

Project Title	The Natural Health Service Project at Broomfield Hospital
Award Category	Best Community Engagement
A brief summary of the project	
<p>Mid Essex Hospital Services NHS Trust (Broomfield Hospital) has two over 270-year-old woodlands situated on the hospital campus grounds; Puddings Wood and the Long Shapely Belt. The hospital is keen to ensure that this wonderful part of our heritage is protected for generations to come. Therefore a 10 year Woodland Management Plan has been developed in 2009 and is being delivered to maintain the woodlands as an amenity for the quiet enjoyment for the public as well as to protect its natural habitats. Recently this woodland management project has been extended as the Natural Health Service Project to offer regular opportunities for children, young people and adults to achieve and develop confidence through hands-on learning in our woodland and/or garden environment. This inspirational project offers social and therapeutic activities that incorporate horticulture and conservation activities on the hospital estate. The project is offered through a partnership led by professionals from the Trust, DF Clark (woodland and garden management services) and the Cause-an-Effect Foundation (a social enterprise focusing on social and educational change). Our team guides the participants on their personal journey, providing a simple framework to help make sustainability an integral part of their everyday life. We work with participants on a designated garden or woodland site, setting a program of work tailored to the space available, time of year and, most importantly...to the needs of the participants. Part of our mission is to help each participant to become more sustainable and to bring about positive behaviour change in children, young people and adults and those connected to them, so that good habits learned from within the project are followed through into their homes and communities.</p>	
How many different communities have engaged on the site?	
Various volunteer groups are involved in the activities of our project (more than 10 groups).	
How have you engaged the community? What did you do?	
<p>The improvement and maintenance work in the woodlands has been carried out and supported by various volunteer groups and the learning sessions for woodland management skills were also provided to those volunteers by the local agricultural college and the professional arboricultural service company. In the summer of 2014, a community vegetable garden and orchard were newly installed near our original building, Broomfield Court, to enhance our opportunities for community engagement. We are offering regular volunteering sessions for the local students, including City of Chelmsford MENCAP students and students from Chelmsford College, with the aim of supporting the development of their confidence through hands-on learning such as vegetable gardening experience. It is important to the Trust that the woodlands and gardens on the estate provide a calm, relaxing and therapeutic environment for hospital staff, visitors, patients and members of the local community. In 2014, we launched the Nurture 2014 Campaign (a campaign to recognise and celebrate the contributions of volunteers), a series of Woodland and Garden Walks (offered to staff and visitors) and we are also working on developing a Dementia Friendly Garden (based on the principle of reminiscence theory) and Labyrinth Garden (based on the therapeutic effect of walking on labyrinths). All these projects involve different community groups.</p>	
Who benefited and roughly how many?	
<p>Over 100 volunteers have been involved in activities in the last year including City of Chelmsford MENCAP students, students from Chelmsford College, Children from Larkrise Primary School, volunteers from local gardening groups and volunteers from the local rotary Club (41Club) and various other community groups and individual volunteers. The hospital community (380,000 patients p.a.) including patients, staff and visitors as well as local residents around the hospital such as leisure walkers or dog walkers enjoy the various woodland and garden spaces that we offer.</p>	
What has been the impact?	
<p>The woodlands have been considerably improved over the last few years through regular maintenance and several development works including the instalment of new paved footpath through Puddings Wood, an increased number of native trees and shrubs and the development of various seating areas. Our community engagement through the woodland improvement has received Green Flag Status in 2012 and 2013. Psychotherapy sessions are also introduced to evaluate the impact of these volunteer sessions on the participants and Jennifer Doré (psychologist with Cause an Effect Foundation) evaluates this project as: "a free, easily accessible and natural activity that boosts our volunteers' mental wellbeing. To date we know that our volunteer population feel a natural and social connection with the estate and this wildlife, there is sensory excitement and an adrenalin rush regarding what they will discover on each visit and learning a new skill and completing a manual task leads to a rewarding sense of worth."</p>	