

Local food for local people - Norris Green Fingers, Liverpool

A group from St Christopher's, Norris Green have been reclaiming a piece of unused church grounds, with local people and community partners. Together with the Primary Care Trust's (PCT) "Five a day" scheme we aim to encourage the growing and eating of more fruit and vegetables. We want to interest people of all ages and to educate children about growing food and cycles of nature. There are raised beds to enable access for all and a poly-tunnel, with a wildflower garden planned for the future.

The project is linked to our 'Chatty Church Café', a community café that aims to provide simple healthy food at a reasonable cost. Café users can see the food growing and then sample the produce in their meal.

Since we started in 2004 we have:

- Worked with local schools to help them learn about food growing as part of the National Curriculum
- Helped a number of groups to produce hanging baskets
- Appeared in Operation EDEN's first film, "The Gardeners of Eden"
- Hosted a visit from a church in Manchester considering setting up an eco-centre
- Widened the discussions about local regeneration and the use of our buildings.

Health and safety issues:

It is important to ensure that the area is safe, especially as primary children and older people are involved. The key seems to be careful supervision, especially when tools are being used. We have gloves available for gardeners to use, although it is good to get hands used to working with soil.



Telling people about it:

The project has been promoted in the parish newsletter and the other churches in Liverpool 11. We held a series of events to which local residents, schools and a nursery have been invited and attended. We have had coverage in the local press and through the Capital of Culture Faith in One City Programme.

Funding:

The PCT paid for equipment and Operation EDEN for a development worker to establish the project and help make the right links. (Remember to include for training and some contribution towards the use of church halls & grounds so the project is sustainable.)

For more information contact Mark Coleman or Ann Stein on 0151 256 1434.

Who we worked with:

Local allotment growers helped with the practical establishment of the project and the initial planting. Good links have been made with the local community through the Area Neighbourhood Office and the Norris Green Community Federation. Even local community wardens have come forward to offer help with walking the children safely from school to the church.

What went well:

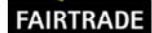
There has been a real sense of involvement from local residents and people are really enthusiastic about the potential. Local Primary schools have been heavily involved. If we were to do it again we would involve other Churches and faith groups right at the outset and have even more parties – celebration is a good way to build a community.

Where you can go for help or advice:

- Speak to the “5 a day” or “healthy eating” coordinator in your Primary Care Trust
- Make contact with your local Urban Farm – very useful in bringing animals along to an open day and may be able to offer some training for gardening volunteers
- See also www.localfoodworks.org for more information about local schemes.



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Goats from the Urban Farm at Open Day