



PERMACULTURE
ASSOCIATION

CASE STUDY

Creating Thriving Communities

A Permaculture Approach

Permaculture is an ethical framework used to design regenerative systems at all scales – from home and garden to community, farm and bioregions.

We live in a time of great uncertainty and unfolding crises with the social, environmental and economic failures of the current system being cruelly exposed by rising inequality, social division, increasingly precarious and insecure employment, loss of biodiversity, accelerating climate change and the inability of an increasing number of people to meet their basic needs for good food and housing.

In this project we are exploring how people across Britain are working to create thriving communities!

www.permaculture.org.uk



**NATIONAL
LOTTERY FUNDED**

The Good Life

Community: Adults with mild to moderate mental health difficulties.

www.pendleleisuretrust.co.uk/services/good-life-project

Overview

The Good Life Project is a therapeutic horticulture programme run by Pendle Leisure Trust and funded by the Big Lottery – Reaching Communities Programme. The project is aimed at adults who are suffering from social isolation with a goal to improve their mental well-being, physical health and bring them together whilst caring for the Nelson community allotment.

It gives them a chance to grow their own produce and develop skills such as nurturing, caring, concentration and co-operation in a fun, friendly and healthy environment. The project uses organic and permaculture principles in activities around beautiful allotments, to assist in the improvement of socially and physically inactive individuals' mental and physical wellbeing.

Permaculture

The term permaculture is not explicitly used, but the ethics of earth care, people care and fair shares are implicit in the work of the Good Life project. People are encouraged to come together through regular gardening sessions or natural craft sessions, both of which support people in connecting with nature and working with natural systems.

People Care



The project has a very grounded approach to working with people and a deep understanding of mental health difficulties, with staff members who were once beneficiaries of the project.

The project is mainly, although not exclusively, targeted at those with mild

to moderate mental health issues, residents of Pendle, Burnley and East Lancashire who are in general socially and physically inactive. The focus is largely on self-care and helping people to think differently, for example the idea of putting in more than you take out and use this idea whilst discussing our personal wellbeing.

Earth Care

Participants in the project are invited to join in gardening and creative activities, which are embedded in the care of the allotment site and help to maintain and care for the space.

Fair Shares

We use David Holmgren's 12 principles of permaculture in all we do in terms of our beautiful allotments, the sessions we run, the ideas we promote, the produce we grow, sell or donate. We try to encourage the ideas of self-help through trying a

new way of thinking (in this case organic growing and permaculture) and physical activity in a green space. We always promote putting in more than you take out and use this idea whilst discussing looking after our personal wellbeing.

Outcomes and monitoring

The following outcomes of the project have been highlighted through a report from the Department of Exercise and Health Studies at the University of Bristol.

They found the following key outcomes to be influential in the overall outcome for participants; a quiet, welcoming and supportive introduction over the first few days was key to the way people entered and how long they stayed in the project. The creation of a safe place; where beneficiaries felt safe was absolutely key. There are different ways in which people can interact, through crafts at the craft table, through growing together on the allotment and being part of a long-standing and successful group, that is The Good Life.

Camaraderie and supportive friendships are also seen as a key element. In contrast to the quiet of the space, there is also a need for social interaction amongst participants. Ensuring everyone feels welcome and everyone joins together for a cup of tea and chat helps the social ambience. The diversity of the space has also been noted as a key element with various different zones, such as a canalside garden, chickens, tool shed, which offer a variety of tasks including planting, growing, animal husbandry and site maintenance. There are also workshops around woodwork, crafts and cooking. People are supported at different phases of their journey and staff support individuals in finding tasks suitable for their point of recovery.

Case Study

Susan

Susan was referred to the Good Life project by the job centre when she needed a new challenge.



Susan was feeling fed up, but knew she loved being outdoors. Susan loves crafts and woodwork and quickly took on a new challenge of restoring an old greenhouse with a Good Life chum, Andy. They built wooden frames and used old polytunnel plastic to cover the frames which became the windows.

"Restoring the greenhouse was a really big achievement and a project I could get stuck in to." The restored greenhouse is now home to the bulk of the year's chilli harvest. "It's a real achievement to see everything you've planted grow and flourish.

The Good Life Project is a big inspiration and keeps me smiling, being outdoors and walking in the fresh air keeps me healthy...The people really make it an experience, they're a lovely bunch and everyone joins in with the team work, I feel on top of the world when I'm here."

Sue followed on from her successes to run the crafts stall at successive Good Life Open Days in 2017. From this, Sue took on her own allotment at Hodge House so is a permanent neighbour. Sue is now seeking funding of her own to run crafts workshops near her home in Nelson.