

# OUR ONGOING RESEARCH... DOES COMING TO CHERRY TREE MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO PEOPLES' LIVES? IF SO, WHY AND HOW?

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We are interested to understand more about why it is that after coming here many volunteers feel better and are more able to cope, which in turn can lead to a better quality of life. This seems to result from a combination of factors.

**C**aring... volunteers care for each other with compassion inside and outside of the nursery, bonding with each other and developing new friendships. Caring for plants is also a very important element of Cherry Tree ethics.

***'People take time for one another.'***

***'I like working with people and plants.'***

***'We all take pleasure in other peoples' achievements and are equally concerned if someone is ill.'***

***'We are a very caring community.'***

***'We appreciate that we all have something to offer.'***

**H**elp... this comes in many forms. Examples of this are:

- . Citizens Advice Bureau outreach
- . Literacy, computer, horticulture courses etc
- . One-to-one help with each other and staff
- . Overcoming fears

This list is continuous and ongoing.

Volunteers think the CAB is a 'Rolls Royce' service.

The teaching is invaluable, giving volunteers access to courses in a safe environment.

***'Cherry Tree teaches you what things are important in life, the caring for each other. It teaches you good values.'***

***'My social phobias have improved.'***

***'I was afraid that I couldn't cope, but feel more able now.'***

***'It has helped me get my head above water while I have been homeless.'***

**E**mpathy... this comes from volunteers and staff, knowing that there are people who understand and have similar feelings, making volunteers feel that suffering affects many, many people. Seeing people get well encourages healing and hope.

***'Working together-together we can be strong.'***

***'It gives us the opportunity to talk about and share our problems.'***

***'If you have a bad day, someone will cheer you up. If you are on your own you get depressed, most of us would be on our own otherwise.'***

***'Cherry Tree makes people sensitive to other peoples' needs and lifestyles.'***

***'We are all equal here, we all get on and mix well which creates a harmonious spirit.'***

**R**ehabilitation... Cherry tree makes many people well and re-builds destroyed lives, giving people the opportunity, confidence and time to get well, enabling many volunteers to begin embracing life.

***'It has showed me another side of life, that work doesn't have to be the way it is in the outside world. There is another way.'***

***'Working outdoors promotes a healthy lifestyle encouraging people to keep fit.'***

***'It keeps you well.'***

***'If I hadn't come here, I probably wouldn't be here on the planet.'***

***'Before coming to Cherry Tree I was off my head with drinks and drugs.'***

**R**elaying the message...This is important to everyone who is involved with Cherry Tree. We try to educate people the best way we can about mental illness, trying to take away the negative stigma that appears to be attached to it. This is done by giving talks and producing comprehensive leaflets. We also have a great video and DVD that carries the message beautifully.

***'Coming here has got rid of my fear of mental health patients. I can see that they are people like me, and it's just the media that create the fears.'***

***'Just because we suffer from depression doesn't mean we don't reach out to other people. We can still help and support others. We are raising money for water in Bolivia.'***

***'This is how it should be in the world out there. Cherry Tree's values should be reflected in the world outside.'***

**Y**esterday has gone... hopelessness, helplessness and despair. Since coming to Cherry Tree, many volunteers have expressed their life changing experiences, and beginning at Cherry Tree has for many been the smiling faces, laughter and companionship.'

**E**xperience...Learning life skills and work skills to potentially move on. Sharing life experiences with each other helps to encourage and repair lives.

***'Teaches tolerance, respect, new skills and develops existing ones.'***

***'It has widened my horizons – the talks, the groups, the outings. It has offered me the chance to do things I would never have done otherwise.'***

***'Having nothing to do made me worse. I was completely different before I came here.'***

***'There is such a huge variety of people with different talents, opinions and interests. You always learn something by being here.'***

**E**xtraordinary... sums up Cherry Tree. It is a wonderful place, where people grow and get back a better quality of life. It gives volunteers the courage to face the future and leave past hurts behind.

***'There is no stress and no pressure.'***

***'Cherry Tree gives encouragement and support which leads to success.'***

***'Makes people stronger and more confident to tackle new challenges.'***

***'For me it encourages normality in a non-threatening environment.'***

***'For whatever reason we are here, we all need to be here. We all get a huge amount from being here.'***

***'I was scared of going to new places, scared of the bus and was quite timid. I no longer have these fears because of Cherry Tree.'***

More than anything, what matters most is friendship and togetherness.

Mental ill health comes from and results in loneliness, isolation and anguish.

In a world where community and collective living seem to have disappeared Cherry tree shows that it is in the 'we' that hope for the future lies.

This leaflet has been put together by a Cherry Tree volunteer.