



The Hill Garden Project

Impact Report

Exeter College and Coreus

A collaboration to create a wellbeing,
sensory and kitchen garden.
October 2024

Ellie Axton, the Sustainability and Social Value Assistant at Coreus, generously offered a team of volunteers to collaborate with us on a project of our choosing.

Together, we identified an opportunity that would be meaningful, purposeful, and sustainable. Both Exeter College and Coreus emphasised the importance of the project in enhancing the student experience.

Exeter College invited the volunteers to revitalise the garden at The Hill, a hub for independent living and learning. We worked with the leaders of The Hill to establish what they wanted and needed from the garden. The Hill had been fundraising through its sustainable shop to transform the garden into a functional kitchen garden, sensory space, and a sanctuary for students.

The project's longevity will be ensured through ongoing maintenance of the garden, the establishment of a college-wide gardening club, and opportunities for students to utilise the garden for educational purposes. We also anticipate an increase in biodiversity, fostering further learning opportunities about the natural world. Additionally, students will have the chance to harvest ingredients from the garden, enhancing their culinary skills and contributing to a local community kitchen.

Ellie brought with her a dedicated team of professionals eager to work diligently and achieve outstanding results. In just two days, we successfully transformed the garden into a tranquil sanctuary, creating a kitchen herb garden, sensory zone, flower garden, and small fruit farm.

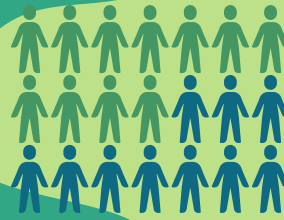
While the impact of this project may not be immediately quantifiable, its effects are evident. The initiative provided students with invaluable experiences in teamwork, communication, planning, and upcycling. They also had the opportunity to cook and serve meals, as well as offer teas and coffees, fostering a sense of involvement and ownership in the project.



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22 volunteers over 2 days.
a £600 budget to transform
the garden.
17 people (staff/students)
completed the survey.



Enjoyed watching the transformation

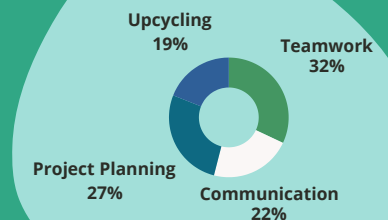


*18% said maybe

Said the transformation made a positive impact on the garden

*71% yes / 29 % said maybe

100%



Learnt from the experience

Participants were asked what skills they learnt by either watching or participating in classroom activities and discussions

Said they were inspired to spend more time in the garden

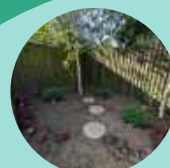
*answered yes or maybe

94%

Said they would like to learn more about the benefits of nature and gardening

*answered yes or maybe

88%



Upcycled the previous sandpit into a kitchen herb garden. Created a flower garden and sensory zone

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Feedback and comments from Exeter
College

I like to look out
at the garden
and see how
it looks now.

It has made the garden space
more appealing and
attractive. Students and staff
access the space more often.
It is such a positive
transformation. Thank you so
much.

As a staff member it has been
wonderful to watch the transformation of the garden and
how the initial concepts were transformed into a reality!
In terms of benefitting students, not only did they watch
people working together and communicating with each
other (seeing others model important skills) but they took
orders for drinks and made lunch all of which benefitted
their own oracy and teamwork skills.
They are all enjoying the garden and have taken ownership
of ensuring it is kept tidy, this has given a sense of
responsibility and an interest in green skills. They now have
a beautiful garden to enjoy and we have been spending so
much more time in that space. Thank you!

Having the chairs
and benches to sit
on, good for a
quiet space.

I like the new
garden
and I think
I like the new areas.

The garden is such a
great resource and it's
been used by students
daily for all sorts of
reasons and activities. I
can't wait for all the
plants to come to life
properly in the spring but
even now with painted
sheds and bamboo
screens it's looking great.
Thank you to all the
volunteers who made it
happen!

it looks better
because it's brighter

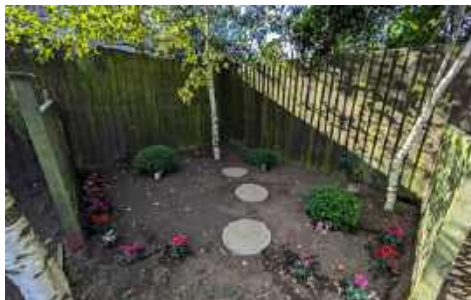
I enjoyed seeing
the new flowers.
It looks nicer. I like playing
in the garden

I enjoyed watching the
flowers (being planted)
and the
lovely people outside.

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Before and After!



The Hill Garden Project Impact Report – Ellie Axton (Coreus)

I had the pleasure of working with Kelly to coordinate Coreus' two volunteering days at the Hub for Independent Living and Learning. Coreus grants all employees a full day of volunteering each year, reflective of our strong commitment to giving back to the communities in which we live and work. As the Sustainability and Social Value Assistant, I was eager to organise a team event where employees could use their volunteering day to contribute meaningfully to a local project.

I reached out to Exeter College, who are a client of Coreus, to see if they might benefit from having a team of volunteers for a day. When Kelly put forward her idea to revamp a part of the college to be a wellbeing/rewilding space, I thought it sounded like an excellent project with potential to make a real positive difference.

We all thoroughly enjoyed our days in the garden and it was extremely satisfying to bring Kelly's vision for the space to life. After two days, we managed to create a more vibrant, inclusive and usable space which featured a pond, wildflower garden and herb garden. Students at the Hill were kind enough to provide us volunteers with refreshments throughout the day and even cooked us a hot meal on both days, which was very well received and greatly appreciated.

It felt really great to be able to contribute to a space that will be used by students and give them the opportunity to grow herbs for cooking, spend time in nature and learn about the natural environment. The project ended up being an excellent team building exercise too, as we worked together in groups to steadily transform sections of the garden.

Thank you to the staff and students at the Hill for welcoming us into your space and for cooking us some very delicious food. We hope you continue enjoying your new garden!

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Volunteer Feedback



'We loved our volunteer days at Exeter College, it was a brilliant way for our team, including Exeter College Alumni, to give back to their local community as well as give back to an important client for Coreus. We hope that the students enjoy the new features of their garden. From a Coreus perspective we have found that the experience has allowed our team to develop valuable skills, improve their mental health, boost their productivity and generally instill an improved sense of purpose and meaning.' - Scott Moore



'Our volunteering days at Exeter College were great to give back to the community on a really worthwhile project, and the soup made by the students was awesome!' - Tom Hicks



'That was the best volunteering project I've worked on, being especially important to me given that Exeter College is where I went to college. It was nice to give to a big local provider something that will be used and enjoyed.' - Evan Stronge