

Postcode

Gardener



Friends of
the Earth

The
co-operative
bank

Bringing back nature

Year 2 impact report

October 2024 – September 2025

Introduction



Greener streets



Increased biodiversity



Communities connected



More people protecting nature

Daily contact with nature is linked to less stress, better mood and better health. People want healthier and greener streets but they often lack the time or skills to maintain new planting.

With nature and biodiversity in decline, the UK is sadly one of the world's most nature-depleted countries and Britons are some of the least nature-connected people globally.¹

That's where a Postcode Gardener can help. They are employed to bring people together in some of the UK's most nature-deprived places to make their streets greener and more biodiverse, to connect people to nature and each other, and ultimately to ensure there are more people actively working to protect our natural world.

In partnership with The Co-operative Bank, we're funding Postcode Gardeners in these places, to work with communities to green up their spaces in the way they want. Together they'll bring back nature to 1,000 spaces across England and Wales over 3 years, catalysed by The Co-operative Bank's support and sustained through fee-paying services that improve local biodiversity.

Our impact in numbers

Within 2 years, our network of Postcode Gardener projects has achieved all this and more...

17

Postcode Gardeners operating across England and Wales.

733

public spaces² transformed by Postcode Gardeners and their communities.

Almost 300

local community groups, such as schools, residents' groups, faith groups, cultural centres and women's groups, collaborated on Postcode Gardener projects.

43,000+

pollinator-friendly plants planted – including native wildflowers, fruit bushes, vegetables, herbs and spring bulbs.

5,100+

community members taking part in gardening and nature-based activities.

Our projects



England

- 1 Manchester
 - West Gorton
 - Wythenshawe

2 East Middlesbrough

- 3 Hull
 - Orchard Park
 - Bransholme
 - Sculcoates

- 4 Derby
 - Rose Hill

- 5 Birmingham
 - Balsall Heath

- 6 London
 - Notting Dale
 - Wood Green

- 7 Bristol
 - Barton Hill

Wales

- 8 Cardiff
 - Ely and Caerau

- 9 Swansea
 - St Thomas
 - Ravenhill

- 10 Rhondda Cynon Taf
 - Ferndale

- 11 Blaenau Gwent
 - Tyleri

- 12 Denbighshire
 - Rhyl

Project highlights



New Postcode Gardener project starts up in Sculcoates, Hull



As part of our accelerator funding this year, our Bransholme partners, Rewilding Youth bid for the chance to extend their work into another area of Hull.

The team will be working alongside local partner Hull Sisters to support women and children of colour affected by abuse and discrimination to transform a disused outdoor area into a growing space for produce that can be cooked for the centre's daily meals. This will make the provision of this service more sustainable in light of the cost-of-living crisis.

By summer, 3 large raised beds had already been constructed and prepared, ready for the women to plant up with edibles of their choice in autumn. Postcode Gardener Jon plans to host pickling and fermenting

workshops with the women, supporting a learning exchange as individuals bring the recipes and spices used in each of their cultures.

“Families have shared with us that they haven't felt safe outdoors since the race-related riots in the summer of 2024. This space will support women and girls to not only spend time together outdoors, in a safe, green space, away from the worries of daily life, but also to gain valuable skills in creating spaces for growing, preparing, eating and preserving fruit and vegetables - all while developing connections with the nature and wildlife around them.”

Dr Charlotte Dean,
Director at Rewilding Youth

“Like a phoenix from the ashes”: East Middlesbrough’s Town Farm allotments

Over a year and a half, Postcode Gardener Ian has turned the once underused and unloved community allotment into a welcoming space generating produce and providing social connections and a sense of purpose to its growing team of dedicated volunteers.

Landscaping and construction jobs – including creating wheelchair-accessible pathways, sheds, planters and fencing – took priority in the early months, followed by creating a seasonal planting schedule and caring for the fruit trees on the site.

Corn, potatoes, runner beans, tomatoes and leeks grown on the allotment are distributed to the community and used for meals in the community kitchen. Pumpkins grown from seed were carved by young people at a Halloween event in the community centre.

The real success, however, is the impact of the sessions on the incredible volunteers who show up week-in, week-out to continue developing the space. Ian’s only prerequisite for each session is that everyone leaves with a smile on their face! The safe and calming environment nurtured by Ian has created a noticeable improvement in the wellbeing and self-confidence of volunteers Peter, Callum, Gemma and Mick.

Next up for Ian and the team is the construction of a working toilet and café area – watch this space.



“When you get up in the morning, you feel like you’ve got a task to do.” **Peter, volunteer**

“It’s such a community. I like coming here because I like to be sociable and meet new people. We all learn different skills about gardening and growing vegetables. It’s opened my eyes to things I didn’t know. Coming here has made me want to get my own allotment one day.”

Callum, volunteer



From lawn to loaf: Cwmtylleri's home-grown wheat

This year, Tyleri Postcode Gardener Jamie took on the exciting, if not daunting, challenge of growing wheat. When it was harvested in mid-August, a crop of just under 2kg was achieved from the 8-square-metre-patch. Not at all bad for wheat grown organically halfway up a mountain – and possibly the first grown in the area for nearly 200 years!

What was even more exciting were the conversations that this triggered within the community. As Pentref Tyleri Co-Founder Ralph put it: **“History, heritage, community, provenance, food quality, sustainability, industry, land use, biodiversity, capitalism, education, work, the future – so many big topics inspired by such a tiny plot of wheat.”**

This is just the beginning for Tyleri's grain and companion planting, with plans to share their learning with local schools and any other groups that want to experience the joy of growing wheat in a nature-friendly way.



Planting a rooftop “pizza garden” in Bransholme

Bransholme Postcode Gardener Jon delivered 8 outdoor sessions with young people outside of the traditional education stream at Winifred Holtby Academy.

The students took over large planters on the school's rooftop to grow their favourite pizza toppings – think tomatoes, onions, peppers, chili and garlic. The idea: to use the veg in their cooking classes so the students can experience the journey food takes from farm to fork, including interacting with the pollinators that are essential to making this happen.

The young people were disappointed when the plants didn't survive the particularly hot and dry summer holidays. But, undeterred, they got straight to clearing the beds and starting again for next season.

Barton Hill's community orchard

What was once a dumping ground has become a vibrant green space, supporting biodiversity and community connections. The space is now accessed by locals, university staff and students, the library and local businesses, and it hosts fruit trees, wildflowers, hedges and perennial meadow planting.

Postcode Gardener Harriet puts the success of this space down to the dedication of a growing group of local volunteers who have thought creatively about how to attract and support wildlife – building log piles, bug hotels and a hoverfly pool in the space.

The weekly gardening group has provided a refreshing space where locals get the opportunity to speak to their neighbours of different ages, backgrounds and interests that they might not otherwise ever get to know. It's been a catalyst of intergenerational friendships, open dialogue and even 1 romantic relationship so far!



Before



After

Rose Hill's one-of-a-kind mobile greenhouse

The team at Down to Earth Derby has repurposed an old horsebox to create "Daisy" – a hot pink portable greenhouse.

This summer, she made her way around Rose Hill and along to a number of local events, spreading joy and bringing different parts of the community together to learn how to grow in small spaces. Inside Daisy, trays of seedlings line the walls, with those sown by schoolchildren and adults in the area growing side by side.



"Daisy gives us the ability to bring the garden to the community. Her unmissable presence is incredibly important in achieving our goal of getting people back in touch with nature and the world around them, particularly in urban environments. We didn't want it to be a case of the Postcode Gardener team just turning up to established areas, planting, and then leaving again. With Daisy, we can be anywhere."

Connor, Down to Earth

Swansea's front garden transformations

Postcode Gardener Ollie has been busy making connections all across St Thomas, kicking things off with a series of front garden makeovers. Alan, Cami and Joseph's home was the first, with family, neighbours and other volunteers all getting stuck in to plant between an existing thick layer of gravel with bee-friendly ivy, lavender and cosmos.

Postcode Gardener Ollie said,
"We've experienced amazing community spirit in St Thomas, particularly through neighbours supporting one another. We've met so many lovely humans who do so much for their local area, as well as people who show a huge amount of gratitude for having help maintaining their front gardens. Everyone seems really enthused by the project and I've no doubt we've got a busy year ahead."



Les and Rita's chippy-turned-allotment

Probably one of the most unlikely spaces to become a haven for wildlife, Rhyl Postcode Gardener Penny has helped transform the back of a local chippy into a thriving allotment and community space. The transformation has been so impressive it won a Level 3 (Advancing) award from Wales in Bloom this year, along with 2 more of the project's community gardens.

The allotment provides spaces for young people to grow their own food – with 1 group planting up peas, turnips and cauliflower for this year's Christmas dinner, and girls from the local Brownies growing flowers to achieve their “eco” award.

Penny's dedicated volunteers Rebecca and Grace have been instrumental in ensuring the space is cared for, as well as showing leadership and initiative to set out the planting plans and schedule.

Local nurse Grace brings a wealth of experience from gardening on her family farm back in Malawi to the project, as well as her infectious energy as a self-proclaimed smiler and “momma to many”. Meanwhile, Rebecca has thrived in teaching young people about gardening and helping instil in them the love for nature and growing.



“Regardless of your background or skills, don't hide away...meet new friends, learn new skills, enjoy what the benefits of gardening have to offer. I know my mothers, sisters, brothers, uncles are so skilled...let's learn from others, let's come out and live as a productive community.”

Grace, volunteer in Rhyl



Supporting community growth

Wellbeing and nature connection

Stronger communities

Biodiversity and wildlife

Financial sustainability

Wellbeing and nature connection

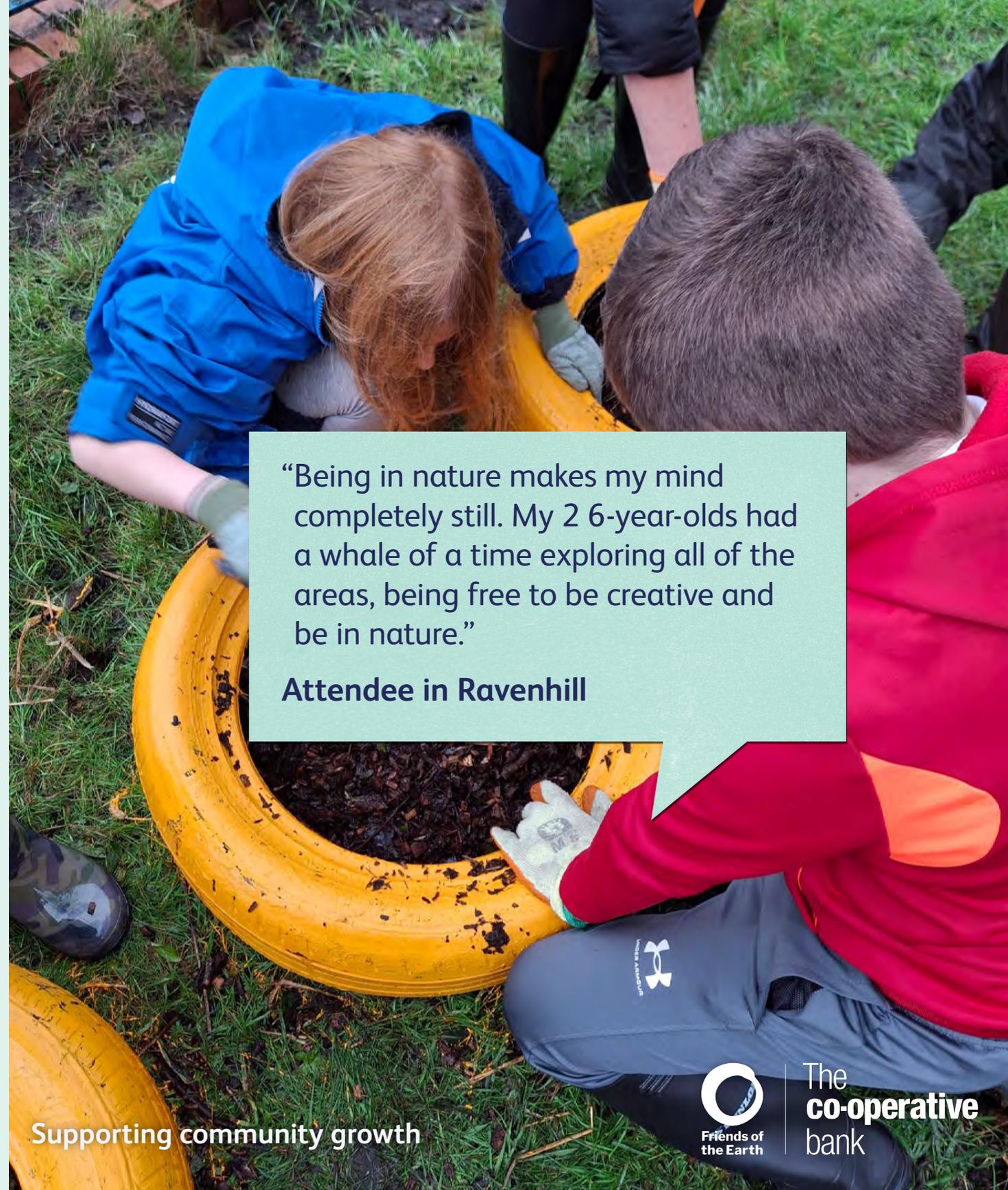
Nature can have a significant impact on wellbeing. People who are more connected with nature are generally happier.⁴ Nature can help people feel calm, joyful and creative.

Research shows that people who connect with nature are also more likely to act in other ways that benefit the environment, such as recycling and buying seasonal food.⁵

After taking part in a Postcode Gardener activity or event...⁶

92% of people felt the session supported their wellbeing

91% of people felt more connected to nature



“Being in nature makes my mind completely still. My 2 6-year-olds had a whale of a time exploring all of the areas, being free to be creative and be in nature.”

Attendee in Ravenhill

“I never used to do much gardening before. I got told to try it because I was feeling a bit lonely. I lost my job, my friends have moved on to live in different places or start families. Someone mentioned the community garden to me. I love coming here because it’s fun and it gets me outside. It’s really therapeutic. I actually smile every time I come here and see people. We talk about life.”

Volunteer in East Middlesbrough



“I love how supportive and knowledgeable Liz is. She’s always so welcoming to new volunteers and makes sure everyone feels comfortable getting involved, no matter how much or how little gardening experience they have. She’s created a really relaxed space where people can join in, learn and not worry if they make a mistake.”

Volunteer in Notting Dale



“I enjoyed meeting new people and looking at the local area in a new way. It’s easy to walk past places and through parks and not really notice what’s around. I came away with new knowledge and appreciation for the plants that are all around us.”

Volunteer in Barton Hill

Healing in green spaces – nature's role in mental health

The Wythenshawe Postcode Gardener project held a volunteering day to support the work of Garden Guardians, a community gardening group for adults with mental ill health that uses therapeutic horticulture to support mental health conditions and recovery.

With the support of a team of keen volunteers from The Co-operative Bank – many of whom stayed beyond the half-day session booked in – the team constructed several new beds in a car park to increase the growing space available to the volunteers. These were then planted up with edibles (blackcurrant, redcurrant, squash, peas) and climbers.

In Barton Hill, Postcode Gardener Harriet has worked with Bristol's child and adolescent mental health services to provide access to enclosed green space at Strawberry Lane Community Garden for the young people they work with. This area now provides a safe, supportive place in nature to aid their wellbeing and recovery.

Additionally, Harriet has set up a weekly drop-in session to ensure the space remains beautiful and accessible to all groups using it. This has given a lot of local people the chance to spend time in a space they otherwise wouldn't have

access to – extending the mental health and wellbeing benefits to the wider community too.

A volunteer in the group shared how important these sessions are to her: “I look forward to it all week and even if I arrive to the sessions tired I know I will leave energised.” Another volunteer who is a prison leaver in recovery also spoke of a calming and therapeutic experience they had while observing the pond in the garden, sharing that the last time they had seen a tadpole was as a child.

Growing connections and confidence for young people in Hull

In Bransholme, Postcode Gardener Jon's weekly sessions at a local youth club have been transformational for one young person named Kingsley. Once shy and spending most of his time on his phone, Kingsley has made himself an indispensable part of the gardening team.

He now spends every session outside, helping with the garden, digging, caring for plants and searching for creepy crawlies. He has even offered to keep an eye on the garden when Jon is not around, which perfectly sums up his new-found sense of ownership and responsibility.

Kingsley has become more outgoing and has gained a passion for being outside and surrounded by nature. The youth workers at the centre say they have never seen him so interested in something – it's testament to the effect that quality nature connection can have on a young person.



Cardiff students remember their headteacher with sunflowers

Postcode Gardener Rob worked with students at Nant Caerau Primary School to plant their outside space with sunflowers in memory of their headteacher, Mr Hughes.

Rob said: “It was so much fun planting with the children. It presented an opportunity for the children to engage with nature and acted as a positive outlet for their grief, having lost their headteacher only a few months earlier.”

“It reminded us of our memories with Mr Hughes.” **Student**

Discovering the joy of the outdoors

In Ravenhill, KS2 pupils at Gendros Primary School attended 5 outdoor sessions where they helped transform unused green space at the front of the school and learned about the role of pollinators and insects in the ecosystem.

Many of the children overcame their fears – going from being terrified to loving their new worm “friends” by the end of the 5 weeks.

“I can’t believe I held a worm!
They’re not as slimy as I thought.”

“Today I learned that touching soil
makes you feel happy.”

“I’ve loved this. I wish we could do it
all the time. I could stay out all day.”

In West Gorton, Postcode Gardener Lizzie has collaborated with a passionate secondary school teacher to enable a group of young people to grow their own fruit and vegetables on an allotment plot near their school.

The students learned basic gardening skills and how to grow different vegetables, including tomatoes, beans and cucumbers. Most of the young people don’t have access to any outside space at home, so this was educational and valuable in terms of supporting them to connect with nature through growing.

Their teacher Amber was a true hero, going above and beyond by sourcing extra plants, watering and weeding the site outside of school hours. Lizzie said it has been “super rewarding” to witness Amber discovering the joy of gardening and then passing this enthusiasm on to young people in return.

Stronger communities

We also know that connecting with nature can help you meet new people and feel more connected to your local community.

Postcode Gardener projects aim to generate positive connections and stories in areas that might feel “left behind” and where people are seeking to battle harmful stereotypes. Residents coming together to transform and beautify their streets not only supports local pride and belonging, but also builds a sense of ownership and shared responsibility over public spaces.

Together, Postcode Gardener communities co-create resilient, thriving and healthy neighbourhoods that benefit people and nature.



“It’s great to see the younger and older generations working together.”

Volunteer in Tyleri

“I truly have enjoyed today. It felt like a community coming together – how a community should be.”

Volunteer in East Middlesbrough

“Having lived and worked within this community for so long, we’re more aware than ever of the need for togetherness. Providing these spaces is so important for all communities to flourish. Having our hands in the soil is universal and without barriers such as language.”

**Brendan, Rose Hill
Postcode Gardener**

People on probation finding balance and belonging through nature



In Ely and Caerau, Postcode Gardener Rob worked with HM Prison and Probation Service to set up a gardening group for people on probation.

Having given a lot of support in the setup, Rob has been able to hand over the running of the group, which is now well established.

A member of the group, Dylan (not their real name), speaks about the impact of the regular session on his mental health:

“It just allows me to switch off. I don’t have a built-in release valve, so I have to do something to switch myself off. It doesn’t come easily to me, so doing something with my hands takes my mind off life’s stresses. I don’t know the nuts and bolts of it, I just know it works. I think the social interaction is what I enjoy most. I suffer with my mental health, with anxiety and depression. I’ve had it for over 30 years. Sometimes it gets out of hand and I can’t get it back, and I feel like I’m in a vicious circle of anxiety, and I think situations are worse than they are. For me, gardening pulls me back on track.”

Orchard Park's resident-led wildflower lawn

A chance encounter in a hardware shop between Postcode Gardener John and Ainslaw resident Kate led to one of the project's biggest successes to date.

After exchanging contact details in Homebase, John and Kate set to work securing widespread approval from residents across the estate and the local ward councillors. In April, residents came together to prepare the ground and sow the seed across 60m². More neighbours congregated to offer local insights, advice and practical support. One agreed to keep a water butt in his garden for ease of access, while another quietly left several packets of wildflower seeds at Kate's back door to donate to the space.

As of September 2025, the flowers are thriving and the space is teeming with wildlife, despite a particularly dry summer and the lawn being erroneously mown down by contractors at an early stage.

The Ainslaw lawn has been a great test of Hull's new "Right to Grow" within its first year,⁷ with the local councillors involved in the original consultation wanting to replicate the approach to replace grass with wildflowers in other parts of the ward.

"Doing the groundwork and sowing the wildflowers was like being on DIY SOS. The neighbours really want it to succeed too. **Even those who were very cautious at first due to suffering years of antisocial behaviour have lowered the defences and welcomed it.** I think the public consultation beforehand was important and I think now that it's sown, people can see that it has been done thoughtfully and with care." **Kate**

"I enjoyed seeing the transformation of a featureless patch of grass which was little more than urban wallpaper into something with purpose and more in tune with how green spaces should and need to be." **Local resident**

Community partnerships in practice

Partnerships with local community centres are crucial for supporting Postcode Gardeners to engage with people of all ages and backgrounds to connect with nature and grow their own produce.

In Rose Hill, Postcode Gardener Brendan has been equipping local community centres with bespoke planters. At the West Indian Community Centre, the older generation taught the younger generation about gardening, before decorating the planters with the flags of all nationalities represented at the centre. At St James Centre, which supports disabled young adults, service users were thrilled to be able to take ownership of their new planters.

In St Thomas, Ollie also oversaw a cross-generational planting initiative with members of the Port Tenant Community Centre. After sourcing some reclaimed scaffold boards for free from Facebook Marketplace, the centre's youth group built, lined and painted 2 planters to make raised beds for the pavilion in Jersey Park.

The young people seemed to really enjoy getting stuck in to create something from scratch with their hands. They were then planted up by 91-year-old friends John and Tom from the centre's men's group, bringing 2 generations together to use their skills and creativity to make something beautiful for their community.

In Balsall Heath, Dan has made strong connections with the Apna Ghar Centre, which provides day care for older and disabled people. A sustainable water collection system has been installed and a tool store built on site to enable the project's tree planting and regular maintenance in Reaside Forest Garden just over the road. Volunteers are also now able to share a nutritious and tasty meal together at the centre following the sessions.

As a result, Dan and Postcode Gardener volunteers have begun work in Apna Ghar's garden to create growing space for centre attendees to grow food that can be used in the centre's daily meals.

Biodiversity and wildlife



We are working with ecological consultants Ecosulis to monitor the impacts of Postcode Gardener projects on biodiversity.



Throughout spring and summer, projects conducted a series of surveys that help us gain insights into how the work of the Postcode Gardeners has affected bumblebee and other pollinator populations.

Pollinators have been chosen as an indicator of ecological impact because they play a crucial role and are sensitive to changes in their environment. Moreover, pollinator surveys as a citizen science activity provide a fun, educational experience for children and adults that has been shown to combat alienation from nature and boost wellbeing.

A sample of 12 Postcode Gardener projects completed pollinator surveys in 2025, adding to baseline results from last year.⁸

The results are impressive, indicating that Postcode Gardener interventions show clear ecological benefits and are creating more functional pollinator communities. They also highlight the value of diverse planting, combining productive, aesthetic and wildlife-friendly species in improving urban pollinator habitats.

Survey results across all projects...

262% more pollinators

Greening plots supported on average 262% more pollinators per survey than control plots.⁹

Higher pollinator group richness

Greening plots consistently supported higher pollinator group richness than control plots.¹⁰

Top responders to Postcode
Gardener interventions saw: ¹¹

Sawflies +450%

Small insects +371%

Bumblebees +207%

Solitary bees +203%

Butterflies and moths +116%

Beetles +112%

Pollinators' favourite plants¹²

- Lavender
- Sunflower
- Tomato
- Grasses
- Cosmos
- Cornflower
- Daisy
- Wild mint
- Borage
- Yarrow

From dumping ground to (invertebrate) breeding ground

Hours of hard work from Notting Dale's dedicated team of Postcode Gardener volunteers over the past year has seen a patch of dry, alkaline, stony and weedy soil transformed into a haven for bugs and bees.

Now termed the Latimer Road "Woodland Edge", the fully organic space has been planted up with a diverse mix of pollinator-friendly plants as well as 2 bug hotels, a stumpery and a wildlife pond. The hotel rooms were quickly booked out, with baby centipedes, baby woodlice and baby spiders found.

The bug hotels have been recently refurbished with new materials like dried grasses, leaves, dead sunflower heads and pinecones to create a variety of cosy habitats for the winter, with additional planting due to be added next spring.



From destruction to restoration in Tyleri



The aftermath of Storm Bert



Sinkhole restoration

Just a few weeks into joining the Postcode Gardener programme last year, Cwmtyleri was badly impacted by Storm Bert, after torrential rain caused a landslide from a nearby coal tip, damaging homes and forcing residents to evacuate.

Not deterred, this sparked conversations in the community about the effects of climate change and a need for community-led projects that can harness nature, offering solutions and mitigating the impacts of extreme weather.

Once the immediate community clean-up was complete, focus turned to repairing a sinkhole caused by a collapsed culvert at Caffi Tyleri. Postcode Gardener Jamie and the team at Pentref Tyleri successfully advocated for permission to reclaim the 500 square metre patch of bare soil for a community wildflower area, rather than it be immediately turfed over – a huge win for pollinators in the valleys.

Footnotes

- 1 www.nhm.ac.uk/our-science/services/data
www.theguardian.com/environment
- 2 Public spaces for the purpose of this project are defined as publicly accessible plots or spots, ranging from smaller areas under 2 square metres (e.g. tree pits, window boxes, planters) to larger spaces approximately 2 – 10 square metres (e.g. raised beds, verges, green walls and roofs, alleyways or neglected amenity grassland).
- 3 Additionally, our pilot project in Hackney delivered by ecoACTIVE received a quarter of a million pounds from the National Lottery Heritage Fund in 2023 to develop a 4km pollinator “buzzline”. This has been removed from the total here to avoid misrepresenting the data.
- 4&5 www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/research/nature-how-connecting-nature-benefits-our-mental-health
- 6 Results from 174 adults and children surveyed following Postcode Gardener sessions and activities across 14 projects between October 2024 and September 2025.
- 7 www.hull.gov.uk/neighbourhoods-1/right-grow
- 8 Bransholme, Orchard Park, Rose Hill and East Middlesbrough projects began biodiversity surveys in 2024 and Bideford has supplied pollinator survey data since 2023.
- 9 The average number of individual pollinators recorded per survey was 16.22 in greening plots compared with 4.48 in control plots.
- 10 Greening plots supported an average of 3.90 pollinator groups per survey, compared with 1.36 in control plots. This meant the average number of pollinator groups per survey was 186% higher in greening plots than control plots.

11 These percentages represent the average increases in mean abundance between control and greening plots across all projects. Across all projects, mean abundances of all insect groups increase in greening plots compared with control plots, except for the ‘other insect’ category, which showed a slight decline.

12 These are the top 10 plants most frequently visited by pollinators in our surveys. Survey effort differed across the projects, with projects recording between 1-4 surveys per plot. While this has been accounted for in abundance calculations, it cannot be applied to other outcome measures, such as the ranking of top plants for pollinators, which rely on raw observation counts.

13 Find out more about corporate volunteering opportunities at friendsoftheearth.uk/nature/corporate-volunteering-bring-back-nature

14 friendsoftheearth.uk/about/environmental-justice-protecting-people-and-planet

Photo credits

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Sophie Quince-Starkey

p.3 (bottom right), p.11 (middle), p.13, p.22, p.28, back cover.