

# Case Study

## Development of a community garden with allotment beds

HOUGHTON PRIMARY CARE CENTRE, HOUGHTEN-LE-SPRING, TYNE AND WEAR

### Background

The NHS Long Term Plan includes a focus on helping people stay healthier for longer and supporting community activities that help improve people's wellbeing; the fitter, healthier and more socially connected we are, the less likely it is we'll need to access our local GP or other health professionals.

The NHS is therefore developing social prescribing networks across the country. Patients with multiple complex needs are referred by their GP to social prescribing services where their needs can be assessed and appropriate community services can be recommended such as adult learning, employment support or activity groups to improve confidence or reduce isolation.

### The Challenge

A community garden at Houghton-le-Spring Primary Care Centre was overgrown and inaccessible after an extended fallow period. Our local team identified the garden as an opportunity to increase the availability of green space in the area for the benefit of a local community group – helping people in a number of ways to live more healthy lives, support and recovery from extended illness, tackling loneliness and supporting educational and physical activity.

The objective of the project was to create an outdoor garden space that could be used by community groups for local people to get outdoors more and improve their health and wellbeing.

### The Solution

We worked with Sunderland Recovery College, an organisation providing free to access educational courses for people with lived mental health experiences, to design a space that would work for their curriculum and engaged with the CCG to establish how else the site could be used.

Supported by Groundwork, a charity that provides practical help to people who need to improve their communities and their own circumstances, NHSPS employees volunteered to clear, rebuild and refurbish the garden to create a space that could be useable by the community. We built allotment beds as well as a compost heap and poly-tunnel. We also funded a 'tool shed' of basic tools for groups to use.

### The Result

The garden is used by Sunderland Recovery College, who run gardening sessions from the garden twice a week. The sessions average around five or six students.

We have been working with local GP groups to increase awareness of the garden and ensure that any patients in the local area who could benefit from Sunderland Recovery Colleges courses are referred accordingly.

### Customer Feedback

"I love coming here as it gets me out of the house and I can clear my mind of all my worry's for a couple of hours."

"It's good for me to meet like-minded people and it safe and enjoyable."

"I have no garden at home so I come here to meet people and learn a little."

Sunderland Recovery College students