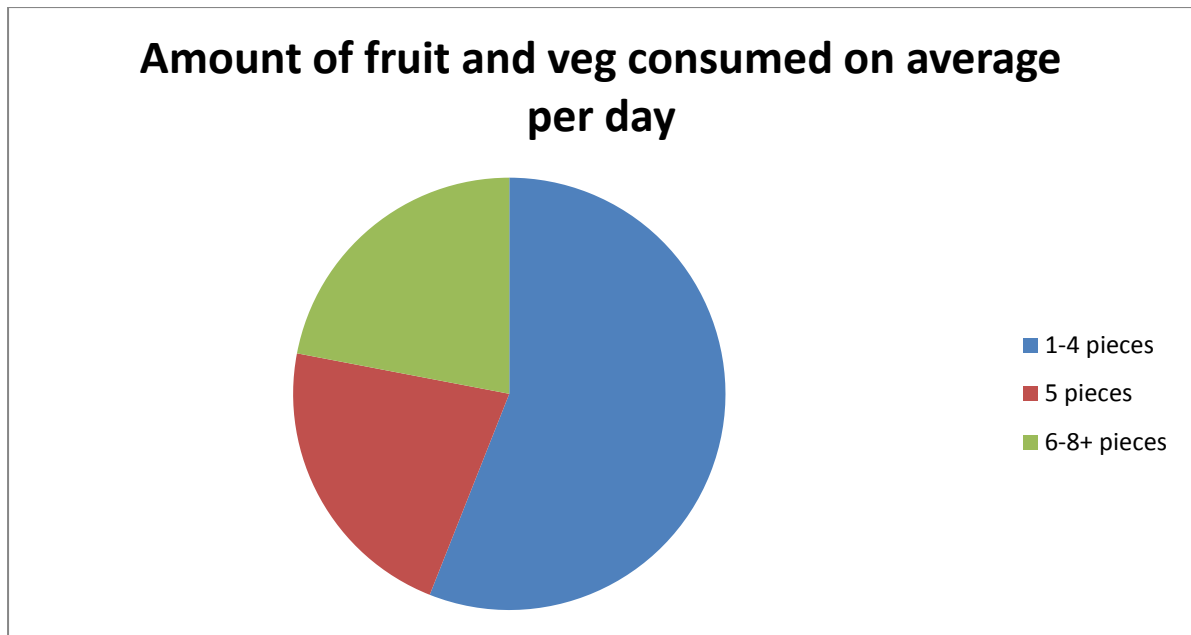


Figure 21: Amount of fruit and vegetables consumed per day

Regarding whether the amount of fruit and vegetables respondents consume on average per day has changed, Figure 20 shows that for the majority of respondents it has stayed the same (81%). For 19% of respondents however this has increased; for only 1 respondent it has decreased. Results are based on 151 responses.

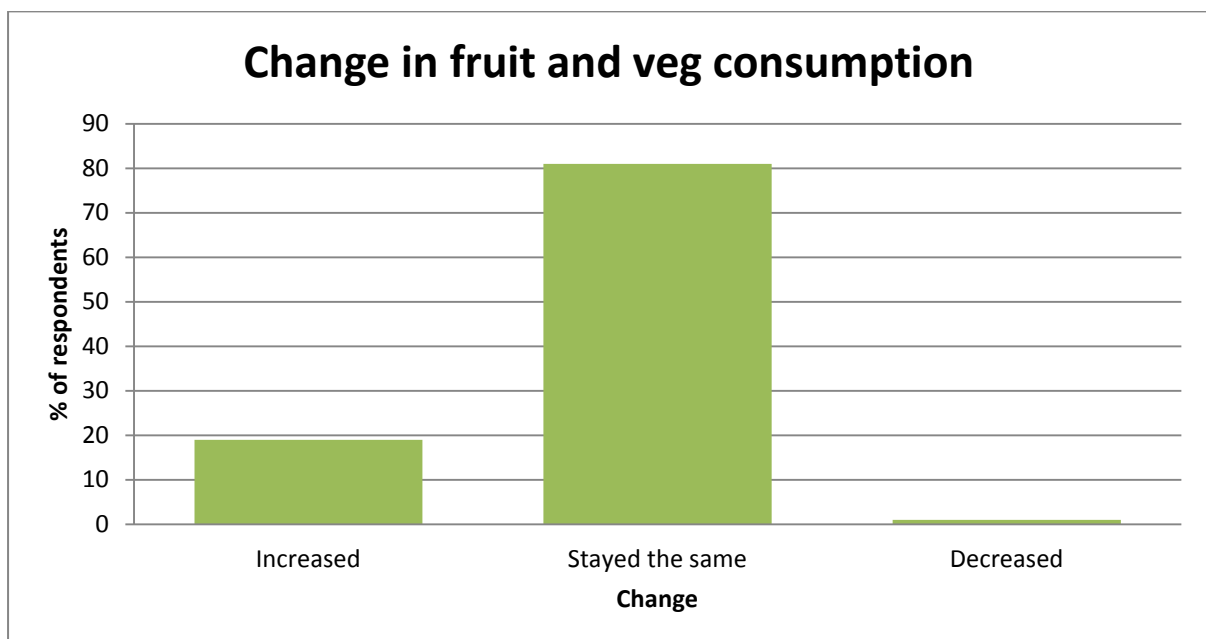


Figure 22: Change in fruit and vegetable consumption

### 2.8.4 Health and Wellbeing Impacts: Components of wellbeing

Table 9 illustrates various ‘components’ of Defra’s wellbeing measurement which have been used within the questionnaire. The average scores for household satisfaction with various components are displayed in the table, along with the national average of satisfaction. At present, Defra’s results are unavailable for later than 2010, but they have been included to provide a basic indication of average scores. As the results show, some findings are close to the average, however ‘feeling part of a community’ is much higher for the Master Gardener households. It should also be noted that ‘accommodation’ and ‘future financial security’ are particularly lower than the national average in 2010.

<b>Table 9: Satisfaction with components of wellbeing</b>		
	Average household satisfaction (2011-2012 <sup>10</sup> )	Defra’s average (2010)
<b>Standard of living</b>	84%	86%
<b>Accommodation</b>	78%	87%
<b>Personal relationships</b>	83%	86%
<b>Feeling part of a community</b>	70%	63%
<b>Future financial security</b>	48%	66%

<sup>10</sup> Rounds 1, 2 and 3.

## 2.9 Views on the Programme

Key Evaluative Impact	Headline Questions
Views on the Programme	<p><b>10. Enjoyment in the programme</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you enjoy being part of the Master Gardener programme, please state why?</li> <li>Would you change anything about the programme?</li> </ul> <p><b>11. Advice from Master Gardener</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How satisfied are you with your advice from your Master Gardener?</li> <li>Do you have any comments you would like to make about your Master Gardener?</li> </ul> <p><b>12. Benefits from participation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the main benefit you have gained from taking part in the programme?</li> </ul>

### 2.9.1 Views on the Programme: Programme enjoyment

When asked whether they enjoy being part of the Master Gardener Programme, overall, 93% of respondents stated that they do enjoy being part of the programme; only 7% of respondents did not. Results are based on 151 responses.

When people were asked to state why they like being part of the programme the following reasons were given. Results are based 68 responses (out a total of 141 people who stated they enjoyed being part of the programme).

- Learned new skills / receiving expert advice and guidance (40%)
- Motivating and rewarding (20%)
- Communication with Master Gardeners (13%)
- Being part of a community, meeting and talking to people (12%)
- Friendly and helpful (4%)
- Sharing ideas (3%)
- Liked the aim of the scheme (3%)
- Interested in gardening (3%)
- Tired of shop bought vegetables (1%)
- Not sure (1%)

Only 7 respondents stated that they did not enjoy being part of the programme, due to the following reasons:

- It was not helpful (2 respondents)
- I did not receive any contact/help (2 respondents)
- I do not have much room (1 respondent)
- Older people in the programme (1 respondents)
- Not enough contact with Master Gardener (1 respondent)

As Figure 23 illustrates, over half of respondents (53%) would not change anything about the programme, whereas 47% of respondents would. Results are based on 140 responses.

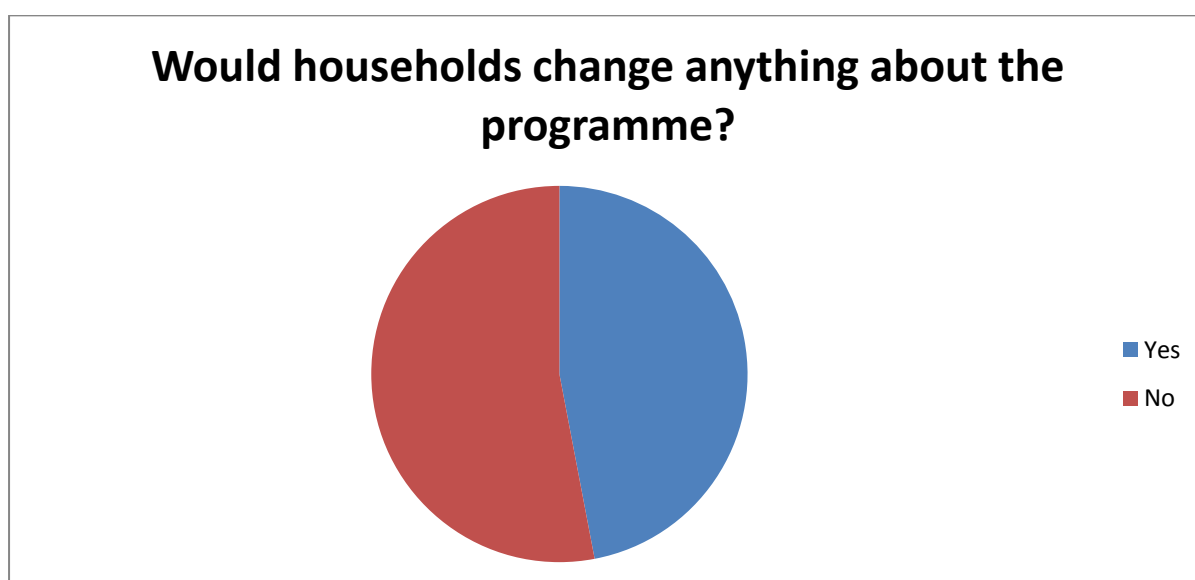


Figure 23: Changes to the programme

When asked to state what they would change about the programme, only 26 respondents, out of the 66 who stated they would change something about the programme responded:

- More structured (23%)
- More/better contact with Master Gardener / other households (31%)
- Access to information (e.g. email newsletters) (15%)
- Extend the programme to other parts of the UK (12%)
- More encouragement for people to work in groups (8%)

### 2.9.2 View on the Programme: Advice from Master Gardener

The majority of respondents (78%) were generally satisfied with the advice from their Master Gardener. When breaking this down, 56% of respondents were 'very satisfied' and 22% were 'fairly satisfied'. 5% of respondents were 'neither satisfied or dissatisfied', 12% were 'fairly dissatisfied' and 5% 'very dissatisfied'. Results are based on 150 responses.

### 2.9.3 Views on the Programme: Benefits from participation

Households were asked what they felt the main benefit was from taking part in the programme. The answers are displayed below. Results based on 144 responses.

- Advice and guidance (42%)
- Growing and eating own produce (16%)
- Greater confidence and motivation (15%)
- Interaction with people with a shared interest (9%)
- Trying new things / new ideas (6%)
- Improved growing results (5%)
- No benefit (4%)
- I have not done anything yet (2%)
- Free seeds (1%)

### 2.9.4 Views on the Programme: Support

Respondents were asked whether there is anything they would like more support with. 63% of households responded to this question (97 responses).

- No further support needed (52%)
- Growing advice (7%)
- More resources (manure, seeds) (10%)
- Pests and diseases (8%)
- Soil and compost improvement (6%)
- Support for a longer period of time (4%)
- Storing food (1%)
- Outreach to other organisations (1%)
- Motivation (1%).



### 2.9.5 View on the Programme: Comments about Master Gardener

Household participants were asked if they would like to make any comments about their Master Gardeners. 63% of respondents made a comment about their Master Gardener and have been categorised in to the following themes. Results are based on 97 responses.

- Helpful and positive (44%)

*“She’s so helpful and friendly and non condescending”*

- Lots of knowledge (20%)

*“A very knowledgeable and helpful individual who goes out of her way to answer any question”*

- Enthusiastic and motivational (15%)
- Not enough contact (12%)
- Lacks knowledge (6%)
- Puts ideas into practice in community (2%)
- Home visits were great (1%)
- Expectations too high (1%)
- Very organised (1%)

## 3.0 Round 4 Household Results

### 3.1 Introduction

The research team at Coventry University was commissioned to undertake an additional round of the evaluation of the Master Gardener Programme (round 4). This follows on from the commissioning of the initial evaluation which took place over three rounds, during 2011 to 2013, and collected data from participants who had been involved in the programme for approximately one year. The round 4 evaluation was designed to target those households and volunteers who took part in the initial evaluation; this enabled the research team to include in the evaluation respondents who had signed up to the Master Gardener up to 48 months ago, which provided the opportunity to evaluate the longer term impacts of those involved in the programme<sup>11</sup>. During the round 4 evaluation, a self-completion questionnaire was sent out to participants, based on the Round 1-3 questionnaires, which asked them to look at their behaviour over the previous 12 months; it is these results that are presented in this section of the report. Therefore, this section of the report focuses on the household round 4 findings (focusing on participants who have been registered on the programme for up to 48 months) before comparing them to the findings from the same group of households participants who took part in the round 1-3 research (which captured data from respondents when they had been involved in the programme for 12 months). As such, we have been able to track the same group of households (and volunteers) over the two stages of the evaluation and are therefore able to compare their results from 12 months into the programme, with their results from up to 48 months after registering.

#### 3.1.1 Response rate

A total of 101 round 4 questionnaires were distributed to households who had responded to the initial (Round 1-3 evaluation) questionnaire. In total, 36 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a response rate of 36%.

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<sup>11</sup> The Round 4 evaluation is therefore targeting volunteers and households who registered for the programme 24-48 months ago, and participated in the initial evaluation, and may or may not still be involved in the Master Gardener programme.

### 3.2 Profile

The profile of households who participated in the two rounds of the evaluation is presented below:

- Overall, 28 out of the 36 household respondents are female, 8 respondents are male.
- One quarter of respondents are aged 40-49, with 19% of respondents aged 50-59, 19% of respondents aged 60-69 and the lowest proportion of respondents aged 20-39 and 70-80+.
- The majority of respondents (66%) have a household income of £14,001 - £48,000 with lower numbers of respondents receiving an annual household income of £14,000 or less (19%), and £48,001 plus (16%). Results are based on 32 responses.
- Over half of household respondents are from Warwickshire (53%), with 14% from North London, 14% South London and 14% from Norfolk. Fewer respondents are from Lincolnshire (6%).

### 3.3 Master Gardener Support

Households were asked whether they still receive support from a Master Gardener, 38% of respondents informed that they did, and 62% did not. Results are based on 34 responses. Therefore, after receiving 12 months free growing advice, nearly 40% of respondents have maintained their relationship with their Master Gardener volunteer. Half of respondents are in contact with their Master Gardener on an 'as and when' basis (50% of respondents, based on 12 responses).

### 3.4 Food Growing and Composting Behaviour

#### 3.4.1 Amount of food grown

Household participants, 12 months after initially registering for the programme, were asked whether the amount of food they grow had changed (Figure 1); 78% respondents reported that the amount of food they grow had increased one year into the programme. For 19% of these respondents the amount they grow has stayed the same and for 3% respondents it had decreased. Results are based on 36 responses.

Over the past 12 months (24-48 months after registering), 44% of the same group of respondents indicated that the amount of food they grow has increased. For 26% of respondents, the amount of food they grow has stayed the same, and this amount has decreased for 29% of respondents. A small proportion stated that they no longer grow their own food (6%). Results are based on 34 responses.

These findings therefore show, that over half of those respondents who originally reported an increase in food growing after one year, have continued to see an increase in the amount of food they grow (24-48 months later), and just less than one third are growing around the same amount of food. There is however a larger number of respondents showing a decrease in the amount of food they grow.

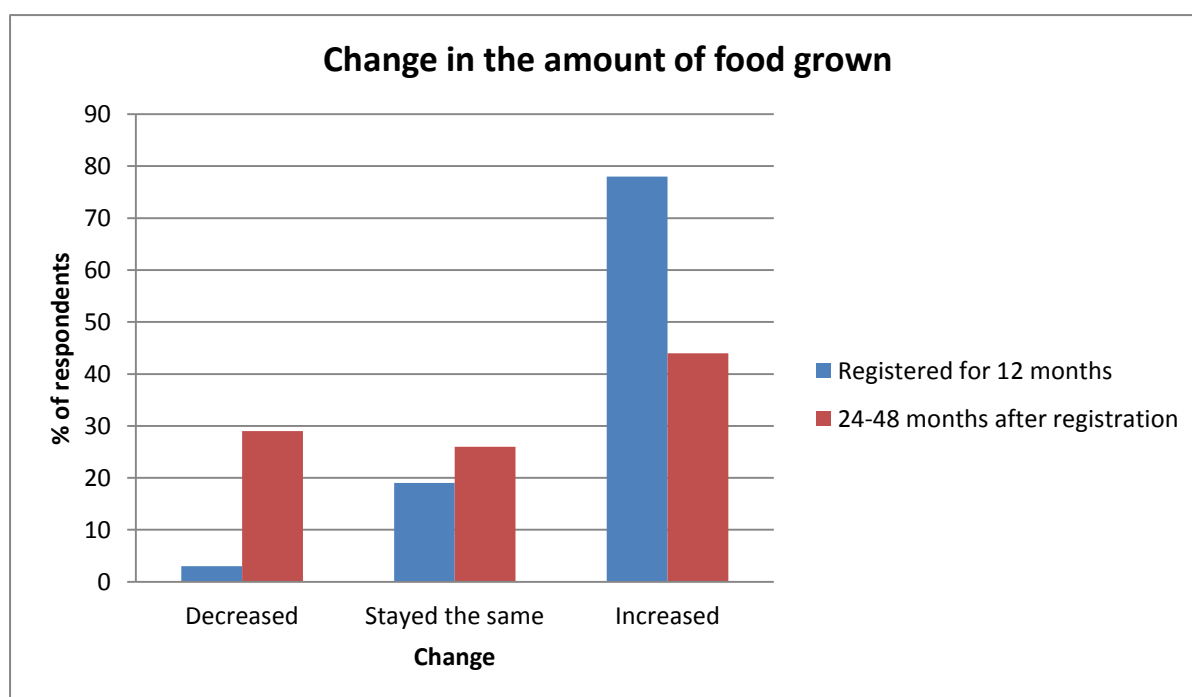


Figure 24: Change in the amount of food grown by households.

Household respondents expanded on why they felt the amount of food they've grown during the past 12 months has changed:

- A total of 53% of respondents who stated that the amount of food they've grown over the past 12 months has **increased**, gave a reason why. Half of respondents informed that they have grown a new or different type of produce. Slightly less, 38%, stated that they have a larger growing space, and one respondent felt as though

better weather had helped them grow more food. Results are based on 8 out of a possible 15 responses.

- For those respondents who informed that the amount of food they've grown over the past 12 months has **stayed the same**, no responses were given.
- For some respondents, the amount of food they've grown over the past 12 months has **decreased**; this is due to the following reasons: 'poor health of respondent or spouse' (3 responses); 'poor weather' (2 responses); 'pests' (1 response); 'lack of time at home' (1 response). Results are based on 7 out of a possible 10 responses.

### 3.4.2 Range of food grown

Focusing on the initial evaluation (Round 1-3) findings, based on data collected 12 months into the programme, 74% of respondents reported an increase in the range of food they grow, and 26% indicated it had stayed the same one year into the programme (Figure 25). Results are based on 35 responses.

Regarding whether the range of food grown by the same group of respondents has changed over the past 12 months (24-48 after registering), 42% stated the range of food they grown has increased, 36% informed that it had stayed the same, and 21% stated it had decreased. Results are based on 33 responses. Similarly to the findings from the 'amount' of food grown, it can be noted again that, over half of respondents have noted a sustained increased in the range (and amount) of food they grow 24-48 after registering.

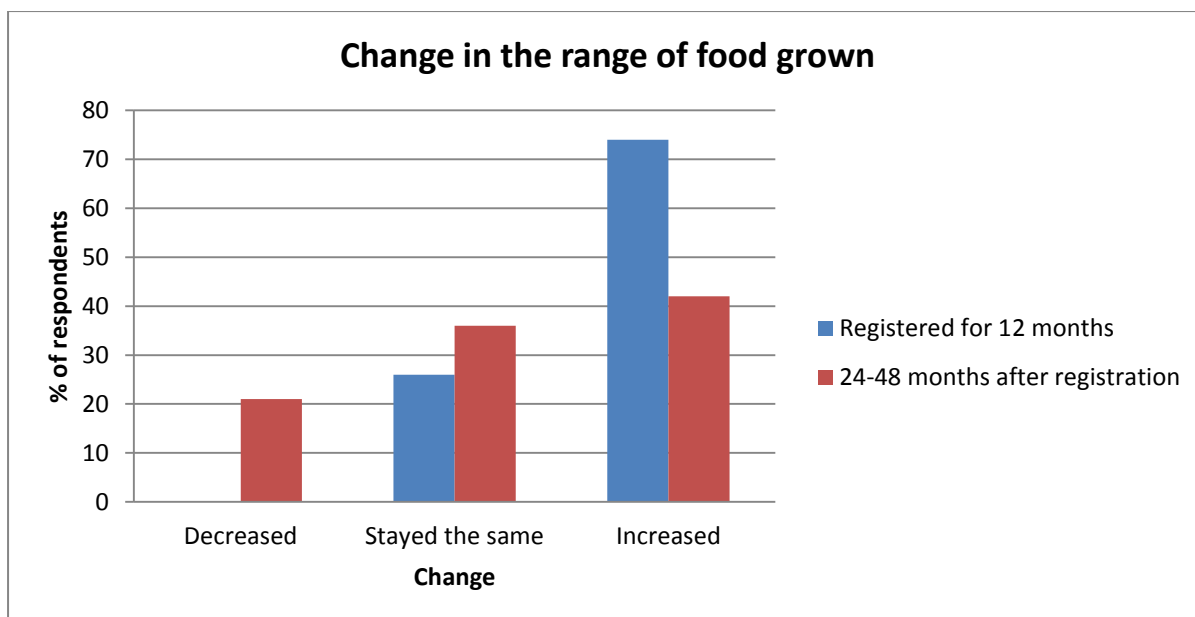


Figure 25: Change in the range of food grown by households.

Respondents expanded on why the range of food they've grown during the past 12 months has increased or stayed the same.

- Similar reasons were given when respondents were asked why the range of food they have grown over the past 12 months has **increased**. The majority of respondents who answered the question stated that they are consciously trying to grow different things (respondents), some stated that they felt more confident and adventurous (2 respondents), and one respondent has more spaces. Results are based on 7 out of a possible 14 responses.
- One respondent (out of 12) felt as though they had limited time, as well as space, to grow a wider range of food, there the range of food they grow has **stayed the same** over the past 12 months.

### 3.4.3 Hours growing food

When asked, 12 months into the programme, how many hours they spend growing food per week, 55% of respondents reported spending 1-2 hours per week growing food; 20% spent 3-4 hours per week, 8% spent 5-6 hours, and 14% spent 7+ hours per week growing food. Results are based on 33 responses.

When the same group of respondents were asked the same question 24-28 months after registering, 41% of household respondents informed that they spend on average 1-2 hours per week, 32% spend on average 3-4 hours per week and 18% spend on average 5-6 hours per week growing food. Small numbers of respondents do not spend any time per week growing food (3%), or 8 hours or more (6%). Results are based on 34 responses.

As demonstrated by Figure 26, 24-48 months after registering, more respondents are spending a greater number of hours growing food per week (between 3-4 and 5-6 hours per week) compared to when they had been involved in the programme for around one year. However, at the more extreme ends, we can see that compared to one year into the programme, there are now fewer respondents spending less time growing food (1-2 hours) but also fewer respondents spending more time growing food (7+ hours). It appears therefore, that the amount of time respondents spend growing food per week has levelled out 24-48 months after registering for the programme.

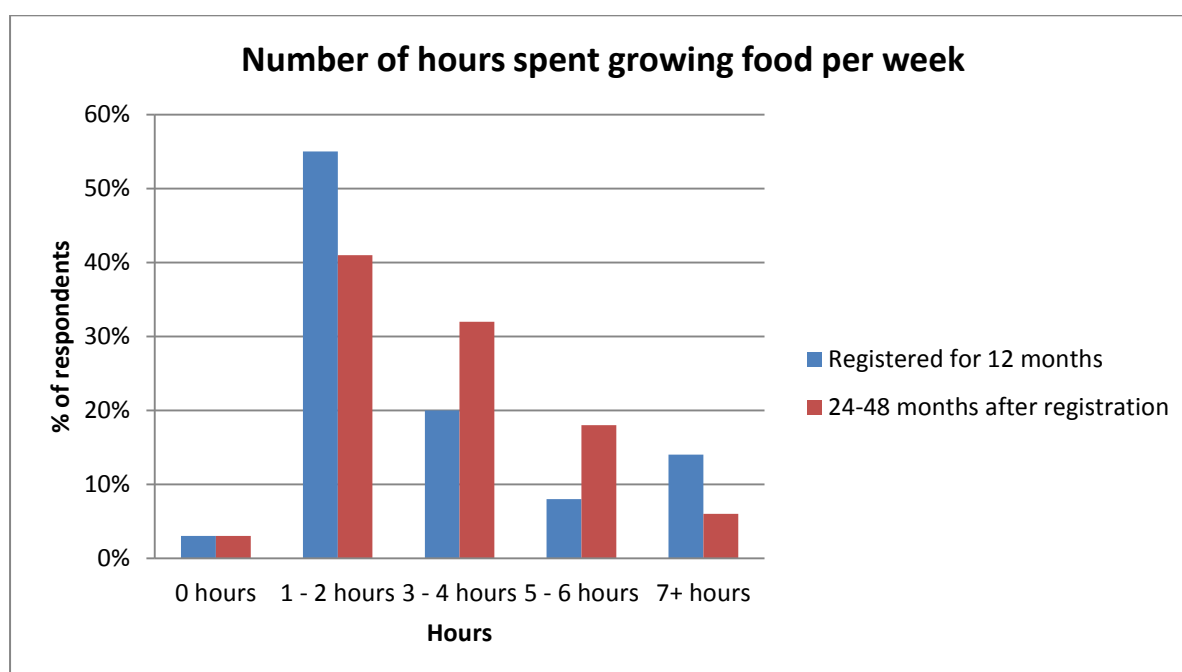


Figure 26: Number of hours households spend growing food.

### 3.4.4 Composting

Respondents were asked, 12 months into the programme, to state the amount of food and garden waste they compost. The highest proportion of respondents composted either 100%,

or 0% of their waste: one third of respondents informed that they composted 100% of their food and garden waste, and one quarter composted 0%. Results are based on 34 responses.

When the same respondents were asked the same question as part of the Round 4 evaluation, the same number of respondents compost 100% of their waste and a larger number of respondents compost 80-90% of their waste. As Figure 27 shows, there are fewer respondents composting 0% of their waste 40-50% and 60-70%, however this is probably accounted for in the increase within 80-90% category. Results are based on 36 responses. We can therefore observe that generally, there has been an overall increase in the amount of food and garden waste composted.

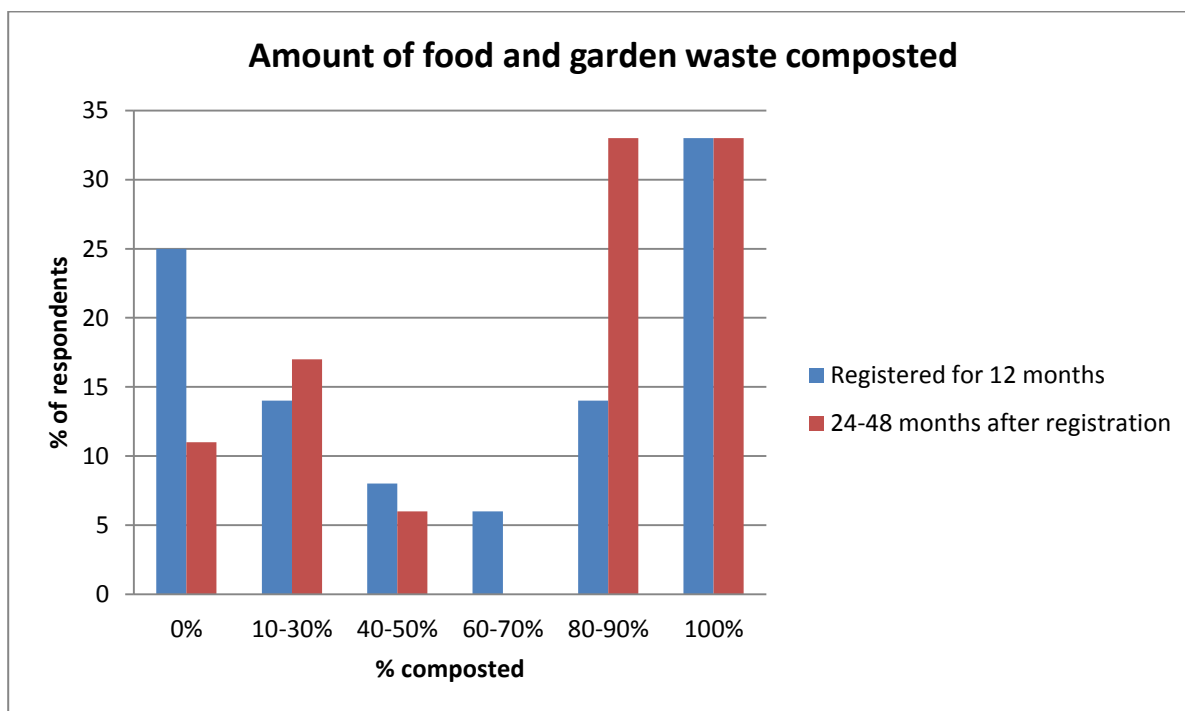


Figure 27: Percentage of food and garden waste composted by households.

### 3.5 Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

The average portions of fruit and vegetables respondents consumed after 12 months into the programme was slightly higher at 5 portions than the average portions respondents consume 24-48 into the programme. Results are based on 36 responses. The results show that on average, households currently consume 4.9 portions of fruit and vegetable per day. Results are based on 36 responses.



Concentrating on the number of portions consumed (Figure 28), the findings show that one year into the programme, a larger proportion of respondents were consuming more portions of fruit and veg, and a lower number of respondents were consuming fewer portions of fruit and veg. When investigating the average consumption for the same respondents 24-48 into the programme, equal proportions of respondents consume 1-4 pieces of fruit a veg per day, 5 pieces per day and 6 pieces or more per day. Results are based on 36 responses. Therefore, a slight difference can be noted with respondents reporting to consume more fruit and veg at the time when they were receiving official free food growing advice.

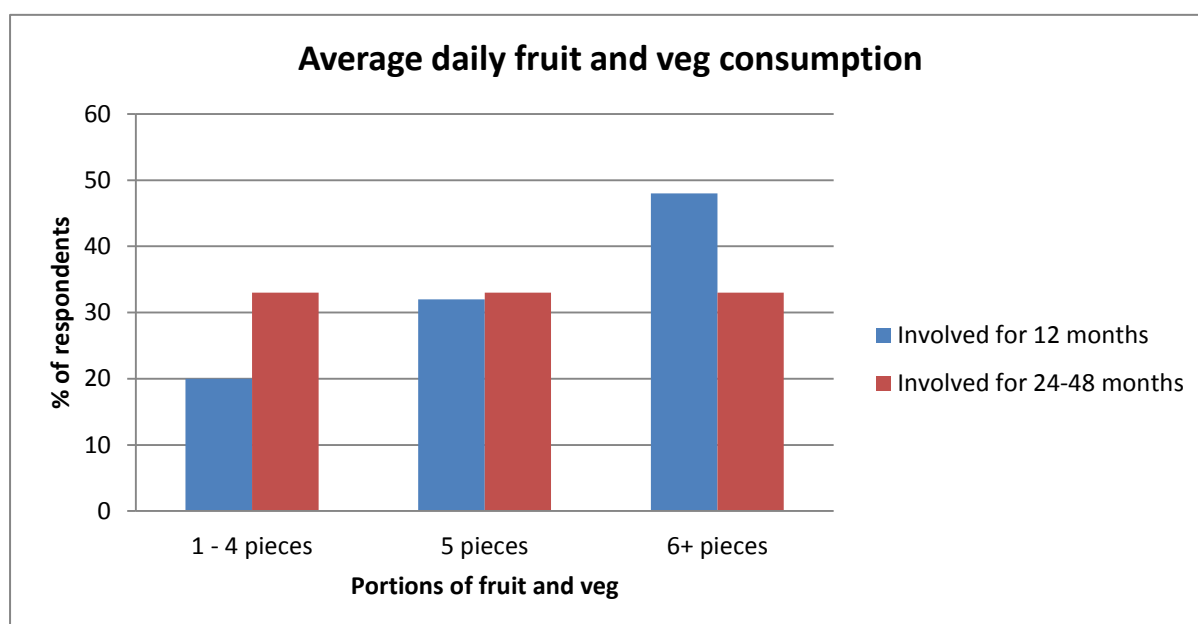


Figure 28: Household average daily fruit and vegetable consumption.

### 3.6 Food Purchasing Behaviour

#### 3.6.1 Amount spent on food each week

When looking at the amount respondents originally reported they spent on food (Figure 6), we can see that generally, respondents now spend a lower amount of money on average per week compared to what they spent one year into the programme (with the exception of a higher proportion of respondents spending £100 or more on food per week) (results based on 35 responses). When looking at Figure 7, respondents' perceptions of their food

expenditure show that the highest proportion of respondents feel as though they are spending more of their weekly food shop. Therefore, although the weekly food expenditure findings show that average weekly expenditure has decreased over time, the perceived increase in food expenditure deserves further investigation through more in-depth and focus research with households.

The highest proportion of respondents, 24-48 months into the programme, spend between £40-£70 on food each week (33%), and under £40 on food each week (47%). Smaller proportions of respondents spend more on food with 8% spending between £70-£100 and 11% spending £100 or more. Results are based on 36 responses.

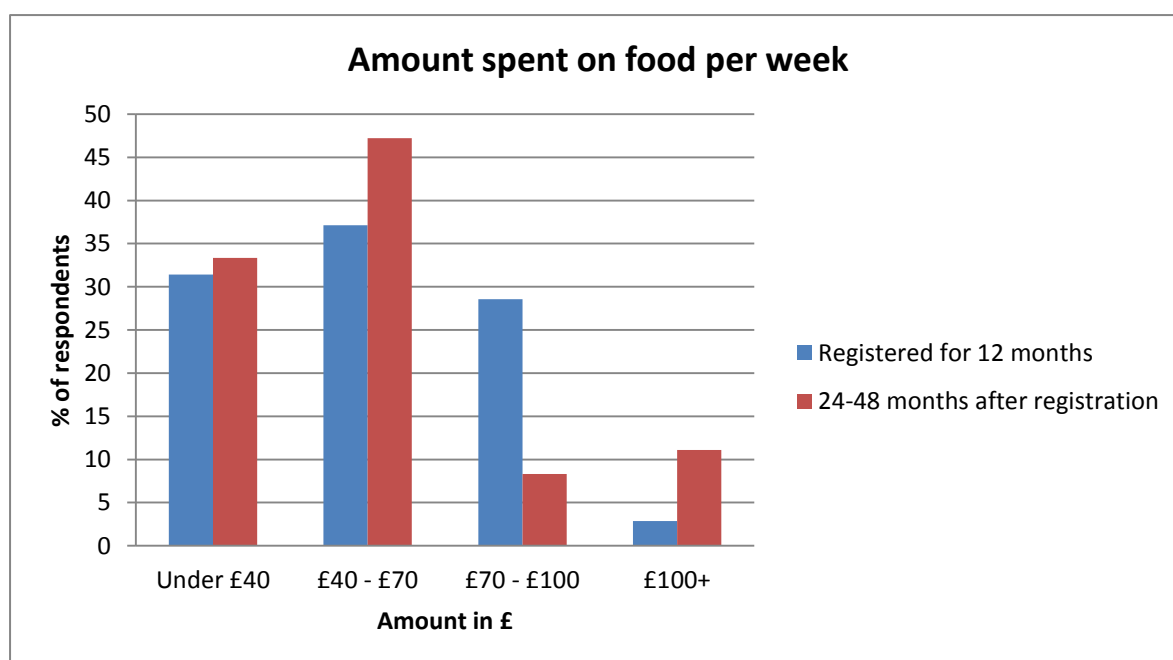


Figure 29: Amount spent on food per week by households.

### 3.6.2 Change in amount spent on food each week

Figure 7 illustrates that after being involved in the programme for 12 months, respondent's food expenditure had generally stayed the same or decreased. Results are based on 31 responses. However, 24-48 into the programme, there has been a higher increase in food expenditure (and less of a decrease) for respondents compared to 12 months into the programme.

Overall, during the past 12 months, 44% of respondents informed that the amount they spend on food has increased, and 42% stated it has stayed the same. Lower number of respondents highlighted that it had decreased (14%). Results are based on 36 responses.

- All 16 respondents who stated that the amount they spend on food has **increased** over the past year were able to give a reason why; 10 respondents felt as though food prices had increased, 2 respondents felt as though the general cost of living had increased, 2 respondents had more members in their household to feed, and 2 respondents were purchasing better quality, or organic produce.
- A total of 11 respondents (out of a possible 15) gave a reason as to why the amount they spend on food has **not changed** over the past 12 months. Some respondents stated that they haven't changed the amount or type of food they consume (3 respondents), others felt as though food prices had increased (2 respondents), 2 respondents felt as though they haven't grown enough.
- All 5 respondents who stated that the amount they spend on food had **gone down** provided a reason why; 3 respondents stated that they are growing more food, or that they have more fresh fruit and veg available, 1 respondent informed that they purchase food from the green grocers, and 1 respondent has less people in their household to feed.

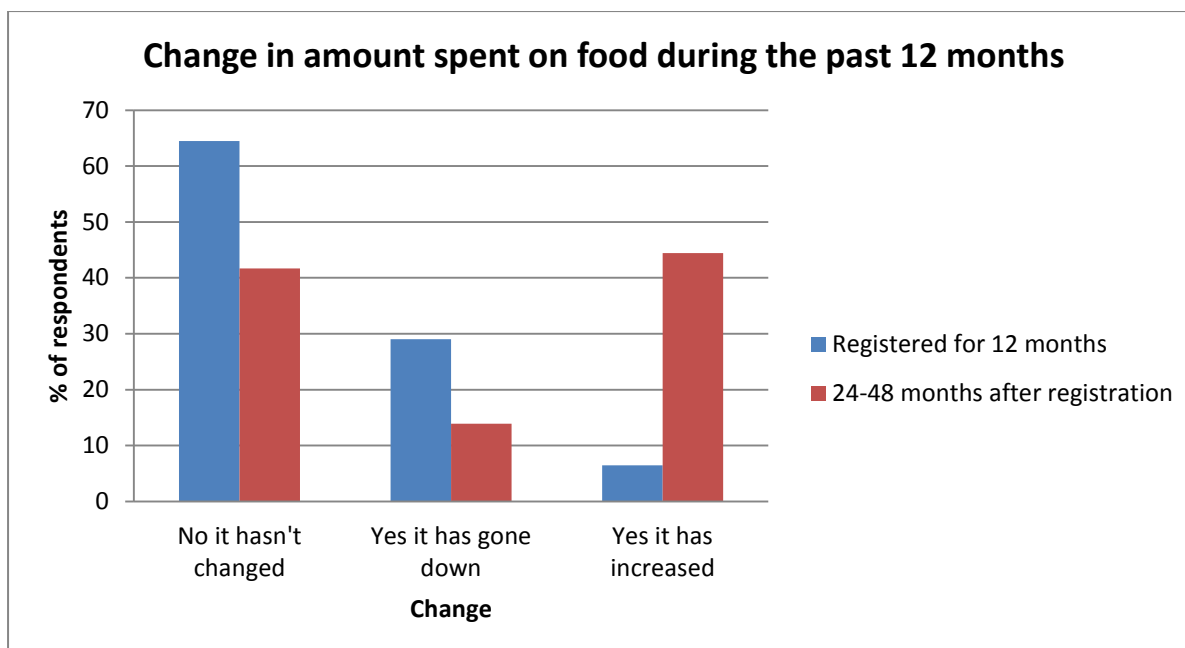


Figure 30: Change in the amount households spent on food during the past 12 months.

### 3.6.3 Changes to where food is purchased from

After receiving 12 months free growing advice 29% of respondents stated that they had made changes to where they purchased their food from (Figure 31). Results are based on 35 responses. Looking at the same group of respondents, 24-48 into the programme, a larger proportion reported making changes to where they buy their food from (43%); changes mainly include buying local and to obtain more quality food (see below). The round 4 results show that 43% of respondents informed that they have recently made changes to where they buy their food from over the past 12 months, with 57% not making any changes. Results are based on 35 responses.

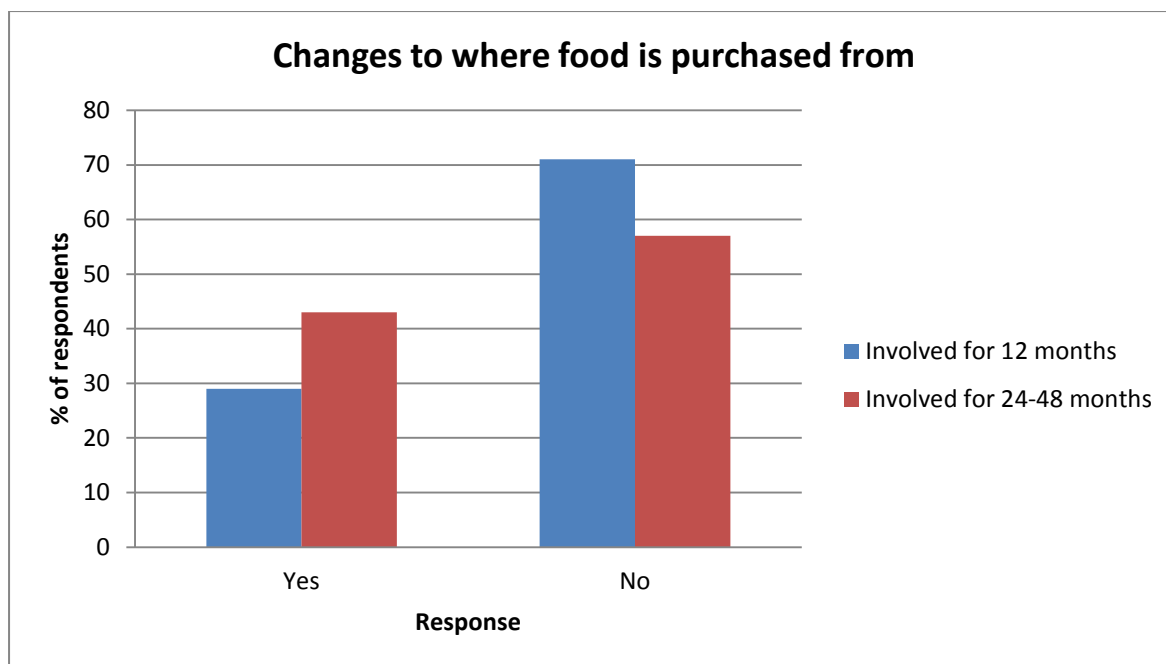


Figure 31: Changes to where households purchase food from.

- Out of the 15 respondents who informed that they had made changes to where they buy their food from over the past 12 months, 10 stated what changes they had made. A total of 5 respondents said that they are buying more locally, either to buy less from supermarkets and more from local shops, or to save the cost of petrol. Other respondents had commented on the quality of produce and had made changes due to this – one respondent noted the poor quality at supermarkets, one had noted the better quality (and price) of produce at the market, and another respondent had stated buying produce from Sainsbury's due to higher quality. One respondent had become a member of Costco which suggest they are buying more in bulk, and another respondent brought more from natural food shops.

### 3.7 Life Satisfaction

#### 3.7.1 Life satisfaction score

Twelve months into the programme, respondents we asked to state their overall life satisfaction score (on a scale of 0 to 10). As Table 10 shows, the average reported life satisfaction score equalled 7.7. Results are based on 30 responses. Looking at the same set of respondent's life satisfaction score 24-48 after registering, the average score was 7.3.

Results are based on 35 responses. Therefore, we can see a 0.5 difference in respondent's life satisfaction, with a lower satisfaction score once they'd stopped receiving official free growing advice.

<b>Table 10: Household life satisfaction score</b>	<b>Involved for 12 months</b>	<b>Involved for 24-28 months</b>
Household average life satisfaction score	7.7	7.3

### *3.7.2 Extent to which participation influences life satisfaction*

Respondents were asked the state the extent to which involvement in the Master Gardener Programme has influenced their overall satisfaction with their life. Figure 32 illustrates that, the same number of respondents, 12 months into the programme and 24-48 months into the programme, feel as though their involvement in the programme has influenced their overall life satisfaction to a large extent. We can also note that when respondents had stopped receiving their free growing advice, the extent to which their participation in the programme had influence their life satisfaction was lower than when they had been receiving official free growing advice for 12 months. Results are based on 31 responses (Rounds 1-3) and 34 responses (Round 4)

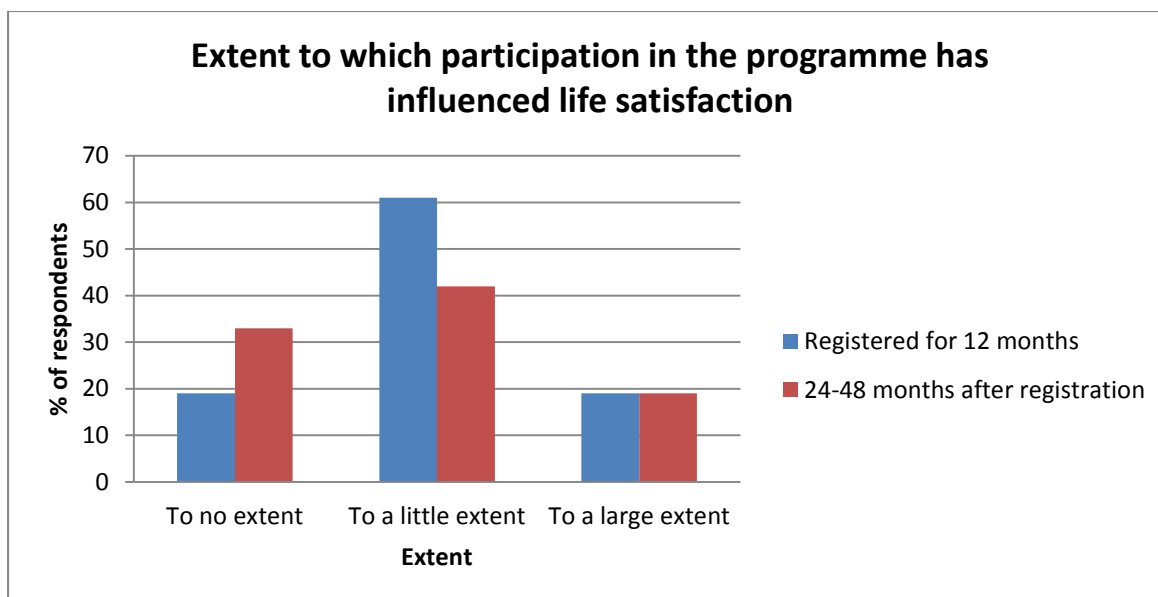


Figure 32: Extent to which participation in the Master Gardener programme influences household life satisfaction.

- The reasons why respondents felt as though participation in the programme has influenced their overall life satisfaction to a **large extent** (24-48 into the programme) are given below (6 out of 7 respondents expanded on why). For 3 respondents, growing more produce had influenced their overall life satisfaction to a large extent, for others it was due to making new friends (1 respondent), or learning new things (1 respondent), or from feeling benefits to their health (1 respondent).
- A total of 14 (out of 15) respondents provided a reasons as to why they felt their involvement in the programme had influenced their life satisfaction to a **little extent**. Overall, 5 respondents felt this was because they enjoy gardening and growing their own food, 3 respondents reported the therapeutic benefits they felt from growing their own food; some felt better about themselves and more confident, and other felt the satisfaction from growing their own food. One respondent felt that being outside and proud of their garden has had an impact on their life satisfaction. Encouragement from Master Gardeners still factored as an important reason why 3 respondents felt as though their involvement in the programme has influenced their overall life satisfaction to a little extent, however for one respondent the fact that they were no

longer receiving support was a negative. One respondent had limited time so felt as though this hadn't generated much impact.

- Regarding involvement in the programme having **no influence** on life satisfaction, 11 out of 12 respondents expanded on why they felt this was the case. For the majority of those who responded, the lack of contact from their Master Gardener, or helpfulness of their Master Gardener was the main reason why involvement in the programme had not influenced their overall life satisfaction (7 respondents). For one respondent personal circumstances prevented the programme from having any impact; for another respondent they didn't grow their own food, and finally, another respondent simply felt as though the programme had not had any influence on their life satisfaction.

### 3.8 Satisfaction with components of wellbeing

Respondents were asked to state their current satisfaction with various aspects of their life (based on Defra's wellbeing indicators). The results, along with the previous evaluation findings, are presented in Table 11<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Round 4 results are based on 35 responses apart from 'satisfaction with achieving goals' which had a response rate of 34. The response rate for the Round 1-3 is 31 responses for the majority of questions, apart from 'health', 'ability to influence what happens in your life', 'achieving your goals' and 'leisure activities and hobbies' which received 32 responses.



<b>Table 11: Household satisfaction with aspects of life</b>	<b>% of household respondents 'satisfied', registered for 12 months</b>	<b>% of household respondents satisfied, 24-48 months after registration</b>
Standard of living	84%	66%
Health	84%	60%
Day-to-day activities	71%	60%
The ability to influence what happens in your life	75%	60%
Personal relationships	81%	74%
Achieving your goals	84%	53%
House/flat/accommodation	63%	83%
Feeling part of a community	61%	51%
The area in which you live	71%	63%
Future financial security	55%	54%
Leisure activities and hobbies	72%	57%

When comparing these results to how satisfied respondents were after receiving 12 months growing advice, we can see that in the majority of areas, respondents were more satisfied with most of the aspects of life satisfaction 12 months into the programme, compared to 24-48 months after involvement in the programme. This is true for 9 out of the 11 components;

however, regarding satisfaction with accommodation, this is now higher for respondents than 12 months into the programme. Twelve months into the programme, 63% of respondents were satisfied with their accommodation, however 24-48 months after registering for the programme, 83% of respondents are satisfied. There has not been a substantial change in satisfaction with future financial security; 12 months into the programme 55% of respondents were satisfied with this area of their life, and 24-48 months after registering for the programme, 54% are satisfied with their future financial security.

Below is a snap-shot of some comments from household respondents when they were asked whether they would like to make any additional comments about their involvement in the programme, in the questionnaire.

- *I am a fairly experienced gardener but had lost confidence after cancer surgery. Help and encouragement from the Master Gardener Programme brought me back into full scale growing albeit far slower and with less energy! Thanks to you all.*
- *Encouraged me to think more about freshness and taste of fruit and veg, plus food in general.*
- *The Master Gardeners in the area have a good network. My Master Gardener introduced me to a local community garden. So I do have access to the Master Gardening gardeners who is a 'leader' there. I'm also unable to join in the Clapham branch of the Master Gardener group as I'm too busy!! The network ensures I have many Master Gardeners I can request information from.*
- *The initial interest created by my Master Gardener has given me a new interest, and also a topic of discussion with other gardeners .*
- *It has been overwhelmingly positive for me and my children. We garden together and love being able to have 'free' meals from the garden.*
- *The programme has given me the enthusiasm and confidence to start growing from and vegetables. I welcome the gentle encouragement I receive to extend and expand my repertoire! This year I have started using a previously unused sunken 'area' at the front of the house to increase my growing space. It requires a step ladder access which enhances it somewhat 'secret' status and I am thrilled with how much increased production I have achieved.... would never have thought about it if had not been part of the programme.*

- *It's a good programme and I enjoy being part of this group which enables me to be as involved as I like with help and advice always on hand.*
- *Think it is a great programme which would encourage others to participate in.*

### 3.9 Summary of the 12 month (round 1-3) and 24-48 month (round 4) household results

This section of the report summarises the main differences from the household results from 12 months into the programme (rounds 1 – 3) and 24 – 28 months after they registered for free growing advice (round 4). Therefore, the longer term impact is assessed based on respondents behaviour 24-48 months after they officially registered for 12 months free growing advice.

- 24-48 months after registering for growing advice, there has been a continued increase in the **amount of food** grown for 42% of respondents. Over half of respondents who originally reported an increase in food growing after one year have continued to see an increase in the amount of food they grown, and just less than one third are growing around the same amount of food.
- Over half of those respondents who originally reported an increase in the **range of food** they grow have continued to see an increase. 42% of all respondents 24-48 months into the programme felt the range of food they grown has increased and 36% felt that it had stayed the same over the past 12 months.
- More respondents, 24-48 months after registering for growing advice, are generally spending **more time growing** food (around 3-6 hours per week) compared to 12 months into the programme. However, there are also fewer respondents spending 7+ hours growing food per week 24-48 months into the programme, but also fewer respondents spending less hours (1-2 per week) growing food. We can see then, that the average number of hours spent growing food has increased.
- A larger proportion of respondents are **composting** more of their food and garden waste 24-48 months into the programme. Although the same number of respondents are composting 100% of their waste, more respondents are composting 80-90% and 10-30% of their waste, and fewer respondents are composting 0%, demonstrating that more respondents are composting.
- In terms of average **fruit and vegetable consumption**, a very slight difference (0.1 portions) can be noted with a larger proportion of respondents consuming more fruit

and veg 12 months into the programme (5 portions) compared to 24-48 months into the programme (4.9).

- Households have reported **spending less on food** each week 24-48 months into the programme, compared to 12 months into the programme, yet 24-48 months into the programme there is also a larger number of respondents spending £100+ on food. However, the results show that 24-48 months into the programme, a much higher proportion of respondents indicated that the amount they spend on food each week has increased (or not changed) which differs from the 12 months findings whereby respondents reported no change or a decrease in their weekly expenditure on food.
- The findings show that 24-48 months into the programme, a larger proportion of respondents (43%) have made **changes to where they buy food** from compared to a lower number of respondents making changes 12 months into the programme (29%).
- Regarding **life satisfaction** scores, the findings show a lower average life satisfaction score, (lower by 0.5) 24-48 months into the programme. The average life satisfaction score for household 12 months into the programme was 7.7, however 24-48 months later, the average life satisfaction score equalled 7.3 (out of 10).
- On average, the **extent to which participation in the programme has influenced respondent's life satisfaction** was lower 24-48 months into the programme, compared to 12 months into the programme. Nevertheless, the amount of respondents reporting that involvement in the programme had influenced their overall life satisfaction to a large extent has stayed the same.
- *Overall, respondents were more **satisfied with various aspects** of their life 12 months into the programme compared to 24-48 months into the programme. This is the case for 9 out of 11 areas of their life apart from satisfaction with 'accommodation' whereby 20% of respondents were more satisfied with this aspect, and a 1% decrease in respondents satisfied with their 'future financial security' 24-48*

## 4. Master Gardener Volunteer Results

### 4.1 Response rate

A total of 327 questionnaires were distributed to Master Gardener volunteers during rounds 1 - 3 of the evaluation in the areas of Warwickshire, Norfolk, North London, South London and Lincolnshire<sup>13</sup>. As Table 12 demonstrates, a total of 144 questionnaires were returned. This equals a response rate of 44%, which is relatively high for a postal questionnaire. When comparing the response rate with the household questionnaires, it is noticeable that the volunteer response rate is much higher; the volunteer response rate is more than double the response rate from the household questionnaire (19%). Section 4.0 of the report focuses on the results from rounds 1 – 3 of the evaluation; the following section concentrates on the analysis of the round 4 data (section 5.0), before moving on to the analysis of the Volunteer Coordinator interviews.

Table 12: Master Gardener questionnaire response rate

Number of Master Gardener questionnaires distributed		Number of completed questionnaires returned	Response Rate (%)
Round 1	118	58	49%
Round 2	97	43	44%
Round 3	115	43	37%
Total	<b>327</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>44%</b>

### 4.2 Sampling

During round 1 of the evaluation, it was agreed that the focus groups would be open for all Master Gardener volunteers to attend as long as they had been in the programme for at least a year. This was due to the fact that the focus groups remit was not on behavioural change, which is the case for the household interviews. The focus groups are based around

<sup>13</sup> \*Questionnaires were only distributed to Lincolnshire in rounds 2 and 3 of the evaluation.

discussing the impacts of the programme; therefore all volunteer opinions are welcomed. As this sampling method is non-restrictive, it allows large number of volunteers to take part therefore generating more data.

### 4.3 Volunteer Focus Groups

In total, 12 focus groups were conducted during the three rounds of the evaluation; three focus groups were carried out in round 1, five in round 2, and four in round 3. Overall, six focus groups occurred in London, three in Warwickshire, two in Norfolk, and one in Lincolnshire. The focus groups were conducted by the research team at Coventry University and the volunteer coordinators.

## 4.4 Profile of respondents

### 4.4.1 Profile of respondents: Age

The majority of respondents (78%) fall between the ages of 40-69; with similar proportions in each age bracket (slightly more aged between 50-69). Fewer respondents are aged 30-39 (11%), and 70-79 (6%). The smallest proportions of respondents are between 16-19 (1%), 20-29 (4%) and 80+ (1%). Results are based on 142 responses.

### 4.4.2 Profile of respondents: Gender

The majority of Master Gardener respondents are female (64%); with 36% male respondents. Results are based on 143 responses.

### 4.4.3 Profile of respondents: Ethnicity

Overall 71% of respondents regarded themselves as English, with 12% from 'another white background'. 4% of respondents would rather not state their ethnicity. Small portions of respondents belong to the following ethnicities: Irish (2%), Scottish (2%), Chinese (1%), Caribbean (1%), White and Asian (1%), White and Black African (1%), other Black background (1%), other Mixed background (1%), and other Ethnic group (1%). Results are based on 140 responses.

### 4.4.4 Profile of respondents: Faith

Respondents informed that they mainly followed the Christian faith (44%) or no religion at all (39%). 6% of respondents chose not to state their faith; equally 6% described their faith as 'other'. Small numbers are Buddhist (4%) and Sikh (1%). Results are based on 138 responses.

### 4.4.5 Profile of respondents: Household composition

Figure 33 illustrates that just over half of respondents are married or cohabiting with no child(ren) or no dependent child(ren) (52%). One fifth of respondents (20%) live in single occupancy households, and slightly lower number are married or cohabiting with child(ren) (18%). Smaller numbers of respondents describe their household composition as an 'other multi person household' (9%) or as a 'single parent family' (1%). Results are based on 141 responses.

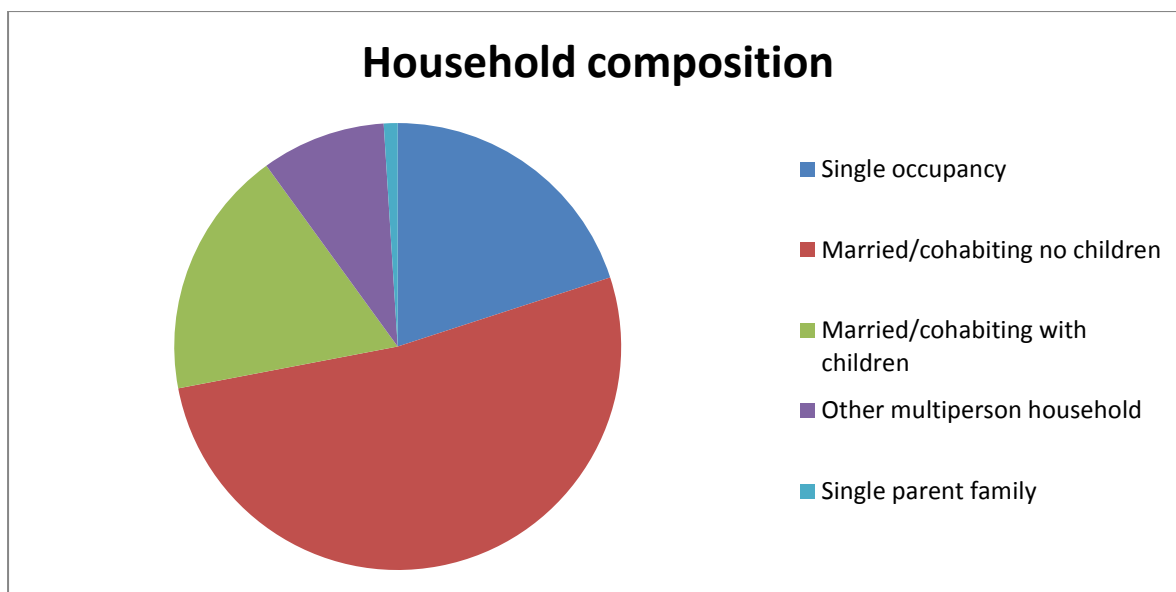


Figure 33: Household composition

#### 4.4.6 Profile of respondents: Main Occupation

Regarding occupation, the highest number of respondents are either in full time employment (30%), part-time employment (25%), or are retired (25%). The remaining respondents describe their main occupation as: 'doing unpaid or voluntary work' (6%), 'unemployed' (4%), 'at home not seeking work' (4%) 'in education or training' (3%), 'other' (2%), 'long term sick or disabled' (1%), or 'carer' (1%). Results are based on 142 responses.

#### 4.4.7 Highest Qualification

The results show that the majority of respondents possess a degree (40%) or higher degree (33%). Smaller numbers of respondents are educated to O Level / GCSE level (or equivalent) (8%) or have A-Levels (or equivalent) (7%). 5% of respondents have an apprenticeship, 5% have an 'other qualification', 2% of respondents have 'no qualifications' and 1% holds a 'foreign qualification'. Results are based on 86 responses<sup>14</sup>.

#### 4.4.8 Profile of respondents: Housing type and ownership

The majority of respondents either fully own their property (48%) or have a mortgage (35%). Fewer respondents live in rented accommodation (13%) or in social housing (5%). Results are based on 141 responses.

<sup>14</sup> This question was only included in rounds 2 and 3.



Similar numbers of respondents live in a 'terrace' (25%), a 'semi detached' (24%) or 'detached' (24%) property, or a flat (22%). Fewer respondents live in a bungalow (7%) or 'other' type of property (1%). Results are based on 144 responses.

#### 4.4.9 Profile of respondents: Household income

The highest number of respondents receive an annual household income of £14,000 or less (32%). Slightly lower fractions have an annual household income of £14,001-28,000 (26%), or £28,001-48,000 (26%) per annum. The lowest percentage of respondents (16%) belong to the highest income bracket and receive an annual household income of £48,001 or more. Results are based on 127 responses.

#### 4.4.10 Profile of respondents: Summary

To summarise the typical profile of Master Gardener volunteers arising from the analysis, a typical volunteer is a middle aged, female, English in ethnicity and Christian in faith, or belonging to no faith group. A typical volunteer respondent is married or cohabiting with no child(ren) or no dependent child(ren) and are either employed or are retired. The results show that the majority of volunteer respondents fully own their property or have a mortgage.

## 4.5 Environmental Impacts

Key Evaluative Impact	Headline Questions
Environmental Impacts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Composting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How much food or garden waste do you compost and has this changed since joining the programme?</li> <li>Is there anything which makes it difficult or prevents you from composting?</li> <li>What types of compost bins do you use and how many compost bins do you have?</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Amount of food grown</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the amount and range of food you grow changed since joining the programme?</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Space where produce is grown</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where do you grow food?</li> </ul> </li> </ol>

### 4.5.1 Environmental Impacts: Home Composting

As Figure 34 demonstrates, the highest proportions of respondents compost a large number of their household food and garden waste at home; 29% of respondents compost 90% of their household waste and 31% compost 100%, therefore 60% of respondents compost between 90-100%. Only a small number of respondents (3%) don't compost any of their household food and garden waste. Results are based on 142 responses.

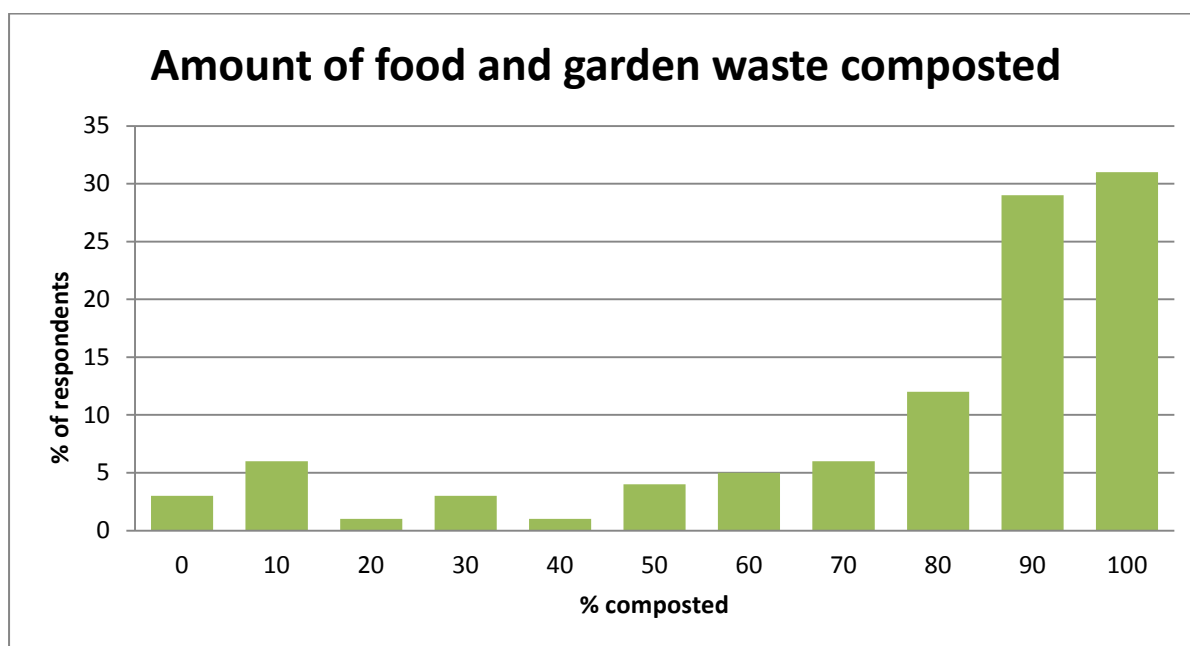


Figure 34: Amount of food and garden waste composted at home

Focusing on whether the amount composted has changed at all for volunteers since participating in the programme, 70% reported that it had stayed the same. However, for 29% of respondents, the amount they compost has increased. Only for 1 of respondent it had actually decreased. Results are based on 144 responses.

Respondents were asked whether there was anything that makes it difficult or prevents them from composting. Over half of respondents (55%) informed that there wasn't anything preventing them or making it difficult for them to compost. 16% of respondents indicated the 'space' was an issue for them, 10% informed that 'pests' were an issue and 10% stated that they are unable to compost all of their waste. Other responses to this question included 'location of compost bin at allotment' (3%), 'permission barriers' (3%), 'lack of knowledge' (2%), composting being a 'long process' (2%), 'council collection of food waste' (1%), and 'the council not collecting food waste' (1%). Results are based on 105 responses.

#### 4.5.2 Number and types of compost bins

The number of compost bins volunteers use ranges from one compost bin to five or more. Table 13 shows the fairly even trend of responses, with the most common number of bins (not by a significant amount however) being two (24%). Results are based on 80 responses and this question was only included in rounds 2 and 3 of the evaluation.

<b>Table 13: Number of compost bins used</b>	
<b>Number of compost bins</b>	<b>% of respondents</b>
1	18%
2	24%
3	20%
4	21%
5 or more	18%

Figure 27 demonstrates the types of compost bins people have. As Figure 26 shows, the most popular type of compost bin is 'plastic', with 60 respondents informing that they use this type. Less commonly used are 'home-made' (27 responses), 'wooden' (24 responses), 'open-heap' (16%) and 'other' (9 respondents). Results are based on 136 responses, and this question was only included in rounds 2 and 3.

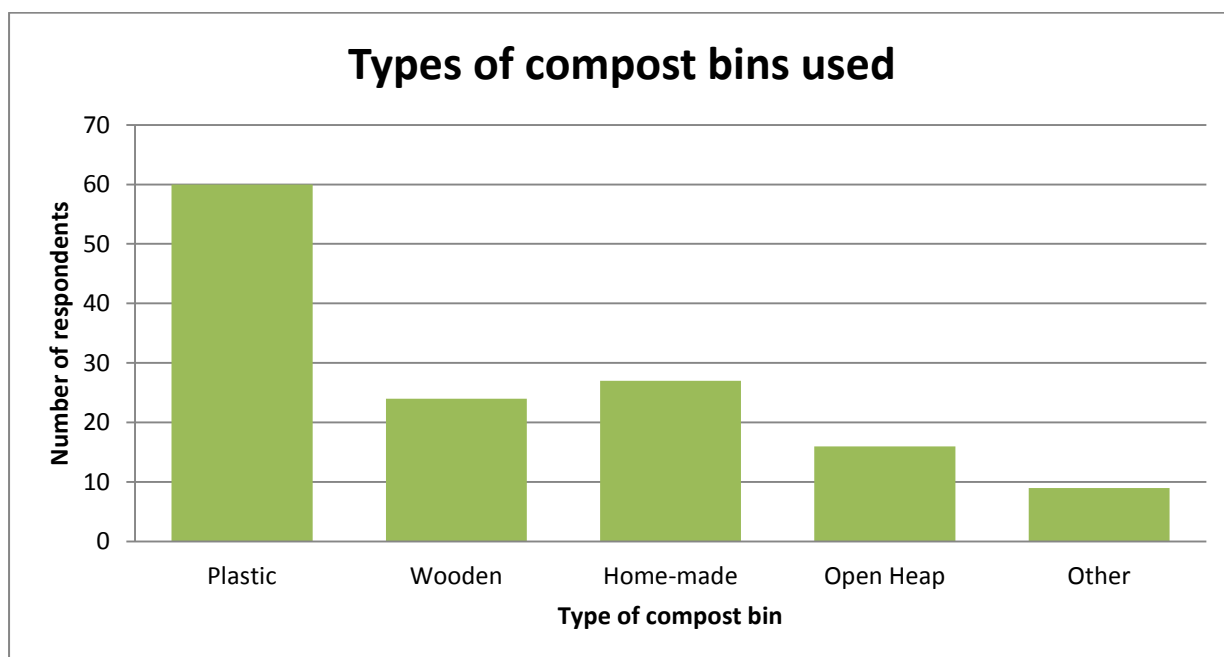


Figure 27: Types of compost bins used

#### 4.5.3 Environmental Impacts: Amount and Range of food grown

Figure 36 focuses whether the amount and range of food grown by participants has changed since their participation in the programme. Turning attention initially to the food grown by volunteers, over half (55%) inform that the amount of food they grow has increased since participating in the programme. For 44% of respondents the amount of food they grow has stayed the same, and for 2% it has decreased. Regarding the range of food grown, two thirds of respondents (66%) report that this has increased since joining the programme. For 31% of respondents the range of food they grow has stayed the same, and for 3%, it has decreased. Results are based on 144 responses for each question.

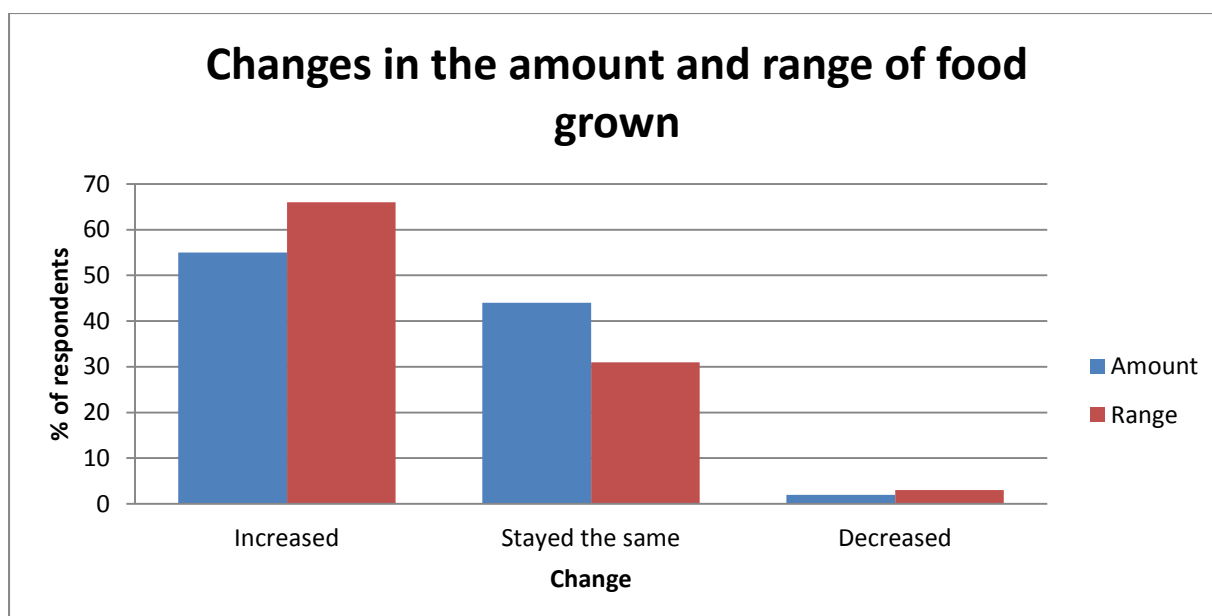


Figure 36: Changes in the amount and range of food grown

Respondents were also asked whether there was anything that makes it difficult or prevents them from growing more food, or from growing what they would like to grow. 10% informed that there was nothing preventing them or making it difficult to grow more food. The largest proportion of respondents stated that 'lack of space' was a barrier (37%) and for 29% 'lack of time' made it difficult or prevented them from growing more food or from growing what they would like to grow. Other responses included, 'growing conditions' such as the weather and soil (18%), 'pests' (3%), 'being away from my garden' (2%), and 'lack of knowledge' (1%). Results are based on a total of 127 responses.

#### 4.5.4 Environmental Impacts: Where food is grown

It is clear from observing Figure 37 that the most common growing space for participants is in their garden and/or on their patio. Lower numbers of respondents also grow on allotments, on their window sills / balconies, or in community gardens. The lowest number of respondents grow food in 'other' spaces, (for example space at work, or a partner's space) Results are based on 220 responses and are displayed on a count scale (not in percentages) as respondents can grow food in more than one location.

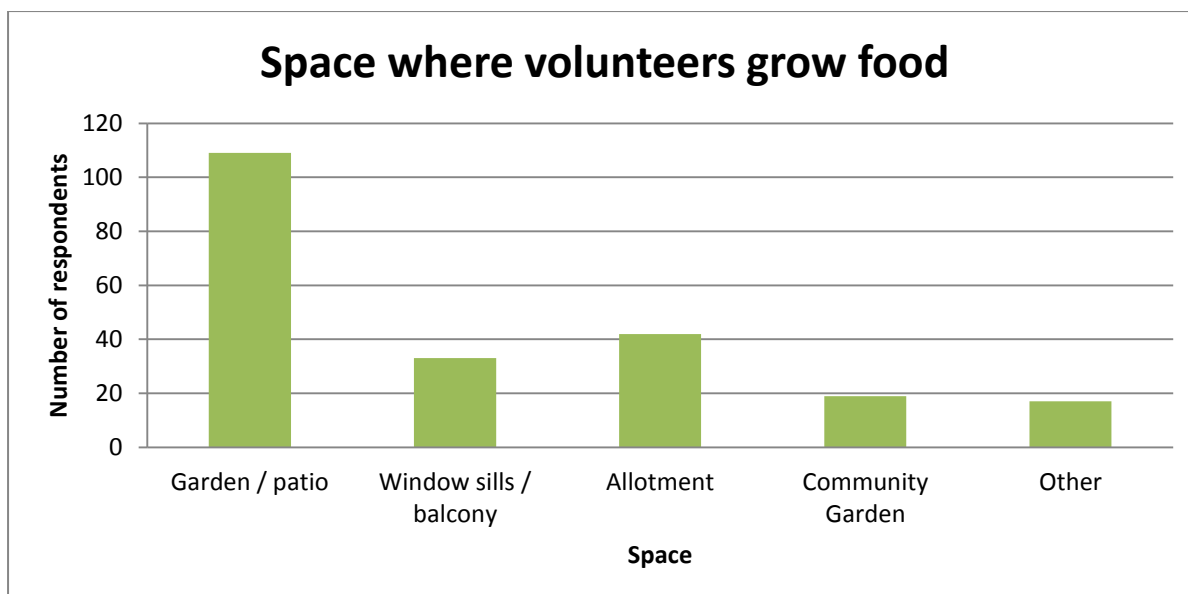


Figure 37: Space where respondents grow food

#### 4.5.5 Focus Group Discussions: Environmental Impacts

During the focus groups, volunteers were asked what they thought the main environmental impacts of the programme are. A number of main themes came out of the discussion, which are discussed below:

- When asked what they felt the main environmental impacts of the Programme one aspect which was discussed by volunteers from the Warwickshire and Norfolk focus groups was the **seasonality of food**. Increased awareness of seasonal food was seen as a main environmental impact of the Programme, as in turn it was thought that this would result in purchasing less imported food, therefore reducing 'food miles'. In relation to seasonal food, quality was also mentioned, with increased recognition of the quality of home grown, seasonal food compared to imported food.
- An increase in **composting** was thought to be an environmental impact of participating in the Programme and was discussed in all of the focus groups. Overall, composting was described as part of an overall awareness to reduce waste and to be more 'sustainable'. Discussions in all of the focus groups made reference to **sustainability** in terms of a wider awareness of the environment and the ecosystem. Wider environmental awareness was thought to be encouraged and achieved through passing on knowledge and information to households. A number of volunteers informed that wider knowledge than just growing food was passed on to households:

*“But you do try and actually project more than just... well I do... project more than just growing your own.”* (Warwickshire Master Gardener, Round 3)

*“Well, as I’ve said, the way I use it, I have always combined it with the sort of wildlife and flower side. I use it with the... we have an instant nature lessons.”* (London Master Garden, Round 2).

The Warwickshire and Lincolnshire volunteers therefore felt that this would generate a feeling of **empowerment** for households and children.

- **Organic** production and the use of chemicals was discussed in all of the focus groups, but was particularly apparent in the Warwickshire and Norfolk discussions. Volunteers from Norfolk and Warwickshire talked about the perceptions of ‘organic’ and how they encountered some difficulties with advocating organic production. One volunteer from Norfolk informed that people questioned how to know that something is organic. In Warwickshire, another respondent stated that the perception that organic is a ‘middle class clique’ and for ‘hippies’ is being challenged by a wider awareness of the ‘future generations’. In London, one respondent discussed how being part of Garden Organic resulted in people being more open to ‘organic’.
- Another point of discussion in the focus groups was the development and greening of **derelict land**. By growing food in derelict spaces was seen to be productive by Norfolk and Warwickshire volunteers. One Warwickshire focus group spent some time talking about the political angle to public management of spaces. Growing food in public areas was seen by London volunteers to increase biodiversity within the city and to also provide aesthetic benefits, whether it is in a public space or on flat window. This was seen to in turn attract people’s attention and provide benefits to the area such as reducing crime and vandalism, and the regeneration the area by reclaiming the land for something positive.

*“sometimes you actually are reclaiming something for a positive environmental use. I mean some of the estates I mentioned, actually police have come in and said well people were using these to bury guns and for drug havens and things like that so you’re reclaiming ground for something ethical, something good, not to go generally to far on that one, but so yeah, it is actually regenerating neglected spaces.”* (London Master Gardener, Round 2).

## 4.6 Social Impacts

Social Impacts	<p>3 Food purchasing behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the amount you spend on food changed since joining the programme?</li> <li>Have you made any changes to where the buy food since joining the programme?</li> </ul> <p>4 Social activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How satisfied are you with their involvement in leisure activities / hobbies, and has this changed since joining the programme?</li> </ul> <p>5 Social / community relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How satisfied are you with feeling part of a community, and their personal relationships, and has this changed since joining the programme?</li> </ul>
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### 4.6.1 Social Impacts: Food purchasing behaviour

Just over half of respondents indicated that they have not made any changes to where they buy their food from over the past year or so (53%); the remaining 47% informed that they have made changes. Results are based on 141 responses.

Respondents made the following changes to where they buy their food from:

- Purchasing locally sourced food (32%)
- Shopping at Farmers' Markets (19%)
- Buying more organic produce (17%)
- Shopping at different supermarkets (13%)
- Shopping at local (geographically) outlets (6%)
- Looking to save money (5%)
- Producing own food (so buying less food) (3%)
- Less frequent shopping trips (3%)
- Avoiding supermarkets (2%)

Results are based on 63 responses and some respondents.

### 4.6.2 Social Impacts: Amount spent on food

When looking at the amount of money volunteers spend on food per week, the highest proportion (44%) spend between £40-£70. 34% of respondents spend £40 or less on food



each week, and even less (17%) spend £70-£100. The smallest proportion of respondents spend the most on food per week, £100 or more. Results are based on 138 responses.

As Figure 38 indicates, for 69% of respondents the amount that they spend on food has not changed since joining the programme. For nearly one quarter however, the amount they spend on food has decreased (24%). For the smallest proportion of respondents, (8%), the amount they spend on food has increased since joining the programme. Results are based on 140 responses.

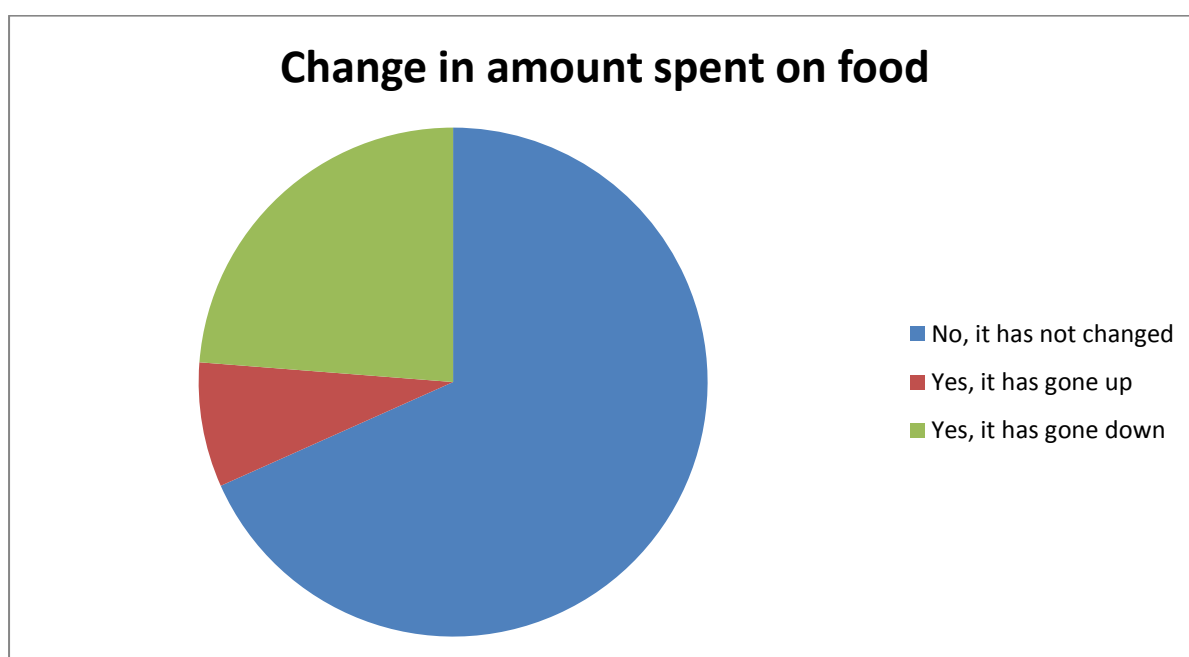


Figure 38: Changes in the amount spent on food

Respondents indicated that the amount that they spend on food since joining the programme has *not changed* due to the following reasons: 'no change in behaviour or shopping habits' (52%), 'food prices have increased' (therefore cancels out any savings made from home grown produce) (24%), 'unable to produce enough food' (9%), 'purchase of other produce unable to grow' (6%), 'lack of time to grow more food' (5%), 'purchasing more local or organic food' (3%), and 'a growing family needing more food' (2%). Results are based on 66 responses.

The reasons why the amount spent on food has *decreased* are presented below. Results based on 30 responses.

- Growing more food (and consuming it) (67%)
- Economic downturn (tighter budget / less to spend on food) (17%)
- Shopping locally / buying seasonal produce (7%)
- Less people to feed at home (7%)

The reasons why the amount spent on food *increased* are listed below. Results based on 10 responses.

- Cost of food has increased (60%)
- Purchasing 'higher quality' produce (e.g. organic) (20%)
- Poor weather (affecting crops) (10%)
- Spent less time gardening (10%)

#### 4.6.3 Focus Group Discussions: Impact on Local Food Systems

Volunteers were asked what they thought the impact of the Programme was on local food systems. This question generated a lot of discussion, the main themes of which are summarised below.

- Volunteers from all focus groups thought that impacting on local food systems would take a while or would be slow to start due to a shift in attitudes and therefore a change in behaviour. Therefore, it was apparent that volunteers felt as though it was **too early to tell** if there was an impact on local food systems. However, from having time to process the question a number of aspects in relation to impact on local food systems were debated within the focus groups.
- Discussion within the Norfolk and London focus groups spent some focusing on the potential **negative impacts** on local food systems. For example, in Norfolk it was thought that if people are growing their own (organic) food, they may buy less from 'existing organic supply structures'. One Norfolk Master Gardener illustrated this point through their own behaviour; they cancelled their box scheme as they were growing enough produce themselves. Another volunteer suggested the need to 'target people who are buying from Tesco', in relation to growing their own food, and not those who are already buying from and therefore supporting organic shops as

they are more likely to grow their own food. In the London focus groups there was scepticism on how the Programme could impact on local food systems and on people's shopping behaviour. One reason was due to the fact that people are not able to grow enough food due to a lack of space. One volunteer informed of the potential reluctance to buy local due to the cost of local food (discussed below).

- The **cost of food** was touched upon in all of the focus groups. In London it was felt that people shop at supermarkets for cheaper food, and that 'local food is expensive'. Within one of the Warwickshire focus groups '**inequality**' was talked about and how some people have no **choice** but to have to shop for the cheaper option. In Norfolk one volunteer stating that they would 'like to see people have the opportunity to eat properly'. Volunteers from the Warwickshire focus groups felt as though growing food was cheaper than buying produce from supermarkets.
- Particularly in Warwickshire, volunteers debated about people **being in control of their food** and the aspect of **choice**. Some volunteers felt that as people are able to grow their own food, '*from soil to plant to plate*' for example, they have a greater sense of control. However, one volunteer felt as though supermarkets reduced choice for people:

*"we'll never do away with the supermarket, and they have a place, but the problem is that they have got total direction on what we have been eating and that becomes a danger zone because we don't have choice. They say, yes we do have choice, but we don't have choice"* (Warwickshire Master Gardener, Round 1)

Encouraging people to buy locally, shopping less at supermarkets (due to a greater awareness of taste, quality and price) and buying more from Farmers' Markets were all impacts mentioned in the Warwickshire focus groups. However, one volunteer from London described Farmers' Markets as 'expensive', and for 'white middle class people'.

- Some respondents from all of the focus groups focused more on the **positive impacts** of the Programme on local food systems. Within the focus groups volunteers felt that people are **more aware of where their food comes** from and are therefore more aware of their shopping habits. It was therefore felt that the impact was in terms of thinking about the wider perspective of where food comes from. Volunteers discussed the factors contributing to this change in attitude and behaviour which was due to a wider awareness and appreciation of '**taste**', '**quality**' and '**cost**'

through households growing their own food. This was described as a longer term impact.

- Finally, one volunteer from Warwickshire thought that a longer term impact of people growing their own food would be a **'localised' food system**, which was also highlighted by a Norfolk Master Gardener who felt that there would be a longer term increase in local food production.

#### 4.6.4 Social Impacts: Social activities

Volunteers were asked to rate their satisfaction with their involvement in leisure activities and hobbies; Figure 39 displays the results. Overall, 83% of respondents were generally satisfied with their involvement in leisure activities and hobbies (39% were very satisfied, and 44% were fairly satisfied). Only a small proportion of respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (13%), fairly dissatisfied (3%) or very dissatisfied (1%). Results are based on 134 responses.

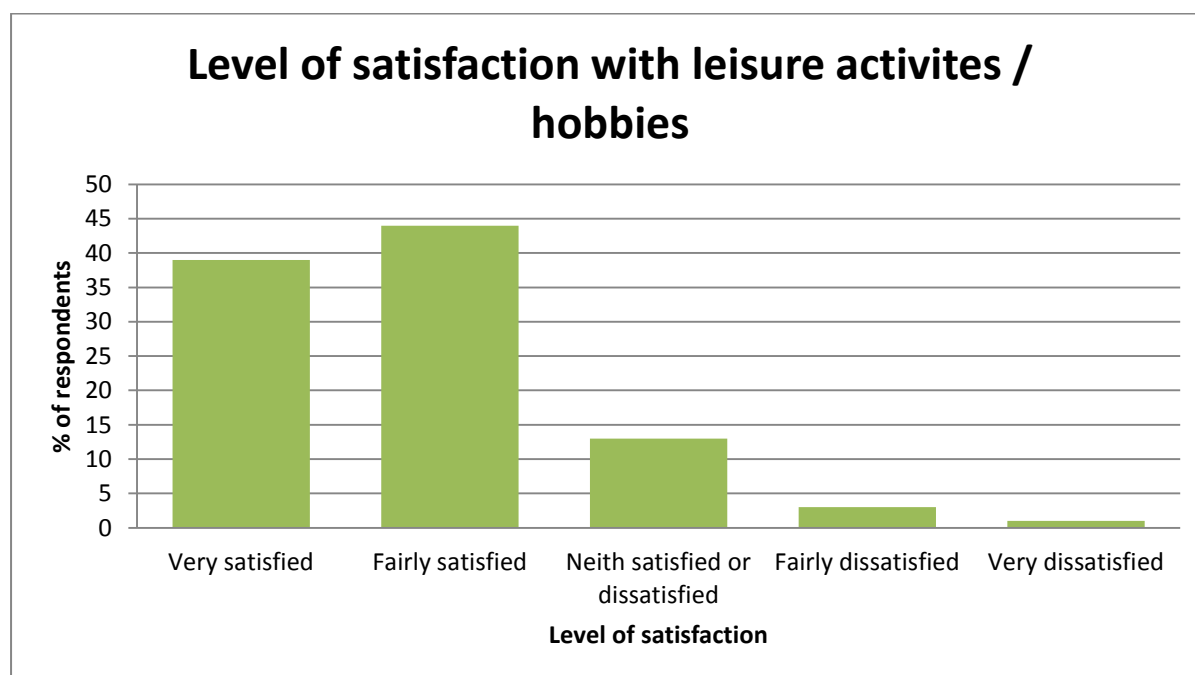


Figure 39: Level of satisfaction with leisure activities / hobbies

When looking at whether their level of satisfaction with leisure activities and hobbies had changed at all since involvement in the programme, Figure 40 shows that 46% of respondents said it had increased. For 48% of respondents it had stayed the same and for a small percentage it had decreased (6%). Results are based on 130 responses.

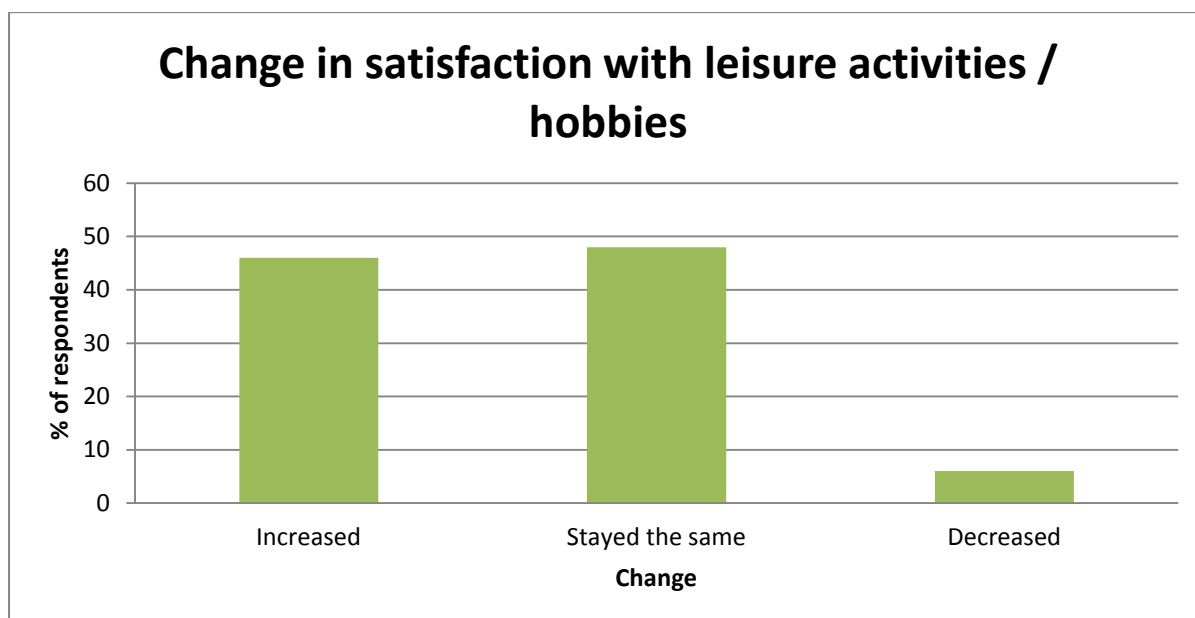


Figure 40: Change in satisfaction with leisure activities / hobbies

#### 4.6.5 Social Impacts: Social and community relationships

As demonstrated by Figure 41, the majority of respondents are generally 'satisfied' with feeling part of a community (72%). When breaking this down, 38% of respondents are 'very satisfied' and 34% of respondents are 'fairly satisfied' with feeling part of a community. 20% of respondents reported that they are 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' with feeling part of a community, 5% are 'fairly dissatisfied' and 3% are very dissatisfied. Regarding personal relationships, overall, 87% are satisfied with their personal relationships; focusing on more detail, 46% are 'very satisfied' and 41% are 'fairly satisfied'. Small numbers of respondents are 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' (11%) or 'fairly dissatisfied' (2%). Zero respondents are 'very dissatisfied' with their personal relationships. Results are based on 133 responses (personal relationships) and 131 responses (feeling part of a community).

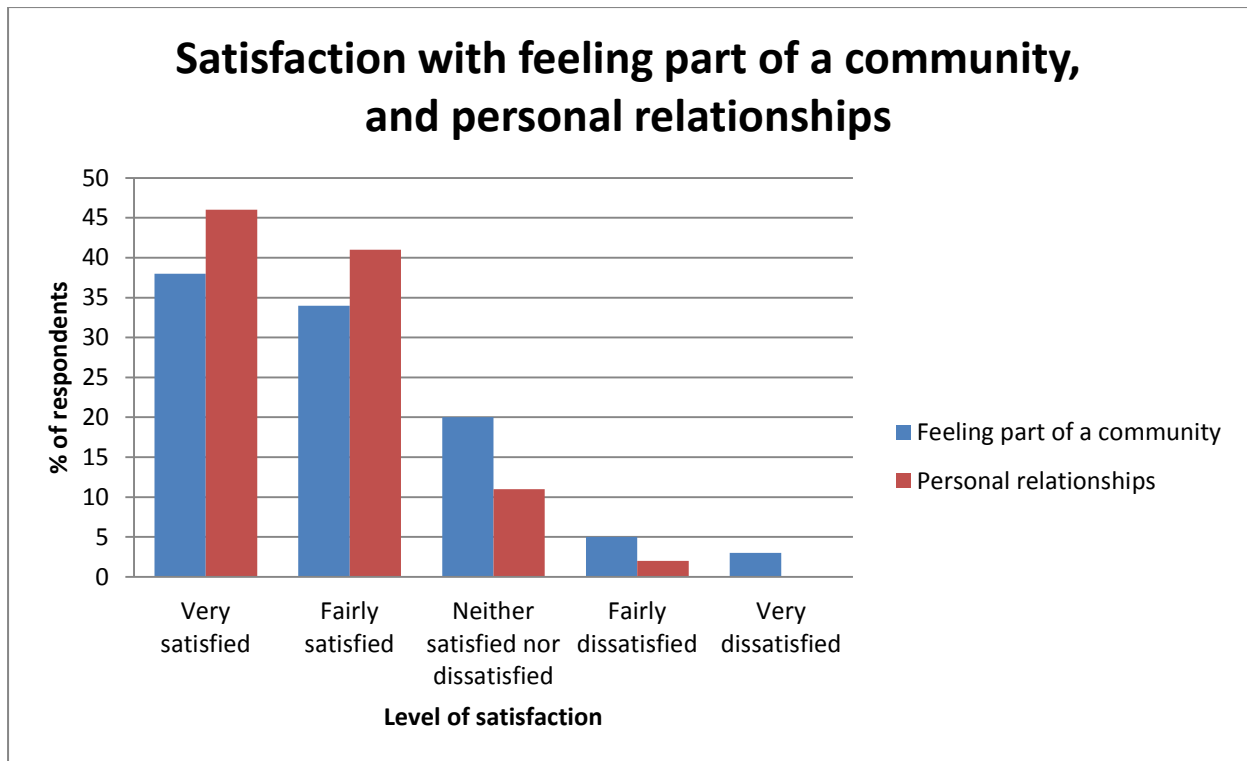


Figure 41: Satisfaction with feeling part of a community, and personal relationships

Figure 42 below illustrates whether respondents satisfaction with feeling part of a community and personal relationships has changed since participating in the programme. Focusing on whether respondent's levels of satisfaction with feeling part of a community had changed at all since participating in the programme 61% reported that it had increased. For 32% it had stayed the same, and for 7% it had decreased. Regarding personal relationships, 26% reported that their satisfaction with this particular aspect of their life has increased; for 70% it had stayed the same, and for 4% it had decreased. Results are based on 131 responses (feeling part of a community) and 130 responses (personal relationships).

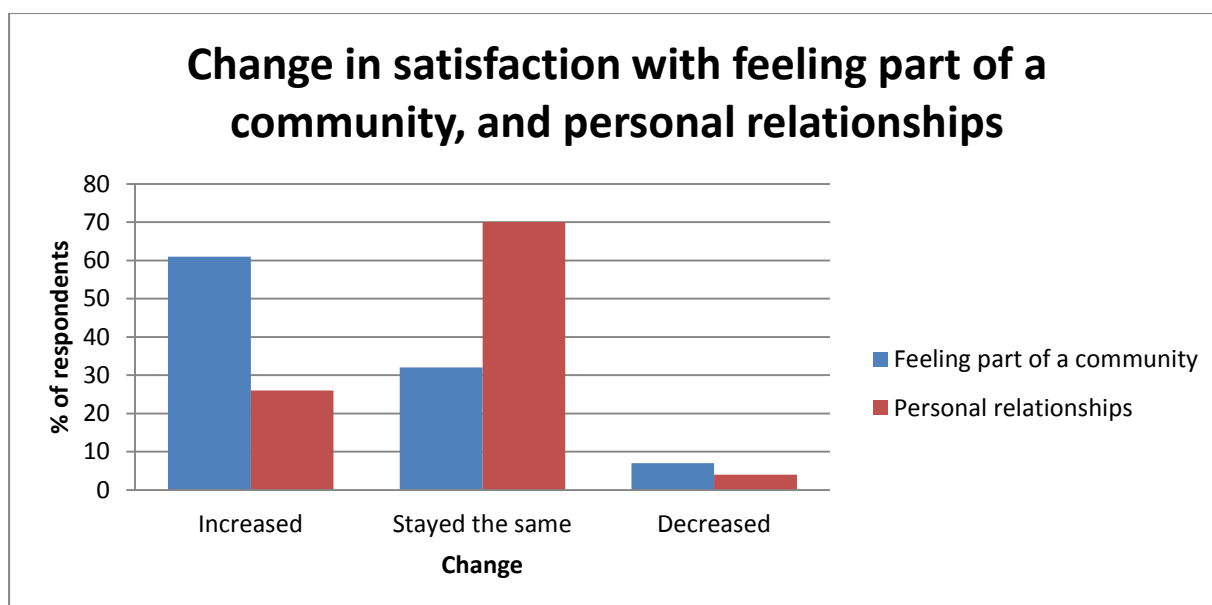


Figure 42: Change in satisfaction with feeling part of a community, and personal relationships

#### 4.6.6 Satisfaction with time spent with friends and family

Respondents were asked whether they feel that their time spent with friends and family had changed since joining the programme. For the majority of respondents it had stayed the same (83%), for 11% it had increased, and for 6% it had decreased. Results are based on 133 responses.

#### 4.6.7 Social Impacts: Hours growing food

Figure 34 shows the average number of hours participants spend growing food per week. There is a slight peak at around 2 – 3 hours, and again at 6 hours, with a larger peak at 8 hours or more. Figure 43 illustrates that the highest number of respondents (27%) spend 8 hours or more per week growing food. Every respondent spends at least one hour growing food per week. Results are based on 142 responses. Hours spent growing food equates to the associated physical activity required, either low or moderate in intensity, in an outdoor setting which is very much connected to health impacts.

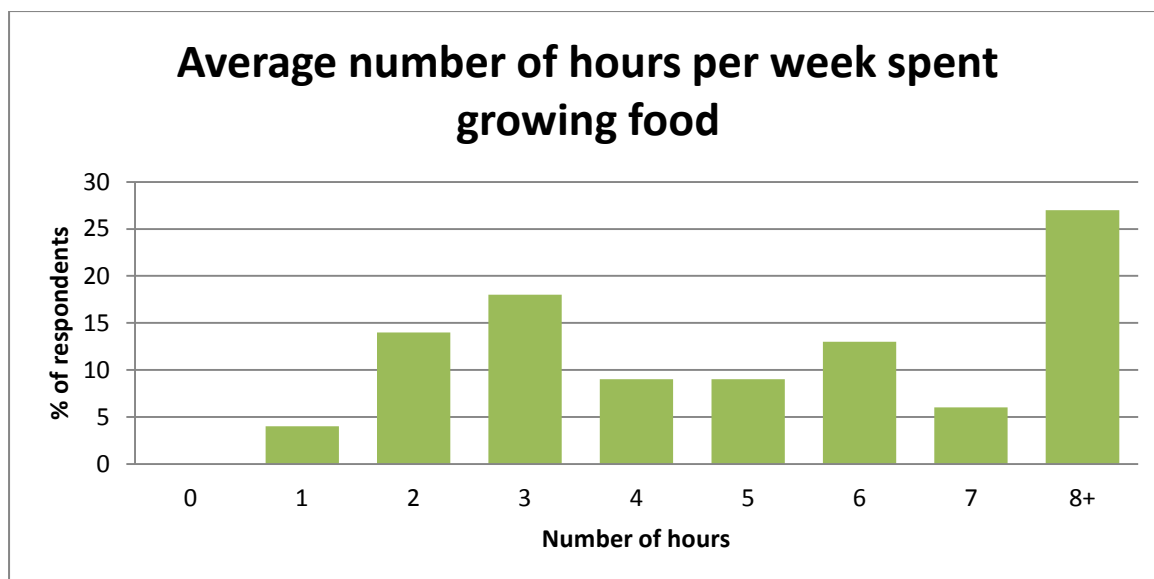


Figure 43: Average number of hours per week spent growing food

The average number of hours spent per week growing food has increased for 44% of respondents, and has stayed the same for 48%. The number of hours spent per week growing food has only decreased for 8% of respondents. Results are based on 143 responses.

#### 4.6.8 Social Impacts: Amount of time spent on programme

The findings show that around half of respondents (51%) feel that the amount of time they spend on the programme is 'just right', and around one half (48%) feel that it is 'too little'. One respondents felt as though they spent 'too much' time on the programme. Results are based on 133 responses.

When looking at the average number of hours volunteers spend on the programme per month, the majority of respondents spend between 1-4 hours (47% of respondents), or 5-9 hours on the programme (37% of respondents). Lower numbers of respondents spend more hours of the project per month; 10-14 hours (6%); 20-24 hours (2%); 25+ hours (4%). 4% of respondents were unsure of how many hours they spent on the programme per month. Results are based on 133 responses.



#### 4.6.9 Social Impacts: Knowledge of food growing

A large number of respondents (94%) informed that their knowledge of food growing had increased since participating in the programme; 6% stated they felt it had stayed the same. Results are based on 143 responses.

#### 4.6.10 Social Impacts: Personal Goal

63% of respondents did have a goal at the beginning of the programme and 37% did not. Results are based on 132 responses. Out of those who did have a goal, 83% of those respondents (69 respondents) reported that they have achieved their goal.

Volunteer's goals included:

- To help others grow food (54%)
- To learn more about growing food (18%)
- To recruit households (13%)
- To meet others (9%)
- To become a Master Gardener / to gain experience (4%)
- To become more active (1%)

Results are based on 82 responses.

#### 4.6.11 Social Impacts: Communication with volunteer coordinator

Volunteers were asked to state how often they communicate with their volunteer coordinator. 31% of respondents informed that they communicate with their coordinator on an 'as and when' basis, and 28% on a monthly basis. Fewer indicated that communicated with their volunteer coordinator fortnightly (16%), every two months (12%) and weekly (9%). The smallest proportion of respondents reported that they communicated with their coordinator 2-3 times a year.

#### 4.6.12 Focus Group Discussions: Social Impacts

Within the focus groups, volunteer were asked what they feel the social impacts of the programme are. A number of themes were apparent in the discussions following the question. The main themes are given below:

- In the focus groups, it was apparent that there were some **geographical differences**. In Norfolk, volunteers described a dispersed population which contributed to social isolation. Some volunteers felt that this made it difficult to incorporate and organising community based activities, for example bringing households together, due to living in such a remote, rural area.

*“But I think that, in the Norfolk context, with that [Master Gardener] said, it is slightly different arrangement with the separation and everything.”* (Norfolk Master Gardener, Round 1).

Volunteers informed however that this posed no issues with individual communication and interaction, on a one to one basis with households. Another geographical distinction was that Master Gardeners in the rural locations felt as though the population within that particular location were already engaged in food growing activities, especially due to the large farming community:

*“Living in a village as a Master Gardener and a Master Composter, I felt I was preaching to the converted you know.”* (Norfolk Master Gardener, Round 3).

On the other hand, in London, involvement in the Programme was seen to bring a number of different people together, in some cases the lack of space for growing food played a part. For example volunteers illustrated that the Programme has provided the opportunity for people from the same estate together who hadn't spoken to each other before to 'come together', and has brought families together. One volunteer had also paired up two people to 'garden share'. The aspect of 'bridging and bonding' people, as described by one volunteer, was apparent throughout the London focus groups. Discussion around **social inclusion** also took place, with particular reference in all of the focus groups to food growing as an activity which people from different cultures engaged in. Engagement of different cultures in food growing was described by one volunteer as an association to their home country. Food growing was also described as an activity accessible for all age groups.

- Throughout the focus groups, food growing was described as a '**conversation starter**' whether it was with strangers or with neighbours. Interaction with those in the community, in particular the development of relationships with neighbours, has led to the swapping of plants and seeds.
- Overall, '**feeling part of a community**', for both volunteers and households, was described as a social impact of the Programme. Some volunteers, especially from the Warwickshire focus groups, felt they had developed friendships with other Master Gardeners, and felt a connection to the community in which they were volunteering in.
- A final main theme that was apparent in all the focus groups when discussing the social impacts of the Programme was the aspect of '**learning**' and '**knowledge**'. Knowledge exchange, the spreading of ideas, and networking were all elements of the discussions. Gardening was described as a 'worthwhile' activity which often led on to meeting other people. Finally, the fact that the programme reached more people than the registered households is something raised by volunteers:

*"if we all actually thought about the impact of the contacts we made, it's a lot of people and the ripple effect is enormous and you need to think about that to realise."*  
(Warwickshire Master Gardener, Round 3).

## 4.7 Health and Wellbeing Impacts

Key Evaluative Impact	Headline Questions
Health and Wellbeing Impacts	<p><b>6 Life satisfaction</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you rate your overall satisfaction with your life now, and one year ago?</li> <li>• To what extent do you feel that your participation in the programme has influenced your overall life satisfaction, and why?</li> <li>• Components of wellbeing</li> </ul> <p><b>7 Health</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How satisfied are you with your health, and do you feel this has changed since joining the programme?</li> </ul> <p><b>8 Fruit and vegetable consumption</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On average per day how many pieces of fruit and vegetables do you eat, and has this changed since you joined the programme?</li> </ul>

### 4.7.1 Health and Wellbeing Impacts: Life satisfaction

Table 14 displays the average life satisfaction score for volunteer respondents for all rounds of the evaluation. On average, the average life satisfaction score of respondents has increased by 1 (0.9 in round 3) since involvement in the Programme for around one year. Comparisons can be made to the national average only in round one (as more recent date is not currently available) where the life satisfaction of respondents is 0.7 higher than the national average in 2011.

<b>Table 14: Volunteer average life satisfaction score</b>					
<b>Life satisfaction:</b>	<b>1 year before completing the questionnaire</b>	<b>Defra national average (2010)</b>	<b>Time of questionnaire completion (1 year in to the programme)</b>	<b>Defra national average (2011)</b>	<b>Change (-/+)</b>
<i>Round 1 Volunteers*</i>	<b>7.4</b> (2010)	<b>7.5</b> (2010)	<b>8.4</b> (2011)	<b>7.7</b> (2011)	<b>1+</b>
<i>Round 2 Volunteers**</i>	<b>7.3</b> (2011)	<b>7.7</b> (2011)	<b>8.3</b> (2012)	N/A <sup>15</sup>	<b>1+</b>
<i>Round 3 Volunteers***</i>	6.7 (2011)	N/A	7.6 (2012)	N/A	<b>0.9+</b>

\* Data excluded for five respondents who had not given their life satisfaction rating for both 'one year ago' and 'now'; or who did not answer the question. This equals a total of 53 responses for this question.

\*\* Data excluded for five respondents who had not given their life satisfaction rating for both 'one year ago' and 'now'; or who did not answer the question. This equals a total of 38 responses for this question.

\*\*\* Results are based on 42 responses.

As Figure 44 demonstrates, nearly half of volunteer respondents (49%) reported that their overall life satisfaction had increased since taking part in the programme for around one year. Again, nearly half of respondents (49%) also reported that their overall life satisfaction had stayed the same since taking part in the programme for around one year. Very few respondents (1%) informed that their life satisfaction had decreased. Results are based on 83 responses<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> National average life satisfaction not available at the time of writing the report.

<sup>16</sup> This question was only included in rounds 2 and 3 of the evaluation.

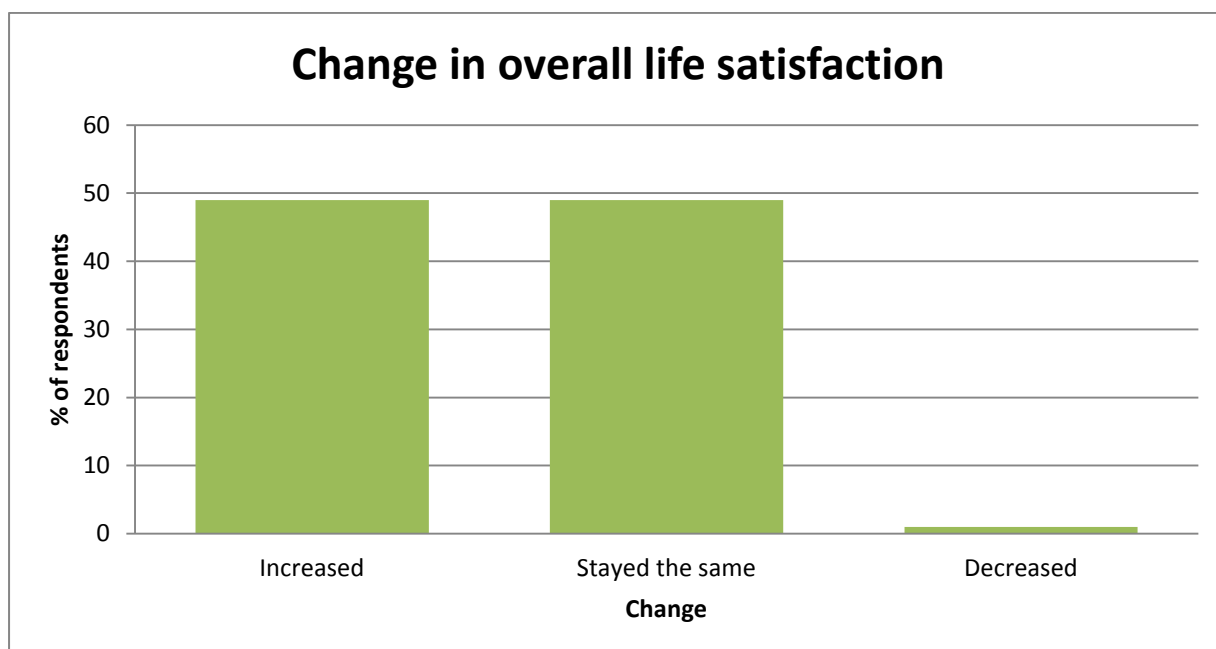


Figure 44: Change in overall life satisfaction

When looking at the extent to which involvement in the programme has influenced participants life satisfaction, 84% informed it had to some extent. When looking at this question in more detail, 26% of respondents stated that it had influenced their life satisfaction to a large extent, and 58% informed it had to a little extent. For 16% of respondents, their involvement had not influenced their life satisfaction. Results are based on 132 responses.

Respondents were asked to elaborate on why they felt that programme *had not* influenced their overall life satisfaction, the reasons are stated below. Results are based on 15 responses.

- Already a volunteer / gardener / have a sustainable attitude (33%)
- Personal issues, such as health / job insecurity (27%)
- Already happy with life (20%)
- Not able to access households (7%)
- Have not contributed enough time to the programme (7%)
- Expected something different from the programme (7%)

The respondents who informed that their involvement in the programme had influenced their life satisfaction to a *little extent* gave the following reasons. Results are based on 68 responses:

- Meeting others (29%)
- Motivation to do more gardening / enjoy gardening more (18%)
- Enjoy helping others (16%)
- Learning new skills (12%)
- Personal benefits, such as 'increased confidence', 'positive factor in life' (10%)
- External factors, such as 'ill health', 'job insecurity' (10%)
- Limited change in behaviour/lifestyle (4%)

Turning attention to the reasons why respondents felt the programme had influenced their life satisfaction to a *large extent*, again similar reasons were given. Results are based on 33 responses:

- Meeting others (21%)
- Positive contribution to society (15%)
- Feeling healthier / more time spent outside (21%)
- More confident (15%)
- Positive activity (therapeutic activity) (12%)
- New skills and knowledge (9%)
- Career development (6%)

### 3.7.2 Health and Wellbeing Impacts: Health

As Figure 45 shows, high numbers of volunteer respondents (86%) are 'satisfied' with their health. Investigating this further, 33% are 'very satisfied' and 53% are 'fairly satisfied'. Few are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (11%), 'fairly dissatisfied' (2%), or 'very dissatisfied' (1%). Results are based on 134 responses.



Figure 45: Satisfaction with health

Focusing on Figure 46, for around one quarter of respondents (24%), their satisfaction with their health has increased since participating in the programme. For 65% it has stayed the same and for the smallest amount of respondents (12%) it has decreased. Results are based on 130 responses.

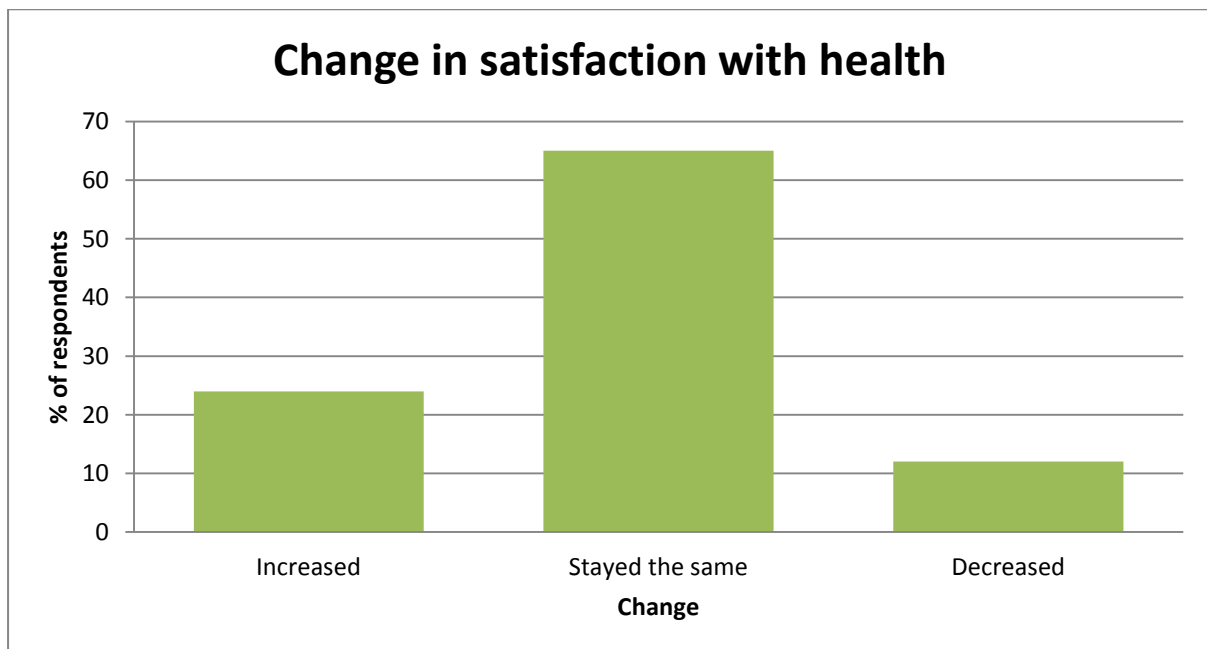


Figure 46: Change in satisfaction with health



#### 4.7.3 Health and Wellbeing Impacts: Fruit and vegetable consumption

As Figure 47 highlights, the highest fraction of respondents (39%) consume the most fruit and vegetables on average per day, 6 portions or more. Slightly fewer, 35%, consume 0-4 pieces of fruit and vegetables on average per day, and 26% of respondents eat 5 pieces. When calculating the average consumption of fruit and vegetables per day, the result is 5 pieces per day. When comparing to the national average of 4.1<sup>17</sup> (for adults aged 19-64), it is higher by 0.9 portions. Results are based on 142 responses.

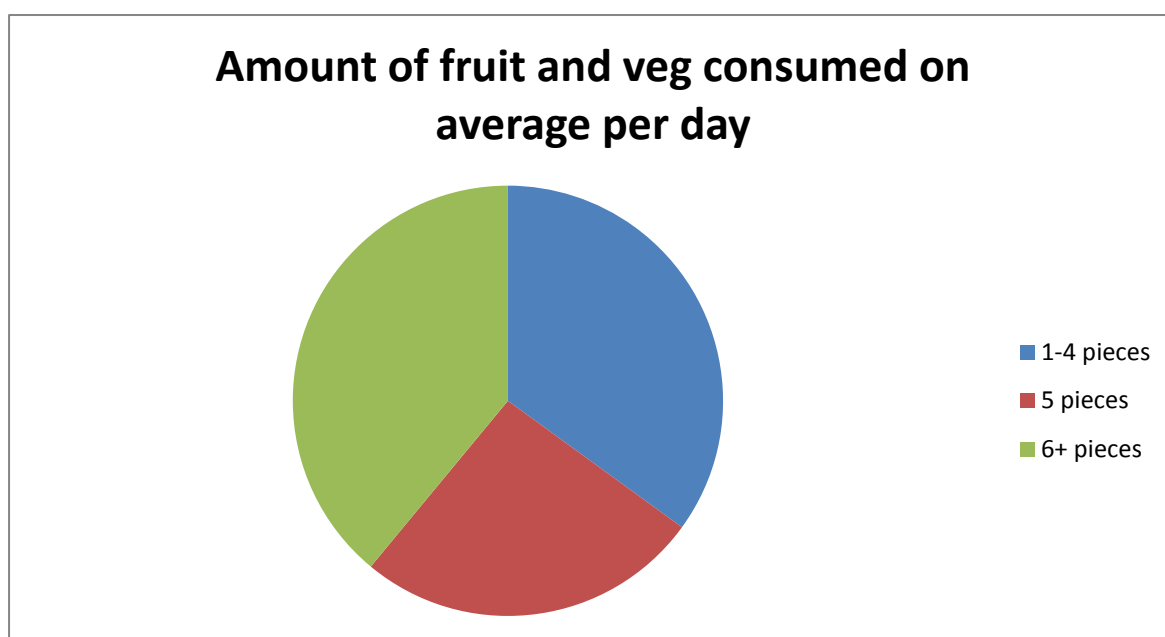


Figure 47: Pieces of fruit and vegetables consumed on average per day

The majority of respondents (85%) reported that the amount of fruit and vegetables they consume on average per day has stayed the same since joining the programme. 14% of respondents informed that it had increased and just 1 respondent stated it had decreased. Results are based on 142 responses.

#### 3.7.4 Focus Group Discussions: Health Impacts

Within the focus groups, volunteers were asked what they felt the main health impacts of the Programme were. Around four key themes were consistently discussed in the focus groups, which are detailed below.

<sup>17</sup> As measured by the DoH 2008/9-2010/11 (2012): <http://mediacentre.dh.gov.uk/2012/07/25/statistical-press-notice-national-diet-and-nutrition-survey-headline-results-from-years-1-2-and-3-combined-200809-201011/>

- Volunteers felt that the Programme impacted on **physical and mental wellbeing**. Firstly, volunteers felt that being outside provided a connection to nature and allowed people to get fresh air and sunlight (vitamin D). Mental wellbeing (or mental health benefits) was also discussed in all of the focus groups. It was apparent that undertaking a ‘meaningful’, ‘purposeful’ activity, whether it is with others or individually, contributed to people ‘feeling better’ and provided a ‘sense of achievement’. Some volunteers thought that gardening/food growing was a positive, rewarding, stress relieving and relaxing activity, which forced people to slow down from busy lifestyles.

*“Getting rid of all your worries when you’re out in the garden on your own.”*  
(Warwickshire Master Gardener, Round 2).

- **Being active** was another theme discussed within all of the focus groups. Undertaking gardening/food growing activities was seen to provide physical exercise and allowed participants to keep fit. It was also described as a ‘free’ and ‘enjoyable’ activity within the London focus groups.
- Volunteers felt that the Programme has had an impact in terms of households **eating healthier**. Volunteers felt as though through growing their own food, households had access to ‘nutritionally’ ‘healthier’ food because it was ‘natural’ and of a ‘higher quality’ compared to produce bought from supermarkets. The link to **cooking** own grown produce was also discussed throughout the focus groups, particularly because respondents may not have cooked the food they’ve been growing before which was apparent in the London discussions. The role of celebrity T.V. chefs such as Jamie Oliver, Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and his River Cottage series were mentioned, and how cooking (own grown produce) is becoming a ‘fashionable’ and ‘trendy’ activity which people are increasingly interested in and engaging with.

#### 4.7.5 Health and Wellbeing Impacts: Components of wellbeing

Table 15 demonstrates Defra’s wellbeing components, five of which this section of the report will focus upon. The Master Gardener results for the five components, for all three rounds of the evaluation are presented in Table 13, along with Defra’s national average (2010). More up to date data is currently unavailable at the time of writing this report but the 2010 averages do provide some level of comparison. As the results show, many of the averages are quite close. However, for ‘feeling part of a community’, the volunteer results are much

higher than the national average, and for 'future financial security' they are lower than the national average. A similar pattern was noted when analysing the household results.

**Table 15: Components of wellbeing**

	<b>Volunteer average (over three rounds)</b>	<b>Defra's average (2010)</b>
<b>Standard of living</b>	86%	86%
<b>Accommodation</b>	90%	87%
<b>Personal relationships</b>	87%	86%
<b>Feeling part of a community</b>	72%	63%
<b>Future financial security</b>	56%	66%

## 4.8 Views on Programme

Key Evaluative Impact	Headline Questions
Views on the Programme	<p><b>9 Enjoyment in the programme</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do you enjoy being part of the Master Gardener programme?</li> <li>Would you change anything about the programme?</li> </ul> <p><b>10 Benefits from participation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the main benefit you have gained from taking part in the programme?</li> </ul> <p><b>11 Advice from Master Gardener</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How satisfied are you with your advice from your volunteer co-ordinator?</li> </ul>

### 4.8.1 Views on the Programme: Enjoyment of the programme

Volunteers were asked whether they enjoy being part of the programme; 98% informed that they are enjoying being part of the programme (results are based on 130 responses); 62 respondents elaborated on why:

- Being part of a community / meeting new people / social interaction (34%)
- Knowledge exchange: learning new skills and sharing knowledge (27%)
- Helping other people and sharing enthusiasm (19%)
- Enjoyable programme / rewarding (18%)
- Helping the environment (2%)

A low number of respondents (2%) stated that they did not enjoy being part of the programme. Only one respondent indicated why they did not enjoy being part of the programme; this was due to a lack of interest and time in 'marketing'.

Overall, 8 respondents indicated that they were no longer a volunteer Master Gardener. This was due to the following reasons:

- No longer had time (6 respondents)
- Unsuccessful in recruiting households (1 respondent)
- Did not enjoy the structure of the programme (1 respondent)

#### 4.8.2 Views on the Programme: Motivations for participation

Volunteers were asked why they decided to participate in the Master Gardener Programme. The following reasons were stated. Results are based on 128 responses.

- To help others / to share knowledge with others (34%)
- To become involved in the community / meeting new people (19%)
- To learn more about gardening (15%)
- Interested in gardening / growing own food (14%) particularly 'organic' gardening for 4% of these respondents.
- Liked the concept of the programme (8%)
- A new hobby / activity (5%)
- Progression from Master Composter / was asked to (5%)

#### 4.8.3 Views on the Programme: Changes to the Programme

When asked if they would change anything about the programme, 59 respondents indicated they would. Suggested changes are displayed below:

- The process of recruiting households (31%)
- Roll out the programme / expand it to different areas/groups / more promotion (24%)
- Improved training (17%)
- Changes to the organisation/structure of the programme (12%)
- Change of name (8%) (i.e. the 'master' element)
- More contact and meetings (7%)
- Less emphasis on organic (2%)

#### 4.8.4 Views on the Programme: Satisfaction with resources

Volunteers were asked to express their satisfaction with various Master Gardener resources. Responses are displayed in Figure 48. It is clear to see that the majority of respondents are mainly 'very satisfied' and 'fairly satisfied' with Master Gardener resources.

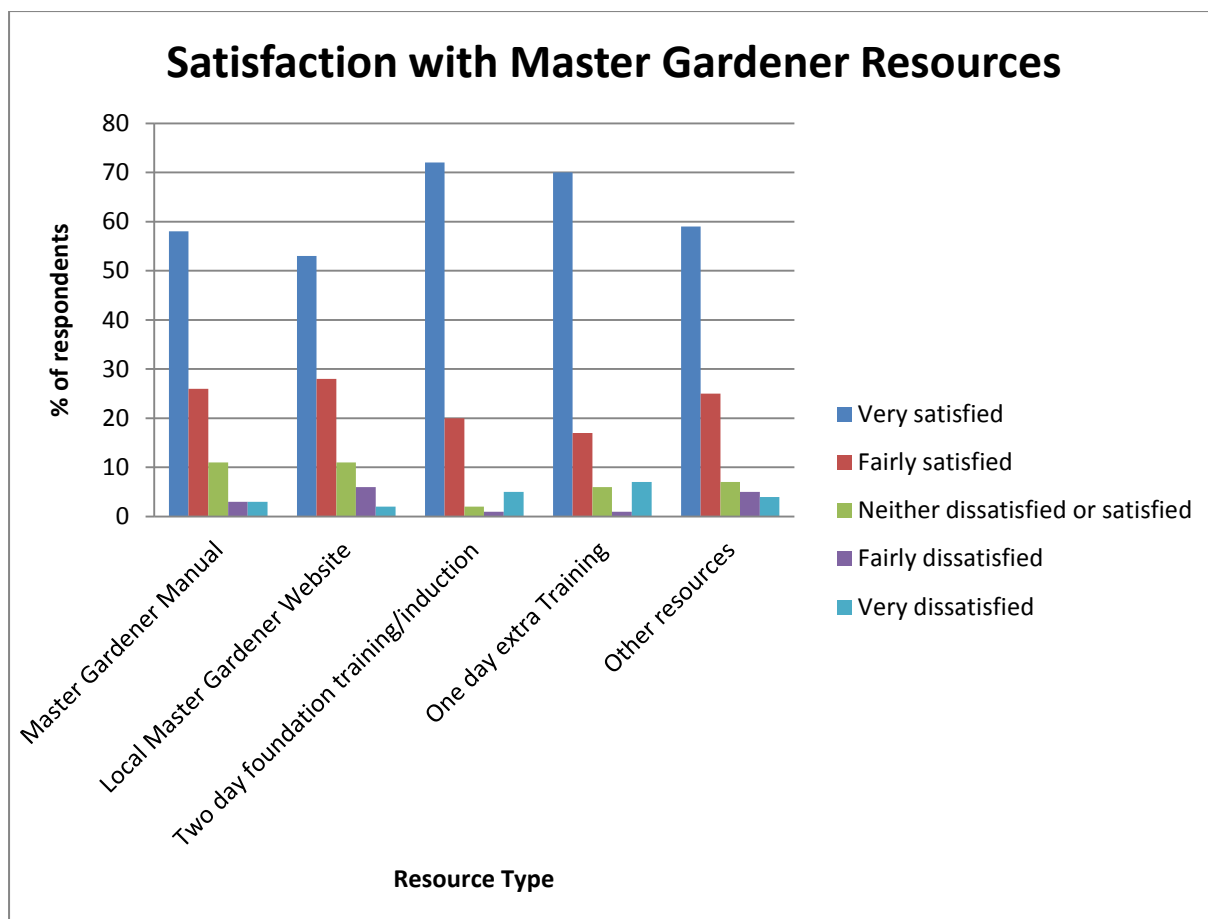


Figure 48: Satisfaction with Master Gardener Resources

Respondents were asked whether they would like to make any comments about any of the Master Gardener resources. Comments have been organised into the following categories and are based on 59 responses:

- The materials were helpful (51%)
- More materials needed (14%)
- Encountered problems with the website (12%)
- Seeds / compost provided lacked quality / taste (8%)
- Too much paper/material (7%)
- More practical training /more training days (5%)
- Lack of original understanding about requirements of the programme (3%)

#### 4.8.5 Views on the Programme: Benefits from participation

Volunteers were presented with the question: ‘what is the main benefit you have gained from taking part in the programme?’ Results are based on 133 responses and are displayed below:

- Increase in personal knowledge (29%)
- Meeting new people (26%)
- Helping others (19%)
- Greater confidence (17%)
- Personal benefits (4%)
- No benefit (3%)
- Growing my own food (2%)
- Environmental contribution (1%)

#### 4.8.6 Views on the Programme: Advice from volunteer coordinator

The results show that 95% of respondents are overall satisfied with the support from their volunteer coordinator, with 84% of those respondents being ‘very satisfied’ and 11% ‘fairly satisfied’. Only 3% of respondents reported being ‘fairly dissatisfied’ with the support from their volunteer coordinator, and 1% of respondents were ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’.. Results are based on 134 responses.

#### 4.8.7 Views on the Programme: Comments about volunteer coordinator

Respondents were asked if they would like to make any comments about their volunteer coordinator; most of the volunteers took the opportunity to, and comments were mainly positive. Comments have been categorised (results are based on 101 responses):

- Friendly / helpful / organised (67%)

*“Very helpful and friendly and is always ready with advice and support  
- she does a first class job.”*

- Enthusiastic / encouraging (16%)

*“A delightful person, good at finding the positive in situations and  
encouraging her volunteers.”*

- 'No comment' (9%)
- Lack of contact (5%)
- Contacts me regularly (3%)

#### 4.8.8 Views on the Programme: Prevention from participation

When asked whether there was anything that would prevent volunteers from future participation in the programme, 45% of respondents stated that there was nothing that would prevent them (results based on 127 responses). Focusing on those respondents who informed that there may be something preventing them from participating in the programme in the future (69 responses), 66% stated that 'lack of time' would be a barrier from future participation. Other barriers include, 'inability to recruit households' (8%), 'health issues' (7%), 'relocation' (7%), 'targets' (1%), 'lack of knowledge' (1%), and 'personal situations' (1%). 4% of respondents stated that they did not know anything that would prevent them from future participation.

#### 4.8.9 Views on the Programme: Problems with households

Volunteers were asked whether they had encountered any problems at all with their households. Volunteers described the following issues (results are based on 54 responses):

- Lack of willingness / interest from households (37%)
- Difficulties with communication (28%) (either limited responses from households when communication has been attempted, or trying not to 'pest' households).
- Lack of time (on both sides: volunteer and household) (15%)
- Lack of understanding from household about how the programme works (7%)
- Lack of feedback / recognition (6%)
- Lack of knowledge to help households (4%) (e.g. households more knowledge than volunteer)
- Households have health issues (4%)



#### 4.8.10 Views on the Programme: Additional comments

Volunteers were asked whether they would like to make any additional comments about their involvement in the Programme. The majority of respondents took the opportunity to state something positive about their involvement in the Programme as demonstrated below.

*“A fabulous, well funded, inspiring project that really makes a difference. Having done lots of voluntary work I feel this project is different as the voluntary input is really recognised and rewarded as much as the end results. Thank you!”*

*“Thoroughly enjoyed being part of the national events at which Garden Organic has attended and have been able to volunteer to support.”*

*“Thank you very much for having me. I hope to engage in a positive, rewarding and enjoyable relationship in the school's gardening club from September 2011.”*

#### 4.8.11 Focus Group Discussions: Overall Impact of the Programme

Volunteers were asked what they felt the overall impact of the Programme was, and also whether they would change anything about the programme. Focusing on whether volunteers would change anything about the Programme, the following main themes were discussed.

- All volunteers gave the Programme praise and thought it was a great scheme which they enjoyed being part of. Volunteers from Norfolk and Warwickshire generally felt that the Programme should be **publicised** more, and that people should be made more aware of it. Volunteers from these areas also felt that the Programme should be ‘opened up’, **‘widened out’** and ‘rolled out’ to more people and other areas.
- In all the focus groups the name **‘Master Gardener’** was discussed. It was apparent that many volunteers did not feel ‘worthy’ enough to be called a ‘Master’.

*“I sometimes think that the actual term ‘Master Gardener’ is a bit of a misnomer.”*  
(London Master Gardener, Round 3).

Other names were suggested such as ‘garden buddies’ and ‘mentor’.

Focusing on what volunteers thought the overall impact of the Programme was, again largely positive responses were given.

- The first point to note is that volunteers from all focus groups felt as though the Programme provided a **wide range of benefits**, rather than just one particular benefit. In Norfolk in particular, volunteers felt as though the Programme created 'lasting impact'.
- **Encouraging people to grow food** was seen as an overall impact of the Programme by volunteers in Lincolnshire and London. It was felt as though a 'generation had been skipped' in terms of food growing, and the Programme was filling this gap.
- Volunteer in Warwickshire raised the point that the Programme may act as a **catalyst** rather than a driver for motivation that's already there. It was felt as though the Programme may be capturing people who are already interested in food growing, and there may be a need to try and capture those who aren't already interested in food growing.

## 5.0 Round 4 Volunteer Results

### 5.1 Introduction

As stated in Section 2, the research team at Coventry University was commissioned to undertake an additional round of the evaluation of the Master Gardener Programme (round 4) which followed on from the initial evaluation (rounds 1 – 3) which collected data from participants who had been involved in the programme for approximately 12 months. The round 4 evaluation was designed to target those households and volunteers who took part in the initial evaluation; this enabled the research team to include in the evaluation respondents who had signed up to the Master Gardener up to 48 months ago, which provided the opportunity to evaluate the longer term impacts of those involved in the programme<sup>18</sup>. During round 4 evaluation, a self-completion questionnaire was sent out to participants, based on the round 1-3 questionnaires, which asked them to look at their behaviour over the previous 12 months; it is these results that are presented in this section of the report. Therefore, this section of the report focuses on the volunteer round 4 findings (focusing on participants who have been volunteering on the programme for up to 48 months) before comparing them to the findings from the same group of volunteer participants who took part in the round 1-3 research (which captured data from respondents when they had been involved in the programme for 12 months). As such, we have been able to track the same group of volunteers (and households) over the two stages of the evaluation and are therefore able to compare their results from 12 months into the programme, with their results from up to 48 months after enrolling.

### 5.1 Response rate

During round 4, a 109 were distributed to volunteers who had responded to the initial, round 1-3 evaluation questionnaires. In total, 59 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a response rate of 54%.

### 5.2 Profile

The profile of volunteers responding to both rounds of the evaluation is given below:

- Overall, 57% volunteer respondents are female with 43% male respondents.

<sup>18</sup> The Round 4 evaluation is therefore targeting volunteers and households who registered for the programme 24-48 months ago, and participated in the initial evaluation, and may or may not still be involved in the Master Gardener programme.

- One third of volunteer respondents are aged 60-69, with just over one quarter (26%) of respondents aged 50-59, 20% of respondents aged 40-49 and the lowest proportion of respondents aged 70-80+ (14%), 30-39 (5%) and 20-29 (0%). Results are based on 57 responses.
- The majority of respondents (35%) have a household income of £14,000 or less, with 27% receiving an annual household income of £14,001 - £28,000, 17% receiving £28,001-£48,000 and 21% receiving £48,001 plus (16%). Results are based on 48 responses.
- The majority of volunteer respondents are from the rural locations of Norfolk (28%), Lincolnshire (21%) and Warwickshire (19%); with 17% of respondents are from South London and 16% from North London.

### 5.3 Involvement in the Master Gardener Programme

#### 5.3.1 *Enjoyment of the programme*

Volunteers were asked whether they still enjoy being part of the Master Gardener programme 24-48 months after enrolling on the programme. Out of those respondents who are still a Master Gardener (86%), 100% enjoy being part of the programme. Results show that 14% of respondents are no longer volunteer Master Gardeners. Results are based on 59 responses.

- The main reasons why Master Gardener enjoying being part of the programme is that they enjoy 'helping others' (13 respondents); 'meeting new people' (6 respondents); 'personal satisfaction' (5 respondents) and 'supporting the organisation / programme' (4 respondents). A total of 32 out of the 51 respondents who enjoying being part of the programme provided responses.

#### 5.3.2 *Contact with coordinator*

The majority of respondents, 24-48 months after joining the programme, are in contact with their Volunteer Coordinator on an 'as and when basis' (42% of respondents, based on 50 responses).

In terms of how satisfied volunteers were with the advice from their volunteer coordinator, after being involved in the programme for 12 months, 95% of respondents were overall 'satisfied' (4% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 2% were dissatisfied). Results are based on 56 responses. When the same respondents were asked again about their satisfaction with their volunteer coordinator 24-48 months into the programme, 86% of respondents were overall 'satisfied' with the advice from their volunteer coordinator (64% 'very satisfied' and 20% 'satisfied'). Lower numbers of volunteers were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' (10%) or 'dissatisfied' (4%) with the support they receive. Results are based on 50 responses. Therefore, although satisfaction with the advice from volunteer coordinators is still high (86%), it is lower than what it was previously (12 months into the programme).

### *5.3.3 Time spent on the programme*

The majority of volunteers (88%) 24-48 months into the programme spend between 1 – 9 hours on the programme per month (45% spend between 1-4 hours per month, and 43% spend between 5-9 hours per month on the programme). Results are based on 49 responses.

The findings from the initiation evaluation, (focussing on behaviour 12 months into the programme), show that 49% of respondents felt as though the time they were spending on the programme was 'just right' (49%), and slightly more respondents felt it was too little (45%) (5% thought it was 'too much'). Results are based on 55 responses. When the same respondents were asked this question 24-48 months later, 69% of respondents feel the amount of time they spend volunteering on the programme is 'just right', and 31% feel it is 'too little' (Figure 49). Results are based on 49 responses. It can be concluded therefore that 24-48 months on, more respondents feel that they are spending a 'right' amount of time on the programme, (not 'too much' or 'too little' which was previously the case).

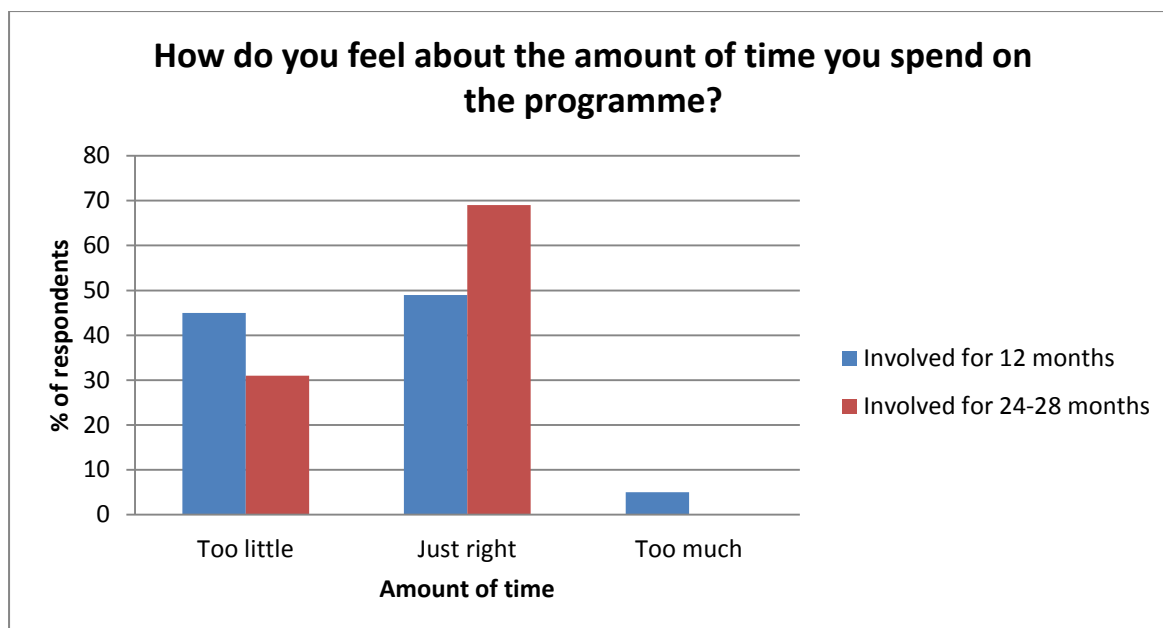


Figure 49: The amount of time volunteers spend on the programme.

## 5.4 Food Growing and Composting Behaviour

### 5.4.1 Amount of food grown

From the initial evaluation findings (focusing on behaviour 12 months into the programme), 55% of respondents reported that the amount of food they grow has increased. For 41% it had stayed the same, and for 4% it had decreased. Results are based on 58 responses.

The same respondents were asked the same question 24-48 months into the programme. The findings show that 49% respondents indicated that the amount of food they grow has increased (Figure 50). For 39% of respondents, the amount of food they grow has stayed the same, and this amount has decreased for 12% of respondents (the results also show that all respondents grow their own food). Results are based on 59 responses.

Therefore 24-48 into the programme, nearly half of respondents are still experiencing an increase in the amount of food they grow. For a slightly lower number of respondents the amount of food they grow has stayed the same but for more respondents the amount of food they grow has decreased.

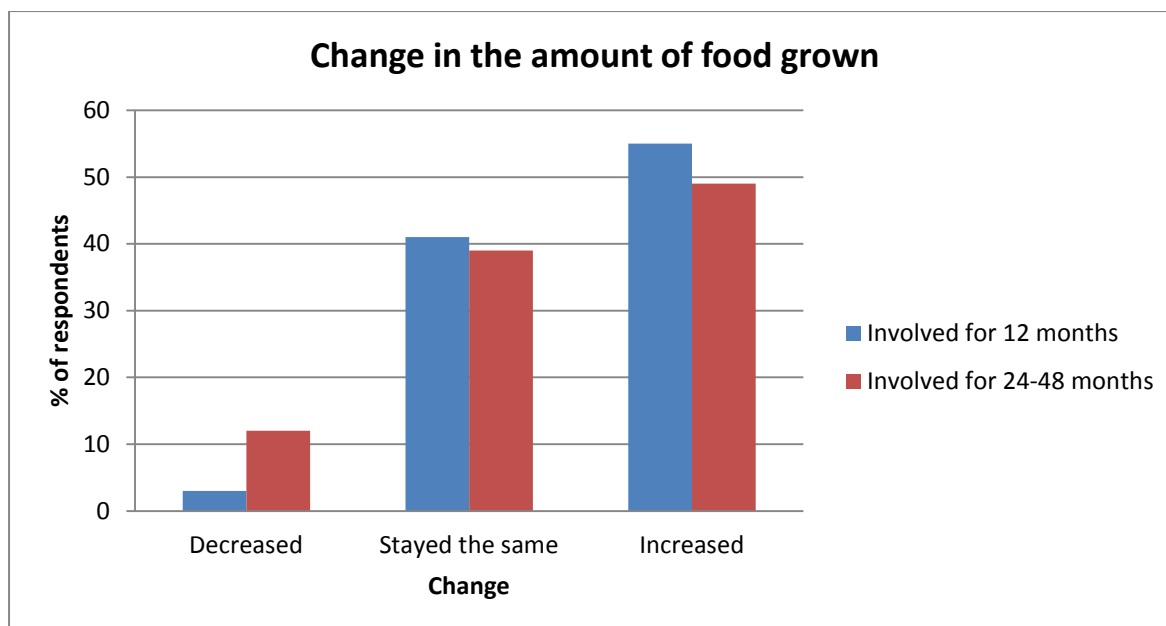


Figure 50: Changes in the amount of food grown by volunteers.

- Volunteers expanded on why the amount of food they've grown over the past 12 months has **increased**: some volunteers have a larger growing space or are being more productive (6 responses), others are putting more effort into food growing (4 responses), some have more knowledge which is reflected in the amount of food they produce (2 responses), and the better weather conditions has enabled some volunteers to grow more (1 response). Results are based on 17 out of a possible 29 responses.
- For some, the amount of food they've grown has **stayed the same** due to a lack of space to expand, or already growing as much as possible (8 responses), some have been limited by personal circumstances which has resulted in a lack of time available for growing food (2 responses), and others are trying different varieties of produce so haven't been able to see the increase in production yet (2 responses). Results are based on 12 out of a possible 23 responses.
- The poor growing season for some, has been the main reason why they amount of food they've grown has actually **decreased** over the past 12 months (2 respondents). For 2 respondents, they've spent time on other commitments, and 1 respondent has concentrated on flora and insects rather than food production. Results are based on 5 put of 7 a possible responses.

### 5.4.2 Range of food grown

Respondents were asked whether the range of food they grown had changed 12 months into the programme; this has increased for 72% of respondents (and had stayed the same for slightly fewer 24%, and decreased for 3%). Results are based on 58 responses.

When presented with the same question 24-48 months later, 68% of respondents informed that the range of food they grown has increased, 27% informed that it had stayed the same, and 5% stated it had decreased (Figure 51). Results are based on 59 responses.

Although the range of food grown has increased for slightly fewer respondents over time, quite a high number of respondents are still seeing an increase in the range of food they grow.

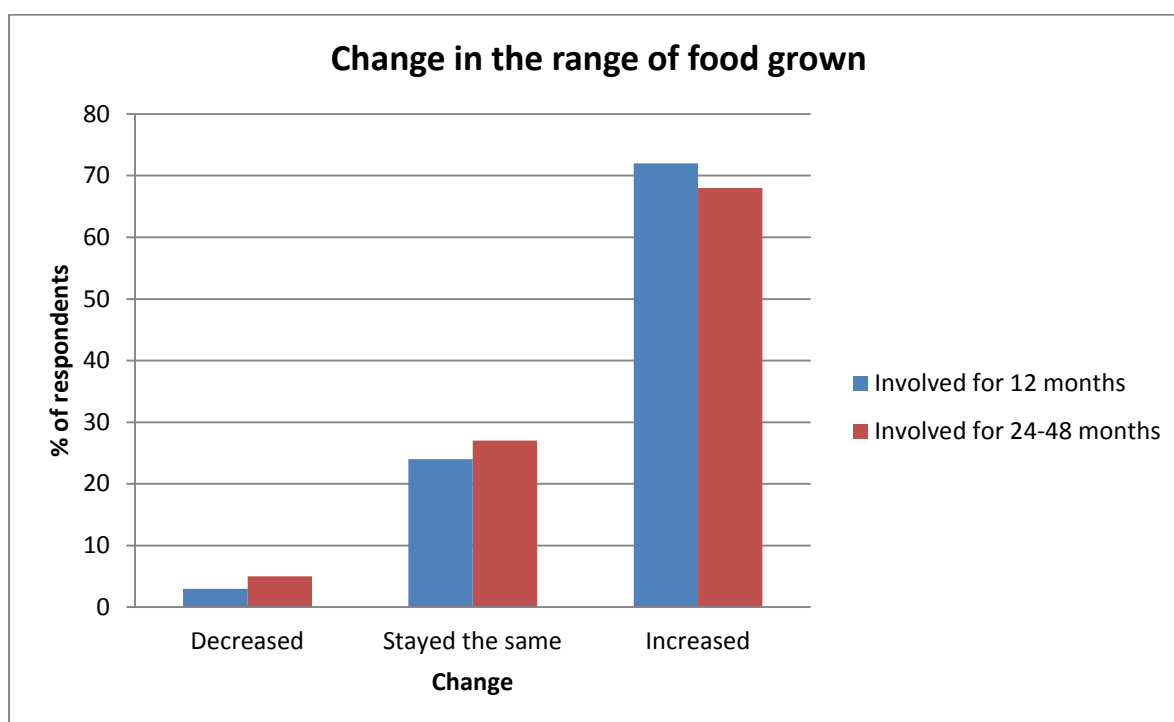


Figure 51: Changes in the range of food grown by volunteers.

- When asked to describe why the range of food grown over the past 12 months has **increased**, the main reason given was that respondents are simply trying to grow new varieties (18 responses), some volunteers had more space to do this (2 respondents), others had more knowledge which gave them the confidence to grow different types of produce (4 respondents), and one respondents was given some



seeds as a present which they planted. Results are based on 25 out of a possible 40 responses.

- For some volunteers, the range of food they grow has **stayed the same**. This is due to 2 volunteers only growing what they like to eat, 2 respondents felt as though they wouldn't be able to grow other types of produce in their gardens, and one respondent stated that they already grow quite a large range of food. Results are based on 5 out of a possible 16 responses.
- For one respondent, the range of food they've grown over the past 12 months has **decreased** due to work commitments.

#### 5.4.3 Hours spent growing food

Figure 52 shows that respondents are now spending more time per week growing food compared to 12 months into the programme. When volunteers were asked, 24-48 months after registering for the programme, how many hours they spend growing food, 41% informed that they spend on average 8 hours or more per week, 25% spend on average 6-7 hours per week, 14% spend on average 4-5 hours per week growing food and 20% spend 2-3 hours per week growing food. Results are based on 59 responses for the Round 4 results and 58 responses for the Round 1-3 results.

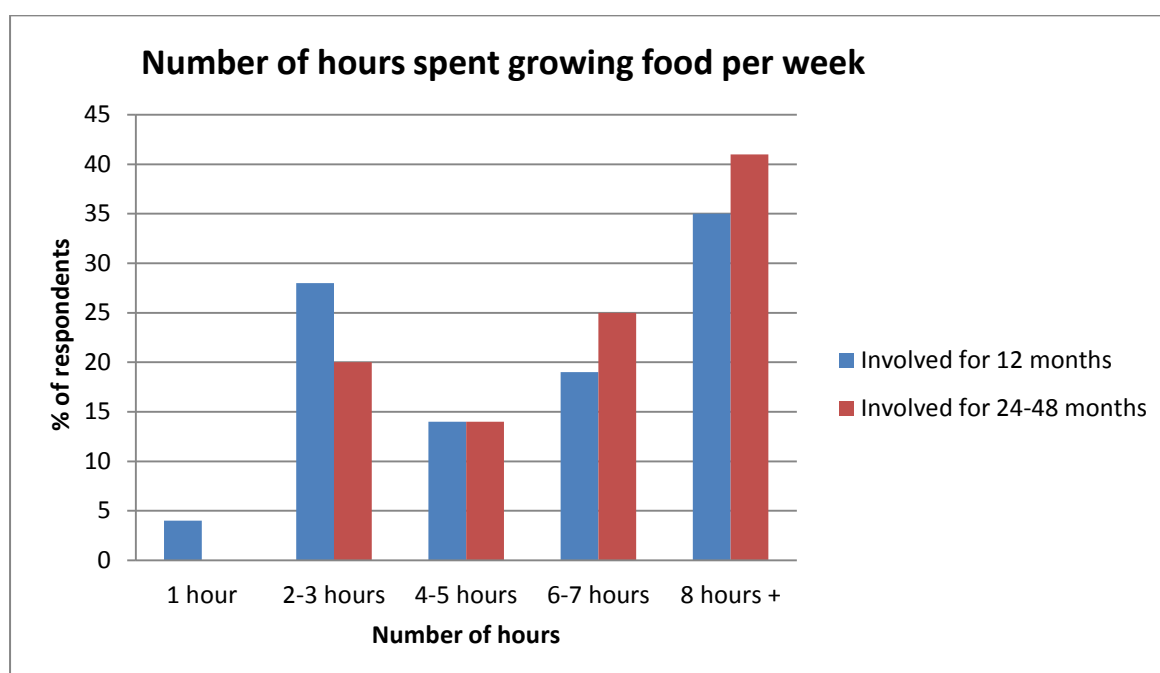


Figure 52: Number of hours volunteers spend growing food per week.

#### 5.4.4 Composting

As illustrated by Figure 53, generally, the amount of food and garden waste composted has increased for respondents the longer they have been involved in the programme. More respondents (21%) currently compost 100% of their food and garden waste (17% of respondents previously composted 100%). Furthermore, the proportion of respondents composting 70-90% of their waste has increased from 28% of respondents to 30%. Results are based on 59 responses for the Round 4 results and 57 responses for the Round 1-3 results.

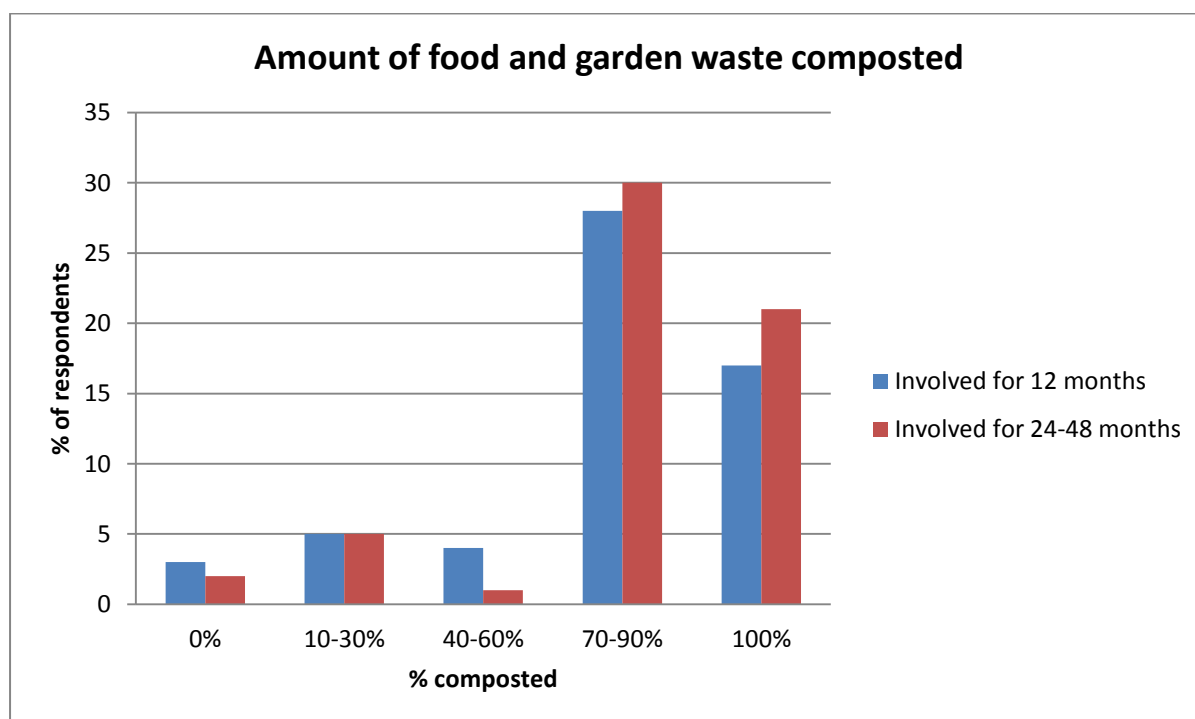


Figure 53: Percentage of food and garden waste composted by volunteers.

#### 5.5 Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

The findings show that 12 months into the programme, the average portions of fruit and vegetables consumed was 5.1. Results are based on 56 responses. The same group of respondents, 24-48 months later reported an average fruit and vegetable consumption of 5.3. Results are based on 59 responses. We can see therefore that average fruit and veg

consumption, for volunteers, has increased by 0.2 portions 24-48 months into the programme.

Interpreting the data in a different way, (Figure 54) we can see that twelve months into the programme, 41% of respondents consumed 3-4 pieces of fruit and veg, 32% consumed 6 or more pieces and 27% consumed 5 pieces. Further into the programme (24-48 months), the highest fraction of respondents (39%) consume, on average 6 pieces of fruit and veg or more, per day. Lower proportions of respondents consume fewer pieces; 29% consume on average 5 pieces and 32% consume on average 2-4 pieces. The results show that zero respondents consume less than two pieces per day. Results are based on 59 responses.

We can see therefore that being involved in the programme for 24-48 shows an increase in 5 pieces, or 6+ pieces of vegetables consumed, and a decrease in 2-4 pieces being consumed, resulting in a higher average fruit and veg consumption 24-48 months into the programme.

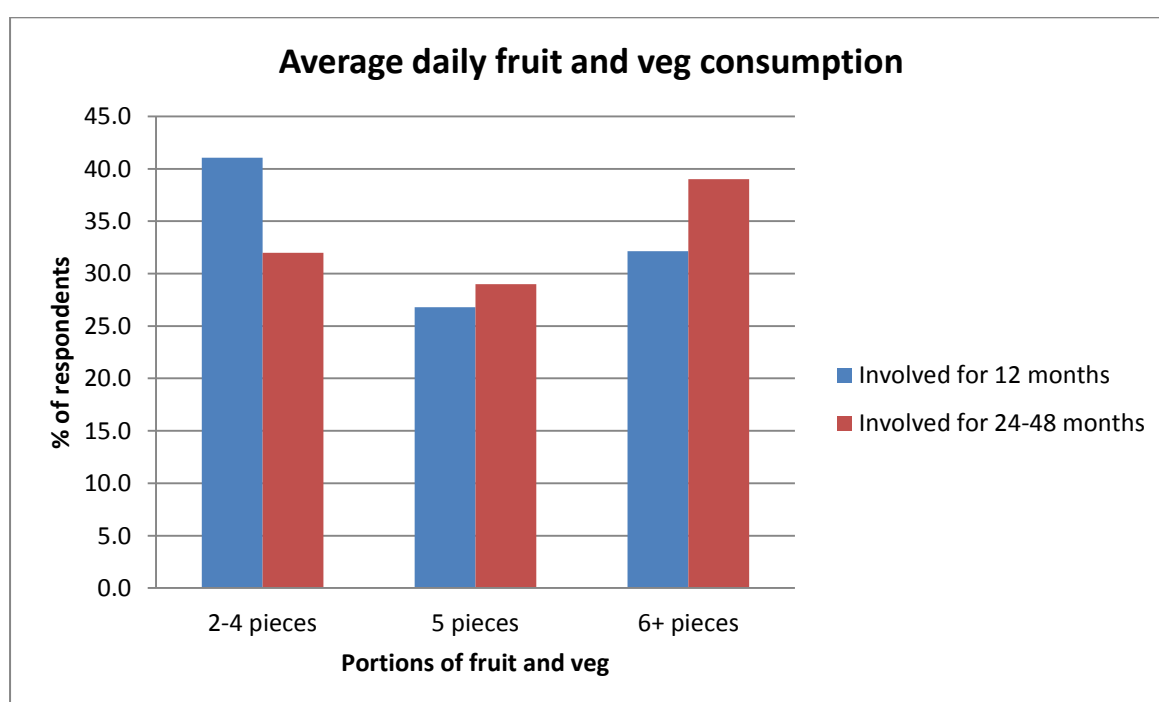


Figure 54: Volunteer average daily fruit and vegetable consumption.

## 5.6 Food Purchasing Behaviour

Focusing on food expenditure, 12 months into the programme, 47% of respondents showed that they spent £40-£70 per week on food, 38% spent under £40, 11% spent £70-£100 and 4% spent £100+. Results are based on 55 responses. The same group of respondents, 24-48 into the programme were asked the same question; 38% respondents showed that the amount of money they spend on food each week is between £40 - £70, and for just over one third (34%), £40 or less. A lower proportion of respondents (29%) spend more on food per week, between £70 - £100; however the results show that there are no respondents spending over £100 on food per week. Results are based on 59 responses.

The graph (Figure 55) demonstrates that although zero respondents are now spending £100+ on their weekly food shop, a larger proportion of respondents are spending between £70-£100; fewer respondents are spending less money each week.

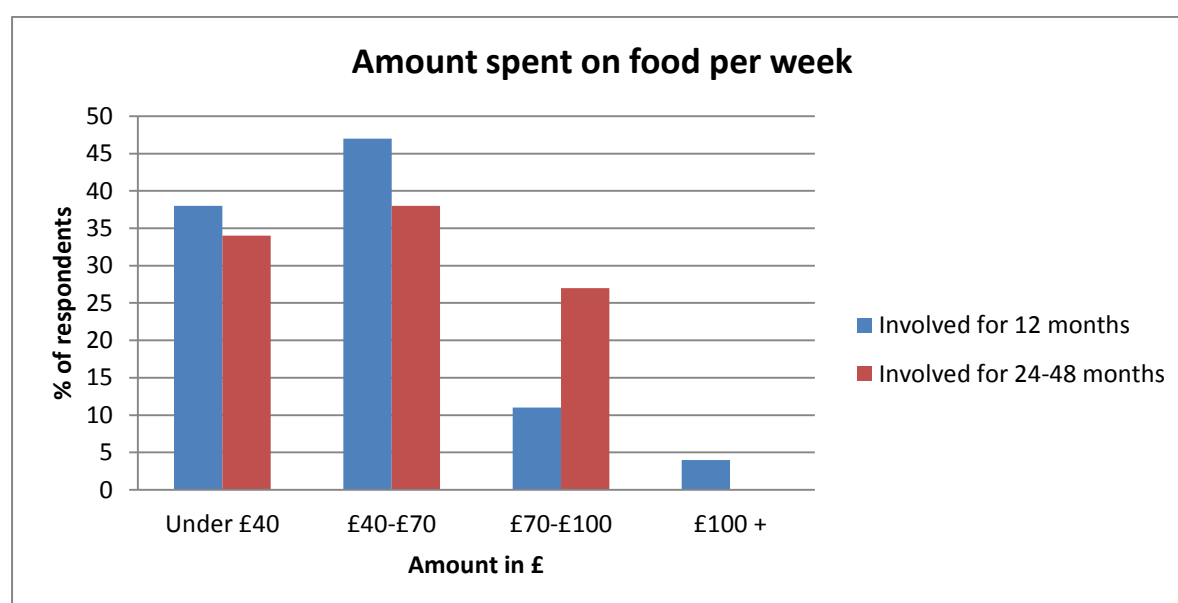


Figure 55: Amount spent on food per week by volunteers.

The below graph (Figure 56) shows that 12 months into the programme, a larger proportion of respondents felt as though there hadn't been a change in their weekly expenditure on food compared to 24-48 months into the programme. More respondents feel as though the amount they spend on food has increased more recently; the graph shows a difference of 28%. There is also a larger proportion of respondents who feel as though the amount they spend on food has decreased more recently, however the difference between the 12 month

results and the 24-48 month results are not that significant. Results are based on 57 responses.

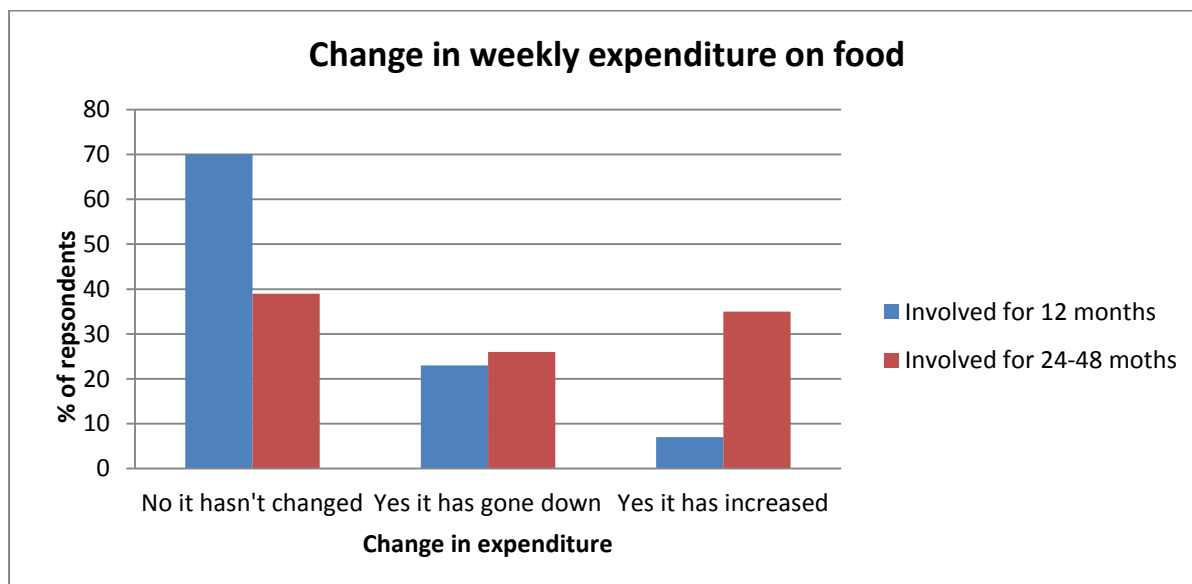


Figure 56: Change in the amount volunteers spent on food during the past 12 months.

- The main reason why the amount of money spent on food has **gone down** over the past 12 months for some respondents, is the fact that they are eating what they've grown (7 respondents), 3 respondents have changed their diet, 2 respondents are being more careful with their money, one 1 respondent is eating seasonally. Results are based on 13 out of a possible 15 responses.
- For some respondents, the amount they spend on food has **stayed the same** due to no change in consumption habits for some volunteers (4 responses). Others highlighted that food prices have increased but they buy less food (4 responses) or that they stick to a budget when shopping or are organised (4 responses). Results are based on 18 out of a possible 22 responses, and only the main reasons are stated.
- Other volunteers have noticed a rise in food prices, which is the reason why the amount they've spent on food over the past 12 months has **increased** (12 responses). One volunteer has noticed an increase in living costs, and two others have had to feed growing children. Finally, one respondent informed that they have been shopping for healthier products. Results are based on 17 out of a possible 20 responses.

### 5.6.1 Changes to where food is purchased from

Focusing on whether respondents have made changes to where they buy their food from (Figure 57), the findings show that 12 months into the programme 44% of respondents had made changes to where they buy their food from. Results are based on 57 responses. However, 24-48 months into the programme, 51% of the same respondents reported that they had made changes to where they buy their food from. Results are based on 57 responses.

- When asked what changes they've made to where they buy their food from, the following answers were given. The majority of volunteers are 'buying locally' (10 respondents), other volunteers are trying to source their food more cheaply (4 respondents), 2 respondents are buying organic produce, and another 2 are buying better quality produce, 1 volunteer is looking at where their food comes from, and another has started to buy British meat (e.g. red tractor label). Finally, one respondent has changed supermarket, and another is buying online. Results are based on 22 out of a possible 29 responses.

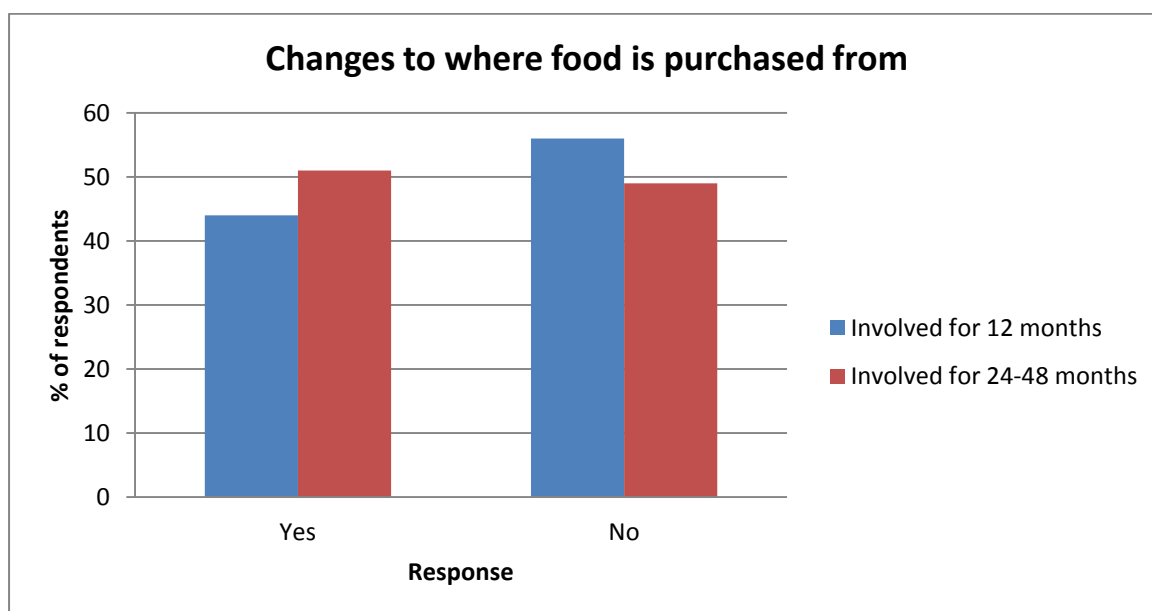


Figure 57: Changes to where volunteers purchase food from.

## 5.7 Life Satisfaction

### 5.7.1 Life satisfaction score

Respondents were asked to score their life satisfaction score on a scale of 0 to 10 (with 0 being very dissatisfied and 10 being very satisfied). Twelve months into the programme, the average score was 8.2 (which is higher than the life satisfaction score given at the start of the programme which was 7 out of 10). Results are based on 53 responses. When the same question was asked again 24-48 months into the programme, the average score was 8.1 (results are based on 56 responses) (see Table 16).

We can therefore see that being involved in the programme for longer (24-48 months after registering for the programme), has only very slightly reduced the average life satisfaction score of respondents by 0.1 point to 8.1 (compared to 8.2, 12 months into the programme).

<b>Table 16: Volunteer life satisfaction score</b>	Involved for 12 months	Involved for 24-28 months
Volunteer average life satisfaction score	8.2	8.1

### 5.7.2 Extent to which participation influences life satisfaction

Respondents were asked the state the extent to which involvement in the Master Gardener Programme has influenced their overall life satisfaction.

As shown by Figure 58, 12 months into the programme, 11% of respondents felt as though the programme had no influence on their life satisfaction where as 89% of respondents felt that it had, to some extent (either a little extent or large extent). Results are based on 53 responses. After being involved in the programme for 24-48 months, we can see that a larger proportion of respondents feel as though their involvement in the programme has influenced their life satisfaction to some extent (95%) (and fewer respondents feel as though their involvement in the programme has influenced their overall life satisfaction to no extent). Results are based on 59 responses. We can see therefore, that over time, respondents feel as though their involvement in the programme is having a wider influence of their overall life satisfaction.

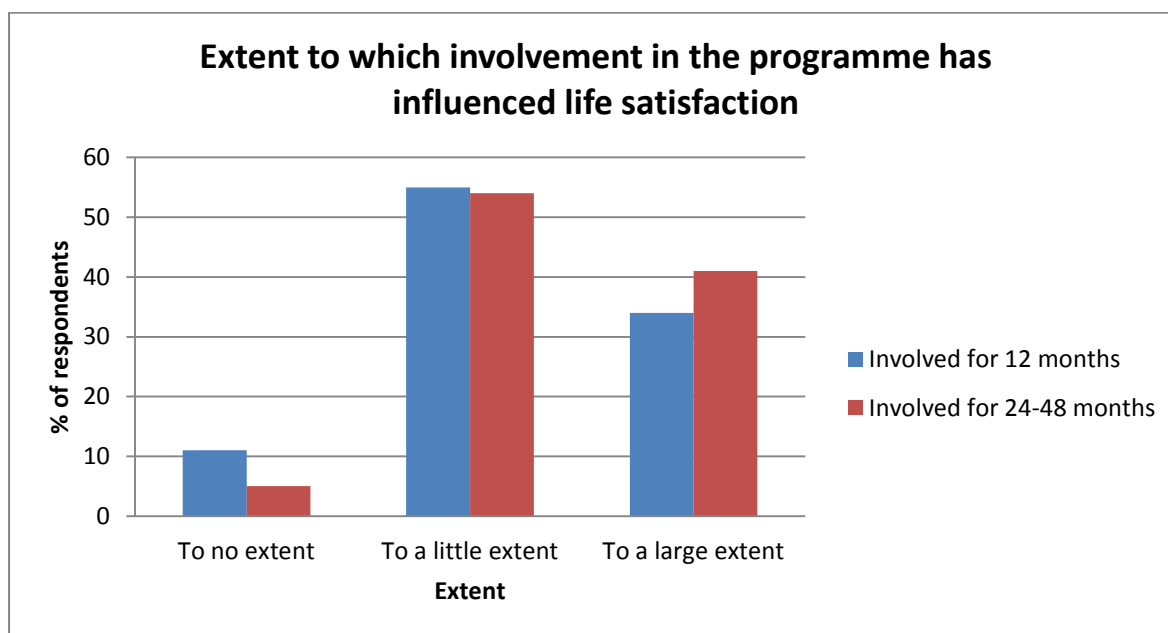


Figure 58: Extent to which participant influences volunteer life satisfaction.

- Volunteers, 24-48 months into the programme, were asked to state why their involvement in the programme has influenced their overall life satisfaction to a **large extent**. The largest proportion of volunteers informed that they enjoy meeting and helping others (8 respondents). Other volunteers stated that they enjoy being part of the community (5 respondents) have increased knowledge (3 respondents), have greater personal wellbeing and satisfaction (3 respondents), teaching children (1 respondent), and enjoy giving time to the programme (results are based on 21 out of a possible 24 responses).
- Those volunteers who stated that their involvement in the programme had influenced their life satisfaction to a **little extent** gave the following reasons: increased confidence / satisfaction (8 respondents), the enjoyment of helping others (5 respondents), meeting new people (4 respondents), satisfaction with the programme organisation/training (2 respondents), increased exercise (1 respondent). Other volunteers lacked households (2 responses), were already busy with other activities/already fulfilled and involvement in the programme was additional bonus (4 responses). For one volunteer, illness had impacted negatively on their life satisfaction. Results are based on 28 out of a possible 32 responses.
- For two respondents, involvement in the programme had **no influence** on their overall life satisfaction. This was due to a lack of involvement due to work



commitments impacting on time spent growing food. Results are based on 2 out of a possible 3 responses.

### 5.8 Satisfaction with components of wellbeing

Respondents were asked to state their satisfaction with various aspects of their life (based on Defra's wellbeing indicators) 12 months into the programme, and again 24-48 months into the programme. The findings<sup>19</sup> are presented in Table 17.

<b>Table 17: Volunteer satisfaction with aspects of life</b>	<b>% of volunteer respondents 'satisfied', registered for 12 months</b>	<b>% of volunteer respondents satisfied, 24-48 months after registration</b>
Standard of living	89%	83%
Health	93%	76%
Day-to-day activities	77%	78%
The ability to influence what happens in your life	76%	68%
Personal relationships	87%	79%
Achieving your goals	72%	68%
House/flat/accommodation	94%	84%

<sup>19</sup> The Round 1-3 response rate is 58 for all questions apart from 'the ability to influence what happens in your life', and 'personal relationships' which is 56, and 'achieving your goals', 'feeling part of a community', 'the area in which you live' and 'leisure activities and hobbies' which is 57. The Round 4 responses rate is 58 for all questions apart from 'the ability to influence what happens in your life', 'achieving your goals', 'feeling part of a community', 'the area in which you live', and 'leisure activities and hobbies' which is 57, and 'personal relationships' which is 56.

Feeling part of a community	81%	68
The area in which you live	89%	84%
Future financial security	60%	53%
Leisure activities and hobbies	89%	79%

Twelve months into the programme respondents satisfaction with various areas of their life was generally higher compared to the proportion of satisfied respondents 24-48 months after registration with the exception of satisfaction with 'day to day activities' with which there was a slight difference.

The following quotes provide a snap-shot of responses from Master Gardener respondents when they were also asked whether they would like to make any additional comments about the programme.

- *I have had nothing but benefits from being involved in the Master Gardener Programme - it is a wonderful thing, brilliantly administered and co-ordinated.*
- *I have enjoyed the Master Gardener training programme and encouragement to grow more unusual veg.*
- *The Master Gardener Programme has been very helpful and I have been able to pass on skills, expertise and knowledge regularly to the volunteers I work with and to other households.*
- *Master Gardener Programme fosters healthy learning and living. It joins communities and builds for food. I am glad to be a member.*
- *I've learned a huge amount and feel much more confident about sharing my knowledge with others.*
- *Having a formal structure, and support, for something I have already been doing for many years have proved very helpful.*

### 5.9 Summary of the 12 month (round 1-3) and 24-48 month (round 4) volunteer results

This section of the report summarises the main differences from the volunteer results from 12 months into the programme (rounds 1 – 3) and 24 – 28 months after they enrolled as a volunteer Master Gardener (round 4). Therefore, the longer term impact is assessed based on respondent's behaviour 24-48 months after they officially enrolled on the programme.

- The findings show that **respondent's satisfaction with advice from volunteer coordinators** was higher 12 months into the programme (98%), compared to 24-48 months later (86%). Therefore although the percentage of respondents who are satisfied with the advice from their volunteer coordinator is still relatively high, a larger proportion of respondents were more satisfied 12 months into the programme.
- A larger number of volunteers 24-48 months into the programme (69%) feel as though the **amount of time they spend on the programme** is 'just right' compared to how they felt 12 months into the programme (49%).
- Slightly more respondents (55%) reported an increase in the **amount of food they grow** 12 months into the programme compared to 24-48 months later (48%); however 12 months into the programme the amount of food grown had stayed the same for 41% of respondents and 24-48 months later it had stayed the same for 39% of respondents.
- **The range of food grown** had increased for 68% of respondents 12 months into the programme and 24-48 months later it had increased for a larger proportion of respondents, 72%.
- Master Gardener volunteer are spending more **time growing food** 24-48 months into the programme compared to 12 months into the programme. The highest number of respondents, 41%, spend 8 hours or more per week growing food, compared to 35% 12 months into the programme.
- In terms of **composting**, a larger number of respondents are now composting a larger proportion of their food and garden waste compared to 12 months into the programme. Therefore, the results show that generally, the amount composted has increased the longer volunteers are involved in the programme.
- **Fruit and vegetable consumption**, for volunteers has increased 0.2 portions 24-48 months into the programme. The average consumption 12 months into the

programme was 5.1 which, 24-48 months later has increased slightly to 5.3, both of which are higher than the national average.

- Fewer respondents are **spending less on food** each week 24-48 months after volunteering on the programme, and more respondents are spending more (£70-£100) on food each week compared to 12 months into the programme (although there has been a decreased in the number of respondents spending the largest amount of money (£100+) on food each week).
- More respondents feel as though the **amount they spend on food** has increased 24-48 months into the programme. There is also a larger proportion of respondents feel as though the amount they spend on food has decreased, however the difference between the 12 month results and the 24-48 month results are not that significant. Fewer respondents now feel that there hasn't been a change in their weekly food expenditure compared to 12 months into the programme.
- A larger proportion of respondents (51%) have made **changes to where they buy their food** from 24-48 months into the programme, compared to 12 months into the programme (44%).
- Respondents reported, on average, a slightly higher **life satisfaction score** 12 months into the programme compared to 24-48 months later. However, there is only a 0.1 difference from 8.2 12 months into the programme, to 8.1 24-48 months after initially becoming a Master Gardener.
- The findings show that 24-48 months into the programme, a larger number of respondents (95%) feel as though their **participation in the programme has influenced their overall life satisfaction** to some extent, compared to a lower number of respondents (89%) claiming that it had 12 months into the programme.
- Generally, 12 months into the programme **respondents life satisfaction with various components of their life** was higher 12 months into the programme compared to 24-48 months later, with the exception of satisfaction with 'day to day activities' which was slightly higher 24-48 months later (78%) than 12 months previously (77.3%).

## 6.0 Volunteer Coordinators

Section 6.0 of the report focuses on the interviews conducted with the programme's Volunteer Coordinators (undertaken during round 4 of the evaluation). A total of 5 Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinators (VCs) were interviewed from: Lincolnshire, Norfolk, North London, South London and Warwickshire (areas included in the programme evaluations). Interviews with Volunteer Coordinators were conducted by telephone (during November and December 2013), lasted for approximately one hour were recorded and professionally transcribed, verbatim. Four of the Master Gardener VCs started their role in 2010-2011 with one VC starting their role in 2013. The purpose of the interviews was to gather VCs views on the impacts of the programme on themselves and those involved, as well as to hear their experiences of working for the Programme. The interviews have provided further insight into the operation of the Programme, which is a valuable contribute to the evaluation. As the Programme has been operating in the pilot stage it is important to incorporate the views of the Volunteer Coordinators into the evaluation as their oversight and insight of the operation of the programme in different areas adds a valuable dimension. For the purpose of the analysis, VCs are referred to anonymously and area names have also been anonymised. The analysis is structured in the following sub-sections:

1. About Volunteer Coordinators
2. The role of Volunteer Coordinators
3. Impacts of the Programme on Volunteer Coordinators
4. Impacts of the Programme on those involved
5. Operation of the Programme in different counties
6. Summary
7. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 6.1 About Volunteer Coordinators

To gain insight into who they are, VCs were asked to explain a bit about themselves and why they wanted to work for the Programme. All VCs expressed a personal interest in the broader area of environmental sustainability, and the range of benefits associated with local food, organic food, and food growing.

*"I've got an interest in both environmental kinds of issues and working with volunteers."* (VC 4).

All VCs had previous experience of working in the voluntary sector; one VC had been previously trained as a volunteer manager, and another had specifically held the role of volunteer coordinator in a previous position. Some VCs reported that when their previous role was coming to an end, it provided them with the opportunity to apply for the position of VC at Garden Organic. One VC in particular expressed a passion regarding raising awareness to people *“who may not be in the traditional category of people who would know about this type of thing.”* (VC 5). Many also possessed experience of working with communities. Therefore, due to their personal interests or passion, VCs expressed an enjoyment in their role as VC. As such, VC’s passion for gardening/growing food, coupled with experience in the voluntary and community sector, or previous roles in a training/teaching capacity, makes them ideal VCs for the Master Gardener Programme.

*“I’m a qualified volunteer manager. I’ve done it before in previous roles and really enjoyed it. Have an interest in particularly organic gardening anyway so it...and my contract was ending in my teaching role so it all came together quite nicely really.”* (VC 2).

*“[The] project which works with local food growers and uses locally sourced locally grown food in the food that’s cooked in the kitchen. So it’s about raising awareness of the health and environmental benefits of locally grown organic seasonal food.”* (VC 5).

*“[T]he aim of the project was really to include as many people from different backgrounds in understanding the healthy eating and healthy growing methods.”* (VC 5).

Not all VCs had been experienced growers of their lives; however some did grow up growing food. One VC reported growing up environmentally aware, through a close connection to nature, and so has been supporting of organic growing throughout their life. For one VC, growing food was part of a more recent lifestyle change.

*“I wanted to become involved because I heard about it and it sounded exciting and it was part of, it’s growing, it’s gardening and it’s an environment that I enjoy getting involved in. I’m relatively new to gardening as sort of an adult passion.”* (VC 1).

*“I’ve only recently had a garden for the last year, so this summer was my first growing season, so I’m learning to grow myself so it’s, from a personal perspective, it’s a nice job to have because it combines my personal interest with actually helping others and supporting food growers to mentor other beginners.”*  
(VC 5).

VC 3 had been growing fruit and veg for around a decade previously. Growing food allowed them to support themselves financially, physically and mentally, as bringing up two children on a low income was difficult. Through their personal passion for plants and growing food they became involved in the Master Gardener Programme as a Master Gardener Volunteer, and soon applied to become a VC.

VCs felt as though they were equipped for the role and felt as though they ticked most of the boxes when applying for the role as VC, through their professional (and educational) experiences as well as personal interests. By working as a VC has also led to further opportunities in the area of food growing. Most VCs are employed on a part time basis (with the exception of one area); therefore additional roles are often undertaken. The analysis will discuss this further on in the document.

*“I had training background, I had teaching background, I had horticulture, I was used to working with community people, so I had all, I ticked I think all the boxes.”* (VC 3).

#### About Volunteer Coordinators: Summary

This initial section has shown that the aspect of VCs professional experiences coupled with their personal interests and passions (associated with the broad area of environmental sustainability as well as social/cultural interests) make them ideal for the role. Not all VCs were particularly experienced in growing food, however for one VC their passion for growing food led them to volunteer as a Master Gardener which saw the transition to VC. This section demonstrates that the role of VC is more than just a job, it reflects personal interest in the area, which is linked to other roles VCs undertake due to the part-time nature of the role of VC.

## 6.2 The Role of Volunteer Coordinators

VCs were asked to explain what their role entails as shown in the following quotes. Ultimately, VCs saw their role as supporting the Master Gardener Volunteers in their area, through coordinating, facilitating and managing, and providing them with what they need e.g. resources. One VC saw their role as encouraging the volunteers, to bring out the best in them; another VC saw their role as keeping the volunteers happy. Therefore, some VCs particular highlight the personal dimension to their role.

*"It's about, I think the main thing is to encourage and support. So that's to mentor really. To bring out the best in volunteers and to facilitate what they want to do."* (VC 3).

*"More accurately possibly is 'project manage'. [...] As a Volunteer Coordinator, I make sure that my volunteers have the resources they need. [...] The overall role of a Volunteer Coordinator is fundamentally to keep your volunteers happy, not necessarily productive, just happy."* (VC 2).

*"I support a network of volunteer food growing mentors."* (VC 5).

*"Well, it's a role of many parts and it depends on the season as well. [...] [O]ne needs to be involved in a lot of, well I need to wear a lot of different hats."* (VC 1).

*"Well, I mean as the title says, coordinate the volunteers. Probably a lot of supporting I guess."* (VC 4).

Summarising their role was difficult for some due to the range of tasks their job requires. VCs provided lengthy accounts of the activities they do which highlights the vast skill set required for the role, including organisational, creative, personal and managerial skills.

- *"large recruitment*
- *administration of recruitment*
- *the selection of volunteers*
- *training and supporting in a formal structure and on an ad hoc basis once volunteers are up and running*
- *to be the PR person*
- *to be the resources person*
- *the ideas person*



- *the coordinator of events and media and social media*
- *so you do need a good understanding of, of how to get a message out.” (VC 1).*
- *“Recruit Master Gardener Volunteers*
- *Provide volunteers with training*
- *Support the volunteers*
- *To share advice and knowledge*
- *To update the website which volunteers use to promote events and activities.” (VC 5)*

*“I can sign-point them into different areas that I am now knowledgeable on, I do CV help with some of them, you know that sort of thing. Coordinate events with them, yes, just generally keep them trained and happy.” (VC 2).*

For one VC, not only did they see their role as supporting them with materials and resources, but:

*“more importantly, keeping in touch by phone, meeting people, using the website, I do a weekly newsletter, more or less weekly newsletter, let them know what’s going on and the best part for me is when I have the conversation about what they’ve been doing and what they want to do next and to use coaching techniques to allow them to grow in their role.” (VC 3).*

This personal element is clearly an important aspect to their role. This VC particularly saw their role also as encouraging ‘personal development’, whilst recognising that this is more of a personal element to the role highlighting that VCs need to be the ‘right’ kind of people for the job, having some degree of empathy.

*“[people] don’t necessarily sign up for that kind of coaching, it’s just, it’s not an overt part of the Programme.” (VC 3).*

*“it’s all about peer-to-peer support amongst the group and linking them [Master Gardeners] up with each other.” (VC 5).*

This final quote sums up nicely the type of person VCs are in how they add a personal dimension to their role which makes it more than a job.

*"[the programme has enabled me] to work with people and plants which was my aim and a way for me to be able to serve other people and which is important for me, is to be able to see what I can do to make, to facilitate growth for other people." (VC3)*

### The Role of Volunteer Coordinators: Summary

This section has shown that the role of a VC is extremely diverse which requires a strong and varied skill set. The role requires both professional and personal skills; professional in terms of managing the website, involvement in the training of volunteers, organisational, promotional, managerial, creative and coordination, and personal skills in the sense of supporting, facilitation, listening, coaching and mentoring. As one VC summarised, they are required to wear a number of different hats, which does require someone with experience (professional as well as life experience) rather than creating an opportunity to train someone up. Finally, the diverse skill set displayed requires a confident and approachable person who is able to relate to individuals to fulfil the role as VC.

### 6.3 Impacts of Programme on Volunteer Coordinators

The core evaluation found the Programme to have a number of positive impacts on the households and volunteers involved in the programme. When the VCs were asked whether their involvement in the Programme has had any particular impact on themselves, a range of responses were given. Overall, all VCs felt as though they had been impacted by working for the Programme in a positive way, as demonstrated by the following sub sections: 1) impact on their personal food growing, 2) relationship and peer-learning, 3) increasing skills, and 4) encouraging and enabling further action.

- Impact on growing their own food

For a number of VCs, working for the Programme has encouraged them to personally grow more of their own food, due to the indirect motivation from volunteers or through an increased knowledge and therefore confidence in the area of food growing.

*“It has developed a desire to grow my own food [...] which has “bolted from a side-line [activity] into the main place within my gardening environment, life and hobbies”. (VC1).*

*“my gardening confidence has definitely increased [...] I have definitely gained horticultural knowledge.” (VC2).*

*“It’s kind of pushed my growing on a bit as well because the Master Gardeners are they’re kind of the experts at growing.” (VC4).*

*“we get to grow a lot of unusual veg and that benefits my family, [my daughter is] a lot more sort of willing to try vegetables perhaps than other four year olds. (VC2).*

The following quotes demonstrate that the VCs too benefit from being in regular contact with the Master Gardeners; as such some of the VCs also feel mentored to some extent. As the Programme is about sharing skills and knowledge it is an additional aspect to the role for VCs to experience some degree of learning too.

*“it’s definitely a benefit of the Programme because talking to the volunteers who were all growers you know, picking up tips and things. I’m very lucky because I’m being mentored by 70 odd volunteers.” (VC1).*

*“from kind of being at training events with the Master Gardeners where it’s been delivered by another kind of horticulture trainer and also from them because they’ve got a huge amount of knowledge and our training is based a lot around them sharing what they already know with each other. So we get to pick up lots of tips as well.” (VC4).*

- Relationships and peer-learning

Volunteer Coordinators spoke about the social benefits they felt from working for the Programme in terms of networking, establishing relationships and peer-learning. Such peer-learning either from the Programme Manager, other VCs, or Master Gardener volunteers, has impacted on various aspects of some of the VCs personal lives. The following quotes show how working for the programme has had positive influences in the wider lives of VCs:

*"I have met people and befriended people that I would not have necessarily have met which is you know really good. It's abstractly helped me organise my band. By applying the organisation principles learned through Philip's methodology." (VC2)*

*"It's helped my personal life and the way I approach life." (VC2)*

*"they're just such wonderful people to be with, Master Gardeners. Although I've, you know, don't see any of them outside of the Programme, but I count them as friends and you know, they're just very special people. They're lovely." (VC4).*

*"And obviously, my colleagues as well. [...] meet up with the other coordinators four or five times a year. So that's been really nice, really nice team to work with." (VC4).*

As well as discussing the relationships with Master Gardeners and other VCs, further reference was made about how the Programme Manager had impacted personally on the VCs. The aspect of personal-professional management and relationships, as well as positive mentoring is therefore a key to the success of the Programme.

*"I learnt a lot from the Master Gardeners and from Philip and from my colleagues. Sort of factual knowledge about how to grow, what to grow but also ways to engage with the public, ways to share information and specifically with Philip, I would say he is probably the best manager I have ever worked with." (VC3).*

*"He's not just enthusiastic, he's actually really on the ball. He remembers everything. He doesn't stint with hard work and he leads the way by showing engagements and enthusiasm as you say but also just the hard work so I find him, I find him very inspiring as a manager. He's got a great way of engaging with us, the coordinators, and the volunteers but also sort of keeping it professional. So I really appreciate the experience of working with him, learnt a lot from him." (VC3).*

*"[Philip] is a great teacher of managing projects and you know organising things. He's been really good, he's the best manager I've ever had." (VC2).*

- Increasing professional and personal skills

As previously discussed, some of the skills VCs have learnt from working for the Programme comprise both professional and personal skills. Although some VCs recognised they were already quite skilful before their role (due to previous experiences), since working for the Programme they have **gained additional skills or developed existing skills**. Therefore the skills VCs have gained or developed vary individually.

*“I had reasonably good grounding but it’s certainly improved.” (VC4).*

Coming across strongly in this section is the satisfaction and feeling of reward from the role as VC for the Programme, as VCs not only enjoy what they do, but are developing too on a professional and personal level.

*“I’m learning as well as offering my skills in community building and mentoring, so it’s a two way thing.” (VC5)*

On a professional level one VC felt they have been exposed to a new area of how **commissioning and partnership-working** works, which has given them new insight and new experiences, which they’ll be able to highlight on their CV for future career development and progression:

*“I feel this job on my CV has opened up other job possibilities when the contract eventually runs out.” (VC2).*

For VC2, their role as a VC has *“been really constructive for my CV”* demonstrating the range of skills needed for the role, and the potential for and the overall contribution to **‘personal development’ and career development**. For another VC, they saw their role as being beneficial to their own career development through the networking they had been exposed to through their role:

*“It’s put me in touch with some wonderful people in my community [...] it’s connected me with some really inspiring people and I’ve learnt a lot from it too from my own professional development perspective.” (VC5)*

Some VCs also felt they had gained new experiences and skills in **writing and developing their area’s website** which has added to their overall skill set. VC3 particularly found their role useful in developing their website/blogging skills through *“curating the website”* (VC3).

*“And so yes, definitely doing the website and from, working the wordpress website through training from Philip, the programme manager I have been able to, I have learnt how to build websites.” (VC 3).*

*“My basic knowledge of things like websites and reports and case study writing and things like that has developed very nicely over the last couple of years. And I would, I’m certainly a richer person in terms of skills and experiences now that I was three years ago.” (VC 1).*

In terms of professional skills, VC 4 felt that **delivering training** has improved their confidence; as well as

*“I’ve really enjoyed it [...] especially I guess I’ve gained a lot more experience in delivering training which I hadn’t do so much of before.”*

*“setting the Programme up from scratch used a lot of skills, a lot of them were new, new skills, designing, helping to design manuals [...] so designed the form, the references, the interview process, everything from scratch.” (VC4).*

Finally, some VCs mentioned the aspect of flexible working the job offered. One VC preferred regular contact with colleagues; however other VCs enjoyed the particular style of working. The flexible working for VC2 is a positive aspect to the role which requires ‘self-motivation and management’, and again is something new to add to their CV.

- Encouraging, enabling and empowering

For some VCs the role has enabled or encouraged them to pursue other interests, which is linked to the skills and networking discussed in the previous sub-sections.

*“it has led me to be asked to be a Governor of a school [...] it has led me to have an article published in The Guardian [and] I’ve been on BBC1 in Escape to the Country. Yes it has led me to places that I didn’t really think I was going to go.” (VC2).*

*“[this role has] enabled me to get very much involved in the local food scene. [...] I have developed two other projects which have had quite a big impact in the*

*[states area] in their own way. And it's given me the confidence and the inspiration to come up with a couple of ideas which were innovative."* (VC3).

*"part of the role has enabled me to make a lot of links and so I think the role, the Programme itself has not only benefitted me but the other things that I've been able to do have also contributed really in a large way something, they have really contributed to what's happening in the [states area] with the food thing."* (VC3).

Through working for the Programme, one VC felt as though it had enabled them to have a more informed understanding of wider issues:

*"a greater understanding of the world, in terms of the environment and nature in general [as well as a] much more informed view of local food [...] local food is a much bigger thing than the local farmers, producers and supplies to wherever."* (VC1).

#### Impacts of the Programme on Volunteer Coordinators

VCs reported on the various impacts the Programme has had on them. For some VCs, one of the main impacts has been to do with growing their own food, due to working with quite knowledgeable and motivational people. Contact has facilitated an increase on confidence, for some, in growing their own food. The model of the Programme is therefore more wider-reaching beyond mentored households; volunteers indirectly mentor VCs for example. Linked to this point is the second listed impact of relationships and peer-learning on the wider lives of VCs, which moves beyond the informal mentoring in relation to food growing discussed in the previous point. Thirdly, the Programme has impacted VCs in the area of skill development and the acquisition of new skills, both professional and personal skills. Fourthly, working for the Programme has facilitated or enabled further interest, knowledge or action in their own areas of interest. This demonstrates that many VCs feel empowered through undertaking the role of VC for the Master Gardener Programme.

#### 6.4 Impacts of the Programme on those involved

Although many of the VCs assisted with and are aware of the results of the core evaluation, they were asked of their personal viewpoint of the impacts of the Programme on those involved, from their own experiences. Although VCs informed that they are not in direct

contact with householders as they are with Master Gardeners, they do sometimes meet the householders through events for example. As will be evidenced in the following sub-sections, a lot of the perceived impacts are inter-connected, and can't really be separated. To begin with, one VC simply stated: *"Well obviously, I mean it's clear that more people have started growing."* (VC4). This is the overall aim of the Programme which leads to other benefits. Before discussing VCs views on how the Programme has impacted on those involved, a discussion around the differences between Master Gardener Volunteers and Householders will take place.

- Impacts on households and volunteers

Some VCs expanded on the differences in how volunteers and households are impacted by the Programme. As the VCs are mostly in contact with Master Gardener volunteers, they felt as though they were more aware of the impacts on this particular group. One VC felt as though both beneficiaries are impacted positively by involvement in the Programme and that volunteers particularly benefit from increased confidence:

*Yes, from what I can see where it works, it really does benefit both parties [...] A lot of my volunteers have said that their confidence has gone up. I've got a few who are you know, doing, delivering courses now, you know things that they wouldn't have thought of doing before. So you know, whilst I can't obviously speak very deeply about households, certainly their confidence in food growing and talking about it has increased, as is working with the advice and support that has been given. But yes, I think confidence is definitely the big thing."* (VC 2).

Another VC felt as though the Master Gardener Volunteers gain a lot of satisfaction through their volunteering, that they are taking part and contributing towards meaningful activity.

*"she's [the Master Gardener] facilitated the reformation of the terrace and resident's association through gardening and out of that there's been another, a lot of other concerns and that particular estate is particularly vibrant now."* (VC 3).

*So for a volunteer, it's, they just enjoy that people often who volunteer are people who have generally lots of goodwill and they just enjoy sharing what they know with others. Others do it actually learn, but some are in it just as much to actually*



*learn about food growing and improve their skills, so that's what they look for and that's what they get out of it."* (VC 3).

In terms of the households, some VCs felt as though they only benefitted from the Programme if they made the effort to engage with it and 'take advantage' of the volunteer support and knowledge on offer. So although the Programme may work well at the VC and volunteer level, there has to be a need to engage at the household level.

*"Householders are obviously, some pick up more than others, so the ones that really take advantage of having a mentor are the ones who engage well and get the most out of that relationship. Some don't, some households are difficult to keep."* (VC 5).

The impact on participating households was described as one VC as providing positive benefits for them in terms of community or environmental benefits, rather than financial. Another VC felt that the impact of just getting people outside was a major benefit to the households.

*"And whilst it's not changing, it's probably not making a huge impact financially on people, but its making an impact on their environment or their activities in the garden or in the community which is beneficial for them. It's seen as a positive for them."* (VC1).

*But yes, other benefits, just, gosh getting more people outside, definitely having an impact.* (VC 2).

Therefore, it was difficult for some of the VCs to know about or comment on the Householders but did relay the positive stories told to them by their Master Gardeners. This highlights the importance of communication, that those on the ground report back to VCs and the Programme Manager.

*"And he [Master Gardener] set up growing areas in the gardens attached to some of their hostels, so he is working with people with long term alcohol or drug addiction problems, sort of the people who have mental health issues and he is really doing amazing work with them and giving them hope and confidence and a direction in life."* (VC 5)

*“So I think examples like that are very inspiring and there’s another woman [Master Gardener] who’s supporting a group of Bengali women who were learning, or were growing exotic vegetables, and again it was bringing them together as a group I think it was probably quite empowering for them. To get them out of their house in a social learning environment.” (VC 5)*

*“What I have got back has always been positive. Also from the stories back from Master Gardeners about how they’re [householders] getting on and what successes they had come across. Again it’s been overall very positive.” (VC 1)*

- Education and learning

Some of the VCs commented on the learning aspect to the Programme, particularly in relation to the Master Gardener Volunteers. The first of the following quotes demonstrates the VCs opinion on both Master Gardener Volunteer and Householders whereas the final two quotes are referring specifically to Master Gardener Volunteers.

*“Yes, education and learning. Simply the amount of learning that has gone on is quite difficult to quantify. The amount of learning that has gone on by Master Gardeners, by the people they support.” (VC 3).*

*“So, and of course, the other, more technical benefits are that they learn themselves more about food growing and food.” (VC 5).*

*“And training that we give them and the resources and each other so they’re learning constantly whilst they’re on the Programme. Those who want to take up that learning anyway.” (VC 5).*

- Meaningful activity, engagement

Most of the VCs discussed the impacts on those involved in relation to engagement in meaningful activity. This relates to the sense of being able to help someone, or being able to contribute to something positive, something the volunteers are passionate about. The nature of the Programme allows volunteers to be flexible to some degree, if they need to take a

break from the Programme they can always return to it. This somewhat informal nature of the Programme allows relationships to develop through continued support over a sustained period of time rather than just off contact which fosters genuine relationships and friendships.

*"I mean certainly the Master Gardeners, a lot of them report good benefits from their volunteering [...] I know a couple of volunteers who have gone through very difficult things at home, and they've kind of you know, have a few months of you know, just come back into the programme when you are ready, but they're really keen to kind of just continue because it gives them something outside of their normal lives, something that they really enjoy in their life, actually helped them to get through other things because they've had a positive thing." (VC4).*

*"In fact quite a lot of the confidence building comes in as Master Gardeners have learned how to communicate and have been able to, some have gone on to do some minor teaching qualifications, teaching and training to kind of formalise it." (VC3).*

*And I mean not all of the Master Gardeners work in schools but those that do, you know, have got really long term relationships with their schools where they're going in regularly. That's a really good impact." (VC4).*

*"It does remind me of [volunteer], who's in his 80s and he is one of our oldest volunteers and he's been growing for 60 years. He's probably already included in the research somewhere. So he's very confident with growing and knows everything there is to know really about growing, but what he didn't feel so confident with is speaking to other people and passing on that knowledge, but you know, he saw the Master Gardener Programme advertised and gave us a ring, he got involved and just the boost of confidence that he's reported back and how it's given him a new sort of lease of life, a new interest." (VC 4)*

*"That's really really good, especially sort of later in life to find something new that gives you that confidence. It's very special."*

- Community and Social

One of the key findings from the core evaluation and inherently linked to the above sub-section are the community and social impacts. These are connected to meaningful activity,

or being involved in something people are passionate about. Within this section, the ‘feeling part of something’ is particularly highlighted through the quotes.

*“I mean the friendship thing is kind of very clear to see, we have regular training days when they come together and you can see that they’re all so pleased to see each other and certain groups become really close friends and they see each other socially as well. What about Master Gardener [name]? You know, she’s, one of the other Master Gardeners has become one of her best friends since, so you know.” (VC 4).*

*“So she’s really, you know, really valuable interactions are happening between them as well.” (VC 4).*

*“I do, yes, and so for them, I would say that they, it gives them a sort of an official group or support network to belong to. So many of them are already doing very impressive gardening work but the Master Gardener Programme puts it under a heading, a banner, an identity.” (VC 5).*

*“So they feel part of something, which legitimises what they do and gives it credit and gives it sort of a feel of achievement and that’s what we, I think that’s part of the purpose of the Programme is to make them feel acknowledged for the work they’re doing and to give them support while they’re doing it. So I would say that feeling of belonging to a group of other gardeners and growers is probably something that they enjoy and the contact, meeting other growers. So I organise get-togethers and social and cafes and pubs just to get them together informally to talk about their ideas and share advice.” (VC 5).*

*“Yes, definitely. And just because it’s such a positive thing helping other people I think, talking about something that they’re very passionate about and I think that’s why the Programme has worked in general because they’re so passionate about their growing, desperate to talk about it and pass it on to other people, so yes, that’s good. Try to think of any other health and wellbeing things. I mean, certainly they’ve reported back that specific households that it’s really helped and maybe somebody who is depressed or something and they have been able to you know actually help their household through stuff as well, having growing as something to focus on and something positive and they can see, get a result from and you know, feel satisfied with.” (VC4).*

The community aspect of the Programme is viewed by a couple of the VCs as the main benefit of the Programme.

*"I think probably it is in the area of community. It's connecting people. [...] so yes, I think there's been a, it feels as if there's been more of a community benefit than environmental benefits, but they're not far apart." (VC1)*

*"I mean people are making more informed choices, people are beginning to share produce and communal gardens and things like that and, or, our volunteers are sharing their harvest with their households and little seedlings and little plants and things like that (unclear 16.38). And, so there's all of that but again, I would put that under community I think." (VC1)*

*"So from the [states area] perspective I would say that the biggest impact is the support that Master Gardeners provide in the community settings." (VC 5).*

- Health and Wellbeing

A number of VCs had a particular view on how growing food through involvement in the Programme has wider health and wellbeing benefits associated with reconnection to the land / nature, as well as being part of something meaningful.

*"Well I believe the biggest is the wellbeing, mental wellbeing. And that, you know, that's a deep belief that contact with the soil and growing things can only bring you know groundedness and joy. The joy of germination I call it. You know, even seasoned growers are excited when something, when a seed grows." (VC3).*

*"we run a number of events so you may be at a stall and you're chatting to members of the public and you do see that yearning that people have to grow and often the contact with, often growing has contact with their parents or their grandparents so it can be quite an emotional thing. And one of the things that you often come across is that people tell you the reasons why they don't have time to grow and you see the pain of people not having time and they're longing to*

*reconnect with growing. So I think it's, and a lot of that, the reasons why people think it takes a lot of time is, it does take a lot of time to grow stuff actually, successful anyway, but the reasons why, I think the thing is that people need to."* (VC3).

*"Yes, what I was going to say is it would be bringing it back to wellbeing. It's sort of like taking care of an outside space or the preening of an outside space, a communal space or it could be in a garden that the improvement of the environment has wellbeing, not just the doing of it."* (VC3)

*"You know, that unquantifiable thing just because every event that I've been to and the training session that we do for our volunteers, everyone says that they feel better, just talking about growing food, it seems to make people feel better. That, for me, is the biggest success and it is the least easy to quantify."* (VC2).

*And even if you're growing isn't going that well, to know that there are these really just feel good anyway, and just being part of that movement I guess.* (VC 2).

- Local Food Movement

One VC felt that through the Programme, involvement in growing their own food has led to *"people are making more informed choices"* (VC1). For another VC, the Programme not only benefits from being a network itself but is also part of a wider network of activities that are occurring in that particular area. As one VC informs, within the local food movement, the Master Gardener Programme is viewed particularly well.

*"It's a phenomenon that's growing. I mean [states areas] are jam packed with food growing and local food initiatives. I mean we're completely...there's so much going on."* (VC5).

*"I think there's a lot of collaborative work that goes on between organisations."* (VC5).

*"I think there is a creation of a cohort of people who contribute to the local food agenda, even if they don't see it as a movement or anything like that. I think*

*there's been some nice facilitations of other organisations involved, so for example, Transition Town and other community groups and I think the name of Garden Organic and Master Gardener Programme is held in high standard."* (VC3).

- Environmental

Many of the VCs also felt strongly about the environmental impacts associated with food growing, noting the contribution made by the Programme. Some VCs felt as though food growing is connected to the wider environmental system in terms of materials and recycling as well as productively spending time utilising greenspace. Linked to environmental impacts is also health and wellbeing (discussed above) as well as educating future generations to care for the environment.

*"So, in terms of, I guess we do have a part of. Okay, part of what comes with it is that inevitably the corollary of growing fruit and veg is that you begin to think more about recycling, begin to think about the materials that you use in growing and where they're coming from and those are often upcycled and you know, we have, we encourage people to go towards organic but that involves a number of dialogues around the alternatives and the vegetable alternatives and organic methods."* (VC3)

*"Just the way, you know, because that's what it's all about really and if that hadn't happened we'd be messed up and obviously that's going to have full on benefits environmentally. Just, because they're using their gardens and learning more about the environment. I guess specially some of the schools works, at some of the mosque gardens do, you know they're really educating the next generation in how to grow and spending more time outside."* (VC4).

*"I think, again, it's just speculative. I mean I'm sure that getting people outside into public green spaces, has a positive effect on wellbeing so the sort of physical activity that's involved in being outside in a natural space can have, going back to the health thing, they're very closely connected, the link between health and environment. So, I mean a lot of people in London live in estates, flats, they don't have any green space so by just touching earth and natural plant matter which has been coming out of the ground as opposed to out of a packet from a*

*supermarket can have a profound effect on people, on children, watching a seed being granted, and then taking it home and putting it on the window sill and seeing it start to grow. Little things can lead to much more profound affects and as just young people grow up. So I think in urban areas there are some quite significant impacts.” (VC5).*

#### Impacts of the Programme on those involved: Summary

The above section has demonstrated the numerous impacts or benefits the VCs feel the Programme has on those involved in it. Although VCs do not have as regular contact with the Households as they do with the Volunteers, they sometimes see Householders at events and hear of their involvement in the Programme from the Volunteers. The main impacts the VCs felt the Programme had on those involved are of course very much interconnected but have been separated into the areas of 1) education and learning, 2) meaningful activity and engagement, 3) community / social, 4) health and wellbeing, 5) the local food movement and 5) environment.

### **6.5 Operation of Programme in different counties**

The Programme was piloted in five counties in England, in both urban and rural areas. Some of the findings from the core evaluation, showed some differences in terms of urban and rural areas. Therefore, it was beneficial to ask the VCs whether they perceived there to be any differences in where the Programme operates. The following sub-themes show that whilst one VC felt there were no differences, others felt the main differences were to do with 1) local geography and culture, 2) local political cultural conditions and 3) different models. The following section will be divided into these four sub-sections.

- No perceived difference

One VC felt there was no difference in how the programme operates in different areas. However, other VCs had a stronger opinion on this topic, as demonstrated by the following sub-sections.



*"I would say there was no difference that I can see that would you know, no evidence that one or the other would be better from my experience..." (VC 4).*

- Type of volunteer

One VCs discussed how the 'type' of volunteer had a part to play in how well the Programme operates between and within different areas.

*"So how they go about things and how easy they found it to recruit households. Some of them have done it very easily and they're kind of very natural at selling, almost. Can speak to people while other volunteers have found it more challenging to find houses to support." (VC4)*

*"And some of them have formed little networks between themselves, so there's Rugby for example. There's four or five Master Gardeners who have been doing a regular farmers market and we've recruited new Master Gardeners in the area and they've kind of joined in so they kind of all get involved in that central event every month so, that's quite good when there's a cluster of them who are able to support each other as well." (VC4)*

*"We have always found it harder to recruit volunteers in the very north of the County, that's been the hardest, harder nut to crack. But really I would say that it's more dependent on the volunteers themselves." (VC4).*

- Local geography and cultures

Some VCs held the view that the Programme operates differently in different areas. For example, in one particular area it was thought that the Programme was much more about supporting community gardens, which according to VC 3 is:

*"more about reaching a lot of people in a light touch way. So metaphorically they sew lots of little seeds in the minds of lots of people. So it's different approach to the one to one mentoring which probably happens in other areas." (VC3).*

*“So, I mean a lot of people in London live in estates, flats, they don’t have any green space so by just touching earth and natural plant matter which has been coming out of the ground as opposed to out of a packet from a supermarket can have a profound effect on people, on children, watching a seed being granted, and then taking it home and putting it on the window sill and seeing it start to grow. Little things can lead to much more profound affects and as just young people grow up. So I think in urban areas there are some quite significant impacts.” (VC 5).*

This could be viewed as an inherent strength of the Programme – giving the flexibility to adapt to the local conditions and circumstances in which it is operating in. In general, it was thought that the denser the population, the easier it is to meet regularly. Therefore, some VCs felt working in more of the rural setting more challenging:

*I don’t know. I mean [states rural area], I think [names VC] has communication issues with [their] volunteers. [They] can’t, for example, get them all together and go to the pub because they live miles away. You know, an hour’s drive from each other. Whereas I can do it regularly and get 20 people in a room quite easily in a pub because [states urban area] is just easier to get around. (VC 5)*

*“it’s a challenge to get everybody coming to training because they’re, we’re such a wide County and the on the great things about interns training, is that we can get people together and start developing little subgroups.” (VC 1).*

In one particular rural areas it may be easier for Volunteers to tap into growing groups rather than Households. Such ‘sub-groups’ as described by above, was viewed to add a level of self – sufficiency, as people in these areas may already growing food and informal support networks may already be in place at the ‘ultra-local’ level.

*“So they can, so it can endure beyond us, I say beyond us, beyond the Programme itself.” (VC 1).*

*"I, again [names another VC] and I have talked about it, we, we, certainly I suspect that it works better in urban areas. Rural areas, generally, we're talking to a sort of, well people who were already doing it. [...] But in cities and large towns you've got more people who wish they could. You've got more pool to play with, but yes, it's working well in Norfolk and Lincolnshire but we both suspect it's more of an urban Programme overall." (VC 2).*

Supporting groups rather than Households is viewed by some as a highly advantageous aspect to the Programme as it is reaching a wider number of people. Tapping into existing networks may also impact on the number of Households recruited to the Programme as well as enhancing the experience of feeling part of something, a community, and enabling social contact with people.

*"Which is why there's advantages, I think, for the model which I described before about community supporting community gardening because you reach much larger number of people." (VC 5).*

*"[Networks] helps improve their volunteering experience as well." (VC4).*

*"I think there's quite a high awareness and knowledge of these types of networks. So I didn't struggle to recruit mentors when I tried in May." (VC 5).*

In some of the more urban settings, the lack of space was perceived as bringing people together whereas in the more rural locations, there may be a more individualist aspect to gardening due to the lower population density. This in turn impact on the number of households volunteers are able to recruit as discussed in the above section.

*"And that is predominantly community gardening, but that's because nobody has their own back garden. Here, in the County here, we have lots of people who have big gardens, so, we would expect more individual households, but I think that's been one of the biggest challenges in the Programme. I'm finding that many of our Master Gardeners are very reluctant to go out there and promote themselves and when they do some of them are getting quite negative, not negative, but they're not getting any response. There's no, nobody is interested in, in, in signing up for 12 months of free support on a personal level. There's*

*been a, I think that's got to do with the type of volunteer and, over the three years, I've discovered that it needs to be somebody who's quite independent and who has, and is really very interested in the environment, in growing your own."* (VC 1).

Apparent in the interviews was also a level of scepticism in a particular rural setting which impacts on the number of households willing to officially sign up. Therefore knowledge sharing and mentoring is still taking place, and demonstrates that the impacts of the Programme are much wider than is officially being and can be measured.

*"And commitment. Something that has come back from quite a lot of the volunteers that they have, they have the same people and they're like a little guru in their village. They had the same questions, the same people coming back and asking them varying different questions, but when they asked them to sign up."* (VC 1).

*"Register and to become part of it, they say oh no, no, no, no I'm fine. They don't need it. But you know, a couple of weeks later there'll be a question about, you know those vegetables that I put in or the carrots are looking a little sort of whatever, you know, so they are having an ongoing relationship but (unclear 22.03) the mentored, household criteria and that."* (VC 1).

*"It's not formally recorded as households, but what we're doing, I've said for the volunteers to write it down"* (VC 1).

Finally there are variations within a particular area; for example the Programme may engage with different sub-populations within an area. One VC makes reference to this in terms of areas of deprivation, but also comments that it depends on the type of volunteer in that area.

*"I mean, so that's a very low percentage of active gardeners. I've got a high drop off rates in both these deprived areas. Even some that are by saying that basically, in [states area within county], you don't have the retired middle class professionals to go out as your workforce. To be honest, I think that wasn't quite fair picture of the Master Gardener, statistically, I think we're a bit more varied than that in our volunteers. I know we're quite a narrow sort of set of volunteers, but I don't think that's fully the thing, but definitely the deprivation, the (unclear 20.44) getting anyone motivated to do anything."* (VC 2)

*“But that’s where you know, saying [states area within county] which is typically another really deprived area, just because I happened to get two or three fantastically motivated volunteers in that area, their community garden was just such a success. It’s the luck of the draw sometimes for the volunteers as well.”*  
(VC 2)

- Local political-cultural conditions

For one VC, geography wasn’t the only thing that impacted on engagement and participation; *“So there’s geographical reasons, there’s political cultural reasons why some areas are easier than others.”* (VC 5). Also picked up on by a number of VCs were the political-cultural variations between areas, in terms of funding, attitudes and where there is deemed to be a ‘need’ for funders. In this sense there may be a need for the Programme to demonstrate that is in meeting these ‘local’ needs, and can fit in with local agendas, which may be different between areas. These different conditions within each area also highlight the need for 1) local knowledge and networks, as well as 2) a diverse and adaptable skill set, and 3) the skill to respond to local changes and local needs. The following quotes demonstrate how a couple of VCs perceive funding to be particularly linked to urban areas.

*“Well I, I think it’s going to be a bit of a, hmm, I’m going to give, my answer again probably will be influenced by the fact that for it [the Programme] to survive it needs money, and money is only going to be spent, (public 24.27) money, if we go to spend some areas where it’s predominantly urban areas where they’ve, we’re basically helping to develop community engagement and support and things related to their health and wellbeing.”* (VC 5).

*“So I think it’s, yes, I think it can only survive in an area where there could be funding and that funding is normally geared towards areas of higher population.”*  
(VC 1).

Some VCs also highlighted the fact that local councils have different ‘agendas’ or areas to focus on and the Programme therefore has to be in-line to some degree with this.

*“Councils, because they obviously have an agenda, they have targets to hit that the local food industry, you know, were interested in. So we had to, over time, adapt you know to meet the Council’s sort of needs whilst meeting our own sort*

*of statistical needs. That sort of led to, well for example, some areas you know, community really did develop, some it failed in. That's due to the model the Council used in building community gardens, a sort of top down model without actually asking people if they wanted it, that sort of thing?" (VC 2).*

*"And the networks that are available and often political will, some local Councils are much more active, they promote much more the infrastructure is better, so it's also a political regional thing as well." (VC 5).*

*"I see differences in the reality in which we're all working. The landscape is very different. And that will affect the ability of the Programme to be successful or not. So, like in Medway there are, there isn't a culture of community gardening as far as I'm aware. There are people inspiring entrepreneurs or community leaders who have set up projects like there are in London, so my colleague Liza was really really struggling to recruit mentors when the Programme started in Medway and is still finding it a challenge to keep them active and on the ball and trying to recruit local residents to be supportive and because it's just the environment where it hasn't been established, that culture." (VC 5).*

- Different models

Allowing the Programme to have some degree of flexibility or adaptability was therefore discussed by a couple of VCs as a way to move the Programme forward in the future. The VC also provided an example as to how they had approached this with the Programme Manager.

*"The Programme overall I think has to learn to be more adaptive to its commissioned partners. I think we were off the mark with that and whilst it hasn't meant we've lost it, I think we're quite lucky that [states area] is a relatively safe, non-competitive market. Some of that is connected to Garden Organic as a whole, not just the Programme, yes, that definitely needs to change. Other than that, no, everything, but you know, the results show that everything is working really well, which is excellent, a good position to be in." (VC 2).*

*“I talked Phillip [Programme Manager] into letting me spend some money advertising the [states area] Programme on Facebook a few weeks ago which is something we’ve never, across the Programme, done is actually pay for marketing and it had, well, relatively fantastic results. We had 32 household requests in two weeks in November which is just unreal.” (VC 2).*

*“I think from a learning point of view, you know to take it forward; I think there’s still plenty of opportunity to develop it across the rest of the country. Slightly different models, (unclear 26.28) that’s what happens with a pilot, you tweak to it and pare down and shape and make bigger and whatever, so that, I think we need to understand what kind of volunteer is best suited to this and be quite focused on not, on volunteer expectations.” (VC 1).*

A final point to make, although not directly related to the operation of the Programme in different counties, it is interesting to consider a point about the website. One VC felt that the local Master Gardener websites could be viewed as an opportunity to connect more widely to people to promote the Programme and its key messages.

*“using the website to closely interact with the Master Gardeners and also the wider world so that the messages about organic growing and about the possibility of the Programme itself are known because I think it’s a really valuable Programme and it would be fantastic if every borough could support something like this.” (VC3).*

#### Operation of the Programme in different counties: summary

Themes highlighted in this section are around differences in local (urban / rural) geographical-cultural conditions as well as local political – cultural differences conditions. This part of the analysis shows that there may be a need for the Programme to be more adaptable in the sense of integrating it or embedding it in the wider ‘local food movement’ context in rural areas. According to VCs this already seems to be happening in urban areas and due to the dispersed nature of rural areas, this may be a way for the Programme to move forward in such circumstances. This therefore, would allow the Programme to be connected to wider activities / groups / organisations in rural areas, which may contribute towards or benefit from being connected to the wider local food movement. In addition, tapping into existing groups may also bolster recruitment numbers in rural areas and may

provide further community benefits, such as the establishment / development of relationship, support and feeling part of something with like-minded people.

## 6.6 Views of the programme

When asked whether they would like to make any other comments about their involvement in the Programme, VCs were all quick to comment on what a good Programme it is, and how much they have enjoyed working for it. VCs often displayed some sort of ownership of the Programme in their particular area; it was clear that they fully supported in and felt a key member of the Programme. In addition, VCs often displayed a personal vested interest in the Programme, wanting to make it succeed.

*“So yes, it’s been, yes, just good.” (VC 2).*

*“Well no, just that it’s been a great experience and I’d like to think that it’s been successful.” (VC 4).*

*“No. It’s really been a pleasure working, I think the team has been so well selected you know, and has done so well sort of assembling the skill set that it has done, it’s been my most pleasurable working experience so far.” (VC 2).*

The ‘trickle-down effect’ of the Programme Manager’s enthusiasm for the Programme has been reported, as well as the variety and level of reward the Programme offers, as demonstrated by the following sub-sections.

### Trickle-down effect

Described within this report as the ‘trickle-down effect’ refers to how the VCs describe the flow of enthuse within the Programme, which comes from the Programme Manager. This flow of enthusiasm is however, is also apparent from the Volunteer Master Gardeners. What this shows is that the success of the Programme is depended on people’s passion for gardening and mentoring at all levels, otherwise they wouldn’t be driven to participate and volunteer.

*“He is, you know and I mean his enthusiasm has really led the whole Programme because obviously that cascades down to us and then you meet the volunteers*



*who are also incredibly enthusiastic, but it comes from both sides and that's really kind of the recipe for success.” (VC 4).*

As well as enthusiasm is the feeling of being valued. Some VCs state that this feeling of being valued and encouragement promotes in turn confidence and enthusiasm. The training as well as the ongoing interaction with VCs and other volunteer Master Gardeners as well as attending events is another key aspect to the Programme. This may also contribute towards feeling valued as well as part of a larger network, which in turn may contribute to volunteer satisfaction as well as retention. This demonstrates as well that part of the VCs role is to a certain extent a mentoring role emphasising the encouragement aspect of that.

*“And they feel valued as well which is important and then they're able to kind of take that enthusiasm and that confidence and go out in the big wide world and pass it on to their households and groups that they help. And the fact that well we hope that our training and all our interaction with them is very positive and encouraging and enthusiastic. And you know, they have told us that they do value that.” (VC 4).*

- Rewarding Programme with Variety

Another theme coming out of this question was how VCs summarised the Programme as rewarding and containing variety. The personal interaction with people (Volunteer Master Gardeners), the personal satisfaction in seeing others happy, and being able to see the impact in people lives that is rewarding for VCs. Furthermore, the multi-dimensional nature of the Programme makes their role as VCs appealing and enjoyable. Finally, the reward the Programme received from 'Local Food' adds an 'official' level of recognition and satisfaction.

*“Well, apart from the fact that I've loved it, loved being involved in it and, and, we've been breaking new grounds and learning new things and, and, contributing very much to, to, to research in the area of food growing but how it has, and it's been wonderful to see how it's been impacting different aspects of people's lives. Whereas overall, there's nothing negative at all. It's all very positive and has been very rewarding for years.” (VC 1).*

*“Well definitely the volunteers have been those who have really engaged and have enjoyed it and have asked quite often, and get, good personal feedback as well about how they feel and what they’re getting out of it. “Because volunteering, you want to be getting something out of it, you don’t (unclear 29.53) for other people. “And so, that’s been very heart-warming as well. It is, I think one of the lovely things is the variety of it.” (VC 1).*

*“It feels like it has, the research, you know, has given us the results that we would have hoped for and we just won an award last week from local food who funded us. We were the best project in the education and learning section. We felt like we must have been doing something right I guess. So yes, it’s very satisfying.” (VC 4).*

This section has highlighted that the success of the programme is due to a number of factors:

- The personal dimension and dedication: being managed well, enthusiastically and passionately; having a personal commitment to the area of mentoring and food growing; valuing all who take part in it, personally giving time and support; offering a two way learning and sharing elements; ensuring some degree of autonomy and flexibility to respond to local conditions and circumstances which enables and empowers; having a longer term element which allows relationships to be sustained helping people feel part of a wider network or community, the community of Master Gardeners in itself

## 6.7 Summary

It is clear to see that the Volunteer Coordinators have been instrumental in the success of the programme, as well as the programme Manager and volunteer Master Gardeners. From the core evaluation and the interviews with the VCs, it is clear to see that the volunteers, programme manager and volunteer coordinators all put an huge amount of effort, personal effort into their roles, which carries a personal and not just professional commitment to the programme and their roles. As one VC puts it *“it’s not really the kind of job that you can do without being passionate and involved in it really.” (VC1).* This is reflected by the fact that the Programme received an award from Local Food; the Programme came first in the

education and learning category which demonstrates the additional benefits that learning has e.g. confidence, enthusiasm, feeling valued. The data shows that the programme has particularly impacts on the VCs themselves (in addition to the volunteers and households) in terms of their own food growing behaviour and knowledge, peer-learning, relationships, development of personal and professional skill set, and encouraging and enabling further action / activity. This goes to show that the Programme has been extremely successful for a range of people involved and has produced a number of impacts and benefits. The following points summarise the key points from the analysis:

- The multidimensional nature of the Programme; the interconnectedness of the impacts need to be recognised
- However successful the Programme model is, it requires engagement at the household level which may require further adaptability
- The different conditions within each area highlight the need for the 'right' type of VC who possesses: 1) local knowledge and connection to networks, 2) a diverse and adaptable skill set including both professional and inter-personal skills, and 3) the skill to be able to respond to local changes and local needs.
- It is beneficial for Volunteer Coordinators to personally hold the values of the Programme and recognise the level of personal dedication and enthusiasm needed for the role.
- The success of the Programme is due to a number of factors:
  - The personal dimension and dedication: being managed well, enthusiastically and passionately; having a personal commitment to the area of mentoring and food growing; valuing all who take part in it, personally giving time and support; offering a two way learning and sharing elements; ensuring some degree of autonomy and flexibility to respond to local conditions and circumstances which enables and empowers; having a longer term element which allows relationships to be sustained helping people feel part of a wider network or community, the community of Master Gardeners in itself

## 7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

Coventry University, in 2011, was commissioned to evaluate the impacts of the Master Gardener programme in order for Garden Organic to meet Objective 5 of the Master Gardener Business Plan “to demonstrate the health, environmental and social impact of the project on the lives of those households involved and on local food systems” (Master Gardener Business Plan, November 2008). This report has presented the results of the independent evaluation, undertaken by Coventry University during the period 2011 – 2014. The report first of all focused on the analysis of the data generated from 155 household questionnaires, 46 household interviews (round 1 – 3) as well as 36 household questionnaires (round 4). Secondly, the report concentrated on the analysis of the data from 144 volunteer questionnaires, 12 focus groups (round 1 – 3) and 59 volunteer questionnaires (round 4). Therefore, the household results were presented first, following by the volunteer results. In order to clearly address the requirements of Objective 5 of the Business Plan<sup>20</sup>, each section of the report has been structured around the environmental, health and social impacts, as well as views on the programme.

### Impacts from 12 months involvement in the programme

The data presented in this final report, has provided some strong insights into the impact of the Master Gardener programme on the lives of those involved, and on local food systems. In terms of the fundamental aim of the programme, to encourage people to grow their own food, this has clearly being achieved with nearly 80% of household respondents having **increased the amount of food they grow**. Moreover, 76% of respondents have also **increased the range of food** they grow since joining the programme. The programme has also had an effect on volunteers as for 55% the **amount of food they grow has increased**, and for two thirds the **range of food they grow has increased**. Overall, 88% of householders agreed that their **knowledge of food growing has increased** substantially. Similarly, over 94% of volunteers informed that their **knowledge of food growing has also increased**. It is clear that the households value the knowledge and support of the volunteers

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<sup>20</sup> Objective 5 of the MG programme is “to demonstrate the health, environmental and social impact of the project on the lives of those households involved and on local food systems” (Master Gardener Business Plan, November 2008).

– **78% were overall satisfied** with the advice. Again, the results show that **95% of volunteers are very satisfied** with the advice from their coordinator.

The findings provide some indications of the **health impacts** of the programme. Over two thirds of household respondents had **increased the number of hours spent growing food** (this is also the case for 44% of volunteer respondents) which equates to increased physical activity (low and moderate intensity) in an outdoor setting. Around 24% of household respondents said their **satisfaction with their health had increased** since participating in the programme; this has also increased for 24% of volunteers. However, it is in terms of **life satisfaction and well-being** that some of the most interesting and potentially significant results have occurred. The household results show that the average life satisfaction score before taking part in the programme was 7.2 (out of 10). Around one year in to the programme, **the average life satisfaction score has increased** by 0.7, to 7.9. Focusing on the Master Gardener volunteers, the **average life satisfaction score** since participating in the programme for one year has **increased** by 1 point, from 7.1 to 8.1. When asked to state the extent to which involvement in the programme has influenced life satisfaction, **77% of household respondents and 84% of volunteer respondents stated that it had, to a little or large extent.**

In terms of **environmental impacts**, one of the key indicators is that one third of householders and 29% of volunteers had **increased the amount of food and waste composted**. The Master Gardeners have high levels of composting which have not changed much since the programme began.

In terms of the **social impact** of the programme, some intriguing results are emerging in terms of expenditure on food, which has a strong potential impact on family budgets. When asked whether the amount spent on food has changed since participating in the programme, 65% of household respondents stated that it had not changed and around **29% stated that the amount they spend on food had actually decreased** since participating in the programme, which seems quite significant given the rising food prices generally over the last few years; 24% of volunteer respondents also stated that the **amount they spend on food has decreased**. The decline in expenditure for 79% of households and 67% volunteers was due to purchasing less food due to consumption of home grown produce. Only a small proportion of respondents stated that the amount they spend on food had increased and this was due to the increased cost of living and buying better quality produce.

Interestingly, 40% of household respondents and 47% of volunteer respondents stated that they **had made changes to where they buy their food**, buying locally being the main change. These findings suggest that the programme may be having an impact on local food systems by encouraging people to 'think local' in terms of food.

Still focusing on the **social impact** of the programme, we have already seen some interesting early insights on sense of community particularly for Master Gardener volunteers. Volunteer's satisfaction with **feeling part of a community has increased** since taking part in the programme for nearly 61% of respondents. When focusing on households, this is the case for 34% of respondents.

### Longer term impacts

The findings presented in this report regarding the longer term impacts (involvement for 24 – 48 months) show quite a substantial difference in some of the volunteer's results in comparison to the household results, particularly in the areas of: food growing behaviour, fruit and veg consumption, food expenditure and food purchasing behaviour, and life satisfaction scores, as well as various components of life satisfaction. This suggests that the **longer-term positive impacts** are generally greater on the volunteer's lives compared to the lives of households involved. This difference could be due to the volunteers' prolonged involvement in the programme, which enables the impacts to be sustained.

In terms of the differences between the round 1-3 results and the round 4 results, the report highlights some interesting findings. In general, there has been a positive change for both households and volunteers in terms of food growing behaviour (41% of volunteers spend on average 8 hours or more growing food per week, and 41% of households spend 1 – 2 hours). A higher proportion of respondents are composting more of their waste at home, and a high number of respondents still reported an increase in the amount and range of food grown:

The amount of food grown over the past 12 months increased for 42% of households and 49% of volunteers, whereas the range of food grown has increased for 42% of households and 68% of volunteers.

Volunteers (51%) and households (43%) are still continuing to make changes to where they buy their food from. In terms of life satisfaction, average life satisfaction score was still higher for volunteers (average life satisfaction score for households was 7.3 compared to the score

of 8.1 for volunteers) and respondents **still feel as though their involvement in the programme has influenced their life satisfaction to some extent:**

95% of volunteers (and 65% of households) highlighted that their involvement in the programme has influenced their overall life satisfaction to some extent.

Finally, fruit and **vegetable consumption has continued to increase for volunteers** (average daily fruit and veg consumption is 5.3 portions for volunteers and 4.9 for households). From drawing on the qualitative research from the round 1-3 evaluation, we can to some extent attribute some of these patterns to involvement in the programme. However these findings would benefit from further qualitative research to fully and rigorously investigate the relationship of these changes to involvement in the programme.

The results show that although household support was for a 12 month period, 38% of household respondents still receive support from a Master Gardener. This is quite a **high retention rate** considering the free support period of 12 months; this could be due to the relationships made between households and volunteers resulting in a **sustained relationship** and continuation of advice. With regard to volunteer Master Gardeners, where there is no limit on involvement, a high number of respondents, 86%, are still engaged in the programme as Master Gardener volunteers, again demonstrating high retention rates.

The opportunity to conduct round 4 of the evaluation provided a valuable insight into the impact of the programme over a longer period of time. In addition to the quantitative data collected, more in-depth, qualitative research with households and volunteers would be extremely beneficial to gain a deeper understanding of some of the changes that have occurred since their overall involvement in the programme.

### The role of Volunteer Coordinators

It is clear to see that the **Volunteer Coordinators have been instrumental** in the success of the programme, as well as the programme Manager and volunteer Master Gardeners. From the core evaluation and the interviews with the VCs, it is clear to see that the volunteers, programme manager and volunteer coordinators all put an huge amount of effort, personal effort into their roles, which carries a personal and not just professional commitment to the programme and their roles. As one VC stated *“it’s not really the kind of job that you can do without being passionate and involved in it really.”* The data shows that the programme has particularly **impacted on the VCs themselves** (in addition to the

volunteers and households) in terms of their own food growing behaviour and knowledge, peer-learning, relationships, development of personal and professional skill set, and encouraging and enabling further action / activity. The success of Volunteer Coordinators is based on 1) **local knowledge and connection to networks**, 2) a **diverse and adaptable skill set** including both professional and inter-personal skills, and 3) the skill to be **able to respond** to local changes and local needs, as well as VCs ascribing to the **values of the programme** as well as recognising the level of personal dedication and enthusiasm needed for the role.

### Recommendations

In terms of the programme moving forward, the following recommendations are provided:

- The opportunity for more household events; this could provide further local peer-support.
- Considerations as to how to recruit more households, e.g. through more advertising.
- The opportunity to link to other local initiatives or interventions, or to be more embedded in local groups and organisations, in the areas of cooking, healthy living (eating, physical activity), education, and smart shopping for example.
- To consider how to build in low-intensity monitoring procedures, as a way to gather evidence in an on-going fashion, to demonstrate the impacts and outputs of the programme.
- It may be beneficial to consider 'apprentice VCs' to 'train up' and support VCs as well as the opportunity for VCs to visit different areas regularly (1 – 2 times per year), particularly connecting urban and rural counties.

The evaluation has highlighted some strong impacts of the programme on the lives of the volunteers and the households. An important point to make is that a **number of impacts** are evident; the project seems to have a wide ranging impact on participants rather than in just one particular area. The findings also point towards an **interconnectedness** of the benefits the programme delivers. The evaluation has clearly generated a lot of valuable data over a number of years, which points towards an **overall positive impact** of the programme.



*Growing food within the realm of the Master Gardener 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.*