



Social Impact Statement

2023/24

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Introduction

These are challenging times for the environment/ cities. Inequality is rising. Climate change is causing extreme weather. Many thousands of people are in food poverty. And while many are striving to address these challenges, we need to do much more to make cities more sustainable.

Urban greening and nature/ food growing in cities has the potential to tackle the three most significant environmental issues of our time: the climate emergency, biodiversity crisis, and cost-of-living crisis. Manchester is the 8th greenest city in the UK, out of 10 major cities. We need to find ways to improve the quality and quantity of green spaces in our city.

This document provides an overview of Sow the City's social impact. Founded in 2009, our vision is for healthy and sustainable communities in Manchester. Our activities include transforming derelict and unused land into thriving community greenspace, tackling inequality, and delivering programs that enrich learning, and promote wellbeing. All our work is underpinned by the need to tackle climate change and support the 17 UN sustainable development goals.

In 2019 Sow the City signed a 12-year lease in 2019 to convert the huge, industrial Boiler House, Moss Side, into a centre for making and mending where we provide free and low-cost use of tools, space, and support. This could be as simple as participants using our woodworking workshop to make planters to grow veg at home, or as complex as designing and fabricating new solutions for communities to tackle climate change.

Since we were founded, we've had 20,642 people attend our sessions/ workshops, facilitated over 15,085 volunteering hours, and transformed 14,327m² of unused and derelict land into useful community greenspace and green infrastructure. Not bad for an organisation with 8 staff.

As a social enterprise (Community Interest Company), 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 – The total attendance as Sow the City sessions run at various community sites and at 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 - 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 and/ or spaces for wildlife.

Volunteering - This is the 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 volunteer directly for us (rather than groups we work with). Many of our volunteers go on to find full time employment.

What happened in 2023/24?

Sow the City had their largest ever social impact in 2023/24.

- Delivery partner for Growing Manchester – Manchester City Council's community food growing programme. Providing training, technical help and advice for over 150 community groups across the city that want to set up food growing projects. The groups are diverse and range from local community groups to specialist support groups and housing associations.
- Healthy Schools programmes in partnership in Salford CVS – providing health and affordable food to school children in Salford at Deans Primary.
- New mushroom growing facility at the Boiler House diverting spent coffee grounds from landfill to grow oyster mushrooms.
- Green Spaces Fund delivery providing expertise for GMCA and local groups to develop new green spaces focussing on the most disadvantaged areas of the city.
- Community Learning Fund Green Skills Courses (2023/24) for unemployed and low wage people in partnership with MCC's Manchester Adult Education Service.
- Native trees planted (over 300) across the city in partnership with Equans and J C Decaux.
- Green roof designed and built in Manchester City Centre on the Printworks.
- New eco shed with solar panels and green roof developed at Ossary St Allotments in Moss Side.
- Community garden created at the Guidance Hub in Moss Side in partnership with the National Trust.
- Wates Foundation Enterprise Trust project to map greenspace across Moss Side and co-design a plan for greenspace improvements.

- Biodiversity and green space review of Manchester Foundation Trust estate (10 hospital sites) including mapping potential for new green spaces for nature and wellbeing.
- Achieve Asset Recovery Service - taking gardening referrals from Greater Manchester Mental Health Trust and providing nature-based activities for people recovering from mental ill health and drug and alcohol addiction.
- NHS funded horticultural therapy and ecotherapy at Prestwich Hospital with people struggling with mental ill health.
- Boiler House Precious Plastic Project – recycling 350kg waste plastic and upcycling in our mini recycling plant.
- Monthly Repair café - a meeting place open to everyone, where people can bring damaged or broken items (electrical items, clothes, furniture, bikes) and have experts help to fix them for free. Through our Repair Cafes, we estimate that we divert 360kg of Electrical Waste from landfill each year. Our Repair Café enables people to save money, & provides opportunity for volunteering, training, and employment.
- Woodwork group ongoing since 2019 - weekly mental health session takes place in our fully equipped Boiler House woodworking workshop. All materials are provided for free, and the session is run by a qualified woodworker. The class is open to people with emotional and mental health needs.
- Cost of Living Fund project over the winter providing make and mend activities that save people money (e.g. repairing, upcycling) and create a more circular economy.
- Continued investment in the Boiler House to create a centre for making and mending in Moss Side.

Learning

Our attendance at sessions was **3,205** in 2023/24. Most of our learners came through our Growing Manchester programme, Boiler House, and our Green Social Prescribing Programme. Many of the sessions are for people experiencing homelessness, mental ill health and those in food poverty. Over 20,000 people have attended sessions since the organisation was formed (although some of these people will have attended more than one course).

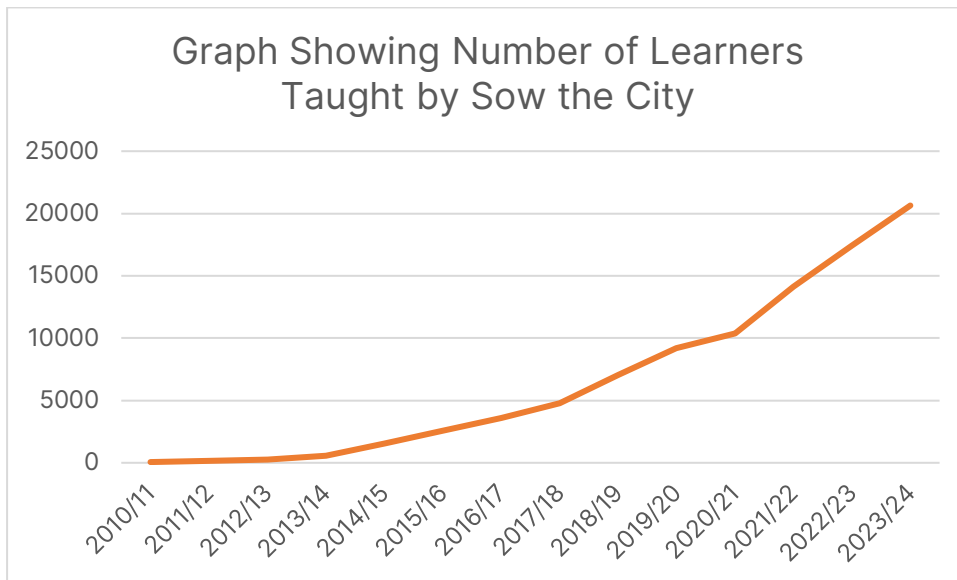


Figure 1: Green Social Prescribing activity at Ryder Brow Allotments in Gorton.

Growing

In 2023/24 a total area of **4070m²** was converted into new green areas for nature and food growing. New food growing and nature spaces in the city were established at Deans Primary, St Johns School, St Chads, plus various sites/groups that have recently joined the Growing Manchester programme. Much of the land was previously low diversity amenity grassland or unused land.

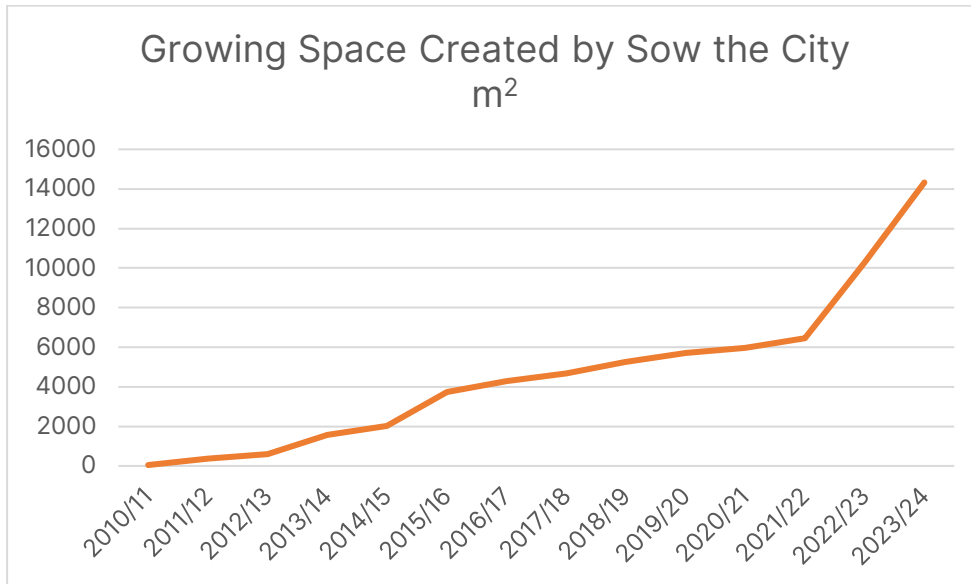


Figure 2: Guidance Hub Community Garden in Cheetham Hill

Volunteering

In 2023/24 we provided **3,915 hours** of volunteering opportunities including practical help for projects (assisting with sessions, constructing and maintaining gardens, food growing) and also help in the office.

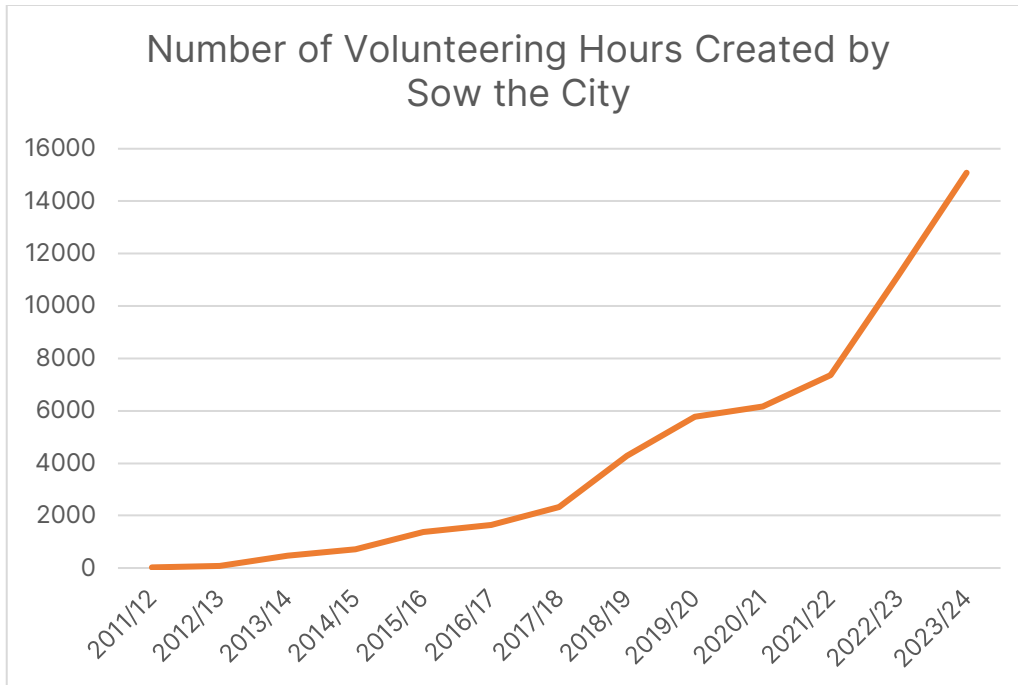


Figure 3: Volunteers at Ossary St Allotment in Moss Side