**Case Study: Clydach Community Garden
Swansea**

**Background information / describe the area/ when & how the group started**

The garden is in a very central part of Clydach opposite the surgery and pharmacy. Initially the site is hidden behind the Community Hall, but as you pass through the gates, you find a small but busy and welcoming garden area.

The group running the garden was formed following a public meeting in January 2019, which was held to gather interest in starting the project at the site which is approximately 20m x 27m. Since then the project has gained momentum helped along by Social media. There is a lot of local support and the group have found it easy to get people engaged due to the central location.

**Group aims and how many members**

The group has 25 people on their email circulation list. Of these, around 10 – 12 volunteer every week, with 8 of them being regulars. More than half of these have been with the project since the beginning.

The aims of the garden are:

* To provide a welcoming growing space for all ages and abilities.
* To share knowledge of gardening with schools and other organisations.
* To grow plants in an environmentally friendly way and improve biodiversity in spaces that matter to the community.
* To support each other whilst in the garden and reduce isolation.
* To improve health and well-being by providing access to exercise and fresh healthy food.

**Main audience and volunteers**

The garden is open to all however it is primarily a social prescribing project and the primary aim is well-being. Volunteers who have specific needs bring support with them.

The group are also creating a welcoming space for schools and groups for educational purposes.

There are 8 people on the Management Committee which meets bi-monthly. They signed their constitution in October 2019.

Events and activities are publicised locally via bi-lingual posters/flyers displayed in the community hall, GP surgery, library, co-op, dentists, Forge Fach, Men's Shed and also the surrounding churches. There is a Facebook Group for communication and volunteers promote the garden via other organisations they are involved in.

**What the project is achieving**

The group have achieved an amazing amount in the short time since they started at the site.

The area had been left for some time and was very overgrown and had been used for dumping. Underneath the soil layer is a rubble layer. The volunteers worked tirelessly to clear and put in a lot of hard work. They have created a small but vibrant garden.

There are now marked out beds being planted up and paths created with cockle shells. There is a wonderful new polytunnel (5m x 12m). Half the space in this will be used for growing and half used for workshops and activities. Tables and benches have been donated by local pub and have been repaired and painted in bright colours by the volunteers.

Grow the Future have supported sessions, paid for the polytunnel and other materials including top soil for beds. There has also been some support from the local Lions Club (Glantawe), Clydach Community Council, Cwmtawe Medical Group (GP Cluster), Vale chemical refinery which is a main employer locally and the Austin Bailey Foundation.

Volunteer days are every Wednesday morning and once a month on a Saturday. There are plans to have a second quieter volunteering group on Wednesday afternoons. These sessions will be one to one so people can gain confidence at the site.

**How group got permission to be on the site/ was it difficult?**

It wasn’t difficult to get permission, the site, which is right behind the community hall, had been derelict for some time. The community were very pleased for it to become a community garden.

There have been some challenges however – the ground holds water and gets very wet, so they have had to manage this by adding shells to the pathways, and a lot of barrowloads of chippings in the polytunnel. Very resourcefully they have used plastic pallets (which were donated) to create a firm base for a seating area outside.

Another challenge is that there has been some vandalism due to the proximity of the youth club meetings which are in the community hall. As a consequence, gates have been erected to secure the entrance and a pallet boundary down from the rear exterior stairs.

**A quote from the group about how they enjoy managing the site/ working with people on the site**

Quote from group – “We come for exercise, sunshine and fresh air and to learn about gardening. We enjoy the company – we all get on and it makes you want to come – you’ll know you’ll leave with a smile on your face.”

**What they hope to achieve in the future/ aspirations for a Green Flag Community Award**

Future plans for the site include:

* Planting up the beds for this season.
* Creating a soft fruit area which will be caged.
* Moving most of the tables into the polytunnel to create a workshop area.
* Creating a sensory garden with herbs and seating.
* Creating a quiet area for children to use with some different resources in such as chalk board.
* Offering one to one sessions on a Wednesday afternoon.
* Plans for an open day on 21st March 2020, this will be the official launch.
* Hoping to gain a Green Flag Award.