

NETHERTHORPE AND UPPERTHORPE
S.R.B. COMMUNITY CHEST
***ORGANIC COMMUNITY
GARDENING FOR HEALTH***
SHEFFIELD ORGANIC FOOD INITIATIVE
FEBRUARY 2002

PROJECT OUTLINE Volunteers will be offered two opportunities to participate in growing organic vegetables, fruit and herbs on 12 local allotments with the support and guidance of Sheffield Organic Food Initiative. This will consist of one day a week in a larger mixed group and another day offering a women-only option. Volunteers will be rewarded for their contribution by receiving a share of any produce available. The project will run for six months from April to October.

HEALTHY LIVING CENTRE This project is well placed to fulfil the stated intentions of the Centre, providing opportunities for exercise, meaningful occupation and improvements to nutrition. The idea for a healthy growing and eating project was included in the planning stages of and the bidding document for the Healthy Living Centre. Providing a Green Gym is now an accepted concept, as and when facilities are available. Horticultural Therapy has been proven to help people recovering from, managing with or wishing to prevent physical and mental illness.

TARGET GROUP Referrals from the Healthy Living Centre and members of the local population recruited by publicity, outreach and adverts in the Community Alliance newsletter. We would anticipate working with at least 12 individuals on a regular weekly basis (24 at most) , as well as other briefer contacts with groups and individuals, such as site visits and talks.

FACILITIES The venues for these activities are 12 allotments in Crookes, run by the charity in pursuance of its charitable aims, which offer a complete range of growing experiences, and two plots in Walkley, which are in the early stages of development. Most of the hard work of setting up these allotments has already been accomplished, which means that volunteers are able to concentrate on the more pleasurable activities such as

harvesting. The allotments are well-established, have raised beds, eight polytunnels, mature orchards and soft fruit. These allotments are the nearest to our area, which has none. We will register these allotments as being certified organic with the Soil Association.

LOCAL SUPPORT The project will build on the most successful elements of development work supported for two years by the Futures Fund. Over a period of three years, an average of eight people per week participated consistently in the Organic Opportunities project, a total of more than fifty local people. S.O.F.I. has also made links with and supported several local groups, including the garden at the back of Crookesmoor Community Centre, Netherthorpe school, two occupational therapy groups based at Limbrick and RECLAIM.

TRANSPORT Volunteers will be offered expenses to cover the cost of travel to and from sites, either by bus or as part of a car-share. If there is sufficient demand, a minibus will be hired from Sheffield Community Transport.

CHILDCARE Parents with pre-school children will be able to claim expenses incurred in organising childcare.

STAFF TRAINING Guides will attend Health and Safety Training prior to the start of the project.

S.O.F.I. Sheffield Organic Food Initiative is a registered charity set up in 1998 to promote Organics, Biodynamics and Permaculture for Education, Health and the Relief of Poverty. S.O.F.I. already manages and co-ordinates the Gardening for Health project at Unstone Grange, Dronfield, funded by the Department of Health's Consortium on Opportunities for Volunteering. S.O.F.I.'s pioneering work was recognised and rewarded last year when we won the Best Community Food Initiative category in the Soil Association's Organic Food Awards 2001. S.O.F.I. is in regular contact with national support organisations such as THRIVE (gardening therapy network), the National Federation of Community Gardens and City Farms and the Community Composting Association.

BUDGET

VOLUNTEER EXPENSES – TRANSPORT / CHILDCARE / CLOTHING / GLOVES / BOOTS	£ 2000
GUIDES' PAY: 10 Hours per week @ £10 / hour (6 months)	£ 2700
PAYROLL Service (Voluntary Action Sheffield)	£ 200
ADMINISTRATION: OFFICE / PUBLICITY / TRANSLATION	£ 300
INSURANCE	£ 150
ORGANIC CERTIFICATION FEES	£ 200
TRAINING	£ 250
FIRST AID	£ 50
MOBILE PHONE	£ 50
HORTICULTURAL SUPPLIES: TOOLS / SEED / FERTILISER	£ 500
POLYTUNNEL FOR WOMENS' ALLOTMENT	£ 500
TOTAL	£6900

Organic Community Gardening for Health

Referrals from G.P.'s, the Healthy Living Centre and members of the general public will be invited to participate as volunteers on two gardening projects based at local allotments: S.O.F.I.'s ten organic allotments in Crookes and at the 2 Women's Community Organic allotments in Walkley. Each opportunity will be available one day a week for 6 months.

The project would help to fill a gap in local provision since there are no allotments available in this area. S.O.F.I. has successfully recruited volunteers from the local community in this area to participate in organic growing and environmental improvements. We can demonstrate that there is demand for these activities, based on five years' experience managing other similar groups in other areas of Sheffield, such as Organic Gardening for Health at Unstone Grange and the Heeley Health project allotment.

The project will give access to a wide range of therapeutic gardening activities. Volunteers will benefit from regular exercise, group activities and fresh organic produce. We hope to achieve improvements in levels of fitness, individual motivation, recuperation after illness and managing disease. The experience and confidence gained from attending will help participants to progress to growing in their own garden or allotment.

The project's success will be judged firstly by regular and sustained attendance. The two opportunities will provide a maximum of 24 places per week. A volunteer register will be maintained to record numbers and activities. Volunteers will be required to fill in a confidential self-assessment form when they first attend, detailing their particular needs, experience and aims. They will also be invited to record what benefits to their health they have derived at the end of their involvement.

Two Guides will be appointed to facilitate these sessions. They will be responsible for preparing and supervising each week's activities on site. They have many years' experience working with people with a wide range of physical and mental health issues. In addition, experienced S.O.F.I. volunteers will act as mentors to new recruits.

Volunteers will be able to access meaningful activities, fresh air and exercise. They will be given fresh, local, organic produce, including vegetables, fruit and herbs. We would expect them to experience improvements to diet and nutrition. They will have the chance to improve their skills and learn how to grow food organically. There will also be an element of community bonding, personal development and improving social skills. We have found through experience that these activities can provide effective support through life crises such as disease, unemployment, addiction and psychiatric disorders.

The project will be timed to coincide with the main growing season, from April to October, when the weather should be good and there will be produce available each week. Volunteers will be encouraged to maintain their interest at the end of the project by continuing to grow and become involved in other community gardening projects.

We will produce adverts, articles, posters and leaflets for distribution in local newsletters, information points and to be available from the G.P. surgery and H.L.C. We will also produce an in depth information sheet to inform doctors, HLC staff and potential volunteers about the project.

We will arrange meetings with the Healthy Living Centre to discuss the details of recruitment and the suitability of various client groups. We are especially keen to involve ethnic groups, women's groups and patients groups

We hope that this project will be assessed at the end of this grant to provide a model of how to deliver organic health improvements in an urban context. If attendance and health improvements demonstrate its value, we would hope to develop the project further to meet greater and wider needs. Eventually we would like to be able to provide similar opportunities on a city-wide basis.

The idea of providing organic growing opportunities was included in the original remit for the Healthy Living Centre. S.O.F.I. has consistently worked to improve the environment in Netherthorpe and Upperthorpe over the last ten years, delivering such improvements as the garden at Crookesmoor Community Centre and the woodland and orchard on the Ponderosa. We are currently in contact with several potential local volunteers who would welcome the chance to participate.