

Survey of Participants in the Social and Therapeutic Horticulture Programme

Martineau Gardens - May 2015 (Short Version)

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Good News Findings - highlights:

- **When asked about how the volunteers may have benefited from coming to Martineau the Gardens, an increased level of confidence was highlighted by the majority (28 out of 32 respondents)**
- **All respondents reported either learning more skills and learning more about the environment/gardening or both (31 out of 32).**
- **In summary, almost two-thirds (21 out of 32) have either got a job, started a course, gone on or intend to volunteer elsewhere or a combination of these activities since volunteering at the Garden.**

1. 0 Introduction

This survey was carried out looking at personal development and learning amongst a group of people working as volunteers within the Social and Therapeutic Horticulture Programme at Martineau Gardens, Edgbaston, Birmingham, in order to measure the impact of the service has for its participants. This Programme is part of the running and maintenance of the two and a half-acre community garden in the heart of Birmingham and is led by Stewart Holmes, who has a Diploma in Social and Therapeutic Horticulture from Coventry University. He organises the work of the Gardens as well as leading the volunteers in activities.

The questionnaire was designed loosely using the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing' (the Five Ways) framework (Aked, Marks, Cordon and Thompson, 2008). This was developed by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) as part of a Government led initiative, and is an evidence-based approach designed to promote mental health and well-being.

Whilst a modest population of thirty-two respondents were surveyed, this represents 75% of volunteers - many of the participants have volunteered at the Gardens for many months, and in a handful of cases, years – providing useful data. This 'snapshot view' provides feedback from participants on the programme together with information that could be used to develop the programme further. The findings indicated that the Social and Therapeutic Horticulture Programme at Martineau Gardens provides a positive environment for participants.

2.0 Theoretical Context

NEF developed the Five Ways, comprising of 'Connect', 'Be Active', 'Take Notice', 'Keep Learning' and 'Give' (Aked et al, 2008). These key messages were all based on evidence gathered by the Foresight Project (Government Office for Science, 2008) and designed to promote people's mental health and well-being based around both feeling and functioning well. These elements have since been used both nationally and globally to get people to start thinking about well-being, develop organisational strategies, assess need, measure

impact, for staff development and to help people to incorporate more well-being promoting activity into their lives.¹

3.0 Methodology

The majority of questionnaires were anonymous self-completion. A small percentage were completed face-to-face. Further details on methodology are in the Appendices.

3.0 Findings

3.1 'CONNECT'

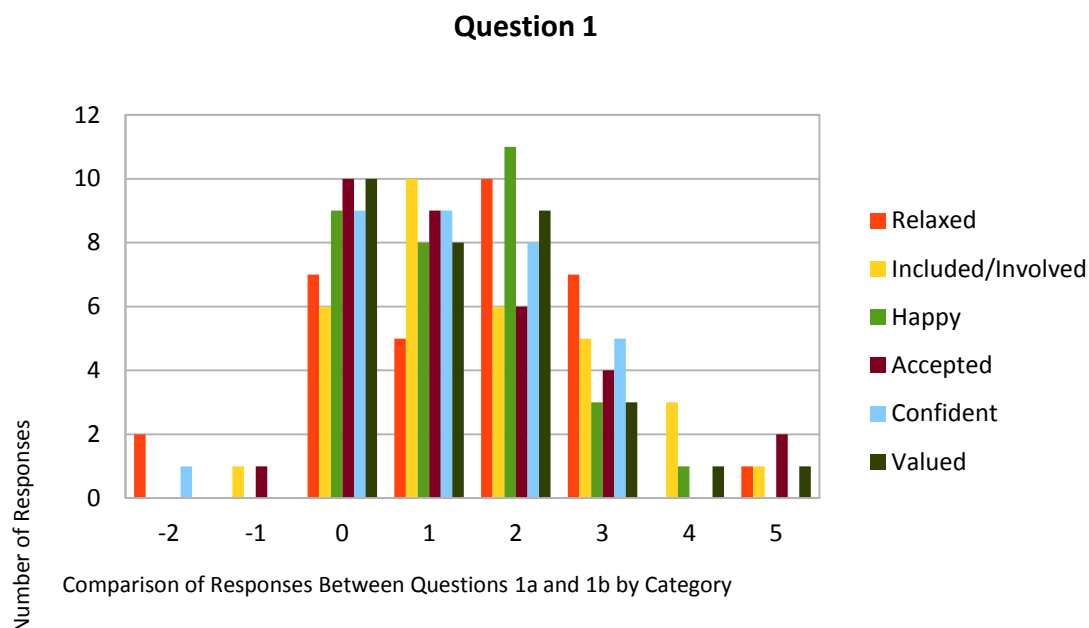
The majority (18/32) of respondents reported feeling a difference, particularly in feeling more relaxed, at the Gardens. Nearly half of respondents reported feeling happier (15/32), experiencing increased levels of confidence (13/32) and feeling more involved/included (15/32). Respondents also reported feeling more valued (14/32) and accepted (12/32) apart from only one respondent who reported feeling less accepted at the Gardens than elsewhere (apart from home). Several responses from the final question (Question 11) elicited the following comments that could be seen to reinforce these findings. One respondent noted that:

"(Martineau Gardens was) different from other places – lot more relaxed."

and a second that:

"I think that Martineau Gardens is a lovely place with great scenery and welcoming atmosphere."

FIGURE 1



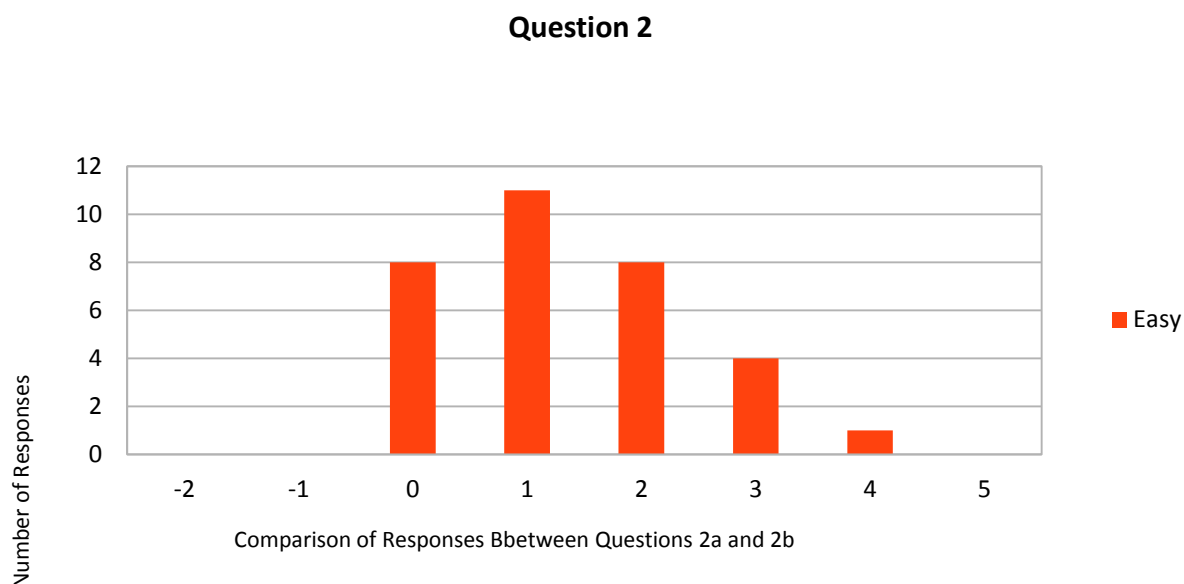
Q1a. How do you feel when you are at Martineau Gardens?

¹ Source: <http://www.neweconomics.org/projects/entry/Five-ways-to-well-being>

Q1b. How do you feel elsewhere (excluding your home)

These findings could be seen to contribute to the those of the second question with most of the respondents in the exercise reporting finding it easier to mix with other people at the Gardens than elsewhere apart from home

FIGURE 2



Q2a. How do you find mixing with other people at Martineau Gardens?

Q2b. How do you find mixing with other people elsewhere (excluding your home)?

3.2 'KEEP LEARNING' and 'TAKE NOTICE'

When asked about how the volunteers may have benefited from coming to the Gardens, an increased level of confidence was highlighted by the majority (28/32) with only one respondent indicating that he had not made friends. All the respondents reported either learning more skills and learning more about the environment/gardening or both (31/32). About three quarters of the volunteers (24/32) highlighted the category referring to being more curious about the world.

In responding to the final question (Question 11), one respondent noted that he/she would:

"(like to) know more about plants in general – just so interesting!"

Almost two-thirds of respondents (20/32) ticked all six boxes and more than three-quarters (25/32) ticked them all except the last box about being curious. The remaining seven participants responses are illustrated in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1: Responses to Question 3 from 7 Participants

BENEFITS	Responses (7 Participants)						
'I feel more confident'		√		√	√		
'I feel healthier'	√		√	√	√	√	
'Learned more skills'	√	√			√	√	
'I have made friends'	√	√		√	√	√	√
'Learned more about the environment/gardenin g'	√	√	√	√	"Not really"	√	√
'I am more curious about the world around me'	√	√			√	√	

3.3 'BE ACTIVE' and 'GIVE'

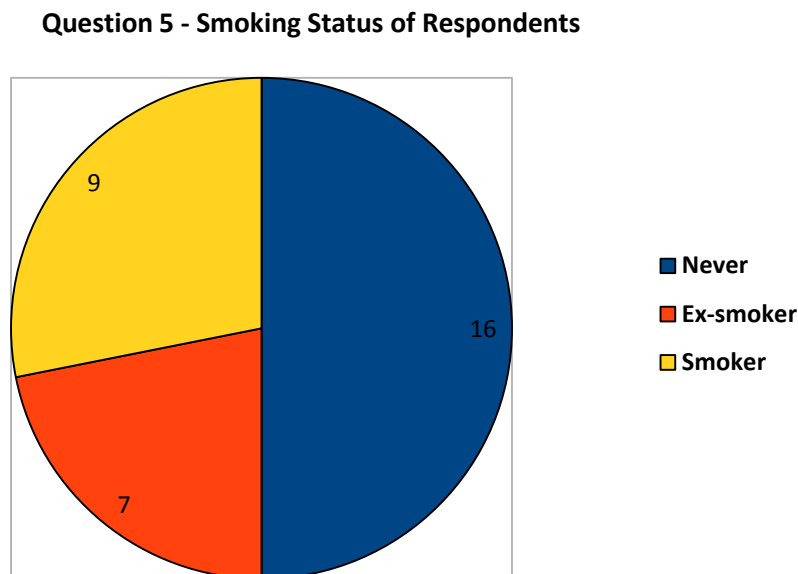
Question: 4 . Have you gone on to do other things since volunteering at the gardens?

Out of those participants responding to the fourth question (27/32), fourteen respondents reported going on to volunteer elsewhere including one starting the day after the questionnaire was completed and one actively looking for voluntary work. Eleven including three of those volunteering elsewhere) had started a course including one respondent who had made a decision about starting a course but had not attended as yet. Two respondents who also volunteered elsewhere had gone on to get allotments. In summary, almost two-thirds (21/32) of all respondents taking part in the survey and completing this question have either got a job (3), started a course, gone on or intend to volunteer elsewhere or a combination of these activities since volunteering at the Garden.

3.4 PHYSICAL HEALTH

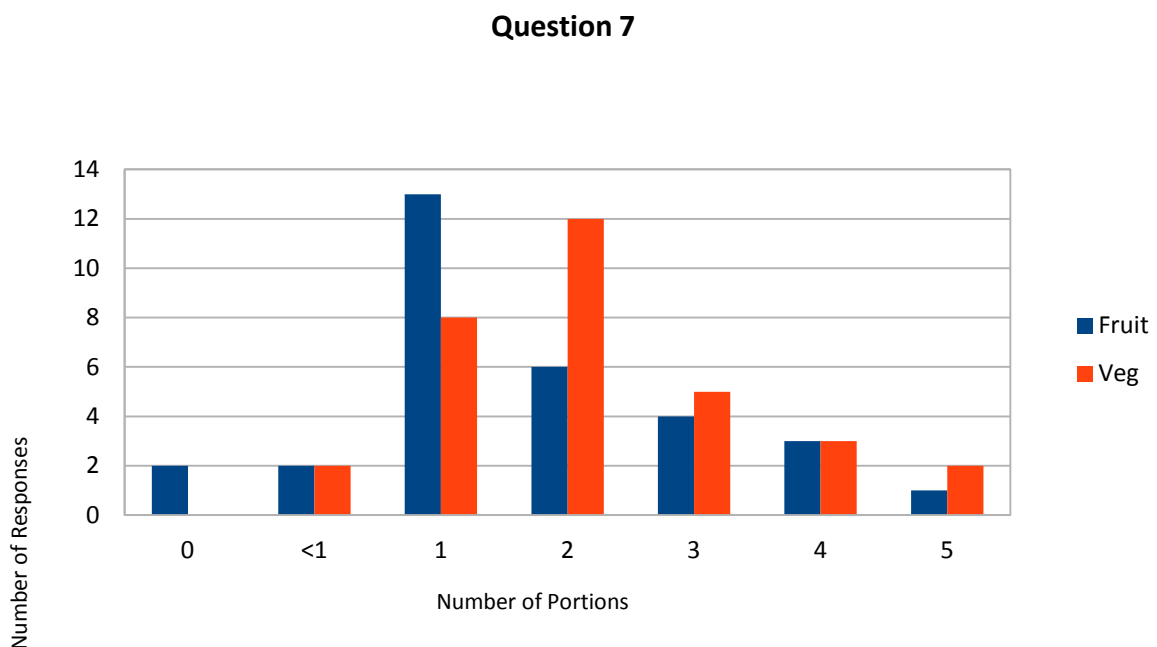
Half of respondents reported never having smoked (16/32) with just under a third (9/32)reporting currently smoking (see Figure 3). Most (at least 5/7) of ex-smokers had given up two years or more previously. About half of the volunteers (16/32) reported drinking alcohol with all but one of the remaining volunteers reporting drinking within recommended limits (15/16).

FIGURE 3



It would appear that the consumption of fruit compared to vegetables is varied. More than half (17/32) respondents reported eating one portion or less of fruit. One respondent noted he/she only had fruit when could afford it. Nearly a third (10/32) respondents reported eating one or less portions of vegetables a day.

FIGURE 4



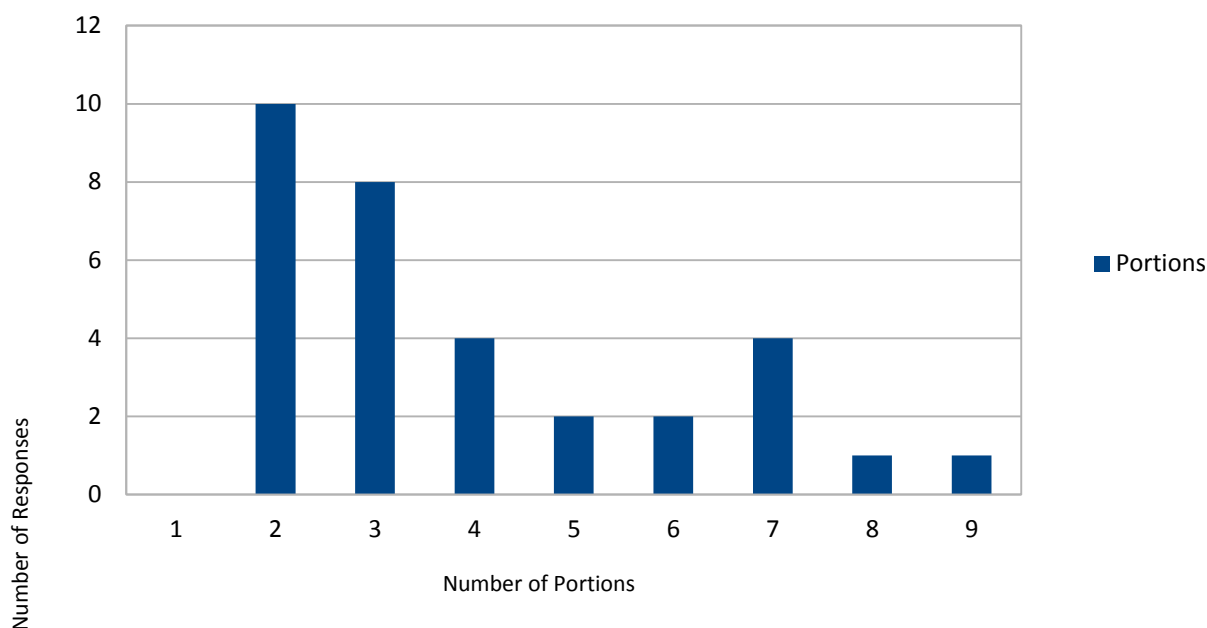
Just a third (10/32) of respondents reported eating five portions of fruit and vegetables a day in line with Government guidelines with just over half (18/32) reporting eating 3 or fewer portions of fruit and vegetables each day (see Figure 5)

FIGURE 5

Q7a. On average how many portions of fruit do you eat in a day?

Q7b On average how many portions of vegetables to you eat in a day?

Question 7 - Overview



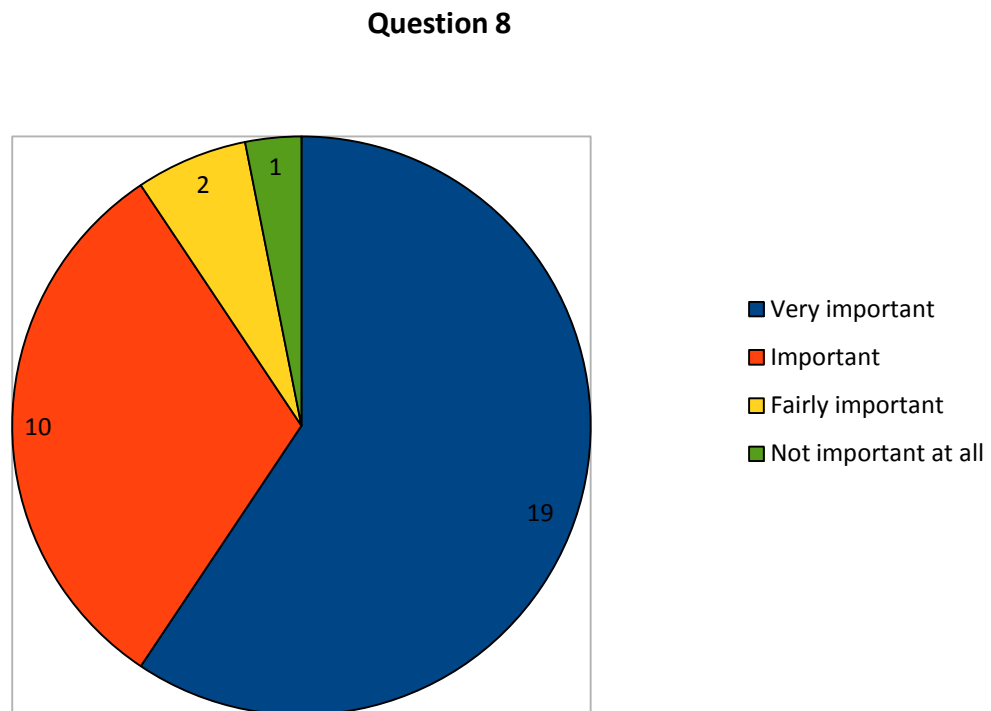
The benefits to mental health and well-being by participating in a healthy lifestyle particularly in relation to diet and exercise were highlighted within a recent systematic review (Dale et al, 2014). With just over just under two thirds (22/32) of respondents reporting eating less than the five portions of fruit and vegetables a day recommended within Government guidelines there could be seen to be plenty of scope for improvement.

3.5 'GIVE'

All but one respondent felt it was fairly or very important to them with almost all (29/32) feeling it was important or very important to them (see Figure 6). This was also picked up by three respondents who would be looking at volunteering elsewhere if not at the Gardens with one respondent reporting wanting to be useful, one reporting a 'sense of usefulness' and and also one respondent later in response to Question 11 noting that:

"This place has given me so much I like to give back what I can"

FIGURE 6

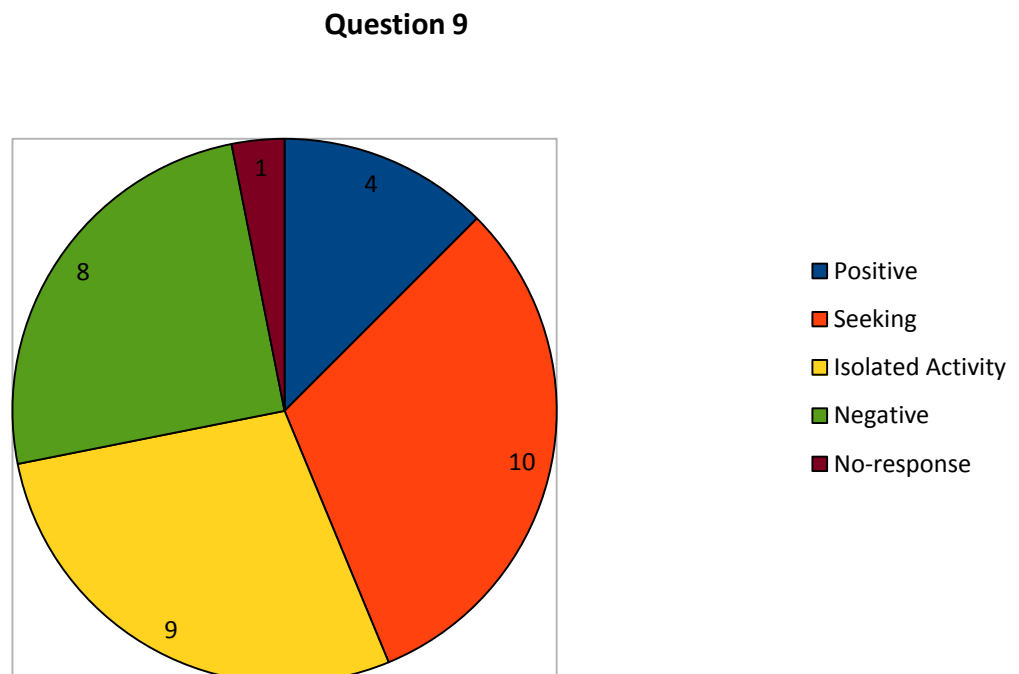


Q8. How important is it to you that you are volunteering for the benefit of other people?

3.6 'BE ACTIVE'

When asked what participants would be doing if not at the Gardens in response to Question 9 a variety of responses were forthcoming (see Figure 7). As noted in section 2 some analysis through broad categorisation was implemented linking to the Five Ways to Wellbeing, however it must be emphasised, that this was a very subjective exercise. Responses to the categories identified are shown in the chart below*.

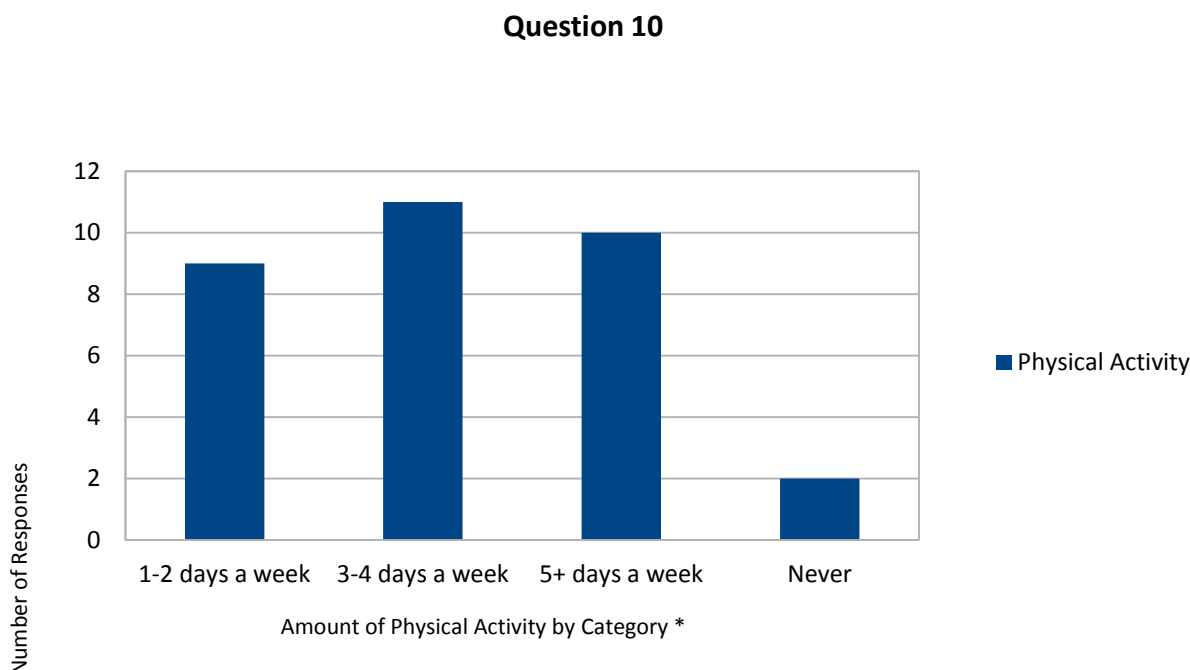
FIGURE 7



Q9. What would you be doing if you weren't at the Gardens?

A third of respondents (10/32) reported meeting Government guidelines relating to moderate intensity physical activity when not at the Gardens. Just under a third (11/32) of respondents reported being active for at least 30 minutes once or twice a week or less.

FIGURE 8



Q10. Apart from Martineau Gardens , how often do you participate in 30 minutes of physical activity (exercise) including 'everyday ' activities such as cycling, walking (brisk not 'strolling') or 'heavy ' gardening?

* No responses received in the categories 'Once a fortnight' and 'Once a month' - not included on figure.

3.7 Other Comments

Q11. Do you have any suggestions that you would like to mention to Martineau Gardens about any improvements, activities you would like to do or general comments?

When asked for any general comments or suggestions in the final question (Question 11), about two thirds of the participants (21/32) responded with 14 participants suggesting possible activities. More than half (12/21) of the respondents asked to learn more with topics covering horticulture (e.g. Plant identification, seed sowing, propagation, transplanting, pruning, log chopping), crafts (e.g. Basketwork, computer skills, Tai Chi, wildlife and recycling. One respondent offered his skills in pruning.

Other comments included:

"Big Thank You– My Anchor!"

"Cool, Brilliant – wonderful place especially being in middle of city - an oasis"

"Such a safe environment – must be lots of people that want to come here."

"Such a fantastic place - sets me up for the week – love it – so peaceful"

4.0 Conclusion

Recent research can be seen to reinforce the components of Five Ways to Health with particular relevance to the programme of work being implemented at Martineau Gardens. In a review of gardening as a mental health intervention, Clatworthy et al (2013) noted that potential benefits included improved social functioning and enhanced emotional well-being, together with improved physical health and opportunities for vocational development.

The programme of work, does seem to an invaluable opportunity in providing an avenue for those with mental health issues and learning disabilities to develop personal skills and provide a conducive environment for learning. Within the review of gardening-based mental health interventions noted above, (Clatworthy et al, 2013) concluded that 'There is now a substantial body

of research demonstrating that garden-based interventions can benefit people especially experiencing mental health difficulties.' Taking into account the information and comments above, Martineau Gardens would seem to be a therapeutic community garden that can be viewed as an oasis in the centre of the city of Birmingham and a unique opportunity for its residents

5.0 Recommendations

5.1 Scoping exercise to feedback findings from 'survey' to participants and other stakeholders,

explore interests, values and opportunities to develop programme.

5.2 Develop further and implement a systematic evaluation and monitoring framework taking into account needs from stakeholders, previous work in this area and findings from similar work.

5.3 Follow up participants on list not available to be included in the survey.

5.4 To further develop the questionnaire used in the survey as appropriate, taking account of learning gained through the exercise.

6.0 References

Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Report :Final Project Report; October 2008' ;The Government Office for Science; London

Aked,J.,Marks,N.,Cordon,C. and Thompson,S. (2008) 'Five Ways to Health and Well-being -A report presented to the Foresight Project on communicating the evidence base for improving people's well-being', Centre for Well-being, NEF

Dale, H., Brassington, L. and King K., (2014) "The impact of healthy lifestyle interventions on mental health and well-being: a systematic review", Mental Health Review Journal, Vol.19, Issue:1, pp.1-26

Clatworthy, J., Hinds, J. and Camic, P.M. (2013) "Gardening as a mental health intervention: a review" , Mental Health Review Journal, Vol. 18, Issue:4, pp.214-225

NOTE: This document is a shortened version of the full report that includes an extended methodology section and appendices containing the full range of responses gained. For further information please contact info@martineau-gardens.org.uk

Appendices

Appendix 1 Questionnaire for Gardening Volunteers

1a. How do you feel when you are at Martineau Gardens? *(Please circle one number on each line as appropriate)*

Relaxed	1	2	3	4	5	6	Anxious
Included/Involved	1	2	3	4	5	6	Excluded
Happy	1	2	3	4	5	6	Unhappy
Not welcome	1	2	3	4	5	6	Accepted
Confident	1	2	3	4	5	6	Shy
Valued	1	2	3	4	5	6	Not respected

1b. How do you feel elsewhere (excluding your home) *(Please circle one number on each line as appropriate)*

Relaxed	1	2	3	4	5	6	Anxious
Included/Involved	1	2	3	4	5	6	Excluded
Happy	1	2	3	4	5	6	Unhappy
Not welcome	1	2	3	4	5	6	Accepted
Confident	1	2	3	4	5	6	Shy
Valued	1	2	3	4	5	6	Not respected

2a. How do you find mixing with other people at Martineau Gardens?
(Please circle one number as appropriate)

Easy	1	2	3	4	5	6	Difficult
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2b. How do you find mixing with other people elsewhere (excluding your home)?
(Please circle one number as appropriate)

Easy	1	2	3	4	5	6	Difficult
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3. How has coming to the Gardens benefited you? *(Please tick all that apply)*

I feel more confident ☐ I feel healthier ☐

Learned more skills ☐ I have made friends ☐

Learned more about the environment/gardening ☐

I am more curious about the world around me ☐

4. Have you gone on to do other things since volunteering at the gardens?

(Please tick all that apply)

Got a job ☐

Volunteer elsewhere ☐

Started a course ☐

I am retired ☐

Other

☐ *Please specify*)

5. About smoking - Which of the categories below applies to you? *(Please tick one box):*

a. Never ☐

b. Ex-smoker ☐ When did you give up?

c. Smoker ☐

d. If a smoker, about how many cigarettes etc. a day?

6. How many units of alcohol do you drink in a week?

7. About your diet *(Please see attached Information Sheet)*

a. On average how many portions of fruit do you eat in a day?

b. On average how many portions of vegetables do you eat in a day?

8. How important is it to you that you are volunteering for the benefit of other people?

a. Very important ☐

b. Important ☐

c. Fairly important ☐

d. Not important at all ☐

9. What would you be doing if you weren't at the Gardens *(Please list below)*

.....
.....

10. Apart from Martineau Gardens, how often do you participate in 30 minutes of physical activity (exercise) including 'everyday' activities such as cycling, walking (brisk not 'strolling') or 'heavy' gardening? *(Please tick one box)*

Never ☐

Once a month ☐

Once a fortnight ☐

Once or twice a week ☐

Three or four days a week ☐

Five or more days a week ☐

11. Do you have any suggestions that you would like to mention to Martineau Gardens about any improvements, activities you would like to do or general comments?

Appendix 2 Methodology – additional information

Supporting information was provided for participants completing the questionnaire, relating to questions on diet and alcohol in order to encourage an informed response about the types of fruit and vegetables and portion/unit sizes. The benefits to mental health and well-being by participating in a healthy lifestyle particularly in relation to diet and exercise were noted within a recent systematic review (Dale, Brassington and King, 2014). Although no particular emphasis is put on these areas during the Therapeutic Programme at Martineau Gardens, questions on smoking, alcohol, diet were included within the exercise together with physical activity which directly links in with the 'Be Active message of Five Ways to Well-Being'.

In view of time scales and the relatively small sample, implementing a formal pilot exercise was difficult. However, the responses from the first five respondents presenting at the first time 'slot' were considered and several amendments made to the questionnaire and the relevant questions re-visited and responses gained using the improved format.

Responses were collated separately for each question apart from the first. In the first question that compared how participants felt when at Martineau Gardens (Question 1a 'How do you feel when you at Martineau Gardens?') as opposed to elsewhere (Question 1b 'How do you feel elsewhere (apart from home)?') the components were the same for both 1a and 1b. Each component was scored separately and then compared with its duplicate and scored again and then analysed.

These components comprised of being relaxed as opposed to anxious, being included/involved as opposed to excluded, being happy as opposed to unhappy, feeling accepted as opposed to not welcomed, confident as opposed to shy and valued as opposed to feeling not respected. In order to collate and analyse this question, a system of scaling was developed in order to be able to quantify the responses that were originally gained through a continuum of 1 – 6.

Questions relating to a healthy lifestyle (Questions 5, 6, 7 and 10) were analysed on a categorical basis in several stages using the Government recommendations for that topic area i.e., smoking, alcohol, diet and physical activity. Other questions where respondents could complete more than one given option (Question 2 'How has coming to the Gardens benefited you?', Question 3 'Have you gone on to do other things since volunteering at the Gardens?' , Question 4 'Have you gone on to do other things since volunteering at the Gardens?' and Question 8 'How important is volunteering to you?' were again categorised in stages.

With regard to Question 9, 'What would you be doing if you were not at the Gardens?', this question gained a variety of responses that needed some consideration in collating and analysing due to the a) subjective nature of a response and b) perceived interpretation. Responses were broadly defined into categories but in taking account the need of taking subjectiveness into account these may only be useful in identifying other areas to explore if appropriate. Suggestions and comments about Martineau Gardens and the programme asked as 'open' questions in the final question (Question 11) are wide ranging and are roughly categorised in order to inform further work as proposed within the recommendations from the report.