



Derventio
Growing
Lives

Growing Lives

IMPACT REPORT 2024-25



Making a difference with Growing Lives

50

people took part in
2024-25

Growing Lives is a safe, supportive space where people in recovery or facing other challenges can build skills, improve wellbeing and feel part of a community. It's a welcoming and inclusive place to socialise, eat healthily, stay active and receive support and mentoring along the way.

The project is a key part of Derventio Housing Trust, which provides a vital stepping stone between homelessness and independent living through accommodation, personalised support and meaningful opportunities to develop skills and confidence.

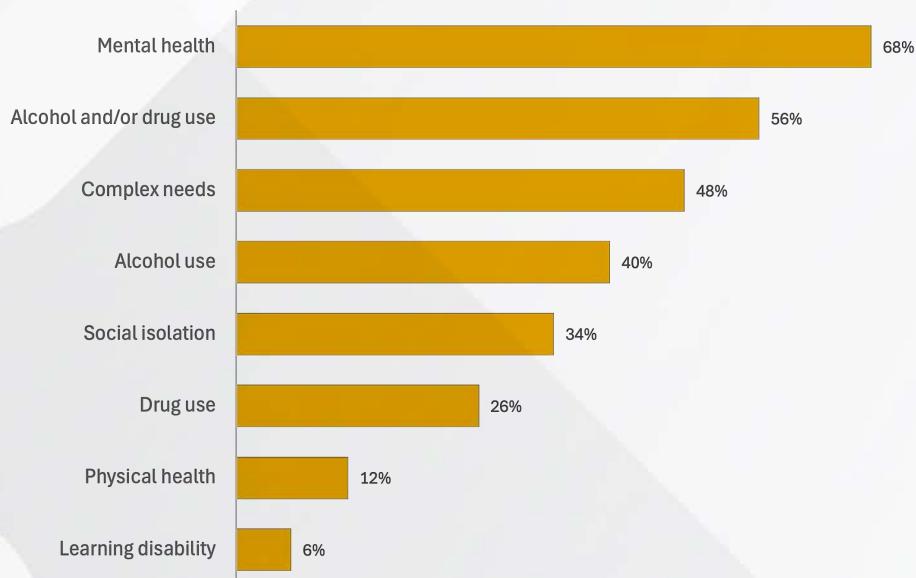
Through creative workshops, gardening, cooking, IT, peer-led groups and one-to-one support, Growing Lives helps people reduce isolation, improve their mental and physical health and move closer to training, education or work. This report shares the real-life impact the project has had on participants over the past year.



The barriers people face

Many Growing Lives participants face a combination of challenges such as poor mental health, substance use, and social isolation. These barriers can make it harder to move forward, but with the right support, people can begin to rebuild their lives.

In the past year, the most common barriers reported by participants were:



We want to say a big thank you to all the participants who have agreed to the use of their photos and stories for this report.

ARTS & CRAFTS

29 people took part in 2024-25



The well-equipped arts and crafts room offers various creative activities such as making cards, painting and drawing, making cushions or learning to repair clothes.

BIKE CLUB

15 people took part in 2024-25



People who take part in Bike Club build their own bike from recycled parts and learn how to look after and repair their new bike. There are also group rides along the local canals and through parks.

WORKSHOP

28 people took part in 2024-25



The workshop is a place to learn practical skills, from upcycling furniture and making planters from recycled pallets, to designing and building bird boxes, clocks and keepsake boxes.

COOKING

21 people took part in 2024-25



In the kitchen people learn how to cook healthy meals on a budget – developing and sharing skills including following recipes, minimising food waste and learning about kitchen and food hygiene.

IT

20 people took part in 2024-25



All participants have access to our computer suite to use for research, searching for jobs, applying for benefits or housing, finding new recipe ideas or keeping in touch with friends and family.

GARDENING

26 people took part in 2024-25



We have a large garden on-site with raised beds, a greenhouse, pond, seating areas and plenty of space for growing plants and flowers. Participants also grow herbs and produce to use in the kitchen.

WALKS & DAY TRIPS

21 people took part in 2024-25



Participants enjoy Wednesday walks around the local area and trips to nearby attractions. Recent trips have included the Heights of Abraham, Wollaton Park and Mount Cook Adventure Centre.

EMPLOYABILITY

15 people took part in 2024-25



Weekly one-to-one and small group sessions give help and guidance around job search, interview skills and overcoming barriers to accessing education, training or employment.

1. Improved health and wellbeing

Growing Lives provides a supportive, welcoming environment where people can improve their mental and physical health through structured activities, healthy food and regular routine.

Participants learn to cook nutritious meals on a budget, take part in walks and gardening sessions and engage in creative and practical workshops that boost confidence and promote positive mental health.

Over half report improved mental wellbeing, increased confidence and healthier lifestyles, showing how the project helps people feel stronger and more in control of their lives.



I really look forward to coming here, it's just part of my routine. I've made some lovely friends and grown in confidence.



61%

have more energy

56%

have improved mental health

56%

feel their physical health is better

50%

feel more confident

44%

are better at cooking and eating healthily



► **Toby's Story ***

Toby's journey with Growing Lives shows how the right support, structure and peer connection can help someone rebuild their wellbeing after a difficult period of loss and substance use.

Toby was referred to Growing Lives by his Housing Officer to help reduce his use of alcohol and cannabis following a bereavement. At first, he found it difficult to mix with others, often appearing angry, frustrated and impatient. His attendance was inconsistent, especially after nights when he had been drinking or using substances.

With support from bereavement counselling and one-to-one guidance at the project, Toby began to manage his emotions more effectively. Staff worked closely with him to improve his communication and tolerance, and his peers played a positive role in encouraging change.

Seven months on, Toby is attending regularly and has reduced his alcohol and cannabis use. He is now much more patient and considerate, taking responsibility for his actions and showing a genuine willingness to help others. He enjoys making people laugh and has become a valued member of the group. Toby says the friendships he has formed at Growing Lives have made a big difference to his wellbeing.

** name changed*

2. Reduced social isolation

Growing Lives helps people connect with others, build friendships and feel part of a community.

Through shared activities like group walks, cooking, arts and crafts, and cycling, participants are able to develop interpersonal skills and regain trust in others. Nearly two-thirds say they feel less socially isolated, and more than three-quarters report improved relationships and better communication.

For people who may have felt cut off due to homelessness, poor mental health or past trauma, Growing Lives offers a vital sense of belonging and inclusion.

“

It's all about interaction – there's a few of us who meet outside Growing Lives for a chitchat.

People come who've been homeless or in addiction – it's a road to recovery

”

78%

improved interpersonal skills

72%

better at keeping positive relationships

67%

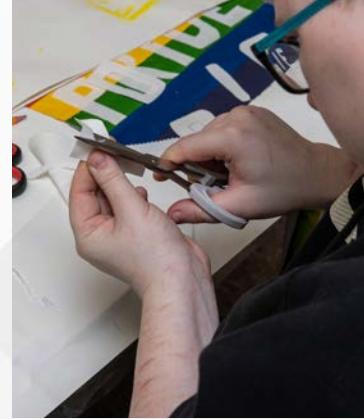
are better at mixing with others

61%

feel less socially isolated

39%

feel more tolerant and accepting



► Clive's Story *

Clive's story shows how tailored support and shared activities at Growing Lives helped him reconnect with others, overcome loneliness and rebuild a sense of belonging after homelessness.

Clive, a former Army serviceman, was referred to Growing Lives after losing his home and spending time sleeping rough. Isolated and struggling with low confidence, Clive had become increasingly reliant on alcohol and had little experience of support services or social connection.

At first, he was quiet and reluctant to engage. But through regular encouragement and interest-led activities, Clive began to build trust and form new relationships. Taking part in the guitar group helped him share his skills with others, boosting his confidence and creating a sense of belonging. He also developed new practical skills in the workshop, working alongside others on shared projects that gave him purpose and connection.

Clive has now maintained abstinence from alcohol for more than 18 months. He continues to enjoy his hobbies, manages his own tenancy and feels part of a community again. Clive says it was the friendships and support at Growing Lives that helped him feel less alone and reconnected to life.

* name changed

3. Better chances in life and work

Growing Lives supports people to develop the confidence, skills and motivation to take positive steps towards learning, training or employment.

The project provides access to practical skills, IT support and employability guidance, helping participants build CVs, prepare for interviews and explore new opportunities. Many go on to further training or find part-time work, and nearly nine in ten say they've gained useful practical skills.

With structure, encouragement from peers in small groups and tailored one-to-one support, the project helps people see a future for themselves.



I have been supported by the amazing staff to retrain and they also helped me with my CV and job applications. I now have a part time job that I love. I don't think I could have done this without their help.



89%

have gained practical skills and experience

80%

job club participants went to training or work

72%

feel better at making positive decisions

67%

feel optimistic about the future

61%

are better at budgeting



► Alice's Story *

Alice's story highlights how personalised support and purposeful activity at Growing Lives helped her rebuild confidence, regain direction and take positive steps towards employment.

Alice began struggling with alcohol use after the breakdown of a long-term relationship, which also ended her 26-year career. She had little confidence or motivation to move forward.

Her Housing & Support Officer encouraged her to try Growing Lives. From day one, Alice felt welcomed and supported by the tutors and participants. The experience helped her regain a sense of purpose.

Attending regularly gave her structure and focus. She now feels more in control and motivated to avoid alcohol. With support from the team, she is actively job hunting and working towards her first Level 2 qualification through online training.

Alice is already exploring further courses to boost her chances of finding part-time work. She says the encouragement she's received at Growing Lives has been a turning point, giving her optimism and a clear sense of direction for the future.

* name changed

Thank you for your support

Watch the Growing Lives video featuring participants here



Derventio
Growing Lives

www.derventiohousing.com

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