



## Raking & Baking Evaluation Report

Raking & Baking is based at  
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<b>1. INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1 Project Background.....	4
1.2 Purpose of This Report.....	5
1.3 Methodology.....	6
<b>2. PROJECT ORGANISATION &amp; IMPLEMENTATION .....</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Design and Preparation .....	8
2.2 Recruitment of Participants – How We Involve Local People.....	9
2.3 Participants and Attendance .....	12
2.4 Sessions .....	14
2.5 Adaptations: ‘Werbuzz Werbuzz’ & Volunteer Gardening Days.....	17
2.6 Challenges & Successes .....	17
2.7 Budget and Finances .....	18
<b>3. PROJECT OUTCOMES – THE DIFFERENCE .....</b>	<b>21</b>
3.1 Skills, Learning and New Opportunities.....	21
3.2 Social Benefits and Community Cohesion.....	23
3.3 Diet, Health and Well-being .....	26
3.4 Enjoyment and Levels of Engagement.....	28
3.5 Benefits to The Local Communities and Environment .....	29
<b>4. THE LEARNINGS.....</b>	<b>30</b>
4.1 Culture of the Place – Inclusivity and Safe Environment .....	30
4.2 Resourcing & Operations .....	31
4.3 Looking Forward .....	31



*"It is the highlight of my week, I feel so privileged to be a part of this group. I feel happier, healthier, more confident, more hopeful and more connected to my community."*

The Raking & Baking Project 2015 - 2020 is a community-led initiative funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, Reaching Communities 5 Year Programme and based at St Werburghs Community Centre in Bristol, UK.

St Werburghs Community Association manages St Werburghs Community Centre, a community hub established in 1971 and managed by a Board of Trustees elected from local residents and member groups of the organisation. In 1999 the Board took over the management of the Centre from the local authority and embarked on a journey of Asset Transfer, £1m Capital Project, quality marks, capacity building, financial sustainability and focusing on developing services which benefit local people, environment and local economy. The Centre accommodates over 80,000 visits per annum. Raking & Baking is one of the pioneering project which was initially set up in 2011, and continues to run successfully, overcoming challenges posed by Covid-19 restrictions.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Project Background

Raking & Baking was initially set up in 2011 with the aim to engage local people in food growing and healthy cooking, and to provide an opportunity for intergenerational and multicultural activities, and to support the Centre's vision which is to form a strong, cohesive, prosperous and caring local community.

The need for the project was identified through community consultations on local needs and focus groups with various disadvantaged communities living in East Bristol: older people, long term unemployed, single parents, people recovering from addictions and people from BAME backgrounds. The Centre's consultation on our facilities also resulted in a comprehensive plan for the outdoor area which included 'mini allotments or growing spaces' in the capital development plans.

### Anticipated project outcomes were:

- People have better chances in life with better access to training and development to improve their life skills - new or enhanced skills, knowledge and understanding relating to gardens, gardening and the natural world.
- Stronger communities – with more active citizens working together to tackle their problems - a long-term interest in the environment, gardening and growing.
- Improved rural and urban environments – which communities are better able to access and enjoy. The creation of the container gardens in the perimeter of the Centre buildings executed to the designs and vision of the participants and local people.
- Healthier and more active people and communities. Promoting healthier lifestyles, taking part in regular gardening as a physical activity. People learning about each other, improving their wellbeing, confidence and self-esteem,

### The unexpected outcomes:

When we evaluated the first year's programme in 2012 one of the unexpected outcomes was how strongly people felt the project helped **counteracting isolation**, where the sessions were mainly seen as an opportunity to make new friends and contacts, and to feel more connected to their community. People also often said that **learning about each other** was unexpected for them as they found themselves in a space with others whom they would normally not come to contact with, it being a person with a disability, from a different ethnic

background, age or walk of life. The evaluation also shown a huge emphasis on **volunteering**, being able to contribute, share and give back was a major factor for majority of the participants.

There were also many outcomes for the Centre:

- Deeper engagement with individuals, local residents, users of the Centre, who come to other groups or services we host.
- New contacts and relationships with local organisations.
- New funding streams towards developing of the gardens and converting our car park into a garden, play, grow and event space.
- New knowledge and understanding of how to run an integration-focused project involving many diverse groups whom we serve.
- Evidence of the importance and impact of projects such as this, as well as all other services hosted by our member groups, local charitable and voluntary organisations.

The project went from strength to strength funded by smaller funds via The Quartet Community Foundation and BCC Neighbourhood Partnerships' grants before being awarded the 5-year funding from The National Lottery, Reaching Communities Programme, also known as TNL Community Fund.

## 1.2 Purpose of this Report

This report was written in order to evaluate the 5-year project delivery as funded by the Reaching Communities, TNL Community Fund from May 2015 until April 2020, against the set Outcomes and to assess any surprising or unexpected outcomes with a particular emphasis on health and wellbeing, enabling people to help themselves and creating meaningful volunteering opportunities.

In this report we also focus on how the project might contribute to the St Werburghs Community Association's understanding of local service design and delivery, collaboration with other organisations, and working with particular vulnerable groups in the future. We will also be highlighting the importance of communities being able to participate in activities which truly foster community cohesion and celebrate the diversity of people who form them. In the body of the report we will describe how the project was organised in practice, what worked and where were the flaws, and how it evolved within the 5-year timeframe. In the last part we will look beyond that covering the period of Covid-19 challenges and further development. We also set out findings relating to outcomes delivered, with commentary as to some of the factors that led to its success.

The primary intended audiences for the report are The National Lottery, trustees and member groups of St Werburghs Community Association. Other potentially interested audiences would include potential funders and those in the community, charity and healthcare sectors who may be considering working cooperatively with us to continue Raking and Baking or setting up a similar project.

### 1.3 Methodology

This report uses self-evaluation method.

The approach is collaborative and focuses on information shared by the Participants, Project Coordinators, Project Administrators, Volunteers, Centre Users and Tenants, including the Neck of the Woods Café staff who share the Centre kitchen with the project.

All project staff took joint responsibility for collecting information, data and collating feedback for ongoing evaluation and annual reports. This had a considerable impact on day-to-day running of the project where developments, recruitment methods, ways of working and implementation of changes were captured and fed back into monitoring and handover reports, as well as made into this final report.

#### Participation

The project took place weekly on Thursdays from 10 am to 3 pm over a 5 year period. The observations which took place informally at regular intervals formed a firm foundation for this report as well as shaped the recruitment process and changes delivered over the years. This took form of casual conversations with participants, support staff, volunteers and staff, as well as occasional participation in cooking, eating or gardening activities.

#### Questionnaires and Feedback

In order to be able to measure the progress made by our beneficiaries during the project period we developed system which included two methods: a Questionnaire filled out by participants which captured their feedback at the end of the course and feedback gathered by the coordinator via a simple set of questions at the beginning of the course to gain baseline and adjust to the needs of the particular participants taking part. The questions were focusing around personal progress and the journey of the individual. It was designed to capture changes in lifestyle which will make a difference to the wellbeing of participants.

## Registers and Coordinator's self-evaluation

Many facts were collated by the Project Coordinator via session registers or Volunteer feedback forms. This allowed for more informal way of collating important information and being able to respond to needs of particular people when needed and re-arranging sessions and seating to accommodate various needs and overcome challenges. A significant feature of the evaluation strategy was to encourage the Project Coordinators to include their own contributions to the monitoring process. They compiled observations, case studies, commentaries and quotes. These were structured in response to questions set out by the Outcomes and focusing on the indicators.

Over the course of five years we had three Project Coordinators who have been responsible for facilitation of the courses as well as monitoring and reflecting on the project's delivery. The project benefitted from committed people who were passionate about the aims of the project as much about access to food, its sustainability and impact on health.

## Meetings with Stakeholders

The collaborative approach was enhanced by meetings with stakeholders including the Centre's staff, the other voluntary organisations staff or support workers, whose observations significantly contributed to the development of the courses and lesson plans. Also of significant impact, were conversations with the representative of the funders whose comments contributed to the joint evaluation approach and constructive thinking when evaluating the courses and their impact, including reviewing the quantitative indicators and qualitative outcomes.

## Summary

The approach to the evaluation process and methodology in some respects have been flexible to fit with the flow of the project and our way of working which prioritises offering support 'there and then'. The systematic analysis of numbers and progress indicators has however allowed us to gather a lot of data which contributes to the qualitative indicators as set in the funding agreement and fulfilling the project outcomes.

## 2. PROJECT ORGANISATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

### 2.1 Design and Preparation

The project delivery was designed by the Centre staff based on 3-year earlier delivery experience of short courses and the initial one-year course run in 2011.

Prior to that on completion of our Capital Project and building of a 4-room Annexe in 2010, we ran a consultation survey, public meetings and permaculture workshops, which resulted in a comprehensive plan for the outdoor area of the community centre buildings. All of our respondents (over 180 people) asked to include 'mini allotments or growing spaces' in the plans for our Outdoor Spaces. We managed to build raised beds, benches and plant fruit and nut trees, as well as seasonal crops, herbs and edible flowers.

Each course group was treated as a focus group and we collected extensive feedback from participants in 2011 and 2012. We monitored the courses very carefully to see if we are reaching our target groups and we allowed for the course to be partially shaped by participants, so people could take the ownership of the project and gardens. This resulted in wonderful sessions delivered by the participants, such as Sushi making workshops, Asian easy and healthy chickpea recipes and making Elderflower cordial and 'champagne' workshop, one bottle of which exploded in transport (!) it was all good, just a bit sticky...

We learnt that structuring the project as shorter six-week courses worked better than one-year long course. We learnt that participants have lots to offer and easily share their knowledge. We learnt that participants really appreciated the social benefits of courses being set up as mixed groups: multicultural, of various abilities and all ages. We learnt that there is a lot of interest across the city in what we were doing and that there is a need to extend this project in a long-term venture as all our workshops were oversubscribed and we had a waiting list. We also learnt that asking for donations towards the costs of ingredients improved the participants' involvement and that people valued it more than when it was offered completely free of charge.

The initial design described in Stage 1 Application was then amended through the funding application process which followed at the Stage 2 Application with the following changes:

- to run the courses as 8-weeks not 6-weeks as originally proposed, which helped with planning;

- to increase the responsibilities of the Project Coordinator, which enabled them to have a more proactive role in the recruitment and monitoring of the project;
- to remove one of the Outcomes around physical improvements of the outdoor areas as it was seen 'not a fit with the other outcomes, is not measurable, has no outcomes for individuals, and does not demonstrate any specific change'. In retrospect this wasn't the case; this is explained below in the Project Organisation & Implementation point 2.5 and Outcomes point 3.3 sections.

As a result, in 2015 we set on delivering 5 years of 8-week courses 10 AM to 3 PM weekly on Thursdays, aimed at 12 new participants on each course and engaging a range of volunteers and other community support.

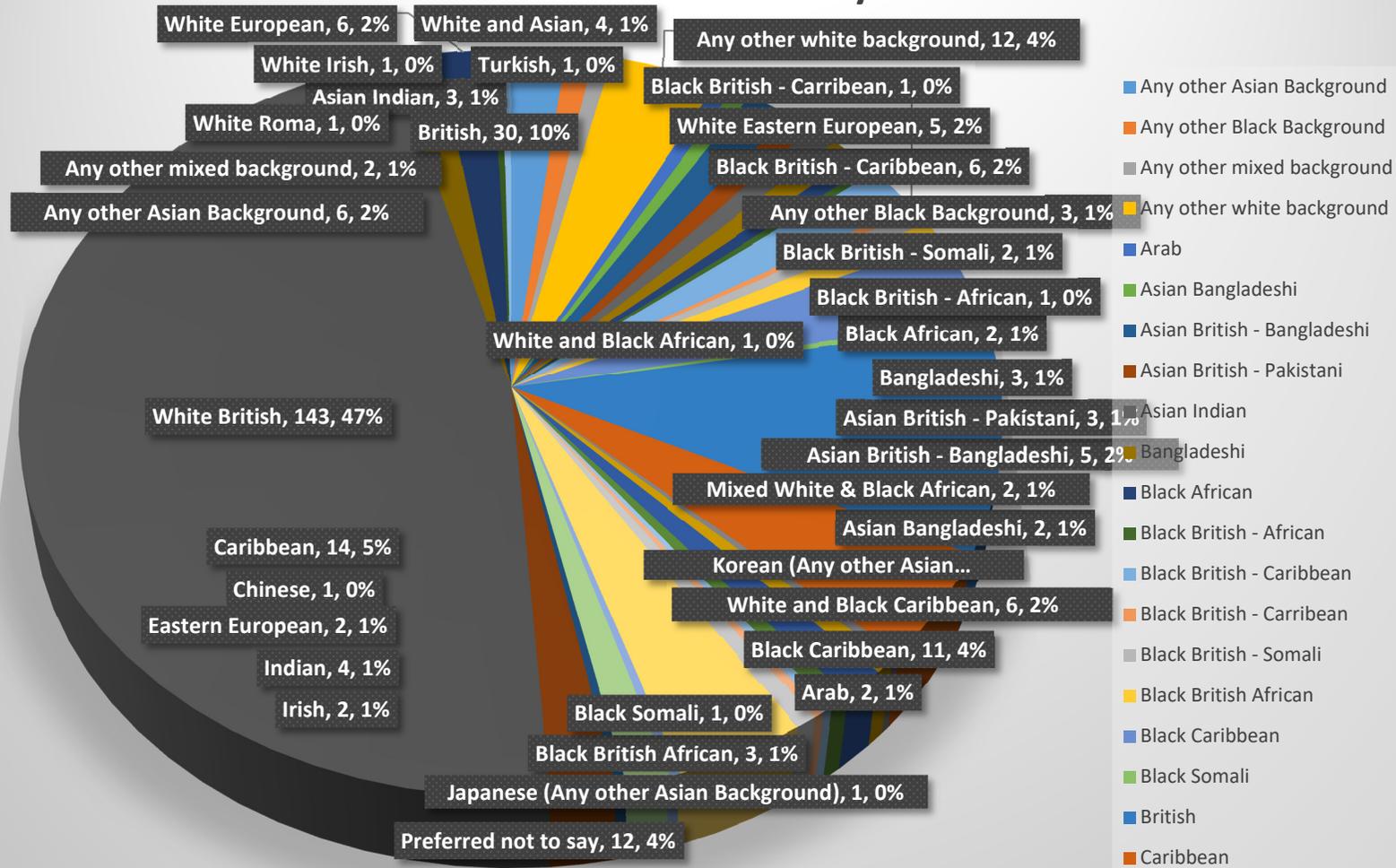
This long-term preparations, 'joint' approach, supporting the project in its ongoing development and mix of pilot projects led to the overall smooth running of the project, as well as contributed towards building commitment to it, from all sides.

## **2.2 Recruitment of Participants – how we involve local people**

The project was aimed at, but not exclusive to, disadvantaged groups in East Bristol: older people who live alone, people with learning difficulties, single parents, people from various ethnic backgrounds, unemployed people, and people with various disabilities. Evidence from our pilot projects showed that we reached individuals from the target groups throughout the duration of the project. The diversity data is also the biggest success of Raking & Baking and what makes it stand out from other similar projects locally and nationally.

Flyers and posters for the project were regularly displayed on noticeboards and throughout the Community Centre which were aimed at general public. We also regularly advertised in local newsletters delivered door-to-door and via e-mail newsletters throughout Ashley, Easton and Lawrence Hill. More information on other methods of recruitment based on collaborative working is described below. The courses are always listed as Free on our own Current Timetable which is available on our website and as a hard copy on reception at the Centre. We distribute 100+ of those each month. The participants were recruited from across the communities which already engage with the Community Centre through all sorts of cultural, support, wellbeing or historical links. Please see the Race and Ethnicity chart below:

## Race and ethnicity



This chart illustrates how we have involved people from our local community in the work on this project and made the most of the strengths of our communities and connections, some of which go back as far as 45 years, and more. The Community Centre was established almost 50 years ago and have continuously supported and acted as a hub for many ethnic groups and communities of interest. We are ideally based to deliver this project and reach all communities as the Centre is a well-used community hub, which recorded at that time we started over 74,000 individual visits per annum and this have risen to over 80,000 in 2019-2020.

We usually have around six tenant organisations based at the Centre who work directly with local communities, these included: LinkAge, Khaas - serving BME families with children with disabilities, The Green House supporting victims of sexual abuse, Mums4Work, K Christie integrative counselling, Herbalists without Borders supporting refugees with no access to NHS, Amicus Foster Care, Awaz Utaoh serving women, families and young people from Asian communities, KICC - an African Christian church, Once25 Peony Project helping women escaping the sex trade, and Shift Bristol, a training organisation which delivers a Practical Sustainability Course.

Apart from these groups there are usually around 200 active groups which use the Centre on regular basis. Among them there were many support groups, such as dementia support, Alcoholics Anonymous, stress reduction, mother and toddler, mental health music therapy. Various ethnic communities and faith groups also use the Centre for regular meetings, services or celebrations. These include Somali, West Indian and Caribbean, East European, Asian and African Communities.

The exciting opportunity of creating something that could be so community-cohesion focused was simultaneously the biggest challenge for this project. Gathering 12 people from very diverse backgrounds and of completely different abilities and life experiences often brought some unexpected results. The scale of this particular challenge, throughout all stages and the duration of the project, was somewhat daunting and intense, and required a huge amount of resilience and creative thinking on the spot from the Project Coordinator. The different ages and barriers meant many aspects of the project or presented solutions would be new, untried or would involve on-the-job learning - and much of this needed to be established within a short lead-in time and implemented by the Project Coordinator.

Over the years we have developed and established links with many individuals, organisations and support groups in our communities, who referred participants to the Project and relied on this activity in their support plans. Over the period of five years we continuously operated a waiting list made up of people who have attended the course previously and were always hoping to re-join should anybody drop out from a course. This has proven to be a very efficient way of ensuring that the service was utilised as best as it could over the years.

Apart from links with local health centres and other community hubs within East Bristol, organisations included: The Golden Key, Priory Group Supported Housing, New Beginnings, Link Age, Rethink, New Key, Voyage Care, Milestone Trust, Age UK Bristol, Bristol Health Partners, LGBT Bristol, Bristol Food Network, Bristol Community Health, Bristol Refugee Rights, East Bristol Advice, Second Step, Bristol Disability Equality Forum, Creative Youth Network, Bristol Mind.

The aim was to open the project up to the widest audience possible, to recruit a diverse group with different abilities, age groups, backgrounds and abilities and this is one of the biggest successes of the Raking & Baking, not only from the fact that it meets the outcomes marked at the outset of the project, but also because the participants had enough time to get to know each other, reflect on their experiences, and feedback to us on their learning.

## 2.3 Participants and Attendance

We aimed to have 12 participants signed up for each course in advance and this was met 90% of the time. The courses were often oversubscribed and we operated a waiting list. If the participants from previous courses or years wanted to come back they were added to the waiting list.

On average out of 12 participants on the list at the beginning of the course 7 or 8 would attend it and 4 to 5 would not turn up or drop out. Their places will be filled with people from the waiting lists as soon as practicably possible. The Project Administrator would endeavour to contact the people who have not attended and communicate with them as to whether they are able to come the next week. Taking into account the complexity and diverse needs of the people who are often also dependent on their support workers, interpreters and carers this could some time take more than a week.

In previous years we managed this problem with applying Refundable £25 Deposits at the time of booking with an agreement that £5 would be deducted every time the participant doesn't attend and doesn't notify us of their absence. This however was seen as a barrier to attending and was not introduced for this 5-year project.

The research shows that these kinds of projects aimed at disadvantaged groups most often base their recruitment activity on a rule of thumb that approximately 10% of those reached might be likely to actually take part in sessions. From signed-up cases the rate is higher but still the numbers achieved by the Raking & Baking fit above the average attendance rates. Our indicators were set on the maximum attendance rates of 72 participants per annum and as such has been met on the numbers of signed-up participants, however in third of the places we needed to recruit from the waiting list in order to keep the course at its best occupancy due to 'no shows' and 'drop outs'.

The Project Coordinators put enormous efforts into enhancing everybody's experience on the course and ensured that for those with special needs the course was always open.

From Shakira Evans, the third Coordinator of Raking & Baking:

**Chris** – Attended with his Support Worker. Developed confidence and a huge interest in different foods. He now regularly utilises the community centre, enjoying the cafe and garden space and comes independently (with his support worker) and voluntarily helps care for the garden on a weekly basis, watering and weeding. He has built up a good rapport with staff and is a valued member of the community centre.

**James** – Unable to talk (communicating with head nods and/or alphabet sheet), in a wheelchair and on a limited solid-food diet (texture-D diet) due to a life changing accident a few years ago. He had an obvious passion for food and was able to get fully involved in sessions helping to chop and stir things. Being mindful of James' diet needs meant he was generally able to eat the same as everyone else, which was a big thing for him and helped to restore a sense of 'normality' amidst the difficulties/ frustrations he experienced daily. He always left with a huge smile on his face. His Support Worker emailed after the course had finished and said that James was often indifferent to most things, but had firmly communicated that he would really like to do the course again. I invited him back to attend the course again since it was clear the course was having a really positive impact on his well-being.

From Amy, the second Coordinator of Raking & Baking:

Overall I felt that returning participants (those who attended the 8-week course more than once) gained more skills and more confidence from the project, and that they were more positively impacted and with longer lasting mental and physical health benefits than those that only attended the project once.

For example:

**Donna** - attended with a Carer and a small group of people from the same charity for assisting adults with learning difficulties. After being quite shy and reserved at the beginning of her first course, Donna warmed up to the gardening and cooking tasks overtime. She took a lot of pride in being able to fulfil tasks independently and took on the role of salad harvester and preparer every week by the time she was attending her second Raking & Baking course. By her third course, Raking & Baking had become Donna's favourite thing in the week and she had asked her carer to help her to prepare fresh food at home instead of her usual microwave ones. She was also growing salad and herbs on her balcony. The longer exposure to the project and the time given to fully develop her skills and confidence meant that the project had longer lasting positive effects on Donna's life.

**A group of three participants who were over 65** and living alone became friends after attending several courses together and began to socialise outside of the project, organising film nights and cook-ins at each other's houses. The social impact of the project is a really key outcome and it was very obvious to observe how much happier and included in their community these three friends felt after having bonded at Raking & Baking.

**Ruby**, a younger participant with some history of mental ill health and struggling with unemployment and direction, attended several courses in a row. Her confidence in cooking especially increased, and she discovered that she had a passion for cooking for others. After she completed her final course, Ruby sent me a note to say that she was now employed as a caterer and was taking her Food and Production NVQ qualification.

## 2.4 Sessions

At the gardening sessions participants learn how to manage a small garden and how to plan it using permaculture principles. The workshops will include sessions on container growing, composting, sowing seeds, companion planting and harvesting. As well as gardening for food production we will create a medicinal herb garden, flowerbeds, which attract wildlife and vertical gardens, which are visually attractive and will improve local environment for the benefit of a wider community. The sessions will also include building of the raised beds and planters, and things like creating bug boxes, rainwater storage and accessible seating.

The cooking sessions will focus on how to cook fresh, healthy and well-balanced meals using seasonal produce and as many local ingredients as possible. We will try to utilise the produce from our gardens and encourage people to grow their own fruit and vegetables. The lessons will also include topics such as making chutneys, preserves and cordials to use the surplus of crops to last over winter months and provide nutritional ingredients all year around. The sessions will be open to participants where they can facilitate a class sharing their favourite recipe or national dish.

The participants will have an opportunity to volunteer their time to run sessions on topics familiar to them or to assist the workshop facilitator or other participants, either with language support or other special needs. They will take turns in the responsibility for watering the gardens and maintaining the gardening tools.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total	Comments
Number of sessions	48	49	48	48	43	236	Last course of the final year was cut short due to Covid-19
Number of enrolments	73	77	83	88	65	386	Due to drop outs and waiting lists the number of enrolments was greater than the number of participants
Number of new participants	73	59	45	50	63	290	In total we had 70 less actual participants as the no show and dropout rate is quite high.

The sessions which were observed and fed into the evaluation were well planned, managed and engaging. There always was element of fun and cooperative approach, making sure everyone could actively participate to their best ability. Participants were encouraged to talk, share their knowledge and experiences. Many of them took a role of supporting others, and volunteered to set up, clear up, etc.

A shared learning environment was promoted, with attendees contributing their own knowledge and experiences to sessions so it wasn't just a teacher-student dynamic.

The sessions handouts were clearly devised, dated and interesting having a variety of information to suit all abilities and personal interests; they covered a range of topics and methods from 'how to chop' or 'what to put in your compost' to more advanced horticultural knowledge e.g. handouts on mycorrhizas, the fungal root support systems which are very important in wild and when planting without use of fertilisers.

The Project Coordinators have put a lot of attention into ensuring everybody's needs were met and accommodated. Resources, tools and activities materials were often adjusted to suit the needs and consider everybody's experience. The enjoyment, engagements and comfort of the participants were the foremost in the planning.

#### Examples of sessions from 2018 - 2020

- Working with dough – making a variety of breads, helping to develop a basic but invaluable skill
- What to make with pulses – curries, hummus, burgers, salads
- Making organic plant fertilisers
- Propagation – plant cuttings
- Building a mini polytunnel structure
- Soups and health broths
- Garden tool maintenance
- Using foods for illness prevention and treatment
- Sauces/pesto/salsas/dressings
- Vertical gardening – pallet planter
- Sugar free treats
- Small growing space design
- Herbal medicine
- Fruit tree care and maintenance
- Different foods that celebrate cultural diversity
- Kimchi
- Chutneys and pickling
- Healthy sweet treats – working with those mid-afternoon cravings
- Baking on a budget – looking at how we can treat and nourish ourselves without 'breaking the bank'
- Knowing how to make a good tomato sauce that can be adapted to make at least 10 other dishes
- Growing food in small spaces, where only pots and windowsills are possible
- Drying and storing herbs for winter
- Foraging and herbal medicine – utilising garden weeds for health

At the start of each course, everyone is asked to share their interests, existing knowledge and personal aims, and hopes, for the course; individual courses could then be modified to maximise the course's beneficial outcomes for those attending. "Evaluations at the end of each course have also been really valuable for feedback." said Shakira in her End of Year report.

In Year 2 there was a session set up for the Grants Officer (as they couldn't attend our usual Thursday session) when we invited participants from across the years. It was good for us to capture their feedback and welcome them back into Raking & Baking. Also, it was invaluable to be able to record their stories, as two of them progressed into cooking and gardening jobs as a result of attending the course in Year 1, followed up by completing a volunteering placement locally. This event significantly influenced the development of the new initiative under the name of Werbuzz Werbuzz & Volunteer Gardening Days.

The session plan looked as follows, although a degree of flexibility was applied so the courses have never felt regimented and participants could enjoy it at own pace:

10.00 – 10.15	arrivals & refreshments – welcome chat
10.15 – 10.30	cooking session explained, recipe shared on handouts
10.30 – 11.15	harvesting from the garden and prepping for cooking
11.15 – 12.00	cooking & baking
12.00 – 13.00	lunch – eating together around tables whilst enjoying a social chat [this was often when informal observations by project evaluation team happened]
13.00 – 15.00	garden activities, clearing up

*"Can't recommend the course enough, I have been speaking very highly of it – every session has been incredibly insightful and useful, and endless practical cooking tips I will use day-to-day."*

## 2.5 Adaptations: Werbuzz Werbuzz & Volunteer Gardening Days

One issue that emerged very early in the project delivery was the problem of the outside space at the Community Centre, the limitations that growing in containers may have and the accessibility of them for those with physical disabilities.

The recycled-wood container gardens which had been initially planned for use for the Raking & Baking courses has very quickly deteriorated and some of the logistics of how it had been laid were making it inaccessible for some participants. There also wasn't enough of growing space, and from our feedback forms we learnt that we needed to do more in order to fulfil our aspirations and engage more people in the space.

This might have been a considerable setback to the project in terms of its targets and projected outcomes. Despite removing the Outcome focusing on the outdoor areas we saw the connection that these two projects had and how they fed into each other. As we were able to say that the facilities we were raising money for were used on a weekly basis by our Raking & Baking project participants, as well as other members of the community, this had a significant impact on the funders and their decisions.

During 2016 – 2017 we secured grants to support the development of Werbuzz Werbuzz Project – transformation of the underused car park space at the back of the building into a community growing, seating, play and event space, and renewals to the existing container gardens in the parameter of the Centre. We involved Raking & Baking participants throughout the courses in the delivery of this from the design stage to the actual building of the raised beds, where possible. The old recycled wood growing containers were replaced with brand new solid ones made of larch sleepers. The gardens have also gained a couple of pergolas and new lockable recycling stations.

The Volunteer Gardening Days involved hundreds of local volunteers, many of whom were previous or future participants of the Raking & Baking courses. We organised 4 to 6 Volunteer Gardening Days per annum and supported them with a professional landscaping company who overseen the development. *“The outdoor space itself was sometimes difficult to keep tidy / maintained due to differing capabilities of attendees and also littering by the public. But the Volunteering Days run by the Community Centre provided valuable support assisting with this issue.”*

We made two short films from those events to share the spirit and ensure this works continues to attract more support in the future. Please follow the links to 1-minute videos of two of the events:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MDLWd590F8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nrSVQczoqUc>

The Garden is insect-themed and we had innovative artwork displayed around the Centre which involves solar powered motion-sensor LED insect lights as well as installation of an A to Z caterpillar on the tarmac and a freestanding puzzle. A solitary bee beehive, a herb spiral, a large bug hotel and engaging educational displays on the life of bugs on earth are also scattered around the Centre grounds.

The Gardens benefitted from new accessible musical play installations which were placed between the fruit trees on the south side of the garden, these were commissioned from a local wood sculpture, a slide and a play tunnel completed the play area around a hexagonal play pit which can also be used for small events, such as story-telling or a group support work, particularly valuable during Covid-19 pandemic when outdoor spaces are in demand. The benefits reach wider community as the space is used by all visitors to the Centre as well as general public: parents pop over for a play with their toddlers and volunteers take pride looking after the trees and green roof structures.

Jess from Neck of the Woods Café says: *“Raking and Baking has become an integral part of the community centre. We have always worked closely with the group as we are the other ‘bakers’ in the building. They are always making such unique and exciting bits to eat, it inspires us to experiment with our menu. In the garden they have really brought it to life and it is now a great place for people to sit and take a peaceful moment.”*

## 2.6 Challenges and Successes

In words of Shakira Evans, the last Project Coordinator: “The project’s biggest success has also at times created the most challenges, which is the range of participants.

- The variances in health and specific needs meant sessions (and myself) needed to be dynamic so as to ensure everyone felt engaged and personal aims were fulfilled at the end of the course. Each course had to be tailored to who was attending which couldn’t be fully realised until meeting new participants on the first session.
- The other challenge was sometimes season / weather – providing rounded growing knowledge with accompanying practical activities was sometimes difficult in winter.

Success - the accessibility and inclusivity of the course - it enables a wide range of people from different backgrounds, ages and cultures to come together, and learn with and from each other, helping to break down barriers and ultimately build community cohesion and resilience. I feel this type of course is not often seen, but holds huge value for all those who participate and also wider societal attitudes.”

“I did enjoy my time as the project facilitator, I found it both rewarding and challenging. The participants were very rewarding, and when the group cohesion/social interaction worked it really didn't feel like work. The social connection that the group fostered for some individuals (and for me!) was probably the best bit. Also that something of what was trying to teach had a positive effect on people, and may have helped them.

The struggle could be to involve everyone in a meaningful way, with a wide range of levels of ability, interest and different personalities. I think for me it was trying to cater for the large range of levels of participants' ability, so that everyone felt involved and learning to the level they were able to. Of course this range of levels was also a great benefit of the course, with individuals who would perhaps not normally meet working together, chatting and getting to know each other - the social connection.” Adam, our first Project Coordinator

## **2.7 Budget and Finances**

The funding received from the National Lottery was fully spent on the delivery of this project as outlined in the application. Any additional staff, facilities and resources costs were covered from St Werburghs Community Association's own reserves built through earned income, and donations from participants and community donors.

The project felt well-resourced throughout and allowed for annual increases and adaptations.

The Werbuzz Werbuzz Project and Volunteer Gardening Days have secured £41,750 of additional funding to date. The new facilities need regular maintenance and this adds to the costs but we will be ensuring local people can benefit from it by learning the maintenance skills through volunteering. So it's a 'win-win' situation again!

We believe that the funding secured for this project allowed us indirectly to secure other funds and contributed to overall financial sustainability of the organisation whilst fulfilling its mission and potential. Within the time under the review the Centre managed to put aside reserves for the necessary buildings maintenance as well as accumulated enough match funding to secure the Power to Change Community Business Fund which will allow us not only to complete a major capital project but also to develop digital tools simplifying data gathering for all service provision from the Centre so in the future any service user monitoring and progress reports can be made readily available at any given time.

Total project costs – include VAT where applicable									
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total	VAT recoverable from total	Funding from other sources	Amount requested from Big Lottery Fund
Revenue costs						A	B	C	(A-B-C)
Salaries, NI and Pensions	£4,680	£4,774	£4,870	£5,064	£5,166	£24,554	£0	£0	£24,554
Recruitment						£0			£0
General running expenses	£4,532	£4,623	£4,716	£4,811	£4,908	£23,590	£0	£7,200	£16,390
Training						£0			£0
Travel						£0			£0
Sessional workers						£0			£0
Consultancy & advice (including evaluation)						£0			£0
Materials: ingredients & plants etc	£1,440	£1,440	£1,440	£1,440	£1,440	£7,200	£0	£0	£7,200
Leaflet Production & Delivery	£3,200	£3,264	£3,330	£3,397	£3,466	£16,657	£0	£11,000	£5,657
<b>Total revenue costs</b>	<b>£13,852</b>	<b>£14,101</b>	<b>£14,356</b>	<b>£14,712</b>	<b>£14,980</b>	<b>£72,001</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£18,200</b>	<b>£53,801</b>
Overheads									
Staff	£4,340	£4,427	£4,515	£4,607	£4,700	£22,589	£0	£0	£22,589
Accommodation						£0			£0
Utilities						£0			£0
Volunteer Expenses	£200	£200	£200	£200	£200	£1,000	£0	£0	£1,000
Contribution to office running costs	£1,732	£1,767	£1,802	£1,838	£1,875	£9,014	£0	£0	£9,014
<b>Total overheads</b>	<b>£6,272</b>	<b>£6,394</b>	<b>£6,517</b>	<b>£6,645</b>	<b>£6,775</b>	<b>£32,603</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£32,603</b>
Capital costs									
Construction and/or refurbishment						£0			£0
Fixtures and fittings						£0			£0
Professional and legal fees for building work						£0			£0
Office equipment						£0			£0
Vehicles						£0			£0
Other - please detail here						£0			£0
Other - please detail here						£0			£0
<b>Total capital costs</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£0</b>
<b>Total project costs</b>	<b>£20,124</b>	<b>£20,495</b>	<b>£20,873</b>	<b>£21,357</b>	<b>£21,755</b>	<b>£104,604</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£18,200</b>	<b>£86,404</b>
If you are asking us to fund overheads, what percentage of your organisation's total overheads does this represent?									3%

### 3. PROJECT OUTCOMES – THE DIFFERENCE

#### 3.1 Skills, Learning and New Opportunities



**Outcome 1** Participants will learn new transferable skills, and will be given volunteer opportunities with the aim of increasing confidence to become involved in other new activities or potential employment.

We assumed that all 12 participants on each course will learn new skills. We see a very high percentage of people learning new skills from the figures below, we believe this is because of our location in an inner-city area where outdoor spaces and growing activities are limited. We have overseen that not everyone will return their feedback form and that the same person will attend more than one course, hence the lower numbers than originally set. The additional 167 participants who attended our supported Volunteer Gardening Days may well include some Raking & Baking participants but will definitely have at least 70% of new people.

Indicator	Set number	Total target number	Actual achieved
1. Number of people who will learn new transferable skills through participating in the classes.	12 per course by the end of each course	360	292 plus 167 from Volunteer Gardening Days
2. Number of people taking volunteer roles within the project.	200 by the end of the project	200	213
3. Number of people in new activities or employment.	180 by the end of the project	180	187

For many participants this is one of their first times cooking and growing fresh healthy food. The numbers on the other two indicators are slightly over the target as most participants do feel like they ‘give back’ through attending this project, also thanks to our active signposting from the main Reception many people found out about other opportunities locally and signed up for various projects and clubs as their confidence increased through attending the Raking & Baking.



"I found it really encouraging. It's inspired me to search out places to volunteer and get more involved with growing and cooking. I got a lot out of this course, lots of great discussions."

"I learnt many vegetarian dishes using own produce, and conserving tomatoes and onions in chutneys and sauces."

"How easy making food from scratch is once you've prepped everything",  
"Learnt how unused foods can be turned into compost which is good for your garden."

"I learnt harvesting, saving seed, and pruning".

"I have managed to land a job as a catering assistant within Catering & Hospitality at the University of Bristol student halls because of Raking & Baking.", "I now volunteer at a rabbit sanctuary."

"Having a day off work and coming here was the best idea I could have had."



### 3.2 Social Benefits and Community Cohesion

**Outcome 2** The project will bring together people from different backgrounds and people of different ages in a common aim of increasing their own wellbeing, which will lead to an increase in levels of social activity.



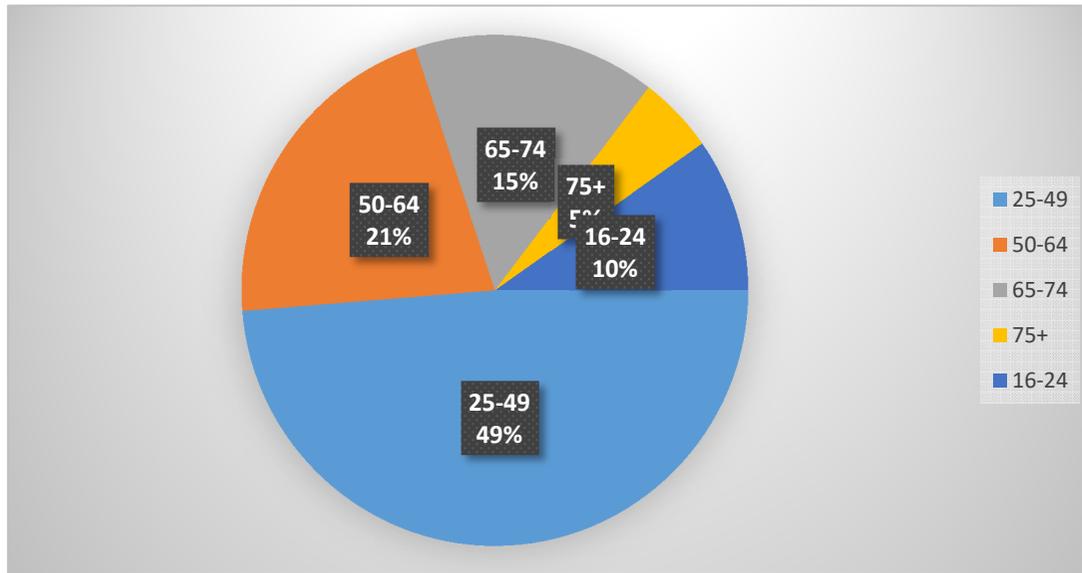
Indicator	Set number	Total target number	Actual Achieved
1. Number of people from different backgrounds brought together by attending the course.	9 per course by the end of each course	270	292
2. Number of people of different ages brought together by attending the course.	3 per course by the end of each course	90	132
3. Number of people increasing wellbeing and level of social activity through participating in the course.	360 by the end of the project	360	288 plus 167 from Volunteer Gardening Days

These are the most successful outcomes of the Raking & Baking and the ones that make it so unique and well valued across Bristol. On average we recorded people from 13 or more different ethnic backgrounds and over 8 different religious backgrounds during a year.

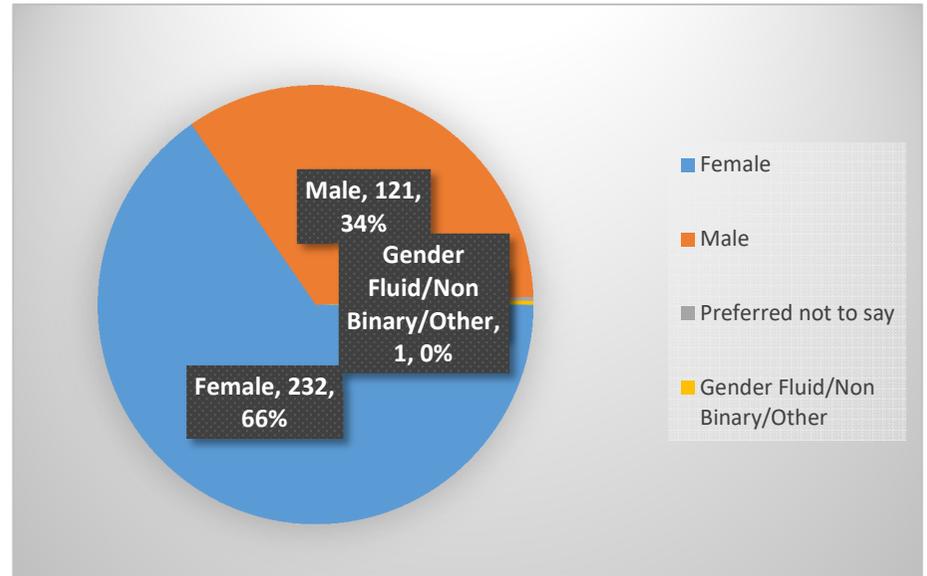
Year 4 report illustrates:

“The 2<sup>nd</sup> most common attendee ethnicity after White British was Black Caribbean, which corresponds well to the local vicinities of St Pauls and Easton. We have also had attendees from Hong Kong, Japan, Somalia, India, Poland, Albania and Venezuela.”

Age Breakdown 2015 -2020



Gender Breakdown 2015 - 2020



The above figures illustrate the overall 5 year of Equalities Monitoring data from the project.

The age breakdown in Year 2:

- 16-24 13%
- 25-49 40%
- 50-64 17%
- 65-74 24%
- 75+ 7%

Year 2 monitoring data said: 67% were female and 33% were male. 36% of those attending considered themselves disabled. 69% were heterosexual, 7% were bisexual and 4% were lesbian or gay.

Year 3 report says: 92% of participants felt less isolated, 93% more happy, and 90% more confident. 100% reported making new friends. People said: "I feel less alone, happier to be part of a project", "It made me feel happier and I've met new friends"

Once again, when Indicator 3 was set on the basis that all 12 participants in all courses will notice a change in the area and feedback on the outcome this is difficult to prove for two reasons:

- We don't get a feedback form from everybody who enrolled on a course
- Some people attended more than one course.

For those reasons we had a lower number reporting. However, since March 2017 we have been running regular Volunteer Gardening Days and those created even more opportunities for local people to socialise, increase their skills, confidence and well-being.

*"It has provided a lovely social experience, got me out of the house every week and my fingers in the soil. I have recently been struggling with anxiety and depression and it has helped me with this."*

*"It is a good course; interacting with other people. There needs to be more courses as people on their own get depressed. If there was enough funding it would be good to have two classes a week!", "I feel a greater sense of wellbeing".*

*"I am feeling more alive and healthy, confident and happy following this sharing experience"*

*"I feel more in touch with younger generations."*

*"I am pleased with my ability to socialise with all kinds of people and talk more to people you wouldn't normally talk to."*

### 3.3 Diet, Health and Well-being

**Outcome 3** Participants and families will improve their diet, and take part in a physical activity, improving health and physical wellbeing.

Indicator	Set number	Total target number	Actual achieved
1.Number of participants and families who improve their diet.	227 by the end of the project	227	211
2.Number of people who take part in physical activity through participating in gardening.	288 by the end of the project	288	278
3. Number of people who improve their health and physical wellbeing.	360 by the end of the project	360	216



*"Growing and having contact with nature has definitely helped. I have enrolled on keep fit courses and become more health conscious"*

*"Now I know healthy options to feed my family and I am teaching my kids how to make them too"*

*"I can do more outdoor things with my family now I know how to grow my own, we are getting more exercise together"*

*"I feel more passionate about healthy food. Noticed my psoriasis has nearly all gone. I have become closer to my mother as a result of doing the class together. Noticed her and my dad's health improving"*

*"It has encouraged me to clear some space in the communal garden where I live ready for planting."*

*"I have made a commitment to come here every week. I have used my bicycle to come here."*

*"It is the highlight of my week, I feel so privileged to be a part of this group. I feel happier, healthier, more confident, more hopeful and more connected to my community."*

The personal journeys of the participants - and their carers – were typically rich and multi-layered, as the following case study reveals:

### **Alistair's story**

"He got signed up to the course by his daughter who said, 'my dad needs to do this course, he's pretty unhealthy'. An accident a number of years previous had turned his life and meant he couldn't do his career and with that, diet and self-care were also impacted.

He arrived and said he didn't like veg or fruit, even the apples and rhubarb growing in his garden which he put straight on the compost heap! But wow, what a turnaround! He tried everything – and enjoyed everything! Changing his perspectives on what he thought fruit and veg tasted like, whispering at the end of the session 'I don't want to admit it, but that was alright.'

He asked lots of questions, inquisitive and motivated to alter his eating habits. Whilst doing the course, he was chuffed to share that he'd already started buying foods he wouldn't have pre-course. He finished the course feeling positive, and was planning to cook a meal for his two daughters."

### 3.4 Enjoyment and Levels of Engagement

There has been real value for those who've attended more than one course. E.g. email from support worker of a woman who has attended the course a few times over the years, asking about re-enrolment: *'The main one is Lisa because she is so autistic and loves Thursday. If someone drops out etc let us know please. Course has been brilliant.'*

Improving independence, confidence, personal capabilities and overall well-being as well as strengthening relationships. After doing course:

- 85% felt more confident,
- 73% felt less isolated,
- 100% made new friendships,
- 76% felt healthier,
- 70% cooked more meals from scratch.

The Video – the following link takes you to a short video that was created in December 2018 to show first-hand the positive impact that the Raking & Baking course has had (and continues to have) on people's lives.

<https://vimeo.com/305774772/fd19b62b57>

As was hoped, a wide range of people have engaged with the project in terms of background, needs, culture, and from both organisation referrals and individual's actively signing up. People attending have varied from experiencing social isolation, anxiety, mental health issues, adults with disabilities, in rehabilitation after an accident, unemployed, those who want to improve their diet or their English, or have moved to the area/country and wanted to get involved with a local community project to learn new skills, and meet people.

Engagement has been worked well through word-of-mouth, speaking to local businesses/organisations and advertising in local community bulletins reaching a varied demographic. Also, local magazines 'Up Our Street' and 'Vocalise' as well as being on the St Werburghs Community Centre's Timetable, and our own Facebook page.

We've networked with groups operating locally e.g. 16-25, Unseen, Voyage Care, Wellspring Surgery and NHS Mental Health Trust. We've recently had a feature on BBC Radio Bristol's 'The Martin Evans Show', with another interview coming up on the live afternoon show in April, and also a feature on Ujima (based in St Pauls) scheduled hopefully next month. The community centre volunteer gardening days throughout the year have helped people to have an active involvement in the outdoor space, and learn more about the Raking and Baking project.

### 3.5 Benefits to The Local Communities and Environment

Participants have been strong advocates for the project and often played a vital role in the project's development, e.g. when we redeveloped the garden.

Feedback from the garden users who have not attended the Raking & Baking course:

*"I love what you have done here! The outside space is wonderful, there is so much to play with for the little ones and your bug hotel is the best one in town! I can't believe how much life there is to be found in this garden right by M32 and surrounded by concrete..."*

*"I come here with my 2 and 6 year olds and they love playing on the slide and tunnel, and interacting with the displays and musical instruments. It is a very safe environment for my kids and they like chatting to the people who tend to the gardens."*

Shakira, the last Project Coordinator also said:

*"The Raking and Baking course provides a safe, relaxed space to learn and develop positive self-care strategies, as well as the chance to be involved in a place that is one of the hearts of the community. It has helped facilitate people in their independence, whether that be getting out / doing more, moving back towards the work place, or developing / building confidence in existing skills. Increasingly more people are using the outdoor space, especially in the summer – having lunch, kids playing, people picking the fruit and asking questions about gardening; it's also been great for those who don't have much access to green space.*

*All this has helped to make the community centre a great space – for the community, which is being made possible – by the community and their valued contributions from doing the course.*

*People writing 'thank you' cards or emailing after the course expressing the course's positive impact and their gratitude have been proud moments and have shown the success of the course and its capacity for promoting and enabling good health and well-being."*

## 4. THE LEARNINGS

### 4.1 Culture of the Place - inclusivity and safe environment

The diversity of people who have attended the courses has been its biggest success; and to no surprise it demonstrates a fairly good representation of the variety of people who live locally. Although, we have connected with various organisations, the course has always been open to anyone rather than targeting specific groups such as older people, people with disabilities or mental health support. This has been a huge asset – it encourages self-referral where people seek activities that make them ‘better’. The diversity of participants is hugely important since certain people may not have naturally met outside of the course – it has helped to break down barriers and has created a respectful and mindful learning environment.

Participants felt safe to share with us their various conditions, backgrounds and challenges. Challenges and backgrounds included: victims of domestic abuse, women who exited the sex work and men who experienced violent attacks, gay people who never shared their sexual orientation before, single parents who were emotionally struggling and professionals who were looking for change of career and inspiration to take a new step in their lives. A number of people joined mainly to improve their English language skills or purely to meet others and counteract isolation. There also were participants with various dietary requirements and/or mental health conditions which impacted on their eating (anorexia, bulimia). We always tried our best to accommodate everybody’s needs and have made adjustments and sacrifices to fulfil the individuals’ goals and explore the opportunity working with such a diverse group of people brings.

It is the Culture of the Place at St Werburghs Community Centre that made the courses so appealing to many different people. The idea for open access activities (no referral necessary) was in line with St Werburghs Community Association’s core values – creating a space that welcomes everybody, engages with people on the same level respectfully and offering more than just a class. Building confidence and skills to be able to improve one’s life as well as understanding of bigger picture: sustainability, community support services and how to help themselves.

Taking place in a very diverse part of Bristol where BAME population reaches 50% and many areas are ranked in the most 10% most deprived across all factors in the IMD it was important that the service was embedded in our mission and core values.

The project participants recognised that getting to know each other over time, as the course length facilitated it, on nobody’s “ground” in a safe environment made it possible to truly open up and make meaningful connections with others in their community. This form of fostering community cohesion is the desired outcome of any and every project and event St Werburghs Community Association sets up at

the Centre. These sessions are the little steps, which allow our communities to grow into being more supportive, cohesive and inclusive, and to make access to opportunities equal to everybody.

It is now when we face the Covid-19 pandemic, social distancing restrictions and forced self-isolation that we recognise the immediate need for this kind of services increases day by day. As we enter the autumn season and a new Raking & Baking chapter of reduced capacity delivery, serving those who are shielding at home with either recipe boxes or digital provision, we are once again raising to the challenge of meeting the needs of local people and reaching those who are most vulnerable in our communities.

## **4.2 Resourcing & Operations**

St Werburghs Community Association believes that collaboration with voluntary and community groups, public bodies and private sector organisations improves its ability to develop and deliver enhanced resources and services. The funding we have received from The National Lottery Community Fund Reaching Communities Programme has fully enabled us to build on our connections and improve our resources – the outside space created and maintained through the project has a huge added value to the use of the Centre, particularly now when Covid-19 restrictions mean more people are looking to meet outdoors.

Resources available for this project made it possible to build on connections and although we know that the financial resources were not the only factors contributing to the project's success, and that there is a lot of added value that is very difficult to measure, we are certain that without the cooperation and effort of the entire team we would have not achieved such outcomes.

The key challenge for the future is one of replicability, given the high costs involved. We are currently funded for one year by the John James Foundation and just secured an additional boost for six months through the Coronavirus Community Support Fund, distributed by the National Lottery Community Fund, which will allow us to re-model the service so we can reach more Older People at home. The five year funding stream from The National Lottery Community Fund allowed us to refine the project over the years and underpinned its unquestionable value for local people – it allowed us to build on their own capabilities and encourage positive change of behaviours, self-help and mutual support. It also allowed other organisations and Social Prescribers to benefit from having an ongoing service available to which they could refer people where their needs were accommodated in an appropriate way.

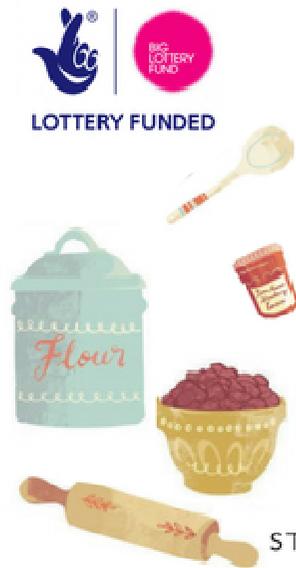
### 4.3 Final thoughts

It's been inspiring to see the impact the course has had on individuals and collectively and how it evolves through the challenges of 2020 and the pandemic. We hope that this report will inspire others to run similar projects for whichever reason they choose to do so, as the positive outcomes are so many! It is important for us to continue this work indefinitely as it is rewarding, beneficial, encourages mutual support and fosters self-help in our communities.

We are confident that the project fulfils our mission to improve people's wellbeing through giving opportunities: to connect with others, to be active through gardening, to take notice and learn about sustainable living and healthy cooking, and to give, through volunteering. According to the New Economics Foundation 'Five ways to Well-being Report' building the above five actions into everyday life is essential to well-being; we have been using these indicators to qualitatively monitor all our projects and the Raking & Baking delivered on all fronts.

*"Finding more purpose in everyday things, cooking has made me more peaceful and happy."*

*"I feel inspired to do more for the environment and own health – feeling positive!"*



# RAKING & BAKING

COMMUNITY COOKING & GARDENING CLASSES

*Thursdays 10am-3pm*

ST WERBURGH'S COMMUNITY CENTRE, HORLEY RD, BS2 9TJ, 0117 955 1351

