



Get Oldham Growing



Summary Report

April 2016 – September 2018



Oldham
Council



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#ourbit

Creating opportunities for people to get involved in community led growing, cooking and food related businesses; building skills and connecting people

#yourbit

Getting involved with all the opportunities on offer and socialising with others

#result

Healthier, more connected communities better linked to their local environments

Introduction

I'm pleased to provide the introduction to the Get Oldham Growing report, which provides a look back at the many successes since our last report in 2015. Launched in 2014, Get Oldham Growing is a public health funded community engagement programme which aims to work with communities and individuals across Oldham around food, building skills, supporting entrepreneurship and addressing the wider determinants of physical and mental health such as social connections and physical activity.

Since the last report there have been a number of changes in the Get Oldham Growing team. The first Programme Manager, Paul Howes has been replaced by Anne Fleming who currently manages the programme. Alan Higgins, Director of Public Health, who had been instrumental in the setting up and development of Get Oldham Growing, left the authority in December 2017. He was replaced by Katrina Stephens and Charlotte Stevenson as Interim Directors of Public Health. However the biggest loss was the sad passing of my colleague, Councillor Sue Dearden in March 2018, who championed Get Oldham Growing from its outset. Sue was a passionate supporter of efforts to improve the health and wellbeing of local people, particularly women, children and young people.

We are committed, as was Sue, to continuing to promote health and wellbeing through our support of various projects such as the growing hubs. I hope you enjoy the retrospective look at our positive work and continue to benefit from the good work we are doing.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Arooj Shah'.

Arooj Shah
Deputy Leader of Oldham Council
and Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Services

Approach

Get Oldham Growing's approach to working with communities is influenced by two factors, firstly that Oldham Council is a Co-operative Council. This approach encourages communities and the Council to work together to solve problems and share ambitions for Oldham and involves 'everyone doing their bit, and everyone benefiting', helping to empower people and communities to take ownership and drive change.

Secondly, Get Oldham Growing uses an Asset Based Community Development approach to work with local people and organisations, a way of working with communities which focuses on community strengths and assets rather than on deficits and problems.

In practice for the Get Oldham Growing Programme this has meant:

- co-producing pieces of work such as the growing conference and food festival
- involving local groups and organisations in pieces of work and paying local groups, social enterprises and individuals to provide services e.g. running a workshop at the growing conference or leading a training course on jam making
- employing local people as Growing and Health Ambassadors
- setting up regular Get Oldham Growing meetings which people can attend to find out what other groups are doing, share with other people and groups what they are doing and discover ways to work together and connect with each other
- working with local people, community groups and social enterprises to create and develop growing hubs across the borough

Aims of The Programme

The programme has four overall aims

Aim one

To develop employment opportunities through local food production and better establishment of the local food economy.

To achieve this Get Oldham Growing has created three jobs to offer community support. We have also supported and commissioned training courses which have assisted small scale enterprises. In addition, we have supported a community food festival, which generated over £1000, and are currently in the process of exploring a 'Grown in Oldham' brand which community growers and food producers will be able to use if they choose.

Health Ambassadors

Two Health Ambassadors, with a remit to support local community groups and residents to develop skills in growing, remove barriers to volunteering and link communities to opportunities to improve health and wellbeing, were appointed in 2017. The scheme built on and extended a Growing Ambassador project which ran in 2014-15 funded by Get Oldham Growing.



Alan Keane, Health Ambassador (centre)



Robina Kauser, Health Ambassador (third from left)

Aim one

Food Festival

A community food festival was held on the 7 October 2017 which attracted over 100 people. This was held in one of the leading community Growing Hubs – Veg in the Park in Waterhead Park. Get Oldham Growing supported the event which allowed local groups to raise awareness about their work, meet like-minded people and raise funds to support their organisations. This was a key project for growing the local food economy and creating sustainable enterprises in Oldham.

Groups attending included Greater Manchester Youth Network; Get Oldham Growing; Lees ECO Hub; the Real Junk Food Project; Veg in the Park; IF Oldham; Medlock Bees; Oldham Floral Arts Society and Greater Manchester Police.





Aim two

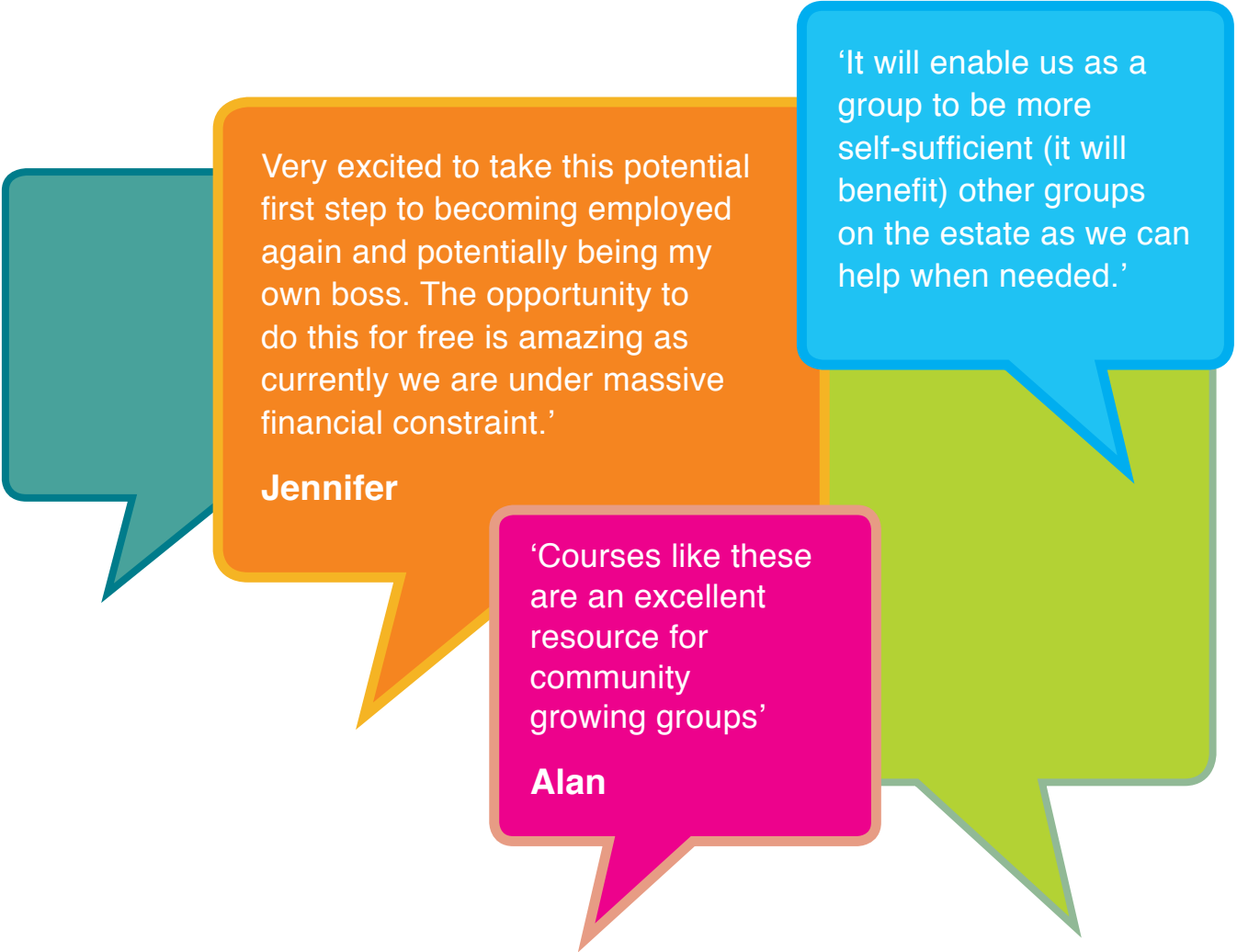
To increase skills, qualifications and entrepreneurship in food related initiatives.

To achieve this aim Get Oldham Growing has created a flexible training programme based on community interests which has so far included tree pruning, jam and pickle making and Level 2 food hygiene courses. In the last two years more than 90 people from a variety of local communities and organisations have taken part in this training which has been delivered through local experts sharing their skills and knowledge with colleagues.

Food Hygiene Training

The food hygiene training has so far benefited 40 people representing eight community groups who can now safely offer food at events, breakfast and luncheon clubs. Some people also attended these courses to allow them to begin to develop food-related businesses. Having the training means that they can safely and sustainably run food enterprises and support our ambition to grow the local food economy.

Participants said of the food hygiene training:



Very excited to take this potential first step to becoming employed again and potentially being my own boss. The opportunity to do this for free is amazing as currently we are under massive financial constraint.'

Jennifer

'It will enable us as a group to be more self-sufficient (it will benefit) other groups on the estate as we can help when needed.'

'Courses like these are an excellent resource for community growing groups'

Alan



Aim two

Food Enterprise Training

Another key focus for our work is supporting food related enterprise. As a way of doing this Get Oldham Growing has supported three Oldham residents in accessing a course in setting up a food enterprise business, delivered and created by the social enterprise 4lunch.

The participants have gone on to create a pop-up cafe at a local growing hub and a rainbow menu system helping cafes display allergy information on their menus in an easily understandable way.

Growing Entrepreneurs Scheme

The programme has also funded the Growing Entrepreneurs Scheme in which schools in Oldham have been invited to work with pupils to grow food in school and then learn how to sell what they produce.

Tree Pruning Training

The Grassroots Project in Failsworth (a project supporting people with learning disabilities run by MioCare) had lots of apples, pears and plums ripe and ready for picking but no one to pick the fruit or prune the trees. IF Oldham, a social enterprise working across the borough, contacted a women's group at Primrose Bank and, with the support of Great Places Housing Association, took 12 volunteers to the site.

Get Oldham Growing paid for a number of tree pruning courses to take place at the Grassroots site, building horticultural skills and helping the Grassroots Project to manage the site.

Silvie Rackham from Real Junk Food Oldham / IF Oldham created an apple poster capturing this piece of work.

Silvie said 'By working together we can ensure a sustainable food future for Oldham.

Grassroots is a horticultural site run by MioCare Group CIC. MioCare deliver whole person centred support and care. At Grassroots they provide meaningful day care activities for people with learning difficulties and young people at the risk of exclusion.

On site there is a fruit orchard which contains 166 mature organic fruit trees. Unfortunately Grassroots were struggling to keep up with everything, they just don't have the hands to harvest all the apples, cut the grass and prune the trees.

We are all facing times of austerity and need to think outside the box.

So in Autumn 2016 The Real Junk Food Project Oldham, IF Oldham and Great Places took 12 volunteers to Grassroots to harvest apples that would otherwise have rotted. The volunteers collected 112.3kg of apples which were then redistributed to the community of Oldham.

Because of the discussions and connections made, Get Oldham Growing funded a pruning course at Grassroots, this will ensure future harvests for years to come and will mean the residents of Oldham can gain new skills in Growing Food for the future'.



The problem:

Rotting fruit with not enough hands to maintain and harvest the orchard



The answer:

12 volunteers



Result:

112.3kg, £350 worth of local organic apples collected and a pruning course



Aim three

To reduce barriers to participation in food growing activities through supported access to land, training and advice, materials and infrastructure development

Oldham Council has seven districts. Get Oldham Growing, in partnership with Environmental Services, has an ambition to create or support at least one Growing Hub in each district as a way of achieving our third aim.

At the time of writing, five Growing Hubs have been created and developed across the districts, each acting as centres for community growing, offering volunteering and training opportunities, having fruit and vegetables for sale and a chance for people to meet up and build skills and confidence.

The Hubs can be found at:

Alexandra Park – The Hub, Alexandra Park is located within Alexandra Park but can be accessed via a gate on Kings Rd, Oldham, OL8 2BH. (Just along from the Kings Rd car park, next to Ability Wheels)

Dunwood Park – The Railway Garden, the community Growing Hub for Shaw, is located in Dunwood Park which is off Smallbrook Rd, Shaw, Oldham, OL2 7UQ.

Failsworth Town Hall – The Failsworth Growing Hub can be found in the grounds of Failsworth Town Hall on Oldham Rd, Failsworth, M35 0FJ.

Lees Park – Lees ECO Hub can be found at Kingsley Drive, Lees, OL4 3JW.

Waterhead Park – Veg in the Park (VIP) is located within Waterhead Park which can be found off Herbert St, Waterhead, Oldham, OL4 2QX.





Volunteers' stories

'It's a lovely atmosphere'

Community Growing Sessions - The Hub, Alexandra Park

'I enjoy coming to the sessions. It's nice meeting all the nice people and I like to come because things are explained well. I like everybody here and having a chat. I like it because everyone gets on really well and it's a small group.

I enjoy the produce and taking the veg home and sharing it. Another nice thing is that the food is fresh and it's good to see how things look different to those in the supermarket. I like to share things and sometimes share it with my neighbour too. I like to hear what different things she cooks with the food. Recently my health has got better. Coming here is keeping me well. I get to have a walk in the park on the way in and afterwards. Walking through the park makes me feel more relaxed especially in a morning on the way. It's nice as I now get to walk through the park afterwards with other group members.

When I first started coming I was more poorly and had to take more rests in the sessions, but now I'm feeling better. I still need some rests but can take part more. At The Hub you have a really good time and it's a lovely atmosphere. It's good for people to come as you learn new things'

CM (45) from Lees

'I tried new and different foods'

Community Growing Sessions - The Hub, Alexandra Park

'Initially I came as a volunteer for myself, but now come with my daughter. I have always been fascinated with growing fruit and vegetables. Now I get to do it and gain from the knowledge and skills of the group.

It's good for my daughter - the experience. It's about getting out in the fresh air, the walk and keeping active. It is beneficial for us both to get out of the house, be more active - good father and daughter time.

Since we've been coming we've tried different and new foods. It's important for my daughter to be trying different foods. At the Hub we've tried new vegetables, but also the recipe ideas - pizza, salads with dressings and dishes. I eat more of a variety now. The cucumber grown at The Hub isn't like ones you get in the shops. I am going to grow the nasturtiums at home too. It's a good time to talk to others as you learn from them and get ideas and new things to try.'

SH (33) and KH (2) from Hollinwood

Alexandra Park Hub

Alexandra Park Hub was the first Oldham Council funded GOG Hub as a resource for people and groups wanting to learn more about food growing. Currently the programme funds a member of staff based at the Hub.

The Hub offers community growing sessions every Wednesday 10am-12noon and family focused Hub explorer sessions every Saturday 10am-12 noon

Between April 2016 and March 2018 Alexandra Hub attracted 932 participants in various growing sessions and worked with 14 community groups. In the same period the Hub attracted 54 volunteers.

Some people have found attending the Hub a great help with improving their health and wellbeing as the case studies show.



Failsworth Growing Hub

Failsworth Growing Hub is the third Growing Hub opened with the support of Get Oldham Growing. The Hub is situated within the grounds of Failsworth Town Hall, outside the café, next to the canal. People can enjoy the garden when the café is open and join in the Thursday gardening sessions.

The group's latest annual report says

'Failsworth Growing Hub began as a community garden created on an unused triangle of land by a small group of volunteers in spring 2016. It was transformed in spring 2017 when the group's aims to make the garden accessible to all became a reality thanks to Oldham Council. The ground was resurfaced so that mobility scooters, wheelchairs and baby buggies move around freely. We gained more planters including raised planters with good quality soil and more growing space along the canal.

During the growing season in 2017 we grew a wide range of fruit and vegetables over the year: strawberries, tomatoes, peas, beans, courgettes, potatoes, carrots, onions, beetroot, kale, broccoli, lettuce, salad leaves, radishes, leeks, chillies, garlic and a range of herbs. We also have young fruit trees developing: apple, pear, plum, cherry and soft fruit bushes settling in: raspberry, gooseberry, blackcurrant, chokeberry. And don't let's forget the flowers: the primulas and daffodils which are a lovely sight.

Given the space available our plan has been to grow a variety not big quantities, so that all the volunteers gain experience of different crops and to make it interesting and informative for the general public who walk round the Hub.'

The group are proud that

'We've got so much stuff that's growing, we're still learning and helping each other – we never stop learning something new... the main thing is getting people together'.



Lees ECO Hub

Lees Eco Hub is the fourth Hub opened with the support of Get Oldham Growing. The Hub opened in March 2018 and is managed by Alan Price who runs a social enterprise – Athene Environmental.

Although very new the Hub has so far hosted some DIY sessions run by Oldham Lifelong Learning Service, where local people have learnt decorating skills by decorating the pavilion, held a pop up café, provided volunteering opportunities for local people – the Hub now has 5 people regularly volunteering - and has started running family sessions, bringing parents and children together to grow in the outdoors.

When the Hub is open (Thursday afternoons, all day Friday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons) the toilets in the park are also opened as they are in the pavilion run by the Hub. This brings more people into the park which in turn helps people using the park to feel safer.

Alan says he is proud that ‘The community are all on board with it now. We never hear anyone complain about it, everyone comes in and it’s positive comments. The Council say they’ve never seen the park so busy. Vandalism is down as well, people are taking ownership of it’.

In the long term Alan would like install solar panels and take the site off-grid, attract even more volunteers and hopes that by summer next year the Hub will be full of schools and businesses.



Veg in the Park (VIP)

Veg in the Park is the second Hub opened with the support of Get Oldham Growing and is sited on a disused bowling green in Waterhead Park. The Hub was developed by a partnership which included Environmental Services, Get Oldham Growing and community members who, with the support of Action Together, Big Local Oldham and IF Oldham, later developed into a formal group known as Veg in the Park or VIP. The group, under leading volunteer Caroline Lawson, took on informal management of the scheme in 2015 and has gone from strength to strength.

Since 2016 the number of regular volunteers on the site has risen from seven to 25 with around 64 volunteers dropping in and out over the last two years. Although most volunteers are local there have been volunteers from as far away as Preston, Cornwall and even New Delhi visiting family in the area. Caroline estimates that volunteers give at least 120 hours a week to the project over the summer months.

The Hub has hosted several events including a food festival, a launch event for Real Junk Food Oldham, Halloween, birthday and Easter parties and has also been the base for training sessions in wreath making and bikeability. VIP regularly hosts sessions involving youth groups, community groups and schools. Some businesses have also had volunteer away days on the site.

VIP have worked with the Well North team and Thriving Communities to fund a new portacabin which is due to be in place in early 2019. The cabin will have room for a shop, a café, toilet facilities and a meeting room which can be rented out, helping the Hub become sustainable.

Caroline says 'I am proud of my volunteers and what we've achieved. People who were so negative about VIP – local residents – are now praising us. I'm proud of myself because I think it's a big achievement for someone with no experience of doing a community group (to do this) but I have a good team around me.'



Apple trees at Alexandra Park Hub

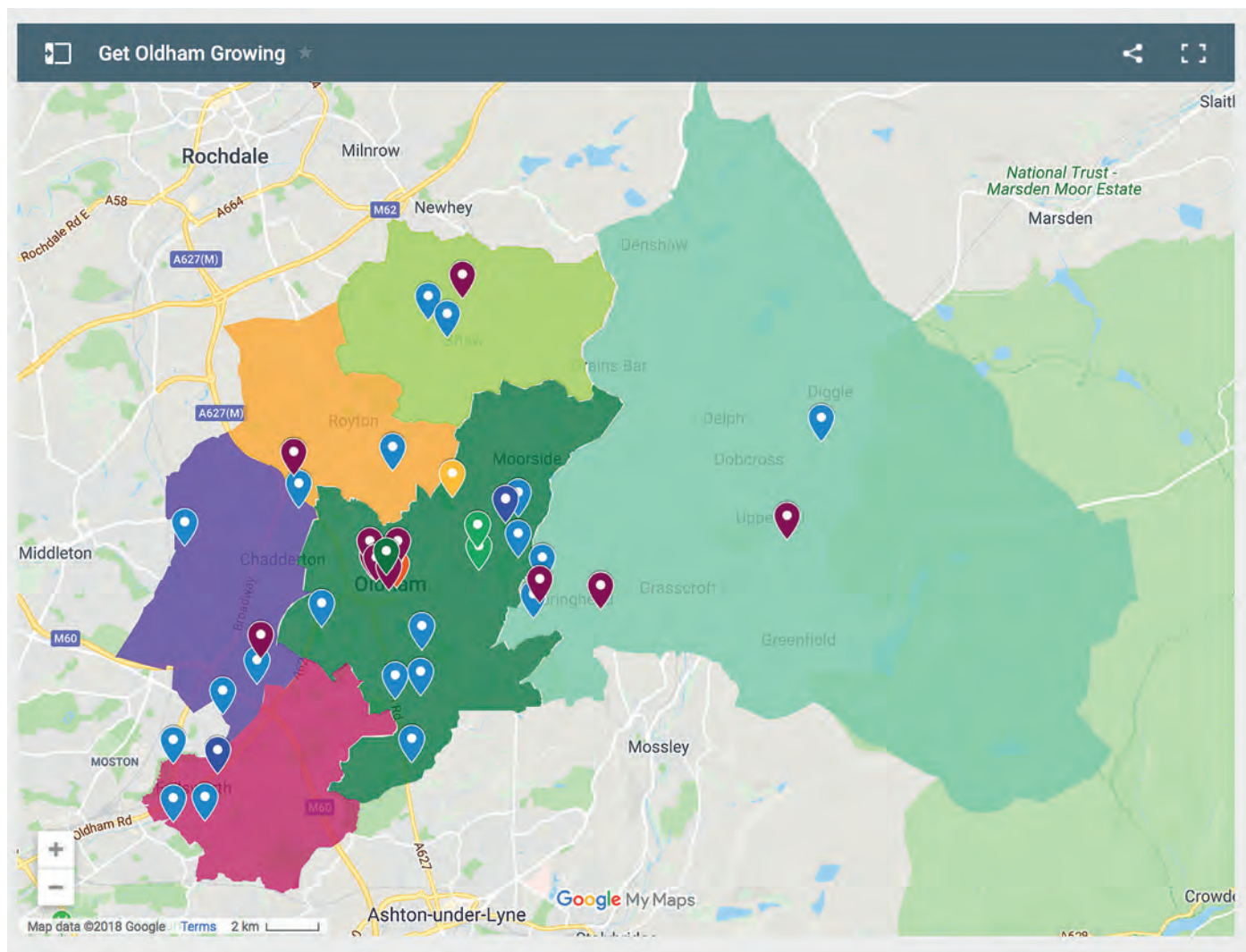


Aim four

To increase community participation in food growing, cooking and eating projects for the improvement of the health and wellbeing of Oldham residents.

To achieve this aim Get Oldham Growing has refreshed its website www.getoldhamgrowing.co.uk - adding a digital map which highlights food growing hubs, projects supported by Get Oldham Growing, events and what training is available.

In the nine months from January to September 2018 the website was viewed 1, 306 times.



There is also a new section – the Harvest-ometer. This is an online tool which allows people to work out how much food they have grown over a season and how many meals this would make, allowing growing groups to demonstrate their impact.



Aim four

Oldham Food Network

Get Oldham Growing supports the community-led Oldham Food Network – a group bringing grassroots community organisations together to work around food across Oldham.

The Food Network's many achievements include leading a crowdfunding campaign for a community kitchen for Oldham Food Bank in December 2016. Through a variety of fundraising activities the Network raised over £20,000 in under eight weeks, successfully galvanising support and investment from residents, partners, businesses and organisations across Oldham.

The network also secured membership of the Sustainable Food Cities Network and led a successful bid for a sustainable food cities award, gaining a bronze award for the Borough.



Growing Tips – October

Posted on October 11, 2018 by Oldham Council



October 2018

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Advertisements



Growing Conference

In February 2017 a growing conference was held which 120 people attended. The conference was co-produced with local people who wanted to build on and celebrate the assets already in Oldham. Eight workshops were delivered by local people and organisations so those attending could find out about bee keeping; flower arranging; composting; wildlife photography using mobile phones; planting; family cooking activities and pickle and jam making.



Aim four

Your Oldham Festival

In July 2018 Get Oldham Growing was one of the sponsors of the Your Oldham Festival in the town centre allowing local social enterprises, Oldham Theatre Workshop and local growing groups to meet the public, sell their wares and raise awareness of their work. 37 local organisations, charities and Council services attended with over 2,000 people moving through the festival across the day.



Oldham Theatre Workshop's Bee Dance at the Your Oldham event 2018

National Play Day event – Growing Zone

Get Oldham Growing sponsored a Growing Zone, aimed at families and children, at the annual National Play Day event in Chadderton Hall Park in August 2018. Oldham Play Action Group (OPAG) coordinated the activity and reported that there were over 1000 visitors to the event with at least 300 visiting the Growing Zone and planting something to take home.

Members of the OPAG team worked with children and families to plant carrots, onions and shallots to take home to grow on. Children enjoyed working with the soil and planting seeds and bulbs. OPAG also took along some 'here is one I prepared earlier' baby carrots grown in the planters at Greenacres Community Centre garden by the Family Cooking and Crafts Friday night group.

They also distributed a carrot and coriander soup recipe; set up a 'still life with vegetables' zone for watercolour painting, and every now and then, included a 'name the vegetable' quiz. Staff from Wifi NW (a social enterprise working around healthy food in Oldham) were able to offer practical growing advice. Lots of conversations were had about where our food comes from and information was given out about growing projects across Oldham. Families expressed the satisfaction both they and their children felt when they had grown something, however simple, and said they thought that events and activities such as these really encourage children to try new things and to eat more vegetables.

Children responded really positively to planting activities and the wonder of growing something that ends up 'for dinner'. There was one disappointment in that OPAG couldn't give them seeds to grow 'binanas' but children were happy to create a carrot necklace so they could see what their seeds would grow into.

Many parents promised their children they would have a go at growing at home, in pots or in the garden. To further support children's interest in growing we have also sponsored juniors classes at three local flower shows which recognise and reward young people as they develop growing skills.



National Play Day event - growing zone

Aim four

Edible Oldham

Oldham Council's Environmental Services team, with the support of Get Oldham Growing, has developed an Edible Oldham scheme encouraging residents to pick fresh food for free. The scheme is made up of two Fruit Routes, the first along a disused railway line running from Grotton to Alexandra Park where a variety of fruits and berries grow each side of the path so people can pick a healthy snack fresh from the tree. The second, running down Union Street in the town centre, is made up of 25 planters offering apples, pears, plums, sage, rosemary and other herbs in season and leads to growing beds outside Positive Steps which are managed by that organisation.

The initiative aims to encourage people to eat fresh healthy food and also to consider growing it for themselves.

Partnership working

Over the last two and a half years Get Oldham Growing has worked with around 50 community or voluntary groups, social enterprises and organisations supporting them in a variety of ways including commissioning activity from them; offering guidance and acting as a referee in funding bids and helping them make connections with one another.

Building on the initial phases of the programme, when Get Oldham Growing mainly worked directly with local community groups offering grant support, training and guidance, its remit has now developed to include more strategic activity, making strong links with the Growing Oldham:Feeding Ambition (GO:FA) and Good Food Greater Manchester (GFGM) partnerships.

Growing Oldham: Feeding Ambition (GO:FA)

The purpose of Growing Oldham: Feeding Ambition is to work in partnership to support key food priorities and drive a sustainable and co-operative approach to food.

The partnership focuses on five themes

1. Grow More
2. Share More
3. Learn More
4. Make it Pay
5. Waste Less

Amongst other pieces of work Get Oldham Growing has supported GO:FA in developing an Enterprise Initiative (building on the development work around food enterprise supported by Get Oldham Growing) linked to the Well North programme which will further support the growth of food related enterprise across the borough.

Good Food Greater Manchester (GFGM)

At the Green Summit in March 2018 the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, supported the launch of Good Food Greater Manchester as a strategic food board for GM, whose role is to coordinate a wide range of local action on food by the public, private and voluntary sector. The partnership brings together representatives from the 10 boroughs within Greater Manchester (Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Manchester, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan) as well as representatives from agencies such as public health, universities and colleges and voluntary organisations to work together around food.

Get Oldham Growing, as well as members of the public health and policy team from Oldham Council, have been attending and supporting the group's work.

Get Oldham Growing meetings

One way to build partnership working has been to organise regular Get Oldham Growing steering group meetings which bring together a range of partners including various departments within the Council (Environmental Services, Policy, Public Health), Action Together, IF Oldham, Wifi NW, Oldham Food Network, MioCare, Medlock Valley Bees, representatives from Oldham allotments, Groundwork, Oasis Academy Oldham and Housing Associations such as First Choice Homes. At the meetings attendees share information on their planned and current work, pick up opportunities for joint working and help to set priorities for the programme.

Awards

In 2018 Get Oldham Growing was part of a team which was shortlisted for a Local Government Chronicle award in the Community Involvement category which focused on 'From Grassroots to Boardroom'. The shortlisting recognised our approach to empowering people and communities at all levels of engagement through food and growing, as well as our focus on asset based community development. We are pleased that our colleague Dominic Coleman, a principal policy officer working around food partnerships, was awarded a Local Government Chronicle Rising Star award in 2018.

Sustainable Food Cities

The Sustainable Food Cities award is designed to recognise and celebrate the success of places taking a joined up, holistic approach to food which are achieving significant positive change on a range of key food issues.

The award is open to any place – be it a city, town, borough, county or district which:

- **has an established cross-sector food partnership in place;**
- **is a member of the Sustainable Food Cities Network; and**
- **is implementing an action plan on healthy and sustainable food**

As well as meeting these minimum requirements, applicants have to provide evidence of action and outcomes across six key food issues:

1. Promoting healthy and sustainable food to the public.
2. Tackling food poverty, diet-related ill-health and access to affordable healthy food.
3. Building community food knowledge, skills, resources and projects.
4. Promoting a vibrant and diverse sustainable food economy.
5. Transforming catering and food procurement.
6. Reducing waste and the ecological footprint of the food system.

There are three tiers to the award – bronze, silver and gold – each requiring an increasing level of achievement in terms of actions and outcomes.

Get Oldham Growing was a key contributor to the application for a sustainable food cities award particularly in the section concentrating on building community food knowledge, skills, resources and projects.

Oldham gained the bronze sustainable food cities award in June 2018.



Britain in Bloom

Get Oldham Growing is proud to continue to support the Oldham entries for Britain in Bloom. Over the last four years we have had the opportunity to meet with the judges to talk about the partnership work we carry out around growing to improve health and wellbeing. We are delighted that Oldham continues to be successful in the awards.

Visit from the Chief Executive of Public Health England

In October 2017 Oldham had a visit from the Chief Executive of Public Health England, Duncan Selbie and Rebecca Wagstaff, Deputy Director of Health and Wellbeing at Public Health England, North West. Duncan leads the organisation which exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing and to reduce inequalities in health.



From left: Alan Higgins (former Director of Public Health), Maggie Kufeldt (former Executive Director Health and Wellbeing), Duncan Selbie (Chief Executive of Public Health England), Dr. Ian Wilkinson (former Chief Operating Officer of Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group), Councillor Eddie Moores (former Cabinet member for Health and Wellbeing) and Rebecca Wagstaff (Deputy Director of Health and Wellbeing at Public Health England, North West) in the Conservatory at Alexandra Park

We were delighted to welcome Duncan and guests to Alexandra Park where he visited our first Growing Hub and met representatives from Oasis Academy (who hosted a Growing Entrepreneur pilot project), Anna Kennedy from Wifi NW (who delivers healthy cooking classes to aid the prevention of type 2 diabetes), Euey Madden from Environmental Services (who manages Oldham's parks and green spaces) as well as a local GP and CCG Business Partner to discuss healthy primary care.

The visit recognised the role of working with communities and growing in improving physical health and mental wellbeing. Duncan was very interested in the work we are doing and could especially relate to the benefits of growing for people with mental health problems.

Visit by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS)

Two of the Growing Hubs hosted a learning visit to share Oldham's co-operative approach to growing and food with Anna Da Silva (Programme Director) and Marcus Hilton Jones (Curator) who are leading on the development of RHS Bridgewater – the RHS's fifth flagship garden in Salford. Veg in the Park and Alan Price from Lees ECO Hub were involved in communicating their activity and ambition.

Food Insecurity

The programme has supported work happening across the borough to address the increasingly concerning issue of food insecurity (poverty). We know that access to enough food, especially enough healthy food, can be a problem for many people across the borough. Get Oldham Growing is part of a partnership of housing associations, social enterprises, community groups and Council departments who are working together to reduce and hopefully end 'holiday hunger', a problem affecting families with children who receive free school meals in school time but no extra help in holidays. It can lead to problems such as hunger, malnutrition and reduced attainment at school. The partnership has supported the recruitment of an Oldham Food Partnership Coordinator whose role will be to coordinate responses to 'holiday hunger' across the borough.



Next Steps for 2019/20

Get Oldham Growing has a number of plans for the future including:

Continuing to support the development of the five current Growing Hubs by working with them in becoming more sustainable; helping them attract more volunteers and build connections across Oldham.

Developing two further hubs in Chadderton and Royton. We are currently in discussions with MioCare about the possibility of Get Oldham Growing linking in to their site in Chadderton Park. In Royton we have made contact with a GP's surgery who may be interested in hosting and supporting a community growing Hub within their grounds.

Developing sites and connections at the Royal Oldham Hospital.

Continuing to support the development and implementation of the GOFA Enterprise Initiative which will offer funding to grow scaleable food enterprises and help to create a vibrant food economy across Oldham.

Exploring the development of a 'Grown in Oldham' brand with GO:FA and other partners, helping local suppliers to raise awareness of what they produce and allowing local people to make informed choices about what they buy.

Continuing to support work to alleviate hunger and poverty including supporting the work of the Oldham Food Partnership Co-ordinator.

Celebrating five years of the Get Oldham Growing programme from April 2019 onwards. We plan on organising a variety of celebration events and activities throughout 2019.

Summary

From its outset in 2014 Get Oldham Growing had a vision of using food as a vehicle to engage with communities and working with them to improve health and wellbeing across the borough. Over the past four and a half years the programme has built links, connections and working partnerships between the Council and a wide variety of partners including individuals; community groups and voluntary organisations; social enterprises; schools; the NHS and businesses to achieve this aim.

Get Oldham Growing has, using its asset based approach, invested in local people and organisations and developed physical assets such as the growing hubs where communities can connect, learn new skills and support one another. It has been able to tap into an underlying reserve of goodwill, commitment and hard work shown by volunteers and those working to improve peoples' lives across Oldham.

The programme has also acted as a catalyst for the development of a wider approach to food which has led to the creation and development of the Oldham Food Network, GO:FA and the movement towards becoming a sustainable food city. Although Get Oldham Growing has been successful, the programme faces challenges moving forward. Budgets continue to be reduced, leading to an increased need to focus on entrepreneurship and sustainability in the projects Get Oldham Growing supports.

Discussions around scaling up growing and supporting the better marketing of locally produced food have begun which has highlighted a skills gap which will need to be addressed and rectified. In spite of these challenges, in 2019 Get Oldham Growing will celebrate five years of work across Oldham. We hope to build on the successes of the previous years and continue to support communities in building skills, making connections and improving health across the borough.

Acknowledgements

Get Oldham Growing would like to acknowledge the work of our many partners.

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Action Together
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Great Places Housing Group
Groundwork Bury, Bolton, Oldham and Rochdale
HACK Oldham
Healthwatch Oldham
IF Oldham
Lees ECO Hub – Athene Environmental
Medlock Bees
Mio Care Group
Oasis Academy Oldham
Oldham Clinical Commissioning Group
Oldham Floral Arts Society
Oldham Foodbank
Oldham Food Network
Oldham Lifelong Learning Service
Oldham Libraries Service
Oldham Theatre Workshop
Oldham Play Action Group (OPAG)
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The Railway Garden
Thriving Communities Oldham
Real Junk Food Oldham
The Regenda Group / Petrus Community
Sholver and Moorside Community Team
Veg in the Park (VIP)
Villages Housing Association
Well North Oldham
Wifi NW
and many other community groups and schools across Oldham.

If you would like to get involved in Get Oldham Growing or want more information, please contact:

Anne Fleming

Programme Manager, Food and Health, Public Health, Oldham Council
Telephone 0161 770 1876 Email: anne.fleming@oldham.gov.uk

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