

Case Study

HEALTH

**Brockwell Park
Surgery**



Space number: 523
Lead organisation: Brockwell Park Surgery
Borough: Lambeth
Postcode: SE24 9AE
Size: 352 sqm
Target group: Staff, patients and local community
Land type: Private land
Land owner: Doctors surgery
Cost: £1,000 plus donation



Background

The growing area is located in a garden behind a detached Victorian property, used as a doctor's surgery for the past 50 years, with a patient list of about 4500. The project aims to practically demonstrate the benefits of fresh air and healthy eating, inspiring people to try it at home.

The garden is used by patients with chronic illnesses. Through the physical activity of gardening, growing their own fruit and vegetables, and interacting with each other and nature, they will gain an increased sense of well-being and ability to cope with their illness.



How was the growing space created?

- The idea to start a food-growing project came from the two practice nurses enthusiastic to get their patients to learn about gardening, and to enjoy a stress-free time in the garden while waiting for appointments.
- The two nurses leading the project started with a core team of 5 people who met for 2-3 hours each week to create the space and 12 patients who started to grow the food.
- Much of the labour was provided by patients, the nurses and a volunteer from an organisation called Placemakers.
- The project received a £1000 grant from Capital Growth which helped pay for their shed, which is large enough to be used for tool storage, a potting shed and a meeting space.
- They received a private donation, which enabled them to employ a garden designer to create a basic plan, and builders to lay the foundations, with a brick path, wheelchair access paths and raised beds.
- They also created a seating area, and a concrete platform for the combined shed/workshop.
- Many members of the practice have got involved by donating tools, pots, seeds, plants, wood and other construction materials. In fact, there were so many donations that they are amazingly well equipped for almost no additional cost.



What has been achieved so far?

The garden is regularly visited by patients and relatives before and after appointments. Staff also use the garden during lunch breaks and meetings. In their first growing season they grew a selection of vegetables including garlic, salad leaves, carrots, runner beans, tumbler and standard tomatoes, swiss chard, beetroot, potatoes, sweet corn, aubergines, chillies, a selection of herbs, mange tout, sugar peas, cauliflowers, broccoli and courgettes. They have also planted some fruits for the start of their perennial fruit garden.

They took part in the Big Lunch in 2010, inviting project staff and patients. There was a barbeque and cooked dishes with ingredients grown in the garden. Earlier on in the spring they took part in a bird watch for the RSPB.

The group have found they have many creative and practical skills including photography, as well as organisational, supportive and leadership skills.

Gill Judson, practice nurse explained: "This project is proving to be so much more than I could have hoped. We are learning that to grow good food we need to create the right environment, healthy soil, good balance of insects and birds and other wildlife – preferably not too many slugs. Then when we get back to learning how to cook the food we grow, we learn how to grow healthy people. It has been such a pleasure for me to witness the excitement of someone eating food they have grown and picked themselves".

Top tips and lessons learnt



"Accept that you will not be able to do everything at once. The project will evolve in response to need. Stand back and be amazed at what you can achieve!"

"Listen to each member who joins your group and encourage them to develop their own ideas. We have learned such a lot from our group and this thriving garden is a testament to their hard work and imagination."

"Keep your eyes open on the streets for free stuff – you'd be amazed what you can recycle. We have an IKEA wardrobe made of batons and white plastic which makes an ace cold frame"

Time has been a challenge, as there is only funding for one afternoon a week for the two nurses to run the project, including administration, planning and fundraising. The garden requires more attention in the summer and a small group of patients have started to come on another afternoon unsupervised.

There currently is no formal agreement with the partners on how the project fits in to the general plan for the surgery. The nurses see the project as a health promotion session equal to others, such as a weight management advice session, whereas partners see the growing as a stand alone project that should be self-financing. Attracting external funding may be a challenge as the general practice is seen to be well funded already.





How has Capital Growth supported the project?

The project received a £1000 grant for a potting and storage shed that also doubles up as a meeting space. In addition the project benefits from general support from Capital Growth including support visit, invites to training and events and discounts on materials.

What next?

As well as preparing for next season, they are looking to develop some other projects, for example keeping a record with photographs of achievements and a labelling scheme showing medicinal and culinary uses of plants. They also plan to develop the wildlife benefit of the area, especially the pond. The list is endless but the main aim remains the same – to provide a therapeutic environment for staff and patients for work or relaxation.

What is Capital Growth?

Capital Growth is a partnership initiative between London Food Link, the Mayor of London Boris Johnson, and the Big Lottery's Local Food Fund. It is championed by the Chair of the London Food Board Rosie Boycott and aims to create 2012 new community food growing spaces across London by the end of 2012.

Capital Growth offers practical help, grants, training and support to groups in London wanting to establish community food-growing projects as well as advice to landowners.

This is part of a series of Capital Growth case studies.

www.capitalgrowth.org

MAYOR OF LONDON

