

**Biddulph East  
Gardening Project**

**Community Pride Initiative**

**Independent Evaluation  
August 2006**

**Evaluation by Wider Impact Consultancy**  
*Innovators in Regeneration and Community Well Being*

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**Project delivered by Staffordshire County Council  
Adult & Community Learning Service Community Link Work Initiative,  
Staffordshire Moorlands Children Centre &  
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council**



Photograph: County Councillor Christina Jebb (2<sup>nd</sup> left) Launching the Gardening Project

**An Independent Evaluation Commissioned by  
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council  
Local Strategic Partnership**

## CONTENTS

|                                      | <b>Page No</b> |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>         | <b>1</b>       |
| <b>2.0 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>          | <b>2</b>       |
| <b>3.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>        | <b>3</b>       |
| <b>4.0 METHODOLOGY</b>               | <b>4</b>       |
| <b>5.0 ABOUT THE COURSE</b>          | <b>5</b>       |
| Background                           | <b>5</b>       |
| Aims and Objectives                  | <b>5</b>       |
| Course Costs                         | <b>6</b>       |
| Funding Sources                      | <b>6</b>       |
| Course Details                       |                |
| <b>6.0 EVALUATION</b>                | <b>7</b>       |
| Student Profile                      | <b>7</b>       |
| Course Outcomes                      | <b>8</b>       |
| Learners Achievements                | <b>8</b>       |
| Distance Traveled by Learners        | <b>9</b>       |
| Learner Satisfaction with the Course | <b>10</b>      |
| Lessons Learnt                       | <b>10</b>      |
| <b>7.0 NEXT STEPS</b>                | <b>11</b>      |
| The Way Forward                      | <b>11</b>      |
| Future Resources                     | <b>11</b>      |
| Key Agency Support                   | <b>11</b>      |
| <b>8.0 CONCLUSIONS</b>               | <b>12</b>      |
| <b>APPENDIX A COURSE PHOTOGRAPHS</b> | <b>14</b>      |

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Established in April 2005, the Biddulph East Neighbourhood Partnership is part of the 'Moorlands Together' initiative, delivered by the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Strategic Partnership. Moorlands Together has identified Biddulph East as an area requiring special attention, because it is an area of deprivation within the district, falling within the most 10% most deprived nationally.

As part of an innovative vision for Biddulph East to become **Better, Brighter** and **Brilliant**, community members and local agencies have identified 6 priorities:

- Community Safety
- Children and Young People
- Environment
- Education, Skills and Training
- Substance Misuse
- Health

The Gardening project was the first major initiative of the Environment Action Group, which aimed to recruit local people/ community champions to create a sensory garden at the Staffordshire Moorlands Childrens Centre, Albert Street, Biddulph, benefiting young children and their families. Objectives included those taking part in the course, developing their ability to 'learn' and assist in the creation of future gardens within the local community.

Funded by local grants, ten local 'learners' were recruited to join an eight week course, which involved class room based learning and an opportunity to create the sensory garden. With only one drop out, nine 'learners' completed the course and have created a wonderful garden at the Childrens Centre, which will benefit young children and their families for many years to come.

All aims have been met and outcomes include the likelihood that the 'learners' will play a key role in establishing a community resource – Biddulph East Environmental Supporters (**BEES**), which will have the potential to create new gardens – e.g. Youth & Community Centre, Park Middle School; support the local community with gardening projects (e.g. young people, elderly, infirm, single mothers); and enable affordable access to gardening tools to the wider community.

Most significantly, the concept of the **BEES** has potential to support a developing initiative, **Community Pride** – a multi agency community based initiative, aimed at tackling environment issues such as litter, graffiti, poor quality green spaces; involving key agencies working collaboratively, supporting local delivery by local community members.

Wider Impact Consultancy has been impressed with the Biddulph East Gardening Project and recommends key agencies provide support and encouragement to the 'learners', as they aim to establish an innovative community based resource.

## 2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Wider Impact Consultancy would like to thank the following for their contributions in making this report possible:

The **learners** who attended the Biddulph East Gardening Course for their time and honesty in completing evaluation forms and contributions at an end of course workshop.

**Lynn Calverley** for her time and support in distributing and collecting evaluation forms, arranging the end of course workshop and liaison with learners.

**Barbara Bowen** and **Sonya Bloor**, Staffordshire Moorlands Children Centre, Biddulph for their support in arranging meetings, provision of such excellent meeting facilities and contributions to development opportunities.

**Ruth Reeves** for her advice and support with the evaluation process.

**Nick Grubb** and **Dee Meredith**, Moorlands Housing, for their input into the development of the Community Pride and BEES initiatives.

**County Councillor Christina Jebb**, for her advice and encouragement during the evaluation process and generous access to photographs.

**Rosalind Tildesely** for planning, designing and delivering the course.

### 3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Evaluate the Biddulph East Gardening Course, exploring if Biddulph East Neighbourhood Partnership (Environment Action Group) aims have been met:

#### **Environment Action Group:**

- Residents, local groups/ businesses and relevant agencies will work together to maintain and improve a clean, green and tidy neighbourhood;
- Green spaces will be conserved and enjoyed;
- Use of public recreational spaces will be optimised;
- All residents will be proud of their neighbourhood.

#### **Course:**

- A sensory garden at the Albert Street Childrens Centre benefiting young children and their families;
  - Young children and their families learning to appreciate the local environment through their enjoyment of the sensory garden. This appreciation to hopefully remain with them in later life, developing a sense of pride and responsibility towards their local environment and neighbourhood;
  - Ten residents and community champions trained in gardening skills;
  - Adults taking part in the course will learn skills that can be used in further gardening projects; rolling the benefits out to other residents;
2. Explore the potential of the Gardening Course to support delivery of a developing initiative, **Community Pride** – a multi agency community based initiative, aimed at tackling environment issues such as litter, graffiti and poor quality green spaces; involving key agencies working collaboratively, supporting local delivery by local community members.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

Methods used for this independent evaluation have included:

- Analysis and reviewing data and information kindly provided by **Lynn Calverley**, Staffordshire County Council Community Link Worker (Moorlands) and **Ruth Reeves**, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Community Development Worker (Biddulph East);
- Observing learners while working as a team developing the Community Garden;
- Facilitating an end of course workshop attended by eight of the nine learners who completing the Gardening Course;
- Informal interviews with key partners, including:
  - County Councillor **Christina Jebb**
  - **Ruth Reeves**, Development Worker, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Community;
  - **Lynn Calverley**, Community Link Worker (Moorlands), Adult & Community Learning Service, Staffordshire County Council;
  - **Barbara Bowen**, Manager, Staffordshire Moorlands Children Centre;
  - **Nick Grubb**, Housing & Support Services Manager, Moorlands Housing;
  - **Dee Meredith**, Strategic Involvement Officer, Moorlands Housing.

## 5. ABOUT THE COURSE

### Background

The Biddulph East Neighbourhood Partnership is part of the 'Moorlands Together' initiative, delivered by the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Strategic Partnership. Moorlands Together has identified Biddulph East as an area requiring special attention because it is an area of deprivation within the district, falling within the most 10% most deprived nationally.

The Biddulph East Neighbourhood Partnership has agreed a vision for the area – **Better, Brighter and Brilliant**. Six Actions Groups have been formed:

- Community Safety
- Children and Young People
- Environment
- Education, Skills and Training
- Substance Misuse
- Health

**Environment Action Group** aims included:

- Residents, local groups/ businesses and relevant agencies will work together to maintain and improve a clean, green and tidy neighbourhood;
- Green spaces will be conserved and enjoyed;
- Use of public recreational spaces will be optimised;
- All residents will be proud of their neighbourhood.

The first project organised by the Group was an eight week gardening course for ten learners based at the Children's Centre.

**Course** aims included:

- A sensory garden at the Albert Street Childrens Centre benefiting young children and their families;
- Young children and their families learning to appreciate the local environment through their enjoyment of the sensory garden. This appreciation to hopefully remain with them in later life, developing a sense of pride and responsibility towards their local environment and neighbourhood;
- Ten residents and community champions trained in gardening skills;
- Adults taking part in the course will learn skills that can be used in further gardening projects; rolling the benefits out to other residents;



## Course Costs

|                     |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Tutor Fees          | £297.00          |
| Childcare           | £48.00           |
| Meeting Rooms       | £240.00          |
| Tools and Equipment | £206.50          |
| Consumables         | £445.50          |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>£1,237.00</b> |

## Funding Sources

The course was funded locally, with generous grants from:

- Staffordshire County Council Life Long Learning Initiative;
- Staffordshire County Council Members (Councillor Christina Jebb) Initiative Fund;
- Staffordshire Moorlands District Council Britannia Building Society Local Agenda 21.

## Course Details

The course was advertised locally, as an eight week course (1pm to 3pm), commencing Wednesday 10 May 2006. Table one is a summary of the course.

**Table 1. Gardening Project Biddulph East**

| Week | Unit   |
|------|--|
| 1    | <b>Introduction to course</b><br>View plot, agree specifications, plan drawings, measuring, source materials<br><b>Homework:</b> locate design materials, practice measuring small plots   |
| 2    | <b>Measuring, transferring measurements to drawing</b><br>Notes of materials on plot e.g. walls, decking, fences, hedges, other houses/ residents. Soil testing. Locating sun/ shade. Explore plants – specific categories.<br><b>Homework:</b> Begin sourcing information on plants and materials |
| 3    | <b>Access Library</b><br>Research available support information. Video on finished designed garden   |
| 4    | <b>Visit Plot/ Garden Centres</b><br>Visit plot, 'reality checks'. Visit Garden Centres, sources of materials. Confirm type of materials e.g. compost.<br><b>Homework:</b> Learners to keep sourcing materials and bring ideas to course   |
| 5    | <b>Finalise Plans</b><br>Decide on final items, produce blue print. Arrange meeting with Manager of Children Centre (client), agree final plans.   |
| 6    | <b>Work on Plot</b><br>Hard landscaping. Prepare plot, feed with compost, rake ready for planting.   |
| 7    | <b>Purchase Plants</b><br>Field trip to purchase plants. Begin planting. Learn how to 'puddle in' new plants.  |
| 8    | <b>Finish Planting</b><br>Water if necessary, finish planting. Replace any failed planting. Install garden furniture. Lay bark. Wind up.   |

## 6. EVALUATION

### STUDENT PROFILE

While ten 'learners' enrolled on the course, one dropped out after week one, apparently realising the course was not appropriate for her needs. All remaining learners finished the course.

Eight out of nine learners handed in evaluation forms, on which the below statistics are based.

#### Gender

All learners were female.

#### Age

Average age **42 years**.

#### Ethnicity

All but one learner was British, the remaining learner, being Irish.

#### Entry Qualification Levels\*

- English GCSE/ O level 100%
- Maths GCSE/ O level 50%
- Level 1 1/8
- Level 2 4/8
- Level 3 1/8
- Level 4 1/8
- Level 5 1/8

\* Level 1 GCSE/ O level; Level 5 Masters Degree, Post graduate certificate

**Learning Last 3 Years** 6/8

#### Employment Status

- Full Time Employed 3/8
- Part Time Employed 2/8
- No Job/ Seeking Work 2/8
- No Job/ Not Seeking Work 1/8

## Geographical Spread

All but one learner were Biddulph based and home areas were:

- Newcastle
- Knypersley
- Station Road
- Redwing Drive
- Grange Road
- Warwick Street
- Park Lane
- Swallow Walk

## Student Needs

Reasons for taking part in the course included:

- *To meet new friends*
- *Another interest*
- *Support the local community*
- *Develop a local area and possibly other areas*

## COURSE OUTCOMES

### Learners Achievements

It is impressive that all nine learners completed the course, despite it clearly being hard work in relation to physical activity and mental agility.

As the adjacent *Chronicle* report (Thursday 6 July 2006), most importantly outlines, the garden was finished on time to the delight and satisfaction of children and staff at the Children Centre.

When asked as a group, what was good about the course, learners' responses included:

- Meeting new people
- Working as team
- Doing something for the community
- Pleasing the children and providing a sustainable resource
- Bringing pleasure to local elderly residents living adjacent to the Children Centre
- Learning something new
- New challenges
- Ideas for my personal development
- Challenging
- Fun and enjoyable



### Distance Traveled by Learners

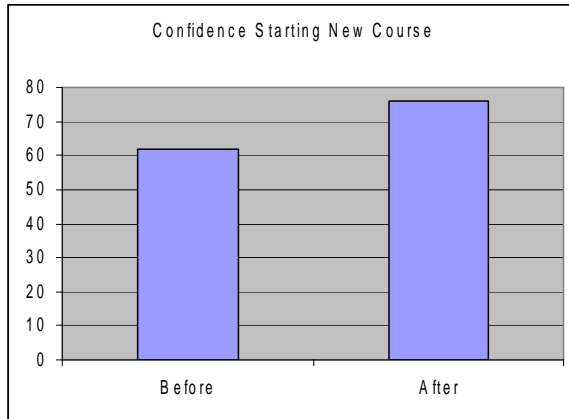
Learners were asked to complete individual learning logs at the start and end of the course. Graded 1 to 5 (1 negative – 5 positive), questions included:

- Confidence about starting a new course
- How much they knew about the subject
- How much they enjoyed learning
- How many things were stopping them from accessing further learning

Responses have been pooled to gauge group outcomes:

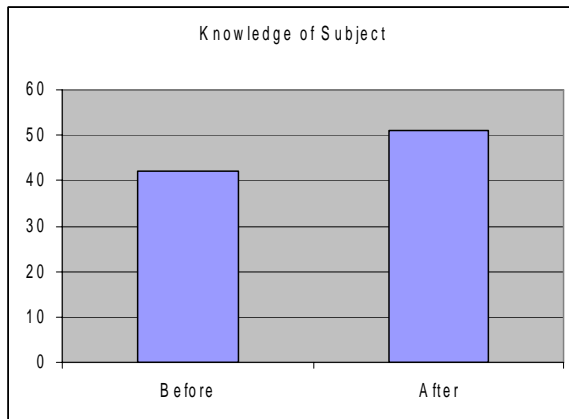
**Confidence** - Graph 1 indicates learners' confidence has increased by **22.6%** on completion of the course

**Graph 1. Confidence about Starting a New Course**



**Knowledge of Subject** - Graph 2 indicates learners' knowledge of the subject has increased **21.4%** on completion of the course.

**Graph 2. Knowledge of Subject**



### Enjoyment of Learning

No noticeable change was noted – before 79; after 81.

### Things stopping access to further learning

No noticeable change was noted – before 41; after 40.

### Learner Satisfaction with the Course

Table 2 summarises learners' satisfaction with elements of the course:

**Table 2. Learners Satisfaction with the Course**

| Subject                     | Extremely Satisfied | Very Satisfied | Satisfied | Not Satisfied |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------|---------------|
| Venue/Facilities            | 2                   | 2              | 3         |               |
| Course content              | 1                   |                | 5         | 1             |
| Interesting and enjoyable   | 2                   | 2              | 3         |               |
| Tutors knowledge            | 2                   | 3              | 2         |               |
| Course delivery             | 1                   | 5              | 1         |               |
| Tutor made you feel at ease | 4                   | 2              | 1         |               |
| Quality of help             | 2                   | 2              | 3         |               |
| Overall satisfaction        | 2                   | 4              | 1         |               |

### Lessons Learnt

When asked as a group, what lessons should be learnt about the course, learners' responses included:

- More time needed – for design, ground preparation and planting;
- Too rushed at times;
- Dependent on weather – slippage needs to be built into course;
- Limited resources – to purchase garden ornaments, gravel for paths etc.
- Full brief and budget needs to be agreed at start of course – last minute changes caused stress to the team;
- Refreshments – at times there was not enough water during hot weather;
- Need male involvement – particularly for heavy work;

## 7. NEXT STEPS

### The Way Forward

When asked as a group, what should happen next in relation to the course, learners' responses included creating a community resource – Biddulph East Environmental Supporters (**BEES**);

The group saw value in establishing a community based resource, the '**BEES**', which potentially could act as a delivery agent for environmental initiatives such as:

- Rolling out new 'community gardens' (e.g. Biddulph East Youth & Community Centre and Park Middle School);
- Training other community members (young and old) to deliver gardening projects;
- Support vulnerable community members with their own gardens (e.g. elderly, infirm, single mothers);
- Affordable tool hire to the wider community - issued from a 'BEE Hive'.

### Future Resources

When asked as group, what resources would be required to deliver their aspirations, learners' responses included:

- Constituted **BEES** group to agree actions and priorities;
- Volunteers – young and old, male and female (Biddulph East residents);
- Base to work from – community contact point, place to hold meetings, issue tools and equipment;
- Data base;
- Funding for plants, equipment and equipment storage;
- More training e.g. garden design course;
- Allotment/greenhouse to grow own plants;
- Specialist training – e.g. Garden Design;
- Childcare;
- Collaborative support from key agencies – e.g. BRIC, SMDC, County Council, Moorlands Housing, Community & Voluntary sectors.

### Key Agency Support

Multi agency meetings (which will include learners), are in hand to explore the establishment of the **BEES** and Moorlands Housing has indicated it may be in position to offer financial support to the initiative, pointing out opportunities to support vulnerable tenants; saving Housing Officer time and possibly avoiding the need to consider evictions for failing to maintain gardens.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

Wider Impact Consultancy is satisfied the Gardening Course has achieved all aims and objectives and has potential to support delivery of Community Pride. Evidence includes:

- Residents, local groups/ businesses and relevant agencies have worked together to create a wonderful sensory garden at the Albert Street Childrens Centre, which will benefit young children and their families for many years to come. Appreciation will hopefully remain with the children later in life, developing a sense of pride and responsibility towards their local environment and neighbourhood;
- Beneficiaries include local elderly residents, who have enjoyed watching the learners create the garden;
- Nine of the ten local residents/ community champions completed the course and are clearly proud of their achievements;
- Learners have achieved a good level of training, which is likely to benefit wider community members by involvement in future gardening projects - rolling out skills and experience to other residents

The course has clearly proven to be **value for money**. In addition to the creation of a community facility, outcomes include potential to:

- Create a community resource – Biddulph East Environmental Supporters (**BEES**);
- Create new gardens – e.g. Youth & Community Centre, Park Middle School;
- Support the local community with gardening projects (e.g. young people, elderly, infirm, single mothers);
- Enable affordable access to tools to the wider community.

Outcomes have potential to deliver further **value for money** e.g. supporting the role of Moorlands Housing staff with vulnerable tenants – saving time and avoiding expensive drawn out eviction procedures, should tenants for example fail to meet tenancy conditions.

Wider Impacts include a sense of '**community pride**', which will enable local people to:

- Socialise and work in teams;
- Do something positive for their community;
- Involve children, young people and the elderly in the provision of sustainable resources;
- Bring pleasure to local people;
- Learning something new;
- Face new challenges/ opportunities;

- Be involved in their personal development;
- Be challenged;
- Bring fun and enjoyment to the regeneration of their local communities.

The concept of the **BEES** is exciting, innovative and is gaining support from key agencies. The initiative has potential to support delivery of the developing **Community Pride** initiative and could support aims and objectives of key agencies, such as members of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Strategic Partnership, Moorlands Housing, Staffordshire Moorlands Children Centre, Community & Voluntary sectors and Staffordshire County Council.

**All involved in delivery of the course should be proud of their achievements and should be congratulated.**



**APPENDIX A**

**COURSE PHOTOGRAPHS**



**From a 'waste land' to .....**



**A place to enjoy .....** and



**Share with future generations**

**Photographs** courtesy of County Councillor Christina Jebb and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council.