

IC - (21197) - EVALUATING THE SOCIAL AND HEALTH IMPACTS OF COMMUNITY GARDENING FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Research or practical problem and objectives

This study is part of the Connecting Nature project (H2020 Grant Agreement no. 730222), and focuses on the Growchapel Community Allotment Gardens (Glasgow). The project focuses on the potential and impact of nature-based solutions to promote health and wellbeing, social cohesion, economic and environmental improvements within the local community. The objective of this study was to carry out an impact assessment of community gardens on a population at risk of social exclusion through the indicators of the Connecting Nature Framework.

Methods and process (for empirical research)

Glasgow City Council contacted local residents and organizations that work with people at risk of social exclusion and will be allotted a plot for gardening, and inquired into their willingness to participate in a pre- and post-intervention evaluation process, which was carried out using a focus group methodology. Impact indicators had been previously co-defined in the project, together with a sample of city councils, to address several health and wellbeing and social cohesion outcomes. A total of 2 Focus Group were conducted by the Glasgow City Council staff, at the beginning of the study and 2 months after the garden had been allotted. Both focus group were transcribed and analyzed using principles of grounded theory.

Main results preview and importance (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

The results of the qualitative study show that social cohesion impacts are among the most important outcomes of allotment gardening. Creating a responsible and inclusive community was one of the main benefits registered by the participants. Other benefits experienced by the participants included improvements in individual health and well-being, opportunities for environmental education and reduction of antisocial behavior among the young population in the neighborhood. We will discuss the implications and difficulties of carrying out social and health evaluation with vulnerable populations and the importance of training and building capacity in cities to carry out carefully crafted and robust outcome evaluations.

Palavras-chave : community gardens, NBS, social cohesion, health and wellbeing, social inclusion