

Lindengate

ORGANISATION SIZE / Small (up to £500,000 turnover)

Zohar Marer

The Old Allotment Site,
Aylesbury Road,
Wendover,
Buckinghamshire
HP22 6BD

BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF YOUR CSR APPLICATION

Lindengate is an award-winning mental health charity that offers specialised gardening activities to help those with mental health needs in their continuing recovery. Our services, known as Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (STH), are recognised to be beneficial for a wide range of mental health needs including anxiety, depression, loneliness as well as for people with autism, dementia and head injury. Lindengate was established in 2013 and occupied the five-acre site near Wendover, Buckinghamshire in June 2014, opening to service users (whom we refer to as Gardeners) in November 2014.

Over and above our core activities as a mental health charity, we enhance nature, collaborate with local communities, businesses, charities and provide employment for 20 people (full and part time roles).

CSR is in our DNA and the evidence collated here shows our strengths under the four pillars of 1) Environment, 2) Workplace, 3) Community and 4) Philanthropy

The founding members and Trustees have CSR in their values as the key element to support and develop people with mental health challenges, from the site that has been designed and created with conservation at its heart, to the welfare, support and development of its employees, volunteers, local communities and business partners.

OVERALL SUMMARY

From humble beginnings, we have grown into an award-winning charity with the following accolades:

- Gold Award for the Environment Category of the BBC Three Counties Radio People's Award 2018.
- High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire Award 2018 for Services to Mental Health
- Buckinghamshire Business First Award 2017 for Enterprising Charity of the Year
- The Autism Society Autism Friendly Award 2017
- The Butterfly Conservation Award 2017 for Promotion of Lepidoptera Conservation. This is a UK-wide award that singled us out
- Oxford Brookes Award – Placement of the Year Award 2018 – we achieved the Highly Commended status.
- Lindengate has been accepted on the National Garden Scheme and will be participating in September 2019.

1.0 ENVIRONMENT

(see Environment document attached for photos and evidence for this section)

1.1 Energy ...

As part of a good house-keeping initiative, Lindengate take steps to minimise our energy use by carefully monitoring our use of electricity. We have a number of efficient energy saving initiatives in place such as LED lights in many of our buildings and the use of solar power for outside lighting. We have sensors for hot water use encouraging staff and volunteers to use less hot water. We try and use less heating throughout the site with an ethos of closing doors, going for a walk or simply putting a jumper on. We also make as much use of natural ventilation during the warmer months. This is very much encouraged by senior staff and staff are very much committed to do all they can to reduce energy. All heaters throughout the site have signs on them asking that they not be touched, so that we have the heating kept on lower settings. Our equipment is

turned off at night.

Apart from reducing our carbon footprint our energy saving initiative have a direct impact on cost savings.

1.2 Biodiversity ...

The 5-acre site has been turned from a disused allotment with overgrown weeds to a wildlife haven. We are champions for conservation and have installed a beehive, bat and owl boxes, bird tables and bug hotels.

We also work with Chiltern Society and Vale Countryside Volunteers; as well as Butterfly Conservation and a number of Wildlife Trusts and the RSPB to supply national conservation projects with wild flowers, which are either sole food plants of a particular endangered species or are part of a regeneration program. It is our Gardeners (service users) who are involved in these projects and actively care for the plants, supported by staff and volunteers, so this is a truly communal initiative.

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We take specific care not to use pesticides or herbicides across the site.

1.3 Waste

Many materials are donated to Lindengate that might otherwise have ended up being transported great distances (CO₂) to landfill. We re-use and recycle as many waste materials as we can. Here are some examples:

- Waste Christmas trees from the local garden centre were donated to Lindengate. Using the team from a corporate team building event (Janssen) – we stripped the trees of branches to re-use trees for fencing. The branches and smaller trees and chippings were re-used for pathways.
- Excess flint from a local site has been donated and re-used to create a feature wall and water rill.
- Old and broken tools are re-used to create fencing around the orchard – protecting our fruit trees.
- Old wellington boots are re-used as planters.
- Excess timber from a local building site have been re-used to make raised beds for the gardeners.
- All batteries and toner cartridges are collected and subsequently disposed of responsibly.
- Waste is composted where appropriate.
- Cleaning products used across the site are selected on the basis of their ecological credentials.

1.4 Water

We have developed a natural pond on the 5-acre site so that we can collect drainage and rainwater for irrigation where possible, relieving pressure off mains water which is treated and pumped and more expensive. This pond also has created a new wildlife area for birds, aquatic plants and related species.

1.5 Travel

In order to reduce carbon emissions and use of fossil fuels, Lindengate management

encourage work from home days and have installed bike racks to encourage volunteers and staff alike to cycle to work.

2.0 WORKPLACE

(see Workplace document attached for photos and evidence for this section)

2.1 Employees Support

We provide an Employees Handbook for employees as well as induction, regular training and health and safety briefings.

An extract from this handbook is in the evidence document attached.

2.2 Events for Volunteers and Staff.

Lindengate prides itself on high volunteer retention and as part of this we like to show our appreciation to volunteers, as well as encourage social interactions that address the issues of social isolation in the community. Every year we put on a Summer BBQ, Christmas party and other events for volunteers and for staff. In addition, we arrange outings, such as Vamos Theatre outing with free tickets, as well as Otmoor RSPB site visit where Lindengate staff and volunteers were invited to see the 80,000 starling murmuration at Otmoor. These events, for which pooled transport arrangements are made to minimise cost and environmental impact, are organised for all those that work and support Lindengate.

2.3 Training for employees and volunteers

Everyone at Lindengate receives tailored training: Tier 1 provides a basic understanding of STH, our core activities and mental health needs. Further training modules, Tier 2, 3 and 4 that provide more specific levels of detail, are also available for staff and volunteers who support Gardener groups. In addition, we support staff and volunteers with other training as their role requires, including: Mental Health First Aid, Goal setting in Green Care, Food Health & Safety at Work, Emergency First Aid, Autism Awareness, Dementia Friend and MoCA training.

2.4 Progression Opportunities

At Lindengate we aim to support individuals

in progressing towards mutually agreed goals. While we have supported Gardeners into employment and work placement roles, we have also recently progressed a number of volunteers into paid roles at Lindengate.

2.5 Work placements

Since 2015 we've had student placements from Oxford Brookes University and will now start accepting students from Coventry University too. Due to our success in supporting Gardeners into work placements or employment, we are receiving referrals from community organisations for young people, aged 16 to 23, to gain work experience with us.

2.6 Employability Programmes

We will shortly launch our 9-month employability programme to teach 16-23 yr olds soft skills that support them in gaining employment..

2.7 Flexible working policy

Lindengate operates a flexible working policy, with the option for full or part time options and ability to work from home.

3.0 COMMUNITY

(see Community document attached for photos and evidence for this section)

3.1 Business In Our Community Events

- Lindengate runs regular business networking. We also provide a platform for each business to promote themselves.

3.2 Open Days and Annual Fairs

We open our gardens to the public with three large flagship events per year as well as regular monthly drop-in.. At these events, we feature numerous activities and experiences including open-air theatre, balloon art, face painting, magician, circus workshops, tombola, petting donkeys, art and craft stalls, conservation stalls, American folk music, plant stalls, and quiet areas.

3.3 Supporting local farmers markets and events

Lindengate has created soft fruit and vegetable growing areas – we use the

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produce from this in our cookery classes as well as making jams and chutneys which we sell at local markets supporting village events in the area.

3.4 Schools and Youth Groups

We have created a Schools Engagement Pack that is a guide to fun activities that can help children enjoy nature and being outdoors. It gives inspirational ideas and information on how you can raise money to support people with mental health needs. Recent visiting groups have included a local Beaver group who enjoyed a nature trail through our garden; Wendover Junior School who enjoyed an intergenerational day engaging with Lindengate Gardeners who have dementia, as part of dispelling the stigma surrounding dementia. For the past three years we have also welcomed young people from Action4Youth who volunteered at our site as part of their National Citizenship Service.

3.5 Community Groups

We regularly have visiting groups, or go to give talks to various local groups, such as gardening groups, University of the Third Age, Rotary and Women's Institute groups and photograph clubs.

3.6 Corporate Team build days

We offer the opportunities to companies to spend the day at Lindengate as part of their CSR volunteering programmes. We started these in 2017 and offer 10 days per year; beneficiary groups have included: Janssen, Lloyds Bank, Metro Bank, Seymour Taylor, Buckinghamshire County Council and Transport for Bucks.

3.7 Garden Party

The charity organises an annual Garden Party around September which is an opportunity for Lindengate to thank local businesses, councils, charities and community members who have supported Lindengate over the year.

3.8 Advocacy

Lindengate spear headed campaigns like #HeadsTogether and #ItsOKtoTalk,

to raise awareness around mental health stigma: <https://www.mix96.co.uk/news/local/2286221/wendover-charity-helps-tackle-mental-health-stigma/>

4.0 PHILANTHROPY

(see Philanthropy document attached for photos and evidence for this section)

4.1 Public Events

We hold Open Days, Open-air Theatre and our annual Lindengate Fair as well as other smaller drop-in events through the year where the public can come and explore and enjoy our gardens. We provide free stalls to other charities as well as free publicity in our literature.

4.2 Talks to local groups

We regularly give talks to a variety of different groups, such as Rotary, WI, gardening clubs and U3A. We also give talks to business groups and schools.

4.3 Bursaries

Our standard STH session fees are heavily subsidised by around 60%, compared to the cost of running each session, to make them affordable to the general public. However, many people experiencing mental health needs are unable to afford more than a nominal sum towards their sessions at Lindengate, particularly if they are not in receipt of benefits and especially under the new and harsher benefits system. In order to support people who are unable to pay the standard fees, we have the Bursary Scheme which provides funded places. This scheme is supported by our grant fundraising, donations and community fundraising: <https://www.paradigmfoundation.org.uk/a-further-5000-awarded-to-gardening-charity-lindengate/> and <https://heartofbucks.org/impact-stories-lindengate/>

4.5 Active on partnership boards

Lindengate is an active participant on the partnership boards for Mental Health, Autism and Dementia, responsible for reviewing mental health provision and needs across the county of Buckinghamshire. Lindengate is a member

of the Independent Advisory Group for Thames Valley Police and lead organiser for the local Dementia Action Alliance. While our core activity is in support of mental health, these activities offer a public service above that of our core activity.

4.6 Collaboration with other charities:

RSPB Otmoor & Wildlife Trusts

Lindengate grow Devil's-bit Scabious for the RSPB Otmoor and the Wildlife

Trusts in support of the Marsh Fritillary butterfly.

See link: <http://www.wendovernews.co.uk/news/local-charity-lindengate-wins-award-for-butterfly-conservation>

As part of our partnership and good relations with the Chiltern Society, we provide free storage for their charity our site.

Summary

As a result of our CSR activities mentioned and detailed in this application we reduce operating costs such as water, electricity and water. Whilst we do not yet have the means to measure it in detail this could be something for the future.

We use local businesses and buy in some materials and services that support the local economy. (Example - food for events are sourced from local producers & caterers, printing services obtained locally, building materials are obtained, whenever possible, from local building supply wholesalers and ideally utilising materials that are surplus to requirements and might otherwise be consigned to landfill waste. We aim to buy as local as possible and reduce use of large chains.)

We are constantly innovating with the materials we are given and to solve the unique challenges that occur in running a project like this. The unique fencing and art work is testimony to that.

The site has been gradually expanding within the five acres as we utilise the whole site but there are no current plans to expand beyond our current perimeter fence. There

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have been discussions at the senior level about replicating this concept but nothing has developed to date. There is more than enough to do with developing the existing site!

We have freely provided advice to similar fledgling projects/charities that have shown an interest in duplicating what we do at Lindengate within their region

In conclusion it is best to show some quotes from our 'gardeners' (service users), which nicely shows the benefits of Lindengate:

"I am learning so much and I love being out of the house, in the fresh air, with nature and getting exercise"

"Engaging in activities has greatly boosted

my confidence and self-esteem"

"It helps my brain to zone out. I can lose myself from all the busy thoughts in my head and forget about everything".

[For further information on STH and the work we do visit:

www.lindengate.org.uk, www.facebook.com/lindengategardening and www.twitter.com/Lindengate]

<https://csr-accreditation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/vfb/2018/12/EVIDENCE-1---ENVIRONMENT.pdf>

<https://csr-accreditation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/vfb/2018/12/EVIDENCE-2---WORKPLACE.pdf>

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