



Designing with Purpose

Kewstoke Farm Project

Josh Tapp – Hospital Manager

Josh Jones – Regional Lead Occupational Therapist

Cygnets Hospital Kewstoke

Improving lives together

Why This Project?

- Traditional inpatient settings can be restrictive, clinical, and risk-focused
- Need to diversify environments to better support recovery
- Growing evidence for nature-based, meaningful activity
- **Opportunity:** underused on-site farm space

Our Context

- 70-bed mental health hospital
- Acute, rehab, personality disorder & complex pathways
- 5 wards, mixed patient group
- Strong therapies team and recovery focus



Recognised Challenge:
Outdoor space underutilised

The Opportunity



The Farm Before

- 8 years disused, overgrown land,
- Lost resource within hospital footprint
- Viewed initially as redundant

Our Approach: Designed *with* people, not *for* them

- Co-production with:
 - Service users
 - Experts by Experience (EbEs)
 - MDT
 - Local Community
- Focus on:
 - Psychological safety
 - Empowerment
 - Recovery identity

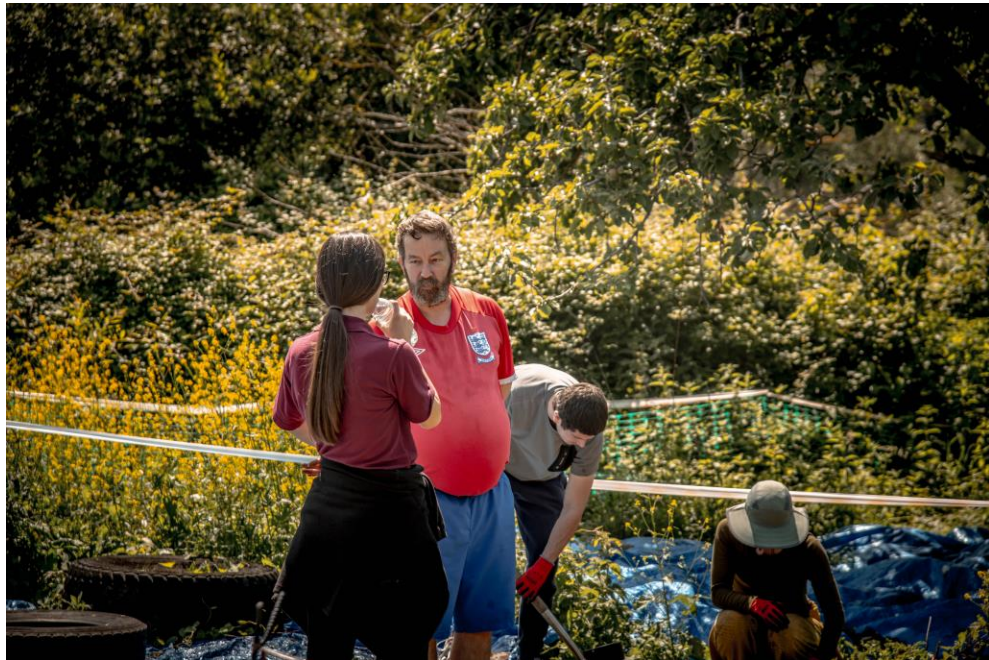
Grounds Redevelopment Project Minutes: 10.01.2022		
Attendees: SC, MVE, LK, DS, JT, BC, MB, SW, JY, JJ Apologies: AE, JA, SL, AC, SD, ML		
Actions from previous meeting:		
None.		
Specific Updates & Actions:		Action
1	Pond / sensory garden	
1.1	LK and ML completed mood board for sensory garden, including a birds eye view plan. Plans include water feature in pond, sensory flowers/herbs <u>eg. lavender</u> , fish.	
1.2	Queried whether we need the pond area fenced off, may not need this as Taunton do not have their pond fenced off. Use bamboo to denote the area to make it more visible, or hedging is this would be too expensive? Need something to separate from the car park. Don't need to change the structure wholesale, just needs clearing out.	
1.3	Lighting along the path? Could use solar powered lights. DS mentioned solar powered fountain also.	
1.4	Once completed, should be self-maintaining through our contractors and through the gardening group	
1.5	DS planning to get a quote for clearance of the pond + readying for planting	DS
1.6	Pond may need new liner	
1.7	JT suggested we link with Maria Harris of Taunton – SC / SD to contact.	SC / SD
1.8	SC contacted Bristol uni botanical gardens, somebody potentially keen to help with the design as part of their project. Also in touch with landscaping course, but not heard back yet. SC to contact <u>Collington</u> (Bridgwater college).	SC
Agreed to prioritise this area.		
2	Animals on site	
2.1	Area where we were planning to keep animals is only accessible through the greenhouse area – difficult to get a quote as not currently accessible. Could use space adjacent to the road instead? Cheaper, though would have the animals in close proximity to cars. May need a certain type of grass. Dave to get quotes.	DS
2.2	JT explained we would need to look at insurance, Josh to get advice around this.	JT
2.3	BC contacted <u>Buxton</u> Park, access to a wide variety of animals, however some opposition to the owner within Kewstoke as he has plans to develop houses on the land he owns. DS mentioned having potential contacts who would be willing to bring donkeys etc.	DS
3	Greenhouse / Gardening	
3.1	Contractors had difficulty providing full quote as much of the area is inaccessible	
3.2	BC has taken aerial photographs of the area. Dave to send round to working party.	DS

Building The Farm

From overgrowth to opportunity

- Patients involved from day one:
 - Clearing, weeding, painting
 - Designing the space
 - Planting and building
- Participation:
 - Voluntary
 - Person-centred





What It Is Now? A therapeutic farm & recovery hub

- Horticultural therapy
- Skill-building workshops
- Informal wellbeing space
- Social connection environment
- Cooking using home-grown produce
- Animal care (e.g., goats)
- Routine and responsibility
- Planting, growing, harvesting







Why It Works (Evidence)

- Nature reduces stress & anxiety
- Improves mood & wellbeing
- Builds confidence, responsibility & achievement
- Promotes social connection & belonging

Mental health benefit	Description	Underpinning theory	Target population	Evidence
Stress reduction	Gardening reduces cortisone levels and promotes relaxation	Stress Reduction Theory (SRT)	Individuals with anxiety or PTSD	Ulrich et al., 1991; Lu et al., 2021; Pieters et al., 2018; Bryant et al., 2014;
Cognitive restoration	Exposure to nature improves attention and memory	Attention Restoration Theory (ART)	Individuals with ADHD, dementia	Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989 ; Bryant et al., 2014;
Mood enhancement	Reduces depression as serotonin and dopamine levels are increased	Biophilia Hypothesis	People with depression	Soga et al., 2017
Social interaction and inclusion	Encourages social bonding and communication	Social Cohesion Theory	Trauma survivors, Elderly	Gonzalez & Kirkevold, 2015
Emotional resilience	Fosters a sense of accomplishment and purpose	Psychological Well-Being Theory	Rehabilitation service users, Veterans	Clatworthy et al., 2013
Physical and mental engagement	Involves fine motor skills, focus, and mindfulness	Holistic Healing Model	Individuals with disabilities	Söderback et al., 2004
Reduction of negative emotions	Lowers symptoms of anger, fatigue, and sadness.	Emotional Regulation Model	Psychiatric care	McMahan & Estes, 2015

Impact On Patients

What we're seeing

- Increased engagement in outdoor therapy and more **purposeful use of section 17 leave/time off-ward.**
- Social interaction & connection opportunities – **Natural interaction between staff/patients across site.**
- Development of practical life skills – increased **volunteering/vocational opportunities** at site.
- Reconnection with purpose – Opportunity to **signpost individuals to similar green spaces** in their local area upon discharge.

Beyond Therapy

Wider community impact

- Links with:
 - Local horticulturalist
 - Education providers (e.g., college pathways)
 - Neighbours
 - Local Council
- Future:
 - Vocational pathways
 - Community integration
 - Food bank involvement
 - Social/Green Care Prescribers
 - Men in Sheds Charity



Winner of the Outside Space of the Year Award – Design in Mental Health Conference 2026.



What Makes This Different

- **Co-produced from the ground up**

Designed with service users and Experts by Experience, shaping how it feels, functions and supports recovery.

- **Embedded in clinical care pathways**

Integrated as part of the therapeutic provision and section 17 leave opportunities

- **Purpose-driven occupation**

Real tasks with visible outcomes (grow → harvest → cook → share)

- **A psychologically safe, non-institutional environment**

Designed to feel calming, empowering, and human rather than clinical

- **Identity-building, not just activity-based**

Patients become growers, cooks, volunteers - not just “service users”

Designing with purpose

- If we want better outcomes:
 - We must rethink environments
 - Move beyond risk containment and towards recovery enablement
- Design spaces that:
 - Are meaningful
 - Are human
 - Enable identity



Replicability

What can other services do?

Start with:

- Underused spaces
- Service user voice – People's Council/EbE
- Occupational Therapy & Clinician involvement
- Small pilots

Principles (not just farms):

- Co-production
- Meaningful occupation
- Nature & environment
- Community integration and involvement

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