



## Volunteer Questionnaire 2017

Growing Well supported 125 people in 2017. Of referrals made by GP's and other Mental Health Professionals, 38% take a placement with us. 45% of those that engage with us move to employment, further training or other volunteering.

Of the 18% of volunteers who responded to the questionnaire:

86% had a particular goal when they came to Growing Well, and 100% felt that Growing Well helped them achieve, or work towards achieving their goals. Comments included:

- Given me the confidence to integrate back into a social group and work towards getting back into paid employment
- Improved my skills, achieved a L2 diploma. Growing confidence, learnt more about mental issues. Given me something to aim for, given me ideas of what to do in future. Helped me feel part of a community.
- Friendly place where conversations could happen easily and without prejudice; comparing notes on personal experiences.
- Help return to work, grow confidence and make friends as well.
- Helping me to comprehend that my situation is not as hopeless and bad as I had previously thought.
- By improving my physical fitness
- Improved my communication skills, my self-confidence and my teamworking skills. The Return to Work group has also improved my confidence in looking for work.
- It is helping me work towards my goal of getting back into education
- Safe environment, improved feeling of worth, exercise
- Through regular supervisions and recovery star sessions. The structure and format of these. The way staff listen, understand and make positive suggestions and gently encourage self-autonomy, as appropriate
- I have returned to work with GW's support
- I did the return to work course which has helped me start college and help me for future when wanting a job. It has also helped me understand me.

When asked, people said they enjoyed:

- It's an environment where everyone is accepted whether they are having a bad day or a good day, and there is support if it's a bad day. The physical exercise as a group is very good for boosting mood.
- The none judgmental environment, as feeling comfortable
- I enjoy meeting everyone and having people to talk to with similar issues

- Mucking in together on meaningful projects
- “Laffs”
- The supportive atmosphere... and the soup
- I enjoy the relaxed, friendly atmosphere and working outdoors
- The camaraderie and spirit among the volunteers and staff. How everyone is friendly. That it’s a place you can come and ‘get away’ from the world and worries for a few hours
- Mixing with the group and the encouragement from the staff in providing extras such as the RED scheme
- I enjoy how everyone is nice to each other

People disliked:

- Not really a great deal I dislike except when the toilets get full!
- Mud!
- A lack of horticultural activities during the winter months, not that there is necessarily anything that can be done about that

91% of respondents felt their mental health had improved whilst at Growing Well (54% felt it had 'got a lot better')

96% of respondents felt that Growing Well had had something to do with their improved mental health (86% felt 'a lot' to do with it), and gave examples of why they felt this, including:

- Because I’ve taken ownership of my progression and staff at GW have encouraged and supported this
- More ambition
- Confidence to get back into study/jobs
- It’s the way the staff are non-judgemental/supportive and show care and consideration. The nature of the tasks available to do and the support to do them. How the tasks are purposeful and have an aim and are achievable
- Routine – gets me out of the house. Sharing experiences, setting goals
- Just being with other people and keeping busy is helping me to feel better
- Being able to talk to others about my mental health, who isn’t a family member or doctor
- Learned new skills
- Giving me a reason to feel involved in something bigger than myself
- Make friends, structure, learning
- All working together on joint projects. Friendliness of everyone. Fun breaks
- Has given me a weekly goal, a safe place to come, a place to be mindful – helping grow things is very mindful
- Without GW is would have remained isolated in my own home most days and wouldn’t have exercised as much. GW gives a sense of community and acceptance and a feeling of achievement

People felt Growing Well could be improved by:

- Probably a new minibus, more active Facebook events page, more publicity – I’m still meeting people in Kendal who don’t know about GW (happy to help with this)
- More days transport

- Improved communication with volunteers as to transport i.e. the minibus and where public bus stops are
- Allow more people to access the fantastic support
- Give feedback on ideas put in the suggestions box, whether implemented or not.
- Better integration of new volunteers to help them sustain their volunteering

People felt Growing Well was particularly good\* at:

(\*we didn't get any responses to the 'do we do anything badly?' question)

- Provides a good safe and accepting environment for those with mental health issues
- I recently went on an Impact course on leadership – after the course I realised that the only organisation that I know which meets its criteria for good leadership is Growing Well – well done.
- All round! From horticulture to admin to catering, fantastic opportunities to support individuals on rehabilitation pathway
- Excellent food
- Help people to feel a belonging where they may not have felt before
- Safe environment
- All muck in together – done well
- Acceptance
- Knowing there is someone to talk to with no judgement
- Support volunteers with massive levels of dedication