



grow

IMPACT REPORT

2024

Inspiring hope and unlocking
potential in young people
through nature





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Steven Cotton, CEO

UPDATE FROM OUR CEO

2024 was an exciting year for Grow. As always, our incredible staff and volunteers dedicated themselves to working with some of Sheffield's most inspirational 16-24 year olds. I've said this many times before but... change and personal development is hardwork and takes bravery. I'm continually inspired by the positive choices and steps our young people make in pursuing a more fulfilling and rich future.

Here are a couple of standout moments from 2024:

The partnership model: Last year, our Grow Gardeners paid work placement programme joined forces with some amazing green organisations to create more opportunities for our young people. This initiative has been a huge success and an exciting leap forward.

The Grow Farm: In 2024, we took full stewardship of the Grow Farm, our multi-purpose green space, having shared the site the previous year. Watching this outdoor learning space evolve into a therapeutic, productive, and educational environment has been inspiring. It truly is a beautiful place to spend time.

2024 wasn't without its challenges. As many of you are aware, the charity sector faced intense financial pressures. At Grow, this significantly impacted our operations. We had to navigate difficult decisions, think creatively, and work even harder to stay afloat amidst economic uncertainty. While the road ahead remains tough, I'm deeply grateful to our team for their resilience and determination to ensure Grow's youth development work continues to thrive in Sheffield and beyond.

WHO IS GROW?

Grow is a youth development charity supporting 16-24 year olds in Sheffield. We use a blend of nature-based activities and therapeutic coaching as a tool to improve young people's mental and physical health, foster community connection, and boost skills. In doing so, we aim to give young people the tools, experience, and confidence they need to overcome barriers and succeed long term.

Our approach

Nature is at the heart of our work, with its proven therapeutic benefits helping to ease mental health struggles like depression, anxiety and stress. Whether it's 1-to-1 coaching sessions outdoors, mindful walks through green spaces, or hands-on horticultural activities at our Grow Farm, nature plays a vital role.

Through nature-based projects and therapeutic coaching, trainees develop essential skills like teamwork, problem solving, communication, and resilience, empowering them to thrive and unlock their full potential.



70% of UK adults agree **being close to nature improves their mood**

49% say it **helps them cope with stress**

NHS could save **£635m** by **prescribing time in nature**

- 1 Mental Health Foundation 2021 report
- 2 Wildlife Trust report - A Natural Health Service: Improving Lives and Saving Money

Our programmes are designed to foster holistic and robust growth by focusing on three interconnected areas:

Employment
Wellbeing
Social connection

Through our experience, we've found that these areas are deeply interlinked, and challenges in one can have a ripple effect on the others.

OUR PURPOSE

987,000

Young people aged 16-24 were not in work, education, or training (NEET) between Oct and Dec 2024

(Office for National Statistics)

2 years

Sheffield's young people face Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) waiting times of up to 105 weeks

(Correct as of March 2025)

29.2%

of 16-17-year-olds in Sheffield are vulnerable to becoming not in work, education, or training (NEET)

(South Yorkshire Skills and Employment Evidence Base)



Our mission:

Inspiring hope and unlocking potential in young people through nature

Our vision:

Grow will be a regional charity of multiple hubs, delivering transformational nature based programmes for young people



CHAIR OF TRUSTEES



John Lovell,
Chair of Trustees

Looking back over the years since Grow was established, 2024 can be characterised as a year of consolidation and maturity. A year where vision, values, culture, systems and personnel were tested and found to be strong and robust. A year that, despite the challenges, saw increased numbers of young people referred, more attending the various Grow programmes, ever improving outcomes, especially in wellbeing and social connectivity, and developing plans for future expansion and sustainability.

The successful year is due in no small part to the amazing commitment, dedication and skill of the team, led by our founder and CEO Steven Cotton. As we approach 2025, Steven has decided the time is right to move on and for the charity to appoint a new leader to build on the strong foundations that have been established. We owe him a massive debt of gratitude for his inspirational leadership over the years as we look to appoint a successor to take Grow into its exciting next chapter.

My thanks, as always, to my fellow trustees for their outstanding work in supporting the team, giving selflessly of their time, energy and expertise to help so many young people in need. To our amazing funders, partners and supporters: we extend our heartfelt thanks. We simply could not have done this without you. We look forward to all that 2025 has in store.



AARON'S STORY

Background: The path to Grow

Before joining Grow, Aaron attended Choices College (formerly Project Choice), which supports employment for young adults with learning disabilities. There, he gained work experience through placements at a charity warehouse, the English Institute of Sport, and Green Estate, where he learned about Grow.

Aaron had a clear vision for his future - he wanted to secure paid work to achieve his long-term goal of travelling and exploring the parts of the world that fascinate him most.

Experiencing the Grow Programme

Initially unsure about what to expect from the Grow Programme, Aaron began his journey with some hesitation. However, as he attended the five week programme, he quickly settled into a rhythm.

“ I actually enjoyed it - I didn't think I was going to. ”

Taking part in the programme's activities made Aaron feel productive. After five weeks, he had the opportunity to interview for one of seven paid Grow Gardeners placements. Thanks to his careful preparation and strong interview, Aaron secured a spot in the next phase of his development.

Grow Gardeners placement

Aaron's 10 week placement paired him with Green Estate, a social enterprise with a mission to grow green, resilient urban places for people and nature to thrive. During this time, he worked at various green sites, tackling a wide range of horticultural, maintenance and development tasks while demonstrating natural curiosity and



eagerness to learn. Despite finding social situations challenging, Aaron has shown self-awareness, recognising the vital role social skills play in the workplace and continues to make progress in this area.

Securing employment

Recognising the horticulture skills he developed whilst at Grow and his desire to work outdoors, Aaron pursued roles with different green employers. Following a rigorous interview with Sheffield City Council, he is pleased to secure a full-time role with the grounds maintenance team. Aaron looks forward to furthering his practical skills and the chance to work at various sites across the city.

Securing paid employment marks a pivotal step for Aaron, fuelling his personal growth while bringing him closer to fulfilling his dream of exploring the world. With determination and focus driving him forward, Aaron's journey is just beginning.

WALK & TALK

Walk & Talk is a walking coaching programme for young people aged 16 - 24. Most of the young people who participate experience mental ill-health and often have additional disabilities or challenges.

Concluding programme

As Grow continues to evolve, we are focusing our energy on our nature-based development programmes based at the Grow Farm. The farm provides a space where young people can work alongside others as a group, building social connections and a shared sense of purpose. We believe this approach creates the most lasting impact in their lives. With this in mind, 2024 marked the conclusion of Walk & Talk. This shift allows us to strengthen our core work, ensuring we can create even richer opportunities for young people and volunteers to connect in meaningful ways.

We deeply value the skills and experiences our volunteers have brought to Walk & Talk and are sincerely grateful for their generosity and time.

About Walk & Talk

On the programme, young people are paired with a trained mentor, who takes a coaching approach when they meet for up to eight sessions for a regular walk. During these walks, the young person discusses their current situation, aspirations, and challenges. Together, they work out actionable steps to help the young person move forward in life. This could include successfully entering or staying in education, gaining the confidence to apply for training or a job, and experiencing increased wellbeing and reduced feelings of isolation.



63%

average increase
in **wellbeing**



14%

average increase in
social connection



83

hours of Walk & Talk
sessions delivered

Programme impact

Additional to the above impact, a key highlight of Walk & Talk has been witnessing the transformative effect of mentoring. Introducing dedicated volunteers to young people who were struggling significantly and seeing firsthand the positive change this support can bring has been incredibly rewarding.

Volunteers

The Walk & Talk programme was led by our dedicated volunteers. In 2024, **32 volunteers** completed our six hour training programme, bringing remarkable passion and patience to support the young people they mentor. Their commitment has been truly inspiring.

During the year, **83 Walk & Talk sessions** took place providing valuable coaching and mentoring for young people.

“ I found I could really open up and feel comfortable when on the walks. I connected well with Sol and she made me feel heard and understood. I find talking easier when walking so the programme worked well for me! ”

Walk & Talk mentee





71 young people participated in Grow Programme



53 trainees completed Grow Programme



14% average increase in wellbeing



14% average increase in social connection



21 trainees progress to Grow Gardeners

GROW PROGRAMME

The Grow Programme, spanning five weeks, is designed to enhance wellbeing, foster social connections, and develop employability skills. It combines practical nature-based activities with group and 1-to-1 sessions. Following completion, all trainees have the opportunity to interview for our paid work placement programme, Grow Gardeners.

Our focus is on the entire journey of our young people, from referrals to completion and beyond. In 2024, we introduced work readiness measures into the Grow Programme to maximise employment opportunities for young people. This

includes securing positions with Grow Gardeners and providing guidance on their next steps.

At the end of 2024, we piloted Connect & Grow, a winter wellbeing programme designed to support young people seeking social connection and mental health support during the darker winter months. During this programme we also piloted the involvement of our existing Walk & Talk volunteers with 1-to-1s. The pilot achieved remarkable results, with average improvements of 29% in mental wellbeing and 28% in social connection. These encouraging findings suggest that further exploration of this opportunity could be valuable in the future.

“

Enjoyed getting to know the staff and programme people. Getting out to of the house and doing gardening. Getting different types of plants and garden more efficiently.

Grow Programme trainee

”

“

It's making me go out more, actually walking around and talking to other people is better than sitting in the house all the time.

Grow Programme trainee

”

In 2025, we will continue to refine and consolidate the curriculum, enabling us to replicate across future sites. The duration of the Grow Programme will be adjusted slightly from five weeks to four. This enables us to deliver three Grow Programmes immediately followed by Grow Gardeners to offer trainees a seamless development journey.

We will also incorporate more content based around five 'work readiness' skills which include communication, team work and professional behaviour. To aid 1-to-1 coaching conversations and to foster a positive outlook in trainees, we will use three models: **the Grow model**, **growth mindset**, and **growth zones**. These frameworks are designed to inspire ambition and encourage forward-thinking perspectives among our trainees.



GROW GARDENERS

In light of last year's highly challenging fundraising climate, we had to make adjustments to our Grow Gardeners programme delivery to ensure the continued success and sustainability of Grow. From summer 2024, we transitioned from a client gardening services led model to an employer partnership approach.

The information presented about Grow Gardeners is split into the two approaches on pages 12-13 and 14-15.

Grow Gardeners: Client gardening services model

This 16 week paid work placement programme supported 16-24 year olds who faced barriers to employment, education or training.

We employed our trainees on a part-time basis and maintained almost 50 client gardens across Sheffield. With guidance from trained Team Leaders, the trainees gained practical horticulture skills and received one-to-one mentoring. This programme provided them with invaluable real-life work experience, promoted their wellbeing, fostered social connections, and cultivated essential employability skills.

“ I feel like it's brought me a bit out of my comfort zone. It's helped a lot with my home life - my routine's got a lot better; I'm sleeping a lot better; I'm looking forward to getting up now in the morning and it's helped take a lot of stuff off my mind. ”

Grow Gardeners trainee



These figures relate to the client gardening services model:



14 trainees completed Grow Gardeners



46 gardens maintained in Sheffield



1344 hours of gardening completed



113% increase in gardening skills



100% felt they benefited from Grow



71%* successful EET outcome

* Trainees in education, employment or training 12 months after completing Grow Gardeners.

GROW GARDENERS

Grow Gardeners: Employer partnership model

In August 2024, we took an exciting step forward by launching an employer partnership model, strengthening pathways to meaningful employment for our trainees. For 10 weeks, trainees are paired with local green employers to build their professional skills and networks. Alongside these placements, they continue their personal development through group work and tailored 1-to-1s on the Grow Farm, ensuring a well-rounded journey toward sustainable employment. In 2025, we will continue to develop this model, recognizing its role in fostering financial sustainability while expanding opportunities for trainees.

Employer partners

We were thrilled to partner with local green employers to offer trainees valuable work experience and skill-building opportunities. Two employers offered continued employment to their trainees after the programme - a truly remarkable outcome!



Sarah Coe Gardens



7 trainees completed Grow Gardeners



735 hours of work experience



26% average increase in wellbeing



10% average increase in social connection



100% felt they benefited from Grow



100% would recommend Grow

"We chose to partner with Grow because their mission aligns closely with our values of empowerment through nature and skill development. Grow's commitment to helping young people overcome barriers and build confidence through nature-based experiences resonates deeply with us, as we see first-hand the transformative power of working with plants and cultivating green spaces."

Mark Pratt - MD of Maratt Lawn & Garden

"There are very few other opportunities to earn some money and develop in a safe environment. The farm is a very special place to work and spend time and the team have the best intentions and want to help you succeed."

Grow Gardeners trainee

ALUMNI CATCH UPS

As part of our alumni community support we organise monthly Catch Up events. These gatherings offer past and present Grow trainees a safe space to connect socially and strengthen their bonds.

In 2024, we hosted **10 Catch Up** events, welcoming **27 young people**. These gatherings offered a range of experiences, including coached tennis, pyrography, interactive games, and utilising our Grow Farm for events like bonfire night, tataki zome flower printing, al fresco dinners, and more.

Developing a thriving alumni community has been fantastic, with active participation from staff, volunteers, current trainees, and alumni at our Catch Up events.

We regularly engage with our alumni to gather feedback on future activities they'd like to explore and identify areas for improvement.

“What benefits me when coming to the Catch Ups is that it gets me out of the house and meet new people and reconnect with friends and what I enjoy is the fun activities, the free food and the kind people.”

Ciaran - Grow alumni

Co-Production

Our Co-Production group offers a platform for past and present trainees to share their ideas and influence the development of Grow. We aim to place young people and their perspectives at the core of our work, involving them in key activities such as interview panels, training sessions, event planning and participation, and shaping the content of our communications.

“It's got me in a better mindset that I was six months ago in many ways. I'm more positive about the future again and wanting to do more stuff.”

Grow Gardeners trainee





GROW FARM

The Grow Farm is our multi-purpose green space, offering a safe and welcoming environment for therapeutic coaching, nature engagement and a platform for developing horticultural skills through outdoor learning activities. While it primarily supports our nature-based programmes, it also serves as a vibrant venue for alumni Catch Up events, volunteering opportunities, and more.

During 2024, our first year of full stewardship of the Grow Farm, our dedicated team led significant transformations, completing key projects that enhanced the farm's infrastructure, productivity, and beauty. This included:

- Construction of a large polytunnel
- Wildlife pond and bog garden development
- Drainage for natural flood management
- Compost bays with rainwater collection
- Creation of beds for edimental plants (those that are both edible and ornamental)
- Establishment of herbaceous plant production beds and a soft fruit garden
- Development of a forest garden area to demonstrate permaculture principles



“It's been great to see the transformation of the Grow Farm throughout 2024. With the help of many hands we've been able to develop different spaces within the farm that work to serve different purposes. We've encouraged in wildlife, created beauty and produced a bountiful harvest, all whilst working towards our charity mission to support the young people of Sheffield.”

Vicky Westall - Farm Manager

Potting Shed

Our micro plant nursery has been an excellent showcase for Grow's work and a wonderful way to share our beautiful plants with the community. As we focus on developing our Grow Farm, we've temporarily paused this venture, but we're excited to explore fresh opportunities to share our produce later in 2025.



WHAT'S NEXT

2025 is going to be an exciting year for Grow. We're focusing on three key areas as we look ahead:

Quality and impact: We remain committed to enhancing the quality of our programmes and ensuring the systems supporting our work are simple and sustainable. Our goal is for every Grow trainee to have a positive life-transforming experience, and our exceptional coaching team continue to achieve meaningful impact through our nature-based approach.

Pilot exploration: We've been exploring the possibility of expansion for a couple of years now. 2025 is the year we will turn it into a reality, with plans for one (possibly two) pilot programmes on the horizon. We're thrilled to embark on this inspiring journey.

New CEO: At the end of 2024, Steven Cotton announced it was time for him to pass the baton. "Having founded Grow in 2018, it's been an incredible journey watching the organisation flourish, working alongside amazing colleagues, and being inspired by Sheffield's extraordinary young people. I'm ready for my next adventure, and Grow is ready for fresh leadership in the CEO role."

We look forward to introducing our new CEO in due course.

GET INVOLVED

Be part of something truly impactful - help us make a real difference in the lives of young people! Whether you're an individual, a funder, or a business, there are so many ways to get involved:



Support our impactful work as a business through financial contributions to help us continue our vital work.



Whether it's a one-off gift or a regular contribution. Every donation, big or small, adds up to make an incredible difference.



Offer valuable work experience for our trainees and also contribute to a positive social impact.



Getting involved in our exciting events throughout the year and connect with our growing community.



Forge a corporate partnership with us to boost your business's impact, reputation, and employee engagement while benefiting the community.



Volunteer your time and skills to directly support our mission and create lasting change.

We hope you've enjoyed learning about our work and impact in 2024. To find out more, visit growuk.org



Inspiring hope and unlocking potential in young people
through nature

growuk.org

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Charity No. 1177035

Follow us





grow

Grow UK

Statement of Financial Activities for the year ended 31st December 2024

Income	Note	£ Total	£ Unrestd	£ Resricted	£ 2023
Grow Gardeners		20550	20550		40158
Potting Shed		5957	5957		9669
Donations		15118	15118		15015
Grants		257478	53000	204478	273870
Events		6367	6367		9066
Room hire		2099	2099		1905
HMRC employment payment and gift aid		6357	6357		722
Training salaries subsidy		20879	20879		29223
Sundry income		1089	1089		
		335894	131416	204478	379628
Expenditure					
Alumni monitoring expenses		564	564		1942
Salaries and pensions	5	298366	73793	224573	276935
Grow gardeners direct expenses	6	16447	16447		27028
Farming project (formerly potting shed)	7	10054	10054		27028
Walk and talk expenses		683	683		3134
Cost of events		1447	1447		755
Rent		14490	14490		8304
Telephone and internet		2027	2027		965
Website and marketing		6951	6951		2525
Office expenses		4334	4334		3523
Travel		2211	2211		1209
Training		3869	3869		3223
Staff health scheme		1019	1019		507
Sundry expenses		1644	1644		2450
Bank charges		956	956		748
Depreciation		1657	1657		1573
		366719	142146	224573	350285
Net (deficit)/surplus for year		-30825	-10730	-20095	29343

Grow UK

Balance Sheet
31st December 2024

	Note	2024	2023
		£	£
Fixed Assets	2	3531	2033
Current Assets			
Stock		300	
Debtors	978	19675	
Cash at bank	120411	79659	
Cash at hand	197	126	
	<u>121586</u>	<u>99760</u>	
Current Liabilities			
Deferred income	109035	50028	
Creditors and accruals	0	4453	
	<u>109035</u>	<u>54481</u>	
		12551	45279
		<u>16082</u>	<u>47312</u>
Financed by			
Unrestricted reserves	16082	27216	
Restricted reserves	0	20096	
	<u>16082</u>	<u>47312</u>	

Approved by the board of trustees

25th June 2025

Notes to the Accounts
31st December 2024

1 Accounting policies

Basis of preparation-the accounts have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities Statement of Recommend ended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Reporting Standard applicable i.e in the UK and Republic of Ireland FRS102

Depreciation is provided on tangible fixed assets estimated to write the assets off over their useful lives, Office fixtures and fittings 25%, Grow Gardeners tools 33%, Potting shed and farm equipment 20%, Website and laptops 50%

The charity operates a defined contribution pension scheme

2 Fixed assets

	Office fixtures	Potting shed and farm equipment
Cost 1st Jan 24	1739	3280
Additions	<u>1739</u>	<u>3155</u>
	1739	6435
Depreciation		
1st Jan 24	1017	1968
Charge for year	<u>370</u>	<u>1287</u>
	<u>1387</u>	<u>3255</u>
Net book value	352	3180

All other assets were fully depreciated at the start of the year

3 Going concern

The trustees are concerned to report a deficit for the year under review but have achieved funding sufficient to trade solvently for the immediate future and consequently the accounts have been prepared on a going concern basis

4 Continuing operations

During 2024 the Grow Gardeners trading was outsourced while the Potting Shed was transferred to a farming project in a spacious purpose built area

5 Salaries and pensions

2024

2023

Grow gardeners	81996	120253
Farming project (previously Potting shed)	19168	11554
Walk and talk	6744	17824
Grow Programme	29801	35275
Alumni	7000	
Core costs	153657	92029

	<u>298366</u>	<u>276935</u>
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6 Grow Gardeners

Training		1977
Plants	1341	2454
Protective clothing	1299	2123
Vehicle leasing	8670	8410
Vehicle running expenses	4345	4079
Consumable tools and other costs	792	7985
	<u>16447</u>	<u>27028</u>
Salaries	81996	120253

	<u>98443</u>	<u>147281</u>
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7 Farming project (formerly Potting shed)

Plants	4220	10938
Plant hire costs	1151	1156
Rent	3207	2833
Tools and equipment	755	537
Other costs	721	

	<u>10054</u>	<u>15464</u>
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Salaries	<u>19168</u>	<u>11154</u>
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	<u>29222</u>	<u>26618</u>
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Independent examiner's report on the accounts of Grow UK

Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2024
Charity no 1177035

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts for Grow UK

As the charity's trustees you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under s145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination I have followed all the applicable directions given by the Charity Commission under s145(5)(b) of the Act.

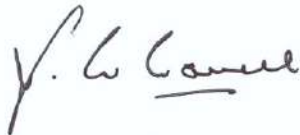
I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in any material effect:
the accounting records were not kept in accordance with s130 of the Charities Act or the accounts did not accord with the accounting records or the accounts did not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and (Reports) Regulations 2008 other than in any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no matters in connection the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Philip N Burley FCA
25th June 2025

Flatt Lodge, Roadhead, Carlisle CA6 6PH



JOHN LOVELL
CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

28th August 2025