

# Therapeutic gardening: a pathway to support physical and mental health in Newham

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The benefits of therapeutic gardening for both physical and mental health across the life span and within different communities and cultures are ample. Within Newham ELFT Occupational Therapy (OT), therapeutic gardening has been a meaningful intervention over many years. However, the offer varied over years depending on staffing, skillset, funding and space. We wanted to improve the way we utilize and optimise therapeutic gardening in Newham, in line with community mental health transformation aims of working in collaboration, considering both mental and physical health needs as a way of improving quality of life. We therefore developed a dedicated Therapeutic Gardening lead role by successfully applying for Physical health funding.



Natalia Sydor and Andrew Casey within the cherry tree blossoms of Newham

## AIM of a dedicated role

- To develop a **realistic pathway into existing community gardening projects** in Newham;
- To **make therapeutic gardening accessible** to those people with both physical and mental health needs;
- **Expand and optimize the ELFT Newham offer** of therapeutic gardening for those not able to access community gardening;
- To pay particular attention to the **sustainability of both the pathway and the ELFT Newham offer**

## HOW and timeline

Feb. 23: Funding proposal

March 23: Wrote JD

Apr. 23: Recruitment

May 23: Andrew and Natalia started

We applied for funding for 1wte of a Band 5 role. It was important for us that the banding reflects the level of skill and autonomy required within this role. Also, to develop a new, non-registered AHP Band 5 role as a progression opportunity. The JD highlighted the important experience and knowledge required to lead this work.

The role was split between two internal candidates, bringing different skillsets to this project.

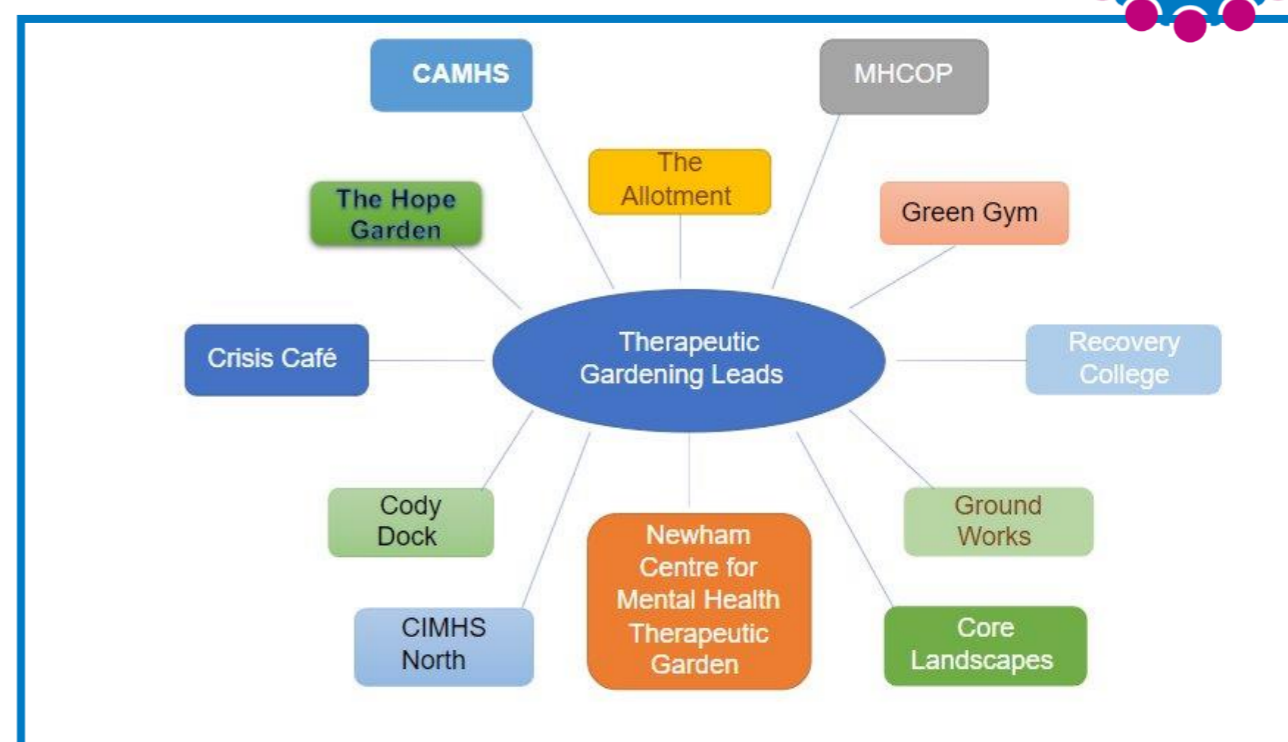
The early focus was to optimise the gardening spaces we have access to and to create a new hospital garden for inpatient services.

## What difference has it made?

- Tranquil new “Cherry Tree garden” at Newham centre for MH with two new inpatient groups and multi-purpose space for staff and service users
- Allotment significantly improved to accommodate more service users
- New community group with Cody Docks and early collaboration with others
- Increased 1:1 offer to service users



## Collaboration with others



## Learning and next steps

### Challenges

- Job share, ways of working and limited overlapping days
- No shared base
- Collaboration with community partners
- Weather!
- Funding and grant applications

### Opportunities

- Build on current relationships with community partners and teams
- Realise initial aims of project
- Expand offer in view of transformation aims / Trieste model
- Consider future income generation opportunities
- Clearer capture of benefit to service users