

Best Community Gardens Development Company 2021

Off The Grid Adventures is an outdoor-based community interest company focusing on improving wellbeing and social integration through alternative activity delivery. For over four years, the company has been working with some of the most vulnerable young people and families across the region, providing unparalleled service within the industry.

Off The Grid Adventures focuses on improving youth wellbeing and social integration through alternative activity delivery. The company has grown considerably over the years in partnership with young people, parents, and professionals. For OTGA, client feedback is the key to continuing the development of its work and often asks for support from the community to aid the company with shaping its activity program.

Overall, the company is a specialised activity provider for children, young people, and the cooperate sectors. The activities offered are often had in local parks, beaches, woodlands & school sites. Additionally, its activities can be booked at its Canberra Farm base in South Yorkshire, with volunteering and training opportunities available.

Moreover, the company relaunched in February 2020 as a community interest company (Limited by Guarantee), with updated policies and procedures tailored to working with a more vulnerable client group. This significant structural change has brought additional opportunities to work with an increased range of partners and funders to help the company engage with the youth.

As part of the organisation, OTGA has a tree service that delivers a range of community garden and tree work services for its local communities, a critical service that the organisation provides as all profits from the work go on to support families in significant need.

However, whilst it has been difficult for many people over the last 18 months due to lockdowns and restrictions from the Covid-19 pandemic, OTGA's client groups has suffered significantly. For example, the tree services business has seen a 50% increase in enquiries over the last 12 months because of lockdown and families spending more time in the gardens.



Director Paul Kirkpatrick states, "It's great to see so many people taking an interest in their gardens and also spending more time outside, which has been proven to be great for emotional wellbeing, especially during this difficult period for all of us."

The company's tree services have grown exponentially over the last ten years, working in and around woodlands to develop safe working spaces for its activity groups. Paul explains, "We also have significant experience developing community gardens and allotments for groups and individual use. Our company is unique in that we are one of only a few organisations nationally with a trading arm based around delivering tree services and community gardens. There are many good tree surgeons out there across the region, but most are private businesses. By using our service, which is very competitive, you not only get a first-class job, but you're supporting some of the most vulnerable families in the area."

For OTGA, its work has now been given its own identity. It has developed into the company's commercial arm, with all profits generated from

private tree and garden work going back into supporting the more vulnerable young people that work with the company.

For OTGA, the Northeast is a fantastic area to live and work in as the company and clients are all proud to be from the Northeast. Paul states, "We have some amazing parks spaces and private gardens that give us amazing opportunities for paid work and to get our mentoring clients out to see what makes the Newcastle people proud."

Initially, the company worked only in Northumberland, but then several exciting partnership opportunities arose, and now OTGA is operating across the South Yorkshire region. OTGA is working from its base with the Sport Society Success Network at Canberra Farm on the outskirts of Doncaster.

2021 has been an excellent year for OTGA, having helped over 100 families, worked with over 500 young people on activity programmes, and delivered many garden projects to clients. Paul states, "We are already planning to build our capacity and have recently received grant funding through BBC Children in Need to deliver a three-year intensive mentoring programme."

Announced as Best Community Gardens Development Company 2021 within the Northern Enterprise Awards, we can't wait to see what results OTGA will continue to produce over the next year and beyond.



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