

16. DCDP Case Study: Maxwelltown Information Centre, Every1's Garden

The Maxwell Centre's vision is focused on improving the quality of life for the local community. Over the last year, the timetable and services provided have continually changed in response to the ever-changing needs of the local community.

The vibrant community centre is well-used by young people, minority groups, the long-term unemployed, individuals recovering from drug and alcohol misuse and vulnerable groups.

Activities offered include opportunities to gain skills and provide socialising opportunities for isolated individuals, with weekly job clubs, 'IT for Work' and online learning classes. Also on offer are arts and crafts groups, and support groups focusing on health, wellbeing and social inclusion.

The centre also provides access to professional legal, welfare rights and money advice, and is a referral point for all the local Dundee foodbanks.

Community consultation identified a need for a green space and the resources to grow fruit and vegetables. The community garden project transformed a derelict builder's yard at the back of the centre into a fertile garden.

Seven allotments and over 20 raised beds have been allocated to community groups who use the centre, and to local individuals keen to grow their own produce.

The Maxwell Centre provides support and resources to allow groups to develop the knowledge, ability and confidence to grow their own produce, including sessions on self-produced seasonal food, cutting food waste and composting.

The Centre's youth work includes providing support and resources to four local primary schools who visit the garden daily to manage their allocated plots and raised bed. In the school holidays, a garden club involves up to 20 local children each day, participating in physical activities, healthy eating, gardening and wildlife activities.

All the youth clubs and afterschool clubs access the garden and have support and resources to grow their own fruit and vegetables.

New developments

Over the year, Maxwell Centre staff noticed that there was the potential to increase the amount of inter-generational interaction. The Centre now offers activities that support interaction with garden club members, youth groups, and the local sheltered housing complexes, such as taking groups of young people to local sheltered housing to meet the residents and play board games.

The number of volunteers has increased over the last year, as has the length of time they spend at the centre. One volunteer comes in and makes soup every day for centre visitors with garden produce.

In October 2016, the Maxwell Centre was awarded 'Outstanding' in the annual *Keep Scotland Beautiful, It's your neighbourhood* awards.

The Maxwell Centre has developed strong partnerships with other projects in the Dundee Community Development Programmes, including:

- Dundee Social Enterprise – further developing MAXcrafts as a social enterprise which not only builds on the social benefits of the project, but provides income for future sustainability.
- The local food bank – the Maxwell Centre has become the main local referral point for the food bank; individuals coming to the Centre for a referral have the added benefit of being offered fresh garden produce
- Bauer Radio – Mission Ambition students have visited the centre and interviewed staff and volunteers
- Coldside Parish Church – composting food waste from their community café
- The V&A - children attending the Maxwell Centre Easter holiday garden club benefited from a visit and a demonstration on the new waterfront site
- The Volunteer Gateway now do a weekly outreach session in the centre.

**Alison Goodfellow, Maxwell Centre
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