

Isle of Wight NHS Youth Forum Garden Project



Transformation of an unusable outdoor space into a garden for wellbeing, tranquility, and peace, for young people



AUTHORS

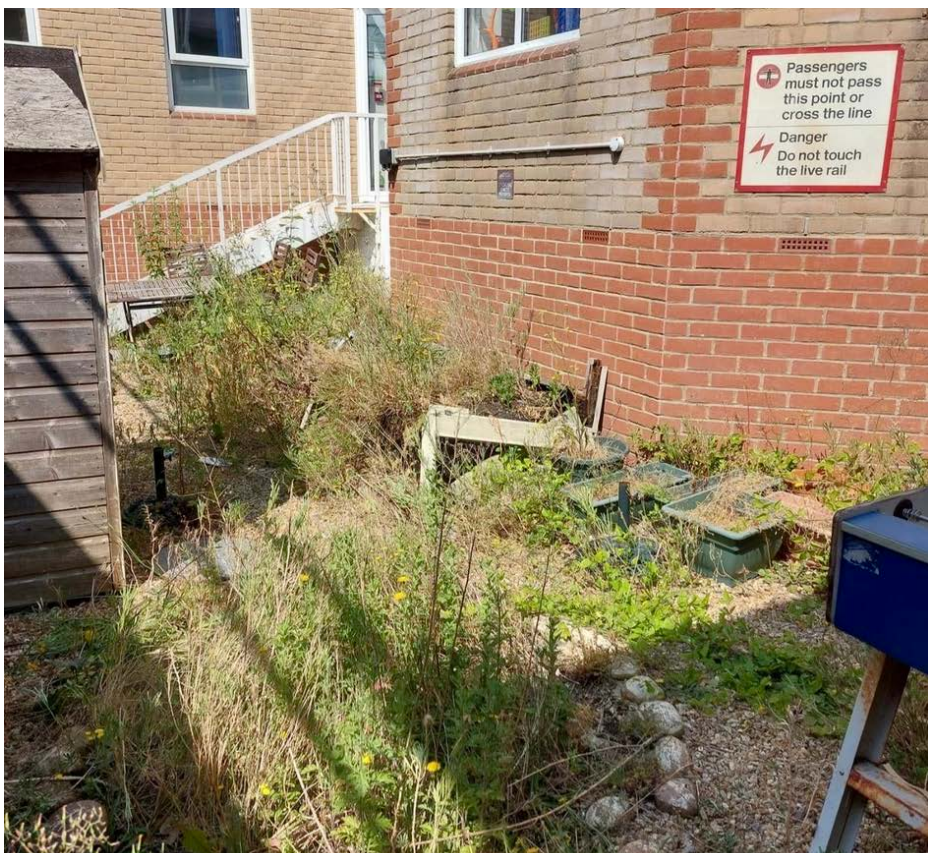
Isle of Wight NHS Youth Forum. Becky Hepworth, Matron CYP, Abi Metcalfe (Youth Chair), and Emma Blake, Consultant Paediatrician.

AFFILIATIONS

Artwork and the Isle of Wight Rotary Club.

INTRODUCTION

There was a disused and neglected outside space within the Children’s ward footprint. The Youth Forum, designed, fund raised, inspired and led work with 2 local charities to create an outside space for young people to enjoy during an in patient stay on Children’s ward. They worked tirelessly on the design, and then worked at weekends/evenings to implement their ideas - painting, planting and building the garden. They wanted to provide a safe sensory space for neurodiverse young people and those with mental health challenges, but that could be enjoyed by all. The garden is now completely accessible with a level, decked flooring, is used every day, offering an outside space for young people that need inpatient care.



METHOD

The Youth Forum completely owned the design and implementation of their ideas in the space. The Youth Forum worked alongside the charity, Artwork. They held a “Dragons’ Den” event to chose the artist but then led the design to meet the needs of their peers when they are in a time of need. The colours, designs, and concept of calmness and nature, came from a series of events held by the youth forum where they considered the needs of different patient groups. They then fundraised for the decking alongside the Rotary Club, gave up weekends, evenings, and other free time to paint, build, and plant. They celebrated the completion of the garden by arranging an event, inviting everyone who had helped or inspired the project.



IMPACT

The garden provides an inviting space for young people who are on the ward, to spend time enjoying fresh air and some tranquility away from the stresses and noise of a busy children’s ward. The garden allows time out, time to spend thinking, a space for some fun, space to talk, and a step into nature. Well-being of our patients has been truly enhanced by this outdoor space which was designed by young people for their peers.

CHALLENGES

The challenges of the project mainly fell with the ‘red tape’ involved within the NHS - getting a water supply to the garden proved very challenging and working within the NHS safety / building restrictions. Working alongside 2 charities also took significant co-ordination which was picked up by the staff members of the team. The weather also caused issues - the youth forum came out in all weathers to paint, plant, and create the space.



CONCLUSION

The initial feedback from young people and their families is that this space is invaluable. It makes their stay feel less restrictive and improves their wellbeing. This is an example of true co-production. The Youth Forum led this project, designing and building it with their own hands. They used their personal experiences and those of their peers to build a truly inspiring and accessible space that is now enjoyed every day.

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