

The Mudlarks Community Background, Aims and Working Ethos



Background

We work with a very mixed range of people of all abilities from as young as 16 to 70. The people we work with have learning difficulties and/or mental health concerns. They might have mild to severe learning difficulties and may display challenging behaviour. We also work with people with physical disabilities, people recovering from drug and alcohol abuse, and anyone who enjoys outdoor work.

Mudlarks plays an active part in the local community through our off-site teams, varied social events, and sale of produce at the cafe.

The work we do is seasonal and varied. It involves gardening, growing vegetables and pot plants, conservation work, woodwork, construction work and countryside crafts. We work outdoors in all weathers.

Our cafe trains and employs people with learning difficulties, and is provided with as much produce from our allotment site as possible. The food served is seasonal, vegetarian and vegan, and all cooked in the cafe kitchen.

Our Aims

Through supported learning and meaningful work in the community, Mudlarks' projects help people build confidence and self-worth, and develop important skills.

Mudlarks runs five projects in Hertford:

- At our allotments in Cromwell Road we provide horticultural therapy, growing vegetables in a safe and caring environment.
- The Mudlarks Café in Fore Street provides training, work experience and employment for adults with learning difficulties which improves their skills and confidence.
- Our Larking About gardening team works in Hertford, managing all of the Town Council gardens.
- Our Special Branch team of gardeners helps the elderly to maintain their gardens.
- Our Forest School at Panshanger Park supports young adults with learning difficulties, giving them the opportunity to take part in activities, connecting them with the natural environment and encouraging self-directed play and exploration.

All of Mudlarks' projects support local people with learning difficulties and mental health concerns to take a full and active role in our community and lead more fulfilling lives.

We aim to use whatever tools are available to spread the message, from social public events, workshops, and demonstrations to our three social media sites and keeping an up-to-date website.

Staff Ethos

We have three guiding principles:

1. **Care for our gardeners, cafe assistants and volunteers**

In all aspects of our work our first priority is care for our gardeners, cafe assistants and volunteers. We should always be alert to their needs and provide whenever

Mudlarks Ethos

The Mudlarks Community - Web: www.mudlarksgarden.org.uk
Company Registration No: 6927124 - Charity No: 1132403 -



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possible the help and the social and physical environment they need to enable them to learn and work together with us and the wider community.

We are committed to involving gardeners and volunteers in all our projects and giving them meaningful work experience and training. We create a community which helps everybody (staff, gardeners, and volunteers) to gain new skills and to be involved.

Staff aspire to being patient, understanding and persistent in our caring responsibilities.

2. **Care for the environment**

In all aspects of our work we try to eliminate or reduce to sustainable levels the environmental impact of everything we do.

The Mudlarks site currently generates some electricity by solar power, we are committed to recycling and have a compost toilet. In the winter we burn waste wood in a woodburner to keep us warm. We aim to be creative in our reuse of discarded property by turning it into something useful. Our off site teams and allotment gardens are all organic. We use battery powered tools to reduce our fossil fuel consumption.

3. **Equality**

Everybody is treated equally and is encouraged to have a go at a new challenge whatever their ability. Often the process will be more important than the result and learning from mistakes is an important lesson.

Overview

A high commitment is expected from all members of staff, volunteers and trustees, which is essential in a charity involving so many people. There are many evening meetings and weekend events to organise and attend. Mudlarks is an ideal place to develop yourself as there are so many facets to the work. Mudlarks encourages everyone to take responsibility and to try new challenges. We work and interact in a friendly and informal way with our colleagues, gardeners, volunteers and trustees and really enjoy our work.