



Enter & View Report

Missenden Walled Garden

December 2021



What was the project about?

Healthwatch Bucks wanted to find out about people's experiences of the community opportunities offered by Missenden Walled Garden.

Why did we do the project?

In 2021-22 we are looking at Covid19 response and recovery in Health and Social Care. Together with our cross-cutting interest in lesser heard voices, we decided to visit locations where community opportunities are provided. These had to close in 2020 during the pandemic and then adapt to changing circumstances as they opened through 2020 and 2021.

We wanted to hear from those who attend day care provision in Buckinghamshire. We wanted to hear what they gain from the experience and how it promotes well-being and self-reliance, one of the aims of [Our Ambition | Buckinghamshire Council \(buckscc.gov.uk\)](https://www.buckscc.gov.uk). In this, Buckinghamshire Council are looking to develop “meaningful and appropriate day and employment opportunities in the community to enable people to live fulfilling lives. We want to support a culture of choice for individuals rather than the current culture of dependency and having to fit in to services”.

We also wanted to identify good practice and ways to improve service delivery.

What did we do?

Our Enter & View visit to the service on 8th October was planned with the provider in advance. For more details on Healthwatch Enter and View and full details of the visit, including the names of our authorised representatives, please see Appendix 1.

We talked to 8 members (clients), 1 carer and 2 members of staff. We also observed the interactions between these people, 4 other members and 3 other staff members. Our authorised representatives used a set of questions to guide their conversation with members. It covered topics such as:

- what did they like doing at Missenden Walled Garden?
- what skills had they improved since attending
- what would they like to change?
- how did they feel about the service?

What did we discover?

Missenden Walled Garden provides day support for people with disabilities or mental health issues. The garden includes an orchard, meadow, pond, vegetable plots, composting area, and beehives. They provide a mix of outdoor work and educational opportunities such as garden maintenance as well as indoor activities in their education centre and 3 large, heated glass

houses. Members and staff maintain the 10 acres of Missenden Abbey as well as provide fresh produce for their kitchen.

How people were treated

Members were very relaxed and cheerful with staff and visitors. We saw some members engaging with the public at the flower, plant and vegetable stall being run at the edge of the site. After lunch we saw members plant out seedlings, mow, and erect goals for a football game at 1.30pm. Some also fed the fish on the site although we did not see this.

We frequently heard staff asked members their opinion. “Shall we go this way, or that way?” “What shall we do this afternoon?” Staff and members were then heard to discuss the options. Staff were keen to demonstrate how something should be planted, explain the reason why it should be done a certain way and encourage members to get involved. For example, members were asked to help staff to fill trolleys with unsold produce and plants and pull them back to the greenhouses, rather than leave the staff alone to clear up. Staff also knew which activities people preferred or were able to do. One member would struggle to bend down to plant out the rocket seedlings but enjoyed the responsibility of mowing the paths.

What do you like doing?

We saw a group of members raking up the leaves outside a local care home. Some told us they enjoyed this whilst others said it was hard work. Two other members told us “you can do what you want” and “we do a lot here”. “If they tell me to do something, I’ll do it.”. One person told us that having a bonfire was their favourite activity. Another was proud of their mowing, “I cut the pitch and putt [lawn at Missenden Abbey] this week.” Another enjoyed watching the wildlife such as birds, insects, and newts. “We like it here.”

What have you got better at since coming here?

One person, who had not been attending Missenden Walled Garden for very long, was able to tell us that in their first week they had learnt how to help on the plant stall and to wash garden canes, “I enjoyed it.” Another person told us how they had made their sandwiches themselves at home for the first time. A staff member told us this was influenced by new members the previous week having said they had made their own lunch. Staff and members sit together in small groups to have lunch although there is space for members to eat alone if they wanted to.

For a member of staff, “the growth narrative is important; plant, watch grow, taste.” Having picked the last of the corn on the cob for the stall that morning, members pulled up the sweetcorn plants and raked the soil ready for rocket seedlings. A one-to-one carer explained how a member had learnt to plant rocket seeds in the greenhouses a few weeks ago. Today, the same member was able to plant the seedlings outside so learning what the plants needed to grow. Their carer said, “it’s such a positive atmosphere here”.

For another person, building on their existing horticulture qualifications was important so they could find work. “I hope to use them [Missenden Garden] for references.” They said staff were working with them to help find paid employment.

What could make your experience better?

Two people told us they would like training to use the ride-on mower. Another said, “We like it better when the sun shines.”

Others reflected on what used to happen prior to Covid19. “It’s nice to be back but feels weird.” Some people were looking forward to the pool and football tables being reopened. These were out of use to enable chairs and tables to be spaced across the room for lunch. Another member commented on not being able to use the microwave now. Some people also wanted day trips, for example to Chiltern Open Air Museum, to be reintroduced as well as “art and maybe cooking”. “It would be nice to do something different.” “More days out would be fun.” They did tell us they had enjoyed a summer party at a member’s home although they had taken their own food. Others wanted to have the stalls back at the Christmas and summer fetes. Before the pandemic, members and staff would have sold produce, plants, and Christmas wreaths there.

How do you feel about the service?

One person told us “I like everything”. Another appreciated staff “keep an eye out for our safety”. “The best thing is just being back and seeing everyone again.”

Our recommendations

Based on what members told us and our observations, we recommend Missenden Walled Garden:

- schedules in training for some members to learn how to use a ride-on mower
- allows members to reuse the microwave, pool, and football tables in a safe way
- considers how more social or community events could be part of their programme
- continues to talk with members about their expectations of Missenden Walled Garden.

Service Provider Response

We are very grateful to Healthwatch for coming to visit our charity. Alison and Heather were engaging and considerate, and their work has enabled us to have valuable additional independent perspectives to explore both from and for our members.

Since we received our report, we are very happy to say that we have recruited two new additional fulltime staff with a strong track record in Horticulture. Thanks to a Community Board funding award, we also have £7000 to invest in horticultural machinery training for our members. All of this will give us the opportunity to ensure all our members are able to safely explore their potential goals around using horticultural machinery. We are also discussing a new partnership with Buckinghamshire council and their grounds work providers, which we hope will open bespoke pathways into employment.

Goal planning is also something we are developing in even greater depth. These last six months we have been working with Buckinghamshire New University, [Thrive](#) and a local Social Therapeutic Horticulture specialist to partner with us on the development of a ground breaking new goal planning tool for and with our members.

With regards to social and community events, we still need to be very mindful of Coronavirus. This necessitates a lot of consultation and very careful planning with our members, their carers and health professionals, to keep everyone’s safety in mind. Over the weekends and evenings these last months, we have been able to include our members in a Race Night, a late-night shopping stall selling our wreaths, and we have a Christmas meal funded for all to attend. Two of our members will be Djing! We are also working with our local schools and [Active in the Community CIC](#) to deliver inclusive intergenerational sport events together in January, along

with sessions with local music and arts facilitators. We are also looking to reintroduce healthy eating cookery sessions again, in partnership with the NHS Dietician Service in the new year.

We have accommodated a huge growth in demand for our service these last six months, which has necessitated very careful planning with regards to Coronavirus and keeping our members safe within our existing spaces. We are currently working with our members and a consultant architect to explore how we can best enhance and expand our facilities to support as many activities as they require. If we cannot accommodate cooking, and games facilities at present due to this demand and coronavirus safety management, it is absolutely our intention to improve that with additional new buildings and facilities. Our site is listed and so we have spent the last year in discussions with our landlord - Buckinghamshire New University to see if we can make such changes and improvements for our members within our tenancy agreements. We have grand designs ahead and, as always, our members are at the absolute heart of these plans! Once again, we thank you for your time and advice - we appreciate how invaluable and special this feedback is to help us grow with clarity and purpose.

Acknowledgements

Healthwatch Bucks would like to thank Missenden Walled Garden members and staff for their contributions to this Enter and View visit.

Disclaimer

Please note that this report relates to findings observed on the specific date set out above. Our report is not a representative portrayal of the experiences of all service users and staff, only an account of what was observed and contributed at the time.

Appendix 1: Enter and View Background and Visit Details

Part of the local Healthwatch programme is to carry out Enter and View visits. Local Healthwatch representatives carry out these visits to health and social care services to find out how they are being run and make recommendations where there are areas for improvement.

The Health and Social Care Act allows local Healthwatch authorised representatives to watch how services are delivered and talk to service users, their families, and carers on premises such as hospitals, care homes, GP practices, dental surgeries, optometrists, and pharmacies. Enter and View visits can happen if people tell us there is a problem with a service but, equally, they can occur when services have a good reputation - so we can learn about and share examples of what they do well from the perspective of people who experience the service first hand.

Healthwatch Enter and View visits are not intended to specifically identify safeguarding issues, however, if safeguarding concerns arise during a visit they are reported in accordance with Healthwatch safeguarding policies. In addition, if any member of staff wishes to raise a safeguarding issue about their employer they will be directed to the CQC where they are protected by legislation if they raise a concern.

| Details of visit: | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Service Provider | Missenden Walled Garden |
| Service Address | Missenden Abbey Great Missenden Buckinghamshire HP16 0BD |
| Date and Time | 8 th October 2021 11.30am - 1.30pm |
| Authorised Representatives | Alison Holloway Heather Duffy |

If you require this report in an alternative format, please contact us.

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