



Access to nature

Isle of Wight
A community based project: running an accessible allotment to improve mental health and links with the community
Jan 2021

The local authority provided an allotment for young people. It is supported by the community and provides a space to enjoy nature, have fun, learn educational skills, and provides a place for therapeutic work.

Why?

Having access to the natural world and the opportunity to take part in hobbies and activities can reduce stress and build resilience. Gardening has benefits for mental health and enhancing well-being. The LA developed the allotment project to address these multiple factors highlighted in their Bright Spots reports.

What did they do?

The allotment can be used by all looked after children and care leavers. It is rent free with all the additional materials and plants raised through fund raising or provided by the local community.

The local authority offers an educational award in horticulture.

The allotment has raised beds for those in wheelchairs. It is accessible for all.

What's next?

Future developments planned include a therapeutic mental health group that will take place at the allotment and a 'shed project' to help young people learn to make things from wood and pallets.

What difference is it making?

The leaving care team leader said:
"It's a place to go where you can socialise, you can learn. It's a community allotment so it offers young people the opportunity to meet other people and learn from them."

"It's a lovely space. It's a wonderful place."

Leaving care team leader

