



Social Impact Statement

2019/20

AUTHOR

Jon Ross

Sow the City

Tel: 0161 465 6954

Email : jon@sowthecity.org

www.sowthecity.org

Introduction

Sow the City CIC (STC) has been operating for 11 years, empowering communities to grow and live sustainably. Our organisation started with a small Unltd grant for a few packets of seeds and some compost, and we have now provided workshops for over 10,000 people and facilitated over 12,000 volunteering hours for communities across Greater Manchester, particularly people whose lives are shattered by drug and alcohol addiction, mental ill health, and homelessness.

In May 2019, STC signed a 12-year lease with a local housing association to convert the disused Boiler House in Moss Side, Manchester, into a community workshop. The centre provides sessions in making and mending for the local, primarily BAME, community. We run a Men's Shed, Women's Shed, Repair Café, DIY courses (e.g. with Women's Aid), woodworking sessions with youth offenders and youth groups. Our service users are often unemployed with poor mental health, disengaged and/or isolated/lonely and activities provide opportunities to develop skills.

As a social enterprise profits from the delivery of our projects go back into the organisation to ensure that the impact of our work is developed and expanded across Manchester and beyond.

How do we measure our social impact?

Our social impact is measured in three ways:

Learning - This is a total for the number people that have been taught by Sow the City including sessions run at various community projects and at our new centre the Boiler House. People that attend courses learn how to live sustainably, save money, improve their activity levels, learn new skills, and improve their community network.

Growing - This is the m² of new growing space created by Sow the City. We only count sites where we have had a direct involvement for example running volunteering sessions, designing or building the garden or getting funding for it. Many of these sites are converting brownfield and/ or derelict land into productive food growing spaces.

Volunteering - This is number of volunteer hours that people help with Sow the City projects. We have volunteers for practical sessions and volunteers that help with office duties and only count people that are volunteer directly for us (rather than groups we work with). Many of our volunteers go on to find full time employment.

What happened in 2019/20?

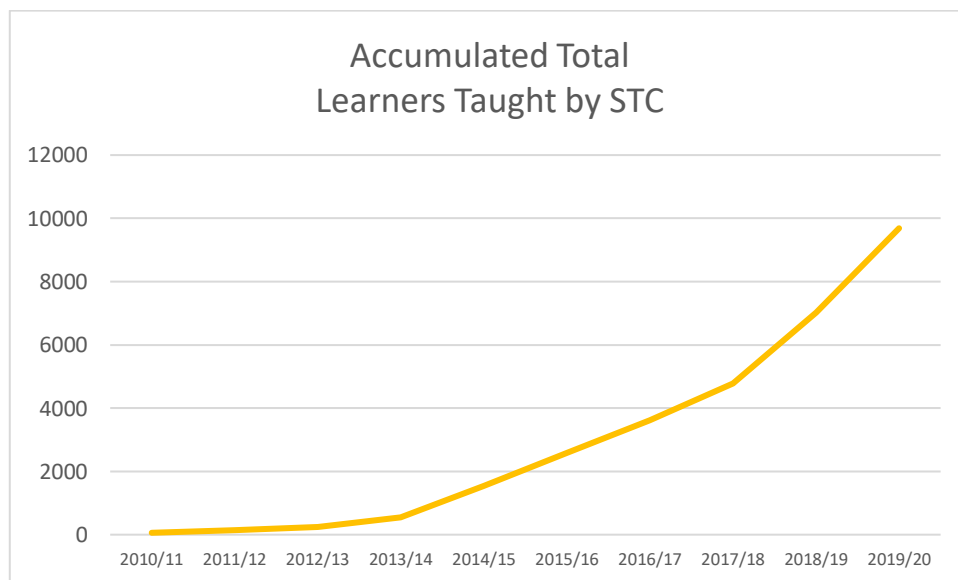
Sow the City had a varied workload in 19/20 running food growing projects for the public, private and voluntary sector. Here is a snapshot of some of the projects delivered:

- 1) We continued to deliver the Growing Manchester programme for Manchester City Council (now Manchester Health and Care Commissioning). The programme provides training, support and advice for over 100 groups across the city that want to set up food growing projects. The groups are diverse and range from local community groups, to community allotments, specialist support groups and housing associations.

- 2) We created an innovative hospital wide Green health Walk at Prestwich Hospital. The green health walk is a marked route for hospital staff, visitors, and patients to enjoy the grounds, and promote the physical and mental benefits of greenspace and exercise.
- 3) We were commissioned by Heywood, Rochdale and Middleton CCG to run ecotherapy sessions in partnership with the #Thrive team at Pennine Care NHS Trust and Link 4 Life. The project focused on early intervention in children aged 0 – 19 years in the borough of Rochdale.
- 4) We ran an Emotional Health and Wellbeing Programme for Salford CVS and an Achieve Asset Recovery Service - taking gardening referrals from Greater Manchester mental health Trust for gardening for people recovering from mental ill health and drug and alcohol addiction.
- 1) We were funded by Salford CVS CCG to run a Healthy Schools Partnership project providing healthy food to disadvantaged communities in Salford.
- 2) We developed an innovative prescribe a plant scheme with Cornbrook GP Surgery for patients recovering from anxiety and depression.
- 3) We continued regular school gardening sessions at various schools including nurture sessions for Looked After Children (LAC) and Special Education Needs children (SEN).
- 4) We invested over £100K in refurbishing an old district heating building, and ex-ONE Manchester housing association depot, The Boiler House into a thriving new centre for sustainability. We secured funding for a monthly Repair Café, Men’s Shed, Women’s Shed, Construction Skills programme, and ran various youth sessions with youth offenders and youth groups.

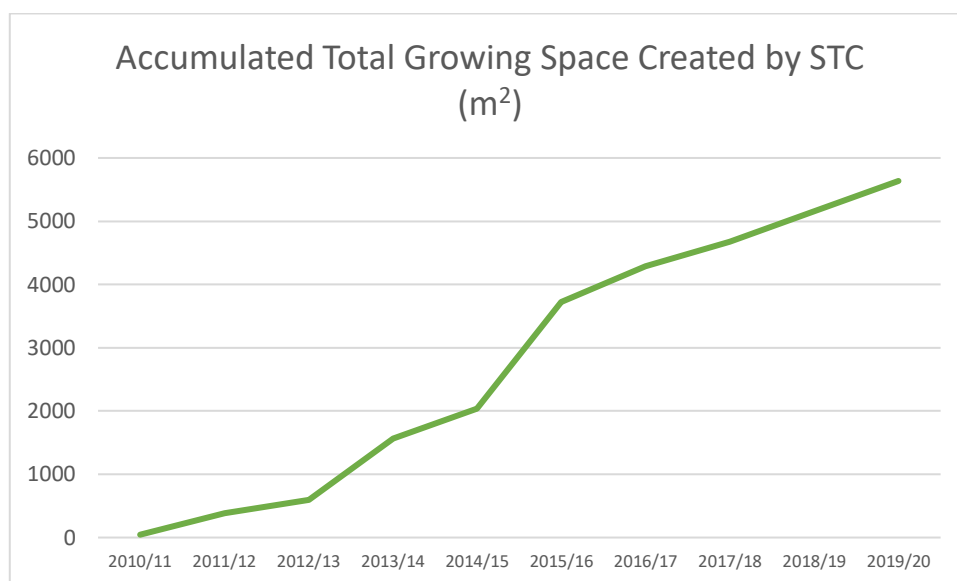
Learning

The total number of people that we taught in 2019/20 was **2668**, an increase on the previous year and we have seen exponential growth in this area since we were established. Most of our learners were taught through our Growing Manchester programme, but a large percentage also attended CCG commissioned projects illustrating the significance of newly developed health and social care focused activity. We have nearly taught 10,000 people since the organisation was formed (although some of these people will have attended more than one course)



Growing

A total area of **446m²** was converted into food growing space in 2019/20. This is higher than the previous financial year. New food growing sites were set up at New Springs (Bury), various sites in Manchester, Cornbrook GP Surgery, Chorlton Family Practice, various Salford NHS sites and centres, and the Boiler House in Moss Side.



Volunteering

The total quantity of volunteer time in 2019/20 was **1466 hours**. So the City office volunteers helped with project development, administration and provided practical help for projects (assisting with sessions, constructing and maintaining gardens, food growing, and helping with the refurbishment of the Boiler House). However, the largest contribution of volunteer time came from corporate groups. Businesses and organisations are able to join one of our partner projects for a team building or CSR day, to have fun, develop teamwork skills, and give something back to the local community.

