

## **Asset based approaches: Janine Ewen**



### **Garden Development Project**

#### **Background into the ARCHIE Foundation**

The ARCHIE Foundation was created eleven years ago to support the building of a children's hospital in Aberdeen. Since then, the charity has contributed over £8m to 'Make the Difference' in the Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital, the children's wards in Inverness and Elgin, several community hospitals and in the Northern Isles too.. ARCHIE works to ease the suffering of sick children across the North of Scotland through various projects and appeals. These projects vary from supporting parental travelling to new medical equipment. The organisation funds staff posts, including a family support worker, specialist nurse and a PhD researcher of children's disease, all of which are having a positive impact. The charity wants to identify itself in contributing to the health and wellbeing of children, through health improvement projects and to ensure children and families receive a good standard of care and support. Unfortunately health inequalities are a growing problem in communities throughout Scotland.

#### **Background and Purpose of the Project**

The ARCHIE Foundation hopes to redevelop a garden at Cornhill for young people who are experiencing poor mental health. The charity aims to not only improve the physical aspect of health for local children but also the mental aspect of health within young people in the North of Scotland. The charity is now beginning to heavily identify itself within health improvement. Working in health has a place amongst the charity, voluntary and third sector organizations. The Scottish Government is aware of the role of the third sector towards delivering effective and equal public services in reducing health inequalities and improving health. Third sector services are involved with initiatives that encourage healthier lifestyles in to reduce the demand on healthcare services (The Scottish Government 2011). The sector is well placed for collaborate working with service users to provide self-directed support and training in self-management techniques and working closely with communities (Bunt, Harris and Puttick 2010). The Third Sector is well known for using a holistic and person-centred

approach, by placing communities and individuals at the centre of projects to meet community needs (Phillimore, et al. 2010). The sector is a key player towards health improvement in Scotland, and supports the work of the NHS and other public bodies (Scottish Government 2011). The Scottish government is now asking local authorities to engage with NHS Boards, to promote well-being through community planning (Voluntary Health Scotland 2010). The ARCHIE Foundation joined closely with NHS Grampian after suggesting the organisation develop into NHS Grampian's main fundraising charity. The charity works closely with the NHS to improve child health, including wellbeing.

Mental health is a global health issue, accounting for a large proportion of disease burden in young people in many countries (Patel, 2007). Scotland in particular is a nation that continues to face a decline in good mental health.

Green spaces can act as a resource for health, giving a sense of ownership, community cohesion and achieving objectives, all of which this project hopes to 'tick'. Evidence shows people and their relationship with nature impacts positively on mental health (Mind, 2007). Also Outdoor activities or physical exercise has led to a huge improvement in self-esteem and mood disturbance (Pretty, et al., 2005). Both passive and active benefits of the green space can have a wide range of social, economic and environmental and health benefits (Pretty, et al., 2005). Green spaces are a contextual factor, which has been found as an indicator of child/young people mental health (Children and Young People's Mental Health, 2011).



The project hopes to develop the Cornhill Garden, located adjacent to the Young People's Department, and support young peoples' involvement in this development. It is argued that adolescents should be viewed as active agents within a community who are able to, and indeed should, be involved in the development of interventions targeting mental health improvement (Patel et al 2007). It has been suggested recently that direct engagement in development of local communities can itself have a positive effect on adolescent mental well being (Sustainable Development Commission 2010).

The ARCHIE Foundation would like to carry out a three-year programme to invest in this under-used garden and assess the impact it has made on the children using this service. To do this, the ARCHIE Foundation will work with a PhD student to provide research and impact reports on the work. Megan Watson is a PhD student at Aberdeen University. She is studying Medical Sciences in the subject of the relationship between physical activity, green space and mental health in adolescents and families. Megan has a strong background in health science and has had previous work experience with young people as a youth worker for Gate Youth Project.

Megan supports Photo voice as an effective method of capturing the unseen. She hopes that the project will be based on participatory research involving the young people. She hopes that by using cameras, we will be able to grasp a better idea/understanding of how the young

people envision this garden to be. Photography is increasingly being used to investigate the social and economic worlds of young people (Wilson, et al., 2007).

It is an opportunity for young people to speak out and be heard by telling their story through the eyes of camera and a great way of representing themselves. It facilitates change through collecting adolescent views (Flicker, 2008). It will also help to facilitate communication and lead on to positive social change. The method will help to develop a fantastic garden; with the security of knowing the young people who participated directly will enjoy it. Megan already comes with photo voice experience, and has explained she was quite shocked at what young people who were involved in the experiment had taken pictures of, which was mental health focused. She explained it was not what she would have thought would have been captured. That is also what is so exciting about this method; it is about learning and seeing things in the eyes of those young people facing poor mental health. As we know mental health can be hard to talk about and if we can uncover things we don't know, it could potentially lead on to great ideas and ways of improving mental health in Scotland. Also if the project is successful photo voice can be used again as a regular method for other projects. Photovoice aims to engage hard to reach communities/groups (Wang, 1997).

Therefore this method can help in reducing health inequalities. More than 80% of people in the UK live in an urban area, which means less green, having a negative impact on mental health (DEFRA, 2004). For this method, young people don't need to read or write and it is easy to teach how to use a camera, allowing participants to bring up sensitive issues in a comfortable way in a safe environment (Wang, 1997). We want the young people to feel inspired. The garden could help to increase positive mental and physical health at the same time, preventing long-term problems later in life. Long term this will help to development a positive adulthood.

The ARCHIE Foundation is now playing a huge role in the development of health benefits both on a physical and mental scale for young people. It aims to tackle the widening gap of health in equalities and works to improve the wellbeing of young people at Cornhill hospital who are currently experiencing poor mental health.

Poor mental health in Scotland is increasing, and there is a need for effective interventions to develop, particularly now in the third sector with key partnerships and communities along with the local individuals. It represents the opportunity for young people to partake in social interaction and to master new skills through a method which has the potential to become better known in it's use for health related research. The project itself aims to reduce health inequalities but also to bring many health benefits such as: improved physical activity and engagement. The project works in a way, which identifies the young people as the assets to the project. The garden brings the opportunity for further development. It brings a positive working relationship with the NHS and third sector. The project could span out to other groups in Aberdeen city and also in the shire. The project can work towards prevention just as much as treatment of poor mental health. The future of the project has much potential and theory practice will develop further which will help further progression of this exciting idea to help towards improving mental health.

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