



Dale Lane Community Garden Case Study

The start of a community greenspace journey

Background:

For many years, the plot of land by the side of Meadow Green Extra Care Home on Dale Lane, adjacent to a row of community shops, has been an unloved eyesore in Heckmondwike. The community have campaigned for it to be turned into a community green space over the years and in 2025, the funds were found to make physical improvements to the area. However a community green space without a community is just that, a green space. Without a community to own and love it, the capital works will mean nothing and fly tipping and antisocial behaviours will quickly return. With this in mind, local volunteers like Keep Heeky Tidy and their councillors turned to S2R's Great Outdoors Project to help engage the community and help bring some sustainability to this new community asset.

Our Aims:

S2R is a mental health charity and our Great Outdoors Project is commissioned to connect people with nature to improve their wellbeing. We have a track record of engaging local communities and helping them get the most out of their green assets. If we help people to use and gain ownership over these spaces, we not only improve the look of the area, we can also improve people's wellbeing. Those directly involved are learning new skills, connecting as a community, getting active outside and giving their time to their community; all things that are proven to improve wellbeing. For the rest of the community, there is an asset to use that is looked after by the community in partnership with Kirklees Council.

What We Did:

The Great Outdoors Project came up with a plan to engage the community and with local partners Keep Heeky Tidy, we secured funding from Nature Hubs & Well Connected. This allowed us to set out a timetable of activities, events and a social media campaign that was delivered from March 2025. Throughout the process we reached out to as many local people, partners and groups as possible to give them the chance to get involved.

We started by setting out a flexible programme of activities and events on the site. Initial meetings and activities concentrated on getting the community to be hands on; clearing the space and looking after the new beds. Alongside this we collected feedback and opinions. The local community were sceptical, they had been promised improvements before but hadn't seen it come to fruition. It became clear that this first phase would be as much about growing trust as growing plants.

Over those first months, the community were invited to litter picks, seed swaps, planting sessions and creative opportunities such as creating 'totem poles' decorated with designs that had local significance.



In June, we invited the community to celebrate everything that had been achieved so far. This work was all backed up by a social media and poster and flyer campaign to raise awareness.

What Happened Next:

The local community were sceptical that the work done would produce lasting effects and were initially reluctant to get involved. However, having a facilitator on the ground and the gentle invitations to get involved has started to produce results with 49 individual adults having attended activities so far. They told us that they feel proud of getting involved in improving their space by planting, creating and litter picking. The evidence on the ground is that the space has remained relatively free of fly tipping and littering and the beds are being maintained. We have also attracted some informal volunteers that are litter picking and planting independently and during dry weather they even came together to water the plants. We have upskilled local people and given them confidence to plant and use the produce they grow.

The Future:

With the community now starting to be engaged, we can look towards supporting them to take even more ownership over this project. This might look like an informal group or a constituted Friends of group. Also, in the next phase of this project, we will be encouraging local groups like the school and Meadow Green Extra Care Home to adopt specific areas of the site.

What Our Participants Said:

"It's hard to get the community out to help, it's usually the same few people that come out!"

"We want more pretty flowers to look at!"

"I have never planted before, what do I do?"

"I've seen what you've been doing. Looks good! I think we should be able to get our hose across the road to help water."

"I usually clear the rubbish here and I cut back the hedges near my street. I think I may buy some wildflower seeds and scatter them all here. It would look really lovely!"

"... I admittedly started quite sceptical about the project but I'm very pleased to say I have been proven wrong! The land where the project is based used to be an eyesore but through the hard work of Waheeda and a very small number of volunteers it has been changed into something that looks good, can be used by all of the local community, attracts many forms of wildlife and insects..."

- Pam Lonsdale, Keep Hecky Tidy

"There's lots of potential for the community garden to develop and we continue to work with local residents to shape future plans for the community garden..."

- Susan Ginty, Kirklees Council Democracy Team