



SCOTCH WHISKY ACTION FUND

MANAGED BY



Brock Garden Centre



@ScotchWhiskySWA

Organisation: **Brock Garden Centre**
 Date of Award: **2020**
 Amount Awarded: **£3,270**
 Project Name: **Shared Lived Experience**



The Brock Garden Centre is a social enterprise supporting people with chronic mental health issues to form links within their community and to develop social skills through horticultural and craft activities. It's open between April and August and operates both a garden centre and wood workshop out of the Strathbrock Partnership Centre in Broxburn, West Lothian. The garden centre then sell the products made in the workshops.

The Project:

In 2020, Brock Garden Centre received a small grant of £3,270 from the Scotch Whisky Action Fund (SWAF) to deliver the 'Shared Lived Experience' project, a peer-led series of workshops delivered by four Brock Garden Centre service users for students of West Lothian College. The workshops provide a practical base to initiate conversations about mental health and increase awareness and understanding. During the initial trial, it found the service users, "really opened up and shared their personal stories and journeys" and by having the service users lead the sessions, it means they are in control of the pace and the conversations which can be therapeutic. The grant covered the cost of two support workers and the cost of hosting ten workshops, evaluation costs, materials, and expenses.



The intended outcomes of the workshops were to:

- Reduce substance misuse and addictions
- Promote safer communities
- Improve community cohesion.

The Impact:

The project was sadly heavily impacted by Covid and lockdown restrictions. And then, once it was able to start it was further restricted due to Covid guidance at West Lothian College which resulted in fewer students, and fewer Brock service users, participating to ensure they met with the group size guidelines for social distancing. The original plan also had to be adapted to ensure all activities took place outdoors as the indoor space was no longer accessible during that time which resulted in one of the weeks being cancelled in the February due to snow. They were only able to deliver seven workshops in total instead of the planned ten due to the delays and cancellations.

Despite the delays and restrictions, the project managed to work well with sixty-three students benefitting from the weekly workshops. The Brock service users appreciated the opportunity to share their stories and positively influence young people, the students found it an “eye-opener” and informed them of potential long-term harm to mental health caused by alcohol and drug use.

The graph below shows the results from the end of project student evaluation:

