

Ruskin Mill Trust

The natural environment – restoring hope to young lives

Nature based approaches to education for special needs

Aonghus Gordon, founder of the Ruskin Mill Trust

**Delivering the health and well-being benefits of the natural
environment: An event to support Sustainability and
Transformation Plans implementation**

Wednesday 16 November 2016

NHS South Region Sustainability and Health Network

Bristol



Aim

- To outline the nature based approaches to education, development and health embodied by the Ruskin Mill Trust's Practical Skills Therapeutic Education method.
- The student experience at Ruskin Mill Trust
 - NHS funded project for adults with Autistic Spectrum Conditions (ASC)



The Ruskin Mill Trust Context:

Educational and therapeutic benefits of a nature-based curriculum

- How the 'natural environment' features in the curriculum

Practical crafts – e.g. green woodwork, clay, basket weaving, felting, farming and growing

- Caring for the land: caring for people
- Health and nutrition
- Embedding of functional skills



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Harvesting at Ruskin Mill College for the community veg box

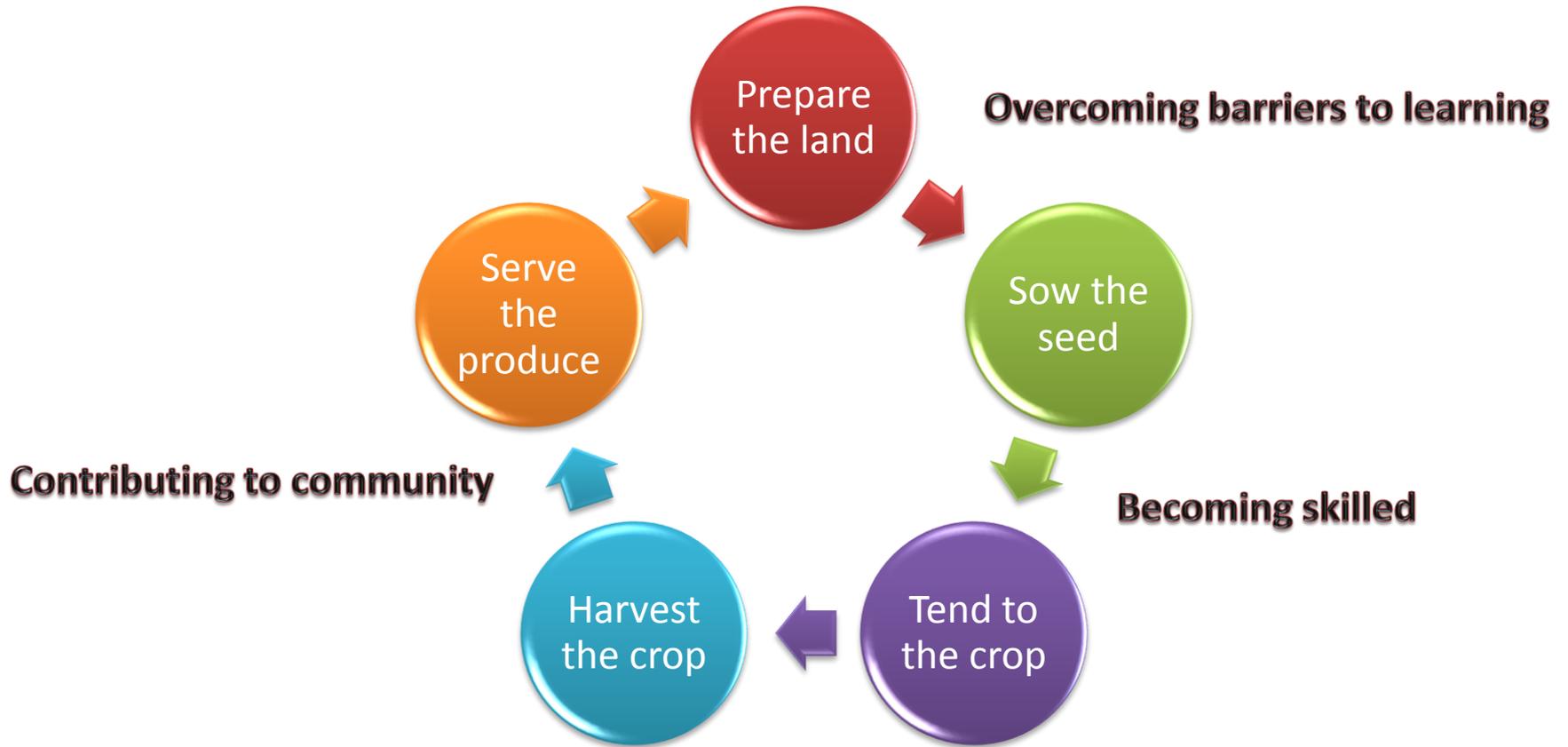


Chair making in the woods at Ruskin Mill College



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Seed to table



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'Seed to Table' - Home Life and Healthy Eating



Preparing a meal from the local produce grown on the farm and baked in the bakery. The self-esteem that is generated by experiencing the success in the process from seed to table is transformational.



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How it works

- Three stages of Practical Skills Therapeutic Education and the student journey
- Example: seed to table curriculum

Stage	Activity example
Overcoming barriers to learning	Learning to take instruction and develop independence
Becoming skilled	Becoming skilled within a craft activity – e.g. growing vegetables within the Market Garden or on the farm
Contributing to community	Taking the produce into the home and / or selling the produce through a box scheme or in the college cafe



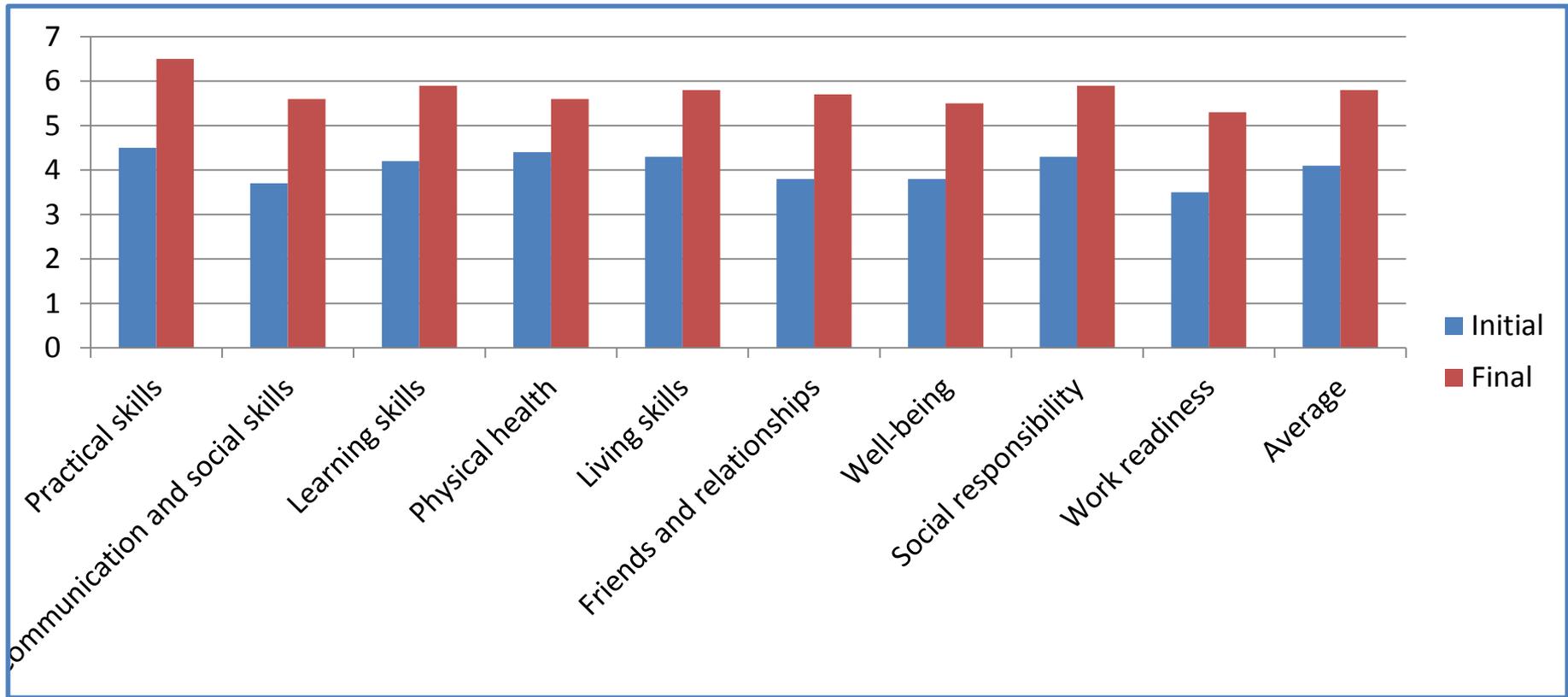


The Young Mothers Programme at Clervaux, Darlington.
For babies, children and mothers at risk. Please see research document



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Positive outcomes



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Taken from the 2014-15 Ruskin Mill Student Star

Supporting Adults with Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC)

- Commissioned by the Clinical Commissioning Groups to deliver a development programme for adults with ASC
- The project has been running for two years
- Delivered by Glasshouse College, Stourbridge
- Part of the 'Green Care' agenda



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How it works

- Structured programme over 15 sessions (11 weeks)
- Based around engagement with the mineral (glassblowing), plant (green woodwork) and animal (felting) kingdoms
- Other artistic activities are weaved throughout, to include drama and movement workshops
- Focused on personal goals (defined by the participant and referring agency)



Results so far...

- Positive feedback from participants includes:
 - Personal satisfaction with the craft items they made
 - Identified personal development (self and others)
 - communication skills and self/social confidence
 - Requests to do a second iteration of the programme from individuals, family/carers and referring agencies, due to the positive impact



The research context

- Ruiz-Gallardo *et al* (2013) Garden-based learning associated with improved academic performance and teacher-observed **self-confidence and self-esteem** in at risk students.
- Gubbles *et al* (2016) Increases in perceived greenery are associated with **less depressive symptoms** in adults.
- Sonti *et al* (2016) Urban farming internship programme offers long term benefits for youth.
- Ward *et al* (2016) Greenspace promotes **physical activity** and **emotional well-being**.
- Schein (2014) Childhood experiences in nature enhance **care for self and others** and contribute to **spiritual development**.
- Dennis *et al* (2014) Nature-based outdoor classrooms enhance children's **learning, behaviour and developmental outcomes**.

See **Children and Nature Network** <http://www.childrenandnature.org/research/>

- Sigman (2015) – A practical skills curriculum promoting neurological and developmental benefits for young people



Ruskin Mill Trust Provision in England & Wales

Brantwood Specialist School
Sheffield
• 7 - 19 years
• Residential & day students
• Up to 52 weeks per year

Argent College
Birmingham
• 16 - 25 years
• Residential & day students
• Up to 52 weeks per year

Coleg Plas Dwbl
Pembrokeshire
• 16 - 25 years
• Residential & day students
• Up to 52 weeks per year

The Field Centre
Gloucestershire
• Centre for situated educational action research
• MA in Special Education Practical Skills
• Transformative Learning

Clervaux
Darlington
• 16 +
• Residential & day students
• Up to 52 weeks per year

Freeman College
Sheffield
• 16 - 25 years
• Residential & day students
• Up to 52 weeks per year

Glasshouse College
Stourbridge
• 16 - 25 years
• Residential & day students
• Up to 52 weeks per year

Ruskin Mill College
Gloucestershire
• 16 - 25 years
• Residential & day students
• Up to 52 weeks per year



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Next steps...