

North East Area Council Project

Let's Grow - Great Houghton

Project Proposal

The Great Houghton Let's Grow initiative will build upon the public's pride in the environment and increase Health and Wellbeing by developing a community growing centre.

Using derelict allotment sites in Great Houghton we aim to encourage local volunteers to help us bring these sites back into use for the use of the wider community. To build on community cohesion, gain transferable skills, learn the forgotten skills on how and where food is produced, promote healthy eating and care for the environment. It is possible for this project to include all sections of the community, including local business, Schools and partnership agencies.

We aim to turn two allotments into a designated training area which will act as the hub for further community environmental improvements, where further specific training can take place, e.g. health and safety, safe tool use, horticultural practices such as seed sowing, propagation and planting. The project would link in with local schools and include a junior and senior section.

We would encourage these volunteers to build a management team for the whole site which would enable them to keep all vacant plots useable, fencing in good condition, weed growth under control and best of all provide a service to help older members with the harder more physical tasks and be able to take over their plots and keep them cultivation if they fell ill and where unable to tend their plot. Hopefully this could lead onto the volunteer group being able and confident enough to take on tasks within the wider community.

Eventually the one of the key aims would be to make the allotment project self financing, this could be done by offering work experience placements to local secondary schools offering training and qualifications in return for fees and by carrying out development work for school garden projects. Hosting short horticultural training sessions for interested parties, e.g. "How to" courses. It could also offer a safe environment for primary school children to access and supplement their learning on subjects linked to growing and/or the environment.

Aim

The Let's Grow Allotment project would aim to achieve the following objectives:

- Encourage volunteering and the relationships between children, parents and the local community.
- Link in with local schools and have a junior and senior section
- Develop a programme of community growing and volunteering
- Provide a training programme

Outcomes

- Residents are more physically active as a consequence of their involvement
- Residents consume more fresh produce
- Increased Number of Community Growing Champions trained
- An opportunity for all sections of the community, including local business, Schools and partnership agencies, to be involved.

Time scales

Term time over 40 weeks

Scheme Detail

The project will:

- Turn two allotments into a designated training area
- Engage with at least 40 individuals willing to develop vacant plots as part of a group, raising interest in allotment gardening, healthier lifestyles and local food. Working together as a group, rather than alone, will share the workload more evenly and encourage adherence to the programme. These groups may include community groups schools, etc
- Develop a junior Let's Grow section linking in with local primary schools
- Develop a Let's Grow senior section of 14 to 16 year olds
- Provide a series training days
- Increase the number of Community Growing Champions
- Develop at least 3 cook and eat sessions using produce grown on allotment sites
- Obtain 3 individual case studies, demonstrating any change to feelings of well-being

Benefits to the local residents and the community of Great Houghton

Allotments provide a wide range of benefits to local communities and the environment. They do not only provide a source for good, healthy, low cost food production, but also provide valuable recreational opportunities and physical exercise.

Physical activity and social contact can benefit all groups in society, from those on a limited income for whom the economic considerations take precedence, to those who are financially secure but take pleasure in producing their own food. Allotments provide an opportunity for social activity and provide a setting for those with mental health problems or a physical disability to interact. They can also act as a significant component to improving local biodiversity.

Benefits will include:

- Healthier and more active people and communities, and new Volunteers engaged
- People have better chances in life – with better access to training and development to improve life skills, in addition to working with local businesses.
- Stronger communities – with more active citizens working together to tackle issues within the community.
- Improved rural and urban environments – which communities are able to better access and enjoy.