



THE
ALNWICK
GARDEN
TRUST



THE ALNWICK GARDEN TRUST

SOCIAL IMPACT REPORT

APRIL 2021 - MARCH 2022

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Awards and Accolades

2022:	Large Visitor Attraction of The Year Experience of The Year Resilience and Innovation Gold Accolade	North East Tourism Awards North East Tourism Awards North East Tourism Awards VisitEngland	Gold Gold Gold Gold
2021:	NewcastleGateshead Family Magazine Visitor Welcome Gold Accolade Quality Food and Drink	Best Family Day Out VisitEngland VisitEngland VisitEngland	Nominated Nominated Nominated
Previous years' awards have included:	Large Visitor Attraction of The Year Experience of the Year Hall of Fame – 5 Years of Excellence Award of Excellence Loo of the Year 100 Best Gardens Great Place to Eat	North East Tourism Awards North East Tourism Awards Trip Advisor Trip Advisor Loo of the Year Garden News Heritage Awards	Silver Bronze Platinum Winner Winner



Welcome

The 2021/22 year has brought a much-needed sense of normality back to The Garden and the communities we serve. Our brilliant Community and Education team were able to get back to delivering our programmes after a Covid-interrupted 2020/21.



The reinvigorated team adapted quickly to the regulations as they were relaxed and ensured that our beneficiaries were supported and felt safe whilst in The Garden. What followed was a year of much activity and engagement with all sectors of the community.

Apart from the re-engagement of our programmes, two other important developments took place this year:

Firstly, Claire Mitchell took over the leadership of the Community and Education team. Claire previously headed up our Drugs Education Programme and is passionate about equality and supporting those in need. Claire, who has over 15 years' experience delivering education and community programmes, has made a great impact as you will read further in this report.

Secondly, we launched our exciting new Climate Action Programme. Understanding that this is the most defining challenge of our lifetime, we have put the fight against greenhouse gasses front and centre of everything we do. We are on a journey not only to reduce our emissions and improve our behaviour, but to share our learnings with others. Whilst there is a profusion of information available about the causes of global warming, little exists about what we individuals and organisations can do to address this. Our new programme will work hand in hand with our innovative new Bee Observation Hive due for completion later in 2022. Exciting times lie ahead!

I hope you enjoy our 2021/22 Social Impact Report.

Mark Brassell
CEO The Alnwick Garden



Introduction from Head of Community and Education

The Alnwick Garden Trust provides much needed support to our local communities. The Covid-19 pandemic was arguably one of the most difficult periods for both individuals and communities in recent history and the social, economic and cultural effects of this pandemic will be with us for some years to come.

The pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities and differences, as well as creating new ones and we are already seeing the impacts it has had on health and wellbeing. The disconnection from support and social networks affected us all. The loss of access to education will have an impact on skills and future employment opportunities for young people, and needs great consideration.

We do know however, that despite all of the challenges we faced, communities came together and they came together well. The Alnwick Garden Trust has always been committed to working in and as part of our community and 2021/22 was a crucial time for us to identify societal needs and be seen as a major asset in assisting with Covid recovery.

We were in a strong position to respond quickly to the ever-changing Covid restrictions and, as lockdowns ended, we were able to use our outdoor spaces to provide our much-needed programmes and offer invaluable wellbeing support. We brought together people safely, and saw the benefits and positive impacts of this almost immediately.

Claire Mitchell



Who do The Alnwick Garden Trust aim to reach?

The Alnwick Garden is a garden for the community, with a wide and far-reaching impact. It nurtures a sense of belonging and inclusivity for all. The Alnwick Garden Trust seeks to give back to communities, engage people from all walks of life, and provide both familiar and new experiences and opportunities.

The Trust's Elderberries programme works to address loneliness and isolation for people aged 55 and over living in Northumberland, offering local people access to projects, events, services and opportunities. It aims to promote a healthy and fulfilling quality of life.

The 'Drop-In Centre' is a free facility open every Thursday, Friday and Sunday for those over 55 who wish to make new friends and enjoy the company of others. Run by volunteers the service has become a pillar of support for the community since it opened in 2017.

The Trust's educational programmes encourage young people and their families to consider their lifestyles and empower them with knowledge on how to lead a healthier life and make positive choices that can improve wellbeing.

The Trust's employability programmes give those seeking employment, the skills, knowledge and experience to secure jobs. The programmes are delivered to meet the individual needs of our participants and support and empower them to remove barriers to employment.

The Alnwick Garden Trust became a registered charity in 2003, and has since developed an array of programmes and initiatives to:

- ✦ Improve physical and mental wellbeing
- ✦ Reduce social isolation
- ✦ Help people learn new skills
- ✦ Increase life expectancy and quality of life for our ageing population
- ✦ Move people into employment
- ✦ Educate on how to live healthy lifestyles
- ✦ Prevent drug related harm
- ✦ Form a connection with nature



About The Alnwick Garden Trust.....

The brainchild of The Duchess of Northumberland, The Alnwick Garden is an award-winning visitor attraction in Alnwick, Northumberland. The 12 acres of magnificent gardens are home to the world's largest Taihaku Cherry Orchard, a Grand Cascade comprising of 120 water jets and the world's largest Treehouse. Through a combination of water features, beautiful plants and ornate spaces, it is a tranquil haven for horticulturalists, families and tourists alike. The Alnwick Garden welcomes over 350,000 visitors per year.

The Alnwick Garden Trust became a registered charity in 2003. Any surplus from running The Garden is re-invested into improving and developing The Alnwick Garden and or making positive social impacts through one of The Garden's award winning charity programmes.



Mission

The Alnwick Garden cultivates communities and raises aspirations in a place of beauty. Fearlessly inspiring and connecting people in an inclusive garden environment that creates learning opportunities and enriches lives.

Promote Skills and Lifelong Learning

Provide opportunities for people of all abilities to learn and grow. Empower individuals in raising aspirations to reach their potential through building skills, knowledge and confidence.

Encourage Healthy Living and Wellbeing

Provide innovative and creative ways for the community to engage in experiences that promote positive wellbeing and healthy lifestyles. Tackle barriers to reduce social and rural isolation.

Create and Nurture Community Partnerships

Complement other organisations' services whilst working towards a strategic vision for support in communities. Be a pioneer for new initiatives, incorporating partners' expertise and sharing good practice. Solidify our charitable presence locally, regionally and nationally.

The Alnwick Garden Trust believes that everyone has an innate need to be connected. From this belief we developed a range of programmes which aim to respond to the needs of our community, improving the wellbeing, educating and empowering our most vulnerable community members.

Addressing disadvantages, The Trust plays a vital role within Northumberland by providing both indoor and outdoor spaces where passions can be shared with others, skills can be learnt, and confidence and friendships can be built in a safe environment which encourages self and collective expression.

Our quirky yet distinctive setting transforms the everyday, allowing the unfamiliar to be explored, with uplifting experiences exposing those in our community to a whole new world. The Trust recognises the importance of art, culture and heritage and that they should be made accessible to all which we achieve through our varied events programme.

Strong relationships are built with those who visit our site but beyond The Garden gates, we also visit schools to educate the next generation and reach out to support other community groups. We celebrate diversity and provide unique opportunities promoting inclusion and interests, in a setting where skills can be learnt and showcased.

We have a responsibility to give more-elderly members, especially those at risk of social isolation, a voice in their community in a safe and comfortable place where they can share stories, carry on learning, and enjoy making new memories, all year round.

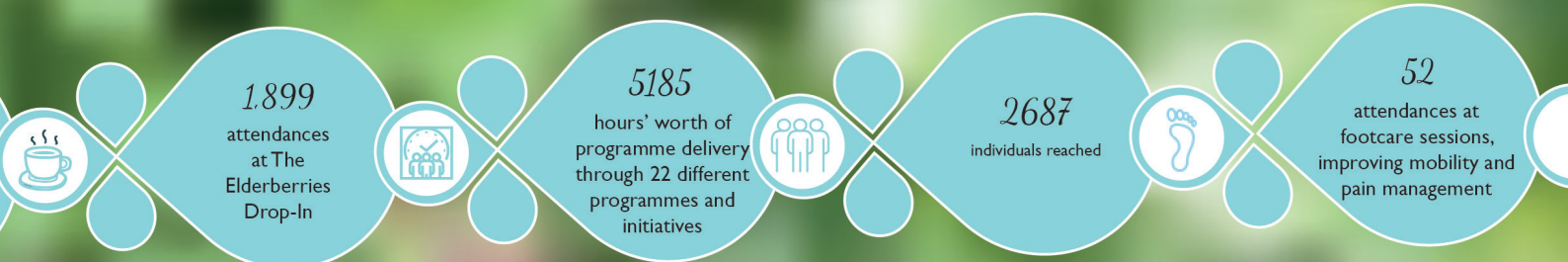
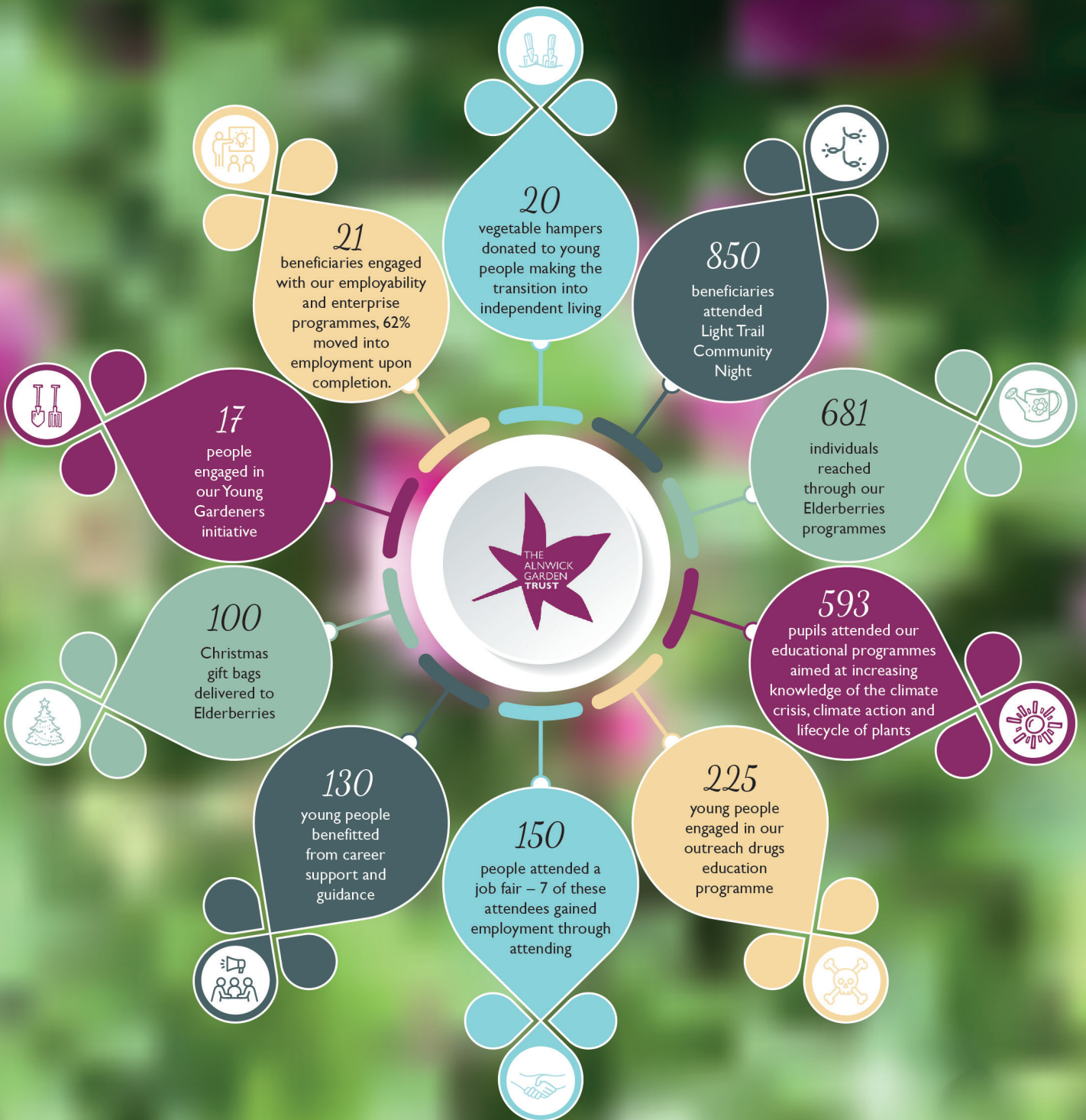


FACT

2687 Individuals
reached in 2021/22

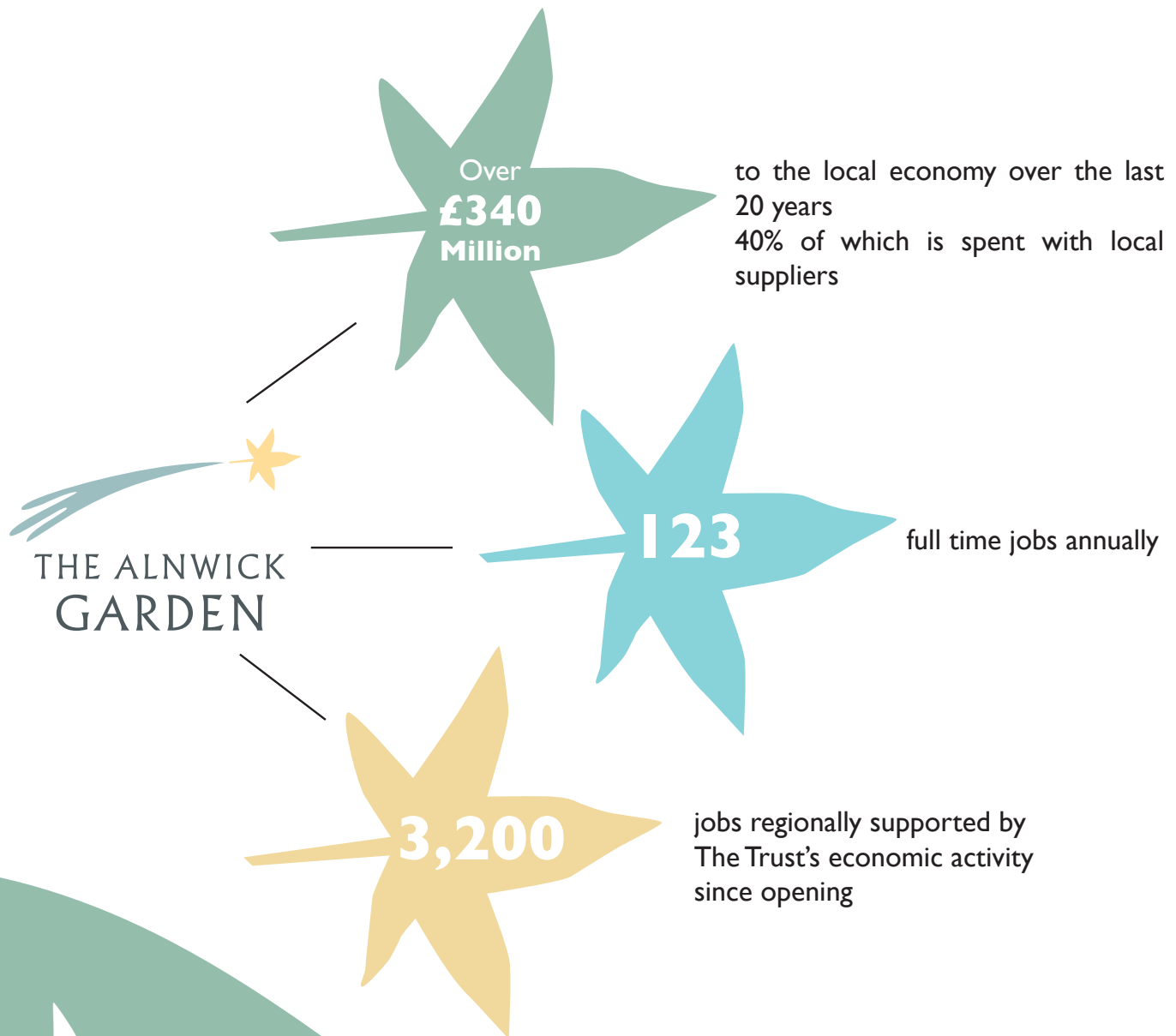


2021/22 At A Glance



Economic Impact

Beyond the impact of our community programmes, The Alnwick Garden contributes significantly from an economic and social perspective to the wider region. Based on research conducted independently and extrapolated to 20 years, it is estimated that The Garden has contributed over **£340 million** to the local economy over the last 20 years, of which **£175m** was spent with local suppliers. Annually there are **123** full-time equivalent employees, whilst The Trust's economic activity has supported **3,200** jobs regionally since opening.



The Alnwick Garden offered employment, through the government's Kick Start Scheme, to **7** young people. **4** moved into further and more sustainable employment as a result of the scheme

FACT

681 individuals
have been reached
through our
Elderberries
programmes



How We Make A Difference - Our Community Programmes

Elderberries

Elderberries is the longest running and most established programme at The Alwick Garden. The programme works with people aged over 55 to combat isolation, provide stimulating and mind provoking activities, as well as increase physical exercise and promote mental wellbeing. The Trust ensures that every activity and group follow at least one of the NHS 5 Steps to Wellbeing, which are:

- ★ Connect with other people
- ★ Be physically active
- ★ Learn new skills
- ★ Give to others
- ★ Mindfulness



There are Elderberries activities delivered 6 days per week and they run all year round. **681** beneficiaries were reached through our Elderberries programmes in 2021/22, with a total of **3107** hours' worth of activities.

Walking Group

A weekly walking session encouraging Elderberries to be physically active and gain health benefits through exercise. **42** individuals attended the walking group in 2021/22 with **546** attendances. They noted an improvement in wellbeing by being close to nature, as well as connecting with others and making friendships along the way.



Gentlemen's Garden

A weekly gardening session that allows gentlemen to socialise through connecting with others, share traditional skills and learn new ones, all whilst benefitting from the positive impact gardening has on mood and wellbeing. Throughout the growing season the gentlemen work on their own allotment plots, growing their own produce, not only keeping them physically active, but also allowing them to eat healthily. Through the winter months the sessions continue indoors where the gentlemen make crafts to sell at a Christmas market. All profits go back into the project and enable the gentlemen to enjoy a trip out at the end of the year. **12** gentlemen engaged in Gentlemen's Garden in 2021/22 with **290** attendances.

Blooming Well

Twice weekly initiative to support over 55's who have early onset dementia, and their carers. The sessions offer a range of activities from arts and crafts to therapeutic horticulture as well as allowing those who attend to connect with others to reduce social isolation. **21** people benefitted from these groups in 2021/22 with **357** attendances.



Tea and Tech

Weekly sessions for our over 55's to bring in their gadgets, whether a laptop, mobile phone or tablet, and receive support and advice on how to use them. The sessions aim to help our Elderberries adapt to a digital world and learn new skills that will help them with things such as online shopping, online banking and using the NHS app. Technology also allows us to connect with others through communication methods such as emails and social networking sites, helping to reduce loneliness and isolation. **46** Elderberries attended these sessions in 2021/22 with **186** attendances.

Ukulele for fun

A 12-week course for beginners where Elderberries were able to learn a new skill, make new friends and connect with others. Evidence shows that learning to play a musical instrument improves memory, attention and concentration as well as promoting wellbeing.

Clinic Café

Monthly talks and presentations from services and professionals offering advice and information on topics such as health and wellbeing, fraud and scams, and energy efficiency. There were **34** attendances in 2021/22.

FACT

5185 hours worth of programme delivery through 22 different programmes and initiatives



Footcare

Providing pedicure sessions to our Elderberries to help them avoid foot ailments and problems. There were **52** attendances at footcare sessions in 2021/22.

Yoga and Pilates

Weekly sessions to improve strength, flexibility and wellbeing. For our Elderberries, this meant being involved in physical activity, mindfulness and connecting with others who attend. **176** individuals attended these sessions over the year.



Drop-In Centre

The Drop-In is a hugely valued and much-needed service evident from the **1899** attendances from April 2021 to March 2022. Aimed at over 55's, the Drop-In is entirely led and delivered by a team of volunteers. The idea was borne by The Duchess of Northumberland, who wanted a community-based area for older people in Alnwick and the surrounding areas, where friendships can be made and nurtured. The Drop-In has been purpose built, funded by the Stuart Halbert Foundation and The Rank Foundation, to replicate a comfortable, heart-warming living-room feel. Home baked refreshments are served, free of charge, and a variety of games, books and magazines are available. At the Drop-In, beneficiaries have the opportunity to spend time with others, play games, pass the time of day, or share stories and memories.

"You may or may not know but coming to Elderberries has made my life worthwhile"

Elderberries Attendee 2022

FACT

100 Christmas gift bags were delivered to our more vulnerable Elderberries



What else did we provide for our Elderberries in 2021/22 ?

Open Garden

A monthly initiative that gave over 55's free access to The Alwick Garden to exercise and meet with others whilst indoor restrictions were in place due to Covid-19. The aim was to improve mental wellbeing by reducing isolation through connecting with others and also promote physical activity. **99** people attended our Open Garden sessions.

Backyard Cricket

Cricket sessions for over 55's promoting physical activity and connecting with others in the sessions who were taking up cricket as a new hobby or were enjoying returning to play. There were **17** attendances at this pilot initiative.

Christmas Party

100 Elderberries attended the Christmas Party for an afternoon of entertainment, singing and dancing. Afternoon Tea was provided alongside live music; a much needed celebration after a Christmas spent in lockdown the previous year.

Christmas Gift Bags

Gift bags were delivered to **100** Elderberries who had been referred by external services. The main reasons for referrals were based around social isolation and knowing that this might have been the only gift they receive this year.

Trio Volant Event

An afternoon of classical and jazz musical entertainment provided by Alwick Music Society. The event was attended by **30** Elderberries who benefitted from free tickets for the afternoon.

FACT

21 beneficiaries engaged with our employability and enterprise programmes with 62% moving into employment upon completion.

Employability and Enterprise

Grow into Work

Our Grow Into Work initiative is an employment support programme aiming to help people in Northumberland to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence to secure sustainable employment. The programme, funded through The Mercers Company and North of Tyne Combined Authority, offers a mix of work experience and classroom-based sessions where beneficiaries develop CV writing skills, application form completion, and interview and presentation skills. Support is offered and can continue once beneficiaries have finished the programme for up to six months after completion. **62%** of those who engaged with the programme moved into employment with a further **33%** moving into further training, employability support or volunteering.

One of our Grow Into Work participants who gained employment upon completion stated, "The course was really helpful and the perfect work placement was found for me to help me develop my skills. I thank you very, very much for everything you have helped me with over the past few months, particularly the interview preparation which really applied itself for this role as it was a rather involved interview process."

Seeds for Success

This was a new initiative for 2021/22 and was funded through the North of Tyne Combined Authority, providing workshops offering in-depth support on the basics of starting a small business. Opportunities to link in with The Alnwick Garden platform to initially promote their business are offered as part of the programme.

Job Fair

A Jobs and Careers Fair was held in collaboration with the Education Development Trust and the National Careers Service, to engage potential employees with a range of local companies and organisations. **150** jobseekers attended the event with **7** being offered employment as a direct consequence.

Young People Careers Support

130 young people engaged in an event to increase their knowledge of the skills needed in the hospitality industry and raise aspirations for future career pathways.



FACT

130 young people
benefitted from
career support and
guidance

Education Programmes



The Alnwick Garden Trust is committed to tackling the climate crisis. Through producing our own carbon footprint benchmark and a subsequent policy to implement our journey to become carbon neutral, we aim to become an industry leader, able to educate other organisations on how they can also become carbon neutral. As part of this commitment, we have developed and introduced education programmes for young people that focus upon addressing the climate crisis. **593** pupils engaged in interactive workshops that were focused upon the climate crisis and how they can take action to address it.



Drugs Education Programme

The programme consists of innovative and engaging workshops to educate young people around the dangers of substance use using a harm reduction approach. We aim to give young people the confidence to make informed and positive choices around lifestyle choices, prevent early onset of substance use, and reduce the risk of drug related harm. The project, although physically separate and mainly outreaching, is an expansion of our Poison Garden. The Poison Garden tour guides inform our visitors of the risks of substance use, using the analogy of plant toxicity in the unique surrounding of poisonous plants. Being able to reference The Poison Garden, not only provides an understanding of the origins of some drugs but is an effective way to break down barriers and encourage interaction.

225 young people engaged with the drugs education project:

They increased their knowledge of the health risks associated with drug and alcohol use and explored reasons why young people may use substances and looked at the alternative choices available. Young people were also given the opportunity to consider other harms including social impacts and consequence of law-breaking.

There were **126,726** visitors to The Poison Garden, all receiving information about the toxic plants within.



Young Gardeners

Young Gardeners is a horticulture programme supporting young people with additional needs and their families. The programme allows our young gardeners to learn new skills, as well as building friendships and relationships with others. **5** families engaged with the 2021/22 programme and the following outcomes were achieved:

5 families in total attended the programme, equalling **17** children and parents participating. Increased time outdoors and time spent together as a family as a result of attending the programme. Increased knowledge around healthy eating. Learning new skills that can be transferred to gardening projects at home.

Supporting the Wider Community

The Alnwick Garden always strives to support beyond its existing charitable programmes, and reaches out to a wide range of other initiatives in the community.

We provided **£13,884** worth of tickets to other community groups and charities to assist them with their own fundraising activities and support their own beneficiary outcomes through free access to The Garden. This included supporting **106** charities and **1450** individuals.

We opened our doors to **850** beneficiaries who attended our Winter Light Trail's Community Evening. The groups who benefitted from free access included carers and young carers, foster carers and looked-after children, local community groups, NHS staff, and those in recovery and attending mental health, drug and alcohol treatment services.

"I would just like to say what a wonderful time we had yesterday at the Winter Light Trail. The 5 year old girl who we foster has a learning difficulty and a life limiting condition. She was totally filled with awe and wonder from the moment that we stepped through the gateway. It was such a joy to see and hear her exclamations of excitement. Thank you so much for giving us all this special time"

-Foster carer Northumberland County Council.

We formed a working relationship with The Prince's Trust, providing community projects for **20** young people participating in their employability programme.

We supported other charities, by assisting them with ideas and resources to develop their community allotments and projects. Charities that benefitted included MeadowWell Connected, a community hub who support their own local community in North Shields. We gave support to **20** volunteers and **92** children and families who attend their Kids Club, benefitting from a free visit to The Garden and our Winter Light Trail.

"But it was the community garden that we learned from the most. Much in the same way as our garden requires cross-pollination to thrive, we community gardeners rely on the same process of swapping ideas and encouragement between like-minded folks. And this is how community gardens should operate- being able to learn, inspire and encourage one another to provide a space for local people and wildlife to thrive"

Meadow Well Connected

With the absence of the Roots and Shoots programme this year, our allotment plots were used to grow and donate vegetables to young people who were living in supported accommodation.



THE ALNWICK GARDEN

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Thank You!

Thank you to our supporters and funders who have generously provided crucial funding and donations:

The Mercers Company
Community Foundation Tyne and Wear and Northumberland
Sir James Knott Trust
North of Tyne Combined Authority
David Tennant

The Alnwick Garden Trust, receives phenomenal support from a team of volunteers, without whom we could not deliver such a wide range of programmes. We would like to thank them all for their hard work and commitment over 2021/22 and for over 7,425 hours of volunteering time.

Thank you also to everyone who has donated through our sponsorship appeals and to all those who have donated to drug awareness through our Poison Garden coffin.

**NORTH
OFTYNE**
COMBINED
**COMBINED
AUTHORITY**


SIR JAMES KNOTT TRUST

 Community
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 THE
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