

19<sup>th</sup> September 2023

## Hospital garden transformed by local inclusive gardening group as Newton Community Hospital marks its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary - Innovative gardening project receives Royal Horticultural Society award



Patients, visitors and NHS staff at Newton Community Hospital can now enjoy a new sensory garden inspired by Sir David Attenborough's 'Wild Isles' series, thanks to an inclusive gardening project led by social care charity Community Integrated Care in partnership with healthcare investor Fulcrum and its company Renova, along with Community Health Partnerships. The new garden comes as Newton Community Hospital marks the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary since it first opened to patients and local residents in September 2008.

The innovative gardening project brings together volunteers with learning disabilities and/or autism, who all meet at Newton Community Hospital on a weekly basis to develop and practise their skills, with guidance from gardening experts. The gardening group were recently awarded Level 3 recognition in the prestigious 'It's Your Neighbourhood' Awards from The Royal Horticultural Society and North West in Bloom, celebrating the volunteers' efforts.

Having [previously created](#) a Rugby League World Cup 2021 themed area in the grounds of Newton Community Hospital to celebrate the tournament last year, the group recently turned their attention to creating a sensory garden, offering a peaceful and relaxing area for hospital patients, staff and local residents to enjoy.

The Newton garden volunteers embarked on the project following the launch of a [suite of free gardening and nature resources](#), co-developed by Community Integrated Care, the RSPB, National Trust, WWF and leading charity for creativity and arts in care, Age Exchange. Designed primarily for those who draw on and deliver social care, they take inspiration from Attenborough's Wild Isles documentaries, offering low-cost, easy-to-deliver, creative activities inspired by wildlife and nature.

### **Gardening volunteer, John-Paul Darbyshire, said:**

*"Our group absolutely loves gardening - we have such a good time each week, learning new things and creating beautiful spaces in the garden. It's lovely to watch everything bloom and grow. We were really excited at the idea of creating a sensory garden for the hospital and we hope that everyone enjoys it and finds it a calm and happy place to relax."*

Owned by healthcare investor Fulcrum, Renova has helped to deliver 17 community healthcare facilities across the North West, including Newton Community Hospital. **Renova General Manager Amy Lawrence said:**

*"Newton Community Hospital has played an important role in the local area for the last 15 years, and along with the vital health facilities inside the building, this fantastic gardening project has also helped to create a welcoming, relaxing space outside the hospital for patients, NHS staff and local residents to enjoy. We are proud of Renova's role in this innovative project, and huge congratulations to Community Integrated Care and all of the gardening volunteers for their well-deserved award."*

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