

NHSPS provides funding for therapeutic community garden as part of the Healthy Happy Places programme

2 years ago



Healthy Happy Places project at Shields Health Hub, receives funding from [NHS Property Services \(NHSPS\)](#). This project is the result of the collective engagement of North Shields Primary Care Network, NHS Property Services, NHS Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust, VODA, North Tyneside Art Studio, North Tyneside Council, Health Innovation North East North Cumbria (HI NENC), and the North East North Cumbria Integrated Care Board (ICB).

The creation of the therapeutic garden at Shields Health Hub, formerly known as Priory Day Hospital, has recently reached completion. This programme is innovative in enhancing mental health and well-being by synergizing planning, regeneration, design, healthcare, public health, arts, and community efforts.

With the investment from its Corporate Social Responsibility Fund, NHSPS subsidized the construction, actively exploring avenues to reduce costs and fostering collaboration with existing contractors and volunteers. Health Innovation North East North Cumbria (HI NENC) and North Shields Primary Care Network also contributed funding and resources for initiating the project, design, and engagement work.

The new garden hopes to offer a place of sanctuary and activity that will interest to the community, including social prescribing services and a wide range of charities, allowing local people to create support networks and potentially reduce loneliness and improve mental health.

This collective initiative, led by Health Innovation North East North Cumbria (HI NENC), North Shields Primary Care Network, NHS Property Services, North Tyneside Art Studio, NHS Northumbria Healthcare

Foundation Trust, VODA, North Tyneside Council and the ICB, is committed to creating spaces that promote holistic wellness and foster community engagement.

The programme embodies a partnership-based strategy, emphasising the creation of vibrant and supportive environments. Funding provided by NHS Property Services facilitated the construction of the garden, implementing fundamental design concepts, including biophilic elements to foster a connection with nature and meditative and thematic graphics.

Darius, citizen and garden volunteer, is one poignant example of the transformative impact of such projects, “It’s got a nice feeling to it, like you know it’s a safe space. I can’t thank you enough for making me feel welcome...you are all lovely people and I feel blessed I have found and joined in. It was a breath of fresh air”.

Jo Beynon, Specialist Psychological Therapist Jo Beynon, Specialist Psychological Therapist at Shields Health Hub, commented, “Green spaces are hugely important to our well-being. Having access to a green space for staff and patients creates an implicit and explicit understanding of this. Green spaces move the autonomic nervous system into a ventral vagal response of calm and connection. I have spent time in the garden with clients as a means of experiencing the feeling of calm. We have used the smells of the herbs and the tastes of strawberries to connect with sensory experiences”.

Dave Tomson, retired GP and former Clinical Director of the North Shields Primary Care Network said, “I’ve had an allotment all my life. I know outdoor space makes a difference, that health is not just about the right diagnosis and the right pills and potions, it’s also about connection, it’s also about nature, it’s also about finding balance, and a space like this is a possible area where we can start to offer people more than just pills and potions....we’ve managed to turn that space into something that now has the potential to be a really nurturing space for people.”

North Tyneside Art Studio also played a pivotal role in the design process and the integration of community artwork within the project. Plus, The Garden at the Hub Community Association, VODA and North Tyneside Council’s Public Health Team have provided funding, ideas, and support for the project’s development.

The programme’s engagement phase involved participatory activities, including a model garden used to capture feedback and prompt cards asking about what people would like to see, how they would like to feel, and what they would like to do in the garden.

Ben Gammer, Senior Strategy Manager at NHSPS, said: “We are proud to champion a project that not only support social prescribing but also exemplifies the power of community-driven healthcare. With tangible impacts already resonating, this project showcases NHSPS’s commitment to excellent, greener healthcare and partnership-based initiatives”.

Dr. Rachel Turnbull, Healthy Happy Places Programme Manager, said: “Healthy Happy Places is about ways we can use the built and natural environment to create better mental health and wellbeing in our communities, doing this through mixing and combining experiences from different sectors and communities. The garden has been a lovely way to show what we can achieve if we work together to turn unloved places into creative, joyful, soothing, calm spaces. Thanks to everyone who has helped to make this happen, and particularly the volunteers who keep the garden blooming and blossoming in all

weathers! It has been a real team effort, and we hope that the garden will continue to grow and develop over the coming months and years.”

Find out more at

(<https://healthinnovationnenc.org.uk/what-we-do/improving-population-health/mental-health/healthy-happy-places/happy-healthy-places-projects/shields-health-hub-community-garden/>) or if you are interested in using the garden as a group or individual please contact Peter (Chair of Community Group) on 07398269468.