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**The Master Gardener Programme**  
working with urban communities



**HIRSCHMANN STIFTUNG**



Garden Organic's London Food  
Poverty Project: **Southwark**

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## INTRODUCTION

For over 20 years, Garden Organic has been involved in delivering a range of community gardening programmes aimed at encouraging local people to get involved in food growing.

## GARDEN ORGANIC'S MASTER GARDENER PROGRAMME

Independent evaluations of the Master Gardener Programme identified a number of positive outcomes for volunteers, communities, households and substance misusing prisoners (undertaken by CAFS and Coventry University (Kneafsey and Bos, 2014; Brown et al 2015). Hence, to date key findings have identified a number of positive outcomes when communities engage in food growing and related activities including:

- Health and Well Being
- Skills base and employability
- Community life
- Food eating and buying
- Food recycling and composting
- Building relationships
- Supporting recovery

This research has highlighted a relationship between a range of positive social outcomes and the aim of this project is to ascertain the potential benefits of adapting the Master Gardener model and delivering the programme in an urban locality identified as an area of deprivation in which some people living in the local community are 'at risk' or experiencing food poverty.

## WHAT DID THE LONDON FOOD POVERTY PROJECT (LFPP) SET OUT TO DO?

Funded by The Hirschmann Foundation, a non-profit charitable foundation [<http://hirschmannstiftung.ch/en/index.cfm>], The London Food Poverty Project [<https://www.gardenorganic.org.uk/food-poverty>] aimed to work with communities to build resilience and knowledge so that involved communities feel confident to address the triggers of food poverty positively and proactively.

The approach used was to encourage participation in food growing and cooking when on a low income.

The project targeted individuals and families living in communities across Southwark.

This report presents key findings from an evaluation of Garden Organic's **London Food Poverty Project (LFPP)**. Carried out by a team of researchers from Coventry University. The report is organised in four sections:

- 1. Background Context**  
Food poverty and community-based programmes
- 2. Collaborative Community Research**  
Approach, methods and participants
- 3. Key Findings**  
Community growing, cooking and networks
- 4. Reflections and key learning points**





## BACKGROUND CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY-BASED GARDENING

### POLITICAL AND SOCIAL CLIMATE

Over the past two decades, there has been a shift in the social and political context impacting the everyday lives of individuals and communities in the UK. The speed and extent in which social security provisions have changed has been significant, and there is now an apparent increasing acceptance of the neo-liberal narrative suggesting that the State cannot and is no longer responsible for meeting the needs of the population (Wiggin 2012). Instead, the onus has increasingly been shifted towards individuals' own responsibility for themselves, and towards communities to provide informal social support structures to meet the needs of the population (Ilcan 2009, Kus 2006). This shift in social context towards individualisation, 'responsibilisation' (Cain 2016) and the corresponding decline of the State's role in delivering welfare services – the result of neo-liberal policy processes coupled with current government austerity policies – is reflected in the introduction of Universal Credit by the UK Coalition and the subsequent Conservative government (MacLeavy 2011, Wiggin 2012). These changes in the social safety net in combination with 'low and stagnant wages, insecure and zero-hours contracts' (Cooper et al. 2014, p.6) have had noticeable, negative impacts for 'millions of the poorest families across the country' (Cooper et al. 2014, p.21). In fact, according to national data published by the UK Department for Work and Pensions (2019), approximately, 3.7 million families and children are living in absolute poverty.

### FOOD POVERTY, FOOD INSECURITY AND FOOD SECURITY

One of the consequences of the systematic dismantling of social security, in combination with stagnant wages, increasing food, energy and housing cost, and the closely-linked increase in inequality in the UK has been a drastic increase in food poverty (Arie 2018, Partington 2019). Food poverty describes people's 'inability to acquire or eat an adequate quality or sufficient

quantity of food in socially acceptable ways (or the uncertainty of being able to do so)' (Dowler & O'Connor 2012, p.44).

According to Dowler & O'Connor (2012) household food insecurity and food poverty are interchangeable concepts. There is currently no regular collection of national data on food poverty or household food insecurity; however, there are very strong indirect indicators of the scale of the problem. A questionnaire used to nationally survey low-income households (the bottom 15% in terms of material deprivation) revealed that almost a third of respondents had insufficient 'access to enough varied and appropriate food to sustain an active and healthy life, and almost 40% reported having been worried that their food would run out before money for more was obtained' (Holmes 2007, cited in Dowler & O'Connor 2012, p.47). Illustrating the fact that food insecurity is an issue for a large number of Britons is the dramatic increase in food bank use: considering all three main food aid providers, Oxfam and Church Action on Poverty have calculated that 20,247,042 meals were given to people in food poverty in 2013/14 (Cooper et al. 2014). The Trussel Trust's food banks alone provided 1.6 million 3-day emergency food parcels in 2018, 73% more than in 2014. This development does not appear to slow down since percentage increases are continuing to rise (2016: a 6% increase to the previous year, 2017: 13%, 2018: 19%). Such levels of food poverty have been associated with detrimental health and wellbeing outcomes such as obesity, diabetes, and micronutrient deficiencies (Thompson 2012; 2014; 2016). Food poverty is often associated with being unemployed and actively looking for work, as well as with receiving some form of means-tested government benefit. Residents who live in highly deprived urban areas tend to carry the biggest burden of food poverty (Cumbers et al., 2018).

As a more goal-oriented phrasing of the challenge, the concept of 'food security' has been contested and defined in many different ways over time. One of the more widely accepted descriptions is the updated FAO (2002) definition that states 'Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food which meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.' Accordingly, 'household food security

is the application of this concept to the family level, with individuals within households as the focus of concern' (FAO, 2003). One of the critical points of the application of the food security concept is its regular focus on individual competencies (and responsibilities) based on a consumerist model that assumes 'informed choice' is key while structural conditions (e.g. the food system, wider socio-economic inequalities) are seldom addressed (Dowler & O'Connor 2012). Here, concepts like food justice and food sovereignty, i.e. 'the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems' (Declaration of Nyéléni 2007), are re-focusing attention towards broader structural food system issues, and towards local food producers.

### FOOD POVERTY AND URBAN SPACES

Food poverty in the UK, like poverty in general (Milbourne 2011), varies substantially in space, given the structural factors affecting food poverty being shaped by complex spatial variations and interactions. Here, considering one spatial aspect of urban food environments, past debates around food security in the UK have utilized the concept of 'food deserts' when considering a community's spatial access to fresh, healthy and nutritious food. Food deserts are understood as symptomatic of deprived areas, with a lack of physical availability of grocery stores and supermarkets creating economic barriers and affordability issues of accessing nutritious foods, including the cost of transportation, price of foods, and incomes of those in the area (Walker et al, 2010). However, while the notion of food deserts originated in the UK, research has demonstrated that the explanatory power of the food desert concept is only limited when trying to understand food poverty in the UK (Block 2013).

Nonetheless, socio-economic challenges like food poverty are often coinciding with differences in the urban environment. According to their multi-continental analysis of 34 cities across the globe, Amano et al. (2018: 1476) state 'Public health in cities was associated with green space and wealth, as well as the interaction between these variables'. Therefore, the relationship between green space and health and wellbeing of the local population is

an important one. Green areas are also of particular importance to certain social groups such as children (Dadvand, 2015), women (McEachan et al. 2016; Sang et al. 2016), and older adults (Wolf and Housley 2016). Hence, deprived urban communities may face greater problems regarding food poverty when compared with more affluent communities because the distribution of green space; or more importantly, the distance to urban green spaces, is considered important (Grahn and Stigsdotter, 2003, Gascon et al., 2015) to opportunities for food poverty alleviation through individual and community-based food growing. The reason for this is because access to green space is often highly stratified, based on axes of difference such as income and ethno-racial characteristics (Wolch et al. 2014). Nonetheless, even when accessibility and use may not be an issue, it is possible that the green spaces within deprived urban communities may have elements, such as pests (e.g., mosquitoes and rats) and allergens (pollen), that are potentially too harmful to public health (Lohmus and Balbus 2015).

### IMPORTANCE OF FOOD GROWING IN DEPRIVED URBAN COMMUNITIES

Food growing in deprived urban areas is seen to have a positive impact on the local community (Bowers et al., 2009) in which it can be part of a viable solution to food poverty. Previous research studies (see for instance, Reuther and Dewar, 2006; Milbourne, 2011) of community-based food initiatives have shown that they can encourage community involvement and participation through promoting principles of community ownership and shared agendas. This is supported by Torres et al. (2018) who highlighted that 20% of the residents interviewed in their study declared having participated in a food growing initiative and declared doing so frequently. Many of the food gardens visited by Cumbers et al. (2018) were also intensively used by residents from the surrounding areas, helping generate broader relational networks beyond the gardens themselves. A typical example was taking food waste and recycling it in the gardens, usually with the offer of supplying some food back or, in other cases, becoming involved in offering training courses in gardening and food preparation for local communities.





Certainly, residents became involved in a diverse range of other outreach activities that included maintaining allotments for housing associations and growing projects with adults and young people with learning disabilities. In this way, food growing and community garden initiatives became home to what Askins (2015: 473) calls a 'transformative politics of encounter' that brings diverse groups of people together in surrounding areas where there has been an absence of community engagement in public space.

Cumbers et al. (2018) maintains that the key to understanding resident participation in food growing initiatives as a response to food poverty is to contextualise their involvement against a broader backdrop of urban decay, neoliberal inspired property-based regeneration and claims by communities to re-appropriate land for public and communal use. In their study of Glasgow, Cumbers et al. (2018) found that food growing in community gardens was especially important in telling personal narratives around the local histories, ethnic mixes, politics and physical attributes of places.

For instance, all community garden groups Cumbers et al. interviewed emphasised the centrality of recovering derelict space for community use, and the importance of recovering places for people living locally through a social and environmental ethos around 'empower[ing] local people to make choices and lifestyle changes that are beneficial for them, their communities and the environment' (Cumbers et al, 2018: 139). By their very existence, therefore, community food growing initiatives challenge the hegemony of neoliberal urban development by problematising the existence of derelict and commercial space, the consequences of both gentrification and disinvestment, and the potential for more progressive collective uses for such sites, which allows deprived communities to reclaim their own sense of place (see Milbourne, 2011).

Within this broader social geography of place and food growing, not only can a transformation

of social relations take place, but the physical and aesthetic natures of these spaces are also transformed by the everyday interactions within them, developing new hybrid or third spaces that combine the public and private realms and produce new meeting places for diverse groups of the local population (Yap 2019). For instance, in Milbourne's (2011) study, gardening activities were dispersed across the neighbourhood, transforming small patches of neglected public green space adjoining streets, and creating networks of micro-spaces of community gardening. Another couple of projects in Milbourne's (2011) study operated in what might be termed "backspaces" – narrow alleyways running behind rows of terraced houses in the areas - which had become dumping grounds for rubbish, places where drugs and alcohol were consumed - creating new socio-ecological places that provided residents with a richer diversity of plants and wildlife, as well as safer spaces where sociality and conviviality can take place.

Furthermore, Bowers et al.'s (2009) research also denoted a link between neighbourhood open space and food growing, and indeed planting activities of local residents. For instance, they found housing estates near urban parks, which often included recreational facilities such as play areas for children, as well as broader designations that encompass some form of green space, provided opportunity structures within the community for engagement, participation and involvement with local activities. Other studies have found similar effects of the built environment on community participation. Caraher and Coveney (2004) found in their study of deprived Atlanta neighbourhoods that local street connectivity was associated with an increased level of engagement from residents, although it was predominately white, middle-class men who were most likely to engage. While these studies are significant because they suggest that good locational access to green space may attenuate to greater community involvement with growing food, there exist many different benefits and issues with such food growing initiatives which will now be discussed further.



## BENEFITS OF FOOD GROWING INITIATIVES

### *Alleviates food deprivation*

An important benefit of food growing is its potential to contribute to poverty alleviation. The central argument here is that food growing can increase the number of livelihood strategies available to deprived communities (see the works of May and Rogerson, 1994; Rakodi, 1995; Karaan and Mohamed, 1998). Furthermore, growing food increases food security and allows for savings on food expenditure in households where budgets are often tight and could also improve the nutritional value of the food consumed. Reuther and Dewar (2006) have also identified a large number of benefits not directly linked to poverty alleviation, but to the tangential connections which can facilitate poverty alleviation. These include the recreational potential and aesthetics of green gardens, ecological services to cities, environmental education, social empowerment such as the increased self-esteem a thriving and productive garden provides, social interaction and the strengthening of community ties.

### *Knowledge, skills and empowerment*

Alongside the alleviation of food poverty, another obvious benefit of food growing is its transformative potential at the individual level in developing both skills and knowledge, but also at a much deeper level in generating a positive sense of self around community gardening for more marginalised groups such as BME residents. The importance of bottom-up processes of collective learning is also important, where people who have little knowledge in relation to horticulture, food production and preparation can develop new skills albeit in a supportive and participatory environment rather than a more top-down form of training and education. During Cumbers et al.'s (2018) observation and participation in community gardens, participants became aware of the diversity of skills being learned. Of particular note was the reference made by many garden volunteers to how they had learned to organise and conduct meetings, being as inclusive as possible and acquiring skills such as taking minutes of meetings and recording events.

### *Develops social and cultural capital*

Food growing activities can also increase social and cultural capital within and between communities in which individuals who share mutual values and social and cultural capital resulting from a common 'race', ethnicity and/or religion could mobilise human and physical resources toward a common goal. Bowers et al. (2009) demonstrated this in their study that included African American and Latinos facing similar issues influencing health and wellbeing outcomes (such as being more likely to experience discrimination and less likely to have access to safe neighbourhoods), and where the provision of a space enabled formal or informal cross-cultural coalitions to identify solutions to these factors.

Increasing levels of civic engagement is another aspect of social and cultural capital that defines people's role in their communities and benefits how they can influence events within the community. Again, in Bower et al. (2009) study, as a result of the cross-cultural collaboration on the Peace Campaign, community members managed to establish trust between local residents and officials (e.g., police, councillors, etc.) which empowered residents to participate in a dialogue with local authorities as a way to reduce wider social problems. These skills among residents were transferable to other organised community groups. Therefore, social networks developed as residents and officialdom came together around a shared concern.

### *Reduction of youth crime and violence*

One of the shared concerns facing deprived communities, currently, is the perceived increase in crime and violence, particularly amongst young people (McCabe, 2014). Youth crime and violence is quite often categorised as a tangential separate criminal justice issue with inadequate recognition that it is the result of prolonged environmental wealth and health disparities. In the United States, many deprived city communities have abandoned properties and unused vacant spaces. These unmaintained spaces are often Brownfield hazards, overgrown with unwanted vegetation, rubbish and vermin, making the spaces attractive places to hide guns, conduct illegal activities and engage in violent crime (McCabe, 2014).



Reclaiming these spaces and converting them into gardens for growing food can become a vital tool to not only reduce wealth and health disparities, but can also be a positive community resource in controlling crime. This is achieved by bringing residents, young and old, together in a shared activity and purpose to generate community stabilisation in which they benefit from not only getting to know each other, and therefore fostering social capital, but also from the produce at each garden, not only in terms of potential nutritional value but through food cost savings or through supplementary income from sales at farmer's markets, mitigating against the straining factors that lead some residents in deprived communities to commit crime in the first place (McCabe, 2014). Furthermore, it can work as a situational crime prevention solution whereby redesigning the unused space into open space amenities, such as gardens, can prevent these areas being used to hide weapons and places where illicit activity is conducted.

### *Social and environmental justice*

Food growing has long been recognised as a powerful metaphor that has been used to represent particular sets of relations between nature, society and culture and to express personal and political power (Milbourne, 2011). As such, Hodgkinson (2005: 67) has claimed food growing provides opportunities to escape and resist broader social, economic and political structures that pervade people's everyday life worlds, 'in maintaining your own patch of earth, you escape the world of money, governments, supermarkets and the industrial processes of food production...In this sense, then, digging is anarchy in action'.

While food growing is often seen as an individual action done within the confines of private spaces, there has been an increase in collective forms of food growing in urban public spaces (see Hou et al. 2009), creating what has become known as community gardening, defined by Glover et al., (2005: 79) as 'an organized, grassroots initiative whereby a section of land is used to produce food or flowers or both in an urban environment for the personal use or collective benefit of its members'.



Community gardening projects can be understood as responses to poverty, environmental degradation and the lack of safe green spaces in deprived urban communities (Ferris et al., 2001). As such, it is claimed that community gardening embraces a broad range of horticultural, environmental, social and political issues (Stocker and Barnett, 1998), combining “the best of environmental ethics, social activism and personal expression” and involving “a faith that what they [the gardeners] do not only helps the individual but strengthens the community” (Lawson, 2005: 301).

Studies of community gardening in America have pointed to its social and environmental impacts in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods: providing food security, improving health, renewing people's senses of pride in their areas and creating new forms of social interaction and civic engagement (Glover et al., 2005; Lawson, 2005). This ability to address such a broad range of urban issues has led Hou et al. (2009) to claim that community gardening not only represents a tangible resource for individuals and communities but also an organizing concept for creating new spatialities of justice to address quality of life and urban sustainability issues (see also, Milbourne, 2011).

Constructing food growing activities in this way begins to open up their potential usefulness as a resource to challenge environmental injustices and urban political ecology, thus contributing towards the food sovereignty movement. It also creates potentially interesting synergies between food growing and the idea of ‘just sustainabilities’ (Agyeman, 2002), which involves a rebalancing of the environmental and social dimensions of sustainability, and more explicit engagements between the concepts of sustainability and social justice.

### *Reduces stress*

Having high quality green space in which to grow food can contribute to lessening stress levels (Roe et al., 2013). In a study conducted by Thompson (2012), it was found that stress was higher for those with no community garden for growing food than those with a community garden. He concludes that it is plausible that the impact of unemployment and

long-term socio-economic adversity amongst his participants resulted in long-term dysregulation in their cortisol profiles. High quality green space levels, therefore, appear to offer some degree of stress buffering in deprived urban communities, reducing or moderating the differences in stress levels. In subsequent studies, Thompson (2014; 2016) found a gendered relationship between higher quality green space levels and reduced stress levels in women, denoting not only the way identity characteristics such as age, race, and gender can influence how individuals engage with or disassociate from community food growing initiatives, but also the role the built environment might have on facilitating the gender differences associated with community green spaces.

## CHALLENGES OF SUCH INITIATIVES

### *Tensions within communities*

One of the central issues that food growing could produce is the creation of cultural and racial tension between different social groups living in the same community. While food growing can create a space for social and cultural integration - by growing food it can bring different ethnic and cultural groups together - it can also inflame existing social, cultural and racial tensions. In Milbourne's (2011) Southampton project, where he attempted to promote social and cultural integration through community gardening, he acknowledged that the project gave rise to creating a space in the area within which people from different groups failed to work together. However, as the late Doreen Massey (2005: 151) would argue, ‘space may set us down next to the unexpected neighbour’. We must therefore acknowledge the problematic nature of working with and across a diverse range of social groups within multicultural urban communities and counter such problematic issues by promoting food growing as a positive recognition and celebration of the coming together of different cultures, especially considering the connection and links between people's cultural sensibilities and food heritages. This speaks to Massey's (2005) demand that we think of place and community as progressive; not self-closing and defensive, but outward-looking and this in turn allows a sense of place which is extroverted and not introverted.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Another issue with food growing and community garden initiatives is that they can become a place which are struggled over and within (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1985); a space where different ideas, passions, interests and rationalities for food growing compete, leading to further tension and conflict. These tensions come in the form of the different reasons for people's involvement in community growing, individuals from the community, public and third sectors, as well as people who have changed careers (Yap 2019). Reuther and Dewar (2006) articulate that these different groups of individuals have competing interests with being involved with community gardening; some see its monetary potential, some use community gardens to challenge existing social and economic conditions, and others engage in community gardens for personal reasons, e.g., tracing ancestral ties and connections. However, while there may be competing reasons for people's involvement in activities such as food growing and community gardening, which demonstrates a valuing of such activities contingent on their vested interests, there still exists a mutual compatibility between all those involved. This mutual compatibility is the desire to enable greater inclusive and stronger community social relations between residents in local area(s) as a way to alleviate concerns around food security. This is the central aim of Garden Organic's Master Gardener Programme.



## THE MASTER GARDENER PROGRAMME

As previously noted, the London Food Poverty Project has built upon Garden Organic's wider Master Gardener programme.

The Master Gardener programme was launched after a successful pilot in 2010. Following on from the success of Garden Organic's 'Master Composter' programme, the overall aim of the programme was to 'provide local support and advice for growing food' ([www.gardenorganic.org.uk](http://www.gardenorganic.org.uk)).

Bos and Kneafsey's (2014) national evaluation of the Master Gardener programme demonstrated a range of impacts for individuals and volunteers involved in the programme across and within the areas of: health and wellbeing; skills base and employability; community life; food eating and buying; and food recycling and composting. The programme has since been carried out in many different settings, including most notably its use as a horticultural intervention programme at HMP Rye Hill where it was implemented to support offenders who have a background of drug misuse, with the aim of assisting their recovery and wider health and wellbeing. In their evaluation of the Master Gardener programme at HMP Rye Hill, Brown et al. (2016) denoted that the programme enabled a supportive environment conducive to addressing inmates' health and wellbeing and also created a sense of community between both offenders and prison staff.

The study presented in this report, examined the views and experiences of participants involved in the programme delivered in Southwark. Master Gardener evaluates the transferability of the Master Gardener programme to deprived urban communities. It is envisaged that the Southwark Food Poverty Project informed by the Master Gardener programme could assist in supporting people living in Southwark impacted by food poverty by contributing towards building community and facilitating a supportive, informal space where people can learn about food growing, cooking and the consumption of healthy food. This, it is hoped, will lead to developing greater understanding and awareness of the topics and issues currently constraining (and enabling) them.





The original evaluation of the programme identified that: -

**‘Growing food within the realm of the MG 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’ (Bos and Kneafsey, 2014:6)**

The approach for the London Food Poverty Project is for Garden Organic to train local volunteers in a variety of organic growing techniques to enable them to support others living in their local communities. The title Master Gardener is used to signify someone who has received the Garden Organic training, but more importantly signifies someone who has an interest or is passionate about growing, healthy eating, diet and nutrition. Once trained, the role of the Master Gardener is varied, for example, it may include providing one to one support or group support.

For the London Food Poverty Project Master Gardeners were expected to encourage local people to engage in growing through sharing their

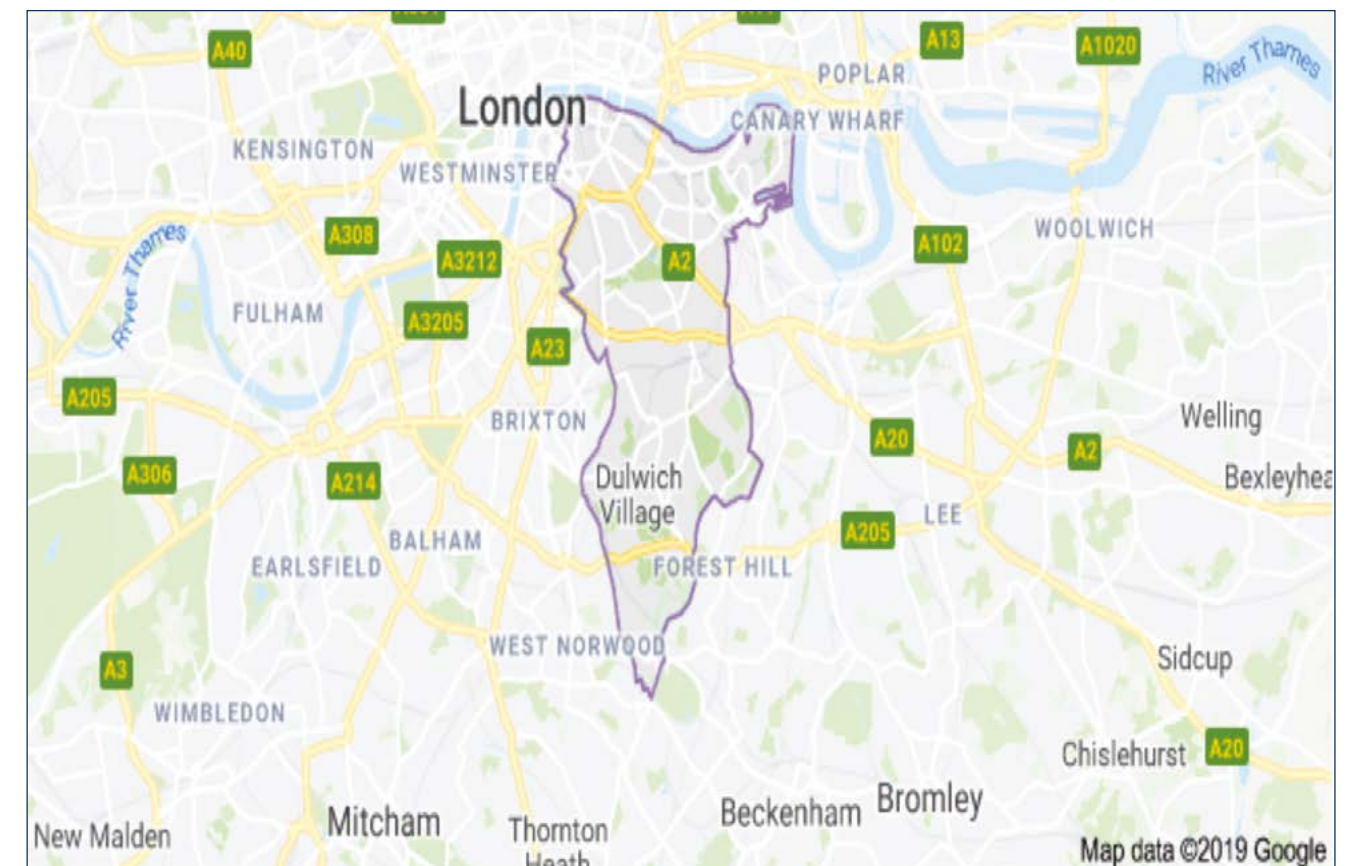
knowledge, offering organic horticultural advice and ensure new growers have access to the information and resources they need.

### **Food Buddies**

The London Poverty Food Project also introduced the role of Food Buddies. The idea was to develop the work of the Master Gardener by also having Food Buddies to act as ‘food champions’ in their local communities. Food Buddies were expected to engage with the existing (and new) supported growers in order to talk with them about how they can improve their diets and provide simple recipes for those living on a budget and who were experiencing or at risk of experiencing food poverty to increase uptake of fresh fruit and vegetables. The role of Food Buddies was to develop and share recipes with people in their local communities alongside carrying out a local ‘asset mapping’ in order to signpost participants to other local growing/food/eating/cookery initiatives.

The Master Gardener’s and Food Buddies acted as a sign posting resource to encourage others in the local community to participate in events and training delivered by Garden Organic. These workshops also provided an additional opportunity to address key issues associated with food poverty alongside practical skills associated with food growing, basic cooking and budgeting, food waste reduction, home composting etc.

## **STUDY SITE: SOUTHWARK**



***‘Southwark you have that northern strip of Southwark has the Shard, the GLA, there is a golden mile across the top and Borough market known for its food culture you step, a mile south of the river and you’re in some of the most deprived areas of London and that juxtaposition was interesting. When you say Southwark people are like yes the Southbank and you are like no you start coming south into Peckham and Peckham Rye you are talking about completely***

***different environment and there is a real juxtaposition in socioeconomic terms that southern belt of Southwark verses where people are living and living in the shadow of the Shard you know. A mile from Southwark Cathedral and you are in some of the hardest areas of London you could go in. And for me that is the challenge you know, it would have been easy to do this in a middle class area but we wouldn’t have got the results’ (Garden Organic Team Member)***

The above quote provides an insight about the rationale for choosing Southwark to deliver the London Food Project.





## Demography of Southwark. Deprivation and poverty

As identified in 'A Tale of Two Southwarks' (Southwark Giving, 2016), the top ten hidden and/or emerging needs in Southwark included: housing; homelessness; general poverty; opportunities and support for minority groups; care of the elderly; opportunities for children and young people; health and wellbeing; employment/unemployment; and the local economy.

Southwark is a mixed borough when it comes to income and wealth. Southwark was ranked the 40<sup>th</sup> most deprived local authority in England (out of 326), falling within the 10% most deprived local authority areas in the country. 38% of Southwark residents live in communities ranked in the 20% most deprived areas, and the poverty rate in Southwark is 31%, which is higher than the London average of 27%. As highlighted above, the unemployment ratio is the 4<sup>th</sup> highest rate in London (Trust for London, 2019). Income deprivation is most likely to affect the elderly and the young, with deprivation amongst older people being more widespread. Southwark has a particularly high level of older people living in income-deprived households; 34.3% received pension credit, which placed Southwark as the sixth worst region in the country. Additionally, an estimated 15,000 children (28%) in Southwark aged under 16 live in low income families. Child poverty within Southwark is worse than the average in England.

The link between poverty and poor health is well-founded, with increasing evidence showing that social adversity have negative effects from early in development, both during pregnancy and childhood (such as emotional, behavioural and cognitive development, and childhood obesity; Citizens UK, 2019).

The demographic information presented below has been collated from the Southwark Council document 'Overview of Southwark's Population' (2018) (see <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/health-and-wellbeing/public-health/health-and-wellbeing-in-southwark-jsna/southwark-profile>), the 'Protected Characteristics in Southwark JSNA Factsheet' (see <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/>

[health-and-wellbeing/public-health/health-and-wellbeing-in-southwark-jsna/population-groups-and-communities](#)), and Southwark Giving's 'A Tale of Two Southwarks' (see <http://southwarkgiving.org/research-report-sections>).

## Ethnicity

The Southwark population has a diverse range of ethnicities and cultural backgrounds. At the time of data collection (2018): 54% identified as White; 25% as black; 11% as Asian; and 10% as 'other'. This varied across the age groups, with people aged under 20 years old representing more diverse ethnicities in comparison to other age groups, with similar proportions of individuals from White and Black ethnic backgrounds.

## Population and age

The population of Southwark is approximately 314,200 (according to the most recent demographic statistics published in July 2018), and is one of the fastest growing populations in South East London. It has been estimated that the population will rise by 60,000 individuals (an increase of 20%) by 2030. Moreover, it is predicted that by 2030, there will be a growth among young people (projected to increase by 7,600), working age adults (projected to increase by 38,200), and older persons (projected to increase by 13,700). This increase can be attributed to natural change (i.e. more births than deaths) and international migration. The median age of the population in 2017 was 33.1 years, which is two years younger than the London average, and almost seven years younger than the national average.

## Disability, health and wellbeing

In line with the Equality Act (2010), an individual is considered to have a disability if they have a long-standing illness, disability or impairment which causes substantial difficulty with day-to-day activities. Approximately 13% of people living in inner London have a disability, equating to 40,700 individuals in Southwark. Of the children and young persons identified as having a disability: 3,050 had social and/or behavioural problems; 2,610 had

learning difficulties; 1,890 had stamina/breathing/fatigue issues; 1,230 had a mental health issue; 870 dexterity problems; 800 memory problems; 580 vision impairments; 440 hearing impairments; and 1,020 'other'. Further, 28% of 10-11 year olds are obese in Southwark, one of the highest rates of child obesity in London. For the adults identifying as having a disability: 21,160 had mobility problems; 15,470 had stamina/breathing/fatigue issues; 10,990 dexterity problems; 8,950 mental health issues; 6,110 had 'other' disabilities; 5,700 hearing impairments; 5,290 vision impairments; 5,290 learning difficulties; and 3,260 social/behavioural problems. Southwark also has issues with high teenage pregnancy rates, drug and alcohol misuse (6.7 people per 1000 received treatment for drug misuse in 2011, compared to the London average of 5.1), and HIV and sexually transmitted infections (Southwark Giving, 2016). With regards to mental health in Southwark, reporting of mental health issues is above average; 13.4% of the population reported depression and anxiety in 2014/15, which was higher than the London average of 11.7%.

## Religion and belief

According to the 2011 consensus, over half of Southwark residents stated their religion as Christian (52.5%) and 26.7% reported having 'no religion'. Other religions included Muslim (8.5%), Buddhist (1.3%), Hindu (1.3%), Jewish (0.3%), and Sikh (0.2%).

## Education and employment

According to 'A Tale of Two Southwarks' (Southwark Giving, 2016), when compared to other London boroughs, GCSE attainment for Southwark's disadvantaged pupils is above average. GCSE performance in Southwark schools is deemed 'excellent', with results exceeding those of London and on a national level. However, 41% of local voluntary and community organisations reported feeling that learning and education in this borough was doing 'about average', a finding that according to 'A Tale of Two Southwarks', would be more reflective of the uneven distribution of academic achievement across the borough. Poorer academic performance in areas with large BAME communities could be attributed to language barriers: 79.1% of school children are from a minority ethnic group and for 41.9% of pupils, English is not their first language. In terms of level three qualifications (equivalent to A-Levels), 40-43% of 19 year olds achieve the qualification, placing Southwark among the eight worst boroughs in London. In terms of employment, at the time of data collection (2018) 74.2% of people in Southwark were in employment, compared to a London average of 72.9%. However, employment rates vary across the borough between the different groups of residents. There are areas of high unemployment, with 6.9% being unemployed, slightly higher than a London average of 6.1%. Moreover, at least 8% of households are in long-term unemployment, or have never worked. As such, Southwark Giving's 'A Tale of Two Southwarks' identified unemployment in the over 50s as an emerging need for the borough. The number of individuals aged over 50 who claim out-of-work benefits is higher than the London average (3.2% versus 2.2%). The proportion of individuals with no qualifications is highest among those aged 50 to retirement age (33.3%).





## COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY RESEARCH

### RESEARCH, DESIGN, METHODS AND PARTICIPANTS

Towards the end of 2017, Garden Organic approached a research team at Coventry University to evaluate their London Food Poverty Project that had been ongoing since July 2016. The evaluation period started in January 2018 and lasted until December of the same year. This evaluation serves several purposes, including an independent examination of the LFPP's capacity to deliver its objectives (see below), and offering an opportunity for Garden Organic to further contribute evidence on their food-related activities, consolidating learning and reflecting on what is effective and what is less effective about the focus and approaches used. The objectives Garden Organic had set themselves for the LFPP were the following:

- Build a network of trained, community-based volunteers who will engage and encourage local residents to grow their own food and attend a series of food related workshops
- Provide quality resources and training to local residents so that they can make a sustained behaviour change with regard to food growing
- Provide a quality suite of 6 workshops in year 2 that engage and educate local people whilst enabling them to make more confident choices about the food they grow, buy, cook and eat
- The workshops will build knowledge and confidence to deal with and address the factors that lie at the heart of food poverty issues
- Build lasting community partnerships to support local residents and in the longer term to provide positive community lead solutions to tackle food poverty
- Measure the impact and outputs from the project activities to determine sustained behaviour change within the London borough of Southwark

The agreed approach for this evaluation consisted of four separate tasks including a) Inception and planning, b) Application for ethical approval and a review of the literature, c) Data Collection, and d) Data analysis and final report.

The planning of the evaluation followed an in-depth consultation with Garden Organic's Head of Sustainable Communities and the LFPP coordinator who, throughout the whole evaluation process, continued to enable access to the different project activities and participants in the project and provided detailed project reports.

Ethical approval for this research and evaluation project was granted by Coventry University at the end of January 2018. A detailed introductory literature overview, contextualising both the project and this report was conducted which consisted

of a detailed review of the existing academic and additional grey literature on community-based food growing (see Section 1).

The selected research methodology and data collection approach was strongly influenced by the purpose of this evaluation and by the characteristics of the LFPP itself. As indicated above, the aim of this evaluation was to understand if Garden Organic's well-established Master Gardener programme could work well in a highly-urbanised area like London's Southwark borough when focusing specifically on working with families on low income living in the most deprived areas of the borough. In order to further address the challenges faced by families who are at risk of food poverty, the project – in addition to the volunteer Master Gardeners – also trained volunteer Food Buddies.



Since incorporating Food Buddies into one of their projects and focusing specifically on food insecurity is a relatively new area of activity for Garden Organic, the London Food Poverty Project was using new approaches and can be considered a pilot study; therefore, a predominantly qualitative research approach was selected for this evaluation that was complimented with an analysis of the LFPP monitoring data. The decision for this methodology was taken as it adds an alternative approach to the growing body of evidence associated with the Master Gardener Programme, qualitative methods enable an in-depth understanding of aspects of a project that have worked and those that might have perhaps been less successful, from the views and experiences of key stakeholders but in addition, the ethnographic dimensions of the approach allows us to capture the various context in which the LFPP is operating.

In order to evaluate the London Food Poverty Project, the data collection comprised two different strands of activity. The first component consisted of data from monitoring case studies, quarterly and final project reports and feedback data routinely collected by LFPP's coordinator.

The second empirical phase employed a range of qualitative methods to capture the experiences of key stakeholders. A substantive amount of data collected was informed by a phenomenological perspective, which emphasises an individuals' own perceptions or subjective appraisals of situations. This allowed the research team to capture the experiences of those involved, allowing for detailed insights that illuminated the key aspects of the journey of those participating in the programme. Such insights are helpful when aiming to understand the transformative potential of involvement in the LFPP.

For the in-depth data collection, a combination of face-to-face interviews, participant observation during project activities and case studies capturing personal stories and experiences were employed that took place throughout the second half of the project. Evidence was collected using intensive note-taking and photography (for observational method), and note-taking, audio recording and transcription for the interviews.

Data collection started in February 2018 and continued until January 2019. A key method employed was participant observation which served to gain

some general experience of the programme and its approaches, and provided ideal opportunities to capture first hand volunteers' views, behaviour and interactions. The team carried out observations of Master Gardener training and community classes, in-service training, LFPP community outreach activities and Southwark Food Action Alliance meetings. This method enabled the researchers to experience and better understand the different activities of the LFPP but also provided many opportunities to engage in informal but informative conversations with project participants, alliance members, and individuals and families living in Southwark. Participant observations of a range of events (n=9), this allowed the researchers to gauge immediate responses and feedbacks to the specific activities and processes but also to collect data on the wider impact of the project.

These interviews (n= 9) were either scheduled specifically (e.g. with Garden Organic's project staff) or were conducted, to minimise costs and increase convenience for interviewees, in conjunction with group-based activities. One of the observation visits to a training event was also complemented by a site visit to two of the community gardens Master Gardener participants had set up and/or used as a teaching ground.

In addition to the observations, semi-structured interviews were another important method utilised for this evaluation. These interviews (9) were either scheduled specifically (e.g. with Garden Organic's project staff) or were conducted, to minimise costs and increase convenience for interviewees, in conjunction with group-based activities. For example, some interviews took place during in-service field trips or community outreach events, or right after a training activity. Such interviews allowed the research team to, for example, gain deeper insights into the motivations of participants and other stakeholders, and to better understand the inspirations behind and the development of the LFPP Project and the Southwark Food Action Alliance as well as the role and influence the LFPP Project has within Southwark's food growing landscape (see Appendix 1 for further detail re: data collection).

In accordance with established research practices and our application for ethics approval, interviewees were provided with a participant information sheet containing a summary of the research and contact details for any concerns or further information.

The provided information sheets offered a summary of the research project and contact details of the lead researcher if they would have any concerns or for further information. Written consent was obtained from all evaluation participants that engaged in semi-structured interviews.

The final data analysis utilised all the different qualitative and quantitative data sources described above, using a system of codes derived from the key aims of the project. These codes support the structuring of the data presented in the chapters below, however, the analysis, following a phenomenological perspective, was also strongly focusing on individuals' own perceptions, explanations or subjective appraisals of situations. Hence, the data section below also contains a number of individual case studies and observations to illustrate our key findings.

Key findings are structured around the project objectives.

## SECTION 3: KEY FINDINGS

### LONDON FOOD POVERTY PROJECT DELIVERING A COMMUNITY INFORMED APPROACH TO FOOD INSECURITY AND SECURITY

Garden Organic's London Food Poverty Project was a community facing programme that aimed to establish a network of trained volunteers who would act as active citizens embedding themselves within their local communities. The expectation was for volunteers to be diverse and recruited from communities living in Southwark, particularly from areas identified as deprived and/ or flagged up in local statistics as having communities 'at risk' or experiencing food poverty.

A key component of the programme is that volunteers would have access to a range of training opportunities in areas of food growing and/ or ways of making best use of produce grown.



Volunteers visit, the Brogdale Collection. <https://www.brogdalecollections.org/>



With the new addition of volunteer Food Buddies, and demonstrations on practical cooking skills and tips on how to cook healthy when living on a budget.

An anticipated outcome was that once trained, volunteers would serve as a community asset in which they would share their learning with others in their local community. This involved them in carrying out a range of community focused activities, this could include; working on a one-to-one or group basis with individuals in the local community, raising awareness around food growing, encouraging and supporting local people to get involved in food growing and healthy eating acting as a source of information. Hence, the LFPP was following in the vein of previous Master Gardener initiatives in terms of Master Gardener and Food Buddies taking a proactive role in their communities.

The diagram (Figure 1) provides a visual representation of the multi-layered approach that underpinned the programme design.

Garden Organic designed a project in order to engage and build relationships with a diverse range of people living and working across Southwark who were 'at risk' or experiencing food poverty. In addition, the project also aimed to be a mechanism for building a community asset which involved the wider community working together to meet the needs and deliver services for individuals living in deprived areas of the borough.

**Table 1** sets out our analysis that shows how the project design facilitated engagement from different stakeholders from within the community, and the significance of the programme and how it engaged with key stakeholders across Macro, Meso and Micro levels.

<b>Macro</b>	Developing strategic partnerships
<b>Meso</b>	Developing partnerships with key stakeholders involved in food growing and cooking initiatives
<b>Micro</b>	Engaging local people

The LFPP was designed to galvanise local people to get involved in food growing and cooking, but key to its sustainability and built into the project design was an aim to also build partnerships with key stakeholders working with or providing services to local communities at risk of food poverty. Working locally, and building local partnerships, was understood as important to raising awareness of food poverty but also in building a local network that brought relevant organisations/ bodies together. As stated in the previous section, the research team's approach involved spending time at the LFPP to elicit the views and experiences of key stakeholders and to observe a selection of the delivered activities. The data shows that the Master Gardener programme, in its adapted LFPP project form, was an innovative and effective mechanism for bringing people together and creating opportunities for key stakeholders to share knowledge, experiences, skills and resources. LFPP offering the potential to establish a community informed response to food insecurity and security. During field visits, the research team spoke formally and informally to volunteers, members of the public, the Garden Organic team members and other key stakeholders. The findings presented draw on the LFPP's monitoring data, interview data and observational data.

The data shows that the impact of the programme is far reaching, in terms of its reach across various levels and in terms of the legacy left in which trained volunteers remain active in their communities. Whilst it is too early to fully evidence the longevity of the changes identified in this report, the work carried out by those involved in the LFPP continues across Southwark.

In this section, we report on the key objective of the study. The sections are organised under the following headings:

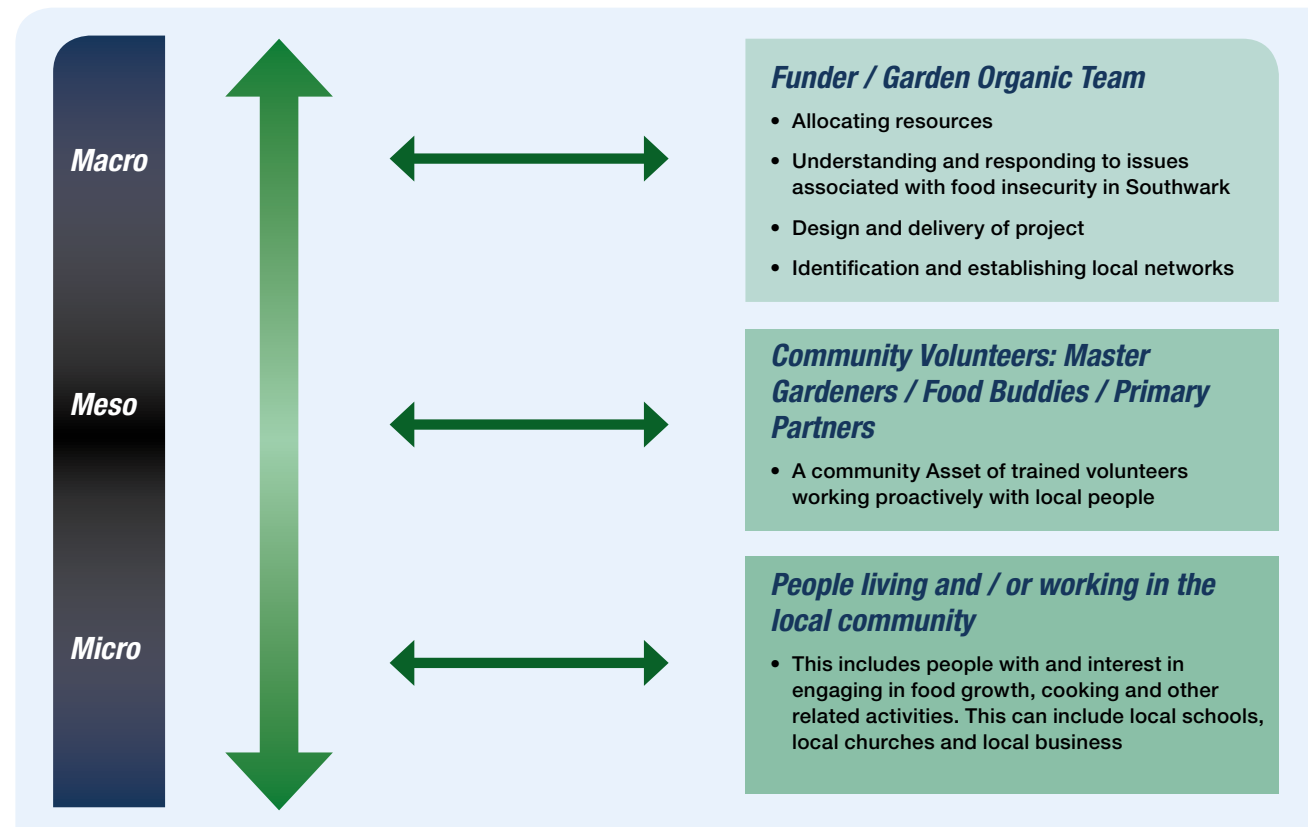
- **Establishing the Master Gardener and Food Buddy programme in Southwark**
- **Building a Master Gardener and Food Buddy community**
- **Engaging, sharing and learning**
- **Relational networks and wider community involvement**
- **Legacy of the London Food Poverty Project**
- **Reflection & learning**

## OBJECTIVE 1: ESTABLISHING THE MASTER GARDENER AND FOOD BUDDY PROGRAMME IN SOUTHWARK:

The London Food Poverty Project started its community outreach, recruitment and training activities in July 2016. This included the attendance of community events and the training of the first group of Master Gardeners. Volunteers for the Master Gardener roles were reached through a multitude of outreach methods including local news and social media, existing community networks, local community events and Volunteer Centres. Selection criteria for the volunteers included their food growing experience and enthusiasm as well as their connections with diverse groups in the Southwark community. The 2-day Master Gardener induction training was run on five different occasions throughout the course of the project, providing more than 30 future Master Gardeners with an introduction to and complimenting the role of a Master Gardener volunteer. Garden Organic Master Gardeners received a Garden Organic membership, uniform, a bag full of resources and lots of information on topics varying from 'how to design an attractive event stall', how to overcome barriers to food growing, and how to grow in an urban setting (e.g. windowsill growing).

The induction training events were also complemented by twelve community training events (that could also be attended by Master Gardeners and Food Buddies), ten professional in-service training events, and participation in community events that not only served to reach out to the community but also to reconnect with fellow volunteers. Each volunteer was asked to reach out and support the food growing activities of five individuals, either at their home or in a community setting with an expectation that they would commit 30 volunteering hours per year. In addition, they were asked to have food-growing conversations with 50 people.

Figure 1





**Table 2 Monitoring data for the Master Gardener component (all 26 months).**

	Project Targets	Year 1	Year 2	Total
<b>Master Gardener</b>				
Number of MGs trained	20	24	13	<b>37</b>
Induction Courses held	N/A	3	2	<b>5</b>
Mentored Growers	200	40	187	<b>227</b>
Hours Volunteered	1200	1,151	2404	<b>3555</b>
Food Growing Conversations	1600	812	1476	<b>2288</b>

The monitoring data for the Master Gardener component of the London Food Poverty Project (see Table 2) provides a first quantitative indication of the positive results of the project activities in this area, with all of the original targets over-achieved. For example, the monitoring data shows the project exceeded the majority of the delivery targets set for the total number of volunteers reported to be trained as Master Gardeners was 37 (target set at 20). Based on the date, it appears that at the end of programme five volunteers had left the programme for various personal and professional reasons, but that was still leaving the total number of active Master Gardeners at 50% higher than originally hoped for. It speaks to the positive experience that volunteering as a Master Gardener has been for the participants that the number of Master Gardener volunteers recruited, trained and working in their local communities as a Master Gardener over the project duration has remained stable. Our analysis of the interview and observational data provides examples of the myriad of ways in which volunteers demonstrated their commitment to the project. Our analyses does not breakdown individual participants level of involvement, but interview and observational data provides some insight about factors that may influence volunteers level of involvement. However, the monitoring data does indicate that the Master Gardener role proved very popular and shows that it had a wide reach in terms of the number of interactions reported between volunteers and people living in the local community. The successful outreach by volunteer Master

Gardeners is illustrated by some additional indicators in Table 2. that were also all overachieved. The table gives an indication of activities and interactions conducted by the volunteers (these relationships could be formal or informal), in which the Master Gardeners supported 227 mentored growers (14% above target), carried out 2288 food growing conversations (43% above target) and volunteered for a total of 3555 hours (nearly three times the target). Overall, the Master Gardener component of the project overachieved all of its targets.

Food Buddies were only recruited and trained in the second half of the London Food Poverty Project. All Food Buddy volunteers received a one-day induction training that included an introduction to Garden Organic, to the role of Food Buddies, to the Master Gardener scheme, and to ways in which Food Buddies could spread their knowledge and enthusiasm for healthy eating and growing within their local communities. Food Buddies also saw a demonstration on low-budget cooking and learnt from an experienced teacher about offering community-based cooking classes. Throughout the second part of the project, Food Buddies were also able to receive in-service training (usually together with the Master Gardeners), to get a Food Hygiene certificate, and to work, frequently alongside Master Gardeners, on community outreach activities.

**Table 3 Monitoring data for the Food Buddy component (only started at end of Year 1)**

Food Buddies	Project Target	Year 1	Year 2	Total
FB Trained	10	0	11	11
Hours volunteered	510	0	195	195
Food Conversations	850	24	982	982





The monitoring data for the Food Buddy component shows slightly more mixed project results in comparison to that of the Master Gardener component. Whilst it shows that Garden Organic successfully met the target set for recruiting and training Food Buddies (n=10), volunteers did not meet the delivery target set for the number of hours of volunteering activities (about 50h per annum per volunteer). In total, table 3 shows that Food Buddies carried out 315 fewer hours of volunteering than the delivery target set. Garden Organic's final project report describes this as being due to the smaller number of opportunities available within only one year, but we will below illuminate further explanations. However, it is worthwhile emphasising that despite the lower number of volunteer hours contributed, the total number of food-related conversations was higher than the expected target.

One of the aims of the London Food Poverty Project was to engage with vulnerable communities within Southwark and to reach out to a diverse range of people. The people trained by Garden Organic as Master Gardener volunteers were fairly representative of Southwark's population and came from a diverse range of background in terms of their gender, ethnicity, age, and educational background. While Food Buddies were predominately all female, they also were a very mixed group in terms of their age, ethnicity and educational backgrounds. Overall, the project included volunteers with little gardening and cooking experience and others who had some experience and an avid interest in gardening and/ or cooking.

*I haven't had any formal training in horticulture and I am not sure if you have to be an expert. But I guess that is slightly concerning if you come up with someone who expects you to know a lot. You might not (Volunteer, MG)*

During interviews and conversations with volunteers, at training and community events, volunteers reported a variety of reasons for their decision to become a volunteer. For example, participants spoke about wanting to get involved in an activity that offered them an opportunity to get involved in their local community:

*I love the fact that we are doing this school work and building community gardens within schools and involving teachers as well as small kids. And going into Age UK, you have school kids that are going there and the food that is grown is going into the kitchens (Volunteer, MG)*

Volunteers also viewed their involvement in the project as guided by their personal and/or professional interest in gardening and/ or food growing and the wider environment.

*I got into it because I really like cooking and eating and I am casually interested in nutrition. My background is in anthropology and geography ... so I am interested in community stuff as well. So, growing was the missing link I suppose. I have been working for an international development charity as an intern for a couple of years and I guess I just decided that I wanted to try and do something with my interest in food and nature and that sort of thing (Volunteer, MG).*

Volunteering was an opportunity to get out the house, meet people and get involved with nature:

*When I get the opportunity to do one-to-ones with people, it is like a day off. Just talking to one person is amazing because you might be the one person that a person talks to in a week. So to be able to afford the time to talk to someone. You start off with the garden but there is so much other stuff. But then it makes their day as well and I get a lot of satisfaction out of that (Volunteer, MG)*

It also was a way of doing something outside of work, to engage with other individuals and with organisations, to learn something new:

*As well as helping people to grow, I really enjoy that immediate feedback I get. I didn't get that from work and I find that I get that and its rewarding, just knowing more. The more you are in contact with these types of groups, the more you find out what is going on. I hope to get some form of income from something related to this (Volunteer, MG)*

Volunteering was also considered as something of a gateway to an activity that has therapeutic qualities, since volunteering within the project brought them something social, purposeful and positive for their own sense of well-being. One volunteer shared how the programme had positively impacted his mental well-being:

*I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for this programme. This programme is the best thing to have happened to me...(Volunteer, MG)*

In line with previous studies of the Master Gardener programme, a reoccurring theme across the data was how participation fostered individuals' confidence and self- esteem, and so the added valued they perceived from the project was deemed invaluable:

*I think that what they are doing is really good because maybe it inspires people who have never thought of growing stuff to give it a go. So, I think that is their niche and that is cool to go against that thing that attracts people who are already in it. Or, they are making use of the people who are already involved to get people interested (Volunteer, MG)*

Participants also identified wanting to help people and identified Garden Organic's vision around food growing as something that appealed to them and as a factor that influenced their decision to volunteer.

*I guess seeing all the projects that are happening around London and meeting people doing it. I guess personally it appeals to me quite a lot so it is in line with my values (Volunteer, MG)*

Interestingly, three volunteers at an event shared that they had recently embarked on a change of career and joining the Master Gardener programme was one of a number of gardening-related opportunities they had accessed. They described the Master Gardener programme as offering a valuable opportunity for them to access training and become part of a Southwark food community:

*More recently I have been trained as a growing buddy so I had some training and went into a local primary school...Capital*

*Growth was running that programme. I met with the local lady leading and enjoyed doing that. I suppose I am just looking for more experience in that field. I work part time as a cookery club tutor... Basically, I am changing careers. Before I became from social researcher to a consultant and I was made redundant from both for different reasons, the second because it went bust. So, I had my first son so decided that I was going to take time off and look after him and try to develop something else (Volunteer, FB).*

Speaking to the success of the project's outreach activities, the data shows there were circumstances in which volunteers had also come across information advertising the MG programme or they had heard about the Master Gardener programme at a prior community event and had decided to find out what it was all about:

*I have seen the flyers for the events. I did work with [Co-coordinator] until about two years ago, but I have seen quite a few fliers around, and it's a presence. And I think it's a good presence as well. And [names co coordinator] has been very proactive and dynamic as well, the way she kind of gets out there. Great on the phone, she's really good when she speaks on the phone, she really gets you engaged which is fantastic. Very convincing. You need that; you need advocates that can do that (Primary Partner)*

Similarly, another volunteer described how s/he learnt about the project:

*I started volunteering in a community garden in 2015 and I think that it was 6 months or so into my volunteering that they must have done something at the Garden for a workshop and I met [co coordinator] and [Name] and Capitol growth. I have gone to a few of their courses and events and they were at one of the events (Volunteer, MG)*

Some volunteers were also attracted by the reputation Garden Organic has, and perhaps some motivation came from the notion of joining this organisation and receiving the title of Master Gardener.



*I enjoy it any way and I know about Garden Organic, so I was quite keen to getting the training just in terms of what happens (Volunteer, MG)*

In addition, what also encouraged involvement was the proactive approach taken by Garden Organic. When asked about how participants found out about the programme and what motivated them to get involved, the data identifies that Garden Organic, and particularly the role of the coordinator, was central. Two main factors are evident; the project team adopted a very proactive recruitment approach; the initial recruitment activity started prior to the official start of the project early in April 2016. Volunteers were recruited using a range of approaches: via members of the Garden Organic team attending community meetings, community events, through community organisations, tenants' and residents' organisations, promotional literature, social media and face-to-face interactions. Hence, spending time networking with those identified as potential key stakeholders and attending potential networking events was very valuable to raising interest and awareness of the project:

*I met her when she did an organic growing course at Draper Hall where I am the [names role] and we then communicated straight away on not just them using the hall but also on the green issue and everything else. So that's how I mainly know of her work. Otherwise I've met her from out and about, from stalls and things like that. (Volunteer, MG)*

Speaking to the importance of finding the right project manager, a volunteer describes:

*[Names coordinator] is the driving force has been important. Just thinking [coordinator] is sleeping, breathing this. [Coordinator] is keeping us going (Volunteer, MG)*

There were similar explanations put forward as to why volunteers decided to become a Food Buddy. However, in conversations with two Food Buddies at an event, it became clear that there were additional factors that influenced their decisions to volunteer as Food Buddies. For example, the role of Food Buddies was perceived as being less

labour intensive for volunteers and more aligned to volunteers' individual personal or professional interests in cooking:

*Master Garden is more time per month that you need to commit to and I am really busy with my family. I was more interested in doing the Food Buddies because I am a chef and it is more my area. So, when it came up I thought you can actually switch over, so I did a couple of months after doing the MG training. But it was good because I could discuss both aspects. I did a gardening club at my son's school as a MG so it's changeable for me with FB. (Volunteer, MG and FB)*

There was general agreement that the project was organised and delivered in a flexible way which gave potential volunteers an opportunity to change between the role of a Master Gardener and Food Buddy. This connection between the role of Master Gardener and Food Buddy, which allowed for some overlap between different roles, related to the intention behind the introduction of the Food Buddies component as a complement to the Master Gardener programme.

*... You can grow it, and so that is where the Food Buddy's bit came out. It is not only growing the food but doing interesting things with the food you have grown that shouldn't cost an arm and a leg. And that's where the growing and recipe cards came from, the two complement each other (Volunteer, MG and FB)*

However, during an interview, one Food Buddy was asked to share their experiences about the Food Buddy training; they found it difficult to recollect specific information related to training sessions geared primarily towards equipping volunteers with skills needed to perform the Food Buddy role.

*Master Gardener training overlaps into it but I find it hard to remember the Food Buddies training. I think we learnt stuff around organic food and food hygiene.*

Comparing the Food Buddies programme to the Master Gardener's, however, it was described that

it felt as if 'the Food Buddies program was missing structure and direction'. One Food Buddy recalled:

*I've only received one day of Food Buddy training, and that was focusing much more on gardening than cooking. In total, I think, I went 3 times to some training but there wasn't really a proper Food Buddy programme, there was not really a clear message of what we were meant to give to the public. Sometimes I was feeling a bit lost. I absolutely realise there were no bad intentions, but for us Food Buddies, there was a lack of structure. Even for a passionate person. But maybe that was because there are only so few of us.*

This statement appeared to be influenced by the recognition that Food Buddy was a new area of work for Garden Organic and there were practical aspects of the programme that created particular challenges.

*One of the challenges I am facing is that I would have needed a portable kit to demonstrate cooking. So that didn't happen which is why, in the end, I could really only do very simple things. But even so the Food Buddies were somewhat disconnected from the Master Gardener side of things, maybe there could be a closer link to community gardens?*

A similar sentiment was expressed by another volunteer:

*Food Buddies, there needs to be a focus ... because it was not quite clear what we were; we weren't able to perform how we wanted to. What would we be doing, where will we be doing it, the focus on the one-to-ones. Like I said, I don't know anyone who has done the one-to-one unless they went to a friend's home. It was very difficult to go to a stranger's home. So that should be an option on the side. Highlight it, but it should be more about where can we do more food demonstrations, that we speak to projects. Blackfriars, if we had contacted charities that actually work with people; youth offending teams and things like that (Volunteer, FB)*

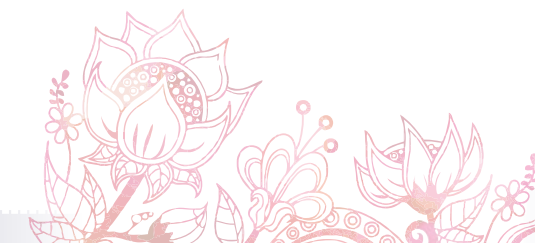
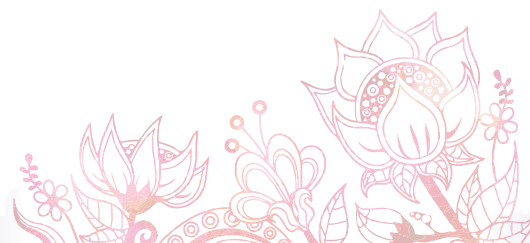
The quotes below by a member of the Garden Organic team draws attention to the importance of the Food Buddies role to the project, but also the challenges that were linked to the organisation's venture into a new area of activity:

*The Food Buddy's bit I'd like to develop a bit more from an organisation perspective. But as an organisation, we are an organic gardening charity. How much do I move from organic growing? And you know the Food Buddy's bit is not implicitly organic. Though I think it is the right bed fellow for this project, but would it stand alone? And would I get support from our trustees and how much would we be doing things other organisations are already doing? I would have to look at the opportunity for that. But if it forms a nice part of the Master Gardener programme, then I think it's the right thing to do. It could equally be that we go into another area and we do the Master Gardener and we partner with another organisation that do the cooking and eating side of it. And I think the project could sit alongside someone else's project. But I do think the growing, cooking and eating are critical in this environment. (Garden Organic Team Member)*

Nonetheless, the flexibility and awareness linked to having both Master Gardeners and Food Buddies in the project was important to ensuring that the project was delivered in a way in which the project and volunteers would be responsive to potential needs they may encounter along the range of challenges associated with food poverty in Southwark.

Overall, when a cross section of people the research team engaged with were asked about the project, the general impressions were positive and described commitment lasting beyond the length of the originally funded project:

*Yes, it definitely worked for me. And I know that it has definitely worked for others, just in a different way. I am a now a Red Box co-coordinator and I met with a group of women the other day and while I am talking to them about the Red Box, my Master Gardener hat came on and it is like ah, right. You have a*





*little growing space out there, let's put you in touch with ...so I introduced them to [the Co-coordinator] and there is a possibility with how the Master Gardener can work with them. Even if it is just one person that can go in there and support them...so every time I go out ... (Volunteer, MG)*

An important aspect that was highlighted frequently is related to the way in which the project was organised and delivered and the support and encouragement people received from the Coordinator:

*Support and resources I can use and someone I can ask questions, where I have always been overwhelmed by not having someone to go to. I already have access to the people so we're using this to support other people. The other thing would be, my cleaning lady the other day asked me, because she saw I had book laying around at home, she said she was trying to grow some strawberries at home for her daughter. So someone like that, someone that I come into contact with that maybe don't have a clue how to grow things and I can ask questions or give them a chance to ask me questions and give them advice (Volunteer, MG).*

For some, this sense of mutual support appears to have continued beyond the duration of the project:

*Absolutely, we have a network and I talk to [Co coordinator] every week because of the Southwark Food Action Alliance. And I know that the MG is running on a small scale, so there is still that connection there. And I know that she is always at the end of the phone if I need her. And the other Master Gardeners, some of us still keep in touch and I am in touch with [names Food Buddy] all the time.*

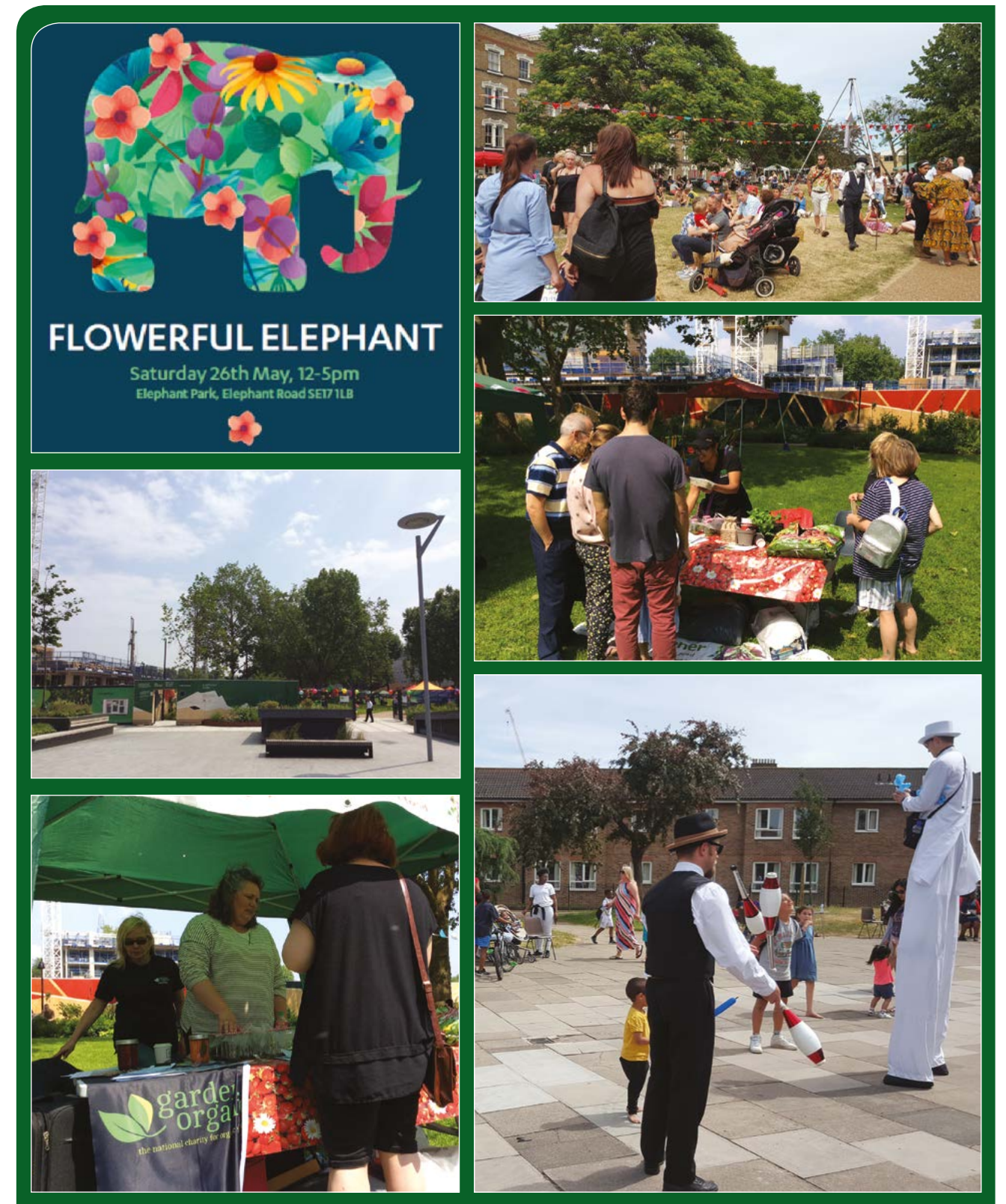
*And with the website, its good when you want to keep up, when you have that question you can go back to that...(Volunteer, MG)*

*Yes, it seems really well organised and Garden Organic is a strong brand. Sometimes, when I have done this sort of thing, the beginning is good but then it phases out in terms of support because it is volunteers and they may not have the time later on. But I think finding the supportive growers and speaking to 50 people does not sound too difficult, but I guess not quite achieving that might be an issue (Volunteer, MG).*

Overall, the targets set for Master Gardener volunteers were also viewed as realistic.

*For me, the targets we've been given, it is completely manageable because it is kind of what I am doing anyway. For someone who has just been gardening on their allotments or in their garden, I can see how it can be daunting. I feel they need to give a clear explanation of what that means when they sign you up.*

However, the diversity of the volunteers meant that whilst some felt very confident in sharing their knowledge and experiences with others in their community, this may not be the case for everyone.





As such the support and training was important, for example, for running a stall at a community event:

*I suppose I did not quite expect it but I think it is quite a nice idea because it is nice to do those types of events that you are supporting people. I do not have an issue but I suppose if you are the type of person who is not used to talking to people it might seem a bit intimidating (Volunteer, MG).*

For Food Buddies, the challenge of meeting the targets was also impacted by some practical issues such as having a venue with appropriate facilities to be able to carry out practical cooking demonstrations, prior identification of potential partners, prior thinking associated with how the Food Buddy area of the project would support people in the local community on an individual basis. Based on conversations with volunteers and considering the lower than anticipated number of volunteer hours reached, this was an area where targets were potentially challenging.

There was also some wariness associated with label Master Gardener and the expectations others might associate with such a label:

*So the 50 is about having conversations with people. Because I am food growing, I tend to rabble that to people anyway. But the 5 people, I guess my experience at the community garden is that they can sometimes expect too much of you. You may*

*be an inexperienced community Gardener, and they want you to solve all their problems for you and answer all their questions or build a fence for them. So I'm weary of people thinking I am going to offer them more than I can (Volunteer, MG)*

There was also an understanding that it was important to continue to widen interest across Southwark in this area:

*I feel like we need to fight the stereotype of the type of people that get involved. Even at the community garden I see the same people over and over again and it is a bit of a self-perpetuating thing. And often the*

*people who are automatically interested in it, it is because that they have been exposed to it anyway. Whether it is gardening or the outdoors or cooking whatever they're interested in it. But, it is the people who have not been exposed to that that need it more. (Volunteer, MG)*

Another person highlighted the importance of the work the Southwark Food Poverty project is involved in:

*[Name] and I are obviously doing the events with the Walworth Community Garden Network. And that's fantastic. It's about local people growing in the communities, be that in window boxes, be it wherever. Because people always think you need an allotment, no you don't. You can grow on your window ledge, you can grow outside where your flat is, and you can grow on your balcony. So that's saying to people you may be in a city, but you can still grow. And as we get to a more sustainable future, we've got to have more of that. So it's great that that ground work is done with organisations like Garden Organic, because that's getting that message across now because it's imperative with what's happening with the environment, that we do that. So that we are more sustainable in the future. Sustaining these relationships beyond the duration of the project to maximise how they could remain as a community asset was identified as a potential opportunity to ensure a long-lasting relationship of volunteers with Garden Organic beyond the duration of the programme (Volunteer, MG)*

There is also a sense that having established links with a range of partners and having people actively working in their local communities, there may be a role for an external body, such as the local authority to provide some support to sustaining the work underway as a result of the project:

*I think what [coordinator] is doing at this estate that is a really cool example of how things change...; she's set a good example for that for what can happen in Southwark. But it does also require the local council to*

*be involved to. But I think it is about building networks, but also inspiring people because maybe if you inspire someone, they will do it at their local estate (Volunteer, MG)*

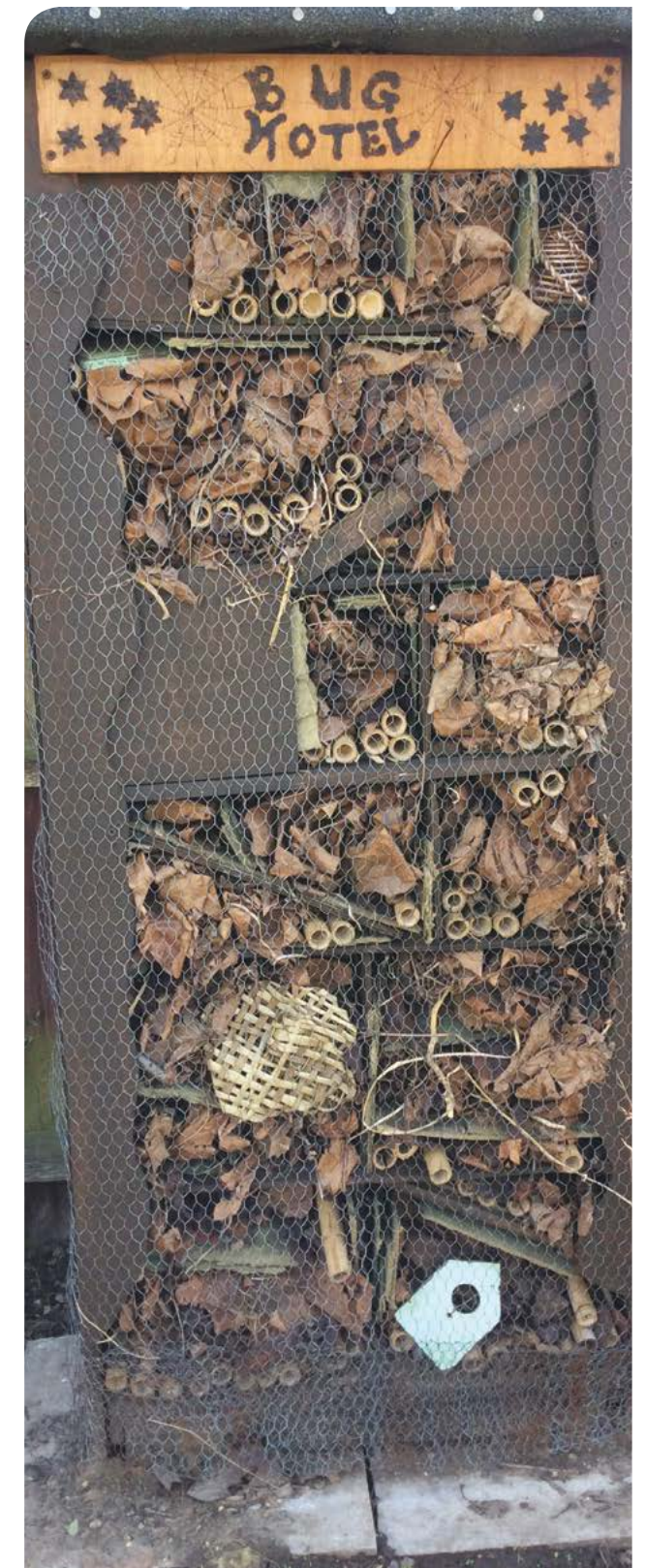
Perceptions associated with the potential sustainability of the community asset developed appeared associated with being able to access resources beyond the project and able to maintain the relationship established, between the coordinator and the volunteers, between volunteers and the links established in the community.

Bos and Kneafsey's 2014 evaluation of the initial Master Gardener programme identified that the typical demographic profile of Master Gardener volunteers was a person that was middle aged, female, English in ethnicity and Christian in faith, or belonging to no faith group. As previously noted, Southwark is a diverse area and to some extent this diversity was reflected in the volunteers who engaged in the project, the members of the local community who attended MG training events and the communities in which MG and FB delivered activities.

In so saying, there is a need to continue to raise awareness of this area of work. Volunteers spoke positively about their volunteering experience. They welcomed the opportunity to learn or develop new skills, to be part of a food community and have opportunities to share their interest with others. They welcomed the flexibility of the programme delivery and the types of activities they could carry out to meet their volunteering targets. The programme created a range of opportunities and for some volunteers this led to becoming involved with other initiatives independently of the Food Poverty project.

The personal dimension of the project and dedication shown by those involved was important; this instilled confidence and encouraged volunteers to be autonomous in terms of feeling they were able to take ideas forward in their own right but knew there would be support available if required.

In order to provide a holistic picture of the multifaceted potential of the project, the story of Maria, a Master Gardener, is described in more detail in the case study below.







## JOURNEY OF A MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER

### Maria : A Case Study of a Master Gardener

*'It has given me the confidence that I know something and I can do something. Not just for myself but for someone else.'*

*And when you sit down and work out the effect it has, then you realise it's quite good. Without feeling confident about it, you can't go forward' (Maria, Volunteer, MG).*

The opening quote was taken from an interview with Maria three months after the formal delivery of the London Food Poverty Project had finished. During the interview, Maria spoke enthusiastically about her journey as a Master Gardener and her continued involvement with food growing in her local community. This involvement included delivering food growing sessions with children and teachers in schools, being in the process of starting to work with Age UK, starting a Community Interest Company, being appointed as a fire brigade cadet instructor delivering growing sessions to young people at a local fire station, being a representative of the Southwark Food Action Alliance and continuing to provide ongoing support to individuals in her local community.

Maria was one of the first cohorts recruited to the project in Year 1. Maria identifies as White British, female and aged 45-55 and as the main carer for her elderly mother. Maria was born and grew up in Southwark but at the time when the programme began had just recently returned to live in London after a number of years living on the South coast of England. Her decision to return was personal; she had left an abusive relationship and had spent time living in a domestic violence refuge. In her interview, she shared how this difficult period had negatively impacted her health and well-being and also had reduced her self-esteem and confidence. She also shared how she was now a carer for her mum and described that whilst it was nice to be home spending time with her mother, this time commitment in combination with having lived outside London for a while meant that she had lost touch with some of her social networks.

For Maria, becoming a Master Gardener was transformational. Over the course of the evaluation, we encountered Maria on a number of occasions, and during formal and informal conversations she was keen to share the wide ranging impact being a Master Gardener had on her life. She for example described:

*'My head is just swimming. Every time I am looking for opportunities with everything and my head just swims. I feel like one of those kids that has just eaten a whole tube of smarties [laughs]. I have just ODED on E numbers, and I am like that all the time, I feel bubbling all the time and it is exciting. And to watch someone's face when you are talking to them is ... "You've got a bit of space out there, you can put a few pots there" and ...oh yes, it's a small win but a big one at the same time. This is infectious'.*

For Maria, being a Master Gardener opened up a new way of life. She was a core member of the volunteering group who embraced every opportunity. Being a Master Gardener opened up access to new food networks, led to her being involved in activities in which she was able to share her knowledge and provide support to others in her local community. She describes training as Master Gardener as a big confidence booster:

*...'now I can stand up in front of a group of people and talk, I can look at how to lesson plan, going and talking to teachers, arranging meetings with people and taking on this school club and teaching this group. I have the teachers in the school coming along and saying, wow!'*

Maria has found that her engagement with the London Food Poverty Project was empowering, and as previous research identified elsewhere (Bowers et al, 2008), she described how this particular volunteering work has positively impacted her health and wellbeing, given her a feeling of being involved in something meaningful in which she feels connected to like-minded people (a food growing network) and was equipped with skills that give her confidence to share her knowledge with both vulnerable groups in Southwark but also with



decisions makers. She also describes the sense of achievement she feels from being able to do something worthy and practical within her community. Equally as important is how being involved in the Master Gardener project has helped her overcome her social isolation since it has led to her meeting a diverse group of people, many of whom she now considers to be her friends (Bos and Kneafsey, 2014; Brown et al, 2015)

To establish food growing as an asset of community value, Garden Organic needed to build a sense of community among Master Gardeners and Food Buddies; a community of active citizens around food growing activities which enabled self-directed learning practices. It was envisaged that these practices would lead to greater empowerment as they could collectively address a range of issues around food poverty by facilitating, at the micro-level, relational networks of wider community involvement towards the self-production and consumption of food. It is this building of community between Master Gardeners and Food Buddies which the next section now turns to.

## BUILDING A MASTER GARDENER AND FOOD BUDDY COMMUNITY

### Excerpt of field notes from In-service Training Event for Master Gardener and Food Buddies: the visit of the National Fruit Collection at Brogdale

After the visit to the Abbey Physic Community Garden in Faversham (<https://www.visitkent.co.uk/attractions/abbey-physic-community-garden-1812/>), the coach continued its journey (with two Food Buddies, twelve Master Gardeners, and six Growing Buddies) towards the National Fruit Collection of Brogdale Farm. Once there, the visit of Brogdale Farm started with a bit of free time which people spend walking around the different stores, taking in the varieties of trees on sale, buying some local fruits and fruit products or looking at all the different stores offering their crafts.

Then lunch was provided at the farm's café (soup and sandwiches) during which different people sat around smaller tables and the lively conversations about the volunteers' experiences continued. I sat together with one Food Buddy [name], two MGs (one of them, who also had a visiting friend along), and one Growing Buddy from Maidstone [name]. During lunch, there was an intensive exchange of experiences around their respective volunteering work, which emphasised the usefulness of these types of events provided by the project [name] is a Food Buddy who is working for a law firm (and her volunteering is part of the firm's CSR practices), as a Food Buddy, she is working together with a school and is also otherwise very engaged in food related projects; she is particularly aware of social justice issues related to food poverty. (More in-depth conversations with individual volunteers are recorded separately.)

A staff member of Brogdale conducted the guided tour of the large area in which the British National Fruit Collection is holding/growing the largest collection of fruit trees in one site globally.

The collection holds varieties from all the temperate zones around the world, and it is managed by DEFRA. The collection includes ornamental trees, a large cider apple tree collection (grafted on M9 root stock), and pears (grafted onto quince stock) ... and many more. During the tour, the volunteers seemed to be really interested in what our guide explained, and used the opportunity to ask a lot of questions, e.g. about the growing practices (e.g. different grafting methods, why not organic?), the history of the site, and the different fruit tree varieties. The tour was a little bit impacted by the rainy weather, but spirits remained high throughout.

After the Brogdale Farm tour ended, we all went back onto the bus. When dropping off the Growing Buddies from another Garden Organic Programme based in Maidstone, Kent everyone was invited to tea and biscuits in a successful Maidstone Community garden, where local Growing Buddies were sharing the Shepway Chariots Community Garden's history, its challenges, and its successes. Again, this was another opportunity for lively discussions and exchange of experiences that was beneficial for the Southwark Master Gardeners (and perhaps Food Buddies?).

## OBJECTIVE 2: COMMUNITY LEARNING: ENGAGING, SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Training, mentoring and knowledge sharing are core to the London Food Poverty Project and run through all the activities offered for and by the Food Buddies and Master Gardeners. At the outset of designing the London Food Poverty Project, it was acknowledged that access to appropriate and ongoing training, mentoring and knowledge sharing opportunities are important to equip and support volunteers to fulfil their roles and to achieve the project's goals. Hence, one key strategy was to ensure the project offered volunteers not only one- or two-day long induction courses, but that there was a regular offer of in-service training which served the dual purpose of increasing the volunteers' knowledge on specific subject topics but also demonstrated creative ways on how to share such knowledge to others. Furthermore, these regular training offers intentionally supported the creation of a Master Gardener and Food Buddies community which enabled social networking, mutual moral support and exchange of practical experiences and learning. Over the duration of the project, a range of training opportunities were provided; Table 3 gives an overview of the number and types of training sessions that were delivered throughout the course of the project and that ranged from participation at the Garden Organic's National Volunteer Conference in September 2016 and the different volunteer induction courses to in-service training including subject-specific training courses and whole-day field trips to various public and community gardens. All the in-service sessions were open to both Food Buddies and Master Gardeners and focused on a range of areas associated with food growing and cooking, but also provided an opportunity to consider issues associated with working with a vulnerable community. The data collected through evaluation forms indicated that training participants were very satisfied with the courses provided, with feedback being 95% completely positive (i.e. highest score of 5 out of 5). The data collected independently by the authors of this report illustrates that volunteers' training experiences were positive for a variety of reasons.

For example, volunteers spoke about how accessing training provided opportunities to learn and or develop new skills:

*I went to five or six of the training groups. I found some more useful than others. And I really enjoyed them. It's useful for me just to meet people coming into the area, but I also learnt a lot about gardening. Particularly, I felt one of the most interesting ones, and a thing I want to take further, is the one we've done on exotic plants. Particularly as a lot of the plants that we were talking about are plants from countries where we had migration into Britain from. So a lot of people recognize those plants as plants either from their home, or their parents' home, or going back to their grandparents home. And that makes an important connection (Volunteer, MG)*

September 2016	National Volunteer Conference (Garden Organic)
October 2016	Master Gardener Induction
January 2017	<b>Urban Orchards</b>
January 2017	<b>Dementia awareness</b>
April 2017	Master Gardener Induction
June 2017	Food Buddy Induction
July 2017	<b>Composting</b>
July 2017	<b>Dangerous/ Exotic Plants Visit</b>
August 2017	Food Buddy Induction
October 2017	Educational visit to Sissinghurst Castle Garden
December 2017	<b>Herbal Christmas Crafts</b>
January 2018	<b>Food Hygiene Level 2</b>
January 2018	<b>Pests and Diseases</b>
January 2018	<b>Chilli's</b>
October 2018	Educational visit to Abbey Physic Garden
October 2018	Educational visit to National Fruit Tree Collection, Kent

Table 3



The structure and range of training available meant volunteers gained practical skills (e.g. on organic growing and new ideas around cooking when on a budget) but also included scope for volunteers to develop transferable skills that supported their roles as Master Gardeners and Food Buddies. Talking about the things they learned during the training, one volunteer shared that learning was “not just related to growing but working with individuals and small groups, and manning the stand”. Another enthused on the feedback forms: “Amazingly informative and educational!” Something especially noted during interviews and reflected in the data collected is the way in which volunteers spoke candidly about the confidence gained from attending training sessions (even if this confidence is about clear communication and setting limits to expectations):

*I think so, and through my community gardening I have learnt that you have to be clear with people what you can offer them so not to create the wrong expectations.*

Another describes the benefits of being a volunteer with the LFPP project:

*For me, it's the training. I know that I can teach people but I can be a bit too academic about it sometimes. And I am not that good about making it accessible. Sometimes I think I am good at inspiring people to try stuff but I am not always so good at the details. I would really like to get better at that and they do a lot of that. I guess, it just ties in so well with the stuff I do at the community garden (Volunteer, MG).*

One also commented on the good timing of the induction and in-service training sessions:

*The training is perfect because it is the growing season and people tend to move away from gardening in the winter so I think it is just fine (Volunteer, MG).*

The project attracted people who had prior knowledge and work related experiences, so training sessions also created important social opportunities in which volunteers with a shared interest could meet and learn from each other:

*And it is good to meet people doing similar things but also another organisation to work with so to build up a bigger network in Southwark. So part of it is the sharing and learning part of it (Volunteer, MG).*

Apart from peer-to-peer learning, training sessions, community information events and attendance at community events included a networking dimension, so an opportunity to meet individuals working in other areas but with a keen interest in food growing. For example, an idea of networking with London Food Poverty Project beyond its current scope was suggested:

*I very much liked the Master Gardener side of it: I think the idea of training people up to become not just good gardeners but gardeners that can share their skills with other people, I think it's extremely important and I'd like to see more of that. And maybe, if it is slightly different, no not so much different but in addition to it, it could maybe concentrate on particular community garden groups. So try and say, yeah, 'you know we've got a fair few gardeners on the Brandon, maybe we could concentrate on getting one or two of those'. So look at the local areas, and make it then have a relationship with a few gardening groups around your area. And that's something a garden network could help with because we could identify little clusters of community garden groups. And try and identify individuals within those clusters that might wanna be trained up (Key partner).*

Training and knowledge sharing did not only occur during the above described training activities that were specifically focused on volunteers, but was also a major aim of the twelve community classes offered, of the two community information events held by Garden Organics' LFPP project, and of the information stands at the nearly 60 community events attended by Garden Organic staff and volunteers throughout Southwark.

Workshops and Outreach	Project Target	Year 1	Year 2	Total
				37
Community Events attended	n/a	33	26	59
Number of Primary Partners	10	10	0	10
Partnership Meetings	2	0	8	8
Community Information Events Held	2	1	1	2
Community Classes	12	0	12	12
Community Classes Attendees	144	0	137	137
Case Studies	12	6	10	16
Workshop Feedback	85%	94.30%	95.70%	95.70%

Table 4

Holding informal community facing information events was an approach used to contribute to extending the reach of the project as widely as possible to local communities. Two Community Information events were organised (1 per year). Entitled “Grow Food – Eat Better – Save Money”, these events helped to raise awareness of the project and other related food initiatives across Southwark. The nearly hundred Southwark residents attending these two events had the opportunity to learn about the aims of the project, the forthcoming community classes and some basic growing tips, and could register for food growing support. The positive evaluations scores (out of 5, all 4.4 or above) and comments received for these outreach activities hint at the motivational effects these community events have had on participants: “Great! Better than expected. Very inspiring!”, “I’m inspired to try growing potatoes, pea shoots and tomatoes”, and “I can grow food for myself and save so much money” are some of the comments the organizers received.

The twelve community classes (two blocks of six) were held in two different parts of Southwark to increase the reach of the project. Of the 137 attendees, some were project volunteers but many

others were members of the public that attended between one and six events. The positive reception of these training events was evidenced by the fact that several local organisations and individuals partaking in the community classes approached the LFPP/ Garden Organic to run further such events in the future, by the very positive evaluations (nearly 100% score), the positive atmosphere observed, and by the positive comments that participants provided:

*Greater than my expectations. I'm always amazed by what is taught. The lessons are easy and fun (Volunteer, MG).*

The effects these events may have had on participants and their own gardening practices are hinted at in the following quotes: “I’m keen to try new plants”, “we can grow a lot of plants in our garden”, “the possibility to grow vegetables, exotic or otherwise, is manageable” and “Yes, I feel inspired!”

An additional pathway for sharing knowledge about the project but more importantly about food growing and cooking used by the project coordinator and the volunteers was the participation at community events throughout the Borough of Southwark. At the nearly sixty events attended, a large number of the project’s total registered 3,270 food and food growing conversations were held. Being at such events gave volunteers the opportunities to engage with a variety of different people and to give wide-ranging tips on gardening and food preparation. Here, friendly advice and the provision of food growing and recipe cards was complimented with hands-on demonstrations ranging from simple approaches to pesto-making, food preservation and sprouting to a quick course in seed planting or advice on the best area for a community growing space.

Last but not least, one of the most impactful levels of training, mentoring and knowledge sharing initiated by the project took place during the mentoring of individuals or groups the volunteers engaged with on an individual and regular basis. This was recognised by one key partner who was convinced of the benefits of Master Gardener’s activities within community gardens:





*Certainly with the Master Gardeners. One of the things we find a lot when working with community gardening groups, they are not keen gardeners. They want to garden, but they are not knowledgeable gardeners. Or they don't think they are knowledgeable gardeners. And they struggle to make decisions, and to make sensible decisions, particularly early on. So what would be really great to have is some system where we've got experienced gardeners, whether Master Gardeners or just generally experienced gardeners, somehow to mentor, sponsor, shadow groups as they start up. Particularly helping the early planning. And talk to them about things like whether or not they should have raised beds or plant in the ground, make sure they've thought carefully about access to water, what's appropriate planting, the amount of work they're taking on. All these sorts of issues that you really need to think about in the beginning. People really need some help with that. Otherwise they often struggle to maintain the plans they started with. So that would be something really good to work closely with the Master Gardeners on that. (key partner)*

During observation of a training session the research team captured the dynamic way in which the LFPP was a catalyst in fostering social and human capital. This is seen in how it was a vehicle for upskilling volunteers to support their role as Master Gardener's and Food Buddies and how in establishing a social network of Master Gardeners and Food Buddies training also offered a mechanism that had the potential to support local people who may not have prior knowledge, lacked confidence or just wanted to learn more to improve their existing skills.

Training sessions open to both volunteers and local people were a valuable way to build relationships between LFPP and the local community.

This community focused approach to training is described in the field notes below.

## FIELD NOTES FROM MASTER GARDENER TRAINING SESSION

The Observation was of a Master Gardener Training session that was held in a community hall. The environment was suitable for the session consisting of a main training room, kitchen area and outside space for conducting growing activities.

### *What kinds of behaviour are promoted / prevented?*

The training session was delivered using a participatory approach; participants were encouraged to engage in question and answering sessions, sharing their gardening experience, ask questions and introduced to some basic growing techniques.

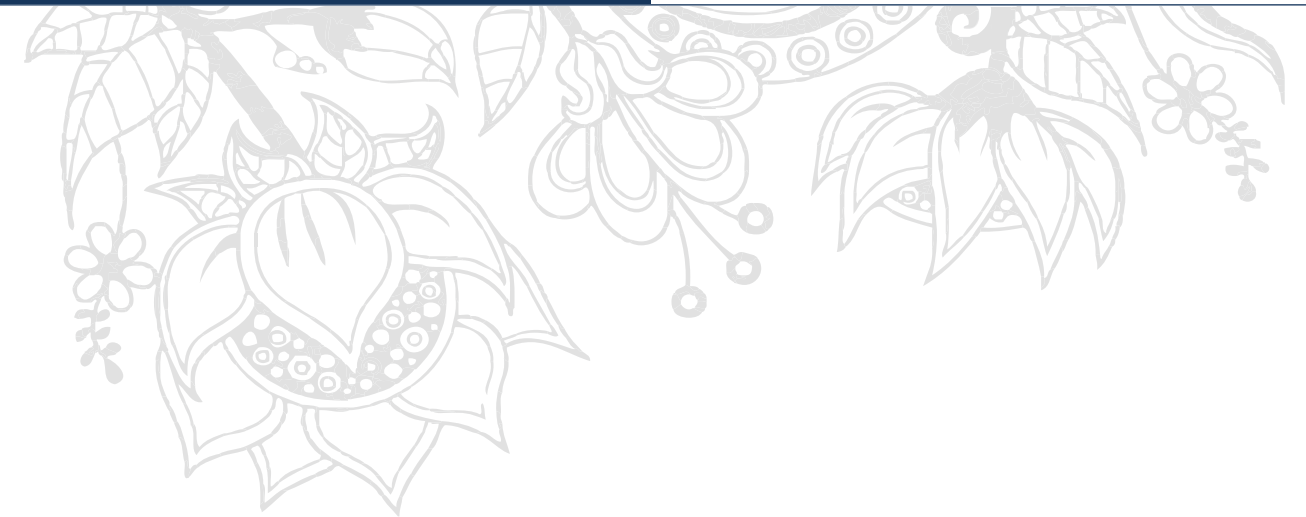
### **Who is present at the session?**

There was some diversity amongst participants; 4 males, 6 females, ethnically diverse, motivation for wanting to be a Master Gardener, employment background and age. The majority of participants had some connection to Southwark (living and/or working in the area)

## ACTIVITIES AND INTERACTION

The training session was held between 10am-4pm and was designed to use a range of learning methods. The session was very well organised and led by two facilitators. Participants were encouraged to get involved and there appeared to be very good interaction between volunteer and facilitators.

Overall, I observed very positive responses to a range of activities and classroom based sessions. This used quite an informal approach. Participants were provided with information about Garden Organic and the role of a Master Gardener. They were also introduced to the London Food Poverty Project and what their role as volunteers would entail.



Alongside this, the facilitators also shared relevant horticultural information that would support the volunteer in their Master Gardener role.

Alongside this, participants engaged in practical growing exercises, facilitator led. These exercises provided opportunities to learn core growing principles and engaging in a growing activity. These activities also provided a chance for participants to taste a range of herbs.

The session also included an opportunity for participants to socialise and eat together.

I observed people sharing ideas and experiences during lunch.

During the afternoon I conducted interviews with 3 of the volunteers, interviews lasted approx. 20 minutes.

## FREQUENCY AND DURATION

This was the first day of a two day training session. The sessions are designed over a full day (10am – 4pm). The informal delivery of the session and the opportunity to engage in a range of activities is used well to structure sessions and maintain interest. The community hall is set on an estate that has a number of outdoor gardening areas.

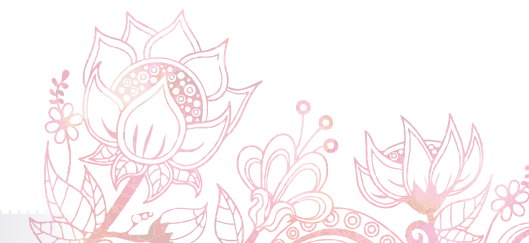
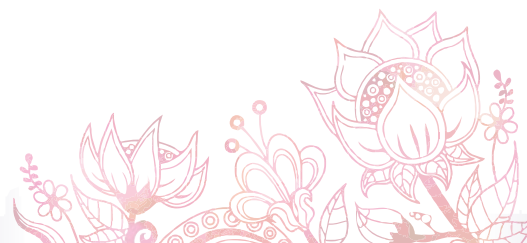
These areas are maintained by residents some of whom also were invited to share lunch with participants.

## REFLECTIONS

*I really enjoyed the visit. The community centre was a welcoming environment to carrying out the training as it is situated in the centre of the estate and a couple members of the community wandered in and out of the centre during the training session. Whilst engaging in outdoor activities I met a resident who had lived on the estate for over 30 years. He explained that he has always had a love of gardening stemming back from his childhood living in the countryside in the Caribbean. He was keen to show me the preparation he had done in the garden for vegetables he was planning to grow this season. He was also keen to share how he often shared the products grown with his neighbours.*

*During lunch I was able to speak with some of the MG volunteers. I learnt that each had their own reasons for wanting to be part of the programme, this included; a career change, support with health and well-being, gaining experience to develop a community gardening area in a part of the borough and for some their involvement formed part of work they did in their local community in tandem with their love for gardening.*

*I had a great day and left feeling very positive about the work being carried out. Garden Organic Co-ordinator passion and commitment was evident in the positive relationship she has with participants, her colleague and the local residents.*







### OBJECTIVE 3

#### LONDON FOOD POVERTY PROJECT: A COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

Observations were conducted at a Master Gardener Community class that was held in a community hall in Walworth. The spatial environment was complimentary of the types of activities which took place. The environment consisted of a main community hall room, a kitchen and garden space used for food growing, composting etc. The garden space was surrounded by blossom trees and other plants and shrubbery, enabling the creation of what Jones & Cloke would call 'tree cultures': the symbiotic interaction of human social relations and symbols of gardening to facilitate a sense of community.

#### *What kinds of behaviour are promoted / prevented?*

The community class was delivered using both didactic and participatory approaches. Participants engaged in various learning activities including the delivery of a PowerPoint presentation on the science behind composting, in which they were encouraged to ask questions and share their own prior experiences of composting or making a wormery, and participating in card based games around what materials to use and not to use in compost bins and the different types of compost bins.

#### *The participants*

##### Who is present at the session?

There was a vast diversity amongst participants. There were 3 males 6 females in attendance and from different ethnic backgrounds, and with a range of motivation for wanting to be part of the programme, either as a Master Gardener/Food Buddy/Volunteer or participant. These motivations included learning to be self-efficient, change of or advancing career, or because of a general interest in food growing.

Most participants had some connection to Southwark (they either lived and / or worked in the area), but there were also some who had travelled to the community class from more affluent areas of London (e.g. Hamel Hampstead).

#### ACTIVITIES AND INTERACTION

The community class was held between 10.30am-2pm and was designed to teach participants about and get them engaged in how to compost. The session was well structured and was led by an experienced member of the Garden Organic team. Participants were encouraged to get involved through participatory learning activities (such as the 'What to put in your compost bin' card game) and there appeared to be very good interaction between community participants, the Master Gardener volunteers and Food Buddy volunteers.

Overall, I observed very positive responses to the class. Some participants shared with me that they liked the relatively informal approach to the class. Participants felt they were provided with very useful information about composting and many had said that they would begin implementing what they had learned in their own gardens. While the class finished at 12.30pm, there was a 90 minute space after the session which allowed the opportunity for participants to socialise over lunch. Within this time, I observed the sharing and exchanging of ideas and experiences not only between the participants but between participants, Master Gardener and Food Buddies: truly enabling for the creation of community based around shared vested interests in food growing and food provision.

#### FREQUENCY AND DURATION

This was the fourth class out of a series of six classes. The sessions are designed typically to last between 10.30am-12.30pm, with an extra 90 minutes to allow for socialising over lunch. The informal delivery of the session allowed for opportunity to engage in a range of learning activities to deliver a well-structured session and maintain interest of the participants.

#### MY REFLECTIONS

I really enjoyed my first visit to the Master Gardener community classes. The community hall was a suitable environment to carrying out the class as it allowed for participants to come and go freely; something which came in useful when I wanted to talk to participants without disturbing the class, and also because of the garden area which allowed the tutor to demonstrate how to efficiently to use a compost bin.

During the day, there was a chance for me to engage in some of the learning activities and share my own experience of composting and food growing. This allowed for good participatory observational data. Through using more participatory methods of observations, I had conversations with some of the community participants, Food buddies and Master Gardener volunteers. For instance, one participant mentioned how he had come from a different Borough of London to take part in the programme. His motivations for this were multiple: for example, he felt that food growing activities enabled him to reconnect with his ancestral heritage of Zimbabwe. He was particularly interested in learning to grow traditional Zimbabwean crops such as aubergines, sweet potatoes and chickpeas.

Likewise, during lunch, I managed to talk to a Food Buddy who articulated that, while she had started off as a Master Gardener teaching participants how to grow food, her greatest passion was about cooking and teaching people about the nutritional benefits of plant-based foods. She went onto discuss how working with GO has allowed her to follow her passion of cooking and teaching people about the benefits of plant-based food and how she has won many competitions and local awards for it. Similarly, I was also able to talk to some of the MG volunteers, with one gentleman noting the reason why he decided to volunteer for MG was not only that he did have a passion for gardening and food growing activities but was ultimately interested in bringing the community of Southwark together.



## SUMMARY

In line with the study carried out by Bos and Kneafsey (2014) and Brown et al (2015) of ongoing or previous Master Gardener programmes, the data shows that people accessed the programme for various reasons, they had varying gardening and/or cooking experience and they required similar and different outputs for the training. Overwhelmingly, the data is positive, volunteers and community participants welcomed the training sessions delivered. Training was educational and social; it was held largely in local venues and delivered in a clear and accessible way. The training session created a safe space in which people sometimes shared their personal stories alongside sharing gardening and cooking ideas.

## BUILDING COMMUNITY: RELATIONAL NETWORKS AND WIDER COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

One of the key benefits of the London Food Poverty Project was how such engagement, sharing and learning strategies around food growing extended beyond the network of Master Gardeners and Food Buddies and pervaded into the wider community of Southwark. By Garden Organic and its network of Master Gardeners and Food Buddies going out into the wider localities of Southwark, attending and being present at local community events, the programme developed what Massey (2005) would call the 'generative' power of place in which by Master Gardeners and Food Buddies engaging and sharing information around food growing they were able to create wider, relational community networks around good growing activities, leading to important forms of social empowerment by helping to re-energize communities in some of Southwark's most deprived areas.

Moreover, by situating themselves into the wider community of Southwark, Master Gardeners and Food Buddies helped to reshape the relationship between deprived localities and food by transforming residents' passive dependency to a more active one where local residents and communities are able to actively challenge deprivation and poverty in part by taking control of their own food security issues. The creation of a

more active sense of place allowed residents with multiple and intersecting individual identities and interests to come together and raise awareness about food growing and cooking but also discuss issues such as food poverty and deprivation through lived practices.

The quotes below provide examples of the positive ways in which the LFPP supported people in their local community, building relationship with local people:

*I continue to talk to people on the estate about the raised beds, and have been watering and planting. I've taken some pictures when people have let me. This lady picks the chard and has asked to grow some calaloo with Victor who lives on the estate.*

*I have been taking a child minder to the allotment every Thursday morning, she knows nothing about gardening or growing and has been bringing the kids down to me and we have been enjoying the time there. We are planning to go to her house and start some easy salad and peas and toms for her.*

*May as been a really busy month. We've been growing beans in the school garden with the toddlers I look after which have come up super quick.*

The fieldwork observations below elaborate further on the transformative potential of the London Food Poverty Project in helping working with local communities to alleviate food poverty within the deprived boroughs of Southwark.

## FIELD NOTES FROM A COMMUNITY EVENT: PULLENS

The Pullens event took place on a fenced-off area of green space, located in the centre of the Pullens estate and just a short walk away from the Newington estate and the Fun Day they hosted earlier that day. The environment consisted of large grassed areas with pavement running through it to provide a footpath. This 'park-like' space was also surrounded by trees. Within the middle of the space there was a variety of stalls selling a range of goods; from food to 'feet mud painting' to clothes'.

At the far end of the space, there was a stage on which folk/punk bands played while people listened, chatted and took a look around the stalls. The event was organised by local community groups to get people of Southwark together to talk and interact with one another. The London Food Poverty Project had a stall to promote their food growing activities and classes in Southwark.

## Who is present at the session?

There was a clear diversity of individuals who attended the Pullens event. There was not just a clear mix of gender, ethnicity and age but also lifestyle. The event was not put on specifically for residents of the estate but for people from all over Southwark and the wider London area.

There was a sense of togetherness, coupled with the spatial surroundings of a green space the event became a period of exaggeration of the central values and axioms of the community in which its attendants (although tacitly) and community groups (actively) wanted to create.

One of the community activist's I talked to, an organiser of a food growing and tree planting group who also sits on the Food Alliance for Southwark, mentioned how tree planting (in particular) was a useful way to resist socio-spatial change. This is because it encourages community groups to tacitly organise to buy spaces to prevent them being bought by big businesses and housing developers. The activist worried that food growing and tree planting as a catalyst for resistance but also its social value in their appeal could be lost under the branding of a particular organisation. He was uncertain whether community members were allowed to grow and foster under Garden Organic or whether they were here to provide a very corporate way of doing food growing, bringing the community together.

## FREQUENCY AND DURATION

It was brought to my attention through my conversations with certain members of community groups (who I was introduced to by one of the Master Gardeners and her husband) that this Pullens event was held once every summer. It is hosted and put on by local community groups as a way for people from Southwark to come together and interact and talk over food and other activities. I stayed at the event for 2 hours. However, the event was not finished. Through my own observations, I saw the event as built around particular vested interests – despite some 'everyday' residents from the community being there, it was – by and large – an event for those individuals who adopted a 'hipster' lifestyle. The particular demography of the event could be confirmed from my conversations with Richard who was a representative from a community group who highlighted gentrification as a particular issue.

## MY REFLECTIONS

I really enjoyed conducting the fieldwork of the Pullens event. I managed to collect some really insightful ethnographic data.

The carnival-like rituals exhibited at the Pullens event were inextricably linked to the social relations. A specific example of this was the way activities, such as having stalls and live music interwove with social relations to reinforce community cohesion. Another characteristic which was noticeable was its role in sustaining a sense of place. Ritual performances are important in building up collective memory, which is in turn crucial for the development of a sense of community. Such events, therefore, are designed to create a sense of and actual community and feelings of belonging and togetherness through the use of celebration. What was most interesting is that despite the Pullens event representing a sense of community, by and large was representational of Foucault's (1986) concept of heterotopia where the Pullens event provided a single real space into several spaces. This was evident by the ways attendants were not necessarily 'together' but rather clustered into specific groups (i.e., event goers stuck to their own social circles).



## POST-FIELDWORK REFLECTIONS

On reflecting on the events of the day, I began thinking about Cumbers et al's (2018) idea of claims of authenticity and legitimacy. The people I had observed and talk to appeared to me to form of part of 'hipster' subculture – new wave environmentalists that have arisen off the back of growing gentrification of the wider area of Southwark. People who enjoy the benefits of neo-liberalism but also partake in communal activities and demonstrate somewhat left-leaning principles towards social justice. However, after talking to others and getting to know some more historical context of the place after the fieldwork, I became aware that the Pullens community are proud about their history and their punk and socialist principles to social justice. This additional information has made me reflect on my haste in piecing together what I saw with what participants on the day had told me. While the pervasive nature of neo-liberal-based property regeneration has enabled a generation of individuals who reap the benefits of neo-liberalism while also championing local growing initiatives to promote social justice, there are also those people who embraced punk and socialist principles of the 1970s, prior to the growth of neo-liberalism, but may now have to negotiate fighting social justice while also having to operate within the neo-liberal market (e.g., home ownership, employment etc.). It is possible that there is a singular narrative where both those who hold 'traditional' punk and socialist principles towards social justice and those new wave environmentalists can belong. A narrative of the celebration of different groups with different reasons and interests coming together to promote social justice and alleviate food poverty.

## SUMMARY

The data highlights that food growing can bring diverse groups of people together, this is not to suggest this is without challenges. However, It is clear from the observational data that the London Food Poverty Project helped to transform local communities by emphasising the social impacts of their work in creating wider relational networks of individuals challenging food deprivation and poverty by getting Master Gardeners and Food Buddies to

share information around food growing activities with people living and working within the localities of Southwark.

The central theme that cuts across all this observational data is that irrespective of the motivations for people's involvement, the LFPP's emphasis on developing sets of social relations between people and their wider physical environments to encourage food growing actions contributed to people giving consideration to broader forms of social change and ways the engagement with LFPP could lead to action in tackling what was perceived to be existing social injustices – namely, food deprivation and poverty – through the practice of food growing and to a lesser extent cooking.

## OBJECTIVE 4: LEGACY OF THE LONDON FOOD POVERTY PROJECT

The LFPP utilised a dynamic model that was innovative, inclusive and impactful. In line with other models of the Master Gardener Programme, the data shows a variety of ways the LFPP was effective in bringing diverse groups together. The design and delivery of the project was influenced by lessons learnt delivering previous Master Gardener projects but was also heavily shaped by the input of the coordinator. The coordinator took time to become familiar with the locality, communities, key stakeholders and situating food insecurity within its local context. The coordinator was highly motivated and central in wanting the LFPP to lead to change the food insecurity landscape across the borough. The role of the coordinator, supported by Garden Organic management, was essential and effective in building trust with people living and working across the borough. The recruitment of volunteers from diverse backgrounds, with varying levels of experiences and needs, was an influential factor which contributed significantly to ensuring the LFPP was responsive to needs arising over the duration of the project. Establishing a network of volunteers who were diverse, local and aware of many of the issues impacting their local communities, contributed to raising awareness of the project, broadening its appeal and sending a message of inclusivity.

The data points to a conceptualisation of the LFPP which enabled addressing some of the micro-meso- and macro-level factors influencing food insecurity via a range of avenues; from working on the ground with volunteers and local communities (e.g. shaping food growing and consumption decisions), working in partnership with primary partners (e.g. enabling food growing activities) and working with decision makers and service providers to influence changes in policy and practice (e.g. creating a space for knowledge exchange and policy debate of food poverty in Southwark).

Bos and Kneafsey (2014) state: 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 (Bos, and Kneafsey, 2014: 170)

Similarly, the data from this research also identifies the LFPP project's capacity to foster a sense of community at the different levels it engaged with, from the individual food growers, and the various

community garden groups, to the organisations involved in addressing food poverty in Southwark. The Master Gardener programme in its adapted LFPP form has been an effective tool to bring people together for sharing knowledge, experiences and learning new skills. In the context of working with communities 'at risk' or 'experiencing' food insecurity, the adapted project has been a positive and effective tool in ameliorating its effects for supporting change at an individual, organisational and policy level. The data in this study also shows that the impact of the programme is far reaching. As will be demonstrated below, there is also evidence to indicate that in some circumstances it has led to change, albeit still too early to fully evidence the longevity of the changes identified or the impact of the changes beyond Southwark.

The LFPP was designed to galvanise local people to get involved in food growing and cooking and to simultaneously build partnerships with key stakeholders addressing root causes of food insecurity and/or working with communities impacted by it.

The diagram (Figure 2) offers a visual representation to show the multi-layered nature of the LFPP project and its impact at a range of levels.



Figure 2



As previously stated, the design, delivery and approach of the LFPP was key in maximising impact of the project. The project was far reaching in terms of how it opened the way for a range of key stakeholders to get involved but also in terms of its impact. The diagram points to the interconnectedness of the work of volunteers, partner organisations and policy makers working in statutory bodies. The LFPP played an intrinsic role, acting as a conduit for communication in which the coordinator worked to connect people across the different Micro, Meso and Macro levels that can drive positive change towards food security in Southwark.

On a Macro level, we see the impact of government priorities, social and public policies and economic climate on communities in Southwark. For example, an aim of the Food Action Alliance is to bring key stakeholders together to look at how Government policies, such as Universal Credit, impacts on food insecurity for communities in Southwark. The Macro space is identified as key to changing structural factors influencing access to food, influencing behaviour and addressing food insecurity. Here, the LFPP raised awareness of the food poverty issues in Southwark and facilitated the collaboration of key stakeholders and decision makers as a means of influencing policy and practice in the local borough. Furthermore, the LFPP performed the role of an advocate for individuals impacted by food insecurity in which they shared their learning and understanding from working in communities.

## MACRO-, MESO-AND MICRO LEVELS

A significant impact of the LFPP is the setting up of Southwark Food Action Alliance. This network is supported by the local authority and is a borough wide initiative with responsibility for developing a Southwark food strategy. Whilst it is too soon to comment on the sustainability and impact of the Alliance, its setting up has galvanised the local authority and decisions maker from public bodies such as the DWP, Public Health and Housing:

*I think the alliance really has the council's ear and the alliance can come to the meeting and present to all the right people in the room. The council really values it as a network now, after taking years to get the*

*council to back us and get involved in the project and we weren't getting anywhere. Then all of a sudden, they [Garden Organic] came along and we are important...(Garden Organic, Team Member).*

At the time of writing the report, Southwark as launched its food action plan and the Alliance has grown to over 50 members.

The Meso Level represents the way in which the LFPP focused on working together with the primary partner organisations. The activities of the LFPP has created links between previously disconnected organisations and has led to changes in how food growing and other food organisations are working together, and has led to increased knowledge sharing between these organisation that are working with people impacted by food insecurity in the borough. This was a space in which service providers / practitioners established channels of communications which were informal and formal. For example, organisations were sharing information about upcoming events or were setting up referral routes so people in the local community in need of support could be provided with relevant information pertaining to accessing services. Our observational data reports numerous examples of these interactions, practitioners sharing their ways of working to meet the needs of communities. This meso level occupied by representatives from a range of organisations and decision makers. All were active to varying degrees at both the macro and micro level.

These partnerships are formal and informally constituted. However, what they offer is some improvement in the fragmented nature of the sector, where organisations often worked in silos, creating duplication or gaps in services.

It is on the Micro level where we can see the traditional work of the Master Gardener project in which the LFPP works with Food Buddy and Master Gardener volunteers in their local communities. Here, the coordination of the LFPP also provided a vehicle for ensuring the views and experiences of local people were represented and had a direct input into informing and shaping decisions at the Meso and Micro level. Hence the, diagram shows the reach and influence of the LFPP.

The data shows that the impact on individuals who engaged in the LFPP. Volunteers spoke about improvement in their health, wellbeing, knowledge and employability. Volunteers welcome the opportunity to be supported by the Garden Organic team, to have access to practical gardening and cooking skills delivered through training and hands-on experience. They identified being able to be active in their communities as volunteers as overwhelmingly positive. For some volunteers, the programme gave them a purpose and instilled a sense of confidence.

*When there was the AGM Garden Organic at Ryton and [Names coordinator] and I did it, I would never have done that previously and opening up about something that was personal to me with a group of strangers, I would have never had done that before. Confidence is massive.*

*LFPP created a space for people from diverse backgrounds to come together, make new friends and learn about growing and eating healthier, locally grown food. It opened a channel of communication between communities and individuals:*

*If you look at [Names Food Buddy], she's done the MG and she has done the Food Buddies. And she has built up her confidence that she goes out and she teaches food classes, and she is setting up a company (Volunteer, MG).*

The LFPP led to changes in physical health, mental health and wellbeing; it engendered a sense of trust and belonging. This supports the findings of the Local Food programme SROI, which also found subjective wellbeing to be an important outcome of food growing and training activities (2014).

## SUMMARY

In section 1 and 2, we detail that setting up and delivery of the LFPP was not without its challenges and the data points to key learning for delivering food poverty programme in an urban locality. An outcome of the project is its legacy (at least in the short term) of ongoing relationships, networks and activities encouraged which continue today through

the work of volunteers, primary partners, Southwark Council and Southwark Food Action Alliance. As such, the aim to deliver a project that served as a community asset was realised.

*It was a standard project set up purely because of the model we have got we know what works. So we put a co-ordinator in place that knows the area and understands the patch, which is critical to the success of these projects wherever we do them. Getting them [Coordinator] embedded in the community, keeping the attitude we are not coming into the area to take over and I talk about it with people but I like to think we ooze into an area rather than coming into the middle of it and sticking a flag in it you go around what is already there. We talk to people, where are the community gardens, how can we add value to them and what they do. We are not going to build community gardens that in 3 years we walk away and leave because the funding has run out. What are the assets on the ground already and are the volunteers in these gardens as trained as they could be or could we train them to be MG to deliver the messages that we want to give, Does that give the local community an interaction and communication with the people that work there? So assisting, supporting and co-producing solutions with people are very much the way we want to do our projects and particularly in area where we don't know people. So that was the key the other element of this project that we committed to was the legacy bit and I was very keen to write the legacy part in it from the start so I was very keen to set up a group that would talk about food insecurity from the start in Southwark (Garden Organic Team Member)*

Moreover, the London Food Poverty Project demonstrated that food growing was not just a resource for individuals and communities but also could be used as an 'organizing concept for new ideas about quality of life and urban sustainability' (Hou et al., 2009: 29). Utilising food growing in this way has meant that the London Food Poverty Project has facilitated a long-term legacy around the idea of 'just sustainabilities' (Milbourne, 2011) - a balancing between the environmental and social dimensions of sustainability with the need to promote principles of social justice.



By Garden Organic taking a proactive approach through establishing relationships with local areas and working alongside them by sharing information regarding food growing via their network of Master Gardener and Food Buddies, the programme has created a platform that is able to deliver social justice through the medium of environmentalism and community engagement which, if maintained, could be long-term and sustainable.

## FINAL REFLECTION

There is a growing body of research that shows the potential contribution of initiatives such as the LFPP to alleviating food insecurity and supporting food security. Food growing in deprived urban areas can have a positive impact on the local community (Bowers et al., 2009), in terms of offering strategies and resources (see May and Rogerson, 1994; Karaan and Mohamed 1998, Bos and Kneafsey, 2014)

In line with existing research, the data points to a range of potential health and social outcomes for those involved in the LFPP. In post-project interviews, volunteers spoke about their ongoing community activities so it is possible to see a legacy of LFPP is that, for some, it has raised a level of consciousness and determination to remain actively working in their local communities (Lawson, 2015). The data also shows that LFPP engaged with diverse groups of people (age, ethnicity, motivation for getting involved, level of engagement, level of knowledge about food growing and cooking healthy on a budget). Hence, a key success of the LFPP, is how it served as a catalyst and conduit for connecting people, creating positive opportunities for local people to establish friendships, supportive growing and cooking relationships, alongside LFPP facilitating working partnerships with key stakeholders across the voluntary, community and statutory sector.

Our research shows the potential for the LFPP to positively impact behaviour and support change. This impact is wide reaching; on an individual, organisational and local policy level.

The data shows that the LFPP made an impact across the borough in the following areas:

- Building individuals confidence
- Supporting individuals well-being
- Developing individuals gardening and cooking skills
- Creating a mechanism for local people to engage socially and politically in their local community
- Creating a hub for bringing diverse groups of people together
- Establishing a network of active volunteers
- Creating a network of partner agencies working in the area of food insecurity
- Offering free opportunities for local communities to access community based activities
- Contributing strategic input to understanding and developing a borough wide action plan to address food insecurity and security.

The LFPP provided an example of how such initiatives can positively contribute a community response to food insecurity and security. Factors such as time, commitment, resources, leadership, local knowledge and engaging positively with local communities are key components in creating initiatives that are able to make a difference. The design of LFPP set out to create a model of the Master Gardener programme that was innovative, inclusive and inspiring. LFPP adapted learning from previous Master Gardener Programmes, (Bos and Kneafsey, 2014; and Brown et al, 2015) but it's design and delivery was adapted to create the condition needed to maximise potential positive outcomes for those involved and living in deprived local communities. The data also captures the importance of understanding and being responsive to the needs of local communities, the local environment, and the challenges programmes encounter due to wider structural challenges. The LFPP was designed and delivered at a time of rising levels of poverty and a period in which the UK is in the midst of a reorganisation and retrenchment of social welfare. Hence, a success of the LFPP is that it recognises the imperative for approaches put forward to address the issue of food insecurity and security having to operate across the Micro, Meso and Macro levels.





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## APPENDIX 1 OVERVIEW OF DATA COLLECTION ACTIVITIES

Data collection Method	Event/ Activity & Location	Who collected the data	Type of data collected
Participant Observation	Training workshops for the local community	GB, JF, NK	Observation Informal conversations fieldnotes/ Photographs
Participant Observation	In-service Training	GB JF	Observation fieldnotes Interviews Photographs
Participant Observation	Food Alliance meetings (x2)	GB, JF	Observation fieldnotes  Semi structured Interviews Photographs
Participant Observation	London Food Poverty Projects outreach activities	JF, NK	Observation fieldnotes/ Photographs
Semi-structured interview	Telephone or face-to-face	GB, JF	Interview recordings plus transcripts and/ or interview notes
Post project interviews		GB	







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