

# north east autism society

The Nineveh Charitable Trust  
8 Mill Lane,  
Saffron Walden  
Essex  
CB10 2AS

24<sup>th</sup> July 2019

Dear Trustees

On behalf of North East Autism Society, I would like to thank the Trustees for their generous donation of £8,000 received last year towards the cost of purchasing an outdoor classroom to support the learning of young people and adults with autism around horticulture, agriculture and nature conservation.

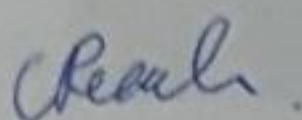
*I have enclosed a brief report on the impact your support has had on the lives of the people who access our farm.*

The classroom has proved invaluable in enabling young people and adults with a range of conditions and disabilities the chance to develop differentiated education and skills and empower them to reach their full potential.

Additionally, the outdoor classroom has enabled us to engage with the community to help break down barriers in society, as well as enable further land based education, and associated health benefits.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you again for your kind support.

Yours sincerely,

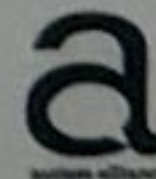
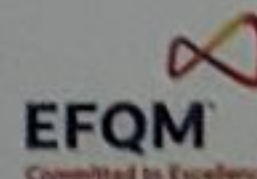
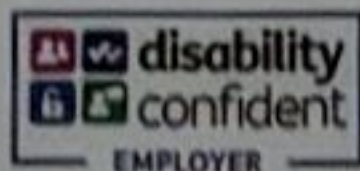
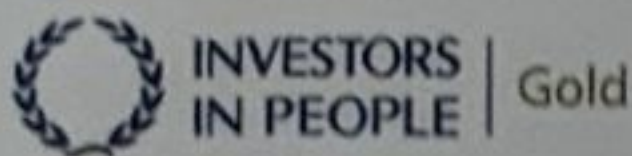


Lindsay Peach  
Bid Writer

ENCLOSURE:

- Feedback report

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## Nineveh Charitable Trust report

Funding from the Nineveh Charitable Trust enabled us to build an outdoor classroom on our 77 acre farmland in Holmside, County Durham.

We commissioned Wernick to supply a modular building to enable us to realise the project. Through their refurbished buildings programme we were heavily discounted the cost of delivery, setup and installation of a fit for purpose classroom.

In order to make the project as economic as possible, our own Maintenance Team 'book-ended' the project, both laying the foundation and preparing all groundworks for the 2 bay modular classroom, in addition to decorating to a specification suited to the setting.

The classroom with plumbing and fittings took approximately 6 weeks to fully install. This includes foundations, service connections, full building install and final decoration process. At which point we were able to appropriately equip the classroom, making it fully operationally, and bringing it into use for the remaining 46 weeks of the year and beyond. We were very lucky to receive donations of classroom furniture, noticeboards and books from local organisations, helping us to keep the costs down further.





Engagement with the classroom has been very positive. Post-19 year old service users at the Training Centre have been making daily use (Mon-Fri) of the classroom for outdoor-based vocational learning, in addition to our off-site curriculum students (of school age) using it at scheduled intervals during the school week (2 days). Outside of these hours; the space is accessible to the general public during scheduled evening and weekend hours.

Our learners use the space on a regular basis where they can develop their skills around horticulture, learn more about specific practices, and also create practical items.

Working in nature helps our trainees; the natural environment is found to be particularly beneficial for those with sensory processing issues, offering a range of experiences for those seeking sensory stimulation and those who wish to minimise it. The secure, quiet and calming environment is perfect for those who need space, allowing self-regulation of challenging behaviours, reducing anxiety, and in turn enabling more effective learning.



The outdoor classroom provides a work-based environment where our trainees can learn more about countryside stewardship and horticulture, developing specific and practical skills.

They also receive training in the softer skills required to fully participate in their local community and in the workplace.



We run night classes for the community two evenings per week, from the classroom. The space is used during the day to help prepare for these classes. We currently run RHS (Royal Horticultural Society) Level 2 and Level 3 courses in Horticulture, alongside a variety of short courses, for around 6-7 members of the public on average, which are scheduled to run for the remainder of the year. We already have interest from 5 more people to start in September. In addition we are hosting RHS exams when the classroom is not in use during other periods.

The courses give a good grounding in horticulture and allows the development of essential knowledge and understanding required for the horticultural industry, whether at entry level, or looking for career development.



The project has made an impact in four key areas; health, education, welfare and the environment

#### **Study and appreciation of the land and the environment**

Our learners have used the classroom as a base in which to help to plant our new orchard, and also to learn how to sustainably grow flowers, fruits, vegetables and herbs on our farmland in poly tunnels and raised beds, under direction of our tutors and horticultural expert.

They have also learned more about biodiversity and conservation through sowing wild flowers, and the reasons behind this, and helping to create a nature highway.





Courses for the public also promote the importance of the land to the community within the structure of the RHS courses.

### Health, welfare and education

From speaking to support workers we know that having the option to work in the outdoor classroom on gloomy days, when working outdoors wouldn't previously have been an option, has really helped our learners. The secure, quiet and calming environment is perfect for those who have sensory processing issues, or who need space, allowing self-regulation of challenging behaviours, reducing anxiety, and in turn enabling more effective learning.

We have seen the benefits of working outdoors in all of our service users – from increased physical strength and motor skills, to improved social integration and communication, and also increased attention, which positively impacts their learning and progression.



Education is promoted throughout the project, with a focus on providing the right environment, level and activities for each individual to thrive. Learners are taught by skilled professionals and lessons promote team work and communication, with a focus on service user participation and achievement.

The range of activities are varied to meet all abilities and interests, allowing learners the security and confidence to do activities that might otherwise not be available to them.

Through our community courses we have started to build links in the community, to help educate and reduce the stigma associated with autism, helping to reduce social isolation, improve access and improve future life chances.

### Outcomes

- All learners based at the farm, and those from off-site curriculum, have learned new skills, learned more about the land, conservation and the skills and practices involved in growing, management, and harvesting
- All learners have gained confidence, improved health and wellbeing through being able to access nature and work outdoors as much as possible.
- A variety of community courses are running from the classroom, creating stronger relationships between the community and the Society, helping aid social inclusion.





*"I wish we had this sooner, we've been crying out for something like this for years"*

- Training Centre Manager

*"The classroom gives us extra options for working outside on bad days and plenty of cover for bad weather"*

- Support Worker

*"The classroom is a great facility, not too big and not too small"*

- RHS Course Learner

We would like to say a huge thank you to the Nineveh Charitable Trust for helping to make this project a reality.

