

A Growing Community: A Sociological Exploration of Values and Practices on a Third Sector Mental Health Project

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Abstract

Since the 1990s UK governments have sought to harness third sector organisations in the delivery of services due to their perceived capacity to address social problems, and provide more responsive and individually-tailored services which can foster the capacity of individuals to lead more independent and fulfilled lives. However, these enhanced expectations exist alongside state retrenchment and mounting pressure to deliver services in more cost-effective ways. As grant-funding has been replaced by contracts, voluntary organisations have faced pressures to change their services in line with what commissioners want, compromising the distinctive values and practices that have traditionally been associated with the sector. Despite these empirical trends, there has been little in-depth sociological exploration of the effect of contracting on the values and practices of individual organisations, and how this is experienced by those who work, volunteer and use their services. This is surprising given that the ‘values-driven’ nature of these organisations is generally understood to be what makes them distinctive from the organisations of the state and the market. Instead, ‘values-driven’ is routinely conflated with ‘value-added’, in an instrumental view which treats values as transactional resources. Consequently, there has been a failure to grasp the intrinsic importance of values to people’s wellbeing, the rootedness of those values in practices, and the implications of changing people’s practices to achieve with greater efficiency an external product or outcome. This study adopted an Aristotelian lens to explore the relationship between values and practices on a third sector mental health garden project. The research used ethnographic participant observation and in-depth interviews to investigate how the practices of gardening and care embodied the values and aims of the organisation, and how those who worked, volunteered and used its services attached meaning to what they did. The research found that for project members’, being able to participate in practices in a way which was congruous with their values, was understood as an important facilitator of wellbeing. In keeping with the Aristotelian contention, participants perceived wellbeing as something which was realised through achieving those ‘internal goods’ which constituted excellence in their practices. Adapting practices to make them more effective at realising external outcomes not only threatened the very means through which these values were realised, but also undermined how project workers felt they could utilise their practices to facilitate wellbeing. The centrality of doing well to being well documented in this research suggests that if policy is to take wellbeing, and the role of the third sector in fostering this seriously, then values should be viewed as ends in themselves, and not merely as means to realise particular external outcomes.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Context and rationale for research

For many third sector theorists, the value-rational roots of these organisations are what set them apart from the more bureaucratic instrumentally-rational organisations of the state and the market¹. Whilst the third sector does not have a monopoly on values, the idea that third sector organisations are driven by their values rather than profit (the market) or public policy agendas (the state) has informed normative, and ideal-typical understandings of sector differences (Kramer, 1981; Mason, 1996; Taylor and Langan, 1996; Frumkin, 2002; Billis, 2010; 2013). The assumption underpinning this idea is that those who work and volunteer in such organisations do so because they wish to express deeply held personal and moral values. The sector therefore effectively acts as a value-guardian where different private conceptions of the good can be realised (Kramer, 1981; Frumkin, 2002).

Interestingly, government policy discourse and practice has accorded little attention to the specific nature of these values. Instead, values are routinely conflated with the particular 'added-value' which can be harnessed for the purposes of public policy (see HM Treasury 2002: 16; 2005:23-24; OTS, 2006; WAG, 2006; 2007: 3; 2008a; 2008b). Such arguments featured heavily in the 'Third Way' policy discourse of New Labour (1997-2010) conceived by Anthony Giddens, whereby the third sector was heralded as an alternative to the state and the market when it came to solving social problems, in particular, the issues of civic participation and social exclusion (Giddens, 1998).

This perceived 'added-value' served as the rationale to enhance the role of the sector in service provision via the use of contracts. Although, in some respects, this represented a continuation of the contracting trends set in place by public sector reform and New Public Management initiatives of the Conservative government in the 1980s/early 1990s (Le Grand and Bartlett, 1993), commentators such as Lewis (2005) have argued that New Labour sought to make a break with the top-down contract relationships of the past, endeavouring instead to shift this relationship to

¹ I shall discuss this idea further in chapter two.

one of partnership, as evidenced in the introduction of The Compact² (Home Office, 1998). The Compact aimed to create ‘a new approach to partnership’ between statutory and voluntary and community sectors ‘based on shared values and mutual respect’ (Carrington, 2002:2). These were followed by local Compacts emphasising greater partnership between local government and the third sector (Craig et al, 2002). During these years the sector enjoyed more state support and engagement with government than it had ever had before³ (Alcock, 2010a). On the whole third sector representatives seemed to embrace the government’s desire for the sector’s larger role in society, welcoming the benefits from their new found financial support (Alcock, 2010a; Lewis, 2005). However, with this support came higher expectations, and a change of the environment in which voluntary organisations were expected to work.

In England, there was a proliferation of contracting out to the sector under New Labour. Government support for the sector increased with income from statutory sources growing from £8.4 billion in 2001-2002, to £12 billion in 2006-2007. All of this additional income came from contract funding, which increased from £3.8 billion to £7.8 billion, whereas grant funding declined from £4.6 to £4.2 billion (Kane et al, 2009). Although third sector policy has been devolved in Wales since 2000, similar policy discourse pertaining to an enhanced role for the sector due to its perceived ‘added-value’ was also apparent during these years (2000-2010) (Alcock, 2009; 2012; see WAG, 2006; 2007; 2008a: 18; 2008b; 2009:2). Thus, arguments concerning ‘added-value’ specifically centred on harnessing this value to realise particular policy goals via the utilisation of ‘partnerships’, whereby voluntary organisations were conceived as willing and equal partners to the state⁴ (Lewis, 2005; Carmel and Harlock, 2008; Milbourne, 2013; Rochester, 2013).

² Although in England ‘The Compact’ is not legally binding as it is in Wales.

³ As well as an increase in contracting, a number of initiatives were also invested in to better prepare the sector for this enhanced role (see (ChangeUp (2004) and Futurebuilders (2005)).

⁴ The 1998 Government of Wales Act placed a statutory duty on the Welsh Government to promote the interests of voluntary organisations across all of its functions (National Assembly Wales (NAW), 2000; Welsh Government 2014) (Chaney, 2002; Alcock, 2012). For Chaney (2002), the formally legislated commitment to promote and engage with the sector in Wales indicates a higher government commitment to supporting the sector than in England. Further, following the formation of the Coalition government in England in 2010, policy for the sector has shifted to the wider remit of organisations included under the more amorphous Civil Society. Whilst there is still an emphasis on non-state solutions to policy problems, it has been argued that the third sector has been de-

There has been a body of empirical research which has explored how changing state-sector relationships have played out for the sector in England, particularly their effect on the distinctive character and independence of voluntary organisations (OCVA-Framework, 2008; Buckingham, 2009; 2010; Milbourne 2009; Milbourne and Cushman, 2011; Milbourne, 2013). Some of this research has been rather negative in its conclusions, arguing that the state's instrumental attitude to the sector has paradoxically undermined the very 'added-value' it initially sought these organisations for (Buckingham, 2009; 2010; Milbourne 2009), and exerted pressure on them to take on work which is not necessarily in keeping with their mission (Cairns et al, 2008; Packwood, 2007; Nevile, 2010).

However, whilst this research has touched on the implications this has had for what are assumed to be the distinctive values and practices of the sector in general, the impact of contracting on the more specific everyday practices, and, in turn, the values which underpin these, is left under-explored. Indeed, there has been little empirical examination of the values within individual organisations, and more than this, the sort of ethnographic research which has sought to uncover the relationships of these values to their everyday practices. On the whole conceptions of values remain under theorised. Values have been identified with bland mission statements (Rochester 2013), or articulated at the more abstract level of discourse (see Jochum and Pratten, 2008). This tells us little about what these values really mean in terms what the organisation does, and how it does it. If the traditional Aristotelian conception of values is taken into account, then action is at the core what it is to realise values (Aristotle, 2002; MacIntyre, 2007). This means that values can only be understood through a detailed examination of the practices of these organisations. Additionally, empirical research which has explored the impact of the changing relationships between the third sector and the state on voluntary organisations delivering services in Wales is also limited.

privileged from the preferred provider it was under New Labour (Macmillan, 2013a; Milbourne, 2013).

Although the Welsh Government's greater commitment to public services has meant that trends of contracting-out to the sector have been less entrenched in Wales than in England (see WAG, 2010a), where the sector does play a role in service provision (particularly in the fields of health and social care), it is primarily via contracts (procurement) as opposed to grants (WCVA, 2016). Moreover, the Welsh Government continues to emphasise the need for the state to work in partnership with the sector, by commissioning more of its services out to the third sector in the drive to deliver better public services (WAG, 2010b; Welsh Government, 2014a). The Welsh Government argue that this process should focus on the generation of outcomes which are of value not only for users, but also for the strategic agendas of the Welsh Government, which stress a need for all social care services to promote independence and social inclusion (WAG, 2010b; 1). Thus in Wales, as in England, the value of third sector organisations, and the rationale for funding them, increasingly appears to be understood in relation to the particular 'added-value' outcomes they can provide public policy.

However, it remains to be seen what this instrumental attitude may do to the particular values which shape what the organisation does and how it does it. More critical commentators such as Rochester (2013) have argued that the study of voluntary organisations which are already in receipt of statutory funding is pointless, because the values and practices of these organisations will already reflect the more bureaucratic and instrumentally-rational values of their funders. For Rochester, values only remain central to the functioning of those organisations which operate on the margins of the sector – those which the state has chosen not to embrace, but represent the core of what the sector is supposed to be about (Rochester, 2013: 155). Whilst this is in some respects compelling in a society where the ideology of the market dominates (MacIntyre, 2007; Sandel, 2012), he provides little empirical evidence for this claim. It also overlooks how individuals and organisations may fight to sustain their values and the practices which underpin these, in light of pressures to adopt the more instrumentally-rational imperatives of the state.

Further, it ignores the fact that as humans, we are beings for whom things matter. For philosopher Andrew Sayer our values are integral to how we orient ourselves to the world, and inform our actions within it. Despite this, he argues that the

fundamental role values play in our lives has not been taken seriously by social science research (Sayer, 2011). However, it is perhaps all the more surprising that this has been the case in the third sector research literature, since the very notion that these organisations are value-led has informed how the third sector and voluntary action are conceived in popular discourse. If the contention that the appeal of participation in these organisations lies in the opportunity they provide for individuals to come together to realise particular shared social, philosophical and/or ethical values is true, then pressures to shift organisational practices to better realise the outcomes that are deemed worthy of value in public policy may have implications for these values.

Thus, at the heart of this research is an interest in exploring what the increasingly instrumental attitude of the state may mean for the indigenous values and practices of these organisations, which have hitherto received little detailed exploration in the research literature. This research seeks to offer a theoretically and ethnographically rigorous analysis of the relationship of values to practices in a Welsh third sector organisation working in the field of mental health.

1.2 Chapter summaries

Chapter two documents how values have been discussed in the third sector literature, including the particular distinctive attributes which have been thought to underpin its 'added-value'. It then goes on to look at some of the empirical literature which has explored some of the consequences of changing state-sector relationships for voluntary organisations' distinctive attributes, as a result of this perceived 'added-value', including how value is measured and understood within current commissioning and procurement practices. In doing so, it will show that the conflation of values with 'added-value', has meant that values have been sorely overlooked in the literature. It will then go on to put forward the case for exploring the role of values, and their relationship to practices within these organisations in more detail, showing how the virtue-ethics of Aristotle, as well as others influenced by his thought, may present a useful lens to do so. It is here where I suggest why a mental health garden project may be a particularly interesting site to conduct this

enquiry, ending the chapter with the specific research questions this thesis aims to address.

Chapter three is an account of my methodology. This includes a discussion of ethnographic participant observation and in-depth interviews, the research site, and how I got access to it, my experience of adopting this methodology, some of the ethical and practical challenges I faced, and how I analysed my data.

Chapters' four to seven explore my empirical data. Chapter four introduces the research site and participants. It also documents an average day at the project, and includes some of the success stories I encountered whilst there. Chapters five, six and seven explore in more detail the value which was accorded to the practices on the project by my participants. Chapter five documents how participants understood the inclusiveness of the project (or not). Chapter six looks at wellbeing, and how the practices of the project were understood to realise this. Chapter seven explores the value attributed to learning on the project, and how the proposed introduction of accreditation was understood to threaten this, as well as some of the qualities explored in the previous chapters.

Chapter eight shows how my data answer the research questions, and explores the implications of these findings in relation to the theoretical and empirical literature discussed in chapter two. In my final chapter I discuss some of the potential policy implications, and suggest that these will depend on whether a communitarian or critical theory perspective is taken. I will then state my own perspective and suggest some policy recommendations in line with these. I then identify some avenues for future research, some of the study's limitations, and my contribution to the field.

1.3 Defining Terms

Numerous terms exist to refer to voluntary organisations: not-for-profits, non-governmental organisations, the voluntary sector, the voluntary and community sector, the third sector, the social economy, and civil society. The UK has historically employed the term 'voluntary sector', although policy changes over the last couple of decades have seen this term shift to the 'third sector', and more recently in

England, 'civil society' (Milbourne, 2013). Whilst I am aware terms and sector boundaries are particularly contested in the UK context (see Alcock, 2010b), in this thesis I use the term 'third sector' specifically in reference to what has historically been understood as the 'voluntary sector' in the UK. The terms 'voluntary organisation' and 'third sector' are therefore referred to interchangeably. When referring to scholars in the United States, however, I have opted to remain faithful to the term they have adopted (non-profits).

In third sector research and policy in the UK, Salamon and Anheier's (1997) definition of these organisations is the one which is commonly utilised (see Kendall and Knapp, 1996; Billis and Glennerster, 1998; Milbourne, 2013; HM Treasury 2002; 2005; WAG, 2008a). This distinguishes third sector organisations as, formally constituted organisations which are simultaneously, non-profit distributing, constitutionally independent from the state, and benefit in some degree from volunteers (Salamon and Anheier, 1997)⁵. The sector therefore includes a wide diversity of organisations ranging from small self-help and mutual aid groups, to large support and infrastructure bodies, all with varying levels of organisational formality, independence from external constraints, and use of volunteers (Knight, 1993 cited in Milbourne, 2013:5).

⁵ Interestingly Welsh policy documents also define these organisations in terms of them being 'value-driven' and motivated by the desire to further social, cultural or environmental objectives, rather than simply to make a profit' (WAG, 2008a:5)

2.0 Values and the third sector

2.1 Introduction

References to values or 'value' feature heavily in much of the literature on third sector organisations, with value being associated with such organisations in a number of different ways. This review looks at some of the ways value has been discussed, identifying the gaps in the literature and the unanswered questions regarding values within voluntary organisations. The review will first look at how such organisations have been understood as value-rational enterprises⁶. These arguments essentially place the associational roots of such organisations, and thus the shared cultural, political and/or ethical values which informed their inception, at the centre for understanding how they function (Rothschild-Whitt, 1979, Kramer, 1981; Gerard, 1983; Jeavons, 1992; Mason, 1996, Paton and Cornforth, 1992; Paton, 1996; Frumkin, 2002; Rothschild and Milofsky, 2006; Billis, 1993; 2010). These arguments contend that because of their value-rational, associational roots, these organisations cannot be understood in the same way as the organisations of the state and the market, which are informed by principles underpinned by instrumental rationality. Thus, ideal-typically at least, these organisations are distinctive from the state and the market.

However, there is also a growing recognition that in reality many third sector organisations actually function as hybrids, combining logics from the other two sectors with their own (Evers, 1995; Billis, 2010). Whilst this introduces tension as a result of these organisations having to balance their value-rational roots with more instrumentally-rational concerns, for some theorists it has also been understood to give such organisations a 'comparative advantage' when it comes to addressing particular needs (Billis and Glennerster, 1998) and tackling particular policy problems (Billis, 2001). This hybrid quality was also recognised as a source of 'added-value' in the policy discourse that underpinned the shifts in government policy towards the

⁶ I am borrowing Weber's term, Wertrational here. Value rational action refers to action which is driven by a 'belief in the value for its own sake...independent of its prospects of success' (Weber, 1968: 37). Voluntary organisations are understood to be driven by the values and beliefs of their members and are thus considered value-rational enterprise by many third sector scholars.

sector that were central in shaping the conditions that these organisations work in today. The theoretical and empirical evidence for this will be explored, before going on to look at some of the empirical evidence which suggests that the policy changes discussed in chapter one have served to change the environment these organisations work in, in such a way that has paradoxically exacerbated trends of hybridisation, undermining the distinctive features for which voluntary organisations were initially valued for. These changes have also had implications for how value is understood, with their ‘added-value’ increasingly being understood as their ability to realise particular *outcomes*. I will look at some of the empirical evidence exploring the impact this has had on third sector organisations, including how such organisations are now being encouraged to capture and measure their value. In response to some of the more negative implications, I will then go on to suggest that it might be worthwhile to return to the value-rational and value-expressive roots of such organisations, which have received relatively little research attention despite acknowledgement of their centrality to these organisations (Rothschild and Milofsky, 2006).

More specifically, it may be worthwhile to look at how these values are expressed and realised in particular *practices*, since some of the research evidence suggests that a sense of anguish is experienced by voluntary organisation employees when they lose control over their practices as a result of changing state-sector relationships. Whilst the implications of this have been explored in relation to the independence and autonomy of these organisations, there has been little exploration of the normative and ethical value of these practices for those who work and volunteer in these organisations, of their relationship to organisational mission, and of how these practices are experienced by service users. Looking at *practices*, and the value that is attributed to these, would not only allow a more in-depth understanding of the implications of such changes on third organisations, but may also provide a means for organisations to better articulate and defend their values.

2.2 Third sector organisations as value-expressive and value-rational

Much of the early literature on third sector or voluntary organisations sought to explore their origins. Economic theorists such as Weisbrod (1988) located the origins of such organisations in the failure of both the market and the state to provide for particular needs, thus positioning the third sector as a residual complement to the welfare economy (Weisbrod, 1988; see Hansmann, 1980 also). Whilst there is some truth to this, historically the presence of voluntary organisations as welfare providers preceded the formation of the welfare state, with many being the vanguards of services which were later taken on by the state (Prochaska, 2006). Further, by constructing their role as wholly supplementary, there is a tendency to value such organisations merely in terms of their capacity to provide services to those that the state cannot reach, rather than in terms of the unique or distinctive approach to what they do (Kramer, 1981). Thus, there have been a number of theorists, from both the UK and United States, who have sought to take a less residual approach to understanding the sector's origins, instead understanding the sector in relation to what it is, rather than what it is not. This particular literature has placed the values expressive and value-rational character of such organisations at the core of their existence, making this central for understanding how such organisations are distinctive from the organisations of the state and the market (Rothschild-Whitt, 1979; Kramer, 1981; Gerard, 1983; Lohmann, 1992; Jeavons, 1992; Paton and Cornforth, 1992; Mason, 1996; Paton, 1996; Frumkin, 2002; Rothschild and Milofsky, 2006; Billis, 2010).

For example, Lohmann's (1992) theory of 'the commons' (the term he uses to refer to what is largely understood as the third, voluntary or non-profit sector) contends that in contrast to the organisations of the state and the market, organisations which occupy the commons comprise of individuals who freely come together to pursue commonly defined goals. That individuals freely choose to come together to pursue particular goals is indicative of the associative roots of these organisations (Lohmann, 1992; see also Billis, 1993). This fundamentally differentiates them from the organisations of the market and state, since compliance is achieved through non-

coercive means. That is, if the state achieves compliance through coercion and sanctions, and the market through rewards or remuneration, the third sector does so through appeals to shared norms and values (Etzioni, 1961; Rothschild-Whitt, 1979; Mason, 1996; Frumkin, 2002; Kendall, 2003). For Mason (1996) and Frumkin (2002), without this expressive or normative appeal, third sector organisations would not be able to gain volunteer involvement, attract the financial support of donors and members, or recruit employees who are likely to be paid more elsewhere. This means that such organisations, particularly those with some form of public benefit, 'come into being and exist primarily to give expression to the social, philosophical, moral or religious values of their founders and supporters' (Jeavons, 1992: 404). Mirroring this Cloke et al's (see 2005 and 2007) research on voluntary organisations providing emergency services for the homeless found that these organisations 'were not only undergirded by strong and deliberate discourses of "mission" or "values" but that these discourses presented a significant ethical bases for involvement and action' (Cloke et al, 2007: 1089-1090; see also Cloke et al, 2005 for further discussion). Indeed, for Paton (1999) when these organisations are placed in their historical context they can be understood as the practical expressions of the concerns of different social and political movements.

Kramer (1981) also places the expression of values at the centre of voluntary action, arguing that voluntary organisations not only function as service pioneers and providers, but also as 'value guardians of voluntaristic, particularistic and sectarian values' (Kramer, 1981: 9). However, given his concern with ascertaining and evaluating the different functions⁷ of these organisations, his research merely posits some of the more generic types of values which are thought to underpin voluntary action, rather than identifying the more specific personal values which will have initially brought individuals together to form organisations focused on addressing a particular need or voicing a particular concern. It therefore tells us little about how the more specific personal values of members shape what the organisation does. The

⁷ Kramer 's (1981) seminal research explored what he identified as the four different functions of voluntary organisations (service pioneer role, value guardian and volunteerism role, improver role and advocacy, service provider role) in the field of mental health and disability across different welfare state regimes (England, the Netherlands, Israel and the USA). His research aimed to explore the extent to which organisations fulfilled all four of these roles in different countries and how different institutional arrangements affected each of these.

more generic values identified by Kramer include altruism, self-help, democratic collective action, pluralism and the humanising or personalising of the provision of a social service. These are the taken-for-granted values which are often believed to underpin the work of voluntary organisations in much of the research literature on the third sector. Voluntary organisations are expected to protect and promote these values by offering opportunities for their active expression. Indeed in democratic societies, the legitimisation of voluntary organisations by the state has rested on the value that has historically been attached to the free expression of these particular interests (Kramer, 1981: 193; Evers, 1995).

More than just representing spaces for people to give expression to their own particular values, Jeavons (1992) posits that value-expressive organisations also hope that those they seek to serve will adopt these values too. This is especially true for religious organisations. For example, Cloke et al's (2005) examination of the discourses of ethos in the organisational materials of 149 organisations providing emergency services to the homeless (e.g. informational booklets, leaflets and brochures) found that 60 of these organisations displayed discourses of Christian 'caritas'⁸. Organisations displaying discourses of Christian 'caritas' were unambiguous about the Christian ethos underpinning their services, and for some, this extended to openly expressing an evangelist impulse to convert those they served. However, many providers, evangelical or otherwise, were also at pains to state the unconditional nature of services they offered. Yet, interestingly, this also tended to be framed as an expression of Christian ethos, in that it was understood as an embodiment of the unconditional love of Christ. Thus, for many of these

⁸ Cloke et al (2005) utilised Coles' (1997) politics of generosity to identify three ideal types of ethos underpinning these organisations. The first of these is Christian 'caritas', whereby the ethical prompt for charity is underpinned by traditional notions of Christian charity and love. Historically, 'caritas' has also been entwined with the evangelical drive to convert others. The second of these is 'secular humanism' whereby the ethical prompt centres on human beings, and their political and economic institutions. This ethos is underpinned by a moral universalism, and thus tends to rely on 'given' notions of basic human rights and rules of social justice. Coles is critical of both Christian caritas and secular humanist charity, arguing that both are rooted in a self-identification of what is true, just, valuable, and right. Consequently, the 'giving' of charity originates from the self and therefore often discriminates against the giver, in that the giver in his or her obliviousness to alterity, is unable to be receptive to the difference of the other. The final ideal-type, 'post-secular' charity, differs from the former two in that it 'encompasses a receptive generosity, whereby giving involves the ability to receive the specificity of the other, and to be generous in the context of that specificity rather than in the context of the self' (Coles, 1997 cited in Cloke et al, 2005:398).

organisations, their work with the homeless represented an expression of faith-in-action. Not only was their work motivated by what were understood as God-like concerns, but in doing this work, these organisations explicitly sought to provide an exemplar of a good Christian, with the view to inspire the Christian impulse in others (Cloke et al, 2005). The same impulse to change others is also present in organisations seeking social change. Jeavons uses environmental advocacy and conservation groups to illustrate this point further. Whilst such organisations work towards improving the general quality of life and environment for others (public-benefit), in the process, they are also hoping to inculcate a different attitude to nature in those whose lives they aim to improve.

Further, in organisations where the expression of values is central, the means an organisation adopts to conduct its work are as important as the ends, and therefore vital for organisational integrity. For example, Jeavons cites the public outcry that was expressed when a non-profit recycling firm voted against legislation which would result in a marked reduction in waste, because this would have threatened its resource base. Jeavons argues that this particular organisation had lost sight of the environmentally progressive values which had informed its inception, instead becoming solely concerned with its survival, and thus undermining its integrity as an environmental organisation in the process (Jeavons, 1992). Indeed, in some expressive organisations, the means an organisation adopts may be valued more than the ends it seeks to achieve, since these will be an important vehicle through which values are expressed and shared. For example, research on Christian voluntary organisations by Cairns et al (2007) found that being able to realise religious values through what they did, such as caring for those in need, was more of a motivating factor for their work than the realisation of particular outcomes (Cairns et al, 2007: 427). For Mason (1996) because the opportunity for values-expression is likely to be an important draw for individuals to become involved in these organisations, the challenge for management is to successfully balance the value-expressive dimension with the instrumental dimension (outcomes and goals) (Mason, 1996).

That value-expression may be of primary concern and importance, means that such organisations could be characterised by what Weber (1968) termed as value or substantive rationality, whereby social action is driven by a 'belief in the value for its

own sake...independent of its prospects of success' (Weber, 1968: 25). Instrumental rationality on the other hand, is action driven by procedures and rules which are informed by means-end calculations without regard to persons (Weber, 1968: 24). Thus the state and the market, with their concern for procedure and efficiency, can be characterised as instrumentally rational in that their activities are always a means to achieving their overall objectives. For example, the activities of the state are primarily concerned with the implementation of public policy as a means to maintain political power; and in the case of the market, activities are primarily concerned with maximising efficiency as a means to accumulate profit (Evers, 1995; Frumkin, 2002; Billis, 2010).

Whilst in practice the organisations of the state and the market may also be influenced by value rationality – for example, by the personal values of employees, or through adopting particular organisational practices which are not underpinned by market principles, such as corporate social responsibility – these will always be subservient to their instrumental goals, with the political or financial bottom line being indispensable to their legitimacy (O'Neill and Young, 1988 cited in Jeavons, 1992; Evers, 1995; Frumkin, 2002; Billis, 2010). The legitimacy of voluntary organisations on the other hand rests on the degree to which they fulfil the mission to which their donors, members and volunteers subscribe. Whilst this mission may include instrumental goals, such as producing a particular outcome for a beneficiary, or seeking to effect wider social change, what these goals are, and how they are to be achieved, will essentially be determined by the shared values that initially brought the members together (Jeavons, 1992; Taylor and Langan, 1996; Billis, 2010; 2013).

If value rationality as opposed to instrumental rationality is understood as being at the roots of such organisations, and in turn what makes them distinct from the organisations of the state and the market, then in theory these organisations should also be structured and function in such a way as to allow value-rationality primacy. Indeed, the above accounts of how voluntary organisations achieve their legitimacy, along with their reliance on non-coercive means to draw individuals to their cause, already indicates that such organisations cannot be subject to the same command and control of traditional management (Billis, 1993; Harris, 1998; Rochester, 2013). Ideal-typical examples, such as Rothchild's-Whitt's (1979) 'collectivist organisation'

and Billis' (2010) idea of the 'voluntary association', present further evidence to suggest that these organisations function in a way that is qualitatively different from the organisations of the state and the market.

2.3 Third sector organisations as functioning in a way that is qualitatively different from the organisations of the state and the market

2.3.1 Rothchild-Whitt's Collectivist Organisation

Rothchild-Whitt's (1979) research on collectivist organisations⁹ found that these organisations rejected the dominant rational-bureaucratic organisational model, structuring themselves in such a way as to favour value-rational over instrumentally-rational action. Organisational decisions were often justified in terms of substantive ethics (value rationality) as opposed to the formal rules (instrumental rationality) characteristic of the state bureau and the firm. The organisations in her study also rejected hierarchical authority, with decisions being made collectively, and on the basis of consensus. Because of this, members were often recruited on the basis of their perceived ability to fit in and whether they shared the substantive values of the members, with personal and political values, or even prior establishment of affective bonds, being central to recruitment decisions. This contrasts with the reliance on formal professional qualifications adopted by the bureau. Further, organisational rules were utilised in an ad hoc manner as and when the need for them arose, contrasting with the formal rules and procedures which are consistently adhered to in bureaucratic organisations (Rothschild-Whitt, 1979).

2.3.2 Billis' Voluntary Association

Billis (1993; 2010) contends that voluntary organisations defy the traditional top-down bureaucratic organisational model used to inform orthodox management

⁹ Collective organisations are collectively controlled organisations whereby members 'participate in the *collective* formulations of problems and *negotiation* of decisions' (Rothschild-Whitt, 1979: 511 her emphasis)

practice, because they are often more complex and structurally ambiguous than the organisations of the state or the market. This is because they combine aspects of the associational or personal world with those of the bureaucratic world (1993). For Billis, the pure ideal-type of the voluntary association¹⁰ where there are no paid roles, is useful for understanding the nature of this ambiguity. In traditional bureaucratic organisations there are clear lines of demarcation between roles, making it easy to disentangle the operational activities that management is concerned with from the rest of the organisation. For example, the organisations' owners, such as the shareholders in the private sector firm, or the elected public body in the public sector bureau, will often play no role in operational activities which are carried out by paid staff. Customers or clients will also be separate from the operational activities and governance of such organisations. However, because voluntary associations are owned by their members these roles and functions will be more blurred; decisions will be made collectively or at least in a collegiate manner, and users or beneficiaries may be part of the governing body, or may play a role in the operational activities, such as contributing volunteer labour. Further, because of their reliance on voluntary labour, roles will be allocated not only on the basis of the time and energy individuals are able to contribute, but also on the basis of individuals' personal interests. This will in turn depend on the extent to which other members allow them to articulate their interests. Whilst Billis contends that this represents the ideal-type which should be used to inform our understanding of the distinctiveness of the third sector, he acknowledges that ideal types are rare and that most voluntary organisations operate as hybrids, often combining competing principles and practices from the spheres of the market and the state (Billis, 1993; 2010).

2.3.3. Third sector organisations as hybrids

For Billis (2010), as voluntary associations evolve to become more formal voluntary organisations, they inevitably become more hybridised, taking on some of the characteristics of the bureaucratic organisation, such as paid staff (Billis terms this 'shallow hybridity'). This does not necessarily pose any challenges to the associational roots of an organisation. However over time, hybridity can become

¹⁰ Voluntary associations are 'groups of people who draw a boundary between themselves and others in order to meet some problem, to "do something"' Billis (1993: 160)

more entrenched, usually out of a growing reliance on resources from the government and the private sector in the form of grants, contracts and sales. This results in voluntary organisations taking on more characteristics of the firm or the bureau, such as increased numbers of paid staff carrying out the operational work, and hierarchical management structures; and, with this, the need to think more instrumentally about organisational sustainability. When this occurs, voluntary organisations face the challenge of having to combine the alien qualities associated with the bureaucratic world, such as formal rules and standardised procedures, with the more informal approach of the associational world which is grounded in appeals to shared norms and values, and this challenge has implications for maintaining the value-rational base of the organisation (Billis, 2010).

For Harris (1998), the conflict between these different logics is particularly evident in clashes between volunteers and professional staff over which means and ends the organisations should use and pursue (Harris, 1998). Because of this complexity and ambiguity, the bureaucratic model of organisations is ill-suited to these organisations, since it only takes into account the instrumental dimension of organisations, and thus neglects the importance of the expressive dimension for understanding how voluntary organisations function. Thus, whilst Billis contends that the majority of third sector organisations function as hybrids, if ideal-typical conceptions are taken to inform how third sector organisations are understood, the value-rational element will remain central to how they function despite trends towards hybridisation. For Billis, this is because organisational legitimacy and accountability will ultimately be founded on the extent to which the affairs of these organisations are conducted in accordance with their stated aims and mission, and therefore their underlying value-rational base (Billis, 2010). Indeed, it is this conception of the sector which has traditionally informed how the organisational cultures of each sector have been distinguished by policy makers (Kendall, 2003; Billis, 2010). It also has meaning for those involved in the sector in terms of organisations' missions, working practices and sense of purpose (Paton and Cornforth, 1992; Borzanga and Tortia, 2006; Lewis, 2010).

However, whilst Billis acknowledges that hybridisation presents challenges for management in having to balance these different organisational logics, he offers little

advice as to how organisations can sustain their value-rational base, or the opportunities for the sorts of behaviour and practices which promote and sustain these values. For Billis, as long as organisations retain their accountability and legitimacy by remaining true to their mission and purpose, hybridity does not appear to pose a problem. Moreover, Billis and Glennerster (1998) argue that this structural ambiguity places voluntary organisations at a ‘comparative advantage’ when it comes to particular kinds of welfare provision (see also Billis, 2001), a claim I shall explore further in due course. Reflective of this sentiment also, are the discussions of value which have centred on the unique ‘added-value’ which third sector organisations are said to bring to service delivery (Macmillan, 2013b). This perception of ‘added-value’ has led to increasing political interest in utilising non-profit, voluntary or community-based organisations as solutions to social problems, such as reducing social exclusion and enhancing civic participation¹¹ (Home Office, 1998; Kendall, 2000; 2003; Milbourne, 2013; HM Treasury 2002: 16; HM Treasury 2005:23-24; OTS, 2006; WAG, 2008a; 2008b; 2009) as the following quote suggests: [voluntary organisations] ‘enable individuals to contribute to the development of their communities. By so doing they promote citizenship, help to re-establish a sense of community and make a crucial contribution to our aim of a just and inclusive society’ (Home Office, 1998:1).

2.4 Value understood as ‘added-value’

Much of the literature concerning the ‘added-value’ of the sector attributes it to the distinctive organisational qualities of the organisations which comprise the sector. For example, their non-profit and non-statutory status has led to claims that they are greater invokers of trust (Hansmann, 1980; James, 1989 cited in Lorentzon, 2010; Putnam 1993; Giddens, 1998), and more innovative and responsive service providers (Hansmann, 1980; Weisbrod, 1988; Evers, 1995; Billis and Glennerster, 1998;

¹¹ Indeed, Chaney and Wincott’s (2014) content analysis of Welsh Government policy documents found that much of the policy discourse in Wales has valued the sector in terms of its perceived capacity to develop a more participatory democracy, and the sector is seen as more trust-invoking and responsive than services delivered by the state, accruing positive benefits for communities (Chaney and Wincott, 2014; see WAG, 2006; WAG, 2009).

Halfpenny and Reid, 2002; Evers and Laville, 2004). Whilst the theory behind these claims is compelling, the reality is more complex, as the following will demonstrate.

2.4.1 'Added-value': third sector organisations as greater invokers of trust?

Economic theorists have contended that the not-for-profit status of third sector organisations means that citizens may be more likely to put their trust in them as service providers, since there is no pressure to downgrade the quality of services to increase profit (Hansmann, 1980; James, 1989 cited in Lorentzon, 2010). Furthermore, the presence of multiple-stakeholders (such as board members, staff, users and volunteers, see Billis and Glennerster, 1998) also means that members often have a direct stake in what the organisation does, reducing the incentive to cut corners (Ben-Ner and Gui, 1993 cited in Anheier and Kendall, 2000). Whilst there may be some truth to these observations, Anheier and Kendall (2000) argue that these claims are difficult to assess empirically because they tend to conceive humans as rational choice actors, assuming that individuals choose service providers as a result of utilitarian cost-benefit calculations, which is overly simplistic. For them, the fact that service providers from different sectors are often able to successfully operate in the same field (e.g. in health care) suggests that consumers do not necessarily make decisions about service providers based on cost-benefit calculation. Further, not all for-profit organisations will be purely profit-maximising alone. For example they may have a genuine interest in providing a good service, generating a small income to allow them to do this. Moreover, the institutional arrangements of the state may also act to keep market providers in check by limiting profit-seeking behaviour in particular fields. This may also help to invoke public trust in private sector service providers. Overall, there is little empirical evidence on both the demand and the supply side as to how choices about different service providers are made (Anheier and Kendall, 2000).

More importantly for Anheier and Kendall is that the conception of trust put forward by economic theorists is over-simplified, essentially viewed in transactional terms, with individuals choosing to put their trust in something or someone through calculating the perceived benefits or risks from doing so. This does not take into

account the more social and relational aspects of trust. For example, religious institutions providing welfare may invoke stronger and more deferential or hierarchical forms of trust, than the more reflexive trust associated with more participatory membership associations. Trust plays an essential role in the effectiveness of services in both cases, but the force behind the trust rests on different motivations and value bases. In this respect, voluntary organisations with services directed towards particular client groups, such as disabled people's organisations, may already have a captive audience whose trust is easier to evoke (Anheier and Kendall, 2000). Thus for those hard-to-reach client groups whose trust may be particularly difficult to secure by statutory providers, voluntary organisations may have particular 'added-value' (see Billis and Glennerster, 1998 also).

Not only have voluntary organisations been understood as being more able to evoke the trust of particular service consumers, but from the perspective of social capital theorists such as Putnam (1993), trust as a quality in itself is understood as being specifically generated through participation in voluntary associations. For Putnam, participation in voluntary associations creates greater opportunities for trust and reciprocity-building encounters. According to this theory, trust and co-operation can only really be learned in the family or the free associations of civil society, as this is where the inculcation of informal norms and values occurs, which provides the conditions under which trust and co-operation can be forged. When transferred into the public sphere, these values can have a positive economic and political impact, making them forms of social capital. Putnam bases his theory on research conducted in Italy, attributing the economic and political success of The North to the higher density of associations when compared with the poorer less politically successful regions of The South (Putnam 1993; Putnam, 2000). Fukuyama (1995) mirrors this reasoning, arguing that forms of social capital such as trust underpin the economic cohesion necessary for economic growth, claiming that societies with a high proportion of voluntary associations tend to be more economically prosperous (Fukuyama, 1995).

Such ideas were also influential in Giddens' third way theory in the UK. For Giddens, trust is also a form of social capital which can be harnessed for successful economic regeneration and broader civic renewal. Voluntary organisations are understood as

being particularly adept at cultivating this form of capital amongst more marginalised groups, due to them often being embedded in the communities they serve (Giddens, 1998). From the perspective of social capital theorists, therefore, the 'added-value' voluntary organisations can bring as a result of this quality extends to having a positive knock-on effect on the economy and wider social cohesion, and thus can help to promote social inclusion.

Whilst the relationship between interpersonal trust and membership in voluntary associations is a persistent research finding cross-nationally (Anheier and Kendall, 2002), the supposed benefits this form of social capital brings to wider society is less straightforward. For Anheier and Kendall (2000; 2002), the view that the social capital gained through involvement in voluntary association can be transferred to economic and generally more civil behaviour, fails to take into account the potential particularisms and exclusivity of voluntary organisations (see Kendall, 2003), and does not consider whether the norms and values inculcated serve to reinforce or challenge the legitimacy of the social order. Nor does it take into account that participation in voluntary associations may not necessarily result in the exercise of more democratic decision-making, or participation for more vulnerable citizens (Anheier and Kendall, 2000; 2002). Further, the above arguments appear to rest on the pure ideal-type voluntary association as put forward by Billis (2010) where individual participation is wholly voluntary, with little consideration of whether more formal organisations which deliver their services through state contracts can inculcate trust in the same way.

Indeed, Tonkiss and Passey (1999) argue that whilst trust is central for understanding relations within the informal association, it becomes problematized in more formal hybrid organisations due to the presence of more hierarchical structures, specialist expertise, and competing interests. Utilising the theory of Luhmann (1988) they argue that this is because social relations in hybridised voluntary organisations tend to become characterised by procedural measures which are contractual in nature, and thus underpinned by 'confidence' in abstract systems of law and institutions. In the more informal voluntary association on the other hand, 'trust' is derived out of social relations that are founded in an environment of non-coercion and a commitment to shared norms and values. Thus, far from hybridity offering a

'comparative advantage' (Billis and Glennerster, 1998) by generating trust, the contradiction between the unique value-rational base of voluntary organisations, and the institutional structures acquired through their engagement with the market and/or the state, may undercut the relations of trust which formed their foundation, limiting their perceived role in this regard for both consumers and participants (Tonkiss and Passey, 1999).

2.4.2 'Added-value': third sector organisations as more responsive and innovative?

Voluntary organisations have also been regarded as more responsive and innovative. These qualities have been understood as offering a particular 'added-value' when public or private provision is viewed as too rigid or expensive, inviting more experimental, adventurous and specialist service provision to supplement the standardised services provided by the state (Kramer, 1981; Evers, 1995; Halfpenny and Reid, 2002). This view is grounded in neo-classical accounts of the origin of the third sector, which essentially view the sector as a provider of services to consumers who would otherwise be left wanting if service provision was left purely to state and market providers (Hansmann, 1980; Weisbrod, 1988). Voluntary organisations therefore surface to provide more specialist services where the state cannot do so, and where there is no profit incentive for market providers to do so (Weisbrod, 1988). This may explain why voluntary organisations often work with those who are most vulnerable in society, as they often do not have the financial capacity or the political clout as voters to have their needs met in more conventional ways, creating a demand for more specialist services (Billis and Glennerster, 1998).

Billis and Glennerster (1998) and Evers and Laville (2004) attribute this 'added-value' to the unique and ambiguous hybrid organisational structure of voluntary organisations which gives them a multi-stakeholder constitution. For Billis and Glennerster (1998) this structural ambiguity is reflected in the fact that there is often a lack of clear cut differentiation between employers, employees, and volunteers in hybrid voluntary organisations. For example, volunteers and employees may be involved in frontline service provision, as well as sit on the governing board; they may

also have been recipients of the services themselves (see Billis, 2010 also). Whilst Billis and Glennerster acknowledge this can be problematic, with employees and volunteers not always necessarily agreeing with governing bodies on the nature of services provided, they argue that it can also be beneficial, since it means that the gap between users and those in authority can be smaller. This structure can therefore motivate organisations to provide more sensitively tailored services (Billis and Glennerster, 1998).

For Evers and Laville (2004) the smaller gap between users and those in authority, also allows for greater mutual trust to be built between different stakeholders. For them this is reflected in the primacy of reciprocity-based activities in voluntary organisations where there is room for collective reflection and participation, in which strategic, instrumental and utilitarian factors are secondary. This gives them the 'added-value' of being able to bring what were once private concerns into the public sphere, with the information then being used to better design and inform service delivery. Thus third sector organisations' unique quality of possessing multiple stakeholders means that they are potentially better equipped to address much of the informational uncertainty that is characteristic of complex modern society (Evers and Laville, 2004: 34-35).

Despite these interesting theoretical and conceptual claims, there is limited empirical research demonstrating that voluntary organisations provide more innovative, responsive or effective services as a result of their distinctive organisational features (Macmillan, 2010, 2013a). However, research conducted by Osborne (1998) exploring innovation across a variety of service-providing voluntary organisations in England found that voluntary organisations could provide innovative services, but this quality was not evident across the board. Furthermore, innovative capacity was attributed to the interaction and arrangements between them and local government, rather than to any distinctive features in terms of their organisational structure or culture. Interestingly, Osborne concluded his study with a warning to sector representatives of the potential unintended consequence of championing these particular 'value-added' qualities as a means to secure themselves as preferred providers, arguing that it risked downgrading or dismissing their other important and genuinely distinctive attributes (Osborne, 1998).

Nonetheless, a later follow up study by Osborne et al (2008) found that innovation was increasingly used as a precondition for government funding, and that voluntary organisations publicised this quality strategically to help differentiate themselves from other organisations when competing to secure contracts. Moreover, echoing the findings from the earlier research, funding arrangements and relationships with statutory bodies remained determining factors in terms of the degree to which innovation was promoted. In this respect, the follow up study found that the potential innovative capacity of organisations was actually being undermined due to changes in the funding arrangements. These had led to more risk averse funding, as a result of contracts being increasingly linked to outcomes (Osborne et al, 2008).

Empirical research by Hopkins (2007) which compared user experiences of service providers from different sectors was also mixed in its findings in relation to the perceived 'added-value' of service responsiveness. Whilst users of third sector organisations providing employment services reported better experiences, and more responsive services, than users of their statutory or private counterparts, there were few differences found between the sectors in the fields of housing and domiciliary care. Indeed, with regard to the latter, private sector providers were found to be more responsive to service users' needs (Hopkins, 2007). In another study Kendall and Knapp (2001) also found little difference between different sector providers in terms of their motivations, with managers from both non-profit and for-profit care providers claiming to being committed to meet the needs of clientele. However, Kavanagh and Knapp (1997) did find that third sector residential day care providers were likely to provide more opportunities for leisure activities, something they attributed to the higher voluntary input, perhaps demonstrating a distinctive 'added-value' feature not present in public or private day-care provision (Kavanagh and Knapp, 1997 cited in Kendall, and Knapp, 2001). Thus, distinctive qualities are perhaps more likely to be present within particular or niche service areas than they are to be shared across the sector as whole (Hopkins, 2007; Macmillan, 2013b).

2.4.3 'Added-value': third sector organisations as enhancers of social inclusion?

The above sources of added-value (trust, innovation and responsiveness) have also been argued by theorists such as Billis (2001) and Giddens (1998) to make voluntary organisations well-equipped to tackle social exclusion¹²— a key objective of EU and British government policy (see Levitas, 2006). For Giddens in particular, the more responsive and individually-tailored welfare services voluntary organisations are thought to deliver can also help to foster the sort of 'positive welfare' he argues is crucial for equipping citizens with the right resources to navigate the risks of our time¹³, and can thus prevent individuals from becoming socially excluded in the first place.

Giddens argues that the traditional welfare system, with its focus on economic maintenance and the provision of measures which are designed to deal with events after they happen, is incapable of guaranteeing the security and wellbeing of its citizens in the way that it once did. This is partly because the risks we now face transcend the boundaries (and thus the control) of nation-states, and partly because the principle of collective provision on which the welfare state was initially founded, no longer reflects the pluralistic needs of its citizens. Consequently, Giddens argues that the state needs to develop a 'positive welfare' system whereby welfare is understood as the promotion of happiness and wellbeing. For Giddens, such happiness does not derive from the possession of economic wealth (as is implicit in a welfare system which has traditionally viewed welfare as an instrument to redistribute wealth more evenly amongst its citizens), but rather from 'security (of mind and body), self-respect and the opportunity for self-actualisation' (Giddens,

¹² The Social Exclusion Unit defined social exclusion as 'a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown' (SEU, 1997, cited in Levitas, 2006: 126). It is important to note that there is a difficulty in distinguishing social exclusion from poverty (Levitas, 2006).

¹³ Giddens identifies these risks as those associated with globalisation and the ecological crisis. These 'risks' exist alongside other important social and cultural shifts which he argues challenge the foundations of the welfare system, leading Giddens to argue that the left should embrace the alternative politics of the 'third way' (Giddens, 1998). Giddens' thought went on to influence the politics and policies of New Labour.

1994: 180). This means that welfare institutions must be concerned with fostering psychological benefits as much as economic ones (Giddens, 1998: 117).

A 'positive welfare' system would therefore move away from 'economic provision for the deprived', and instead, direct its energies towards 'the fostering of the autotelic self' who is able to positively confront the challenges and uncertainties posed by risk in such a way as to generate self-actualisation (Giddens, 1994: 192-194). The state's role in this would be to work in partnership with other agencies, including the third sector, to put in place the right conditions and opportunities for individuals to develop and actualise themselves. Instead of equality being understood as equality of outcome, as it is under the traditional welfare system, equality would be understood as equality of inclusion. Securing social inclusion thus becomes the means through which wellbeing can be realised within a 'positive welfare' system (Giddens, 1994).

However, Giddens argues that for this to happen, the concept of inclusion also needs to be broadened to take account of 'the wider diversity of goals life has to offer' (Giddens, 1998:110), moving beyond the narrow, and productivist understandings of inclusion that underpins the traditional welfare system (Giddens, 1994; 1998). For Giddens, the third sector can help to generate the inclusion which 'positive welfare' is founded on in two important ways. Firstly, by providing volunteering opportunities voluntary organisations can act as spaces of inclusion beyond paid work, providing resources and opportunities for the cultivation of individual identity, as well as generating important forms of non-economic wealth such as social cohesion. Secondly, because they are well-placed to address and respond to the needs of hard-to-reach groups, their services can be utilised to successfully generate security (trust) and self-respect in ways which can also foster self-actualisation through engagement with uncertainty amongst those who are socially excluded¹⁴. In providing this 'positive welfare' Giddens argues that third sector organisations should be seen as wealth creators, both economically and psychologically (Giddens, 1998). Thus, for Giddens, voluntary organisations can not only help to ameliorate the negative effects

¹⁴ Giddens refers to voluntary organisations' valuable role in delivering education and training programmes to marginalised groups as an example of how these organisations can be utilised to foster 'positive welfare' (Giddens, 1998).

of social exclusion, but more importantly, can be harnessed to foster 'positive welfare' in which happiness and self-actualisation are central components (Giddens, 1994).

As with the above sources of 'added-value', there has been little comparative research across the sectors which has sought to test the truth of such claims. However, there has been some research in the field of mental health (a group of whom are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion (SEU, 2004)) which has explored the capacity of third sector organisations to facilitate social inclusion and wellbeing. Much of this research, interestingly, has focused on third sector organisations which utilise social and therapeutic horticulture (STH) or ecotherapy¹⁵ as an intervention (Sempik et al, 2005; Parr, 2007; Diament and Waterhouse, 2010; Bragg et al, 2013; Mind, 2013), and this focus also influenced my own choice of research site.

Sempik et al's (2005) research is worthy of note here because it is the only study out of those listed which explicitly attempted to measure the effectiveness of STH projects¹⁶ in relation to the four processes of social inclusion identified by Burchardt et al (2002). According to Burchardt et al, an individual is socially included if he or she is engaged in the following four processes: is involved in meaningful and socially valuable activity such as paid employment, education, training and unpaid or voluntary work (production); has the ability to buy goods and services that others can buy, and to access the same goods and public services that others can access (consumption); has access to social networks and opportunities to mix and engage with other people (social interaction); and is involved in local or national decision making (political engagement) (Burchardt et al, 2002).

Sempik et al (2005) found that STH projects fulfilled each of these facets of inclusion to varying degrees. For example, in relation to social interaction, the majority of participants formed new friendships on the projects (see Diament and Waterhouse, 2010; Mind, 2013; Bragg et al, 2013 also). However, for the most part, the formation

¹⁵ Both these terms broadly refer to interventions which utilise engagement with nature as a therapeutic tool. Although the concern and focus of the abovementioned research was not to demonstrate the value of the third sector, all of the organisations involved in the above studies were third sector organisations.

¹⁶ Their research consisted of 24 STH projects across the UK. Although their research did not strictly focus on mental health, a third of their client participants had mental health conditions.

of friendships on the project did not extend to enhancing social networks beyond the project (see also Parr, 2007). This led the authors to argue that projects needed to do more to ensure that clients use the social skills they gain from the project to interact socially beyond the project if they were to be fully successful at enhancing this element of inclusion. Nonetheless, that projects were often located in the wider community was, for them, an important facet of how STH can function to promote social inclusion, since they argue that this can help to challenge prejudice and misconceptions around mental health, thus reducing discrimination and stigma (see Parr, 2007 also). Participants were also able to participate and have a say in the daily running of the projects, and often consumed the produce (Sempik et al, 2005).

In relation to the process of production, Sempik et al (2005) found that whilst participants saw their participation on projects as 'work', they also dissociated this work from paid work. Gardening work was perceived as more enjoyable and less stressful than paid work, with the opportunity to engage with, and be in nature, a central component of this¹⁷. Indeed, although the stated aim of some of the projects were to help individuals access work, only 30 clients stated that they were attending projects as a means to find paid work. Overall, a year after the study took place, only one individual had moved onto full-time employment, three into part-time employment, and five were employed by the projects¹⁸. In contrast, the more recent evaluation of Mind's Eco-minds projects by Bragg et al (2013) found that 620 clients across the 130 projects involved had moved on into paid work as a result of participation in a project. This led Bragg et al to conclude that ecotherapy can provide 'added-value', not only by fulfilling a wide variety of health-related outcomes, but also by building social capital and supporting individuals in their return to work or education, supporting the claims made by Giddens (Bragg et al, 2013). Therefore this particular third sector intervention provides some evidence to suggest that third sector mental health organisations delivering specific niche services may be able to deliver outcomes in relation to social inclusion, but again, this cannot be attributed to the sector as a whole.

¹⁷ This particular example would be evidence for the kind of inclusion beyond productivism Giddens advocates in his conception of 'positive welfare' (Giddens, 1994).

¹⁸ Out of the 137 client participants involved in their research.

Whilst the empirical evidence relating to the capacity of third sector organisations to bring the ‘added-value’ to service delivery is far from conclusive (Public Administration Select Committee, 2008; Macmillan, 2010; 2013b) such claims feature heavily in arguments for an enhanced role for the third sector in service provision in England and Wales, and were influential in justifying the changes in government policy towards the sector between 1997 and 2010 (HM Government, 1997; Home Office, 1998; OTS, 2006; WAG, 2006; 2008a; 2008b; 2009:2). However, the subsequent policy changes which occurred as a result of this perceived ‘added-value’ (see chapter one) have paradoxically exacerbated trends towards hybridisation, with the growth of contracting raising questions as to how much third sector organisations can retain their distinctive value-rational roots in light of pressure from contracting to adopt more of the features and practices characteristic of statutory or private organisations, and in turn the more instrumentally-rational values which underpin these. For more critical commentators such as Rochester (2013), initiatives and efforts to enhance the involvement of voluntary organisations in service delivery during this period sought to further professionalise the sector by encouraging management strategies which adopted market values and practices, undermining its distinctive features (Rochester, 2013). Whilst it is beyond the scope of this review to explore all of these studies in detail, the following will briefly outline some of the empirical evidence for this.

2.5 Evidence of third sector organisations losing their distinctive attributes as a result of contracting

Reflective of the earlier theoretical arguments of Tonkiss and Passey (1998), evidence suggests that contracting has engendered more competitive relationships between voluntary organisations. This has led to concerns that this may force out some of the smaller, more locally embedded informal and volunteer-led services, losing the expertise and distinctive attributes government initially claimed to value in such organisations (OCVA-Framework, 2008; Buckingham, 2009; 2010; Milbourne 2009; Milbourne and Cushman, 2011; Milbourne, 2013). Buckingham’s (2009) research on homeless organisations in Southampton, for example, found that organisations were

struggling to balance the need to be more competitive in order to win contracts, with the need to cooperate with other organisations, undermining the distinctive trust relationships within and between organisations, and thus their capacity to provide effective services in the first place (Buckingham, 2009; 2010; see Milbourne, 2009; Milbourne and Cushman, 2011 for similar conclusions).

There is also evidence that the tension of having to balance the informal and the formal has undermined the voluntary base of such organisations. Milligan and Fyfe (2005) found that pressures to professionalize and adopt more formal working practices as a result of contracting had crowded out opportunities for volunteering (Milligan and Fyfe 2005; see Rochester, 2001 also). However, Buckingham (2010) was also able to identify organisations – the more ‘cautious contractors’ – which had successfully managed to balance the different tensions between the informal and formal as a result of contracting. Buckingham identified the larger scale of these organisations, along with strong volunteer and membership support, as factors which had allowed ‘cautious contractors’ to maintain their commitment to mission and their more informal working arrangements alongside statutory contracts. Tensions were, however, emerging in relation to performance measurement around contracts, leading Buckingham to question how long they would be able to maintain this middle ground (Buckingham, 2010)¹⁹.

Indeed, more critical commentators Bruce and Chew (2011) have argued that the competitive pressures leading more voluntary organisations to adopt ‘the

¹⁹ Utilising theories of hybridity (see Billis, 2010; Evers, 1995; Evers and Laville, 2004), Buckingham (2010) uses the welfare triangle (a visual representation of welfare provision, with third sector welfare located in the centre of the triangle, between the three poles of the market, state and informal welfare) to conceptualise the position of different types of ‘hybrids’ amongst homelessness TSOs in order to understand how the pull from the state and the market influences them in different ways. Four types were identified: ‘Comfortable contractors’ – a non-profit established with statutory money and thus what Billis (2010) would term an ‘enacted hybrid’, funded entirely by government contracts with no voluntary income and no volunteer presence and therefore experiencing little to no tension in contracting working; ‘Community based non-contractors’ – organisations which most closely resemble Billis’ ideal-type, almost entirely volunteer led and completely independent; ‘Compliant Contractors’ – charities which have become professionalised and are heavily dependent on government contracts with no volunteer involvement and no volunteer income; ‘Cautious Contractors’ – involved in government contracts but with significant voluntary income and volunteer involvement, tensions between multiple stakeholders, with difficulty adapting to government requirements.

management approaches and values of the private sector as a means to respond to their changing environment, risks social mission drift, confuses accountability and erodes charitable values' (Bruce and Chew, 2011: 155-156). Supporting this assertion perhaps, Buckingham's (2010) research found a manager of an organisation identified by Buckingham as a 'comfortable contractor' openly admitting that, to win contracts, the emphasis had to be placed on government priorities and measurements, and that these may not always be compatible with clients' needs, indicating evidence of mission drift and changing organisational priorities in light of more competitive funding arrangements (see also Cairns et al, 2006). Indeed, Buckingham concludes that the organisations which are successful in winning contracts are likely to be those more willing to succumb to pressures to 'relinquish values and practices most associated with the sector' in order to comply with outcomes determined by commissioners, adopting more features and practices of the state and the market in the process (Buckingham, 2010: 14).

In contrast, Nevile (2010) found that the service delivery organisations involved in her research strove to maintain their normative legitimacy, that is, their distinctive values base, by diversifying their funding and ensuring that they only bid for contracts which fitted their core mission. For example, one service-providing development organisation which worked with women to help them make more informed choices, avoided funding their work through funding streams which only paid for direct delivery time. This was because the organisation believed that it was important that the setting and learning environment was also appropriate for the women they worked with, and the funding did not take account of this. Similar reasoning about funding decisions was articulated by staff across all sixteen participating organisations. For Nevile this served as evidence that 'underlying ethical values continued to drive choices about the type of work the organisation engaged in' (Nevile, 2010: 535). However, despite the apparent commitment to mission, participants struggled with reconciling the more prescriptive nature of contracts with being able to respond to individual need, making services less flexible and responsive to service users (Nevile, 2010).

The above demonstrates some evidence to suggest that the state's utilisation of third sector organisations in service delivery via contracts has exacerbated trends of hybridisation. However, little is known about the extent to which the unique and distinctive value-rational base of individual organisations is preserved, or else undermined when practices associated with the organisations of the state and the market are adopted. Evidence from Nevile's (2010) research in particular alludes to the importance that may be attached to practices and particular ways of doing by individuals who work in third sector organisations. Whilst the organisations involved in her research believed they were able to maintain their commitment to mission despite a more competitive and prescriptive funding environment, there was a sense this had to be actively maintained, and that some ways of working were at stake. For example, in two of the participating organisations, being able to provide ongoing support which was tailored to the needs of individual service users was being compromised by performance indicators. However, the impact of this on the practices adopted, and on those delivering and in receipt of these services, was left unexplored. Thus, whilst Nevile identified the strategies that organisations had developed at the level of funding to maintain their commitment to mission, the focus of her research and the nature of the methods she adopted (semi-structured interviews) meant that she could not explore in any depth the potential importance which was also attributed to practices for realising values and mission, and what the loss of these may have meant to participants²⁰. Such an empirical enquiry may be timely, because the proliferation of contracting under New Labour (1997-2010) has significantly increased the pressure on third sector organisations to adapt to external imperatives.

²⁰ Nevile's research sought to explore the impact of funding mechanisms on an organisation's normative legitimacy (mission). 'Adherence to the value base or core mission of the organisation in terms of what work the organisation chose to do and how it chose to do it, were taken as indicators of normative legitimacy'. Participants were asked about the work of the organisation, sources of funding and the impact of funding mechanisms on the organisation and its work (Nevile, 2010: 533-534). What they weren't asked about, however, was how funding sources had impacted on organisations at the level of everyday practice and how this was experienced by those responsible for service delivery. The little evidence provided suggested that services had become less flexible and responsive in order to comply with more prescriptive contracts, suggesting shifts in practice, yet little further consideration is given about this means for the underlying ethical values which may inform how things are done.

2.6 The new contract culture: value as outcomes

As suggested in chapter one, the era of partnership signalled an enhanced role for third sector organisations in the delivery of public services. This was primarily achieved through an increase in the use of contracts as opposed to grants (Macmillan, 2010). Recent data for England and Wales from the NCVO suggests that contracts are now the dominant form of statutory funding for the sector, with 83 per cent of government income for the sector in 2012/13 coming from contracts and only 17 per cent from grants. This contrasts with the corresponding 57 per cent and 43 per cent in 2004/05 (Keen, 2015). Whilst this trend began under the previous (1979-1997) Conservative Governments, it became central to New Labour's efforts to enhance partnership working and create a greater role for the third sector in the design and delivery of services (Macmillan, 2010; Rees, 2014). This included developing new commissioning and procurement practices²¹ which sought to encompass a broader range of activities than under the previous contracting arrangements. These included involving the third sector in service design, and removing the barriers to third sector organisations' ability to gain contracts²² (Macmillan, 2010; see OTS, 2006). These practices were to be underpinned by performance regimes which placed less of an emphasis on outputs (activities undertaken), and more of an emphasis on outcomes for service users and the wider community (Wimbush, 2011; Bovaird et al, 2012). The new model of commissioning also aimed to create more sustainable and long-term funding for the sector, implement full-cost recovery, and create a level playing field for the third sector when it came to winning contracts from statutory bodies (Macmillan, 2010; Rees, 2014). Although such practices have continued to be promoted under the Coalition Government (Cabinet Office, 2010), evidence suggests that despite the promise of

²¹ The Office of the Third Sector (2006:5) defines these two processes as:-
commissioning – 'the cycle of assessing the needs of people in an area, designing and then securing an appropriate service'; and

procurement – 'the specific aspects of the commissioning cycle that focus on the process of buying services, from initial advertising through to appropriate contract arrangements'. (See Macmillan, 2010)

²² The principles underpinning good commissioning are also similar to those advocated by the idea of 'intelligent commissioning' (Audit Commission, 2007; Nef, 2009)

these efforts, many third sector organisations continue to experience challenges, barriers and concerns in relation to commissioning (see Hedley and Joy, 2012).

2.6.1 Third sector experiences of the new commissioning environment

More important for the purposes of this review is the broader impact of commissioning on independence, mission and organisational values. An evaluation of the National Programme for Third Sector Commissioning found that over half of the commissioners involved believed that third sector organisations lacked the skills, knowledge and experience to manage public sector contracts (Shared Intelligence, 2008 cited in Macmillan, 2010: 15). Interestingly, this supposed lack of expertise has been partly attributed to cultural differences, and an unwillingness to adapt to the new commissioning environment. For example, the Department of Health Third Sector Commissioning Task Force identified ‘culture and behavioural change’ as the greatest obstacles to commissioning (DOH, 2006:9); and research by Baines et al (2010) found that commissioners perceived third sector organisations as being unable to adequately evidence their outcomes, and insufficiently business-like (Baines et al, 2010). In light of this, the third sector has been urged to become more ‘professional’ by some sector representatives (see Bubb and Michell, 2009). That this is the case, suggests that for some commentators, the sector’s value may rest solely on its capacity to deliver outcomes. However, the pressure to adopt more business-like practices in the name of enhancing so-called organisational effectiveness has obvious implications for how voluntary organisations go about their everyday activities, and there is little consideration given as to whether this is actually appropriate for organisations which are driven by different values and principles (Rochester, 2013).

The earlier mentioned research from Nevile (2010) is worthy of note again here. This research sought to explore the tension between the different forms of legitimacy third sector organisations have to secure to maintain themselves as organisations in this environment. On the one hand there is normative legitimacy, which rests on their shared values base; and on the other there is output legitimacy, which rests on the organisation’s ability to secure the desired outcomes for funders. Pressures for the sector to become more business-like are premised on the belief that this will enhance

the achievement of output legitimacy, with potential implications for normative legitimacy only if the outcomes stipulated by the contract are not in keeping with the mission of the organisation. Thus in theory, greater pressure to achieve output legitimacy does not threaten normative legitimacy if organisations make funding decisions that can maintain both normative and output legitimacy.

Indeed, Nevile's research concluded that normative legitimacy was not compromised because organisations were careful about selecting funding that did not shift their work away from their fundamental mission (Nevile, 2010). However, this does not necessarily tell us all that much in respect of whether these organisations are still able to realise their values in what they do and how they do it. By considering only mission, that is the ends or goals that each organisation works towards, as indicative of their commitment to values, the means through which these ends are reached is overlooked. Evidence that changes in funding had impacted on practices, and that decisions about contracts were partly made on the basis of how much freedom they allowed an organisation to perform its work, suggests that practices may also be important for expressing the values and mission of these organisations. Thus, whilst pressures to become more business-like may not undermine the overall 'mission' of an organisation, if normative legitimacy is premised solely on this, then the full implications of these changes cannot be appreciated. This is because pressures to achieve output legitimacy may also impact on organisational practices, and these may also be important for the normative legitimacy of an organisation. Commitment to mission is therefore a somewhat superficial assessment of normative legitimacy. So far relatively little is known about the cultural and normative value attached to the particular practices adopted by an organisation, their relation to mission, and whether the pressures of securing particular outcomes undermines the capacity of such organisations to articulate their values in terms of *how* they go about achieving their goals.

Whilst service providing voluntary organisations have always had to balance meeting the value-expressive needs of their members with their more instrumental and outward looking organisational goals (Harris, 1998), some evidence suggests that the 'value' of third sector organisations is increasingly associated with the latter, and

contrary to Nevile's research, these are increasingly dictated by the goals of funders. For example, Milbourne's (2013) longitudinal case study research with small voluntary organisations across four different localities in England found that increasing competition for funding has exerted greater pressures on voluntary organisations to tailor and deliver their services in line with the requirements of commissioners (Milbourne, 2013). Packwood's (2007) research also found that employees in third sector organisations working with families and children, felt that commissioners did not really value what they did, and lacked appreciation for the so-called softer and more intangible outcomes they provided (Packwood, 2007; see Baines et al, 2008 and Rees et al, 2014 also).

Mirroring this, Milbourne (2013) found that in one organisation providing education and advice services for young people disaffected with school, there was an ongoing disagreement and misunderstanding between commissioners and voluntary organisation staff around the meanings, purposes and appropriate targets for their work. Further, staff felt that their achievements and efforts with young people were overlooked, with the value of their work resting solely on performance which was measured against prescribed targets and outcomes. The rigidity of these targets was felt to undermine their ability to define 'appropriate approaches and goals through negotiation with individual young people' (Milbourne, 2013: 78-79). Thus, far from being collaborative, there is evidence to suggest that relationships between voluntary organisations and commissioners have been top-down, with performance measured against prescribed targets and outcomes which are imposed by funders, and often perceived as inappropriate by voluntary organisations (Milbourne, 2013, see Milbourne et al, 2003; Martikke and Moxham, 2010; Milbourne, 2009; Nevile, 2010 also).

When this is taken alongside Packwood's (2007) finding that the voluntary organisations in his study were more concerned with the processes that their work involved than the outcomes they achieved, it is possible to see how different understandings between commissioners and voluntary organisations regarding the value of their work can result in tensions emerging. Indeed, the anguish expressed at the loss of control over working practices by voluntary organisation employees as a

result of the introduction of more stringent performance criteria in Milbourne's research in particular, exemplifies the potential importance of these practices for the articulation of values by those who work in voluntary organisations (Milbourne, 2013). Similarly Cunningham's research with voluntary organisation employees providing support to individuals with mental health conditions found that they were driven by a strong sense of commitment to the organisation's particular ethos of care, but that this was being undermined by strict contract criteria which prevented them giving 'the kind of emotional support they felt some clients needed, and indeed they themselves wanted to achieve in their role' (Cunningham, 2010: 709). The research evidence explored thus far lends some support to earlier theoretical arguments such as Wolch's (1990) idea of the 'shadow state,' whereby the state manipulates organisations to its own ends by controlling the conditions attached to funding (Wolch, 1990). DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) idea of 'isomorphism', where organisations mimic the structures and practices of those that fund them, also seems applicable here (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983).

Furthermore, evidence also suggests that the proposed opportunities for the sector to influence service design and outcomes within the new commissioning process, have not necessarily been realised in practice (Martikke and Moxham, 2010; Rees et al, 2014). Rees (2014) argues that not only is there a lack of shared understanding of what the concept and process of commissioning is (see Bovaird et al, 2012 for a review), but that in practice it is more often merely procurement, rather than the full cycle of design and delivery intended by the government (Tanner, 2007; Packwood, 2007; Checkland et al, 2012 cited in Rees, 2014; Rees et al, 2014). This circumvents the key parts of the cycle where the government hoped that greater collaboration with the third sector would result in better services and better outcomes for service users. When this is coupled with pressures on statutory bodies to make savings, there is an obvious tension between commissioning practices which aim to secure savings and drive down costs, and the more collaborative, participative planning for social outcomes advocated by 'intelligent commissioning' (Rees, 2014).

Adding to these more sobering thoughts from Rees (2014) are also the more critical concerns raised by Rochester (2013). He argues that the conditions under which

voluntary organisations work with the state have worsened under new commissioning practices. Under the previous contract culture there at least 'remained a degree of negotiation about how needs should be addressed' and 'the terms of the financial arrangements'. Under present commissioning arrangements, however, the government decides 'exactly what it wants, how much it is prepared to pay, what outcomes it expects, and how services are to be delivered.' For Rochester, the only choice for voluntary organisations is whether to enter the competition to secure the money (Rochester, 2013: 78). Thus in terms of how value is understood within these new arrangements, the so-called 'added-value' that third sector organisations can bring to service delivery is understood entirely in terms of their capacity to realise the particular 'outcomes' desired by commissioners and wider public policy (Ellis and Gregory, 2008; Carmel and Harlock, 2008).

However, more recent research exploring the experiences of commissioning in third sector mental health organisations by Rees et al (2014) suggests that the picture is perhaps more nuanced. The majority of their participants²³ welcomed the opportunity for more of an outcomes-based commissioning approach, since they believed they genuinely provided better outcomes than private and state providers, and that this placed them in a favourable position for future funding. Rees et al credited this more positive attitude to the growing emphasis in government policy on the provision of more holistic services which focus on wellbeing and recovery. Thus, in the field of mental health, there may be less tension with regard to the outcomes which both government policy and mental health organisations are trying to achieve. However, whether this is actually the case in practice we do not know since Rees et al's research focused on experiences of the commissioning and procurement process. Thus, the experiences of the employees and volunteers engaged in the practice of service delivery is unexplored (Rees et al, 2014; see Miller, 2013 for a policy discussion on this also).

²³ Rees et al (2014) conducted online surveys and follow up semi-structured interviews with 23 large third sector organisations and six commissioners. Whilst Rees et al do not say what role their participants had within the organisations, given the research's focus on the commissioning process and size of the organisations involved it is likely that this research focused on managers who would most likely have first-hand experience of these processes as opposed to frontline employees or volunteers.

For some commentators such as Miller (2013) and Harlock (2014), the more recent emphasis placed on social value by the Social (Value) Act 2012²⁴ in England may provide more opportunity for third sector organisations to bring their expertise to the design and delivery of services in the commissioning process. Social value refers to the wider added and collective benefits a service may generate, and commissioners are encouraged to apply this Act at all stages of the commissioning process. For example, local community and volunteer-led befriending services for the elderly may improve general health and wellbeing and therefore reduce hospital admissions by keeping individuals living independently for longer, reducing cost burdens on the NHS. Moreover, the transferable skills gained by the volunteers may enhance employability and engender greater community cohesion. Thus, the broader social value Harlock argues voluntary organisations can add, echoes Giddens' earlier discussed argument concerning 'positive welfare' and the role voluntary organisations can play in fostering social inclusion and wellbeing (Giddens, 1994; 1998).

For Harlock (2014) the idea of 'social value' acts to encourage commissioners to think about the benefits of a service beyond its cost, potentially creating more of a level playing field for third sector organisations. Interestingly, however, the method promoted as a means to capture this value (the Social Return on Investment (SROI)), translates these benefits into a cost ratio (Harlock, 2014), the implications for value of which I shall return to later. Whilst this may mean that funders begin to accord value to the softer more intangible outcomes organisations provide, their value as organisations is nonetheless still couched in utility terms. This overlooks the potential intrinsic value of practices to those who work, volunteer and use the services of voluntary organisations, again bypassing further exploration of the values which underpin these. Nevertheless, if value is accorded to these softer outcomes this may allow voluntary organisations more freedom to articulate their values through what they do, rather than forcing them to shift their practices to adhere to strict performance criteria. However, as Rees (2014) notes, this Act has also come at a time of state retrenchment, thus leaving little room for consideration of broader social

²⁴ This act has limited application in Wales, although codes of commissioning practice are essentially the same.

value. When this is considered alongside more recent commissioning practices under the Coalition government, such as payment by results²⁵ (Rees, 2014), then the earlier mentioned concerns regarding competition, mission integrity, autonomy and independence seem likely to intensify.

This is likely to have ramifications for the values and working practices of voluntary organisations, which have thus far received only superficial consideration in the research literature. Whilst the values of members no doubt shape and inform the mission and goals of voluntary organisations, as I have already stated, only considering the ends an organisation works towards as an indication of this commitment, overlooks how these values can be transformed, for example, by adopting means that may seem inappropriate, but nonetheless reach the same goals. This arguably represents a misappropriation of these values.

If greater research attention is given to practices, a fuller appreciation of the values which underpin what a voluntary organisation does and how it does it, is made possible. Further, closer examination of the values which are expressed in practices would also enable us to assess whether the broader social outcomes such as those identified by Harlock (2014) are also valued and articulated by employees, volunteers and service users.

2.6.2 Commissioning in Wales

Although Wales seems to be more insulated from some of the more negative trends associated with statutory contracts, the general cuts to public expenditure no doubt pose challenges. The limited data available suggests that the contracting out of public services to non-statutory providers is less embedded in Wales than in England, with less pronounced contracting trends over the last twenty years (WAG, 2010a). Following devolution, the Welsh Government favoured a strong public sector, resisting the introduction of market-based competition, especially in health and social care (Michael and Tanner, 2007 cited in Day, 2009; Hughes et al, 2011). Sources of public funding to the third sector have also been more mixed, including grants,

²⁵ Where organisations are paid on the basis of whether, and to what extent, they secure the outcomes stipulated in their contracts.

service level agreements²⁶ (WAG, 2010a). However, the Welsh Government has acknowledged that funding in the form of grants is likely to decline due to increased pressures on public spending. Consequently, it has urged third sector organisations to seek ‘more diverse forms of income’ and be prepared to adopt more ‘entrepreneurial approaches, including bidding for public service procurement contracts or negotiating service level agreements for the provision of specific forms of services’ (WAG, 2008a: 16; see WAG, 2008b; 2009; WCVA, 2013 also). Further, commissioning in the fields of health and social care in particular, has been encouraged as a means to improve services by the Welsh Government, and has become more commonplace over recent years (WAG, 2010b). Recommendations of best practice are similar to those in England (WAG, 2008b; 2009; 2010b; Welsh Government 2014b), with a focus on outcomes-based commissioning, particularly those outcomes which make a ‘direct link between outcomes for individual service users and strategic outcomes’ (WAG, 2010b:4).

Thus, although Wales has demonstrated a greater commitment to more collaborative working through making partnership working a statutory requirement (NAW, 2000), where such arrangements are already in place, third sector organisations may well experience similar problems as those identified in the research in England (see WAG, 2002; Hughes and Longley, 2008). Compared to England there has been a deficit of qualitative research on experiences of service delivery within third sector organisations, with the limited available data also dating to before the economic recession. Further research which explores these issues in the Welsh context is therefore timely.

It is clear that the funding landscape has changed in both England and Wales, with outcomes-based commissioning becoming the central mechanism for how third sector organisations are funded by statutory bodies. Whilst in theory this is meant to provide positive opportunities for voluntary organisations to have a greater role in service provision, research has identified a number of critical issues in terms of how

²⁶ Service Level Agreements are similar to contracts in that the service is provided under certain terms and conditions.

this has played out in England²⁷. However, as I have argued, we are yet to understand the impact of outcomes-based commissioning on organisations at the level of everyday practice. Limited evidence from Packwood (2007), Cunningham (2010), Nevile (2010) and Milbourne (2013) suggests that this may be a tension worthy of further exploration. Aside from Milbourne's mixed methods longitudinal research, the utilisation of surveys and semi-structured interviews has meant that further exploration of practices has for the most part eluded researchers so far. Additionally, that much of the research has been produced by academics from the fields of social policy or management has meant that a more in-depth sociological examination of the cultural and normative significance of the values which underpin practices in these organisations has been overlooked. These for the most part have been assumed and taken-for-granted due to much of the research literature being driven by answering questions which are ultimately concerned with utility. For example, from the perspective of management theory, questions around values have focused on addressing how management is different in value-based organisations, and what management can do to effectively manage these organisations so as to maintain value-commitment in light of encroaching pressures from the state and the market. From the perspective of social policy thinkers, on the other hand, the implications of changing state-sector relationships are considered in relation to the nature of service provision, and more broadly civil society. Little attention has been paid to what drives what these organisations choose to do in the first place. There is therefore a gap in the current research literature regarding values and their relationship to practices in these organisations, a point to which I will return in due course.

2.6.3 Capturing impact and value

In response to the growing emphasis on the need to secure outcomes in contracts there has been a proliferation of literature exploring the tools on offer to help organisations build their capacity to compete in this new terrain by better articulating and capturing their impact and value to funders (Baines et al, 2008; Arvidson et al, 2010; Arvidson and Kara, 2013; Ellis and Gregory 2008; Eliot and Piper, 2008; Metcalf,

²⁷ Evidence of this also playing out positively for some organisations – particularly larger ones and those in particular fields – makes it difficult to generalise the implications of this across the sector as a whole (Buckingham, 2010; Rees et al, 2014).

2013; NCVO, 2013). Eliot and Piper (2008) have urged voluntary organisations to move beyond the idea of 'added-value' and embrace the idea of 'full value', which is interestingly more in keeping with the broader notion of 'social value' emphasised in outcomes-based commissioning, since it includes benefits that extend beyond those accrued for primary user groups. For them, claims of 'added-value' have often related to those qualities which are presupposed to exist across the sector as a whole (trust, innovation and responsiveness). They argue that these are often unsubstantiated, difficult to measure and capture, and do not necessarily translate to improved public services. The idea of 'full value' on the other hand, provides a more useful conceptual tool for organisations to articulate what they do in ways which are meaningful to funders (Eliot and Piper, 2008). Whilst this notion provides positive opportunities for third sector organisations to reflect more broadly on the potential value of what they do, challenges of capturing 'full' or 'social' value remain due to its often more intangible nature (Harlock, 2014).

As mentioned earlier, Social Return on Investment (SROI) has been promoted as the tool to capture this impact. SROI is 'a form of adjusted cost-benefit analysis that takes into account, in a more holistic way, the various types of impact' that services have (Lawlor, 2009 cited in Arvidson et al, 2010:4), allowing for a monetary value to be placed on the social, economic and environmental benefits and costs created by an organisation (Arvidson et al, 2010). Whilst Arvidson and Kara (2013) recognise that this could be an important communicative tool for ensuring various stakeholders understand the impact of a particular service, in line with Westall (2009) they also caution that an over emphasis on service outcomes downplays the value of processes, as well as those intrinsic values associated with the expressive function of such organisations and their value-rational roots. There is also potential for conflict between different values, with some outcomes being understood as more credible than others, and there may be differences between different stakeholders with regard to these. As Arvidson et al (2010) suggest, there is a danger that if it 'cannot be measured, it cannot be managed' (Arvidson et al, 2010: 10). This makes the adoption of this tool trickier than merely assessing a service in relation to easily quantifiable inputs and outputs, with important questions remaining about what is valued and by whom, and in turn, what practices and activities are favoured in pursuit

of these (Arvidson et al, 2010; Arvidson and Kara, 2013; Westall, 2009; see McCabe, 2012; also). Indeed, as Arvidson and Kara (2013) argue, such evaluative tools not only serve as methods to capture value but also promote particular values, since the methods adopted are underpinned by normative and political assumptions regarding their superiority.

Thus, whilst the literature on how voluntary organisations can better capture their value and impact is not concerned with values per se, it nonetheless has ramifications for the way we conceptualise values since the 'value' of third sector organisations is understood predominantly in terms of public utility in this literature. If organisations begin to conceive themselves wholly in utility terms, the intrinsic value of their practices risk being overlooked, and even undermined, as new practices are adopted as a means to ensure they are better able to capture their value and impact to funders. For example, encouraging community participation may be a good in itself, but this cannot necessarily be identified as an impact if it does not lead to individual empowerment and independence (Arvidson et al, 2010: 10). More importantly, by focusing on impact, these measures tell us nothing about the values, processes and practices that have enabled organisations to achieve particular outcomes in the first place (Arvidson et al, 2010). The fact Lyon et al (2010) found that the SROI was being used by organisations as a means to capture their 'added-value' in line with what was valued by commissioners (to the exclusion of their users) is also telling, since this suggests that this tool may function to further adapt organisational practices to this new environment (Lyon et al, 2010 cited in Arvidson et al 2010). This has potential consequences for clarity of mission and authenticity of values (Arvidson et al, 2010). This is another reason why more needs to be known about how values relate to practices within these organisations.

Social value is also measured in a way which renders it comparable with monetary value (Westall, 2009; McCabe, 2012), potentially subsuming value(s) to market values. Questions also remain as to whether all things can or should be reduced to monetary value (Sandel, 2012). Further, whilst the broader notions of 'Social Value' or 'full value' in theory allow for the incorporation of value which goes beyond economic or easily quantifiable outputs, the mechanisms and tools developed still

aim to capture these in monetised ways, allowing these values to be compared with other values, which may in fact be incommensurable (Westall, 2009). We therefore do not know if shifts towards a broader notion of 'Social Value' in outcomes-based commissioning does much to help organisations defend their mission, logic and working practices from the more dominant organisational working practices of the market and the state (and the more instrumental values which underpin these), especially given the means that are used to capture these.

2.6.4 Interim Summary

To summarise the argument of this review so far, despite decades of research on the third sector by social scientists and social policy thinkers, little attention has been paid to the values which underpin individual organisations, and how these values influence practices. Whilst values, and value rationality, are not the preserve of voluntary organisations only, the centrality of value rationality as opposed to instrumental rationality at the roots of such organisations has traditionally served to differentiate them from the state and the market. Although different ways of organising and doing are recognised in the research literature as causing tension and anguish, little consideration has been given to the values which may underpin these, or to the cultural and normative importance of practices for value-expression. Instead, the focus of attention has been on the potential long term impact of these changes on mission integrity, autonomy and independence, and the so-called distinctive attributes of these organisations, with researchers studying the tensions between different organisational logics rather than closely examining the specific values that underpin these logics (Milligan and Fyfe, 2005; Buckingham, 2010; Milbourne, 2013). Whilst this research is no doubt useful for understanding the evolving relationships between the different sectors, and the role of such organisations in welfare provision, I would argue that these enquiries are rooted in a utilitarian view of the sector. This is because they are driven by a need to explore whether voluntary organisations are losing the so-called 'distinctiveness' associated with their value-rational roots, and thus in turn, the unique or 'added-value,' they bring to service delivery. As a result the impact of these changes on the specific values and practices of the organisations themselves is overlooked.

Further, I would also suggest that the dualistic concepts that have been utilised to explicate the tensions and pressures experienced by service delivery voluntary organisations – i.e. ‘normative’ legitimacy versus ‘output’ legitimacy (Neville, 2010), the ‘value-expressive function’ versus the ‘instrumental function’ (Mason, 1996; Frumkin, 2002), the ‘informal’ world of the association versus the ‘formal’ world of the bureaucracy (Harris, 1998; Billis 2010) - lack the sophistication to move beyond the descriptive in terms of the implications these tensions may have in relation to values. More importantly, I would argue that these dualisms also unintentionally invite a utilitarian research lens, since they do not take values seriously. There is a sense of inferiority implicit in the terminology used to allude to the role of values within these organisations (i.e. ‘informal’, ‘expressive’, and ‘normative’) when compared with the more superior connotations of productivism and action evoked by their opposing terminology (i.e. ‘formal’, ‘instrumental’ and ‘output’). In my assessment, this implicit detachment of values from action and practices has resulted in the devaluation of values.

This has limited the research thus far, precluding an exploration as to whether, and if so how, external pressures concerned with enhancing effectiveness have undermined the unique philosophy and values which drive individual organisations. If we are to fully understand both the influence of values on these organisations, and the implications of changes in state-sector relationships on these more fully, then closer attention should be paid to the nature of practices within individual organisations, to how these practices are sustained in light of the above pressures, and to ‘the ethical dimensions of how things are done’ (Westall, 2009:3).

Are such practices integral to how the values of such organisations are communicated and realised? More importantly perhaps, are they understood by those who participate in such organisations as an important means for the expression of values which are potentially lacking in more instrumentally driven organisations? Without practices to sustain values, values are empty. Therefore if we are to understand fully the implications of shifting governance regimes on different organisations, taking a closer look at practices is key. Aristotelian value ethics may offer a useful starting point for such a task.

2.7 Value theory and Aristotelianism

Aristotelian value ethics, or ‘virtue ethics’ as it is also called, is potentially useful for this task since it turns the relationship of values and practices on its head. Whilst third sector commentators often assert that it is values which shape practices (Gerard, 1983; Mason, 1996; Frumkin, 2002; Rothschild and Milofsky, 2006; Cairns et al, 2007; Billis, 2010) in doing so they also seem to forget the converse, that practices are also necessary for the creation and sustenance of these values. This is important from a social scientific point of view, since it means that we cannot study authentic values without studying the practices which embody and sustain them.

Aristotle starts from the contention that values, or rather virtues as he terms them, are specifically acquired through engagement in practices, and more specifically, through seeking excellence in these practices. More importantly perhaps, for Aristotle it is *only* through seeking excellence in practices that human beings are able to cultivate and acquire the qualities or virtues needed for them to live well and thus achieve the greatest good of all – happiness or eudaimonia. This means that, for Aristotle, all human action must be understood teleologically, that is, understood in terms of the extent to which the particular ends of human action allow individuals to get closer to realising the chief good of eudaimonia. This makes values, and the practices which realise and sustain them, central to wellbeing, since for Aristotle wellbeing is well-doing, and well-doing means realising, in practice, a particular idea of the good (Aristotle, 2002). As thinkers like Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2000) and Sayer (2011) contend, wellbeing is not only what we have, but what we can do or be.

However, although this Aristotelian contention that values are rooted in practices offers a potentially fruitful lens to explore values in a third sector organisation, Aristotle’s virtue ethics is in some ways dated in terms of its usefulness for application. This is because the virtues Aristotle identified, were those virtues which were necessary to live well in the Athenian city state, and thus are rooted in a particular culture and point in history. This universalistic and ahistorical account of the virtues is therefore not entirely apt for operationalising in modern societies

characterised by value-plurality. Further, and more importantly, because of this flaw, Aristotle's theory is unable to acknowledge any tension or conflict in relation to the idea of the good, since what it is to live well, and the virtues needed to achieve this, is already taken as given. The neo-Aristotelianism of Alasdair MacIntyre (2007) is likely to be more fruitful because it offers a way to move beyond this universalistic and ahistorical account due to the particular practice-based approach he adopts. Rather than identifying the virtues as the particular qualities that are needed to live well within a city state - such city states no longer exist – MacIntyre posits that the virtues can only be identified in relation to particular practices.

MacIntyre's (2007) theory of internal and external goods is particularly worthy of note here. For MacIntyre (2007), individuals cannot realise excellence within a practice without the cultivation and practice of the particular virtues or qualities which are necessary for them to achieve this. The 'internal goods' of a practice, therefore, are the particular skills, virtues, or qualities that are necessary for doing well or achieving excellence within a particular practice. Practices include:

Any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative form of human activity through which goods internal to the form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of ends and goods are systematically extended (MacIntyre, 2007:187).

Examples of such practices could include chess, football, gardening, farming, painting and music. The sustenance of communities, families, cities and nations are also considered by MacIntyre to be practices through which internal goods are produced. Practices can also produce *external* goods, which are goods that are not specific to particular practices – for example, money, status and prestige. Thus, external goods can be obtained through a variety of practices, whereas internal goods can only be produced through particular practices, since the meaning of such goods can only be specified in relation to that particular practice.

For MacIntyre, that internal goods can only be realised through practices means that they are always partially unknown before participation in a practice. Conversely,

external goods are by their nature predetermined, and thus are ends which can be arrived at through multiple means. The crucial difference between internal and external goods is that the production of internal goods can be enjoyed by the whole community who participate in the particular practice. For example, if an individual develops a particular skill which enables him or her to become a better chess player, this will not only benefit the individual in question but also the entire community of individuals who participate in the practice of chess. External goods, such as money, power or prestige on the other hand, can only be the property of individuals, institutions or organisations (MacIntyre, 2007:190).

However, practices cannot be sustained for any long period of time without the development of organisations, and this development often hinges on the production of external goods, since organisations have to survive in a market driven environment. Not doing so, would not allow them to exist, therefore making it difficult to develop the internal goods intrinsic to the practices they are involved in sustaining. This can therefore produce a tension between the production of internal and external goods, since the 'ideals and creativity of a practice are always vulnerable to the acquisitiveness of an institution' (MacIntyre, 2007: 194). This tension gets little empirical exploration from MacIntyre (2007) as it is his contention that such communities of practice are rare in this modern liberal individual era where the notion of a common project, politically at least, seems an alien concept. Indeed, that this is the case is precisely what he attributes to what he sees as the modern day inability to come up with any value consensus on how life should be led (MacIntyre, 2007).

In the case of third sector organisations, however, this tension may have relevance, especially for practitioners for whom working for a certain organisation has appeal because of its individual mission and values, which thus provides opportunity for values expression potentially favouring the production of internal goods over external ones. Indeed, MacIntyre's recognition of the tension between what could loosely be understood as the internal and external logics of organisations housing practices, is already acknowledged in the abovementioned dualisms (i.e. Mason, 1996; Frumkin, 2002 and Nevile, 2010). However, what differentiates MacIntyre's

theory of internal and external goods, is that its operationalisation potentially offers a way to elucidate, how these values are embodied and enacted in the practices of the people who hold them. It therefore allows for an in-depth exploration of how this tension plays out specifically in relation to the organisation's practices, and the values that these practices are understood to reflect and sustain. In doing so, it also differs from those scholars who appear to assess value-integrity wholly on the basis of how well an organisation achieves the goals stipulated in its mission (Nevile, 2010; Billis, 2010). More importantly, MacIntyre's theory and Aristotelian theory in general also takes seriously the normative importance of practice and values for our wellbeing. Given the empirical literature hints at a sense of anguish or loss being experienced when voluntary organisations shift their practices (Packwood, 2007; Cunningham, 2010; Nevile, 2010; Milbourne, 2013), this framework also allows for a deeper consideration of how participation in voluntary organisations is understood to impact on wellbeing.

Whilst third sector organisations do not necessarily represent spaces where singular practices are engaged in, it may be interesting to explore whether they represent examples of spaces where excellence in practices is still sought, and whether engagement in certain practices represents an attempt to cultivate some kind of shared idea about what it is to live the good life, including from the meaning that is derived from engaging in particular practices. If the value-expressive function of such organisations is taken into account, then practices are not only adopted to achieve particular organisational ends but also to articulate and reproduce particular values (Kramer, 1981; Jeavons, 1992; Frumkin, 2002). Further, third sector organisations providing services in a mixed welfare economy potentially represent such spaces, since they often combine both an expressive and instrumental role.

Adopting a practice-based understanding of values is a useful way of examining whether third sector organisations are able to maintain their values in light of pressures from both the market and the state, but it is one that cannot be conducted without investigating the experiences of those who are engaged in such practices. For MacIntyre, the cultural and historical contexts in which all practices are rooted, enables cultural and normative judgements to be made about what constitutes

excellence in those practices. Whilst standards are open to change, they nonetheless have to be understood and fully grasped by participants before such change can happen. The examination of practices therefore not only allows for a better elicitation as to what the values of organisations are, but also for better judgement as to the authenticity of these values (MacIntyre, 2007).

2.8 Conclusion and research questions

This review has summarised the different discussions about value(s) and the third sector, and has shown that despite the centrality of value(s) in the literature, relatively little is known about what these values are, and how such organisations function in such a way as to allow these values to be at the forefront of what they do. Theoretical arguments concerning sector distinctiveness have focused on particular shared organisational traits which have then been used to conflate ‘values-driven’ with ‘added-value’ or ‘comparative advantage’, as Billis and Glennerster (1998) termed it. Despite the evidence for this being inconclusive, the notion that the third sector offers ‘added-value’ has been instrumental in shaping government policy towards the sector over the last twenty years or so in England and Wales (Macmillan, 2010). The proliferation of contracting and the stringent performance-auditing mechanisms which have occurred as a result of these shifts has also had implications for how value is understood and measured by people working within the sector (Westall, 2009; Arvidson et al, 2010; Arvidson and Kara, 2013). The empirical evidence explored in this chapter has demonstrated some of the consequences this has had on mission integrity, independence and distinctive organisational attributes, as well as some of the potential implications for service provision and civil society (Milligan and Fyfe, 2005; Buckingham, 2009; 2010; Milbourne, 2009; 2013; Nevile, 2010). However, relatively little is known about how this is experienced by those who work, volunteer, and use the services of voluntary organisations, or whether the pressure to compete for what MacIntyre calls ‘external goods’ is resisted.

Although Billis’ (2010) conception is useful for exploring the impact of these trends in relation to hybridisation, and thus the tension which can arise out of the adoption

of different organisational logics, it can offer no insight into how this may play out for specific organisational values and practices, and how these can be sustained in light of the increasing pressures placed on these organisations to realise external outcomes. If voluntary organisations are thought to exist as spaces for the cultivation and expression of values (Kramer, 1981; Jeavons, 1992; Frumkin, 2002), then increasing pressures to adopt market or state practices may have implications for this.

Whilst third sector organisations are engaged in a number of practices, ideas of sector distinctiveness discussed at the beginning of this chapter suggest that the practices of voluntary organisations are more likely to be informed by value rationality as opposed to instrumental rationality. However, there has been little examination of whether this is the case beyond the more obvious empirical examinations of faith-based organisations (Cairns et al, 2007) and 'collectivist organisations' (Rothchilds-Whitt, 1979). Further, tensions regarding the introduction of different cultures and ways of doing as a result of contracting (see Nevile, 2010; Milbourne, 2013), indicate that practices may still be important for the articulation of organisational values within voluntary organisations. The limited and thus far superficial exploration of values has in part been because much of the research enquiry has focused on exploring the implications of changes in state-sector relationships from a policy-centred perspective. Consequently, research has been utilised to address questions concerning what these changes may mean for service provision, and for civil society more broadly, rather than looking more specifically at the micro-level impact of these changes on those who work, volunteer and use the services of individual organisations, and the values which have informed this. Indeed, I would suggest that the conflation of values with commitment to mission in much of the research literature is also a consequence of this research focus.

If we are to take the role of values more seriously within these organisations, then a closer and more sociologically grounded examination of the practices an organisation adopts is necessary, since these will be integral for the articulation and sustenance of values. Operationalising an Aristotelian informed virtue ethics is therefore useful because of the practice-based understanding to ethics Aristotle adopts. MacIntyre's

(2007) theory of internal and external goods, provides a useful theoretical lens to look at this within an organisational perspective²⁸ (see Beadle, 2013 for an interesting application to circus management). This is because within an organisational setting the sustenance of a practice will to some degree depend on the achievement of external goods. This theory may therefore be particularly useful for exploring the competing tensions within the work of third sector organisations, since these organisations are already characterised by experiences of tension, and a careful balancing of different logics (Mason, 1996; Harris, 1998; Billis, 2010)

Considering a third sector organisation which engages in distinctive practices may be a useful starting point of such an enquiry, and more specifically, an organisation which also uses practices to explicitly enhance social inclusion and wellbeing, since this is how the role of the third sector is broadly conceived in government policy. If we consider this policy agenda alongside the Aristotelian idea that wellbeing is realised through the pursuit of excellence in practices (internal goods), then this also allows the means adopted to be inextricably linked to the ends the organisation seeks to produce. This takes seriously the potential value motivations of those who work and volunteer in the sector. Adopting this theory therefore allows for a closer examination of values, and whether pressures to realise external goods (as referred to as output legitimacy, instrumental goals or outcomes elsewhere in the literature) interferes with the authenticity of these values.

The site of this present enquiry is a recovery-focused mental health garden project, chosen not only because it adopts a distinctive practice, but also because it specifically utilises this practice as a rehabilitative tool to foster the social inclusion and wellbeing of individuals with mental health conditions. Although the benefits of nature for mental health and wellbeing have long been documented in the health and psychology research literature (see Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989; Hartig et al, 1991; Kaplan, 1995; Maller et al, 2006; Peacock et al, 2007; Gonzalez et al, 2009; 2010; Barton and Pretty, 2010; Thompson Coon et al, 2011), the research literature

²⁸ MacIntyre's theory has been adopted for empirical application of the relationship between 'goods- virtues –practices-institutions' by organisational theorists – see Moore and Beadle, 2006; Bordon, 2007; Coe and Beadle, 2008

explored earlier discussed the potential benefits third sector STH interventions can accrue for outcomes associated with social inclusion and wellbeing more broadly (Sempik et al, 2005; Parr, 2007; Diament and Waterhouse, 2010; Bragg et al, 2013; Mind, 2013).

Further, evidence suggests that those with mental health conditions are more likely to be socially excluded than other members of the population (SEU, 2004; Friedli, 2009; RCP, 2009). Enhancing the inclusion of this group is therefore a key concern for government policy, and voluntary organisations have been identified as important agents in this (SEU, 2004; DWP, 2009; Welsh Government, 2012a; 2012b). This makes this group, and the role of third sector organisations in enhancing their wellbeing through increased social inclusion, of notable interest. However, unlike the broad understanding of social inclusion adopted by Sempik et al's (2005) research²⁹, government and policy discourse has tended to place paid work at the centre of what it is to be socially included (Levitas, 2005; Dean et al, 2005). Indeed, in all of the above-mentioned mental health documents, increasing access to paid work is understood as central to enhancing the social inclusion and wellbeing of this group. This is due to its association with improved self-esteem, and its capacity to reduce the social isolation and poverty which can arise out of being unemployed, both of which can further exacerbate a mental health condition (SEU, 2004; Friedli, 2009; Mind 2013). It is unsurprising, therefore, that policy makers and advisors recommend that the barriers and stigma which exclude individuals with mental health conditions from employment should be removed, and access to mental health services which promote recovery and independence should be encouraged and supported (SEU, 2004; DWP, 2009; Friedli, 2009; Friedli and Parsonage, 2009; RCP, 2009; Welsh Government, 2012b). This is worth bearing in mind when considering what particular outcomes statutory funders may deem worthy of value. Because the STH research discussed earlier in this chapter focused solely on the *effectiveness* of this intervention for individuals with mental health conditions, it failed to situate these services within the broader third sector and welfare policy contexts in which they operate. Thus, there has been little examination of how policy imperatives and

²⁹ and indeed, the idea of inclusion Giddens articulates through his conception of 'positive welfare' as part of 'third way' politics (Giddens, 1994: 1998)

funding relationships may impact on the practices of these projects, or any deeper sociological exploration of the meaning attributed to the practices by those engaged in them.

Further, in Wales, the work of recovery orientated mental health organisations is becoming increasingly important. All users of secondary mental health services are now legally entitled to a care and treatment plan (NAW 2010), in which the fostering of independence and recovery are central (Welsh Government, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). This makes such an organisation an interesting site for research since it allows for consideration of the potential tensions which may come into play in a third sector organisation which specifically works to enhance wellbeing and social inclusion, while working under statutory contract. As MacIntyre (2007) contends, the internal goods of a practice are only partially known before one's participation in a practice and can only be achieved through participation in and seeking excellence in a practice. Because funders are not engaged in these practices they may be more concerned with the external goods the organisation provides, and thus potentially understand these practices as means to particular ends, rather than as ends in themselves. If different or more effective means of achieving the same external goods are then preferred, not only does this jeopardise the practices the organisation engages in, but it also threatens the values these practices are understood to express and sustain, and in turn the wellbeing which is derived from seeking excellence in these practices.

By exploring what was actually valued by volunteers, employees and service users engaged in the everyday practices of a mental health recovery service operating in the third sector, my aim was to investigate the relationship between values and practices, and the insight which a neo-Aristotelian approach could shed on the conflict between the internal and external logics of a voluntary organisation delivering its services under contract. The research questions which were clarified and refined during the first few months of participant observation (see p68 for further discussion) were as follows:

1. What are the enacted values of a mental health recovery organisation operating in the third sector?
2. What are the internal and external goods of the organisation?
3. How is the tension between internal and external goods experienced by members of the organisation?

3.0 Research Methodology

As discussed in the previous chapter, picking an organisation which specifically utilised a practice as a means to enhance wellbeing and social inclusion was thought to provide an interesting site of enquiry for exploring the relationship of values to practices. My participation in these everyday practices was imperative for understanding the 'goods' they produced. Participant observation and in-depth interviews therefore represented the only feasible way to understand the practices of this setting. This chapter sets out the rationale behind adopting a dual method approach, before going on briefly to discuss the research site and how I got access to it. I will then explore each of the methods I adopted in more detail, including my own experience of using these, and some of the challenges I faced in the field. Lastly, the method of data analysis will set out the rationale for my decision to code the data manually, and describes the analysis process.

3.1 The rationale for combining participant observation with in-depth semi-structured interviews

Given the focus on organisational practices I chose an ethnographic approach because such methods allow for an in-depth understanding of the phenomena in question (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002). Before commencing the research, much of my knowledge concerning the pressures that service-delivery voluntary organisations were experiencing was largely informed by policy analysis and commentary from third sector representatives, therefore providing limited insight into the implications of changing state-sector relationships on individual organisation's values. Further, much of the qualitative research consulted was largely reliant on interviews (e.g. Packwood, 2007; OCVA-Framework, 2008; Buckingham, 2009; Nevile, 2010), and although useful, only touched the surface in relation to how organisations experienced change over time, and how these changes impacted on the organisation's practices. Whilst such research sparked my initial interest, I wanted to gain a deeper insight into how the outwardly expressed values and mission of an organisation informed everyday practices, how broader institutional change

influenced these practices, and how this was understood by individuals at different levels within the organisation. Gaining such an insight would allow for more adequate exploration of organisational values.

Given my little personal knowledge or experience of working or volunteering in voluntary organisations, participant observation was also selected to help me 'get to know' and understand the practices of these organisations more generally, and to build rapport with my participants. Observations were carried out at the project one day a week over the course of fifteen months, engaging in the daily activities on the project through my role as a volunteer. Although I was not present every day, taking this more active role over a long period of time enabled a deeper immersion in the field, giving me the opportunity to gather both tacit and explicit information which could then be drawn on to inform in-depth semi-structured interviews. Eight in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted. Two managers were interviewed (the project manager and the area manager), two project workers, two volunteers and two service users. Conducting more interviews with service users was not possible due to issues such as intermittent attendance and poor health. Nonetheless, I got plenty of information from service users through both my observations and the many informal conversations I had with them during my time there.

The interviews were conducted after seven months of being in the field, allowing for a sufficient period of immersion before they took place. The interviews were used to explore things noted in observations, and thus helped to ensure internal validity by allowing me to check how closely my interpretation of what went on in the field matched my participants (Miles and Huberman, 1994). They were also used to gain a richer picture of the individuals on the project, their lives before their involvement, what they got out of their involvement, and how they understood the work of the project, and the organisation more broadly. Field notes were written up at the end of each day and interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Combining both of these methods was fruitful for a number of reasons. Firstly, my participation helped to facilitate a deeper understanding of the accounts given in the interviews. Secondly, given that much of gardening involves tacit knowledge – the sort of knowledge which is difficult to verbalise (Polanyi, 1967) – rather than formal knowledge, my participation allowed me to better grasp the importance participants

attributed to this practice. For example, I would not have understood the joys of seeing something finally come together, the disappointment and frustration when things could not get done as planned, or the value that was attributed to physical work, if I had not participated in the practices myself. Indeed, Miriam Glucksmann's (1982) and Michael Burawoy's (1979) seminal ethnographies which explored the experiences of factory work in the 1970s would not have been possible had they not experienced these working environments themselves. Participation allowed them to experience the tacit and embodied aspects of this work, allowing for a full understanding of what it was like to work in these environments. Both Glucksmann and Burawoy were adamant about the value of 'doing' the work to understand it. Further, Jerolmack and Khan argue that it is 'only through sustained participation that the ethnographer can actually witness or even experience the formation and/or activation of dispositions and schemas' which inform action (Jerolmack and Khan, 2014:19).

Thirdly, participant observation over a long period of time also provided me with opportunities to witness debates about how things should be done, reactions to proposed changes in working practices, and to familiarise myself with the social dynamics and relationships between people on the project. This provided a wealth of data to explore further in interviews. Being witness to such debates would not have been possible through the conduct of interviews alone, and bears more of a relation to how individuals perceived the organisation's values and how these were realised in practice in this setting. This allowed for more carefully conceived interview questions. For example, merely asking individuals about the organisation's values, and how successful they think the project is at realising these, could have invited anodyne responses which would do little to illuminate how things are actually experienced on the ground. Indeed, Jerolmack and Khan (2014) note that research has shown that there is often little consistency between attitude and behaviour (Gross and Niman, 1975; Schuman and Johnson, 1976 cited in Jerolmack and Khan, 2014). They suggest that there is therefore some irony to sociologists' seeming preference for utilising verbal approaches to understand human behaviour, terming this preference the 'attitudinal fallacy'. They argue that since both attitudes and actions are collectively negotiated and context-dependent, interviews alone, with

their focus on individual accounts, can do little more than ‘reveal actors’ justification for actions that take place in unobserved contexts (the past or the future)’ (Jerolmack and Khan, 2014: 15). Participant observation was therefore central for enabling a corroboration between what people said and what they actually did (Agar, 1996).

However, this design is not without its flaws, as my own participation has implications for the nature of the data generated. This will be discussed in more detail shortly. Furthermore, all accounts of observations, and subsequent interpretations of these, are partial because ‘as observers and interpreters of the world, we are inextricably part of it; we cannot step outside our own experience to obtain some observer-independent account of what we experience’ (Maxwell, 2002:41). In recognition of this, my own intellectual background and ontological assumptions have impacted on both the design and analysis of my research. My enquiry was shaped around applying an Aristotelian framework, in particular the neo-Aristotelianism of Alasdair MacIntyre, which posits that values, or rather virtues are dependent on practices for their realisation and sustenance (MacIntyre, 2007). This meant the focus of my enquiry strictly centred on how participants attributed value to the practices the project engaged in, and what ‘goods’ were worthy of pursuit, adopting an Aristotelian lens to elucidate a deeper understanding of the relationship between values and practices on one site of a particular third sector organisation. Thus, the data were analysed in reference to a particular theoretical framework.

Ontologically, this empirical reality is understood from the perspective of critical realism, in that my research seeks to understand the grounded everyday realities of my research participants, but also attempts to interpret participants’ everyday accounts in relation to broader structural factors. It therefore comes from a position which conceives human action as being both enabled and constrained by social structures, and seeks to understand how human agents act in ways which either maintain or transform social structures (Bashkar, 1979). Although the small scale and qualitative nature of my research means that it lacks generalizability to the third sector more broadly, the findings will have implications for similar third sector organisations providing mental health services in similar settings. Further, the in-depth nature of the enquiry can provide some theoretical inferences regarding the

sector's role in society. Before going on to explore each of these methods separately in more detail, I will first briefly describe the research site and how I accessed it.

3.2 Access and research site

The subject of my enquiry was driven by theoretical and empirical gaps in the literature, leading me to seek out an appropriate setting to potentially conduct research. An initial online search led to the identification of two potential sites to conduct my research. Both sites were contacted over the phone, and face-to-face meetings were arranged to discuss my research and potential access. The first organisation, a small local organisation offering peer-led support and vocational services, declined to participate in the research due to resource constraints. They also had ethical concerns regarding participant observation through my involvement as a volunteer, due to maintaining a policy of only using current or ex-service users as volunteers.

The second organisation consulted became the subject of this research. In May 2012, access was kindly granted by the project manager of a local branch of a national member-led mental health organisation³⁰. My initial meeting with the manager lasted over an hour, resembling more of an informal interview. The manager responded to my research interests with enthusiasm, offering up information regarding the organisation's current funding arrangements, and his own opinions on the current state of statutory-third sector relations. It was decided at the end of this meeting that access would be granted, and that I would volunteer at the project every Tuesday (the busiest day), also allowing the opportunity to undertake observations. Entry into the field commenced at the end of May 2012 once all the relevant volunteer forms had been processed.

3.3 Participant Observation

Participant observation involves the collection of data in naturalistic settings by either observing or participating in the daily activities of the people under study, in order to learn about both the explicit and tacit aspects of their routines and their

³⁰ A more detailed account of the research setting will be provided in the following chapter.

culture (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002: 1). The eventual aim of this process is to understand the view of the other (Katz, 1988). Bernard (1994) suggests that achieving this requires some form of impression management by the researcher, with the aim of the researcher being to establish rapport with participants, and to learn enough about the community to be able to blend in sufficiently so that its participants act naturally in her presence. This involves the researcher immersing herself in the field, before removing herself from it to write about it (Bernard, 1994). Establishing rapport in fieldwork is important since it helps to develop trust and co-operation between the researcher and the participants, influencing the extent to which data gathered in participant observation is dependable (Jorgenson, 1989 cited in Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002). Building rapport takes time, and can involve 'hanging out' or working alongside participants, learning the way that they do things, and how to speak their language (Bernard, 1994). My role as a volunteer helped to facilitate building rapport in a number of ways. Firstly, it necessitated that I got involved in the daily activities of the project, requiring active participation. Secondly, learning about my role as a volunteer as someone who was both new to the setting and to gardening also entailed the demonstration of qualities considered important for rapport building, such as, genuine interest in how things are done, active listening, being truthful, respect, commitment and empathy. I was keen to play my role well, so asking questions was not only interesting and useful for the purposes of my research, but also necessary for learning the ropes. Indeed, both my role as researcher and my role as a volunteer represented a kind of apprenticeship into a community and its practices. Both were modes of learning which were ongoing in nature. For example, even the more established volunteers continued to learn in their roles (see chapter seven). Lastly, my role as a volunteer also represented a form of reciprocity and giving something back to the research participants, something which is also regarded critical for establishing rapport in research (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002).

According to DeMunck and Sobo (1998) rapport building undergoes the following three stages: the stranger stage, the acquaintance stage and the intimate stage. In the first stage, the researcher is a complete stranger and must attempt to learn the rules of the community. During the second, the researcher begins to stand out less as an intruder (or newcomer in my case), with the language and practices becoming

more familiar, and thus the researcher is less conscious of her actions and behaviour. This is followed by the final intimate stage, where the researcher has established relationships with the participants and no longer needs to think about what she is saying or doing, with the interaction between the researcher and participants being comfortable (DeMunck and Sobo, 1998 cited in Kawulich, 2005). My own experience in the field underwent similar stages, with my inclusion as a member, despite my initial outsider status, being secured by my ongoing active participation and engagement in the project as a volunteer. However, I never learnt the language or practice of gardening to the same level as the other project workers or other volunteers, with this, and my perceived lack of practicality, being an ongoing source of joke and amusement directed towards me. Instead of this obvious difference marking me as an outsider, the easy way in which participants came to joke with me about it, marked my acceptance. Jokes on the project honestly acknowledged through humour, the differences between me and the research participants in terms of my gender, class and competence, without making these differences exclusionary. The role I was allocated – intellectual but impractical, clever but incompetent – allowed my ‘difference’ to be a factor for inclusion in the community’s practices and performances. My role as a volunteer was therefore crucial in building rapport and trust, with my acceptance as a member, over time, helping to secure the generation of rich data gathered through observation and interviews.

The data gathered through participant observation consisted not only of detailed accounts of observations, but also of natural and directed conversations (informal interviews) (Bernard, 1994). In becoming a good observer Dewalt and Dewalt (2002) advocate a non-judgemental and open attitude to what is being observed, and a genuine interest in learning more about those under study. This requires a certain giving up of control on the part of the researcher and a willingness to have her ideas and assumptions challenged. Good observation, listening skills, and ultimately patience, are also required so that slowly, over time, the researcher begins to build a full picture of what is being observed (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002). Given that I did not know how much time this would take, my approach to conducting the fieldwork was open-ended with no set time-frame in place for gathering data. Indeed, my contact and involvement in the project continued long after fieldwork had formally

'ended'³¹ and continued to shape how I engaged with the textual data generated through the observations and interviews.

In terms of how to go about the process of participant observation, the following three phases of observation are identified by Spradley (1980): descriptive, focused and selective. The first phase involves the process of the researcher observing anything and everything in order to initially grasp the complexity of the field. This is followed by the second phase where a more focused approach to observation narrows the perspectives to processes and problems important for the research questions. The final approach, selective observation, occurs towards the end of data collection and merely seeks to look for further instances and examples identified in the second focused phase of observation (Spradley, 1980). In writing up observations, numerous ethnographic authors advocate the practice of maintaining very detailed descriptive field notes in order to generate 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973), and recording notes of conversations in verbatim as much as possible. This is considered especially important in the initial phases of research (Spradley, 1980; Bernard, 1994; Wolcott, 2001; Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002). However, my role as participant made taking the detailed observational field notes using the techniques advocated above difficult, due to the physically involving and often muddy nature of gardening. I was therefore unable to frequently jot down things as they were happening in situ. Given the capacity of humans to forget things soon after the event, Lofland and Lofland (1995) urge researchers to make mental notes, which can then be jotted down to a few key words or triggers, which will then be used to aid the full writing up of field observations later (Lofland and Lofland, 1995). Thus, trips to the toilet or bus journeys back were often used to make quick notes on my phone to help jog my memory for full writing up on my return home.

Interestingly, I found that my field notes became more detailed the longer I was in the field, despite my engagement in physically involving activity making it difficult to keep track of what was going on the whole time. I believe this in part was because I became a more attuned observer the more I actually experienced 'being in' rather

³¹ The last entry in my field notes was in August 2013, so in terms of my engagement in the formal practices of 'doing fieldwork' the research formally ended here, but I continued to volunteer at the project once a month until December 2013, and more sporadically thereafter until present.

than what Dewalt and Dewalt term 'being on' in the field. Despite much to be said for the development of observation techniques that lend themselves to the development of more detailed and accurate field note observations, Dewalt and Dewalt argue that after some experience of being an observer who is 'just participating', the observer can often come away from the field with the ability to write hours of field notes, meaning that the observer role can become almost second nature (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2000). Thus, although my field notes were at times limited by lack of the 'thick descriptions' advocated above, this limitation was in some way countered by the experience of becoming a participant/member throughout my time in the field. As mentioned earlier, I believe that this role also facilitated the building of trust and rapport with the research participants. The different roles that researchers can take as observers, and the implications this can have on the nature of the data generated is recognised by Gold (1958).

According to Gold (1958) four observation stances exist in fieldwork. At the one extreme is the complete participant, where the researcher conceals her role as a researcher completely from participants. This role has obvious ethical implications since it involves a high degree of deception. It also poses huge challenges to the self of the researcher, with fear that the inability to play the role authentically may lead to her getting found out, rendering her too self-conscious to effectively perform the role. It also presents challenges if the researcher 'goes native', and effectively incorporates the new role into her own self-conceptions, making it difficult to gain the distance necessary for dispassionate observation. At the other extreme is the complete observer role, where the researcher does not engage in participation at all, often observing in ways which either do not interfere with participants, or remaining unknown to participants, such as in public spaces. This runs the risk of much of the data generated being ethnocentric (Gold, 1958). In between these two extremes are the participant-as-observer stance, and the observer-as-participant stance.

The participant-as-observer stance involves a similar level of participation as the complete participant, but is less problematic due to both parties being aware of their roles. This researcher role involves similar risks associated with 'going native', for example where the fieldworker's relationship with participants resembles more of a friendship than a field-work relationship, jeopardising the researcher's ability to gain

the adequate distance necessary for clarity of research. This sort of stance is usually adopted by researchers researching groups they are already members of. Dewalt and Dewalt (2002) acknowledge the paradoxical nature of the role of participant-as-observer for research. The role involves the researcher simultaneously seeking to 'know' in a unique way about the experiences of those under study through becoming a participant of what is being observed, whilst at the same time remaining observers of actions and behaviours, maintaining a certain level of distance between herself and those she wishes to 'know' (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002: 25). Exploring this further, Gold draws on Simmel's work on intimacy, distinguishing between 'intimate form' and 'intimate content'. 'Intimate content', for example the disclosure of particular personal information or secrets, does not directly correlate to 'intimate form', since individuals often disclose their most personal secrets to complete strangers with the understanding that this relationship will not go on to take an 'intimate form' (Simmel, 1950: 127 cited in Gold, 1958). Gold argues that the role the field worker strives to achieve brings the informant to the point of friendship, that is, to the point of intimate form, but that the researcher must retain elements of 'the stranger' to avoid actually reaching intimate form (Gold, 1958: 221). Merriam (1998) terms the nature of this paradoxical stance a 'schizophrenic activity' which requires that researchers account for the potential effects of being participant in explaining the data (Merriam, 1998: 103 cited in Kawulich, 2005). Thus the challenge for researchers in this role is to participate enough to access the sort of knowledge which can only be gained through participation, whilst maintaining sufficient amount of distance to gain perspective and avoid becoming comfortable or over-familiar.

The observer-as-participant stance involves less risk of 'going native' than the participant-as-observer or complete participant stance, since it usually involves more formal and structured participation as a means to better improve observation, with the main role of the researcher being to observe (Gold, 1958). Adler and Adler (1994) note that this stance is the most beneficial for observation research since the researcher is more of a peripheral member, enabling her to 'observe and interact closely enough with members to establish an insider's identity, without participating in those activities constituting the core of the group membership' (Adler and Adler, 1994: 380). My research role arguably fell somewhere between the latter two. Whilst

attending I was very much treated as a member through my role as a volunteer. I was involved in the majority of the activities of front line service provision, and treated like the other volunteers, being asked to attend staff parties and buy gifts. For example, jokes about the managers and moaning about the increasingly regulated nature of the job were also made in my presence, indicating a level of trust and comfortableness around me. However, I never went completely native, with my status as an outsider researcher openly discussed and frequent references about me as 'the brains', and jokes made about my lack of practicality. Furthermore, I did not attend the project every day, also securing enough to distance to reflect on my time at the project. In this sense my role was not dissimilar to that of the other volunteers who also did not attend every day, and like me, had other roles outside the project, and were not exposed directly to all the practices of the organisation. I therefore suggest that my dual role as a researcher and volunteer only secured me as an 'insider' in relation to my role as a volunteer. Becoming an 'insider' in this sense influenced how I interviewed managers on the project, at times interrogating their accounts from the perspective of a volunteer. Thus the boundaries between insider and outsider were blurred, and often shifted depending on the context, impacting on the nature of the data generated, and how they were later analysed. Indeed, it is perhaps worth noting that in the context of a third sector organisation especially, there is a danger of drawing overly simplistic boundaries between 'insiders' and 'outsiders,' since there are multiple levels – both formal and informal – of membership in such organisations (see Billis, 2010). These are expressed in terms of organisational authority and power, contract status, working hours, paid or unpaid work, and of course, the shifting loyalties and allegiances that characterise any community as its members act, interact, and reproduce themselves. Furthermore, this insider-outsider dynamic also illuminates the shifting that occurred between my researcher and my volunteer role, whereby my loyalty to my volunteer role also problematizes the notion of objectivity in social research. This experience also paralleled Goodley's (1999) experience conducting an ethnographic study of a self-advocacy group for individuals' with learning disabilities, where he was also a volunteer (Goodley, 1999).

Regardless of the role of the researcher, or the techniques used in participant observation, it is worth a final note that what is observed is invariably shaped by the researcher's own interest, meaning that all observation is partial (Agar, 1996; Wolcott, 1999). My observations were shaped by what I found interesting, and over time came to reflect the focus of the particular theoretical lens I chose to adopt. I initially went into the field with the broad aim to explore the relationship between practices and values (RQ1), since I felt that this had been overlooked in the literature. I then used the early stages of immersion to inform my reading and to develop my theoretical framework, and subsequent research questions (RQ2 and RQ3). Aristotelianism, and in particular, Macintyre's internal and external goods theory were not settled on right away, but were rather the result of an iterative process which involved thinking about the data generated in my field notes in relation to potentially relevant theory. The relevance of Macintyre's internal and external goods theory became apparent in the tension that existed between project workers and managers concerning the value which was accorded to the practice of gardening, and how this seemed to be about differing ideas concerning what constituted excellence in practices and wellbeing. This was brought into focus one day during a discussion between my participants about planting out already cultivated seedlings (this was viewed as lazy) (see p169). It became clear that it was important for the project workers to seek excellence within their gardening practice, yet this seemed to conflict in some way with the managers concern for effectiveness.

Once my theoretical framework and research questions were established, my written observations centred on things which I felt were pertinent to my research questions, such as particular interesting conversations overheard or engaged in, and observations of how participants responded to the practices of the project. However, becoming more familiar with the field over time also sparked new interests and fields of inquiry to explore with my reading, shaping what I would then go onto explore in interviews. As I became more attuned to how individuals specifically related to the practice of gardening, I was more easily able to decipher the internal and external goods of the project, and thus to understand the particular tensions regarding change and how things should be done from the perspective of my participants. In this sense my field notes also served an important function of helping to organise

some of my more abstract or analytical thoughts about what had been observed and shaped my reading over time. This open and flexible approach to research helped to ensure that the research was not purely deductive in nature. It was also hugely beneficial for the conduct of my interviews, which the following will now address.

3.4 In-depth semi-structured interviews

Interviews were conducted with the purpose of adding depth to the more tacit understanding of participants' experiences on the project gained through participation. I used the interviews to explore in more detail how participants related to the project's practices, and what they valued about it. For Kvale (1996), the qualitative semi-structured interview is essentially a structured conversation, the purpose of which is to 'obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena' (Kvale, 1996: 6). I had a prior relationship with everyone I interviewed, apart from the area manager, whom I had met only on one occasion at the AGM event prior to the interview. Nonetheless, this brief meeting still provided the opportunity to build some initial familiarity and rapport. Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest that conducting interviews with individuals with whom rapport and trust has already been built is more likely to generate meaningful data than interviews which occur in circumstances where the researcher meets the participant as a 'rootless stranger' (Rubin and Rubin, 2005:92).

Furthermore, it also allowed time to develop the interview themes in line with emerging impressions garnered from directed conversations (informal interviews) and observations in the field. The interview schedules were fairly open, with the aim of the interview being to explore the histories of each individual, and how they understood and related to the practices of the project. For example, I usually opened with a question merely asking them to tell me a little bit about what they had done before they came to the project to gain a bit more of an understanding of their life trajectories before the project. Interview schedules differed slightly depending on the role of the respondent on the project. For example, managers were asked about funding arrangements and relationships with commissioners, whereas volunteers were asked questions regarding how they experienced their role as a volunteer

compared to paid work they had had. The focus of interviews with service users tended to centre on their experiences of attending the project, and what they got out of it. Questions were also slightly tailored to the individual, based on things I had picked up on whilst getting to know them in the field and wished to explore more in the interview. For example, I found out that one of the service users, Gareth, wanted to eventually become a small-holder. I wanted to explore this in more detail with him in his interview. Being able to explore the past experiences, and future hopes gleaned from getting to know participants over time in the field, enabled me to gain a more in-depth and nuanced understanding of why the practices of the project may have been valued, differentiating my research from other research which has explored the benefits of STH. All of the interviews were pre-arranged, and at the participants own convenience, with most taking place on the research site, aside from three which took place in cafés, and in a participant's home.

In terms of the interview process, the openness of the qualitative interview means that there are no standardised techniques or rules that exist for interviews. Despite this lack of standardised rules, Kvale describes the interview as a form of craftsmanship, with the outcome of the interview being dependent on the 'knowledge, sensitivity and empathy of the interviewer' (Kvale, 1996: 105). Kvale suggests that the interviewer should approach the interview process with an openness, playing the 'deliberate naivete' by being curious and sensitive to both what is said and what is not said, keeping her own presuppositions in check during the interview. This more open and undirected approach is more likely to generate better and more useful data, since it allows the respondent to reflect on what is important and meaningful to him or her in relation to the theme or question (Kvale, 1996). For me, this meant that certain questions required careful wording in order to not produce formulaic or leading responses. For example instead of merely asking the participant whether he or she believed the project was successful in realising its aims and mission, I tended to ask individuals to recall a particular success story, or a really good day that they could think of during their time at the project. This enabled me to glean an understanding of their own interpretation of what they believed their work at the organisation to be about, and an opportunity to explore further how they viewed the role of the project in such success stories. I also asked about future plans

and hopes for the project, and what they felt could be done better in order to gauge how they thought the project could be improved. Contrary to such questioning inviting defensive responses, my prior relationship with the participants, especially with those I had spent time with and had got to know well, often resulted in them including me in their responses. For example, shared experiences were drawn on as examples of both shortcomings and positive features of the project, beginning with 'well, you've been here when...' or 'you've noticed yourself', aligning me with their own view. My role volunteering at the project was arguably central to generating these open and honest responses about the project's successes and some of its shortcomings.

Thus, in recognition that the interview is a form of interaction jointly constructed by the interviewer and respondent (Silverman, 2001), responses such as the above, show how my role as a volunteer shaped responses generated in the interviews, with shared and prior experiences often being drawn on as frames of reference. As discussed earlier, this role made me more of an 'insider' in relation to the particular experience of being a volunteer. For example, due to our shared role, the interviews with other volunteers tended to produce more responses in which they aligned me with their own views and experiences.

My role as a volunteer also shaped the nature of the data generated in the interview(s) with the managers. For example, at certain points I interrogated and questioned the project manager, Dan, from what would arguably be considered the position of a volunteer, taking the protective view of the project held by volunteers and project workers. He often responded to these challenges with his own challenges and counter-questions. This undermined the usual power relationship of the interview in terms of the usual question-answer speaking turns, instead, replicating the organisational power relationship of manager versus volunteer. This had its benefits in the interview process, forcing him to articulate and clarify further what he meant about certain points and vice versa.

My familiar relationship with him, and knowledge of his provocative personality gleaned through my time getting to know him on the project, meant that I was

comfortable making such challenges without fearing I would cause him offence³². However, I was also aware of the increasingly competitive funding climate, and was sympathetic to his position. Thus, I was careful to allow him the space to articulate his own perspective. Overall, this dynamic was fruitful for the generation of detailed and complex data, and would not have been possible if I had not experienced the project first hand through my role as a participant.

The interview dynamic with John, the project worker who set-up the project and was nearing retirement, was different again. He was reluctant to speak of the project in a negative way, despite frequently moaning about regulation and health and safety during my time there. Instead of viewing his positive account as entirely performative, I interpreted this as him seeing the interview as an opportunity to put on record what he felt he had achieved with the project, and to protect the legacy he had built up. I was reluctant to challenge or probe for a more reflective account on this, partly out of respect for him, but also because I wanted to give him the opportunity to articulate this legacy now he was nearing retirement. He seemed to view the project as his, frequently referring to how he was about to 'pass it on' to Anne, the other project worker (something Anne also acknowledged).

The interviews with service users were shorter and more open. I was careful about going into too much detail about their mental health problems, especially with Eric, who rarely openly discussed his mental health. Thus each of the interview dynamics and the nature the data generated were different depending on who was being interviewed, my prior relationship with them, and their role on the project. This differs from the neutral interviewer, where the interviewer constructs her position as neutral in order to allow the interviewee the opportunity to pursue her own interests (Garton and Copland, 2010). This sometimes made the playing of the 'deliberate naivete' advocated by Kvale difficult (Kvale, 1996), since shared experiences were often drawn on as a means to either align me with the interviewee's own view, or to explore interview themes in more detail. Far from this limiting the opportunity for the generation of useful data, the existence of prior

³² Indeed, I had witnessed volunteers and project workers also make such challenges without him seeming to take offence.

relationships allowed me to gain access to resources not always available in traditional social science interviews (Garton and Copland, 2010).

3.5 Ethics

Before undertaking the study ethical approval from the University ethics committee was sought and granted. This initial approval did not account for interviewing service users, where further ethical approval was applied for and granted at a later stage. As mentioned earlier, consent and access were also kindly given by the project manager.

In all social research the duty of the researcher is to ensure that the 'physical, social and psychological well-being of the research participants is not adversely affected by the research' (BSA, 2002:2). This entails that informed consent from all research participants is gained prior to research, and thus it is the responsibility of the researcher to explain her research in terms understood by participants, and to inform participants how the research will be disseminated and used (BSA, 2002). Given the sporadic attendance of some of the service users, and the sometimes brief comings and goings of potential new service users, my research role was explained a number of times. On starting at the project I initially introduced myself and informed everyone I would be working with about the purpose of my being there, telling them a little bit about my research, and that I would be observing what went on during my time there, and hoped to interview them at some point. Opportunities to explain the purpose of my research also arose throughout my time there, with project members often showing an interest in what I was doing and enquiring about how I was getting on.

However, as Punch (1986) argues, ethical and moral dilemmas are often an unavoidable consequence of field work, and virtually impossible to plan in advance for. The overlap of my roles meant that there were two instances during the fieldwork where two different service users forgot I was there also doing research, believing me to be there as a pure volunteer, and in one case, as another service user. When this happened I would remind them that I was there doing research, and briefly

informed them of what it was about again. This issue occurred despite efforts to frequently remind people that I would be writing up what went on at the project day-to-day and asking individuals if they were comfortable with me including them in my observations. Nonetheless, the issue of consent sometimes seemed blurry. For example, a few service users were comfortable being observed but uncomfortable being interviewed. In such cases I would check again if they were comfortable with me observing them and writing about what happened on the project and their experiences. Just because consent is gained formally, it does not necessarily mean that research is ethical, with consent shifting depending on the nature of the material discussed. Participants may be happy for some material to be made public but not others (de Laine, 2000). The nature of my participation meant that conversations either with me or with the wider group in general would sometimes include sensitive material, some of which participants may not have felt comfortable with my detailing in my notes or findings. However, consent for every conversation or observation which included sensitive information could not always be checked in the moment it occurred. Indeed, this would have interrupted the natural flow of dialogue between individuals, and perhaps made individuals feel overly aware or self-conscious in an environment that was supposed to be therapeutic. Retroactive consent could not always be obtained either, as some service users following a sudden downturn in their health would suddenly disappear from the project not to be seen again, or their attendance would become more sporadic. In cases where a service user's attendance stopped completely it would have been inappropriate and potentially damaging to get in touch with them to check for their consent. In these cases I chose to refrain from including their stories in my findings.

Issues regarding what to include and what to keep on and 'off the record' are central in observation research, and are especially pertinent where the researcher may form close relationships with participants as a result of their own participation (de Laine, 2000). De Laine argues the researcher cannot know in advance what is personal and private and not for public consumption, therefore she must take time to get to know research participants and the social or cultural phenomena in question before attempting to delve too deeply into the lives of participants, respecting and taking seriously the other's world (de Laine, 2000: 53-55). For me, this meant building an

understanding of how comfortable individuals were in general with participating and talking openly in the group. For example, some service users were generally known for being very quiet and uncomfortable in larger groups, and with these individuals I refrained from straying onto topic areas which were not led by them during my time conducting observations.

However, it is impossible for the researcher to entirely control what goes on in the field. The relationships I built over time as a result of my participation, coupled with the element of peer support which was integral to the ethos of the project, meant that some service users would openly discuss their personal struggles with their mental health, sometimes disclosing highly personal information. Whilst some of this material was not always central to the research questions, it forms the background for my exploration of them, and is obviously relevant to the broader issue of wellbeing which was central to Aristotle's ethics (Aristotle, 2002). It would be difficult to understand what those who attended the project got out of their attendance, or if, and/or how, the project worked to facilitate wellbeing, without also having some knowledge about how individuals' mental health conditions affected their everyday lives. Thus, to exclude all such material completely would be a dishonest account of the project and a disservice to the voice of service users whom the service is meant to benefit. The inclusion of some of the more personal material relating to their mental health conditions therefore required careful consideration in terms of what should be included and what should be kept 'off the record' out of respect for the research participants' privacy (de Laine, 2000). For example, one participant entered a manic episode during my time with her and disclosed highly sensitive information to me; this was followed by time away in a crisis house. On her return she apologised if any of her behaviour was inappropriate telling me that she could not remember anything. Prior to this point, she had been keen on being interviewed, but her unstable condition and embarrassment on her return to the project led me to decide against interviewing her or including too much about her in my findings, since the issues of consent are blurred when particularly vulnerable participants may have divulged more than they were actually comfortable with, or could subsequently account for (de Laine, 2000). Overall, decisions about what to include and what to exclude were largely made at my discretion. They were informed by my relationship

with research participants and honesty on my part in terms of discussing how I planned to use their stories to ensure I represented their accounts truthfully and in a way that they were comfortable with. In general, I chose to steer clear of more personal information and stick to recording those more general and shared experiences in order to protect the privacy of participants.

Consent for interviews was more straightforward, and gained verbally prior to interviews. Before commencing interviews, a consent form was also signed and the interview participants were asked if they were comfortable with being recorded. In contrast to the need for careful negotiation regarding what could be included 'on record' in relation to observations and conversations in the field, interviews did not touch on overly sensitive information or probe into potentially emotionally charged issues, and participants were instead encouraged to voice their perspective on the project. The two volunteers interviewed enjoyed the interview process because they said it gave them an opportunity to reflect on their involvement on the project in ways they had not previously. Gareth, one of the service users interviewed, had a keen interest in politics and activism, and saw his opportunity to participate as a means to convey the value of the service to him in the hope that this could protect the service from potential future funding cuts. I told him that the small-scale nature of the research made this unlikely, but nonetheless, that I hoped, like he did, that services such as those provided at the project would continue to provide support for others. Similar motivations to participate have been found in other health related research (Peel et al, 2006). He was also keen to not be anonymised, wanting to be identified in order to be fully affirmative in his positive view. Despite his wishes to be identifiable, the small-scale nature of the research already made the complete protection of anonymity between participants a potentially sensitive area, thus out of a duty to other research participants, all data was anonymised.

Ethical issues also arise in relation to leaving the field. Taylor (1991) argues that researchers are ultimately indebted to their research participants, without whom the research would not be possible, and they must leave the field in such a way as to respect the nature of the relationship built up in the field. This can be difficult in cases where research participants desire a continuation of a relationship, potentially resulting in feelings of disappointment, betrayal or exploitation. There are no explicit

guidelines about how this should be done, with decisions being personal to each researcher (Taylor, 1991 cited in de Laine, 2000: 142). Goodley's (1999) earlier mentioned research with a learning disability self-advocacy group used group discussions to specifically tackle the process of the researcher's disengagement, signalling a clear end to the research. As part of this exercise, feedback reports were produced summarising what group members had said they got out of self-advocacy (Goodley, 1991).

No such strategy was adopted in my own research. I continued to attend as a volunteer long after the formal process of research ended, albeit with less frequency³³. In this sense, disengagement did not happen, although I did inform participants conversationally when I was at the stage of writing up. This did not happen with all participants due to a number of service users, as well as both the volunteers I worked with, leaving the project whilst I was still conducting research. I continue to be in touch with one of the other volunteers intermittently. John also retired from the project, and the manager Dan moved on to a job elsewhere during the writing up period. I believe that my involvement on the project has not had any negative impact on participants, with my own intermittent attendance after formal data collection ended, reflecting the general ebb and flow of the project, with service users and volunteers often leaving and returning to the project in accordance with how much the structure of the rest of their lives or their mental or physical health allows. Furthermore, my weekly attendance at the project also meant that relationships did not become so close that I felt my attendance would be missed, with the work of the project continuing regardless if I was there or not. The retirement of John is more likely to impact the dynamics of the project than the once-a-week visits of a researcher/volunteer. Thus my contact with the project, although sadly more intermittent, remains, despite many research participants no longer being present. My research is often discussed during my time there, both with those involved and those whom I have met following the end of data collection. When my contact will cease will largely depend on the same factors which limit or allow for the engagement of other volunteers on the project.

³³ At the point of submitting this thesis (2016) I still volunteer every few months.

3.6 Challenges in the field

There were a number of challenges faced during the research process, the first of which was the management of my dual role as researcher and volunteer. As mentioned earlier, this sometimes resulted in the confusion of identity, causing upset to one service user on finding out that I was not 'like her', and causing me to question how clear I had been in making my role known. In this particular instance, I apologised if I had not made it completely clear and explained my role and the research again. She seemed happy enough, and we continued to work alongside each other until she later left the project following a period of ill mental health. Despite my research role often being openly discussed, there were still instances where it was forgotten by service users, as it was in the above case. Relations of trust built on self-disclosure can be damaging to service users, and there is a fine balance between cultivating empathy and understanding towards participants to reduce power differences, and maintaining boundaries so to ensure participants are not lured into disclosing information they may later regret, leaving them feeling betrayed or exploited (de Laine, 2000). Following this particular instance I resolved to cultivate less personal relationships with service users, and to remind them more frequently of my role there.

The latter became easier over time, with research participants often enquiring as to how my research was coming along. However, maintaining adequate distance as volunteer/researcher was still difficult. Sharing personal experiences, future hopes and fears was common at the project. Such conversational openness arguably made people feel more at ease with one another and created feelings of conviviality and an almost familial feel on the project. For example, John always referred to me affectionately as 'little girl' and referred to male service users as 'my boys'. Thus, relationships on the project inevitably became personal, sometimes making it difficult to maintain boundaries. For example, Lewis, a service user, once asked me to the cinema. I politely refused, but wondered what role I had played in inviting this sort of attention. Following this incident I asked for some advice from the other volunteer, Jane, and mentioned it to Anne too. Jane told me how she always tried to

maintain boundaries with service users but admitted that this was sometimes hard; indeed, she maintained friendships outside the project with one of the service users, the other volunteer, and the project workers. Anne told John, the other project worker, about this incident with Lewis, and from then on John was always protective over me. Thus maintenance of boundaries was not only important for my role as a researcher but also as a volunteer, with both roles requiring a duty of responsibility towards research participants, as well as this being important for the protection of self.

I also experienced challenges with recruiting more service users for interviews. Some simply felt too vulnerable, viewing their time there as an opportunity to get their heads together, telling me they felt unable to express themselves in an interview. Some came and went before I even got the chance, and others, despite wanting to be interviewed, were in and out of the project too much, mainly in hospital or in crisis houses, due to poor mental health. Not only were individuals in the latter case difficult to pin down, but I also considered them too vulnerable, feeling uncertain about issues regarding consent in such cases. I therefore have little interview data relating to the experiences of service users, something which has limited a more exploratory understanding of their experiences on the project.

3.7 Data analysis

Based on my previous experience of using Atlas ti during my MSc, I decided against utilising Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) to analyse the qualitative data from this research. This was because I had found the ‘distancing’ and decontextualisation associated with employing such software problematic at times (Fielding and Lee, 1998; St John and Johnson, 2000), since it fragmented the data and made it hard for me to access the overall meaning (Miles and Huberman, 1984). As a result, I often found myself referring back to the original transcripts in order to re-immense myself in the original interview context. Thus, although this software offered a highly efficient and effective means to organise and retrieve large bodies of coded text, in line with Siedal (1991), I found it favoured breadth rather

than depth. This has obvious benefits when the research is large in scale with many participants, as my MSc was. For example, this software enabled me to get perspective on the commonness of particular experiences within the data. Yet, when it came to establishing the meaning of these experiences, I almost always had to engage with the transcript more closely to get a sense of overall narrative, since this was important for understanding participants' accounts of negative treatment³⁴. Thus, as Weitzman (2003) argues, although this software can free up more time for the analysis process, ultimately it cannot do the analysis for you.

Since this PhD research involved dealing with lots of data generated from relatively small population, context and narrative were important elements for me to grasp in order to establish meaning, I opted to code the data manually. The following describes the analysis process.

Preliminary analysis began whilst the research was still in progress, thus the development of research themes happened gradually over a long period of time. Potential initial themes were developed from emerging patterns noted throughout the fieldwork diary. These often included theoretical and analytical notes alongside description of happenings at the project, shaping my enquiry as I went along. My interpretations of the fieldwork data were also sense checked with my participants during informal interviews and conversations, to ensure that my interpretations were faithful to their own experiences and perspectives.

Following the completion of each interview transcripts were read over numerous times, with annotations about potential preliminary themes made in the margins, before themes, and their concordant interview excerpts, were placed into a word document. These initial themes were largely data generated, and included codes such as 'inclusiveness', 'work', 'balance', 'learning by doing', as well as what were initially more broad and general themes relating to extracts about gardening and how participants understood the project's successes and limitations.

³⁴ My Msc explored experiences of disabled people's negative treatment in the workplace as part of a mixed-methods research team which looked at negative experiences across the UK population in different workplaces (see Fevre et al 2012). Whilst Atlas ti was useful at gaining insight into the bigger picture, accessing and understanding subjective experiences at a deeper level was easier if you engaged with the overall narratives of participants.

Once I had completed fieldwork and interviews, I began a more thorough analysis. This began with producing a word document which included a brief description of each interview participant and the main themes discussed in their interview. I did this to get an overall idea of the narrative of each interview participant to help ensure that these individual narratives were not lost in the process of more detailed coding, keeping a record to go back to throughout the writing up process. I also created maps of the broad themes identified throughout the fieldwork and what I understood as the relationships between them. These were informed by both the interview data and the theoretical literature discussed in the literature review. This helped me to visually organise the data, enabling me to begin exploring the relationship between the different themes and how they related to the research questions. I then went back to the transcripts and field notes and coded them by hand using felt-tip pens, before finally organising interview and field note excerpts under themes and their related codes in another separate word document. This process involved a further refining of codes and themes, merging some together and developing new codes and/or themes, helping to ensure consistency.

The codes and themes developed at this stage were both inductive (codes and themes derived directly from the data) and deductive (codes and themes informed by theoretical ideas underpinning my research questions). Some codes represented a mixture of the two, such as the code 'inclusion' which was a code derived directly from the interview data, but was also used to code data excerpts I interpreted as relating to the idea of inclusion and its relationship to wellbeing in a more abstract or theoretical way. For example, I also applied this code to excerpts where participants described the feeling of being on the project, and to excerpts in field notes relating to how tasks were undertaken (their inclusion in the particular practice of gardening). Data excerpts tended to be quite long in order to preserve their context. Keeping excerpts long also meant that the same excerpt could relate to multiple codes and themes. Instead of merely merging these codes, the separate codes were kept in order to display nuance in the data. For example, some data excerpts relating to perceived project limitations or failures were coded accordingly as 'dated' and 'unstructured', but some of these same excerpts were also included under the theme relating to 'tensions or differing expectations,' as they also related

to tensions between different members' ideas and expectations about what the project could achieve.

This coding method differs from the approach advocated by Rubin and Rubin (1995) who suggest that codes should emerge directly from the data (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that this approach is naïve as it wrongly assumes passivity on the part of the researcher, downplaying the influence of the researchers' research interests and their epistemological and ontological position. The mixture of both inductive and deductive coding applied during thematic analysis was loosely in keeping with the adaptive theory approach developed by Layder (1998) and the principles of critical realism, which represents a middle ground between purely positivist and interpretivist epistemologies. In such an approach theories both shape and are shaped by the empirical data which emerges from the research, with theory being used and/or generated to help understand the connection between structure and agency in the particular social context being researched. Thus, the analysis of a data within this framework is a process which gives importance to both subjective meaning and experience, but also seeks to understand this by considering the broader structural or systemic conditions in which these meanings and experiences are embedded (Bhaskar, 1979; Layder, 1998). The themes presented in the following chapters represent the outcome of this process.

4.0 Using gardening as a tool for mental health recovery and rehabilitation at Lles

The first empirical chapter introduces the research setting, the project's history and aims, and the research participants. The day-to-day routine of the project will also be explored to provide an impression of what daily life at the project was like, before going on to present some of the success stories I encountered during my time there. This routine, and the concurrent accounts from project workers and managers, will show how in certain respects the aims and values of the project were in keeping with dominant UK welfare and mental health policy discourses concerning social inclusion and wellbeing discussed in chapter two. These policy discourses either explicitly or implicitly place paid work at the centre of social inclusion, empowerment and enablement, and thus at the heart of mental health recovery and wellbeing (SEU, 2004; Friedli and Parsonage, 2009; Welsh Government, 2012a; 2012b; 2012c). That project workers and managers also identified strongly with this is unsurprising given the organisation's aims. Indeed, the very principles which underpin Lles' own recovery programme are now central to those adopted in the Care and Treatment Plans which became a legal right for all users of secondary health services in Wales in June 2012. Whilst this legislation is still in its infancy, there was a key overlap between government policy and the ethos of Lles at the time of research. Lles regarded its services and campaign efforts as having played a central role in this recent legislative change. This also lends some weight to the kinds of assertions made by both academics and the government regarding the perceived capacity of the third sector in general (e.g. Giddens, 1998; Billis, 2001; WAG, 2008a; 2008b). Thus, by detailing how project managers and project workers understood the goals of the project, this chapter aims to show how dominant ideas about work and the supposed relationship of this to social inclusion and recovery, influenced the daily practices on the project.

However, it is first instructive to introduce the research setting and the participants and their biographies prior to their involvement in the project. This is not only important for elucidating the values which informed the daily practices of the

project, but also provides some context for understanding the different ways in which the organisation was perceived to be of value by different participants, a central theme of this research.

4.1 Project History and Aims

Lles³⁵ is a member-led organisation which is managed by the people it aims to support – individuals with serious mental health conditions such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, and their families. It is made up of 191 employees and 150 volunteers, who are spread across branches in Wales, each with links to their own Local Authority and Health Board. The organisation is underpinned by the belief that those who have direct experience of mental illness know best how services are to be delivered. In keeping with Billis' (2010) conception of voluntary organisations, this belief is central to how the organisation is structured and functions. For example, all board members have some experience of mental illness and all prospective members have to have their membership approved by trustees before they can become members. Organisational decisions are made by members through a voting process to ensure accountability to members and organisational mission. User participation is also strongly promoted at every level. For example, service users meet with staff to make formal management decisions on each project, and service users are also engaged in membership and governance at the national level. Therefore, evidence of what Billis (2010) defines as the hybridised and ambiguous structure of voluntary organisations is immediately identifiable in how Lles is structured and functions.

The organisation provides a number of services for individuals and their carers across Wales. It was formed in 2003, following the break-up of the UK-wide mental health charity, Wellspring, into its national constituents. All branches in Wales came together to form their own separate nationally based organisation, Lles. The organisation believes that all individuals with mental health conditions should have equal access to health and social care, income, employment, housing and education, since all aspects of an individual's life will impact on the quality of their mental health.

³⁵ Lles and Wellspring are pseudonyms. Lles is Welsh for 'benefit', 'good' or 'welfare'.

The overall aim of the organisation is to fight mental health discrimination, and to help those with serious mental illness to achieve a better quality of life. All services are underpinned by Lles' recovery programme, which is founded on the principles of empowerment, self-management, and a whole-person approach. The aim of these programmes is to help individuals to identify and reach their own personal recovery goals. This includes goals which are directly related to the treatment of mental illness, such as reducing or changing medication, and/or seeking other psychological interventions, as well as the development of goals which relate more broadly to wellbeing. The latter include accommodation, personal care and physical wellbeing, work and occupation, training and education, parental or caring relationships, and social, cultural, or spiritual life (principles which are also supposed to be adopted within all Care and Treatment Plans in Wales). The organisation works with each service user on his or her recovery programme, with personal goals being developed in relation to each of these aspects.

However, as indicated in the interview quotes from Dave, the area manager, and John, a project worker, access to work, education or training opportunities is at the forefront of many of their services:

I think it's our job to enable the individual to have skills so they're able to move on into I hate the term, but more mainstream opportunities. (Dave)

The organisation is a big team with different projects. They do different things, but a vast amount of the things that we do is about getting people back into work. To give them knowledge, to give them experience, to give them confidence, to get 'em back to work, that is what it is basically all about. (John)

The branch involved in this research is a training and employment project based within the grounds of some beautiful historic gardens on the rural outskirts of a Welsh city. It uses gardening as a tool to equip service users with practical, or 'pre-employment' skills, with the aim being to move individuals on into education, training or employment within two years of using the service. Individuals can only attend the project through being given a referral from their community psychiatric nurse (CPN), their psychiatrist, or their GP.

The project was started by John, who was first employed by what was then Wellspring as a gardening instructor in 1996. Initially there was no project site, with John being given a van to pick up men (it was only men back then) who had been referred to the service by local mental health teams, from various locations across the city, including hostels. The van had four seats and some space for tools. Up until 1998 John would pick up the men each morning, and they would go and do some garden maintenance for whoever would pay, charging a nominal fee for their service, putting any profits back into the organisation. The area manager Dave informed me that during this period, it was more common for some of the projects to function as social enterprises. For example, one project paid service users to make patio slabs which would be sold to the public.

In 1998, a colleague of John whose husband worked in the historic gardens nearby, informed John of a potential site there. The site had been left by its previous lease owners in 1993 and had since become over-grown. John approached the head of gardening operations there, with the view to taking on the lease for the grounds, for the express purpose of turning the site into a project. The garden manager approved the acquisition of the lease by Wellspring, giving them the lease at a reduced fee in exchange for 10,000 hours a year of free labour for the gardens.

It took John, with the help of service users and volunteers, two years to get the site up and running as a project, with him having to rely on his own resourcefulness and ingenuity to do it. Wellspring had given him little money for the tools that he needed, so he built the project up on his own by applying for grants, salvaging stuff from dumps and scrap merchants, and stealing tools abandoned on building sites, supplementing this with his own money when he had to. For example, he had assembled the poly tunnel from scratch having salvaged it from a skip, saving the project thousands of pounds. Once the garden project was up and running it opened to the public every year during the summer months to sell its vegetable produce and hanging baskets, which were made by John and the service users. Following the formation of Lles in 2003, the project also acquired a derelict fourteen-room house which was also on site to carry out other organisational activities, such as mental health training courses. The house needed work and re-furbishing, so John furnished it with furniture that he obtained from a local closed down hospital upon being

informed by a friend that everything inside was to be dumped. For him, it was these materials, as much as his own work, which had made the project a success:

I don't have things getting dumped, I recycle anything I can get my hands on, that I can use y'know? And that's what makes a project; because if you're a charity you try to save money, you salvage things that are getting thrown away if you can re-use them. (John)

Indeed, this self-sufficient ethos informed how John ran the project and he took pride in this, not least because he was working for a charity; this is a theme that will be explored further in the ensuing chapters.

In 2008, Anne left her job in a women's organisation and joined the project as a project worker alongside John. Anne worked on the project with John, but also provided a carers' garden service. This was a free garden maintenance service provided for those who did not have the time or the resources to look after their own garden, due to caring responsibilities for a family member with a mental health condition. In June 2012, a month after commencing my fieldwork, the project moved to a smaller site in the grounds due to the historic gardens' plans to extend onto the site that was being leased by Lles, so as to provide more parking space for visitors. Whilst this move could have been postponed for another year or so, Dan, the project manager, wanted the site up and running before John was due to retire in 2014. The summer of the move was a time of great upheaval, change and uncertainty, during which some service users stopped attending the project. John and Anne attributed this to the turbulence of the move, and it is important to note that they themselves were not immune to the effects of this. Both were saddened by the closure of the old project, especially John who regarded the project as his. Anne also felt uncertain about the future direction of the new project which would be led solely by her once John had retired. At the point of the move, the lease with the historic gardens was not formally agreed, with those in higher management apparently resistant to the idea of a mental health project maintaining a continual presence on the gardens' site³⁶ at all. Funding for the coming year from the health board was also not in place at this time, with Lles being in the process of putting in a bid for the new contract

³⁶ The lease was eventually secured in November 2012.

beginning in April 2013. This uncertainty delayed the development of the new site, compounding the already existing anxiety around the change.

In October 2012, Dan informed everyone that Lles had got the contract with the health board for April 2013, securing funding for the next three years. Prior to this, the project had been funded on a year-by-year basis, with service-level agreements rolling on each year. However, in 2013 the health board changed the rolling service level agreement to an open tender process. This meant that from 2013 onwards, contracts would be opened up to other service providers, and that organisations would have to bid in competition with each other for contracts awarded on a three yearly basis. In the initial open tender, Lles were the only organisation to bid for the contract, and were thus easily able to secure funding for the project until April 2016. The same contract also funded a café-based project in another nearby urban location (not involved in this research). Each project was funded for twenty places a week³⁷. Whilst this meant that funding was guaranteed for three years, enhancing the security of the project, managers also believed that the opening up of contracts to other service providers, along with greater focus on hard outcomes, meant that pressures on future funding would increase. Indeed, the service was not immune from cuts during my time there. In 2014, the Local Authority grant for Anne's carers' garden service was withdrawn due to budget constraints. Lles continues to run the service but now charges carers a fee to do so.

In response to these anticipated funding pressures, Lles was working towards making all of its projects more effective at achieving their desired outcomes. Dan informed me prior to starting the research that the project largely fell short of its targets in regards to both consistently filling the twenty places a week, and successfully moving service users on within two years. To address the former, the project had introduced a therapeutic pottery group to attract more users. This was funded by a mixture of grant money and some of the contract money. An art therapist was contracted by Lles to run the group. However, for Dan, the latter problem was more acute. In response to this issue, it was proposed that the project deliver a horticultural qualification. This was something that was resisted by project worker Anne, who saw

³⁷ One person attending three days a week would equate to three places.

it as fundamentally changing the way she worked, and undermining the value of what she did. In contrast to Dan, both John and Anne saw their work as a success, despite the lack of 'move on' cases. This tension was a central theme throughout the research, and I would suggest was at the root of the differences in how those involved in the project understood its value. Throughout the fieldwork the project was experiencing what could be understood as isomorphic pressures (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) with regard to how it was to deliver its service in response to the shifting funding terrain, mirroring the evidence from Milbourne's (2013) and Buckingham's (2010) research in England discussed in the previous chapter. This brought to bear fundamentally different ideas about what it meant to realise the project's values, the central theme of this research. However, before exploring this in more detail it is necessary to introduce the research participants.

4.2 Research Participants

4.2.1 Project workers

Project workers, John and Anne were keen gardeners, having gardened either professionally and/or as a hobby throughout their lives. Whilst managers referred to them as 'recovery workers', I never once heard John or Anne refer to themselves using this term, with both instead identifying themselves as 'gardeners'. Neither professed to be experts when it came to what it was people needed to be well, something I think is important for understanding how they worked with service users. Indeed, both believed that the two years they had to move individuals on was arbitrary, and believed it was better for service users to move on when they were ready.

John

John was in his late sixties at the time of research. He was kind, humorous and steadfast. He had worked for Lles for over eighteen years, retiring from the project after the culmination of my research in summer 2014, at the age of seventy. He started his working life in the army, retiring as a Sergeant. He then took a job in the local paper mill in order to pay the mortgage and provide for his wife and his three children. He once told me during a discussion we had about his work at Lles, that he

had 'hated' his job in the paper mill for 'the whole twenty three years I was there' and gladly took a voluntary redundancy package in his fifties. Gardening had always been a hobby of his, so he tried starting his own gardening business, but found it to be 'too much hard work' on his own. One evening in the pub, a friend of his showed him a job advert in the paper for a paid gardening instructor with Lles, and urged him to apply, thinking that he would be good at it. John applied for the job and got it. He claimed working on the project was the best job that he had ever had, and the only job he had done for himself. He had no previous experience of working in mental health, relying on what he understood through his own experience with people, and the second-hand experiences of his wife, who had been a mental health nurse, to guide him in his work. I also got the impression that one of his daughters was also having difficulties with her mental health during my time there. She had moved back in with John and his wife, and was having some time off work following the breakdown of her relationship.

John used humour to bond with others, constantly cracking jokes during my time on the project. He tended to avoid inquiring into the mental health of service users in too much detail, usually relying on how they looked to judge if they were doing okay. He had a knack for making and fixing things, seemingly knowing how things worked through sight alone. Whilst John referred to himself as a 'jack of all trades and master of none', others on the project would frequently marvel at his ability. Although John smoked, he did not seem to perceive it as something which negatively affected his health, believing that 'everyone needs a vice' and that if 'you keep moving, you'll be fine'. He told me that he had only been off sick from the project once, and only for two weeks (although he was supposed to take six), following a heart scare in the summer of 2008, and his return to work had been on the condition that he engage in light duties only. I noticed that he did not seem to take this seriously, engaging in heavy work throughout the duration of the field work, despite this being in breach of his contract. Whilst he was never caught doing anything during my time there, this was not always the case. He told me whilst moving patio slabs one day, that he had once had a disciplinary for moving a fridge. He was deeply resentful of this, and told me that he had nearly left at this point, but had only stayed to help Anne set up the new project. John did not like what he understood as the increasing and disabling

regulation around Health and Safety, claiming it would be 'impossible' for him to start the project from scratch again today with regulation being as it was. From his perspective, his commitment and do-it-yourself ethos was what had made the project a success, and he felt that this had been overlooked by Head Office.

This particular example is evidence of the tension that can manifest between the formal and the informal in voluntary organisations noted in the earlier literature chapter (Rochester, 2001; Buckingham, 2009; 2010). However, I would suggest that it was about more than this. For example, John also hated what he saw as Head Office taking credit for the work that he and Anne had done. For John, the work of Head Office was far removed from the practices of the project; therefore he disliked them interfering because he felt they could neither understand nor appreciate the work he and Anne did. John's drive to do things his way arose from a deep commitment to his own values, which, in turn, informed the way he ran the project. Aside from these frustrations, John loved his work and felt that he was largely autonomous in his role. It was because of this autonomy that he was able to exercise his values through his work, and, for him, this was what enabled him to do good work on the project, as the following chapters will show.

Anne

Anne was in her fifties, and had worked for Lles for six years. Anne was caring, enthusiastic and energetic. Like John, she also claimed that working on the project was the best job she had ever done. Anne started her working life as a bus conductor in London, and after finding that she hated having to talk to the general public, decided to give gardening a try. Following a gardening apprenticeship, she worked as a gardener for the council in local parks and in a nursery, before moving to Wales with her husband to start a family. She stayed at home and tended her own garden, whilst her three children were growing up, before setting up her own gardening business. She enjoyed this work, but found it hard doing it on her own, often coming home exhausted. Anne referred to her initial move to leave her work as a gardener and work with people as a calling. During our interview she told me that she had ended up working with people after hearing a voice at a Native American medicine workshop (she had followed the Native American faith for over twenty years). The voice had told her that 'the time of gardening has been a time of healing, and it is

now time to work with people'. She herself acknowledged that this was strange, given that the reason she had got into gardening in the first place was to get away from people. On telling the group about this experience, one member came up to Anne and told her that she had already mentioned Anne to her colleagues in the women's organisation she worked for, and urged Anne to apply for a support worker job which was going there. After initially battling with whether or not she would be any good at the job, having had no professional experience of working with people, Anne decided that maybe it was 'time to do something different'. She applied for the job using her own personal experience on the application. To her surprise, she got the job. Anne enjoyed this job for a time, but she missed gardening and felt frustrated by her lack of impact. She began to look for jobs which involved both gardening and working with people. Anne initially had no luck getting anything until her old manager, who had moved to a job in Lles' Head Office, got in touch to inform her that some volunteer help was needed at one of Lles' projects. Anne began volunteering at the project during her days off in the summer of 2008, sometimes also covering for John who was off work following his heart scare.

By the end of that summer Anne was offered a full-time paid job on the project and could see no reason not to take it. Whilst she was less adept than John at design and putting things together off-the-cuff, she knew more about plants. Anne also worked with service users on their recovery programmes, and was the main person service users would go to if they needed to talk about anything in relation to their illness. She tended to relate to service users and volunteers on more of an emotional and personal level than John, sharing her own stories and experiences, and enquiring into their personal lives in more detail. Anne believed the key to happiness was to find out what you love in life, and to do it as much as possible. This was something she was always encouraging service users to do. Anne also believed that good habits were learnt from people, and told me that she wanted to 'be an inspiration' to service users. She had a strong interest in environmentalism and sustainability, and was hoping to take the project down more of a permaculture route after John had retired. Similarly to John, Anne valued her autonomy and thought she was good at her work, but she felt aggrieved by the increasing levels of health and safety regulation.

4.2.2 Volunteers

Two volunteers were involved in the fieldwork, Jane and Sarah. Both were keen gardeners and had family members who had experienced mental health issues. There was also one other volunteer at the project, Rhodri, a former service user in his sixties. He volunteered on a different day to myself, however, so I knew little about him.

Jane

Jane was in her late forties, and at the point of the research had volunteered at the project one or two days a week for two years. Alongside this, Jane worked part-time as a photography teacher in community education, teaching mainstream photography classes and photography classes for adults with mental health conditions. Jane was also involved in a community arts co-op, and did a bit of casual gardening on the side for friends to earn extra money. Her move to volunteer at the project formed part of an attempt to incorporate more gardening into her life, paid or unpaid, following being ill with cancer. Jane told me in her interview that she had become increasingly 'disgruntled' with community education, and had always wanted to do something with horticulture or the environment. She described her illness as 'a wake-up call' and began to make changes in her life to gain more of a 'balance', as she put it. She reduced her teaching hours, and began a two year horticulture HND. Although not part of the course, an interest in horticultural therapy led her to choose Lles as a placement option for her free module. The rest of her placement was spent with the gardeners in the historic gardens. Despite not learning much about horticultural therapy at Lles, Jane enjoyed her placement so much that she continued to volunteer there following the completion of her HND. Throughout the field work, Jane was still struggling to find the balance she wanted, becoming increasingly stressed with her teaching, and searching for alternative sources of income. At the encouragement of John and Anne, she applied for a one year full-time horticultural traineeship, got it, and left the project in September 2013. She started her own horticultural business at the beginning of 2015.

Sarah

Sarah was in her late fifties and volunteered at the project two days a week. She was also a keen gardener and had her own allotment. When I first met Sarah she told me

that she volunteered to 'stay out of trouble'. She was unemployed, in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), and looking for work and ways to survive on little money. She initially volunteered at the project for three days a week, but the pressure of having to look for a job to earn some money meant that she had to drop down to two. Sarah's love of gardening began when she was first married after a brief stint WWOOF-ING³⁸ with her now ex-husband, but was something she said was 'growing on' her more over recent years. Sarah was originally from Norway but had moved all over the world for her ex-husband's career. Prior to volunteering Sarah had worked in a number of jobs, but had never really liked any of them. She did not see herself as a 'career person' and told me that she had only worked out of necessity to provide for her children following her divorce. Before the birth of her third child she had pursued a career as an occupational therapist, something she saw as 'just a job', and had worked for a brief time in a psychiatric unit. Her third child was born with a severe learning disability, so she left occupational therapy to work as a teaching assistant as the working hours were more 'family friendly'. She continued working in this role until her youngest daughter also suffered mental health issues and could no longer attend school, so she gave up work to care for her daughter full-time until she moved out. She then worked for the Care Quality Commission doing care inspections but found herself unemployed once her position there had ended. An interest in volunteering was sparked following visits to a therapeutic garden in England where her middle daughter volunteered. On finding that she was spending an increasing amount of time volunteering alongside her daughter, she decided to find something closer to home. She looked at a number of garden projects, but for reasons she could not really explain to me, did not find them suitable. She told me that as soon as she walked into Lles she thought 'this is what I want, this is where I want to be' and so began her time at Lles. Sarah volunteered at the project for over three years before leaving in January 2013 to enrol on a level one horticultural qualification in order to continue her eligibility for her JSA. The course was cancelled mid-way through due to funding cuts. Sarah also applied for the same traineeship scheme as Jane, but did not

³⁸ Willing Workers on Organic Farms – a volunteer scheme for individuals who wish to travel and to learn about organic farming methods. In exchange for their labour, individuals are provided with accommodation and food by the farm host.

get it. Shortly after, she returned to Norway where she has managed to find a job working with adults in end-of-life care.

4.2.3 Service users

The problems I experienced getting service users to participate in the research were discussed in my methodology chapter. This meant that I encountered more service users throughout the field work than those who are included here. Whilst those included here were comfortable with being involved in the fieldwork, some were uncomfortable about being interviewed. Others who were initially willing, subsequently left the project abruptly or were too infrequent in their attendance to be interviewed. Eric and Gareth were the only service users I interviewed.

Eric

Eric was in his mid-fifties. I did not know his diagnosis but knew he was prone to depression. He had been attending the project three times a week for over ten years. Prior to his illness he was a training officer with a gas and electric company. Whilst he had enjoyed his job there, he described it as ‘office based’, ‘target driven’, ‘goal orientated’, ‘stressful’ and ‘totally the opposite’ to work on the project. Since becoming ill, Eric had found that any stress made him ill – including watching his football team – and thus for him another job was out of the question. Eric was quiet and talked little about his personal life or his illness, preferring to chat about music and football. He did not have his own garden but looked after his mother’s garden. There were a several periods throughout the field work where he did not attend the project due to physical ill health and a family bereavement.

Gareth

Gareth was in his early forties. He was diagnosed with acute depression which he told me he believed was triggered by being ill for a long time with the chicken pox. He attended the project for less than a year. He was referred to the project by a local mental health team, who thought ‘gardening might be good’ for him. Gareth had always enjoyed gardening and the outdoors in general, having grown up on a small holding. He came to the project with the hope of gaining a formal horticultural qualification, which would potentially allow him to get a paid job working outdoors.

His overall ambition was to eventually become self-sufficient by earning enough money to be able to return to the countryside and have his own small holding. Prior to becoming ill, Gareth had worked as a chef, something he believed was too stressful for him to return to. He had also worked on and off as a Welsh translator throughout the duration of his depression, something he did not mind, but ultimately found boring. Gareth had intermittent periods of mental and physical ill-health throughout his time at the project, with the former being caused by the stress of caring and supporting a friend who had attempted suicide on several occasions. Gareth left the project in the summer of 2013, having decided to move back to the countryside near to where he grew up, as he and his wife could no longer afford their rent. Whilst he reasoned that this was not his initial plan, his GP told him that this was probably better for him than 'any drugs or therapy she could prescribe' because he would 'be happier.' Gareth was chatty, open about his condition, and had strong political views. He was particularly critical of the organisation Atos³⁹. Outside the project he was quite involved in disabled people's activism.

Mike ('Woody')

Mike was in his forties and had been diagnosed with schizophrenia at the age of twelve. He had attended the project two or three times a week for over ten years. Throughout his teenage years Mike had dabbled in drugs, and drank a lot, something which had interfered with his medication. He had also been involved in petty crimes. He had spent his working life as a carpenter, and had worked in the building industry abroad for a number of years, telling me that it was 'good money', and that he had loved the camaraderie of it. He was not ill during this period, but the breakdown of his eighteen year relationship sent him into a downwards spiral he had not recovered from. His attendance was intermittent due to both physical and mental ill health. He was chatty, liked to joke, and was open about his condition. Outside the project, he ran a support group for people who hear voices a drop-in centre.

Harriet

Harriet was in her late thirties. She started attending the project in November 2012 and left in September 2013 to start the same horticultural traineeship as Jane. Whilst

³⁹ Atos Healthcare conducts assessments on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

I did not know her diagnoses, I knew that she had not got along with her psychiatrist, and that she had suffered bad side-effects from her prescribed medication. After eventually persuading her psychiatrist to lower her medication dosage Harriet started to do more in her life, developing a love of gardening and photography. She was introduced to the project by Jane who had previously taught her photography, and who upon finding out about her interest in gardening recommended she start coming to Lles. At this point Harriet was not in contact with a community mental health team, and thus needed to go for an assessment and get a referral in order to attend the project. Once she got a referral Harriet started attending the project, gradually coming in more and more, until she came every day. She and John were particularly close, and John was always praising how hard-working and conscientious she was. Harriet had been a chef before becoming ill, but told me she could not go back to it as it was too stressful. She was living in a flat she didn't like much, and having moved a lot throughout her life, hoped to put some 'roots' down, and find a place with a garden. On hearing about the traineeship from the historic gardens manager, she was persuaded by John and Anne to apply, and got the placement within the historic gardens, which she loved. Harriet continued to pop in throughout her placement and has stayed in touch with John since his retirement. The last I heard she was employed on a short-term contract by the historic gardens.

Tom

Tom was in his mid-twenties and had been diagnosed with depression. He started attending the project towards the end of the field work in the summer of 2013, and attended for just under a year. Prior to attending the project he had worked for his mum in her café and had begun a carpentry apprenticeship, which he had not completed due to him not getting along with his mentors. Tom wanted to use his time at the project to figure out what he wanted to do with his life, and as a means through which to become less isolated. He was also trying to give up smoking and drinking during this period. The last time I saw him was at John's retirement in the summer of 2014, where he told me that he had pretty much stopped coming since Harriet had left because he did not feel as comfortable around the new service users. He told me that he hoped to change this as he was in a bit of a rut, but as far as I am aware he has not been back.

Louise

Louise was in her fifties and started coming to the project around the same time as Tom. I did not really get to know much about Louise during the fieldwork, as she was quiet and going through a difficult time. I knew that she loved gardening but did not have her own garden as she lived in a flat with her husband and son. Jane had also taught her photography and had recommended Lles to her. She continues to attend the project, going three days a week, and I have got to know her better since my research finished. She has recently acquired her own allotment.

May

May was in her forties and diagnosed with bipolar disorder, something she thought had been triggered by the anti-depressants she was put on following a break down due to pressures at work. She had been attending the project on and off prior to the commencement of my field work, but I only met her for the first time in October 2012. Throughout the duration of the fieldwork her attendance fluctuated due to either bouts of depression or mania. She had moved around in various jobs throughout her life. These included having her own business, being a youth worker and, the job she discussed the most, being a roadie and tour manager for musicians. She had dabbled in a lot of drugs over the years, but as far as I was aware now only used marijuana occasionally. She had a reputation for being a bit of a character, and was sometimes difficult to manage, although this was mainly when entering periods of mania. She was always chatting and singing, and had strong political opinions. We got along well, and she wanted to be interviewed but unfortunately she was not well enough. When I last saw her she was going through a depressive period and was struggling to come in.

Richard

I only met Richard a few times. He was in his late thirties and had been coming to the project for ten years prior to the move and stopped attending shortly after. I often bumped into him out and about and he came up in conversation every now and again, since he also kept in touch with Anne. The last I heard he had started some training for a job at the beginning of 2015.

Lewis

Lewis was in his mid-twenties. I knew little about his condition aside from that he was on a community treatment order, but as with Harriet, did not like being on his medication, and was trying to persuade his psychiatrist to lower his dose. I never found out when he first started attending the project as his attendance was intermittent throughout the fieldwork. Lewis was known for being 'troubled' and for 'disappearing,' something which was attributed to his problems with alcohol and drugs. He would often leave early without telling anyone, and sometimes he would disappear for months, with Anne being unable to contact him. He stopped showing up at the project completely at the end of the summer in 2013. Lewis was quiet, often withdrawn and mumbled, so it was difficult to understand him. However there were some moments, either in one-on-ones or in smaller groups, when he would open up and be quite chatty. He told me that he did not think he needed to be on his medication, and that he aimed to eventually come off it completely, and get a job. However, he knew that to be successful he would also need to quit alcohol and drugs, and this would be the hard part.

Martin

Martin was also in his mid-twenties. He was quiet and often listened to music while he worked. Whilst I did not know everyone's diagnosis, he was the only participant I had frequent and ongoing contact with who never mentioned anything about his mental health or his future. Conversation with him tended to focus either on the project or his visits to see family in South Africa. I did not know when he first started coming to the project, but knew that he had been attending three days a week for over five years. He often left after lunch, sometimes also disappearing without saying goodbye, despite efforts by John and Anne to get him to stay for the full day. His attendance was also intermittent, and Anne attributed this to the effects of his medication.

What struck me about the service users was that despite their different diagnoses, ages, and life experiences, there were a few things that the majority of them seemed to have in common with one another. For example, attendance tended to be irregular (usually due to mental or physical ill health) and over a long period of time, rather than, say, a methodical engagement over two years followed by a transition to

something more independent. As far as I was aware seven of them had, or had had, issues with drugs or alcohol. Further, eight of them admitted to struggling to function on their medication and had had difficulty with psychiatrists over the years, with the exception of Eric and Martin, who never mentioned their medication or psychiatrists. The fact that some service users had had poor experiences with statutory services perhaps serves as indication of the kind of added value Billis (2001) asserts voluntary organisations may have for individuals who are socially excluded, offering an alternative service for individuals who may otherwise be left wanting if they had to rely on statutory provision alone (see Billis and Glennerster, 1998 also). Perhaps more telling was their common struggles with the stresses of mainstream society, and how their attendance at the project represented a temporary reprieve from these.

4.2.4 Managers

Dan (Project Manager)

Dan was in his late thirties and had worked for Lles for ten years, initially as a carer's advocate and then as a project manager. He described how he ended up coming to work for Lles as 'pure chance'. Like project workers and volunteers, however, I got the impression that Dan may have had some personal experience of mental ill health. This was something that he evaded in his interview, but was acknowledged via his use of the statistic that one in four people suffer mental ill health at some point in their life. Prior to working for Lles, he had a job in publishing which he had liked. However, it entailed him working away from home for four days each week, something his wife had not liked, but that he had enjoyed ('no responsibilities'). To 'appease' his wife, he applied for a job at Lles, thinking that he would not get it because he did not really want it. Confounding his expectation, he got the job and had worked there ever since. Whilst he had never planned to go into the third sector, he said that he preferred it to his job in publishing because you 'actually get to help people'. He had big plans for the project following the move, hoping to make it more successful at moving people on by introducing a qualification and doing more with the historic gardens. He believed that the project was failing and attributed the project's surprising success with funding to 'the good relationships I have with commissioners'. Dan was known for his talk and was not afraid of being controversial

with his words. John and Anne would frequently tease him about his ego, his apparent laziness and his over-enjoyment of the limelight. In 2015, Anne informed me that Dan was leaving Lles to go and work for the NHS.

Dave (Area Manager)

Dave was also in his early thirties and had worked for Lles for about four years. He had two roles there: his main role as an area manager, and another which focused on the development of young people's services. Dave had always enjoyed working with people. Whilst at university studying sports science he had worked as a support worker for children with autism. He then did a postgraduate degree in research methods, and on graduating looked for something which could combine his background in care with his degree in sports science. This led to a job as a sports, healthcare and wellbeing development officer, which he had also enjoyed. He left that job after three years to take a job developing young people's services with Lles. The funding for his post fell through mid-way, but ten months later a job as a recovery manager came up, which he got, and after a year or so in that post he applied for the area manager post. He had been in this post for just over a year at the time of research. Although he enjoyed his job, he missed working 'hands-on' with people. When I asked him why he took a management role, he reasoned that if he wanted to progress, then that was the route that he needed to take, and he felt the dual-responsibility of family and mortgage left him with little choice. Dave described himself as the kind of person who had to keep his mind occupied, and outside his job with Lles was also working towards completing a PhD part-time.

4.3 A day in the life of the project

Before moving on to a more detailed analysis of the value-tensions and practices evident at Lles, I want to sketch a rough picture of the activities we engaged in on the gardening project. John and Anne were keen to create a working environment, organising the daily structure of the project, as much as they could, in line with the working day. Service users and volunteers were encouraged to arrive between nine and ten, and to work until four (although few would often stay until this late). Lunch would usually be between midday and one, although if we were really engaged in a

particular task, then people would work on to complete it. If the work was particularly physically demanding there would also be a short break in the afternoon. The daily routine was applied loosely depending on how the day was panning out, and how productive we had been. Arriving late and/or leaving early was often discouraged – albeit mainly through jokes. Mike was the only one who appeared to be the exception to this, since he left early to run a hearing voices support group.

For John, creating a working environment was important for achieving what he saw as the project's goal of getting people back into work:

It's more therapeutic for them to go to a bus stop, get on a bus, come here, do a day's work and then go back on the bus. That's like getting yourself motivated to go back to work isn't it, more than simply picking somebody up and dropping them off. (John)

John explicitly saw the role of the project as being to provide 'a day's work', attributing therapeutic benefit to this. Individual agency was viewed as important for this process, since service users had to make their own way to the project. For John this was therapeutic, not only because it more realistically mirrored work, but more importantly, because the self-motivation it required was perceived as more empowering for service users. Anne viewed the role of the project in a similar sense, seeing it as something which gave service users 'motivation to get up in the morning, and somewhere to be'. This parallels what has been found in the aforementioned research exploring the perceived benefits of using STH as an intervention with vulnerable adults (Sempik et al, 2005; Parr, 2007; Bragg et al, 2013; Mind, 2013). In Sempik et al's (2005) study in particular, the work or productive element of such projects was understood as an important facilitator of empowerment and wellbeing by both service users and project workers. Anne explained how she fostered this working environment in the following terms:

I always set things up for the whole day... the last thing I want them to do is sit about, not because I'm a slave driver, but because I don't want them bored. So if people want to sit down for five that's fine, [but] I don't want them sitting in there until eleven in the morning. It's too long. What is the point in coming in somewhere and just sitting or standing about? (Anne)

John and Anne were also keen to have service users come to the project as much as they could, believing that this ‘helps change their mind-set’ and ‘results in them wanting to do a whole load of other things’ (Anne). The shift in mind-set Anne referred to had something to do with the development of a work ethic through a commitment to the practice of gardening. For Anne, developing the habit of working or doing something every day was understood as producing a catalyst effect on all aspects of the individual’s life, helping them to move out of the rut they had got into. Thus, the work ethic, and its association with the development of agency and responsibility, was understood as being important for aiding the process of getting one’s life back.

The physical and tangible nature of gardening work was also understood as a particularly apt medium to do this, since it was understood as universally satisfying:

I think with gardening there’s a lot of job satisfaction, because it’s immediate isn’t it? If you’ve dug over a plot, whoever you are, whether you’re feeling rubbish, or whether you’re feeling good – you did over a plot. And you stand back, you done that, and you immediately see it. (Anne)

Since the move to the new project entailed the creation of a new garden on a site which was largely overgrown, there was always lots to be done, and days which were dry were usually full from start to finish. John and Anne frequently praised our ‘hard work’ and their attempts to enthuse service users if they saw them flagging, often centred on getting ‘more work out of you’ (Anne), in turn reinforcing the normative value placed on work at the project. Indeed, the possession and exercise of this virtue was understood as necessary for both the achievement of a move on (an external good), and for the acquisition of those goods which were internal to the practices of the project as the ensuing chapters will show (MacIntyre, 2007).

Much of the daily work on the project involved clearing the site to make space for the two greenhouses and the poly tunnel, which was important since it would enable work to continue when the weather was wet. This first, and major task of moving and installing the poly tunnel, took up until Christmas to complete despite our best efforts to do it sooner. This was due to Head Office taking a while to approve the Health and Safety assessment. Up until this point, on the days that it rained heavily,

work either terminated early or did not happen at all, much to everyone's frustration. Days which were dry were often spent clearing away the brambles and pampas grass which had taken over the site, and then levelling out these areas to make them flat for the greenhouses and poly tunnel. Jane and I were also charged on several occasions with the arduous task of cutting back the overgrown yew to make enough space for the poly tunnel. This yew also separated what would eventually become a flower and herb garden from the patio area around the back of the house.

Days spent ridding the soil of the couch grass and knot weed (which in many respects was a never ending battle), so that the soil could then be used elsewhere on the site, were also common. This soil was then used to temporarily re-plant the shrubs and plants which were shifted from the old site. The lack of space and uncertainty with the project's direction meant that things were usually moved around several times during the first seven months of fieldwork. Clearing the site also revealed plants which had been planted previously by the historic gardens staff, most of which were kept, such as some rose bushes, daylilies, and some red poker plants. Trees such as the ylang ylang were also kept in situ, and the large flowering plum and kiwi trees, which grew up the wall enclosing the project, were pruned (by Jane and myself) and remained in place.

In the New Year (2013) the project began to take shape. In January the main path that would eventually separate the space into different areas was made: on the one side of this path there was what would eventually be a tranquillity garden, enclosed by a willow arbour made by Sarah and Jane; next to this there was a small fruit tree garden, and space for two green houses. Across from the green houses, and along the wall which enclosed the project, was the space where the three raised beds would eventually go. On the other side of the main pathway there was the poly tunnel, a flower and herb garden, the patio, and the house.

During the early months of the year, time was also spent creating the small open flower and herb garden. Pathways through this space were made, stone lined, and filled with shells which had been collected by Anne and some of the service users. The small lawn this pathway backed onto was surrounded with some shrubs and flowers from the old site, planted by Anne, Sarah and myself. This area also contained a few benches, some of which were re-made, and which were also framed by arbour

archways which were both made by Mike and Lewis. More recently, a 'bug hotel'⁴⁰ made by Louise has also been added to this area. Separating this small open garden area from the patio behind the house, was what remained of the yew. In February we took up the patio and weeded and removed the lime scale underneath to prepare it to be remade by the stone mason. In March the greenhouses from the old site were finally dismantled and rebuilt⁴¹ to house the tomato and lettuce plants; and between the months of February and April raised beds were made by John, Mike and Lewis. Once completed in April, Jane, May and Anne planted squash, courgette and strawberry plants in them. Come the summer months we spent more time working in the historic gardens, as required in the terms of the lease, doing things such as clearing the pondweed, and clearing logs from trees which had been felled.

Thus, throughout the whole of the field work period, days were generally filled with work such as the above, unless it was raining. Days were also punctuated with work on the historic gardens or work in residential neighbourhoods doing carers' gardens. There was no way, therefore, that it could be said that Lles was not 'a place of work', but whether this work led to jobs beyond the project was a different matter. Whilst from John and Anne's perspective, creating a day full of work for service users to be included in was what made the project a success, from the perspective of the manager Dan, the project was far from inclusive and largely failed to realise its aim to move individuals on within two years. This was the first point of contention that my research identified.

4.4 Turning up and 'moving on'

Whilst Dan shared John and Anne's view regarding the aims of the project, he did not think the project was structured in a way that effectively realised the organisational aim of moving service users on. For example, unlike John, Dan did not see people

⁴⁰ A bug hotel is a structure made out of wood and other recycled materials with the purpose of creating a more habitable environment for a variety of insects. They are used to enhance biodiversity and for controlling pests by increasing the number of beneficial insects in gardens.

⁴¹ This was originally meant to happen before Christmas at the same time as the poly tunnel but due to the riskier health and safety concerns, Lles were going to get contractors in to do this job. However the contractors wanted to charge £16,000 and this was too much, so eventually Lles approved that John could do it himself, provided he enlisted the help of the historic gardens' staff.

coming to the project every day as work. He referred to the project as a 'cocoon' and believed the carers' garden project was better at enhancing social inclusion than the project was:

The carers' gardens are successful because they are inclusive, you are helping carers whilst helping service users... It's also positive because it's not in a little bubble, so we're not expecting them to come to a Lles project and work with us all day. It's very much in the community... I mean we all use services on a daily basis that we take for granted, y'know the local library, the local shop, Tesco's down the road, the bank, the chip shop, take away... If we didn't use any of these amenities out in the community, then would you be part of society? I'd say you wouldn't, because they go hand in hand. What you have with the people... who are referred to our project... is that for a number of reasons they don't engage in the same way that you and I would. For example... [Coming] here is probably the only time they may actually leave their house... and then they'll go straight back home... If they engage in the carers' gardens, they're supported to go out and see the wider world. (Dan)

There were clearly some differences between how the manager and project workers understood the role of the project as enhancing social inclusion. Whilst both no doubt saw work as being part of what it is to be socially included, how this was manifested at Lles was understood differently. For John and Anne, the ability of the project to realise its aims was contingent on them cultivating the sorts of habits that would encourage a shift of 'mind-set' to occur. In their view, this would set off a chain reaction whereby individuals would eventually move on from the project because they wanted to. This was fundamentally about the formation of individual autonomy, thus the time this took to occur was different for different people, with both telling me that two years was not enough time to move people on into work, especially in the current financial climate. Thus, for John and Anne, inclusion was something which was achieved primarily through the practices of the project and how they fostered agency, something which will be explored in more detail in the following chapter.

For Dan, on the other hand, the capacity of the project to enhance social inclusion was more about the extent to which it provided individuals with the opportunity to access external goods – namely to consume the products and services of the market

economy. In this sense, it is one's ability to consume which determines one's inclusion in society, with paid work being the means through which this is achieved. Hence, coming to work on the project was not understood as inclusive by Dan since it was removed from this. That this was the case, coupled with the fact that the project was not successful at moving people on within two years, meant that Dan did not see service users coming to the project everyday as an exercise of agency, but rather an exercise of dependency:

It's very much a dated model, and the old third sector model of 'come to us, we'll put our arms around you, you won't have to worry about anything, we'll take care of everything' – and that's not how life is. (Dan)

For him, the project was failing to do its job, and the service needed to be changed in such a way as to move people on more effectively (whether this was into work or not). This was the central tension in how the value of the project was understood by the workers. For Dan the project 'institutionalised' people, and thus failed to enhance social inclusion. In contrast, John and Anne understood the project as being both enabling and inclusive regardless of whether it resulted in a move on, since the value of moving on was something that could only be determined by the individual in question. Nevertheless, the project had produced some successful move on cases during my time there.

4.5 Success stories

In keeping with the aims of the project, success was usually determined by people moving on into work, training or education, or rather what could be understood as the 'external goods' of the project:

John: We've had some marvellous results, marvellous.

Jo: What sticks in your memory?

John: People going back to work. We got one fella who is working in Sainsbury's now, full time. He went back and fore as a volunteer, they put him on the meat counter, they put him on the till, they put him in the warehouse,

he did all the jobs that they asked him to do, and then they took him on full time, so that was good.

Whilst John could (and would) recount numerous success stories such as the above when people had gone back to work throughout the field work, during my time at the project there was only really one successful move on as far as I was aware – Harriet. Harriet was a case John and Anne were particularly proud of since she had gone into something which directly related to gardening. After completion of fieldwork when my attendance as a volunteer went down to once a month, I heard that Richard, and one other service user whom I met once in the summer of 2014, had also moved on to do some training. But aside from these three, there were no others I was aware of. Service users would often leave, but not usually as a result of getting a job. Some of these were understood as successes since they had moved on to do something else positive, like Gareth. Others merely seemed to disappear, with some being out of reach completely, like Lewis, and there were others who kept in touch with plans to return, but never did, like Tom.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the research participants and the project environment, showing how project workers and managers understood the project's role, with clear links being apparent between these aims and those espoused in policy discourse. For project workers this was specifically about work and its association with the exercise of agency, whereas for Dan, it was more about one's capacity to participate in the wider community or marketplace via the exercise of consumer choice. Despite this difference in emphasis, both represent different sides of the same coin, and this is why, on the surface at least, there appeared to be an overall agreement regarding the project's aims. In practice, however, there was a tension between using the project to merely obtain an external (economic) outcome, and using the project to obtain outcomes that were understood as meaningful for those in receipt of the service. When the latter is taken into account, the project's role in enhancing social inclusion becomes more complex and nuanced. The following chapters aim to show how participants' attributed value to the practices of the project, and how, in turn,

these practices were understood to relate to the values of Lles, specifically in relation to the themes of social inclusion, wellbeing and learning.

5.0 The project as a site for social inclusion

In the previous chapter I noted how the project's aims were generally in keeping with the policy discourses around the relationship of work to social inclusion, and its relationship to wellbeing. However, a tension was also apparent between the managers and project workers regarding what constituted success on the project, and whether the practices of the project enhanced social inclusion. This problematizes the concept of social inclusion, since what this looked like in practice was understood differently by different participants. In order to explore this tension further, this empirical chapter sets out to explore participants' understanding of inclusion in more detail, namely, what it was they understood that was being included, and what they attributed value to being included in.

5.1 Inclusion of what?

5.1.1 The whole person – the person-centred approach

In an effort to reduce the stigma around mental illness, Lles claimed to adopt a person-centred ethos in its services. This quality was something which was particularly valued by volunteer Sarah, and had informed her decision to volunteer at Lles:

Sarah: I contacted X and they sent me a list of all their gardens... I phoned them all up and visited some of them but none of them was really what I was looking for ... but I went to see it [Lles] and that was it. As soon as I walked in there I thought this is what I want. This is where I want to be. There was no question about it.

Jo: How was it different to the places you went to, the other ones that you saw?

Sarah: It was different from the place I saw in England... it had a sort of a feel to it; a quality to it that really appealed to me. It's more intuitive than actually being able to say it was that or that or that.

Whilst Sarah initially struggled to articulate what exactly differentiated the project from others, she later went on to identify its 'inclusiveness' and its focus on the whole person as its stand-out qualities:

I think the key word for me is inclusiveness, and everyone who is there is included I think.

It goes back to the fact that they see people first and foremost as people. They don't focus on the illness, and that's how it is to have mental illness in the family too. You don't see that person as an illness. You see that person as a person. (Sarah)

For Sarah, this immediately evident inclusive atmosphere indicated that the project offered something which was different from the mainstream; hence her initial struggle to find the words to capture exactly what this was. Even the language she eventually came to use seemed somewhat inadequate. 'Inclusiveness', and all that it was associated with in the dominant policy discourse, was in some respects a pale representation of her experience of the project; yet it was the only word she could find to sum it up.

This attribute was specifically credited to the characters of John and Anne, and their seeming ability to 'accept people as they are'. Sarah at a later stage contrasted them to a project leader she had met at another project, who, despite attempting to be inclusive, had an 'officious' manner, and did not have the 'same way about him' as John and Anne did. This suggests that for her, the adoption of this approach was not necessarily something which could be reduced to codes of best practice, but had more to do with the values and characters of the individuals themselves.

According to Sarah, John and Anne made this possible because they made the focus of the project 'not around care but on what we do'. This took the focus off the illness and onto the activity, thereby mitigating the potential stigma of having a mental illness, echoing what has been found in some of the social and therapeutic horticulture research literature discussed in chapter two (Mind, 2013). Interestingly, this view served as a direct contrast to the manager Dan, who disparagingly referred to the service the project provided in terms more akin to care, describing the project as a protective 'cocoon' from the outside world, where service users came to 'potter

around', with the effect of institutionalising them. However, institutionalisation would suggest a removal of personhood (Goffman, 1961), and from Sarah's perspective, this could not have been further from the truth. Not only did she explicitly refer to the project as 'work' (in keeping with John and Anne's perception), she also forgot that she was working with people who were mentally ill:

You never fear when you go to Lles that you're going to work with people who are mentally ill, you don't think about it really. You're there to work with people, and it so totally makes sense. I think they're very good at it [John and Anne]. (Sarah)

For Goffman (1961), institutionalisation was a process of depersonalisation which entailed robbing people of the symbolic resources necessary to act as persons. The above account from Sarah certainly does not lend support to this. Indeed, Sarah contrasted the project with psychiatric units, where it was inferred that the focus tended to be on illnesses in need of cure, rather than on individuals with strengths and weaknesses:

I worked a little bit in psychiatry as an OT and it can be a miserable place. After I started Lles, it made me think... Why can't they do it so much better from a psychiatric unit? What is it that makes it so positive? I think it's because they never focus on people being ill, they focus on the person. (Sarah)

For Sarah, this person-centred focus enabled John and Anne to 'get the best out of people', despite them being 'seriously ill' during their time at the project. The area manager Dave, also shared Sarah's view regarding the value of the person-centred approach:

Why should we say you're not mainstream because you got schizophrenia? What's it matter? You're a person... The illness you have shouldn't determine who you are, that's just personal... Although I also recognise that diagnosis enables people to get treatment. It's a fine line, a fine balance. (Dave)

However, perhaps understandably given his role, the importance of adopting a person-centred approach was valued in terms of the sort of external outcomes it enabled the service to deliver – for example, access to 'mainstream' opportunities

such as a job or education (see p85) – rather than in terms of the internal and inclusive practices of the project. Thus, for Dave adopting the person-centred approach was understood in relation to the inclusion it enabled in wider society. This was further reiterated in his understanding of recovery, and Lles' role in achieving this:

Recovery for me means... an individual regaining help to an extent that they're able to function to the best of their capabilities, so again I see it as a very individual term. Because perhaps my level of functioning is different to what someone else's is, whatever that may be – no rights, no wrongs – but as long as we look at functioning in terms of what they want and how they want to really.

It would be nice to think that, when someone comes in they have a target of where they want to be and we can support them through that process, so that they can recover to the level where they were prior to their illness.

(Dave)

That Dave saw the project as fostering wellbeing through enhancing individual capability mirrors the theories of wellbeing which have been developed by the economist and philosopher Amartya Sen, and philosopher Martha Nussbaum. Both argue that understandings of human wellbeing must go beyond both needs-based approaches, which tend to emphasise what individuals have, such as wealth, and subjectivist accounts of happiness, which tend to focus on individual preferences. Instead, both contend that wellbeing should be thought about in terms of capability – what people are able to do or able to be – and thus their ability to live a good life (Sen, 1985, 1987; Nussbaum, 2000). For Sen, capability is determined by the various combinations of functionings that a person can achieve. Functionings refer to the *actual* beings and doings of individuals, and include things such as being healthy or part of a community, whereas capability refers to what they are *able* to do or experience should they choose. Whilst functionings and capability are closely interlinked, for Sen, the concept of capability is more important for understanding wellbeing, because it refers to the positive opportunities individuals have in terms of how they choose to lead their lives (Sen 1987: 36). Thus, for Sen, it is the freedom to do or be, which is of crucial importance.

If this theory is taken to demonstrate how Dave understood wellbeing, then the idea that the inclusion of the whole person could result in inclusion both on (Sarah) and beyond (Dave) the project is not entirely incongruous, since if individual functionings are increased on the project then this would enhance individual capacity to realise capability beyond the project. However, in reality the existence of these two slightly different ways of perceiving the project's value is problematic. For Dave, the whole-person approach concerned the project's role in enabling service users to 'function to the best of their capabilities'. However, although Dave also acknowledged that it was increasingly difficult to secure employment outcomes, this did not cause him to question whether opportunities beyond the project were able to realise the 'best' of service users 'capabilities'.

Yet the latter was of central importance to Sarah, who was highly critical of the inclusiveness of wider society and its institutions and practices, and understood the whole-person approach as being inclusive at Lles. Indeed, Sarah's reservations exemplify one of the criticisms which has been levied at the capabilities approach by philosopher Andrew Sayer (2011). Whilst sympathetic to the idea of 'doing' rather than 'having' for wellbeing, Sayer argues that Sen's privileging of freedom of choice over inequality overlooks the fact that access to opportunities remains unequal, thus the sort of jobs where individuals can realise their potential (capability) are monopolised by a privileged minority (Sayer, 2011). This slightly different understanding of what a person-centred approach meant in practice sheds further light on why Dan did not see the service as sufficiently inclusive. If inclusion of the whole-person only made itself evident in terms of particular external outcomes associated with access to 'mainstream opportunities,' then from the managerial perspective the project would not be considered inclusive since it was for the most part not achieving this for service users. Hence for Dan the service was institutionalising.

Nonetheless, despite the difference between how Sarah and the managers understood this, overall there seemed to be an agreement that the whole-person approach entailed focusing on each service user as an individual, along with a rejection of uniform and dominant medicalised approaches which sought merely to treat mental illness with medication. Whilst the benefits of medication were

recognised, John and Anne believed that it was relied upon too much and did not always work. For them, 'different things worked for different people' (Anne), as the following interview quote from John illustrates.

Some people act on their medication, they work on their medication and they've got the motivation to go back to work and you'll see that they'll push themselves. But two people are not the same, even if they got the same problem, and they're on the same medication, doesn't necessarily mean they're going to be the same. (John)

This rejection of a medicalised approach was representative of Lles' ethos as an organisation, and, perhaps unsurprisingly, was a view shared by all participants. For example, in the previous chapter I noted how many of the service users struggled to function on their medication; Harriet was in the process of trying to come off hers completely, whilst Lewis wanted to reduce his dosage. May, on the other hand, simply wanted to find some medication that made it easier for her to manage the more depressive element of her bipolar disorder.

The belief that 'different things work for different people' further reinforces the idea that the inclusion of the whole-person was an important facet of the service for project workers. However, it also meant that both John and Anne were unable to articulate what exactly enabled people to move on. This was problematic in an organisation which was under increasing pressure to produce generic outcomes, whilst at the same time aspiring to deliver a service that was tailored to the needs of each different individual, supporting what has been found elsewhere in the third sector research literature discussed in chapter two (Buckingham, 2010; Nevile, 2010; Milbourne, 2013). This tension aside, the whole-person approach was understood as something which made the project inclusive, particularly for Sarah who believed that this was realised through service users' inclusion in the particular practices of the project. The following will attempt to elucidate this further, discussing what it was the participants felt they were included in on the project.

5.2 Inclusion into what?

5.2.1 Being included in nature

One of the most obvious attributes of the project was that it involved working outdoors in beautiful surroundings. It was therefore unsurprising that participants valued the opportunity to be included in nature whilst on the project.

The healing benefits of nature

The healing benefits of nature have been long documented in health and psychology research (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989; Ulrich, 1979; 1982 cited in Maller et al, 2005; Gonzales et al, 2009; 2010). In keeping with this research literature, my participants also identified being in, and working with nature as an important aspect of the project. Project workers John and Anne understood the healing benefits of nature as a given, although both were unable to articulate exactly what it was about nature that made it healing other than it being a nice environment to work in:

If you're doing gardening and you're trying to create a beautiful space then that will impact on you. (Anne)

Gardening and fresh air is the best therapy you can think of innit? I mean a lot of people say... they love gardening but they can't get out there; well, they get depressed. But when the sun comes out and you get a nice place to operate, a nice place to work, it stops depression doesn't it? (John)

In contrast to John and Anne, Jane articulated this in terms of her own knowledge of the research evidence regarding the supposed therapeutic effects of gardening and nature:

Not only is it exercise... Y'know the endorphins and whatever they're called, kick in... But it's also this kind of, this distraction thing, so people... their mind can just switch off, or can just wonder and not dwell on [their] problems... I think that little bit, sort of like space, and distraction from whatever.... it just offers a real... healing opportunity as well. I know there are all sorts of stats, facts and figures out there.... because [a well-known horticultural therapy organisation] are always having to justify what they do, and prove it...I know

it has been proven so, horticultural therapy, if you want to call it that, is really beneficial to people with mental health issues. (Jane)

However, in terms of her own personal experience, Jane saw being in nature as a remedy for the hectic experience of urban life:

Say you're feeling frazzled, what do you want to do? Quite often you'll want to go, well I will want to go into the countryside or to the beach, y'know those kinds of places, bit of tranquillity. (Jane)

Gareth, a service user, felt similarly to Jane, believing that moving to the countryside would be the best thing for him since he would be happier. In his interview he contrasted his life in the country with his current life in the city:

It feels less stressful somehow, it's a lot more, I mean, they do say that the Welsh 'now' is a bit like the Spanish 'manana', but without the sense of urgency. And that's kind of what I miss here. Everything is so rushed and it's just, it's bad for me (laughs), it's bad for me. (Gareth)

The above two quotes from Gareth and Jane are particularly interesting for understanding nature and its relation to inclusion on the project. For Gareth and Jane, modern urban living was experienced as stressful and alienating, and thus in an important sense exclusionary, particularly for Gareth. Indeed, Sempik (2008) and Kaplan and Kaplan's (1989) research also attributed part of the healing benefits of nature for their participants to the notion of 'escape' or 'being away'. Sempik interpreted his participants' desire to escape to the outdoors, not only as a desire to escape to a different physical space, but also a desire to mentally escape from the limitations of their mental illness. For example, his participants referred to being 'cut off' and 'inside' as a result of their illness. John also made this link. For Gareth, however, being in nature with its slower pace and less aggressive demands was experienced as more in keeping with his own natural rhythm, and therefore more inclusive. The slower pace of nature allowed time to reflect ('a healing opportunity'), since there was no pressure to get things done 'now'. Further indication of this was exemplified by service users May and Louise reference to the project as a 'haven'.

It did not matter that participants could not articulate this in more than words such as because its 'nice' or 'good' for you, as John and Anne did, since this was the point for them. The slower pace, and space to just be, meant that participants did not have to continuously justify, or force into words, the therapeutic value of something which just was by virtue of its being for them. To have to do this would be more akin to how everyday life was experienced beyond the project, and consequently, exhausting, as inferred by Jane's exasperation with the need to 'justify' or 'prove'. The contrast between this attitude and the need for the managers of the project to audit its performance and be accountable to its funders was self-evident. Whilst Sempik's (2008) participants also contrasted being in nature to being in urban environments, offices and factories, there was little further exploration or critical reflection as to why this contrast was the case for his participants beyond it being perceived as 'healthier'. The experiences of some of my own participants suggest that there may have been more to this contrast than merely the differences between urban and rural environments, a point to which I will return in due course.

The existential value of nature

For Anne, being in nature was about more than just its beauty or therapeutic qualities, but was valued because it made us aware of our place in the world, our connectedness to planet earth and animals. Thus, the value she attributed to being in nature went beyond a human-orientated understanding of what it was individuals needed to be included in:

I think gardening helps you relate to the rest of the world because, I don't know if it is the same for everyone, but it seems to me, most people are very human-orientated; that the world is just human. And I know some people love dogs, and some people love birds, some people love dolphins; but we're just one little spec on the spectrum of the whole aren't we? So when you're outside and you're with the plants and worms and birds, and clouds and rain.... you're very much part of the whole, part of the whole planet if you like, the whole of the land. Whereas when you're indoors, you're cut off... [If] you're indoors, you don't feel the creatures and the worms. You don't see the hedgehog. You don't hear the birds much – you can hear them today, but you're not really

part of it – we seem to cut ourselves off. I think that is what is really good for everybody. (Anne)

To be outside was to be in nature, and to be indoors was to be ‘cut off’ and excluded from this, a point that echoes the findings of Sempik’s (2008) research on social and therapeutic horticultural projects in England. Anne’s belief that being in nature connected us to the whole, links well to the healing benefits of nature discussed earlier, since by connecting us to the whole it is also inferred that it included our whole being (the whole person) in a way the human world perhaps did not. For example, for Gareth, being close to nature reflected ‘who I am’, and thus had a self-affirming quality. For Sarah, its appeal was that it served as a refreshing contrast from the consumerist lifestyle of the human-orientated world (although she acknowledged that gardening was also commercial). For her, it was this consumerist lifestyle which was alienating and exclusionary:

I think the consumer society is tiresome and I think it’s ultimately quite boring

You have to have so much energy to keep everything going, and paying for everything. You think what is the point of it all?

We should be in charge of what we need and it’s so easily perceived the other way around; that you have to have this, and you have that to be a complete person... I think it’s very hard. When I look at my granddaughter who is eight; I think there is a great pressure to have things on her, that she can’t really control, because it comes through the media, it comes through the school, with friends, and it’s not really her choice... I think it’s the lack of choice really, it’s imposed values that I feel the commercial world gives to us. (Sarah)

Consequently, the being ‘part of whole’ that Anne referred to, offered some perspective and respite from what Sarah understood as the exclusionary values which were enforced on us by the consumer lifestyle of the human world. Whilst for Dan the relationship between consumer society and inclusion was straightforward, for Sarah this relationship was more complex. Although Sarah understood the importance of having a job to earn money, for her, inclusion in consumer society was understood as something which carried a high existential cost, since inclusion in this

society excluded us from and compromised our respect for nature, and so only connected us to a narrow aspect of the world. This adds further to how Sarah understood the project as inclusive of the whole person, since the focus was on what people could do, rather than what they had, in line with the capabilities approach to understanding human flourishing adopted by thinkers such as Sen (1985), Nussbaum (2000) and Sayer (2011).

The overwhelming amount of choice and compulsion to have things in order to be 'a complete person' associated with the consumer lifestyle for Sarah, is at its most tangible in the city, and for other participants as well, there was a sense that urban living was not necessarily conducive to wellbeing. Indeed, the desire to escape urban living was explored by the philosopher Bertrand Russell in the *Conquest of Happiness* (1930). In this book, Russell argued that consumerism served as a futile attempt to escape from our fear of boredom, the origins of which he attributed to our self-inflicted break with nature. However, the endless search for novelty and excitement which consumerism represented for Russell, often left us exhausted, hence the need to escape and recuperate in nature (Russell, 1930). The psychological impact of excessive consumer choice on individuals has also been documented in more recent research literature (see Schwartz, 2004).

For Sarah, Anne and Jane, detachment or exclusion from the natural world was not only thought to be bad for us, but also bad for the planet. All three had a keen interest in environmentalism, and for Sarah this interest extended to a belief that it was time to move beyond a money-based economy:

I think a lot of the alternatives [to living in a money based economy] are really interesting; they are much more caring of the earth and what we all live off. (Sarah)

For Anne and Sarah, the existential value of nature was essentially about the same thing. For them, being attuned to nature had value in itself because it helped to deepen our relationship to it. This was not only good in that it helped people to be more caring towards nature, but it was also good for people too. This was because it opened up the value of our own existence to something which went beyond the human world, which was considered by Sarah especially, as dominated by the false

and exclusionary choices of consumerism. Nature was valued because it had the capacity to make individuals feel 'part of the whole' (and thus complete) (Anne), as opposed to being complete only through what we had (Sarah). Anne's wish to foster this deepened relationship to nature mirrors the argument which has been made by the environmental philosopher John O'Neill.

For O'Neill (1993), cultivating an appropriate environmental ethic depends on recognising the intrinsic value of nature. He argues that this can only be achieved through the cultivation of disinterestedness – that is, by grasping our difference and separateness from nature. This entails that we extend the powers of our perception, by furthering our understanding of nature beyond our own experience, through art and science. Doing so, not only allows for a properly informed valuing of objects, but also leads to the further development of our own individual capacities as humans, enriching our own wellbeing as a result (O'Neill, 1993). Anne attempted to cultivate this ethic by encouraging users to value nature as an end in itself, respecting nature's own *telos* ⁴²(its' own end). She did this by teaching users to garden in a way which was ecologically sound.

Sarah's more explicit anti-consumerist attitude is also reflective of a wish to shift the human relationship to nature so that we may value it appropriately. Moreover, for Sarah, it is inferred that the drive to have things to be 'a complete person' in consumer society, was in reality a relentless and never ending project; and consequently always left individuals dissatisfied and incomplete, echoing some of the more critical arguments which have been made about capitalism and consumerism over the last 150 years (Fromm, 1956; Marx, 1964; Marcuse, 1964). Sarah's antipathy to consumerism could be seen to echo Marx's argument that humans express and fulfil themselves through productive practices, and anything which impedes, misdirects or subordinates this productive aspect of the human condition was a source of 'alienation' and suffering. For Marx, the omnipotent power of money in capitalist society was 'the alienated *ability of mankind*' (Marx, 1964: 168, his emphasis) since 'what I *am* and *am* capable of' was in the marketplace, and not

⁴² Telos refers to 'end' 'purpose' or 'goal'. I'm borrowing this term from Aristotle (2002) and MacIntyre (2007). For Aristotle, all things had an end or purpose, and in this sense the telos of the plant would be to grow from a seed (an imperfect state) to a full-grown adult plant (its end goal).

determined by 'my ability', but by what 'money can buy' (Marx, 1964: 167, his emphasis). Thus, it could be argued that Sarah also found the consumer lifestyle 'ultimately boring' because of the limited opportunities it provided for the realisation of her own capacities. The more affirming experience of being in nature expressed by Gareth also mirrors this. The frustration Sarah expressed at our lack of capacity to determine our own needs and values in consumer society, echoes the fierce criticism of consumerism provided by Fromm (1956) and Marcuse (1964). Both saw consumerism as an ideological tool used to stimulate 'false' needs, whilst repressing our 'real' needs.

Eric Fromm's critique, whilst dated, in some respects remains pertinent today and relates well to the experiences of some of my participants, particularly Sarah – not least because as a practising psychoanalyst, Fromm was interested in understanding the relationship between social and economic systems and psychological wellbeing. Writing in the post-war period, when living standards in the affluent West were beginning to rise, Fromm was exploring how 'consumer society' could be as alienating and unhappy as the exploitative factory system of nineteenth century capitalism. For Fromm, we could not be satisfied by our consumption because our consumption was always an alienated experience, since we had no direct or concrete relationship to the things we consumed, and thus could derive no real sense of satisfaction or pleasure from them. 'We do not know how bread is made, how cloth is woven... we consume, as we produce without any concrete relatedness to the objects which we deal' and thus 'we are never satisfied, since it is not a real person which consumes a real and concrete thing' (Fromm, 1956: 134). This lack of satisfaction, however, drives us to consume more, he argued, making consumption an aim in itself, enslaving us to capitalist society and the inevitable unhappiness this produces by virtue of our ultimately alienated existence. For Fromm, this alienation robbed us not only of the capacity to derive real pleasure from what we consumed, but also of our capacity for active and meaningful leisure. For him, the act of consumption should be 'a concrete human act' that involved the entirety of our beings (Fromm, 1956) – like consuming vegetables you had grown yourself, as we did on the project, and as Sarah and Gareth did at home.

5.2.2 Being included in a mental health community

The project existing as a safe space where service users could come and work without the fear of stigma, discrimination or the need to hide their condition was also understood as a valuable attribute of the project by project workers, and contributed to its inclusive quality:

In a team it's really good, especially here, especially with everyone that comes, because everyone knows that they're all a bit vulnerable and so they're all really nice with each other... they all understand each other's predicament if you like, which I think is brilliant. (Anne)

What helps people get well in a project is that they know they're safe when they go there and the people that they see when they go there are safe, are the same as them, they're trying to get well. (John)

The peer-support element of the service also seemed to be valued by service users, and is also mirrored in the other research literature exploring the benefits of social and therapeutic horticulture for mental health (Sempik et al, 2005; Diamant and Waterhouse, 2010; Mind, 2013):

The best thing about coming here is the people, you're all really friendly... We've all got the same problems so there's an empathy if you like with each other and what we're doing. (Eric)

Working with the crew here has helped, is a big help, because you're all fantastic. (Gareth)

Friendships were maintained outside the project, and if someone had not been in for a while John or Anne would often enquire into their wellbeing via other service users whom they knew the person in question to be friendly with. Further, service users would often arrange to catch the same buses to and from the project so that they could travel on public transport together. When May was going through a particularly difficult time, for example, she would only come in to the project when Louise did.

Whilst being around empathetic others appeared to be important for the project being perceived as 'safe', there was also evidence to suggest that it was not only being around others who were *similar* or going through the same thing which was

important, but being around others who were also *familiar*. Many service users knew each other prior to coming to the project through using other local services, such as the peer support centre Mike went to, or through Jane's photography class. Indeed, it was through the latter that the project was discovered by Harriet and Louise. However, Tom, who was younger and more isolated at the point of coming to the project, did not have these prior support networks. Tom told me that he stopped coming to the project after Harriet had moved on because he did not know, or feel as comfortable with the new group of service users (who were not involved in the fieldwork). This indicates that within this particular mental health community familiarity and stability played an equally important role in the project being experienced as welcoming and inclusive. For project managers, however, the friendship and peer support element was somewhat problematic. This was not only because of experiences such as Tom's, but also because it potentially impacted on moving on. The sense of belonging and attachment that arose out of the ongoing relationships that were developed with other project members, as well as towards the project as a particular space with its own values, was counter to the kind of environment which would be conducive to moving individuals on. For Dan, this more social and peer support element was not what the project was supposed to be about, and was what made the project institutionalising in his view.

5.2.3 Being included in a work community

As already indicated above and in the previous chapter, aside from Dan, the project manager, the project was perceived by most staff and users as a space where one engaged in gardening work, mirroring some of the research on social and therapeutic horticultural projects in England (Sempik et al 2005). There were a number of factors regarding the nature of the work, and how the work was structured, which led this working environment to be perceived as an inclusive one.

Teamwork and camaraderie

Much satisfaction appeared to be derived from teamwork on the project. Daily work would either involve being divided up to perform different tasks, working in pairs, or all together on the same task, taking it in turns to do different things. Sarah attributed the inclusiveness she valued at the project in part to this teamwork element:

I really like the sort of team spirit that's fostered there, between everybody that is in on the same day. We are a team really, and I like that.

The 'team spirit' identified by Sarah created a nice atmosphere and a sense of camaraderie. John would often crack jokes, and we usually talked whilst we worked. Discussions ranged from the routine, such as last night's television or dinner, to more serious things such as our hopes for the future and current political matters. This collegial way of working functioned to strengthen solidarity, maintain good relations and acted as a motivator when tasks were dull⁴³. Working in a team also made the work easier and thus also more enjoyable. For example, work which was usually heavy in nature, such as digging up shrubs or shifting wheelbarrows of soil, was shared between different people, limiting the effect of fatigue without compromising the efficiency of the task. Anne, in particular, appreciated the relative respite of this after having gardened on her own for a number of years:

Oh God, yes, it's so much better. When you you're working on your own... it's really physically hard. It's really hard... You keep going until steam runs out really and then you get home exhausted.... Whereas here... you all work together as a team so it's not as hard physically...which is great. (Anne)

However, the inclusive value attributed to teamwork on the project also had something to do with the nature of gardening, and the particular setting we gardened in. For example, the pace of gardening means that it cannot be easily subjected to a form of productivity which is measured in terms of output over a particular amount of time. This is because gardening tolerates a variety of different paces.

Firstly, gardening is seasonal, and one has to work with the rhythms of nature by being patient and waiting for things to grow. Because of this, time and its relationship to productive value is understood in relation to the particular season and hours of sun light in the day, rather than in terms of the number of hours on the clock, as in

⁴³ One particular instance that comes to mind was when the historic gardens had us move the horse dung which was used by both them and Lles for manure, since it was blocking the path for the tractor to move through. It took all morning to do this, and the work was hard and boring. John cracked jokes throughout the duration. Halfway through the task we were told that it actually needed to be moved somewhere else. John, Jane, Gareth and I were already pretty exhausted at this point, but after lunch spent the rest of the afternoon doing the same. Despite John's obvious frustration, he continued to make light of it, and raise our spirits.

the case of the modern workplace. Whilst the seasons mean that the pace of the work may be faster at different times of the year, there is always work to be done and plants to be attended to. The work of tending and caring is also tolerant of different paces, since nature is highly robust and allows margins for error. For example, during the move, shrubs and flowers were often planted in less than ideal positions (e.g. limited soil and light) as things could only be placed where there was space, leaving them vulnerable. The prodigiousness of nature was also a source of much joy. The woody and overgrown kiwi was producing no flowers when we initially moved, but after a much-needed prune, flowered beautifully the following summer.⁴⁴ Already wilting polyanthus taken from the historic gardens, and a flower (a daylily) uncovered when moving the pampas grass, were expected to die, but soon flowered when properly planted and tended to.

Secondly, the output of a gardener's labour is in part dependent on variables that one cannot entirely control, such as the weather and the presence of pests, which takes some of the responsibility off the individual gardener for the overall fruits of their labour. In a commercial setting, these two aspects may at times be in tension with consumer demand for particular produce, but given that the focus of our efforts was for the most part on the project, it did not matter if individuals worked at different paces and with different rates of success, since the overall collective effort meant that something would usually come to fruition from the work. Because of this, there was no sense that anyone was ever letting the team down by not working fast enough, meaning that everyone could be included, regardless of energy level, motivation or skill.

For Eric, this was inferred in his contrast of the project with his job as a training officer, where there was pressure on sales:

That was more office based, target driven, goal orientated... here is totally the opposite. (Eric)

The limited commercial pressures on the project, coupled with the fact that it was meant to be a space which was specifically for the benefit of service users, also meant

⁴⁴ Whilst kiwis are hardy, for them to flower and produce fruit they need a lot of attention. Proper and consistent pruning is needed to prevent the expenditure of energy on vine growth.

that it was an entirely non-competitive environment, as suggested in Eric's comparison above. This made the experience of teamwork a genuinely inclusive one, since the reward one got out of the work was enhanced by collective input and effort rather than diminished:

Everybody got different ideas, and if the volunteers come in with a nice idea then we use it; clients come in with ideas, we use them; so, it's nice to get so vast an amount of people working together – we've all got different ideas and we put them together. (John)

For some participants the experience of camaraderie and teamwork was in stark contrast to their experiences of work outside the project. For example, Anne had started to find gardening on her own exhausting, diminishing her zest for it. For Eric, the experience of genuinely working in a team contrasted with his experience of employment, which was dominated by competition and pressures to make sales. For him, this element was in part what made the environment 'stress free'. Similarly for Gareth and Harriet, the lack of stress on the project, despite the work being physically demanding, contrasted with their experiences as chefs. Whilst this stress-free element is also documented in the research literature (Parr, 2007; Sempik et al, 2005; Mind, 2013), there is little further exploration of what it was outside of these settings that was stressful. For some of the participants in this research, as we have seen, the outside world was seen as divisive and exclusionary.

The perceived egalitarian spirit of the project

As mentioned above, the teamwork element of the project was viewed as a particularly important attribute for volunteer Sarah, who perceived it as being part of what made the project inclusive. For her, working as a team also gave the project an egalitarian spirit:

Everybody is important really on the day that we are in, they, we're all equally important in what we do, I feel. (Sarah)

However, whilst Sarah believed that everyone's work was of equal value, Sarah also told me that she enjoyed her role being directed by John and Anne. This suggests that some form of hierarchy was in place, which perhaps contradicts the aforesaid perception of egalitarianism. Further, there also appeared to be the perception that

we were there to help John and Anne (see p167), and service users seemed to relate to John and Anne as mentors (see 7.3.1). In some respects this was also how John and Anne perceived it, as everyone was always thanked for their work, and John and Anne also provided tea and biscuits. For John in particular, the latter was understood as a civilised way of recognising everyone's contribution, as the following disagreement between him and the manager Dan at one of the partnership meetings shows:

Dan wants to bring in a paying system for tea and coffee where everyone contributes 50 pence each time they come in, as John and Anne currently fund it themselves (this is viewed as unsustainable). 'It can't keep coming out of John's pocket, and Lles cannot justify it when in the other projects people pay for their own tea and coffee'. John interjects, he doesn't appear to like this, and makes his point by telling a story about a time when they delivered a load of stuff, free of charge, to another Lles project. After they had finished shifting the stuff they asked for a cup of coffee, and they were expected to pay for it. He thought this was wrong, and says he believes that if people come there to contribute to the project, be it a service user or volunteer, they should be able to get a cup of tea - 'people come here and work all day, and then they're expected to pay for a cup of tea!' Anne nods in agreement. Jane scoffs at the idea and says she'll bring her own. (Field notes)

Dan's proposal that all service users and volunteers contribute to the refreshment fund could be seen as more egalitarian in its intent than the system John and Anne had in place, since it avoids patronising individuals and obliges them to contribute. This is, indeed, the liberal spirit of the money economy, which replaces hierarchical bonds of personal fealty and dependence, with an individual freedom which 'increases with the objectivation and depersonalisation of the economic universe' (Simmel, 2004: 303). Thus, from Dan's perspective introducing this change was an effort to further enhance independence and diminish the institutionalising effects of the project. For him, the value of the project was understood primarily in terms of exchange-value, and the goal of moving on service users into the employment-consumption society could be more sufficiently achieved by socialising the users into this economic culture.

Dan positioned service users similarly to customers; he believed that service users should come to the project to get a particular need met, in this case the need for skills, and once this had been achieved, move on.

You wouldn't expect to be going to that same place for the rest of your life. There would be an expectation that you would go there, get your needs met, whatever you need sorted – whether that be for 12 months or short term – and then move on. (Dan)

With this in mind, paying for tea and coffee would serve to reinforce the idea of the project as a service, and, symbolically at least, act as a reminder that relationships between project workers and service users was a formal exchange.

For John and Anne, on the other hand, without the time and effort of service users and volunteers, the project would not exist, hence their resistance to the introduction of a payment for something which they believed was more than paid for by users' and volunteers' labour. The fact service users also understood their time there as work, was further indication of this. In this sense, everyone was considered equal regardless of their status, and this was an important element of what made this environment an inclusive one. This altogether different view, reflects their understanding of the project as a sharing of common practices and values. This was problematic for project managers charged with the responsibility of moving service users on, since this inclusive environment also made it easier for service users to develop bonds of attachment to the project which, whilst conducive to their wellbeing, were not always conducive to their moving on.

Variety

The variety of the work offered at the project was also valued by participants, particularly volunteers Jane and Sarah, and service user Gareth, because it made the work enjoyable, challenging and interesting. With regard to inclusion, it also meant that work on the project was attractive for those with different abilities:

Well here, it's good because it's a different set of challenges, its different work, particularly with having to clear the garden and start from scratch. It's been interesting seeing the garden develop, and hearing the various ideas, things like the willow screening and the tranquillity garden, it's been a good

*combination of... heavy and light work I suppose, and labour and finer work.
It's been very good. (Gareth)*

From my time working alongside Gareth it was clear that he enjoyed being engaged in heavier work. He would often volunteer to do heavier work such as digging, especially on days when he felt particularly frustrated since he said it helped take his mind off things, in keeping with the experiences of participants in Parr's (2007) research. However, his ongoing problems with sciatica also meant that he was sometimes unable to engage in the heavier work or come to the project at all. The variety of tasks available therefore allowed him to choose the work that best suited his physical health. This was something which was apparent with all service users, with John and Anne usually setting up a number of tasks for the day and then allocating them in terms of what different service users enjoyed or were able to do on that particular day. John, in particular seemed to enjoy being able to offer a variety of work to service users:

I mean here we were buying stuff in, but we were also growing stuff from seed, um, we were doing cuttings, we were doing grafting.... The project had a vast amount of things you could do: you were building shelves to put in your poly tunnel, you were building sprinkler systems to go in your poly tunnel, you were doing pathways, cutting the grass, there was a vast variety of jobs. So that's why you could have clients with different outlooks. If you had a client that wanted to do gardening then you had gardening for him, if you had one that wanted to do carpentry then you had carpentry for him. (John)

For John and Anne, variety contributed to the inclusiveness of the project, since it meant that work could be tailored to the particular capacities and interests of the individual in question. This was inclusive since it acted to enable rather than disable, and reflected the whole-person approach discussed earlier, as well as the social model of disability in general (see Oliver, 1986, 1990, 1996). Jane, in particular, valued the variety on offer at the project in these terms, but questioned whether the project was doing as well as it could at offering *enough* variety to be inclusive for all – such as, for those with more complex needs:

I don't necessarily know whether we've taken the best advantage of that blank canvas as we could have... Like could a wheelchair user come? Not really, y'know? Stuff like that. We do really well actually, and Mike can do stuff with his carpentry skills, we do really well. I just think that other people, y'know? If you're not that physically strong, would you be able to come and get the best use out of Lles? (Jane)

In contrast to this view was how managers Dave and Dan understood the value of variety. For them, its value was articulated more in terms of a potential diversification of the service so as to better reach its targets and outputs, rather than widening access to goods which were internal to the project as Jane understood it. This included offering different mediums through which the service could be delivered, such as pottery which was added to the service to attract more service users to the project.

What we have to recognise is that if we are just a gardening project, it's a very niche service, and there are only a certain number of people that will be interested in gardening. And let's not forget for individuals with a severe mental illness, they're a small amount of the population.... So you're a niche market within a niche market so to speak. By offering those other things, we can then target more people, and get more people in who are perhaps interested in other things, while also looking more holistically at their vocational, educational, training and employment outcomes. (Dave)

Whilst this is not entirely at odds with the value of variety as understood by the other participants discussed above, in that variety offered different things to attract different people, I would suggest there was a subtle difference when considering its value to the theme of inclusion for participants. For Jane, John and Anne, and Gareth, variety was understood as being enabling and inclusive, in that it meant everyone could be included on the project during their time there, regardless of their ability or capacity. The relationship of variety to enablement and inclusion was therefore explicitly linked to, and contained within the parameters of gardening on the project. Gardening was the primary good, and variety was the means of widening access to that good. For the managers, on the other hand, variety was specifically linked to the diversification of the medium engaged in on the project, and more importantly, the

subsequent access to a wider variety of vocational skills that such diversification was thought to allow. For them, 'enablement' was an external good separated from gardening, and understood more in terms of access to vocational skills, with these being understood as the ultimate enabling mechanism, since having vocational skills helped service users to move on from the project, and to secure their inclusion in wider society:

It's about enabling people to increase their skills, so they're ready to move on into any form of educational, training or employment... What we've sold to funders is that it's not just going to be about gardening, it's also going to be about CV writing, confidence building, all of those other things because it's not just gardening. (Dave)

Since this was the case, the relationship of variety to enablement and inclusion identified by other research participants eluded managers because the targets for the managers were to increase the number of service users, and to increase the rate at which service users moved on. Variety was therefore valued if it facilitated either of these. The project workers, users and volunteers on the other hand, referred only to the needs of the current gardening community. This is an important theme and one which will be explored in more detail in relation to learning in chapter seven.

Role allocation, and its gendered nature

Throughout my time on the project traditional gender roles were both challenged and reinforced. With regard to the latter in particular, one thing that stood out was that hands and knees, detail orientated work, such as weeding, was always done by females; and heavier, more traditionally masculine work, such as carpentry or shifting heavy wheelbarrows of earth, despite being spread more evenly between the sexes, was preferred by males:

Mike and Eric go to do some carpentry work, whilst Sarah and I work on weeding out all the roots from the tranquillity garden to prepare it for being planted. (Field notes)

After doing this for a while (shifting glass panes from the greenhouses) I am sort of left at a loose end, so Anne asks me if I would like to weed between the pavers. I tell her that I like doing that sort of stuff, and she goes to get the

tools, telling me that women always like this sort of work, and that men won't do it. She asks Eric, and he declines, saying he is happy where he is. (Field notes)

Whilst Anne was all about 'girl power' and challenging gender stereotypes, often encouraging women to do more of the heavier work, she had noticed gender differences in terms of what individuals enjoyed, and preferred to allocate tasks on the basis of this. I asked her about this in an interview:

A: That's sort of rewarding somehow for women, I don't know why. Men don't like getting down on their hands and knees, they hate it for the most part and it doesn't matter how many times you tell 'em what to do, they'll leave big roots in, nearly all of them, because really they don't want to be doing it. So they'll stand up and weed, or turn the soil over, or they'll cart and wheel the weeds away; well you've seen that... They're quite happy to do that, but getting down on their hands and knees they don't want to do it...

J: Why do you think it is?

A: I don't know, I don't know why it is, but it's really noticeable that women, women actually like doing that, and they get really into it, lost in it almost, and fellas just stand back, they don't want to do that. (Anne)

Anne was reluctant to explore gender differences further in her interview, perhaps because she was wary of sounding gender essentialist. Issues concerning gender were mentioned a lot, particularly in relation to relationships, and raising children. She refuted gender essentialist views about women and motherhood, and did not like to pigeonhole others. Further, her account of the division of labour in her own home did not mirror traditional gender norms with Anne renovating her house herself, and her husband sharing the chores and cooking, reflecting her belief in gender equality. However, the data suggests that in some respects her view of gender equality was informed by an understanding of equality based on difference rather than sameness (Gilligan, 1993).

For example, Anne told me one day that her experiences of gardening and raising children had led her to believe that there were differences between men and women

despite her not wanting to believe this. In the above quote there is already a sense that she perceived the male relationship to nature as different from females. In her experience, male engagement with nature seemed to be more cerebral, hence how they stood back from it and tended to impose structure (or control) onto it – for Anne, this was John’s strength. Anne noticed that female engagement was somewhat more embodied – women would get ‘lost’ in the soil.

According to ecofeminist Carolyn Merchant, the idea that women are closer to nature has been popular throughout history, and is rooted in the nature (women) – culture (men) dualism of Western thought which has subjugated both nature and women to male domination. Merchant traces this to the Enlightenment and the development of Capitalism. During this period, the reconceptualization of nature as something outside of ourselves, not only sanctioned the domination of nature, but also women, with science and technology being developed and utilised as a means to control and dominate over nature. For Merchant, the same instrumental logic which resulted in the in the devaluation of nature, also resulted in the devaluation of what were traditionally understood as female qualities in general⁴⁵. (Merchant, 1980).

The fact Anne also believed that men and women perceived the world differently is further evidence that her understanding of gender equality was in some respects founded on difference. For example, when Jane once asked her on a visit to the old site about why it was all happening, Anne told Jane and I that she saw the decision made by the historic gardens to build the carpark where it was, as indicative of a ‘male logic’:

‘It’s just men isn’t it? They don’t think things through in the same way’ and that they always took ‘the path of least resistance’. Building it on the farm land ‘would do less damage in the long-term’ (Field notes).

⁴⁵ Whilst Merchant wishes to ultimately move beyond gendered conceptions of nature, historically humans have associated nature with the feminine, such as in the idea Mother Nature, for example. This is significant for Merchant, since this perception had acted as cultural constraint, containing a certain reverence, awe and respect for nature. This was undermined by the new ideas around mechanism and the mastery of nature. However, the notion of nature as wild, unruly and in need of control (also associated with the female) has also been present throughout history.

Another instance which comes to mind was when Anne, Harriet, Eric, Mike, Lewis and I were planting some fruit trees with one of the male gardeners from the gardens. John was away on holiday at this point. Anne kept trying to tell the gardener that he was planting the trees too close together (not thinking about how big they would get in the future) but he kept ignoring her. During the tea break, Anne moaned about how irritating she found him:

'He thinks he's the head gardener but he isn't'.... 'He talks to me like I'm not a gardener' ... 'he's planted the trees too close together' and 'keeps bossing me about'. She then mimics shouting at him 'you've planted them too close together MAN!' (Field notes)

The frustration expressed by Anne in the above, is not only indicative of the differences she saw between males and females in terms of how they approached gardening, but also related to her experience of being a woman in a male dominated environment. Whilst John would never have ignored her like this – when she told him about this on his return he said that he would not have stood for her being treated like that – these differences were also apparent between them.

I try and plant and plan out for the long term, for the future, and John plants out for now. So if you put, er, a tree in and it's going to grow, like a eucalyptus, going to grow, whoosh, huge. I would need to know, where it's going to go, why it's going to go there, because it's going to be big one day. John would just put it in anywhere, because you can just cut it down if it gets too big. So that is one of our very different approaches. I tend to look further in the future, and it's not right or wrong, it's just different. (Anne)

Anne had told Jane and myself, following a visit to the old site to pick some snow drops, that moving from the old site had been so difficult for her because it had gone against her nature, which was to 'plan a garden for life', based on how everything would look when it was fully 'grown and nurtured'. Anne's relationship with nature was grounded in her respect for the natural rhythms of growth, with cutting and moving things being understood as a violation of nature's *telos*. For Anne, this relationship was influenced by the values endorsed by the Native American faith she practised (the principles of which also critique the philosophical assumptions

underpinning dualistic Western thought). Anne told me she had always been drawn to this faith because it just seemed to 'make sense' to her. However, there were times when Anne saw her own attitude as inconvenient, and at odds with the unavoidable 'impermanence of things'.

There is also a sense that Anne approached gardening as she approached raising her children (something which she had not taken easily to, but ultimately felt had enriched her life), seeing the garden as something she was permanently connected to. This suggests that her practice as a gardener may have also been informed by particular gendered experiences, such as motherhood. Merchant's (1980) focus on gender alongside ecology has particular value for understanding Anne's experience as a gardener, since it could be suggested that Anne saw her fight to garden in a way she saw as more ecologically sound, partly in terms of a battle for greater equality between the genders also.

The difference between John and Anne was also framed using gendered terms by Jane, who referred to John and Anne's working well together as 'a marry[ing] together' of different approaches, with John being more 'traditional' and Anne being more interested in holistic and sustainable methods such as permaculture. Whilst the reference made by Jane is inferred rather than explicit, it does suggest that in some sense she perceived John and Anne as a union containing a balance of conventional masculine and feminine qualities. This was also mirrored in terms of how they worked differently with service users, with John adopting an ethic of independence, and Anne an ethic of care, something which will be explored further in the next chapter.

5.3 Conclusion

The chapter suggests that for project workers, service users and volunteers, there was more to inclusion than simply being part of the work and consumption society. Exploring the value attributed to the practices of the project by participants suggests that their understanding of inclusion was informed by a particular content, such as, being included in nature and the specific working community which was cultivated by John and Anne. This work community was organised so as to include the whole

person, tailoring the work and roles to the individual in question, making these goods internal to the practices of the project. Whilst this was in keeping with Lles's outwardly expressed values and ethos, participants' understanding of inclusion differ markedly from notions of inclusion in government policy, as well as those put forward by the manager Dan, since individuals capacity to fit the mainstream workplace – the external good of the project – is placed at the foreground for determining the project's fulfilment of its values. This makes the project's role in fostering social inclusion, recovery and wellbeing more complex than that envisioned in academic and policy discourse, since both the form (nature) and content (teamwork, variety) of inclusion as identified by some of the participants were internal to the practices of the project, and thus only accessible through one's participation in these. That participants' experiences of work and nature on the project also stood in sharp contrast to experiences of modern life outside the project, perhaps unintentionally undermined the project's external goal to secure service users' inclusion in wider society.

However, given that these experiences were also shared by the volunteers, suggests that in reality the boundary between mental health and mental ill health was perhaps a porous one; the fact that all participants had either direct or indirect experiences of mental ill health lends support to this. This adds complexity to debates concerning the relationship between mental health and inclusion, and the role of paid work and consumption in this. Indeed, some of the experiences and accounts in this chapter echoed some of the more critical views concerning the impact capitalism and consumption have on our being by Karl Marx, psychoanalyst Eric Fromm (1956), and Herbert Marcuse (1964). 'The Sane Society' by Fromm, has particular resonance given the research setting. Fromm argued that modern capitalist society thwarted the needs of individuals rather than satisfying them. For him, the symptoms associated with mental illness were therefore a rational reaction to a society which was pathologically sick (Fromm, 1956). The project perhaps also served as an antidote to the more negative impacts of alienation characteristic of capitalist society identified by critical theorists. In contrast, there was no doubt that the inclusionary practices of the project were understood as being beneficial for wellbeing. In order to illustrate this link further, the following chapter will explore participants'

conceptions of wellbeing and how these related to the practices of the project in more detail.

6.0 The project and wellbeing

The first empirical chapter showed that project workers identified positively with the external aims of the project to move individuals on into paid work, with work being understood as something which could facilitate the journey to recovery. However, there were only two successful move on cases during my time there, and what was particularly striking, was that project workers still understood their work on the project as a success. From John and Anne's perspective, the fact service users and volunteers came to the project of their own free will, was evidence enough; since if no positive benefit was derived from attending, people would simply not come. Whilst 'nature' and the inclusionary practices of the project discussed in chapter five have obvious implications for how wellbeing was realised there, the relationship of these particular factors to participants' own understanding of wellbeing needs further exploration if we are to understand how the project worked to realise wellbeing more fully. Whilst mental illness was not discussed all that frequently on the project, discussions about wellbeing were common. Such discussions usually centred on what made us happy or gave us satisfaction, and what sort of things didn't, and our future hopes and aspirations. These discussions were ultimately concerned with wellbeing, regardless of mental health condition. Such understandings are important since they can help to further illuminate why participants perceived their work on the project as being good for them. This was as much the case for volunteers as it was for service users. This chapter seeks to first explore how John and Anne worked to realise the wellbeing of service users, before going on to explore participants' own understandings of what was necessary for wellbeing, and how these related to the practices of the project.

6.1 Enhancing the wellbeing of service users

Despite John and Anne not considering themselves as 'professionals', both believed themselves to be good at what they did, deriving much job satisfaction from feeling like they could positively impact on service users' wellbeing. However, the capacity of their work to enhance wellbeing was not understood in terms of the number of

successful move on cases they produced (although these were regarded as success stories, as the earlier chapter attests), but rather in relation to how they saw the positive impact of their work on service users day-to-day, mirroring the experiences of voluntary organisation employees in Milbourne's (2013) research. More specifically, for them, being able to enhance the wellbeing of service users was contingent on how much their work enabled service users to do a good job whilst there, and, not unlike Aristotle (2003) and MacIntyre (2007), it was this that was good for wellbeing. Thus it did not necessarily matter if people did not move on. This was evident in how they understood their work as being of value and a success.

6.1.1 Being attentive and responsive to the needs of service users

The previous chapter discussed the value attributed to the person-centred approach, evident in how the project aimed to tailor or provide work which was suited to an individual's interests and capacities. However, for project workers and volunteers, feeling like they had done a good job when it came to enhancing the wellbeing of service users, was about more than being able to provide them with things to do when they came to the project. Supporting the wellbeing of service users also entailed being attuned to their needs by offering them the right support:

Feeling like you were really useful, like with a service user perhaps, like recognising that someone was having a wobbly day... and just listening to them talking and then realising that getting public transport would be hard for them so just saying to them 'look I am going to be on such and such a bus'.

(Jane)

As much as Jane came to the project to garden, she also felt that it was important to play a supportive role for service users. As the above quotes suggests, the kind of support volunteers offered tended to be practical rather than emotional in nature. The latter was usually provided by Anne, who would always give a listening ear if service users wanted to discuss any problems; whereas John tended to use humour to lift people when they were low. Whilst his approach was less hands on than Anne's, he was able to read people well enough to tell when they were struggling. For example, following the death of Eric's father, John would send Eric home early for a period, because he said he could 'tell by his eyes' that he was struggling. John's

less intimate style of relating to the users could be attributed to his age and traditional working class masculinity. But it also seemed to express a desire to respect and accept people as they were. For John, displaying care through compassion may have been seen as something which drew attention to unequal relations between himself and service users in what was meant to be a setting where everyone was valued as equal by virtue of their contribution. Keeping an element of distance between himself and service users was his way of displaying his respect for them as equals (Arendt, 1996 cited in Sennett, 2003) and thus his way of being attentive to their wellbeing.

Doing well for service users also extended to how both understood moving service users on, with both believing that this was a decision that should be left to each individual (in keeping with the idea that users, not staff were the experts on their own condition). However, when it came to some of the more long-term cases, such as Eric, they were somewhat ambivalent as to what would be best. During my time at the project, Eric's psychiatrist had deemed him ready to return to work. Eric challenged this opinion, he did not see going back to work as a viable option. Whilst John and Anne believed that he was able to work, John also reasoned that Eric was in his fifties, and wondered realistically what he would actually do. On the one hand, John and Anne felt Eric no longer needed the service, but on the other, they believed it was important for individuals to move on into something they perceived as meaningful. In light of no meaningful options being available to Eric, both felt it was better for him to continue to attend the project rather than be forced to move on.

There was also pressure for long-term service user Mike to move on. After being away in a crisis house for a month, Mike decided he wanted to return to the project, but Dan told Anne that this may be difficult given how long he had been attending. Anne suggested that Dan should try and refer Mike back to the project as a new case as a means to get around this issue. Anne valued Mike's role on the project as a carpenter, and felt it was important for him to be able to continue in this role on the new project due to how much she saw him get out of it. By making use of the skills some service users already had, the project existed as a space they could practise and hone what they were good at. This was important for John and Anne, since it focused on individual capability, rather than on recovering from a particular illness

(implying deficiency). To be good at this depended on John and Anne being attentive to each individual's history, and thus to what Sayer (2011) would understand as the particulars of each situation. John and Anne were well placed to do this as they had plenty of experience working with people (see 7.1.1). Indeed, Sarah's perception of John and Anne's practice as more inclusive than the 'officious' practitioner at another project she visited (see p111) perhaps reflected what Aristotle would term their possession of the intellectual virtue 'practical wisdom' (*phronesis*). The possession of this virtue concerned not only knowing what was good for human flourishing, but more importantly, knowing how to act in each *particular* situation in light of this more general understanding about what was needed for human flourishing:

Nor is wisdom only concerned with universals: to be wise, one must also be familiar with the particular, since wisdom has to do with action, and the sphere of action is constituted by particulars. That is why sometimes people who lack universal knowledge are more effective in action than those who have it – something that holds especially of experienced people. (Aristotle, 2002: 182 [141b15])

Whilst Aristotle identified *phronesis* as an intellectual virtue, its practical nature differentiated it from formal knowledge, in that it was something which was learnt through practical experience and, more importantly, was contingent on virtue of character (the capacity to act well merely for the sake of acting well), since 'it is impossible to be wise without possessing excellence' (virtue of character) (Aristotle, 2002: 188 [144b1]).

Aristotle's contention that the virtues were qualities which generally aimed toward the intermediate or mean, was also important in this respect (Aristotle, 2002: 112-113 [1104a20-104b4]), because acting virtuously entailed knowing how to react appropriately to different situations, and this took both time and the capacity to learn from one's experience (the capacity to acquire practical wisdom). Hence, for Aristotle there was an intimate connection between excellence of character and wisdom: 'Excellence (virtue) makes the goal correct, while wisdom (*phronesis*) makes what leads to it correct' (Aristotle, 2002:187 [144a9]). Yet without wisdom, none of

the virtues of character could be exercised, since it was the virtue of wisdom which informed the ability to exercise excellence in one's actions (MacIntyre, 2007: 154).

For Sayer (2011), it is this form of wisdom that is implicitly referred to when we evaluate our own or others' behaviour as reasonable⁴⁶ or unreasonable, because what is reasonable specifically concerns deliberation about what the right course of action is when the specificities of the particular context are taken into account, hence the ethical nature of this form of knowledge. This is something which more procedurally driven behaviour is indifferent to, since the ends of action are already given and one only has to decide on the most logical or rational way of reaching them. Anne and John's reflection about long-term attendees – individuals who were considered problematic from the perspective of managers – did not refer to rules, but rather concerned their use of practical wisdom. Each individual case involved a careful balancing and evaluation of what ends or goals would be reasonable or appropriate for the particular individual in question. Thus, the abstracted, rational, one-size-fits-all approaches that Sayer argues tend to be imposed on practitioners in many organisational settings, were ill-suited in this instance, because in some cases these goals were considered unreasonable or inappropriate for the individual in question (Sayer, 2011: 64). Being able to assess the right thing to do by each individual by treating each as an end in themselves, rather than as a means to achieve the project's goals, was what made their practice person-centred. This was important regardless of whether or not it produced the desired outcomes for the organisation.

Indeed, moving people on before they were ready was understood as almost cruel:

When people first come, they either are coming because they want to get better, because they want to move on; or they're coming with a totally different attitude. They're not coping with life very well and this is a safe environment... And hopefully they will gradually get confident. But they're not necessarily wanting to move on. They're not necessarily wanting to move into

⁴⁶ Sayer notes that reasonableness also implies acting in moderation – knowing how to act appropriately by not over reacting or under reacting in each situation – which was central to Aristotle's theory of the virtues. This also demonstrates the link between virtue of character and practical wisdom. Sayer notes that reasonableness is also specifically used in reference to the treatment of others rather than things, and thus also entails having emotional intelligence and sensitivity to others (Sayer, 2011).

work, or voluntary, or anything. Some people are just trying to get their head together.... I think that's the most important thing for people really – rather than trying to push people out before they're ready. If people are ready, that's great. That's fantastic isn't it?! If they're not ready – if they're still struggling with their head – then I think it's the pits to try and push them out into something. (Anne)

Anne's protectiveness towards service users concerned the potential negative repercussions associated with pushing them out into what was considered a cruel and competitive world before they were ready. Instilling the confidence and resilience necessary for this, took time and rested on service users' continued engagement in the practices of the project. Indicative of this, was how John and Anne attributed the change in 'mind-set' to service users attending every day (see p103). However, the everyday attendance necessary for a change in mind-set to occur was difficult to achieve because the unstable nature of some service users' mental health meant that attendance fluctuated. Thus, achieving a change of mind-set was not a linear, progressive process. For example, Mike's confidence when it came to taking responsibility for the carpentry seemed to have a pattern to it. When he was feeling good, he seemed more confident and took on more responsibility, but when he had just come out of hospital it always took him a while to build up his confidence again. This would go on for a few months, but then he would find himself set back again following another psychotic episode.

Given that these sort of patterns were common, it was important for John and Anne that the project also existed as a space where service users could 'get their head[s] together'. Because of this, both attributed a huge amount of value to the day-to-day positive benefits for service users, as suggested in the following:

I like to see when people come in the morning, they're a little bit down because they haven't been here, but after they have been here an hour or so you can see the difference in them. Their morale has gone up a little bit and I get a pat on the back seeing that happening all the time. (John)

Through being attentive to the needs of each service user, John and Anne were able to accrue positive benefits from their work even if this did not necessarily lead to the

desired outcome of moving people on. For them, the value of their work was specifically connected to realising the wellbeing of service users, whether this be on a day-to-day level or in a more profound way. The latter was concerned with how they tried to use their work to realise capabilities.

6.1.2 Being able to realise service users' capabilities

For both project workers, and volunteer Jane, there was an explicit link between gardening, and what Sen (1985) and Nussbaum (2000) refer to as the realisation of capabilities, as these quotes from Jane suggest:

I like the idea of growing things being a sort of, not just a social activity, but a way of doing good to the people involved.

I think I like and get a buzz from the idea of gardening being used as an aid, not just for adults with mental health issues. I like the idea of it enabling people who are perhaps elderly. (Jane)

On the project, it was the realisation of capabilities which enabled service users to garden well. For Anne, working with service users in this way was perceived to have an almost transformative impact, and this was where the real value of her work lay:

They haven't got time to think about how they're feeling, that they're not feeling okay; because they're trying to do whatever it is I am getting them to do. And they go home a different person and I love that, I love that. (Anne)

For Anne, it was explicitly what she got service users to do which had impact. For her, the value of her work related specifically to how she used gardening as a tool to do this. This differed from the perspective of managers, who felt that this could be done with any medium, and that the service should be broadened to include things such as CV writing (see p132). Whilst it may be true that other mediums could be used to the same effect, this was not how Anne and John understood it. Firstly, writing a CV is not a practice, but merely a process one learns to do as a means to a particular end, in this instance, a job. Thus writing a CV is largely concerned with the acquirement of external goods. Given participants attributed value specifically to the practices on the project, and the acquirement of the goods which were internal to these, writing a CV may not have the same effect since it is only through the

acquisition of these goods that one can excel, and thus achieve wellbeing (MacIntyre, 2007). Secondly, whilst writing a CV would involve a number of important functionings (Sen, 1985), such as being able to write coherently, and being adequately educated – which together act to enhance capability – capability is only realised if there are meaningful opportunities available to exercise these various functionings. These opportunities were limited beyond the project, as Dave admitted (see p114).

In the quote above from Anne, however, the transformative effect perceived by Anne, not only arose out of mastering the use of a particular tool, but more importantly out of how this skill enabled service users to become better gardeners on the project. This therefore provided a real opportunity to realise capability (Nussbaum, 2000). Thirdly, from John and Anne's perspective, being good gardeners was what made them good teachers. This was what enabled them to use the medium of gardening to realise capabilities in others. Teaching activities that they did not see themselves as being good at, meant that they would not be able to realise capability to the same effect. This is significant for understanding some of the tension which arose when it came to potentially changing the service, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Fourthly, if improved wellbeing is considered the end that the project worked towards, and this in turn is realised through achieving excellence in practices, then one has to have the opportunity to practice and acquire the right skills and qualities necessary for acquiring the goods internal to the practice engaged in (Aristotle, 2002; MacIntyre, 2007). Whilst John and Anne were aware that service users were not seeking to become professional gardeners, I would suggest that in keeping with this Aristotelian understanding of wellbeing, teaching people how to become better gardeners on the project was how they worked to realise wellbeing. The frustration John and Anne felt with Health and Safety is worthy of note here. For John in particular, regulation fundamentally changed what people could get out of attending the project day-to-day. For example, Gareth and Harriet wanted to make a small wildlife pond, but Dan said that this would be considered too risky by Health and Safety. Anne and Jane tried to get around this by making a small water feature using dustbin lids, but they all agreed that the effect was somewhat disappointing. Because

regulation got in the way of getting stuff done, it also stunted the sense of satisfaction and achievement which was derived from learning to do things. Further indication of John's concern in this regard was how he attributed the decline in service user numbers over the years to the increase in regulation.

Being able to realise capabilities was not just contingent on their ability to use gardening effectively as a medium, but also rested on how John and Anne related to service users. For example, for John, being able to do a good job with service users was implicitly linked to him relating to them as 'youngsters':

This is nice because you're working with youngsters, and trying to get em well. It's nice to see them getting well, because you get a pat on the back then. Their parents are saying since he/she's been going to the project we've seen a big change in them, it's doing them good, well that's good innit? It's nice to see them getting something out of it. I get job satisfaction because I can see that I am helping somebody get their life back together, y'know get their act, just like anybody. (John)

Whilst service users were certainly not youths, I would suggest John's relating to them as youngsters was important, since for John, youth, and the associative qualities of malleability, and openness to future possibility, were what allowed him to see his work as fostering capabilities. Indeed, John referred to his co-workers in the paper industry as 'old buggers' who would only talk about their war stories, implying that they were fixed and stuck in the past by comparison. More importantly in relation to his role on the project, is that his perception of service users as young was important for when it came to teaching them, since with youth there is not only openness, but also more time to put into practice what is learnt. For Aristotle, excellence was not something which could be achieved off the cuff, but rather through trial and error, and through developing the right habits and dispositions, and these inevitably took time and practice to form (Aristotle, 2002).

Anne on the other hand, had to be able to develop more of an affective bond to service users in order to feel that she was doing well. Loving was important for her to be able to commit herself fully to things, and this included loving service users:

I love 'em, I do, I do. I just love 'em all because they're just, y'know. They don't want to be how they are. They don't want all the rubbish going on in their head. (Anne)

Anne's own sense of wellbeing, job satisfaction and commitment to her work, was explicitly linked to feeling like she could improve the wellbeing of service users. Being able to develop good relationships with service users aided this, and this was contingent on service users collaborating with her to make this the case. The fact that service users 'didn't want to be how they are' made it easier for Anne to develop positive relationships with them. This apparent openness to change was what allowed Anne to take an active role in fostering their wellbeing through their engagement in the different practices on the project. Thus, for Anne, the quality of these relationships impacted on her capacity to do well in her job. This contrasted with her previous job in a women's organisation where, despite viewing the work as worthwhile, she became demoralised from feeling as though she could make little impact. This was partly because she struggled to develop the positive relationships required for her to do so, with some of her clients being resistant to her efforts to help them.

Further indication of the importance of positive relationships for wellbeing for Anne, was evident in how she understood service users' attendance at the project specifically in terms of the positive affect which arose out of the relationships cultivated there:

I think people feel more than that, because they feel wanted when they come.... because they are wanted when they come, and that always has an impact on people. If you feel wanted somewhere, you're more likely to go and be there; because it gives you a boost doesn't it? (Anne)

For Anne making people feel wanted was important, but the real power of this emotional boost lay in it being perceived as a catalyst for the sort of ongoing attendance that enabled users to become better gardeners, and achieve an enhanced sense of wellbeing as a result. This also relates to the project being experienced as an egalitarian setting, and the way that John and Anne genuinely wanted, and valued, their input as whole persons. The fact that Anne also

experienced this positive affect is suggestive that in this particular setting inter-subjective processes were central in how wellbeing was realised, both her own, and that of service users.

For Anne, being able to develop genuine positive relationships with users was important for her to be able to develop the moral commitment and 'practical wisdom' needed to do her job well. This challenges the traditional public/private dichotomy when it comes to affective relationships. Indeed, Sayer (2011) argues that the capacity to build positive relationships is important for doing any job which involves a significant amount social interaction, well. For example, in assessing the competency of nurses, he argues that we would expect them not only to possess the technical expertise to do the job, but also to be committed and responsible. Whilst these virtues of character do not assure competency, they are certainly related to it. For Sayer, developing this commitment has an emotional aspect to it also, in that it is informed by a concern for others. The nurse who is committed and takes responsibility for his or her patients, does so not only because his or her professional reputation depends on it, but also out of concern for his or her patients. He or she would therefore be upset by failure, and fulfilled by success (Sayer, 2011).

Although Anne was not a nurse, the development of positive relationships was central for her to be able to utilise the practical wisdom (*phronesis*) necessary for her to do her job well and ensure her continued moral commitment to it. Whilst John's commitment to his work was also founded in a moral commitment, this was less grounded in being able to realise these more affective bonds than it was for Anne; and more about how service users related to him as a mentor. Nonetheless, being able to develop positive relationships was still important for him because it meant that service users wanted to return to the project (see p181), which for him, served as indication that his work was doing good.

The above shows that, John and Anne's own wellbeing was specifically linked to how well they could realise the wellbeing of service users. The idea that well-being was well-doing was also shared by service users and volunteers, with the practices of the project being a space where this could be realised. Thus it was not only *what* you could do or be, which was important for wellbeing, but *how well* you could do or be, as the following will show.

6.2 Participants' understanding of wellbeing and how the project contributed to this

6.2.1 Paid work and money, and their relationship to wellbeing

Whilst it was clear project workers were attached to the aims of the project, in the day-to-day running of the project, attitudes towards work and money and their importance for individual wellbeing appeared to be more complicated. For example, having lots of money was frowned upon by participants who seemed to associate it with power and corruption (especially in relation to politicians). More importantly with regard to the practices of the project, having money was also associated with being less practical. For example, whilst shifting some bags of compost out of the van one day, John started telling Sarah, Jane and I about his daughter and her bad taste in men. On the previous evening, she had been picked up for date by a man in a Jaguar who worked in the legal profession. John told us that since being single she would go to expensive hotels with the hope of picking up a wealthy man to take her out on dates. He seemed bemused by this. This prompted Sarah to ask us, if we would rather a man who had a fancy car or was able to do up a van. Jane and I said the latter, and this led to further discussion between John, Jane and Sarah about money. All three believed that they would rather be poorer and able to do things for themselves, than have the money to be able to pay people to do things for them. Reflective of this also, was the value that Gareth, Louise, May and Harriet placed on having practical skills, being more motivated to acquire these than to earn lots of money. Thus having too much money was perceived as potentially thwarting opportunities to exercise all their capacities, since with money it was possible to merely buy the capacities of others. Further, these skills were also necessary for becoming a good gardener on the project. Acquiring them enabled individuals to access the goods internal to the practice of gardening (MacIntyre, 2007).

The relationship between paid work, money and wellbeing was brought to bear further in a conversation about winning the lottery one day with Gareth, John, and Jane whilst cleaning the glass panes to go into the greenhouses. Sarah and Dave also

mentioned this in their interviews. This was interesting since it freed up questions of wellbeing from matters which were solely concerned with the fulfilment of our basic needs, such as the need for food, clothing and housing. These conversations therefore allowed for reflections on what wellbeing would be if the necessity of having to make money to live was no longer an issue. This provided an insight into how a few of my participants understood the relationship of paid work to wellbeing. For John, this was not an issue since he was already near retirement. He said he would use the money to buy a house abroad for him and his wife to move to in the winter.

Jane on the other hand, did not like the idea of winning the lottery, having initially brought the topic up after finding out that her partner purchased tickets. She felt uneasy about having too much money, believing 'money just changes things doesn't it?' Jane felt that she would experience having money as a 'weight' or 'responsibility'. For her, having money meant having power, and with this came the responsibility of having to use this power in a just way. Indicative of this was how she would spend the money if she won. She told us she would move to an area where she did not have to hear people banging on her neighbour's door saying 'open up, we've got your methadone,' start up a social enterprise, and would give a lot of it away to 'good causes'.

Jane also believed that having an 'element of struggle made life interesting' and helped people to 'appreciate things'. Her discomfort with having too much money, or winning the lottery, was bound up in her ideas about what it was to lead a balanced life, and how money would potentially change this. The idea of 'balance' was also central to Aristotle's theory of happiness. Possessing a balance of the different goods in life such as health, wealth, knowledge and friendship, was necessary to live a happy life. For Aristotle, not only were these various goods worthy of possessing in themselves, but they also enabled one to exercise the virtues necessary to achieve the chief good of eudaimonia, 'for it is impossible, or not easy to perform fine actions if one is without resources... happiness requires both complete excellence and a complete life' (Aristotle, 2002:104-105 [1099a32 and 1100a5]). An excess of any good, including wealth, could impede this as much as a deficiency could. Balance was key, as Jane also seemed to recognise. For her, paid

work formed an integral part of living a balanced life, not just because of the financial reward, but because it gave her a public role where she could feel useful. Indeed, Jane admitted to me that it was important for her to feel like she could do some good, and her involvement in community education, volunteering, and the community arts was the means through which she did this. Thus, for Jane, working was important both morally, and for her own sense of self-esteem.

For Gareth, Sarah, and Dave on the other hand, winning the lottery was seen as something which would enable them to give up paid work, and have the freedom to pursue things purely out of interest. Gareth said he would fulfil his dream, and purchase a smallholding; Dave, despite liking his job, said he would pursue a PhD full time, and Sarah said she would dedicate her time to things that interested her. Despite their differing from Jane in terms of the importance they accorded to paid work for their own wellbeing, what is interesting is that all four seemed to understand the relationship of money to wellbeing in terms of what money could allow them to do, rather than what it could allow them to have, in keeping with the value accorded to external goods by Aristotle (2002) and MacIntyre (2007). These particular participants were driven by what interested them, with money simply allowing them to do these things more easily, rather than aspiring to acquire money or material goods as ends in themselves. This suggests that having more material things was not necessarily understood as something which was conducive to wellbeing. Indeed, for Sarah in particular, this was 'boring' and 'tiresome' (see p119116):

I really find it valuable as well.... focusing on things that are more interesting than money. (Sarah)

When the above is considered in relation to the theme of inclusion discussed in the preceding chapter, it lends further support to how project workers, volunteers and service users understood inclusion, and its perceived relation to wellbeing on the project. If wellbeing is realised through what one does, rather than what one has (Nussbaum, 2000), then one's inclusion in the particular practices of the project has obvious implications for realising wellbeing.

Further, with regard to paid work it also suggests that work had more value than what it merely allowed you to buy. For those whose work prior to the project had involved high levels of pressure and stress for little more than financial remuneration at the end of the month; work beyond the project was not understood as conducive for their wellbeing as this quote from Eric demonstrates:

A job would be out of the question for me if I am honest with you. It's just too stressful for me, if there's any slight stress I become ill. This is the only thing I've found really, is here, that's not stressful. So I can live an active life and have a certain quality of life too... The work I do here keeps me well. (Eric)

Like the other service users, Eric was on benefits and lived a frugal life with little money; yet for him, living with less was better than moving on into a job. Eric valued the quality of life the project allowed him to have. Whilst I do not want to diminish the strain of having little money, it is interesting that in dealing with the often difficult and unstable circumstances which accompany a mental health condition, for Eric, seeking financial security was not understood as primary for securing his wellbeing, as has been found elsewhere in the empirical literature (see Frayne, 2015). This challenges the relationship between inclusion and wellbeing in dominant policy discourse, whereby paid work is placed at the centre of inclusion and thus wellbeing (SEU, 2004; Dean et al, 2005; Levitas, 2005). What is also interesting about what Eric says in the above, is that for him the project was work, despite it not being paid work. Sarah also understood her role as a volunteer in similar terms:

In many ways I often think if I didn't have to look for a paid job I wouldn't mind working [volunteering] three days a week there like I used to do. I do two days now; if money was no issue at all, if you could just ignore it totally. (Sarah)

Both Eric and Sarah, understood their time at the project as work, and attached value and importance to it being work. Thus, it was meaningful work, rather than work per se, which was understood as being good for individual wellbeing.

John and Anne were supporters of this also. Despite their attachment to paid work they believed it was 'mad' for people to do things they hated. Indeed, Jane perhaps accorded high value to paid work for her own wellbeing because she had always

worked in something that she had found interesting and meaningful. However, even she had begun to find her teaching work a strain, and had started to get more out of volunteering than she did out of her paid work:

I suppose I get a lot more good days, this is terrible, but I get a lot more good days, er, going to Lles than I do necessarily teaching my mainstream photography which just stresses me out sometimes, it's just too much, now I am getting older. (Jane)

Jane attributed the stresses and strains of her job to the increasing targets her work was subjected to. She felt demoralised and under-valued; she regarded her work as a means to be 'useful' and 'do good', yet this was undermined by the challenges to her work by higher management, making her job less satisfying. Despite this dissatisfaction, Jane was ambivalent throughout her interview about the future of her work, and how much teaching would be a part of it. She jumped between leaving the profession completely to reducing her hours further to gain more of a 'balance':

I'd like a nice balance between, er teaching photography mainstream, teaching photography within mental health in some way, er, gardening therapy and gardening non-therapy if that makes sense, commercial.

I have realised more and more that I want to do it [gardening]... I find it more fulfilling than some of the photography teaching that I do. Sometimes I just want to give up all the teaching, but I also want a balance. (Jane)

Again, for her it was not money and paid work which were conducive to wellbeing per se, but rather the content of one's life, including work which was meaningful. Whilst this may seem like an obvious assertion to make, Jane's struggle with deciding how much of a role paid work should have in her life, is perhaps suggestive of her internalising the value accorded to paid work in wider society, regardless of whether that work is satisfying or fulfilling. It is important to note that Jane's conflict about work and its relation to her own wellbeing came after a 'wakeup call' following being ill with cancer, causing her to re-evaluate her own life and what was important for her own sense of wellbeing:

I've been wanting for years to do something to do with gardening. And I suppose the way sort of education was going, and the way educational institutions were going; and the pressures that were put on community ed to be something that it wasn't when I first went into it, made me a bit more disgruntled with the community ed situation... I'd always wanted to do something from an environmental point of view, or a horticultural point of view... I suppose the wakeup call for me was when I had... some physical ill-health myself and I decided... Why keep putting things off really, why not, just do it? (Jane)

Jane did not want to give up work, but she did not want her life to be dominated by work she no longer found fulfilling. Dedicating more time to activities which were ends in themselves was specifically understood as necessary for her own wellbeing and flourishing.

There was therefore a shared understanding amongst project workers, volunteers and service users that work was about more than earning money, and money, or having too much money, was not always conducive to wellbeing. This was because having too much money was understood to hinder the development of other qualities which were good for wellbeing, and these qualities were particularly valuable on the project, such as being practical and resourceful. This seeming lack of acquisitive drive amongst many of the participants, was something that the manager Dan did not understand, since for him inclusion and wellbeing in part related to one's consumer power in the community. When this view is considered alongside attitudes to paid work, it is easy to see why the lure of more money was not necessarily enough of a motivating factor for people to move on into work.

What the above shows is that for service users and volunteers in particular, being able to engage in things which were interesting and enjoyable was more important than having money, and if work did not offer this, then work was not understood as something that could enhance wellbeing.

6.2.2 Being able to do something you enjoy and are interested in

As already suggested in the above, being able to do something you enjoyed was understood as being particularly important for wellbeing. This was something which

came up in discussion a lot, especially with Anne who was always trying to encourage people to find out what they love doing and do it. For her, doing things you loved made life worth living. In her interview Anne labelled herself as 'jammy' for being able to do a job she loved so much, and John also said on numerous occasions that it was the best job he had ever had. Indicative of the value Anne attributed to doing things that one enjoyed for wellbeing were her accounts of some of the success stories she had seen in her work. Whilst she had not enjoyed her last job with a women's organisation, she mentioned one particular success story one day to Harriet and I. Anne had managed to get one of her clients a job in a pony sanctuary, and talked about how great it was that this particular woman had loved this job so much and the difference it had made to her life. Anne advised Harriet to work on finding out what she loved and work towards doing it.

Even if the end result was not a job, Anne understood the value of her work primarily in terms of how well it enhanced an individual's wellbeing, and this was gauged in terms of how much she saw the individual in question enjoying life, be it in a job or otherwise. For example, one of the most memorable successes for her at Lles, was seeing service user Melvin⁴⁷ move on because he made new friends, and had started to try new things. He developed a keen interest in art and poetry. His life gradually became 'so full', that he no longer had time to attend the project. This for Anne, was a 'brilliant' outcome. However, the more amorphous and intangible aspects of this outcome, and Lles's role in achieving it, makes it difficult to articulate to funders, a theme which will be explored further in the following chapter.

This was potentially problematic as far as the aims of the project were concerned, because service users did not always come to the project with the view to move on, but rather because they enjoyed gardening, and being in nature. Being able to do this was precisely what was understood as being good for them:

I just love being in the open air....it gives me a lot of satisfaction to see this tiny little seed stuck in a pot somewhere and watered, and then weeks later you have a great huge plant. There's something, a friend of mine described it

⁴⁷ A prior service user who was not involved in this research, but is referred to a couple of times as an illustrative case.

as mystical, about the whole thing. I just like being close to nature, it's who I am. (Gareth)

Similarly Eric noted how work on the project 'keeps me well'. For May, Lles formed a vital part of her support network, providing her the opportunity to work outdoors with others. Whilst she wanted to move away from the city, she told me that she would only move somewhere that had another Lles project she could go to for support. Harriet and Louise also came to the project primarily due to a love of gardening and wanting more opportunity to do this, since they had no gardens of their own. This extended to volunteers, who came to the project because it offered them an opportunity to do something they enjoyed and were interested in, and thus had benefits for their own wellbeing. Enjoyment and improved wellbeing were as much a part of volunteers' motivations for attending as they were for service users. This suggests that wellbeing was in some respects realised though belonging to a community of like-minded people who worked together to pursue common ends. Hence, Sarah sometimes forgot she was working with people who were 'mentally ill' (see p112).

On the face of it, the relationship between doing things for enjoyment and wellbeing may seem common-sensical, but I would suggest that this link was about more than simply the anodyne effect of enjoyment or pleasure on the mind. Jane's disgruntlement with her teaching job can help to illuminate this. For Jane, the stress of her job specifically concerned the targets which were increasingly imposed on her work, and the fact that students' enjoyment of her classes was no longer considered an outcome worthy of funding. This is interesting because Jane understood the value of her teaching photography to adults with mental health issues and other community education classes, primarily in terms of the opportunity they provided to learn something purely for the sake of it, or for enjoyment. For Jane, doing things purely as ends in themselves, was linked to having a zest for life in general, with participation in one practice, acting as a catalyst for participation in others, and thus was equated with living a full and happy life:

If I go to pottery, y'know, and it might for whatever reasons; it might be like, I just want to go to pottery... But I am doing other things in my life, and the fact that I am having a great time on a Wednesday evening or whatever

going to pottery has enabled me to do other things in my life because I am a happier person and enjoying it. (Jane)

Jane's motivation to volunteer as a means to gain some sort of balance towards more enjoyment in her own life is also indicative of this; the stress of her teaching was diminishing her zest for life, and thus her capacity to participate in the practices that led her life to feeling full and balanced. Whilst Jane wanted more paid work doing gardening, she was ambivalent about taking on a paid role at the project (this had been discussed), since for her, this would potentially undermine her enjoyment of her role there since she would no longer have the freedom to do what she merely enjoyed:

Being paid to do something is very different, isn't it? You'd have to, you'd have to do as you're told (laughs). You'd have to toe the line... It would just be a different way of thinking. (Jane)

However, I would suggest her ambivalence about taking on a job at Lles was about more than just losing the freedom to choose to do what she enjoyed, but was more about what a paid role would mean in terms of having to be responsible for the service:

You're not tied are you? I wouldn't feel psychologically... guilty for not doing certain things (Jane)

The above two quotes reaffirm the relationship Jane perceived between money – in this case, being paid – and power; and more importantly, the need to exercise that power responsibly, discussed earlier. Dealing with the decisions regarding the wellbeing of service users, entails making complex moral decisions regarding how to best meet their needs. This is especially difficult when coupled with organisational imperatives which may conflict with this, hence Jane's concern about toeing the line. This makes responsibility somewhat difficult to exercise, and was already something Jane was struggling with in her teaching work. Jane enjoyed volunteering because she was free from the heavy burden of making difficult moral decisions about the wellbeing of service users. This was precisely because she took having such responsibility so seriously. The powerlessness she was experiencing in her own work

had taken a toll on her own wellbeing, because she was no longer able to exercise this responsibility in a way that she was comfortable with morally.

What was also interesting about the value of engaging in things purely out of love or for enjoyment was how this was also explicitly linked to being good at them. The latter was also understood as being good for wellbeing.

6.2.3 Being good at something

For Anne, Jane and Sarah in particular, there was a relationship between loving something and being good at it. For Jane, this extended to organisations as well as individuals. In a discussion with Jane and myself about the future use of the poly tunnel and the project in general one day, John lamented the fact that it could no longer be used to grow flowers to make hanging baskets to sell – its use on the old site – because the project was no longer open to the public. This was what he had loved doing the most. Jane could not understand why these sales had ceased, because she believed that ‘if everyone in an organisation does something they love, then the organisation works better, and does what it is meant to do better’ (Jane).

More importantly, perhaps, was that being good at something was understood as good for one’s own wellbeing, hence why one enjoyed the things one was good at. For example, Sarah told me of the trials and tribulations her daughter had faced trying her hand at being a bike mechanic – something which did not come ‘naturally’ to her. She had found getting this qualification ‘much harder than going to university’. Whilst Sarah was proud of her daughter’s courage to take on such a challenge, she told me she would find it ‘very hard’ to take on ‘challenges I didn’t really think I could do’ and ‘would lose my confidence very quickly’. Being good at things, and then doing those things, reinforced feelings of self-confidence and self-efficacy. For Sarah, this did not mean shying away from trying things or taking on challenges, but rather testing out, and accepting one’s limits through taking on different challenges:

I need that to sort of feel, ‘yeah I can do this, I am good at this’. I do things in the house that I don’t feel sure about, and to my amazement it comes together sometimes. I get quite a kick out of that. (Sarah)

Similarly Anne had found out what she was capable of through taking on things she never expected she could do:

When I was pregnant we moved over to Wales and we bought a derelict house, and I didn't know that men couldn't do things. I thought all men could do things, but they can't I found out. Geoff can't, and didn't want to anyway. So I found that I could do things, and we lived on a shoestring. We had no money and yet, we were doing up this thing, and we done it, and I did the garden and I learnt to plaster and I put windows in. I thought, 'do you know what, I am a worthwhile person and I don't care if I get the job or not, because I know I am a worthwhile person.' (Anne)

For both Sarah and Anne, discovering what they were good at, was associated with feelings of self-worth and confidence. In the above, Anne drew on what she knew she could do, in order to maintain her self-confidence and a sense of resilience in the face of a potential job rejection. However, although Anne got the job she referred to, she had not enjoyed it because she felt she was unable to make a positive impact, and thus did not feel she was good at it. In contrast, Anne felt it was her passion and love of gardening, along with the 'love' she felt for service users, which made her good at her job in Lles. The relationship between loving something, and being good at it, was therefore understood as a mutually reinforcing one.

Service user Gareth also seemed to enjoy gardening partly because he felt it was something which suited his natural capabilities and talents. This meant that he got more satisfaction and pleasure from gardening on the project than from his previous job as a chef:

Being dyspraxic, most gardening spec and most outdoor work... doesn't have to be as neat and as perfect... I can be creative; and I won't say artistic, but I can express what creativity I do have better on a larger scale than by drawing or painting, because I can't draw and paint.

There's no pressure, there's not the pressure to get it perfect. You know you haven't got twenty people waiting and screaming at you to get the food out, like when I was cooking and that kind of stuff. (Gareth)

Whilst the latter quote does not specifically relate to whether Gareth believed himself to be a good chef per se, it does suggest that the pressure he was under to get things 'perfect' in this job affected his ability to do his job well, and his confidence.

Also indicative of the relationship perceived between doing something well and wellbeing, was how John and Anne tended to allocate tasks in accordance with what service users were good at, and would always give praise for work well done. For example, before becoming too ill to work, Mike had been a carpenter. He was always allocated the carpentry work, and preferred this work over gardening, identifying himself as the carpenter on the project, hence his nickname: 'Woody'. He also seemed to enjoy teaching others, helping Lewis to develop his carpentry skills during my time there for example. It was obvious that Mike took pride in this work, and he was praised by John and Anne for the 'good job' he had done making the benches, archway and raised beds for the new project. Whenever Mike was not there and some carpentry work needed doing, Anne would comment that we needed Mike to come back to do it. Because Mike seemed to get a lot out of this role, Anne was keen to maintain Mike's involvement on the new site, where initially it was thought that there may be fewer carpentry opportunities, due to John's imminent retiring. On more recent return visits in winter 2014 and spring 2015 following John's retirement, I noticed that Anne would still organise activities that would utilise Mike's skills. For example, she got him to instruct and oversee the making of some birdhouses and bird boxes. Thus, the variety of tasks on the project discussed in the previous chapter also served to ensure that there were opportunities for service users to do something they were good at.

6.2.4 Having positive relationships

As discussed in chapter five, the sense of the project being perceived as a 'safe' environment by service users, was in part due to the peer support there (see 5.2.2). For Anne, good relationships were also necessary for her to feel like she could work effectively with service users. However, the value of developing good relationships on the project was about more than just the positive emotional affect. For Anne and Jane in particular, positive relationships were understood as having a perceived catalyst effect on other aspects of one's life. For example, returning to the success

story of Melvin mentioned earlier, Anne attributed his moving on to the positive effect his friendships had had on the rest of his life. This service user had been in hospital for nine years, and went from coming to the project on a day release from hospital to getting 'his life back'. This for her was 'the biggest move on anyone could have':

He started socialising and getting his confidence; and he started meeting his friends in town again. Then he moved out of hospital and into supported housing. He was still coming, and gradually he just didn't have time to come anymore, because his social life was so full. (Anne)

Jane understood her photography classes for adults with mental health conditions as a success in similar terms:

So there was this group of like 10 students that came to me. Yeah, they were doing photography every Friday, but... because they were feeling great having come and met their mates, and they've been supported in a supportive, sensitive environment; that then enabled them to then go on... to do some volunteering somewhere, or to do this or to do that. (Jane)

For Jane and Anne, the stable and positive relationships which were developed in these mental health settings were understood to allow service users to build up their confidence, enabling them to do other things beyond these environments. This was also inferred in Eric's experience of the project mentioned earlier; for him, attending the project had allowed him to have an 'active life' and a certain 'quality of life'. However, managers Dave and Dan took a more circumspect view of the social aspect of projects:

There are people that have been in our services for 15 years perhaps.... There's a whole host of other issues that brings; because if you've got a group of people for that amount of time, cliques form, and then a social hierarchy, which then makes it difficult for anyone new to the project... because they may feel excluded from this group. (Dave)

[Dan discussing the problem with one of Lles's former projects] *It was the same group of ladies basically, so it turned into a social thing, which was great*

but that's not what we're about...That was a flaw on our part... because we should've helped them take that outside... So we changed that – reluctantly – because there was a lot of opposition. (Dan)

The above quote from Dave had some resonance for the experience of Tom discussed earlier (see p124). However, Tom's experience suggests that this problem was not something which was necessarily contingent on the amount of time that service users had attended, as suggested in the quotes above, but rather, was about the dynamics which were formed between different people. Friendships thus served to make the project both inclusive and exclusive. The very friendships that included some, excluded others. Indeed, at another point, Tom's friendship with Harriet had served to make Tom feel included on the project.

Whilst this was difficult for project workers to manage, John and Anne always made an effort to include everyone in social interaction. More importantly with regard to the value of friendships in general, was that without them, it was unlikely that people would attend the project at all. This further indicates the value of friendships for wellbeing, despite some of the tension this sometimes caused. This seemed to be overlooked by managers, who in some respects saw bonds between users as a barrier to wellbeing in that it made moving individuals on trickier.

Indicative of this was Dan's opinion on the matter. For him, this peer support aspect of Lles projects was problematic since it made the projects more akin to the 'old historical model of a day centre', a term he had used specifically in relation to the garden project. Although Dan was referring to what was now the café project in the above, he used this particular example to justify why the garden project needed 'to evolve'. For him Lles projects were not meant to be about relationships (inferring dependence), but about independence. The development of friendships and affective bonds had the unintended consequence of making service users attached to the project; making it difficult for them to move on, thus stunting their independence, and negatively affecting their wellbeing.

6.2.5 Having autonomy and being self-sufficient

As already discussed, for John, Anne and Sarah, in particular, being capable and having practical skills was linked to their sense of self-worth and self-esteem. John

was proud of his resourceful and self-sufficient nature, because it meant that he had not needed to rely so much on his earning power to provide for his family:

I learnt when I came out of the army, I had a home, a family and if I didn't learn how to do these things I would have had to pay somebody to do them, and if you're not in the position to pay somebody to do 'em, then you learn.
(John)

John brought this self-sufficient ethos to the day-to-day running of the project. For example, he avoided having to unnecessarily buy anything by discouraging waste and was always asking if we could see how anything could be re-used. He and Anne also gave stuff away, despite this going against organisational policy. The general way they got around this was to say when things were going in the skip if we wanted them. Dan seemed to turn a blind eye to this sort of behaviour.

John and Anne seemed keen to instil autonomy and self-sufficiency in service users too. Indicative of this was their numerous attempts to shift responsibility for tasks on the project onto the service users; although on the whole service users seemed to prefer having tasks allocated to them, despite John and Anne's attempts. Even Mike who was keen to take on responsibility for the carpentry, sometimes preferred to wait for John's guidance before doing anything:

Anne asks Mike's advice on the raised beds. I can't quite hear, but it's something to do with the structure. Mike tells her he doesn't feel comfortable doing anything without John's guidance⁴⁸. (Field notes)

Whilst it is difficult to infer from the data why service users seemed to resist autonomously directing tasks, their perception of John and Anne as teachers or mentors may have had something to do with it (see 7.3.1). That said, John and Anne still encouraged service users to be autonomous in relation to how they choose to undertake tasks, allowing them to direct the pace of the work, and how they chose to do it.

Gareth in particular, seemed to value this, and understood these qualities as good for his own wellbeing:

⁴⁸ Although it must be noted that in this particular instance, Mike had just come out of hospital.

What I like about coming here... it's very much, go at your own pace, do what you can, if you can't do it, you let them know and it's fine... I can push myself and I can work as fast as I can, or as hard as I can, and go home exhausted but happy. (Gareth)

His dream to have a small holding one day, embodied these qualities, and he saw his time at the project as not only as an opportunity to acquire the skills and qualifications that would enable him to get closer to realising this dream, but also a space to exercise these qualities.

6.2.6 Caregiving

Some form of caregiving was identified by all participants as central to wellbeing. For John and Jane, part of the satisfaction gained from their work concerned their perception of their work as a fulfilment of duty to others. For Jane, this was being 'useful' to society, discussed earlier; and for John, this was providing for his family, and helping individuals at Lles:

When you actually see people get well because of the project, it gives you a pat on the back; makes you think what you're doing is worthwhile... I get more satisfaction doing this than I did in the paper mills, because the paper mills was just an industry producing paper. (John)

Whilst John told me that his work at Lles was something he did for himself, the sense of satisfaction he got from his work was nonetheless attributed by him to that fact that the work at the project had a higher moral value than his old job in the paper industry. For him, the latter was only concerned with the need to earn a wage ('just an industry'). However, whilst John did not realise himself in his previous work, he still gained a sense of wellbeing from it, in the sense that he derived satisfaction from providing for his family:

What I am doing now is only for myself, what I was doing before was bringing a family up, and that is a different ball game... You have to put up with things that's not always suited to you. Even though you don't like what you're doing, you know at the end of the week, what that man is going to give you is going to keep your family, so you do it, you put up with whatever. (John)

Being able to support his family was the reward for doing unsatisfactory work, since the value he placed on his family outweighed the value he placed on work. Now that his family no longer needed his support, his satisfying 'pat on the back' (as he said numerous times in the interview) came from being involved in something which benefited others – Lles had become his family in a sense. Throughout his life John had framed the sense of satisfaction and wellbeing he got from work primarily in terms of doing something for others. John's role as a provider was an important means for him to gain esteem, appreciation and respect from others in a conventionally masculine and non-intimate way (hence the 'pat on the back' doesn't require prolonged face-to-face contact). John's account mirrors much of the policy discourse around the moral value of paid work, especially for those with families, for whom paid work is couched as the best route out of poverty, and thus improved wellbeing (HM Government, 2011). However, it is important to note that in contrast to his previous work, John's work on the project satisfied both his need for a more thorough sense of autonomy, and his need to do something for others, and thus provided him with a deeper sense of fulfilment and wellbeing.

Service user Gareth's equivalent of this 'pat on the back' derived from his care for animals:

The responsibility of caring for an animal that isn't a pet is good for me. It's definitely good for me. Pets are different because you obviously get attached; it's part of the family. But if you've got a couple of pigs or a couple of sheep in the field for the freezer, you don't get attached, but you have to care for them, be concerned for their welfare. It's the responsibility of having to be there twice a day to feed, and make sure they're okay, and deal with any problems that crop up. Whereas a pet you might leave for a night, or a day or two. You can't do that with pigs. (Gareth)

Like John, Gareth also related to care in a conventionally masculine and non-intimate way; this was also linked to the feeling of doing a good job. However, for Gareth, the balance between having care and responsibility for oneself, and care and responsibility for others, was a fine one. Having too much responsibility, or caring too much, was understood as being potentially bad for wellbeing since it made it harder for him to balance this with care for himself. However for Gareth, it was more

than this; becoming too attached to his animals would also undermine what for him would demonstrate what it was to be a good small holder (being self-sufficient). Yet caring too little for the welfare of his animals would be equally detrimental to this. Given that this is what Gareth thought would be good for him, being able to do it well was important for his own sense of wellbeing. Hence he did not feel mentally ready to take this responsibility on, and saw the project as an opportunity to practise some of these qualities in a setting that he did not have to take full responsibility for.

Similarly, the responsibility of having to take care of a pet was often discussed as being 'good for me' by Harriet, Mike and Lewis, who also had pets. For Mike, this was 'as much responsibility' he 'could manage', since he sometimes struggled to care enough for himself. Jane's earlier mentioned reservations about taking on a paid role at the project also reflect the potential bind associated with this balance. Perhaps the more non-intimate conventionally masculine approach to caregiving taken by John and Gareth served as a means for them to negotiate this balance. The tension between self and other in caregiving has long been recognised in the feminist ethic of care literature. A parent's own sense of wellbeing is partly dependent on that of her child, but also sometimes at odds with it, and if the burden of care becomes too much, caregiving is experienced as oppressive (Tronto, 1994; Sevenhuijsen, 1998; Kittay, 1999). Whilst the participants were well aware that caregiving could be easily experienced as burdensome, the above accounts suggest that having some form of caring responsibilities was understood as being important for wellbeing. As Tronto (1994) argues, we depend on care not only for our survival, but also for our physical and emotional development, and thus without care, our capacity to flourish is greatly compromised. Being able to give and receive care is therefore central to our existence, with our attachments to others being a source of enrichment and fulfilment (Tronto, 1994).

Indeed, Eric derived a sense of wellbeing from working on the project precisely because he understood it as benefitting something beyond himself, which made the work seem meaningful:

I am still on benefits but I feel like I am earning my benefits by working up here. Obviously with the old place we were selling stuff and it would go back

into the charity so obviously I was helping out in that way. I felt that it had some purpose to it. (Eric)

This is interesting when it is considered alongside Dave's likening the project to a marketable good, with service users being its target market (see p 131). The market-like language employed by Dave and Dan (see p129), posited that the service user, like the consumer, derived a sense of satisfaction or wellbeing from the consumption of goods the project offered, implying a utilitarian relationship between the two. In using such language, the managers overlooked the fundamentally relational character of how wellbeing was realised on the project, instead, positioning service users as atomised individuals with desires to fulfil no other needs aside from their own. Such a view is in keeping with the dominant liberal conception of the human being which ignores 'our dependence on others for our individuality and sense of self' (Held, 2006 cited in Sayer, 2011: 119). The sense of wellbeing Eric derived from the project was founded in him perceiving his work as a worthy contribution to the collective internal goods that the project offered. In order for him to have this perception, Eric had to believe the work he did there was good, and this belief was based on John and Anne recognising and valuing his contribution.

This was not only in relation to other individuals, but also to the garden. Care and the concomitant responsibility and commitment it required, were associated with being able to garden well, and were linked to how one could derive a sense of wellbeing from gardening:

Well it's nice to see, like you pop a pack of seeds in and in a couple of days' time, they pop their little heads up. And then you move them on into a bigger tray, and you move them forward, and forward; and before you know it, you're selling it. It's good. (John)

I think nearly every gardener likes that bit, growing all the babies and then nurturing them until they're big enough to go outside in the world, it's lovely. That's the best bit. (Anne)

For Anne especially, the process of gardening was almost likened to parenting. The joy derived from gardening lay in seeing plants grow from 'babies' (seedlings) into adult plants which were sturdy enough to go 'outside in the world' (the garden). This

was the gardeners' reward for the commitment and responsibility taken to nurture and care for them. That John, Anne and Jane viewed cultivating seedlings, and then throwing them away just for the sake of training as pointless, and planting out already cultivated plants as lazy, was further indication of the value attributed to these qualities for gardening well.

For Anne these qualities were central to the character of a gardener, and were evident in how she understood her own relationship to gardens as a gardener:

When I do a garden, it's mine. People don't know that but it's mine.... Not so much here. This is John's more, and I know he feels it too. But with my carers' gardens... I'll have done some work in the garden, and then a couple of weeks down the line, I feel like I am being called back: 'don't forget me, I need a bit more doing over here'... I am not doing it for the people. I am supposed to be doing it for the people, but I am doing it for the garden; because the garden is mine now, it's my responsibility now because I have taken it on, and that is how John is here. He does it for the people, but he does it because he has to... You have to, because the garden is yours. It's your responsibility; you've taken it on. Like he used to come in on the weekends and work. Like at the last place, and he wasn't supposed to, because he had to. (Anne)

Anne saw every garden as hers, regardless of whether it was, because the garden became hers by virtue of the sort of relationship she developed with it. Anne was responsible for its care and development. Whilst this could also be interpreted as burdensome, without these qualities, Anne could not derive a full sense of satisfaction from gardening. She had to take full responsibility for the garden in order for it to flourish, since without her efforts plants and flowers may die. So if for any reason this was thwarted, she became frustrated. For her, the relationship between the garden and the gardener was an entirely relational one, whereby the flourishing of one also constituted the flourishing of the other. Interestingly, this was also true of Anne's relationships with service users (see 6.1.2).

This was something which could only be understood by other gardeners and was reflected in the fact that both she and John did not think that Dan understood what they did. For example, Dan saw no problem in Anne falling behind on carers' gardens

if Lles required her to be elsewhere. This sometimes caused frustration since her commitment to garden well sometimes conflicted with her commitment to other organisational imperatives. For Dan, this was not a problem because Anne and John's commitment to gardening represented nothing more than a preference, hence he did not understand the sense of anguish caused if they were prevented from fulfilling these commitments⁴⁹. However, John and Anne's deep commitment to gardening resonates with Sayer's argument concerning the importance of commitments for wellbeing. He argues that our commitments are about more than preferences, in that they come to 'constitute and define our character, our identity and our conceptions of ourselves'. We therefore become deeply attached to them. This means that when we are prevented from pursuing them, we not only lose something external to us, but also part of ourselves. Thus the flourishing of ourselves is also dependent on the flourishing of our commitments (Sayer, 2011: 125). Whilst John and Anne's commitment to gardening was certainly not being curtailed, shifts to the way the service was to be delivered were in some way perceived as a threat to this, as the following chapter will show.

The beauty of working on the project for John and Anne was that gardening in this setting allowed them to develop an attachment and ongoing relationship with the garden which was conducive to its flourishing, since it enabled them to fully develop the qualities of commitment and responsibility necessary for this to be the case⁵⁰. This allowed them to derive a deeper sense of satisfaction and wellbeing from their work. This explains partly why neither saw the pursuit of gardening well, as something which stood in conflict with the pursuit of enhancing service users' wellbeing (as manager Dan seemed to); since for them the two were inextricably connected, as the experience of Eric attests. The participation in practices purely as ends in themselves, was central to how they understood individuals achieved

⁴⁹ It must be noted again, that Dan saw John and Anne as recovery workers not gardeners, and thus their commitment to gardening did not constitute part of their character as gardeners as far as he was concerned, since he did not see them this way in the first place.

⁵⁰ Sayer's example of nurses discussed earlier is also relevant here. Whilst this particular example does not refer to the wellbeing of others, care, attentiveness, commitment and responsibility were certainly qualities necessary for being a good gardener and were also contingent on having practical wisdom (Sayer, 2011).

wellbeing. Hence, Anne spoke of John coming in after-hours almost as if he felt morally compelled to.

John's genuine attachment and commitment to his practice there meant that he would even sometimes flout the organisational rules by coming in outside of working hours, risking his job to do so, because this was in keeping with what was required for him to be a good gardener there. This would make this risk something John would see as worth taking, since for him there was no choice but to. Indeed, the more cautious relationship to responsibility displayed by service users and volunteers discussed earlier indicates precisely how important it was for participants to be able to feel they could engage in particular practices well, and this was especially the case when it came to caregiving.

6.3 Conclusion

This chapter suggests that participants understood wellbeing primarily in relation to what one did rather than what one had. Moreover, it was specifically John and Anne's particular conception of wellbeing that informed the culture and working practices of the project. For them the project was not merely a space for enjoyment or respite, but a space where one could do a good job, and this was what was considered good for wellbeing. Service users and volunteers shared in this perception, evident in the value they gained from the project and in terms of how they understood their lives beyond the project. The inclusionary practices discussed in the previous chapter, were also important in this respect, since it was through developing these practices that John and Anne enabled people to do well there (realise capability), and thus develop a greater sense of wellbeing as a result. This, however, took time and ongoing commitment.

The fact that opportunities to do well in one's work beyond the project were limited, meant that being able to do well and realise certain aspects of themselves on the project stood in contrast to experiences of paid work, in keeping with some of themes discussed in chapter five. This was not only true for service users Gareth and Eric, but also true in relation to how John and Anne understood their previous work experience. This was problematic in cases where paid work did not seem a likely

avenue through which wellbeing could be realised. For John and Anne, doing a good job was about doing well by service users, and not strictly bound up with realising the external goods of the project.

Moreover, the skills and particular qualities that were necessary for doing well on the project were not those which were understood as being necessary for doing well outside the project by managers who were removed from these practices. Indicative of this was how Dan saw gardening merely as 'pottering,' and how John and Anne felt that he did not understand or value what they did. John and Anne's (along with users and volunteers) commitment and attachment to gardening constituted part of who they were, and being able to honour this commitment was conducive to their own flourishing, not detrimental to it, as the managers saw it. Thus whilst the virtues John and Anne sought to inculcate into service users were understood as being positive and beneficial from the perspective of those involved in the practices of the project, they were not understood in the same way by managers, whose primary focus was to enhance the capacity of the project to move people on. This particular area of tension can be explored more fruitfully in relation to how the project was conceived as a learning environment, to which I will now turn.

7.0 The project as a learning environment

As already mentioned, the project was set up as a vocational training project, with the aim to move individuals on into education, training or employment. Such opportunities were understood as important for fostering independence, and aiding the recovery process – the core aim of the organisation. However, as the previous chapters discussed, the project's value lay in the practices participants were included in during their time there, and this contrasted with their experiences beyond the project. The opportunity to learn was also highly valued in this environment; yet the garden project did not actually provide formal training or qualifications, with the opportunity to gain a qualification (in food handling and hygiene) only being available at the café branch of the service. The managers, Dan and Dave were keen to introduce a horticultural qualification to the project. Both believed this would make the service unique, and stand out from other garden projects in the area, as well as provide a more tangible 'hard' outcome, making the service more attractive to funders. More importantly, this would also help the service to achieve its move on targets.

Anne, who in light of John's pending retirement, would be solely responsible for delivering the qualification, was resistant to the idea. The volunteers also did not appear to like the idea, and as far as I was aware, few service users (Gareth was the only one I knew of and Harriet moved on to do one with the historic gardens) expressed an interest in gaining a horticulture qualification. The following chapter will show how learning was valued and understood at the project by different participants, focusing in particular on the tension between learning as a doing and learning as a qualification.

7.1 The style of learning at the project

7.1.1 Learning by doing/learning from experience

The users and volunteers seemed to value the practical, hands-on style of learning engaged in at the project. In many respects, this style of learning was suited to the

acquisition and exercise of practical wisdom (*phronesis*) discussed in the previous chapter, in that it was reliant on both the acquisition of practical experience and knowing what was 'good' for the garden. However, the social theorist Bourdieu's term 'practical reason' is also fitting here (Bourdieu, 1994). Unlike Aristotle's '*phronesis*' – a form of intellect grounded in practical experience and age (Aristotle, 2002), 'practical reason' refers more directly to the almost intuitive, habituated, non-discursive and embodied elements of human behaviour, reflective of many of the skills that are central to the practice of gardening. Despite the differences between these terms, both exemplify a form of knowledge or reason which is grounded in practical experience (doing), and thus both are useful for understanding the style of learning which was adopted on the project.

When it came to working with people, both John and Anne understood that their practical wisdom was part of what made them suited to the job at Lles. For example, Anne referred to her experience of looking after her disabled mother on her application for the job she had in the women's organisation:

I was sat up on the Thursday night until about two in the morning trying to fill this form out. Thinking that I am useless... no qualifications. And then I thought, actually, my mum was disabled and I know about people because I used to have to watch her. She was very strong willed, but sometimes you could see that she couldn't do things... She wouldn't always ask for help, so I would always watch her – not intently – but to see if she could cope. So I do that with people... but I didn't know that until that night. (Anne)

Anne also believed it was the experience she had acquired in this former job that enabled her to get her job with Lles. Similarly John also referred to his experience with people, citing an incident in the army, where he was left in charge of 'thirty eight lads in a double decker bus for 6 months in Northern Ireland', as evidence of his good 'people skills'. Both of the above accounts relate to what was learnt through practice and experience. If Sayer's account of the acquisition of practical wisdom is applied here, although John and Anne would have learnt general rules of thumb, becoming good at their practice would have been dependent on them being attentive to the particulars of each individual, and their capacity to build good relationships as discussed in the previous chapter (Sayer, 2011). However, it could be suggested that

Anne did not actually acquire 'practical wisdom' (*phronesis*) until she learnt how to consciously apply this knowledge in a way that responded to particulars. Hence, before she actually got a job working with people she was almost unaware of the reasoning behind her actions in how she cared for her mother. Whilst her experience with her mother was invaluable for teaching her how to care for people in way that was not patronising or disabling, she only really learnt to do this well by acquiring more knowledge and experience of particulars through doing more work with people.

In relation to how the more practical skills associated with gardening were acquired, Bourdieu's concept of practical reason is more useful. Whilst John and Anne's knowledge was imparted verbally, and thus reduced to something discursive, the knowledge could only really be acquired through practice. For example, Anne taught me how to use the mattock, first showing me how to use it, and then letting me try on my own. This took me a number of attempts to master. When used incorrectly it was cumbersome and made the work of pulling out big roots harder. Yet when used correctly, it hugely reduced the effort expended on this task. Each time I used it Anne would watch and inform me how and where I was going wrong as well as explaining other uses for it. However, even with this instruction, it was something that I only mastered by acquiring a feel or knack for it, and Anne always gave me the opportunity to practice. This was how it was with the saw also, although it was Mike and Louise who instructed me with this particular tool.

Overall, I stood out as someone who found it harder to learn in this way than everyone else, contrasting with the service users and other volunteers who claimed to be non-academic, and more practical in nature. For Bourdieu, practical reason is primarily acquired through an individual's habitus – that is, the habits and dispositions that individuals acquire out of repeated experience. These are primarily shaped by the particular material conditions, social relations and experiences that they are most exposed to in childhood (Bourdieu, 1994). Thus, that these skills came seemingly more naturally to others than to myself, may have been reflective of our different habitus⁵¹. For example, those service users who had worked, had what

⁵¹ For Bourdieu, habitus was also linked to social class, and working class habitus was characterised by an unaffected, unpretentious realism and practicality (Bourdieu, 1984)

could be considered more practical and hands-on jobs before they started to attend the project. For example, Gareth and Harriet were chefs; May had been a tour manager, driver and a youth worker; Tom had started a carpentry apprenticeship; and Mike was a carpenter. Learning by doing was also invaluable when it came to gardening, where what was learnt – for example, how to care for a particular plant or how to use a particular tool – was only really realisable and retained when put into practice, as Jane admitted when discussing the horticultural qualification she did in college:

I've forgotten it all now though; unless I do things I just forget them [laughs].

(Jane)

This more embodied (non-discursive) form of knowledge took time and practice to master, at which point it became almost second nature to the body, and thus harder to forget. This style of learning was therefore also highly informal in nature in that it primarily related to what is known in the sociological literature as tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1967), rather than formal or explicit knowledge, and was therefore not constrained by 'prescribed frameworks' (see Eraut et al, 1998 cited in Gorard et al, 1999: 438). Whilst this could be easily overlooked in an education system which privileges formal, utility-driven learning, the more informal hands-on learn-by-doing ethos embraced on the project was valuable for good reason (see Gorard et al, 1999 for further discussion on the value of informal learning). Not only did this style of learning suit the practice of gardening, but it also suited participants' favoured style of learning. This is important to consider when looking at the rationale for accreditation, to which I shall return in due course.

7.1.2 Learning from mistakes

Learning by doing was always learning by doing well, since often you have to get things wrong in order to understand what right actually means. Making mistakes was common on the project. For example, misidentified plants were wrongly removed; structures were built incorrectly; and shrubs moved numerous times before being planted in the 'best' place (although this was often open to debate). However, mistakes were viewed positively, since they were integral to the learning process:

Like me, you might make a mistake but the second time around you'll do it right, but that is how you learn, you learn by your mistakes. (John)

The way I was always taught when I did a bit of building, was that someone showed me for example, how to do one course of bricks, and you'd watch. And for the 2nd 3rd, 4th and 5th course, it's up you. And if you mess it up... you start again. (Dan)

We just built a wall for a raised bed and it was one of the service users that built it – great – [but] he hasn't done it right... It doesn't matter. Our job is to get him back and say 'look, this is where you went wrong... now let's work together and let's make it right'. And hopefully next time he'll know how to do it as a result of that hands-on experience. (Dan)

You don't realise necessarily how much you are learning when you're there, whatever it might be, even if it's doing something wrong. (Jane)

Learning from these mistakes was something which was understood as being grounded in practice and doing. Jane not realising how much she was learning was also indicative of the more embodied and almost intuitive nature of some the skills learnt; once she got it, it merely became incorporated into her skills set in such a way as to become second nature to her. Hence it was sometimes difficult to put into words what was learnt, as is often the case with tacit knowledge (Polanyi 1967). This was problematic when it came to articulating the value of the service to funders, who, from the managers' perspective, were only interested in how these skills could be applied more broadly. For the project workers on the other hand, the difficulty in articulating these skills was less of an issue, since evidence of skill acquisition was apparent in individuals' capacity to garden well, and thus to access the internal goods of gardening. Learning how to wield the mattock, for example, made it easier to do a better job of removing roots for the soil. The reward for this, was the creation of a garden full of variety. By fully ridding the soil of roots from dominant shrubs, which would likely regrow, space was created for other flowers and shrubs to grow and flourish.

Further, unlike formal learning environments where knowledge is delivered in a more linear and hierarchical fashion from experts to novices⁵², learning on the project was more collective in nature, in that everyone learnt regardless of status or expertise. Mistakes were not just made by service users and volunteers, but by project workers too. For example, John had disagreed with Anne about how to go about assembling the poly tunnel, but John had allowed her to do it her way. She and Martin had spent a good while measuring up to ensure that the trenches that the frame and cover were to fit into were in the right place. When it came to assembling it, it turned out that John was right and they had made the trenches in the wrong place. This meant that we had to go back and re-dig them in the right place. John had allowed Anne to waste time doing something incorrectly because he was soon retiring, and wanted her to learn how to do more structural work herself. Anne admitted that John was better at this sort of thing than her, but had been determined to do it her way, because she also wanted to be able to do such work herself. She knew that her efforts may have been in vain (when talking and laughing about it later on she had admitted: 'You're always right you are!'), but had wanted to try it her way to see if her way of doing it worked. Despite this wasting of time and energy, Anne and Martin's mistake was merely laughed at, with no real negative consequences.

The opportunity to learn in this way would perhaps be more limited in a formal workplace, where the potential risk of making mistakes would need to be carefully balanced with production requirements and customer needs. This may lead to the avoidance of more risky mistake-making behaviour, especially from vulnerable individuals whose self-esteem may also be at stake. This is not to say that modern commercial and administrative environments are devoid of risk – sociologists like Beck (1992) and others have in fact argued exactly the opposite – but in these environments the compulsion to take risks exerts a high psychological cost. Further, both the random nature of risk, and individuals' constant exposure to it, undermines the capacity to create a coherent narrative in their working lives; and over time this eats away at their sense of character (Sennett, 1998). On the project, by contrast, making mistakes was less risky, allowing mistakes to be embraced as part of the

⁵² In some respects this would apply to both Jane's photography classes, and to things like the pottery classes on the project.

learning process. This created a more fertile and accepting learning environment for participants, adding to the perception of the project as 'safe' by service users.

7.2 The educative value of the project from the perspective of project workers and managers

7.2.1 Its capacity to build confidence

Both project workers and managers understood the educative value of the project being to build confidence. This was understood as being central to the recovery process since it enabled individuals to move on, and get their lives back, as the following quote suggests:

Some of the clients I have had have come and gone, but not because of work, but because of other things, which is good, because when they came to the project they didn't do anything and from coming to the project and by us giving them that little bit of confidence they've gone on to do something else, that's good. (John)

The earlier quote referring to the story of Melvin is also illustrative of the value attached to this aspect of the service (see p162). Thus it was not necessarily the specific gardening knowledge and skills which were of educative value from their perspective, but more broadly how engaging in this medium allowed for the development of confidence and other soft skills:

It's about giving people... practical skills... But it's actually far more than that because you're giving people the confidence to try things in their normal life. But... you're not doing it through the medium of self-help groups, sit down and we'll talk about it. And that's far more beneficial. (Dan)

Confidence was understood as something which was specifically gained through action or practice, and this view was shared by both managers and project workers. This was embodied in how John and Anne worked with service users specifically to realise capabilities by getting them to do different things (see 6.1.2). However, there was a subtle difference in the way that the development of confidence was perceived

by Dan compared to John and Anne. Dan specifically conflated evidence of the development of confidence with trying new things, or rather taking risks; hence the importance he placed on making mistakes for this process. Moving on or applying for jobs could be considered examples of such risks.

Whilst John and Anne, also saw making mistakes as an important part of the learning process, evidence of the development of confidence was not conflated with risk taking but more with the capacity to get one's 'life back', as suggested in the case of Melvin. Getting a job was merely one of the factors indicative of this. Gaining the confidence to get one's life back also infers a more person-centred understanding of moving on than gaining the confidence to take risks does. This is because it relates more specifically to an individual regaining control over his or her life, making his or her own decisions and leading the kind of life he or she would like to live, and thus was specific to the realisation of capability (Sen, 1985; Nussbaum, 2000) rather than merely the capacity to take particular risks.

Moreover, Anne's example of Melvin also suggests that she understood confidence as something which was developed not only through learning and developing through one's mistakes, but also relationally, from doing and being with others (practices). The perception of John and Anne as mentors is important in this respect. Dan overlooked this social aspect, understanding confidence as something which was developed primarily through engagement in trial and error, in a progressive and linear-like fashion. Whilst there is obviously some truth to this, it is blind both to the specifics of individual particulars (Sayer, 2011), and to the social nature of practices⁵³. For example, it ignores both the fluctuating mental health and vulnerabilities of service users – Mike's confidence fluctuated with his illness (see p 164) – and from a MacIntyrean perspective, it ignores the importance of practices as inherently social arenas in which the skills and virtues internal to those practices are acquired and exercised (MacIntyre, 2007). This means that confidence is not a portable psychological possession but is rooted in practices (in the social recognition of doing well). Although one set of practices (e.g. gardening) may be replaced by another (e.g.

⁵³ According to MacIntyre bricklaying is not a practice but architecture or housebuilding is (MacIntyre, 2007: 187)

moving onto a job) there is no guarantee that the substitute practice will be well done.

Further, to say that anyone finally has or possesses confidence would be nonsensical from an Aristotelian perspective. Whilst confidence was not a virtue for Aristotle, it perhaps most closely resembles his virtue of courage. For Aristotle, one could only become courageous by acting courageously, that is, by neither being too rash nor too cowardly in one's actions (Aristotle, 2002). The possession of the virtues was therefore entirely dependent on action, hence the importance ascribed to practices by MacIntyre. The practices of gardening and carpentry represented the arenas where service users could acquire and exercise this quality through learning the skills needed to excel (MacIntyre, 2007).

Nonetheless, the subtle differences between Dan and John and Anne explored in the above were important since they influenced their perception of how successful the project was at fulfilling its aims, a point which will be returned to shortly.

7.2.2 The transmission of knowledge and skills

The development of confidence was therefore dependent upon the acquisition of particular knowledge and skills, and both John and Anne understood their role in terms of their ability to transmit their skills and gardening knowledge through practice. John also seemed to value being in a position to 'pass on' his experience. This suggests that he also understood his role as being that of a mentor, in keeping with the themes discussed in the previous chapter:

I've learnt that my knowledge of gardening and experience of working with people has passed on to them. And knowing that they want to come back because of what is here at the project. You try to keep a nice atmosphere going throughout the project and different varieties of things you can pass on or do.
(John)

Interestingly, for John it was being able to pass on this knowledge and experience that meant people wanted to come back to the project. This served to sustain the project since it was only by applying what was learnt through individuals' ongoing engagement and participation in the work there that this could be the case.

John and Anne would usually discuss the purpose of what we were doing whilst we worked, using this as an opportunity to pass on their knowledge of gardening. Anne would joke that I would probably forget most of it (I did – because I did not practise enough), but I was surprised by how much I remembered when prompted. For example, yew was poisonous and could not be composted; comfrey leaf rotted down to make good plant feed; and you could make a hot bed using rotting grass to grow things like courgettes, as an alternative to a heated green house (the latter two were both ecological and cost-effective, in keeping with John and Anne's values).

Whilst Dan and Dave also understood the educative role of the project as being grounded in the gaining of the practical skills associated with gardening, as with confidence, this was articulated more in terms of how the knowledge and skills gained at the project were useful for enabling individuals to move on, contrasting with how John perceived it. This difference was in part due to managers having to articulate the value of the project to funders:

When you're writing a bid, it's not about the actual thing you're doing – gardening. It's looking at the skills that will bring, because it will bring specific pre-employment based skills, or even employment skills.... The increased socialisation, the increased communication. But more importantly for the bid, it's about enabling people to increase their skills, so that they're ready to move on into any form of educational, training or employment.... (Dave)

For Dave gardening was a vehicle to realise other particular life skills, what he referred to as 'soft outcomes' throughout his interview. Whilst he believed that 'we do all of them', they were hard to evidence, and for him, there was no point to the project if it was not successful in fostering and evidencing these sorts of skills:

It's not just gardening because if we had somewhere that taught them: this is how you plant vegetables, this is how you build a raised bed; and this is how you build a greenhouse. That's all well and good, but if the individual doesn't have sufficient communication levels, sufficient confidence... They may have the best gardening skills in the world; but without having that rounded skills set, they're never going to get a job, not in a million years. (Dave)

Thus, despite a shared understanding of the educative value of the project being in its capacity to foster life skills and confidence, a tension existed between project workers and managers in relation to how these were realised and evidenced. For Dave, the difficulty of demonstrating these skills to funders meant that evidence of their existence was ultimately linked to realisation of the harder outcomes such as moving on or getting a job. However, for Dan, the problem was not about the difficulty of evidencing such skills, but more do with the fact that he doubted whether the project was fostering these skills at all, as suggested in the following, and in the quote on page ~~107~~¹⁰⁴:

Come to us, you'll be safe here. You won't learn any skills. We'll just potter around the garden, and after that you'll go home, but don't worry about it because everything is alright because you can come to us. (Dan)

Similarly to the logic Dan applied to understanding whether or not the project built confidence, the project's lack of success when it came to moving people on was evidence enough that it was not equipping individuals with skills, but rather institutionalising them.

From the perspective of project workers on the other hand, learning the sort of things mentioned in the above quote from Dave, was central to how they realised confidence and capabilities in their work, since it was only through acquiring these particular skills and qualities (virtues) that service users were able to access the internal goods of the project. John's perception of himself as a mentor entailed not only the passing down of the practical knowledge useful for these tasks, but also the sharing of his own experience and practical wisdom which could be applied to life in general. This wisdom was also present in how gardening was practised on the project, and was passed on by learning to engage in this practice in this particular way. For example, learning how to be resourceful when gardening, in turn lent itself to being able to do more things for yourself. This was understood as a source integral to confidence and self-esteem, as discussed in the previous chapter. Hence John and Anne wanted to instil this in others. Indicative of this also, was how Anne understood that life skills were acquired:

You learn life skills from people. And they're not always good, you can learn bad habits from people. (Anne)

For Anne the acquisition of life skills was relational in nature, and, in this context, it was dependent on the specific relationship service users had with her and John, and the practice of gardening. Thus, what were already amorphous outcomes by nature, were difficult to evidence to those outside of the project, since they were fundamentally grounded in the practices and relationships within this setting. For project workers, these skills were evident in how service users learnt to garden well, and the effect this had on wellbeing more broadly.

7.3 The educative value of the project from the perspective of service users

7.3.1 Being taught and mentored by John and Anne

In keeping with the project workers' and managers' perception of the project, service users also attributed value to the project as a learning environment:

[John and Anne]... know their job inside out too, which is good, so they're good teachers as well, which is good. (Eric)

I just found it easy to relate to John and to respect him and his experience... He reminds me of the head chef I used to work under. Similar sort of age, similar background; and just the way they both know their stuff, but are also willing to take the time to teach and to train, and to mentor. I hope that when I get to John's age, I will be as willing to take the time to share my experience. (Gareth)

I have gained from it, definitely. I am sure I have learnt techniques. I don't know what I have learnt, but I feel like it's been worthwhile. It's been very worthwhile. (Gareth)

Whilst Gareth and Eric seemed to value John and Anne as teachers, neither of them could really tell me what they had learnt. However, this did not necessarily diminish the value of the project as a learning environment for them. For Gareth, more

important than what was learnt, was the value he attributed to the 'time' and good will John and Anne took to teach and mentor him. For Gareth, John's time was of value because it indicated John's belief in Gareth's capacity to learn and to become a better gardener, and thus see him as capable of realising future possibilities. John's perception of, and relation to service users as 'youngsters' discussed in the previous chapter, lends further support to this relationship being important for the learning process.

Further, Gareth's perception of John also lends support to how Anne understood life skills as being acquired from others, rather than the more abstract understanding of these inferred by managers. Gareth did not just want to become a better gardener; he respected John's character so much, that he wanted to develop this strength of character himself – he hoped that one day he would possess the same good will and qualities John had. For Gareth, John's character and practical wisdom (*phronesis*) were valued as much as his gardening knowledge. Indeed, the numerous thank you cards displayed in the mess room from past service users also referred to John as a mentor, indicated that this was something which was valued by more than just Gareth. I would suggest that this was important for John too. He took time and care to develop good relationships with service users precisely because he wanted to transmit these virtues of character. Thus, the educative value of the project for service users had a specific ethical or moral dimension to it, in that they hoped to learn something from John and Anne about how to lead a 'good life'. This would be difficult to articulate to funders since the acquisition of such knowledge would not be something that could be reduced to a set of particular outcomes per se, because it was concerned with action. Thus the project's value as a learning environment lay in both the style of learning that was fostered there, and in the relationships service users had with project workers, since these were conducive to learning to do well on the project.

Whilst Dave and Dan recognised that a love of gardening was a draw to the project, neither considered learning more about gardening as a positive outcome. Interestingly, this also meant that they did not consider how the skills learnt also served to sustain the project, and thus contributed in part to what made the project a desirable setting for the service in the first place.

7.4 The educative value of the project from the perspective of the volunteers

7.4.1 Learning more about gardening

Sarah and Jane also reported that they had learnt a lot from John and Anne on the project:

I am learning loads about gardening, and I like that.... Just doing things that I would never normally have thought about doing. Shifting shrubs... taking out hedges, and putting in things. Even some of the hard landscaping, things which I might not be able to do much physically myself. I've learnt more and done more at Lles than I did at college definitely, definitely. College was a joke in comparison. (Jane)

I feel I learn things all the time. I quite like that. (Sarah)

Further evidence of the value they attributed to them as teachers was in how they would both call on John and Anne for gardening advice outside of the time they attended the project. For Jane, this aspect of the project was the motivating factor for her continuing to volunteer there after her HND had ended:

I naively and incorrectly thought that I would get all the skills and proper horticultural advice from experts at the historic gardens... and it would be more supporting adults with mental health issues at Lles. But it didn't really work out that way at all. I wasn't getting any tuition at the gardens. I actually found, to my surprise, I was getting more tuition from... John and Anne... No offence to the people there, but a lot of the time I was just a dogsbody. I wasn't really being taught unless I was with the head gardeners. And if I was with the rest of the crew, then they were trying to do a bit of skiving; and I'd be sweeping leaves, and the next week I'd be sweeping leaves, and it just got boring. (Jane)

Jane felt she had learnt more from John and Anne (so-called amateurs), than she had alongside professional gardeners (experts) precisely because John and Anne saw

themselves as teachers whereas these so-called experts did not. This was why the latter treated Jane as a 'dogsbody'. For these gardeners, it was not important that they pass on their knowledge in the same way, since their purpose was to use their skills to create a particular leisure and aesthetic environment to be enjoyed by those merely visiting and passing through. This meant that the way that gardening was practised was different, also making it a different learning experience. For example, because the function of the gardens was primarily an aesthetic one, this meant that shrubs and flowers were sometimes ordered in, ready to be planted straight away for immediate impact. Thus, not everything which was grown there was propagated and brought on from seed, missing out the part of the process that John and Anne attributed the most joy to (see p 168), as well as what was learnt from doing this. The project on the other hand, functioned as a particular work community which was designed to reflect the interests and capacities of those who gardened there. This meant that value, including what was learnt, was only realised through one's ongoing commitment and participation.

Further, both John and Anne also displayed passion and enjoyment in their work, and this contrasted with what could be considered the comparative joylessness that the historic gardeners' took in theirs, indicative in their skiving. Given that Jane also believed that organisations where people were able to do what they loved, did a better job (see p 159) perhaps added to why she experienced the project as a positive learning environment compared to the professional environment of the historic gardens.

However, perhaps indicative of the tension in Jane already discussed (see 6.2.1), she sometimes felt guilty about her enjoyment of learning, feeling that it in some way conflicted with what she saw as her role there to support service users:

But sometimes it's great because it's just us lot there y'know? Like us volunteers and we're having a great ole chin-wag and a laff and everything, and then all of a sudden you feel guilty because there's no service users there (both laugh). And you're thinking 'oh God, this isn't what it's meant to be about.' But then for me it sort of is, because I want to learn about gardening as well. (Jane)

Rather than seeing her enjoyment of learning as something which took away from her role as a supporting volunteer, it could be argued that this enjoyment added to the project being perceived as a positive and inclusive environment (see chapter five). Jane forgetting that she was meant to be there to support service users, is further indication of how the project focused on what was done together, rather than on individuals with illnesses in need of a cure. This made the project an enjoyable environment to be in for both service users and volunteers, despite their different motivations for being there. Perhaps as a consequence, service users did not necessarily want to move on. This was problematic for managers, who were attempting to adapt the service in an effort to change this, as the following will discuss.

7.5 The rationale for introducing a qualification

7.5.1 To demonstrate value for money

As already mentioned, the difficulty in articulating and evidencing what was learnt, was problematic for managers Dave and Dan, who were under more pressure to demonstrate value for money to funders:

Times have changed... Everyone is under greater pressure, and we're under great scrutiny to provide value for money. Everything is moving towards outcomes-based measures, so things have to be more focused. As well as the soft outcomes that our services can provide... We now have to evidence the harder outcomes... Its tax payers' money, they [the health board] have to demonstrate that they are getting value for money. (Dave)

We're moving more towards contracts stipulating that there are certain outcomes we must have. If the contract says you need 30 people to get x qualification – if you don't – you've failed. (Dave)

Whilst it is easy to relate to Dave's argument about public money, the view that the service needed to demonstrate value for money to the taxpayer is more problematic. The service, by very virtue of it being specifically for those with severe mental health conditions, was specialist, and thus not universal. Therefore, despite it being funded

by public money, the idea that it should be subjected to the demands, and the sort of value ascribed to it by the so-called universal, abstracted tax payer, seems somewhat at odds with the service's person-centred ethos, and the character of member-led organisations in general (see Billis, 2010). Further, the very notion of 'value for money' also posits the service's value in economic terms, reducing its value to that which can only be readily realised in monetised terms. The harder outcome of a qualification acts as a more transferable form of human capital, since it would be recognised by both educational institutions and employers, and thus fits better with the economic imperative which Gorard et al (1999) argue drives the dominant approach to education and training.

For Dave, this was not at odds with the softer outcomes the service was already providing since they were gained through this process:

[With] a level 1 gardening qualification you get evidence – brilliant – of an educational qualification. But what you're not evidencing there is the link with increased self-esteem that comes from doing that. The increased communication skills that may have come from doing that. The team work skills from taking part in group sessions to achieve the qualification, so all those different things that are harder for us to pin down. (Dave)

Whilst there is no doubt some truth to what Dave is arguing here, interestingly, the more tacit knowledge and informal style of learning valued by service users and volunteers is overlooked completely. That service users and volunteers came of their own accord because they enjoyed doing so, and did so on terms that suited their own interests and capacities as explored in the previous chapters is indicative of this. Learning was valued in part because it was both leisurely and autonomous. This also contributed to this environment being inclusive, and would perhaps be undermined by the introduction of a credential (see Gorard et al, 1999 for similar conclusions). Dave could not see this because his focus was on how well learning outcomes translated into forms of human capital, and thus to realising the external goods of the project. More importantly, as a result of this, the fundamental idea which underpinned how John and Anne worked to improve confidence and self-esteem – by encouraging service users to do well – was also overlooked.

7.5.2 To better achieve the project's goals

However, Dave's belief in the potential benefit of providing an accreditation extended beyond the need to appease funders, but was founded in what he understood as the transformative impact of gaining a formal qualification:

Sometimes the people that use our services may have dropped out of school at 13 years of age and that, potentially at 40 years of age, could be the first qualification that person has ever achieved. For that person, regardless of what other outcomes there are, that is a massive outcome.... Because perhaps people don't see within themselves the strengths that they have. Everyone who comes to use our services has strengths, like everyone has weaknesses.
(Dave)

Dave provides a compelling argument in the above. Achieving a qualification, with the tangible proof of a certificate to show at the end of it, not only represents a form of public recognition via the public body which awards it, but it is also something one can display proudly in one's home – a physical reminder to oneself, and to others, of what one can achieve, and therefore has positive implications for self-esteem and wellbeing.

Yet, this was the same way that Anne already perceived her use of gardening with service users:

*When I talk about teaching horticulture, that's okay. I **do that out there!** I do that anyway. 'Do you know what this plant is, do you know when it comes out?' I'll do that whoever I am working with. But to sit down and do it! And they don't remember, they don't remember anyway.* (Anne)

Teaching this qualification would entail Anne doing a large part of it indoors and on a computer (online plant identification). This aspect of gaining the qualification would fit with the nature of 'soft skills' in the context of the average workplace. For example being able to demonstrate a capacity to use the internet as a basic search tool, would be useful for a number of things such as accessing other services, and applying for jobs.

However, this went against the hands-on style of learning on the project and would also involve less gardening. For Anne, not only did this go against the logic of gardening, but it was also ineffective, as service users would be more likely to forget knowledge learnt from a book or at a desk, again reflecting that it was the more embodied form of knowledge, only developed and implemented through practice that enabled one to remember. Anne, being a gardener, could not relate to it either. Perhaps because of this, Anne feared this would negatively impact on her work with service users:

If I have to teach the qualification I'll teach it but my heart's not in it. [But] when you've got any kind of teacher if their heart isn't in it, you know?!
(Anne)

Given the relationship between loving something, doing something well and wellbeing demonstrated in the previous chapter, Anne's fear about her heart not being in it, linked not only to her own wellbeing, but more importantly, her capacity to realise the wellbeing of service users. These were inextricably related for her.

Further, Anne did not see the value of gaining a qualification for service users. For her a qualification was a means to an end. This seemed pointless because those who attended the project did not want to become professional gardeners, but rather attended the project because they were 'wanted' there, and were able to do well there. The soft 'life skills' and the potential transformative effect Dave attributed to gaining a qualification were alien to Anne, since the acquisition of skills was contingent on context and the particular practice in question. In the context of the project, life skills were already fostered specifically through how she and John taught service users to garden.

The tension between how Anne and Dave understood the value of a qualification was not only merely a difference of opinion regarding the worth of the qualification itself, but suggestive of a wider tension in regards to how the project should go about realising its values. As we have already seen, for John and Anne, cultivating self-sufficiency through engagement in the practices on the project was important because it made people more self-reliant and less dependent on having to pay others for services. Learning skills on the project was associated with having autonomy, self-

esteem, and confidence, and participants attributed value to this. However, for Dan self-sufficiency was more about one's capacity to consume goods and services in the wider community. Thus the project's values and value were wholly connected to the realisation of external goods, and the introduction of a qualification represented a means to better achieve this.

This tension was about how project workers translated the values endorsed by Lles into their working practices. From their perspective, how they worked with service users was already in keeping with what Lles was meant to be about. Hence Anne's incredulity at the idea of introducing a qualification. Yet because Dan did not engage in these practices, this precluded his access to the internal goods of the project, and how an understanding of these linked to the overall aims of the project. Ongoing attendance was therefore understood as a form of institutionalisation:

We're not running a project for people to come here all their lives... If you had the NHS day centre and they had people coming there 15 years, they would get criticised for it... People would say... that you've institutionalised these people, but we've done exactly the same with some of our clients... You can't keep people on your books. You have to have an outcome (Dan)

For Dave and Dan, introducing a qualification would tailor the service in such a way as to make it easier to move people on, as it entailed both a fixed end point, and a tangible output to the learning process. However, interestingly Dan did not believe the move on outcomes stipulated in the contract were actually realistic:

Well it was originally work or education, part-time work or full time work or education but we've added a few extra things to it, because not everyone goes into work or education. (Dan)

In recognition of this, Dan had widened 'move-on' outcomes in the project reports to include moving on socially, and acquiring vocational skills. He did this unbeknown to Lles higher management and the local health board funders, on the grounds that he believed that his good relationships with local commissioners would offer the project some flexibility. Therefore, the drive to introduce a qualification was more about appeasing funders by playing a game of numbers, than it was about delivering a service which was intrinsically better for service users, or even better for moving

them into education or employment. The argument of institutionalisation was used as a means to justify that any outcome that resulted in a move-on was better than no outcome at all, since to keep people 'on the books' was a fundamental failure. This rendered the positive outcomes identified by project workers and service users meaningless to managers, since these outcomes were tied to the internal practices of the project and thus not conducive to readily producing outputs. Although Dave's assertion that gaining a qualification could have a potentially transformative and capability-realising impact for people has some moral force to it, in the context of the project, this was not the case. This was because the rationale behind it was not necessarily anything to do with better realising the project's aims of rehabilitation and recovery, but more about being seen to provide an outcome for funders.

Jane was particularly reticent about the introduction of accreditation. She saw it as potentially undermining the person-centred and inclusive approach adopted at the project:

For some people – if it's optional – then I think fine. But if...people feel like they've got to do it and they don't want to do it.... that's wrong really... I wouldn't want to be made to do an accreditation in something I'd gone to for different reasons. So I don't see why service users should have that pressure either... But it's very difficult because it draws down funding, so organisations have more of a chance of being there. But sometimes I think it just takes over, and it becomes too much. (Jane)

Like the project workers and managers, Jane recognised that individuals attended the project for different reasons. This was not problematic since it meant that the project could exist as a space where individuals could fulfil multiple aspects of their lives whether it be a need for leisure, learning, socialising; or just a space to be. Introducing accreditation would change this since it would mean that the service would only be offered to those who wanted this, leaving out those who may gain other, less easily evidenced, but equally valuable outcomes from using the service. Whilst Dave acknowledged this, the value of enhancing the capacity of the project to realise its external goods was preferred to the tough task of trying to prove that the project kept people out of hospital. However, Jane was not only critical of adopting learning practices that were potentially exclusive, but also recognised the damaging

implications for wellbeing when it came to treating the service as a vehicle for moving people on:

The group just got bigger and bigger because people didn't want to move on. Some of the students kept coming to me for years. And it was really good... a really vibrant group..., [but] they stopped the funding... They were moving on within it; but they still wanted to come to the class... There's real contradiction in community ed, because they want to retain people, but then at the same time they're saying: 'you can't retain people for too long otherwise it becomes a club, and we don't want clubs we want classes'. (Jane)

Whilst Jane was referring to her mental health photography class, it is easy to draw parallels with the project (see p157 also). If these quotes are compared with the quote from Dave, it is possible to see how Jane's understanding of the role of such projects in relation to 'moving on' was different from Dave's. For Jane, moving on was interpreted as an *inward* journey where individuals began to engage in different practices which would contribute to their overall sense of wellbeing. Social support, and doing things one enjoyed, were understood as catalysts for this process. Thus, her photography classes were viewed as key in enabling service users to 'move on' *inwardly*, as part of their broader recovery journey. However, this resulted in 'clubs' developing rather than 'classes'. This was problematic from the perspective of funders who were concerned with the capacity of this service to provide an external good. 'Classes' were more conducive to this since they provided a more linear, means-end, outcomes-focused approach to learning, moving on and recovery. The development of 'clubs' on the other hand, implies some form of continuity, an endurance of bonds which have been forged out of genuine sociality and the pursuit of common ends. From an Aristotelian perspective a club would be conducive to flourishing, since it enables a more 'full' life to be lived.

The idea of 'clubs not classes', well illustrates the troublesome nature of this for managers. Clubs are necessarily insular and begin to evolve according to their own rules, producing insiders and outsiders – as noted by Dave when he referred to the problem of 'cliques' (see p162), and epitomising the institutionalisation he was trying to avoid. This contrasted dramatically with Jane's view.

If the project chose not to go down the route of accreditation, however, it would make itself vulnerable to being criticised by funders who demanded hard outcomes. This put managers in an awkward position. Dave and Dan wanted to protect the service and ensure its future viability, this meant being realistic about what they could do with the project in terms of outcomes; hence Dan's moving of the goal posts in relation to these. Yet, they still needed to have outcomes to appease funders. However, if accreditation was not the transformative and enabling thing managers hoped it would be, then the legitimacy of the organisation's values and, more importantly, the wellbeing of its service users, would be compromised.

7.6 Conclusion

The conflicting interpretations of learning discussed in this chapter most tangibly exemplify the tension between the pursuit of internal and external goods first discussed in the literature chapter. This tension has been reflected to some degree across all four empirical chapters, but was most evident in the differing ideas concerning the value of learning on the project. In keeping with the notion that wellbeing was well doing, the project workers structured and organised learning in such a way as to realise capability specifically in relation to the practice of gardening, and therefore to realise the internal goods of the project. New methods of teaching and learning associated with the introduction of credentialism fundamentally went against this, since this more means-end orientated practice of learning was not conducive to gardening well. Credentialism also fundamentally went against the majority of participants' motivation for learning, which was largely for its own sake – as an end in itself. It also meant that this particular learning environment was more akin to a community in which all members learnt and worked together to pursue similar ends – what Jane acknowledged was disparagingly referred to as 'clubs' by managers in community education. However, from the perspective of the project workers, service users and volunteers, 'clubs' were more conducive to learning and wellbeing, since they required ongoing commitment and participation, as well as the development of meaningful relationships, as also demonstrated in chapters five and

six. This meant the value of the project went beyond something that could merely be captured in economic or monetised terms.

Managers on the other hand, whilst being concerned about wellbeing, wanted the educative aspect of the service to resemble something which was more akin to 'classes' in order to realise more readily transferable forms of human capital. Whilst there is no doubt that the experience of gaining a qualification can be transformative, the drive behind it was to appease funders, with an external and externally-recognised good, rather than to necessarily provide a better service for service users. Their focus on outcomes, or rather, external goods, meant that not only was the value of internal goods overlooked, but so was the value of the more intangible and more transformative moral education provided by John and Anne. Indeed, this moral education was fundamental for realising the internal goods of the project, since it was not only through acquiring the right skills, but also through developing virtue of character, that individuals were able to realise these goods. Both service users and volunteers were well aware of this since they not only wanted to obtain John and Anne's skills and knowledge, but respected them, and wanted to be more like them too. This has further significance for understanding the importance of practices on the project, since if virtues need practices to sustain them, then the *way* John and Anne practised gardening on the project, served as the arena for these virtues of character to be exercised and displayed. This means that changing the nature of practices so that they are more orientated to securing external goods has fundamental implications for how the project realises its values, and in turn its value as a service. Thus, I would suggest that the central tension in this research concerned the valuing of the practices as ends in themselves versus the valuing of practices as a means to something else.

Having used these empirical chapters to show how the participants accorded and attributed value to the project and its practices, it is now possible to re-examine the findings specifically in relation to answering the research questions. By doing so I hope to add some depth to the discussion of value and values in the third sector, and the potential implications current state-sector relations have for these, and the working practices which underpin them.

8.0 Discussion

The preceding four empirical chapters have illustrated how managers, project workers, volunteers and service users on a third sector mental health gardening project understood and valued the practices they engaged in. In this penultimate chapter, I will firstly discuss my findings in relation to the research questions presented at the end of chapter two, before moving onto explore the implications of my findings for the broader third sector literature on values.

8.1 Adopting an Aristotelian approach to researching values in the third sector

I adopted a broad Aristotelian approach in this study, utilising both the ideas of Aristotle, and those theorists and philosophers who have been influenced by his thought including, MacIntyre (2007), Sayer (2011), O'Neill (1993), Nussbaum (2000) and Sen (1985) for the interpretation of my data. As discussed in chapter two, Aristotelianism contends that values are always also virtues, and are only evident in action. Practices are thus central to their realisation and sustenance. In keeping with this contention, the empirical evidence presented in the preceding four chapters showed that the practices of the project were understood by project workers and volunteers as realising not only deeply held personal values, but also the collective ethos and values of Lles. As discussed in chapter four, this ethos centred on a belief that those with mental health conditions know best how services should be delivered, and that equal access to public services, housing and employment is paramount for recovery. The organisation adopted a person-centred and holistic approach to mental health, developing individually tailored recovery plans which sought to empower individuals to achieve a better quality of life. Both project workers and volunteers identified strongly with this mission and ethos, and were highly committed to the practice of gardening as a means to achieve enhanced wellbeing. However, as the preceding chapters also showed, for project workers especially, the lived values of the project were more important for realising this

mission and ethos than the external aims of the project to move individuals on into education, training, or employment. Thus, although on the face of it managerial pressure to shift the nature of practices would not change the overall aims or outcomes of the project, shifting practices to favour the pursuit of external goods had real implications for the project's values and what participants could get out of the project.

8.2 What are the lived values of a mental health recovery organisation operating in the third sector?

8.2.1 The value of inclusion

The three most prevalent values identified in the project were inclusion, the whole person, and autonomy. I shall consider each of these in turn. Chapter five most clearly demonstrated that for the majority of my participants, the value of inclusion related directly to the practices of the project. Service users valued being included in a particular work community, working alongside other individuals with mental illnesses, contrasting their experiences of inclusion with some of the more stressful and exclusionary practices of life beyond the project. For the managers, however, this internal form of inclusion was 'institutionalising,' a perception which contrasted sharply with how the rest of my participants understood the practice of gardening (chapter five), and its relation to learning and individual development (chapter seven). For the managers, fostering inclusion through the provision of opportunities for service users to acquire the requisite functionings for participation in dominant work-consumer practices, was more important than the project being experienced as welcoming and inclusive.

This was why the managers favoured the pursuit of external goods, since these could facilitate service users' inclusion into wider society. However, for the rest of my participants it was the pursuit of those shared internal goods as opposed to the individualised, external goods which was of value, and this was what made the project inclusive. As discussed in chapter five, project members worked together to pursue common ends, building a community that could be shared and enjoyed by

likeminded others. The skills and virtues acquired there were not only valued because they enhanced individual capability, but also because they constituted the internal goods which were needed to achieve excellence. The inclusiveness engendered by the informal and hands-on nature of learning discussed in chapter seven takes on greater significance here. There I argued that this environment was conducive to the sort of learning required to achieve internal goods, because service users and volunteers were sheltered from having to achieve the external goods of their gardening practice. If these participants were driven by the desire to achieve those more individualised external goods than the shared internal goods of the community, then we may expect this learning environment to take on a more competitive quality, and thus undermine the cohesiveness which facilitated their inclusion in this community.

This community was reminiscent of the public sphere or *polis* as Aristotle praisingly described the Athenian city state. For Aristotle (2002), the Greek *polis* played a fundamental role in facilitating individual wellbeing, because the *polis*, like ‘every inquiry, and similarly every action and undertaking seems to seek some good’ (Aristotle, 2002:95 [1094a1]). In this respect the *polis* played a central role in enabling its citizens to acquire and exercise the virtues which were necessary for them to achieve eudaimonia. Without this *polis*, these virtues were unavailable to them, and consequently the state of eudaimonia also. Like the *polis*, the gardening project was intimately connected to the human *telos* to realise eudaimonia, because it represented a setting where individuals could lead the good life by exercising the virtues needed to do well in their practices there (MacIntyre, 2007).

Whilst the virtues necessary to lead the good life in Aristotle’s Athenian city state were not the same as those virtues needed to lead the good life on the project, I would suggest that, in line with MacIntyre (2007), this does not diminish the importance of the particular virtues studied here, since ‘what we find generally pleasant or useful will depend on what kind of virtues are generally cultivated and possessed in our community. Hence the virtues cannot be defined in terms of the pleasant or the useful’ (MacIntyre, 2007: 160). In this setting the virtue of industriousness, whilst amenable to conversion into external goods, was fundamental to the sustenance of the project as a community. Like all virtues, it was

only made intelligible as a virtue because of its location within the specific history, tradition and culture of the project. The pleasure which was taken in doing the work, including work which was sometimes monotonous and dull, centred on the fact that this work facilitated the shared pursuit of internal goods there.

Indeed, it is worth noting that the highly valued good of friendship present in this community (chapter five and six) was also only achievable through service users' inclusion in the work community. The friendships evident on the project were not formed out of either utility or pleasure, but rather, out of 'a shared concern for goods' which were 'the goods of both and therefore exclusively of neither' (MacIntyre, 2007: 158). For Aristotle, friendships formed out of a shared concern for the good were superior to those which were formed out of utility or pleasure (Aristotle, 2002: 210-212 [1156a7- 1156b25]). Similarly, the value accorded to being included in nature by my participants, related not only to this being understood as more compatible with our own nature, but also in terms of cultivating the right relationship with nature, respecting nature's *telos* (chapter five). I would argue that this relationship was particular to this community because nature was protected from being exploited by the pursuit of external goods. This allowed the members of the project to achieve the internal goods of gardening, and this was conducive to this relationship as it involved valuing nature as an end in itself (O'Neill, 1993).

Moreover, although I cannot draw any conclusions as to whether the project facilitated recovery from mental illness, the fact that the participants often valued inclusion in this community more highly than the prospect of 'moving on' into mainstream society is still significant. I would argue that this was partly because the virtues functioned in a unitary way there, and this helped the community to function as a space where service users could come to 'get their head[s] together' (Anne). This differentiated it from much of modern life where, according to MacIntyre (2007), individuals are often compelled to display qualities in their work that they would feel uncomfortable displaying in their private lives, and this can be discombobulating. For MacIntyre, this makes achieving wellbeing outside the milieu of a social setting such as a community or a shared practice difficult, because individuals are unable to exercise the virtues in the unitary fashion needed to inform the kind of narrative quest which can propel them towards their *telos* (MacIntyre, 2007: 204-205).

On the project there was less fragmentation. Work was not separated from leisure, but rather was performed for enjoyment because my participants valued gardening as a craft. Private life was also not separated from public life, in the sense that the project functioned as an explicit mental health community, and the majority of my participants had direct or indirect experiences of mental health issues. This meant that the private matter of mental illness did not have to be hidden in this public setting. Further, the personal was not separate from the corporate, in as much that the personal values of project workers informed their choice to work on the project, and how they chose to structure the work there. For service user Gareth, time on the project resonated strongly with who he was as a person, and he saw it as facilitating his movement towards his own *telos*. Whilst I cannot draw the same conclusions for other service users, the fact that service users, project workers and volunteers valued being included in a community that had personal meaning for them is significant for the matter of wellbeing, especially if the negative impact of the fragmented nature of modern life on our capacity to form narratives is also taken into consideration.

8.2.2 The value of the whole-person

Project workers structured the project in such a way as to appreciate the value of the whole person by tailoring the work to fit the interests and capacities of each individual. This made the project environment inclusive and helped them to realise service users' capabilities because it took the focus off the illness (implying deficiency) and shifted it onto the whole-person. The practice of gardening was central to this, as it was only because John and Anne were good at gardening that they were able to utilise it to enhance the capability of others, and from their perspective this was what was good for people. Service users and volunteers seemed to share this perspective (chapters five, six and seven).

In line with capabilities theorists Sen (1985) and Nussbaum (2000), the participants understood wellbeing in terms of what people were 'able to do or be' (Sayer, 2011: 234) (chapter five and six). Most of the participants were interested in learning to do things for themselves, not only because their financial circumstances meant that they had to, but also because they derived pleasure and a sense of wellbeing from this. The view that too much money may have acted as a barrier to this (chapter six) is

also consistent with Aristotle's contention of the importance of the intermediate, or the doctrine of the mean, for living well. For Aristotle, the virtues were qualities which represent the intermediate state between two extremes. At one extreme were those vices which were indicative of a lack or deficit in a particular passion or inclination, and at the other were those vices which were indicative of an excess of a particular passion or inclination (Aristotle, 2002: 112-113 [1104a20-104b4], 116-117 [1106a14-1107a8], 121 [1109a20], 176 [1138b19]). In relation to wealth, these two extremes were represented by the vices of 'prodigality' (excess) and 'meanness' (deficiency), with the virtue or intermediate state being 'liberality'. Those who exercised this virtue, according to Aristotle, were able to give and spend wealth in the right amounts and on the right objects, and took pleasure in doing so (Aristotle, 2005⁵⁴: 28-42). We can see this logic echoed in Jane's fear of having too much money (chapter six). For her, it was important to spend money responsibly by not being frivolous or wasteful with it (prodigality). Similarly, it was also apparent in John and Anne's make-do and mend attitude to running the project.

Aristotle's philosophy of the virtues was also mirrored in the way my participants generally valued being practical over having money. Spending money on things one could and should easily be able to do for oneself was viewed as wasteful (chapter six). John and Anne's irritation with what they saw as the unnecessary Health and Safety regulation which demanded that all equipment be purchased new is worthy of mention again here. Buying things second hand not only saved money, but also allowed the money saved to be directed elsewhere on something which was more useful. Indeed, the existence of such rules and regulations to ensure good practice would have been wholly at odds with Aristotle's virtue ethics which rejected rule following, and instead, required individuals to carefully weigh the best course of action in each instance (Aristotle, 2002). However, more importantly for realising the value of the whole person, having limited financial resources encouraged my participants to acquire the important skills and functionings that enabled them to be more self-sufficient, thus enhancing their opportunities to realise capability.

⁵⁴ I've referred to a different translated version here for the sake of brevity. The version I have relied on for the most part translates this virtue as open-handedness. The corresponding vices of avariciousness and wastefulness can refer to both excessiveness or deficiency depending on whether it is money-giving or money-taking which is being referred to (Aristotle, 2002).

Although the relevance of self-sufficiency for realising the value of the whole person may not seem immediately evident, the empirical evidence presented in chapters five and six showed that by doing things for themselves the participants affirmed parts of themselves which were precluded from other aspects of their lives. For example, both the mainstream practices of consumerism (chapter five), and the so-called freedom afforded by wealth were in some respects viewed as alienating, and not conducive to wellbeing (chapter six). Marx's concept of alienation, which was also discussed in chapter five, is therefore of particular relevance here. Like Aristotle, Marx also believed that man essentially realised himself through activity – although for Marx this was more specifically through his labour. Money estranged man from his own capacities, because 'that which I am unable to do as a *man*, and of which therefore all my individual powers are incapable, I am able to do by the means of *money*' and '*money transforms the real essential powers of man and nature into what are merely abstract conceits.... He who can buy bravery is brave, though he be a coward*' (Marx, his emphasis, 1964: 168-196). Given that my participants believed that wellbeing was realised through what they *did*, rather than what they *had*, it is unsurprising that money was sometimes understood to discourage people from exercising a variety of faculties since it allowed them to cheat themselves by buying what they lacked, leaving wellbeing and self-esteem resting on flimsy appearances (hence the emptiness of consumerism for Sarah).

Being able to do things for oneself provided a more thorough sense of wellbeing precisely because self-esteem requires that one realises what one is capable of through the exercise of capacities. This was crucial for building the strength of character that made individuals more resilient in the face of adversity. For example Anne's sense of self-belief in the face of potential job rejection rested on her believing in her capacities as a whole-person, beyond the narrow requisites of the job. This was why she and John were keen to develop and explore the potential capacities of each individual they worked with (chapter six), offering service users a variety of things to do (chapter five). The managers, on the other hand, were more concerned with achievement of the external good of a qualification – not because this good represented an expression, development and confirmation of who service users were, but because it would move them out of the project and enable the

project to meet its targets (chapter seven). The implicit suspicion of the project workers was that the acquisition of a formal qualification was a decorative exercise, divorced from genuine, practice-based understanding, and that it would serve to provide service users with an external substitute for an internal good that they did not necessarily have.

The inclusiveness of nature was also important for realising the value of the whole-person. Whilst I do not wish to argue that gardening provided an opportunity for service users to realise all their capacities to the fullest - elements of gardening on the project were certainly monotonous and boring at times, and gardening obviously draws on a very particular set of skills and qualities - it was clear, that for some of my participants, the slower pace of working in and with nature suited their being and skills more than the faster pace of modern life (chapter five). This meant that the natural environment was experienced as more accepting, and less alienating than the wider social and economic environment. MacIntyre's (2007) idea of the importance of the unity of a life narrative for reaching our *telos* is worthy of comment again here. I noted in chapters five and seven that service users may have experienced gardening and the learning culture of the project as comfortable because it resonated with their personal values, and what they understood as their more practical natures. Whilst it is not possible for me to draw conclusions in respect to the particular end goals or *telos* that service users wished to realise (although Gareth was the exception to this), as discussed in the above (see 8.2.1), the project may have provided service users with a sense of coherence between their private and public lives, in a way that the fragmented nature of life beyond the project did not.

It is therefore possible to suggest that service users experienced a more thorough sense of wellbeing because the practices and the roles undertaken on the project were not just performed, but were a more authentic reflection of who they were as whole-persons, and this would have been important for deciphering which end goals were worthy of pursuit. The sense of coherence with some aspects of past experiences of employment for some is also important here, since for MacIntyre, 'if the narrative of our individual lives and social lives is to continue intelligibly it is always both the case that there are constraints on how the story can continue, *and* within those constraints there are indefinitely many ways it can continue'

(MacIntyre, 2007: 216 his emphasis). Although I do not wish to suggest that inclusion on the project could wholly ameliorate the fragmentation of individual life narratives and subsequent lack of virtue that MacIntyre argues is characteristic of modern society, the project represented a community of practice where, in contrast to experiences of life beyond the project, the whole-person could be included, and this was valuable in and of itself.

The role of project workers in facilitating this was crucial. It was only because John and Anne treated each person 'as an end' (Nussbaum, 2000: 55-56), valuing and respecting each as an individual, that this value was realised. For managers, on the other hand, the inclusion of the whole-person on the project was less important, since for them the value of the whole-person was worth including only insofar that it encouraged a person to move on and exit the project. This was evident in their preference for more readily transferable forms of human capital such as a qualification (chapter seven).

One might argue that inclusion into wider society was, for the managers, the real vehicle for realising the value of the whole-person. However, it would then follow that the value of achieving a qualification would rest on its capacity to open up opportunities for service users to realise capability in the labour market. As the managers acknowledged, however, getting work beyond the project was difficult. More importantly, despite the project's aim to enhance wellbeing, they failed to question whether service users could access the sort of work which was of value to them (chapters five and seven). Sayer's (2011) criticism of this approach discussed in chapter five is pertinent here, since in an unequal society access to opportunities to realise capability will also be unequal, and therefore limited. Project workers were well aware of this, evidenced in their reasoning about those older long-term attendees who in theory were ready to move on, but for whom meaningful opportunities were not available. In this instance, project workers understood their continued participation to be a better outcome than moving them on, thus illustrating how the value of the whole person was more important than securing the outcomes or targets of the organisation (chapter six).

Sayer's (2011) criticism of the capabilities approach takes on increased importance when the issue of shame is also considered. For Sayer, inequality of opportunity and

of outcome also prevents many from achieving what Sen (1999) understood as the vital functioning of being able to appear in public without shame. This is because experiences of shame are closely linked to one's standing in society, and what one has. Therefore, high levels of inequality are likely to produce increased feelings of shame for those with less, with obvious consequences for wellbeing. This is particularly relevant for the service users in this research since shame is likely to be experienced doubly by these participants. Not only are they likely to suffer the shame of being inferior or flawed workers and consumers, but they are also likely to suffer the shame of their mental health histories due to the stigma that surrounds mental illness (see Hinshaw, 2009). This is particularly important when considering how the project functioned to realise the value of the whole-person. Because the project focused entirely on what people could do, it served to protect service users from the potentially corrosive and debilitating effects of shame on their personhood. Thus, despite the fact that a qualification might serve to open up more opportunities for service users to be included in wider society via paid work, the quality of many of these opportunities, alongside the likelihood of an increased exposure to stigma and shame, meant that opportunities beyond the project may not necessarily realise their value as whole-persons in the same way their inclusion on the project did.

8.2.3 The value of autonomy

As illustrated in the preceding chapters, the managers saw service users' inclusion in this community as a form of institutionalisation, and thus as something which robbed service users of their autonomy and personhood. Project workers took the opposite view. From a MacIntyrean perspective, the managers' views exemplify the dominant understanding of the modern self as an entirely rational and autonomous free agent. Within this conception of the self, individual identity – and in turn, the competing conceptions of the good – is something which is fashioned merely through the exercise of individual will and preference, uprooted from the particular history, context, and relationships, in which the self is situated. MacIntyre asserts that such a self does not exist, 'since the self who is separated from its roles loses the arena of

social relationships in which the virtues can function' and this has obvious implications for our wellbeing (MacIntyre, 2007: 205).

This means that the self can only find its identity through its membership in communities, and is therefore always 'constrained by the actions of others, and by the social settings presupposed in his and their action' (MacIntyre, 2007: 215). This more nuanced understanding of the extent to which individuals are 'free' to shape their own lives and identities has resonance for how autonomy was realised on the project. Autonomy was realised in relation to the practice of gardening, and in turn, the particular third sector mental health community in which this practice was situated. It was only *because* service users were included in this community that the value of autonomy could be realised. Whilst there was always a division of labour, in keeping with the more relative understanding of autonomy posited by MacIntyre (2007), project workers allocated roles on the basis of service users strengths and what they enjoyed, whilst encouraging them to fulfil these roles in a way which suited them (chapter five) but which also pushed their capacities by getting them to try new things (chapter six).

Far from constraining individual autonomy by 'institutionalising' the users, as the managers believed, autonomy was realised in a more thorough way than it was in paid employment beyond the project. Not only did service users get to engage in work which was enjoyable, they were also able to tailor this work in a way that suited them. The fact that service users freely attended the project of their own choosing is further indication of this. Managers were unable to recognise how these practices functioned to promote autonomy, because internal goods 'can only be identified and recognised by the experience of participating in the practice in question' (MacIntyre, 2007: 188-9). Consequently, autonomy was uprooted from its particular context and understood to relate to the achievement of the more universal external goods of employment, status and money.

Indeed, in policy terms the acquisition of these external goods also generally serves as *the* indicator that an individual has become a fully-fledged independent, autonomous adult. However, as the above discussion on inclusion shows, the idea of the atomised individual which underpins this particular understanding of autonomy

does not exist. As Sayer (2011), MacIntyre (1999) and many feminists⁵⁵ have long argued, heteronomy and autonomy are not dichotomous qualities, but rather individual autonomy is only realised in and through relations with others (Sayer, 2011). Care (and thus dependence) is integral to survival and wellbeing, and it is only through receiving good care that individuals can become, and develop fully, their individual capacities as humans (Nussbaum, 2006 cited in Sayer, 2011). This was why Anne believed it was cruel to move individuals on before they were ready. Her role on the project was to develop the capacities of service users in order for them to be able to exercise these capacities beyond the project. Her attitude and practices of care were integral to this. The importance of project workers functioning as mentors for service users also reflected the more interpersonal conception of autonomy that was held by the participants. Developing the right relationships, and encouraging service users to relate to them on a personal level, was fundamental to the project workers being able to pass on the virtues which would enable service users to flourish and lead independent lives.

Moreover, service users seemed to view the relationship between autonomy and heteronomy this way too. The data in chapter six illustrate that the so-called constraints on individual autonomy, such as responsibilities and commitments to others, were 'not necessarily impositions', but were 'actually sought out' and enriched their lives (Barnes, 2000 cited in Sayer, 2011: 226). Commitments, and care for living things such as pets, were understood as important facilitators of wellbeing, and part of what it was to realise their own potential and capacities as caring human beings. A life free from these responsibilities was seen as a less meaningful one.

Further, John's decision to work on the project was also indicative of this. Not only did it represent a wish to gain a more thorough sense of autonomy through his work, but it also responded to his seeming urge to continue to serve others in some way now that his family no longer needed his financial support. The market-like and exchange-based view the managers adopted when talking about how service users should relate to the project fundamentally overlooked this. Friendship, peer-support

⁵⁵ See Tronto (1994); Kittay, (1999); Sevenhuijsen, (1998)

and commitment to the project as a community were consequently viewed as constraints on freedom rather than facilitators of it.

8.3 What are the internal and external goods of the project?

MacIntyre's (2007) utilisation of Aristotle's theory to explore the relationship of values to practices is particularly apt for exploring this question in more detail. As touched on in the above discussion of the *polis*, Aristotle's account of the virtues was in essence ahistorical and universal, and thus presupposed that there was a shared idea of the goods, and in turn the virtues, needed to live well. For MacIntyre, this is not the case; for example, the virtues required to live well in the Athenian city state were not the same virtues required to live well in the New Testament, hence the value of locating the virtues within practices, each with their own history and tradition. Further, my participants' own conceptions of wellbeing, which were firmly rooted in practical rather than mental activity, is far removed from, and even at odds, with Aristotle's contention that eudaimonia was ultimately founded on the achievement of metaphysical contemplation (Aristotle, 2002 250-253 [1177a10-1177b32]).

MacIntyre's specific practice-centred account of the nature of the virtues is more sensitive to history and context, and is therefore compatible with value plurality, without becoming a victim to complete value relativism. This makes it particularly apt for exploring the nature of values in third sector settings, since if the values-driven roots of these organisations are taken into account, then the role of the sector is not just to serve human needs, but also to act as a protector of values (and of value plurality). By locating the virtues in practices, each with their own history, tradition and idea of what constitutes excellence, the virtues are also made more intelligible to us, and this makes it easier to defend those virtues which are necessary for a particular practice to thrive. The exercise of these same virtues also constitutes our own wellbeing (Aristotle, 2002; MacIntyre, 2007).

My participants also understood wellbeing as something which was achieved in this way, and thus being able to access the internal goods of the project through acquiring the right skills (chapter seven), habits and virtues (chapter four and six) was where

the project's value ultimately lay for them. The longer service users and volunteers participated, the more they were able to get out of the project, since it was only by learning through their ongoing participation that they were able to access the internal goods of the project.

The internal goods were those goods which were necessary for achieving excellence and sustaining this particular community. I say community, because whilst gardening was the predominant practice, the purpose of the community was not to achieve excellence in the practice of gardening per se, but rather to achieve excellence within this *particular* mental health gardening community, which also included the practice of care. This community had its own history, culture and emotional memory all of which were integral to the shape and identity of its practices. Thus, I would suggest that the sustenance of this community could also be considered a practice⁵⁶. The fact that John understood his role as being to 'pass on' the skills, virtues and habits necessary for this community to flourish is evidence of this.

The external goods on the other hand, were those goods which were necessary for the project to sustain its funding, and in turn its practices. These included, money, prestige, status, and, in pursuit of these, the securing of quantifiable, external outputs such as a 'move on' outcome or qualification.

8.3.1 The internal goods of gardening

Chapters six and seven showed that, for John and Anne, the aim of this community was to teach service users how to garden well, and the internal goods were those goods which were acquired in pursuit of excellence in this practice. Thus, the internal goods were the skills, competencies, and virtues which were needed to cultivate and care for plants and flowers for the full growing cycle (from seed to adult plant). For example, knowledge of how to propagate seeds, how to make good compost, and when and where to plant particular plants and flowers for them to flourish, and then

⁵⁶ For MacIntyre, in 'ancient and medieval worlds, the creating and sustaining of human communities... is generally taken to be a practice' (MacIntyre, 2007: 188). Whilst we are not living in an ancient world, I would argue that the sustaining of the project as a community could still be understood as a practice. I will return to this in due course, when exploring some of the implications for further research adopting this approach.

how to care for them, were all internal goods. Achieving these goods also rested on learning to use the right tools in the correct way. Thus, things like being able to weed properly, or being able to build raised beds and greenhouses – the sorts of skills the managers’ felt were superfluous to the world of work beyond the project – were internal goods here, because they all constituted part of what it was to garden well, and it was only by gardening well that others could share and benefit from the ‘goods’ of this community. These goods were sought out by my participants because they all had a genuine interest in the practice of gardening. The virtues which were cultivated on the project were also goods internal to this community (i.e. commitment, industriousness, patience, and care)⁵⁷. For example, commitment, patience and care had to be exercised in every part of the growing process in order to achieve the internal goods of gardening. These virtues were drawn on to achieve not only the internal goods of gardening, but also the ‘good’ of wellbeing in this setting.

This was why nurturing seedlings only to discard them, or planting out already cultivated plants, was frowned upon by my participants. Both were seen as forms of cheating which rendered ‘the practice pointless except as a device for achieving external goods’ (MacIntyre, 2007:191). Discarding seedlings was not only perceived as wasteful, but also denied the *telos* of the plant. Further, the good gardener always developed an ongoing relationship with the garden (from seedling to adult), and thus gardened with intention and purpose. Abstracting part of the growing process merely for the sake of learning the first part of the growing cycle, as Jane told me was common practice at horticultural college, ran counter to this. The practice of planting out already cultivated plants, something the historic gardeners often engaged in to create immediate impact, secured the external goods of prestige and status, but was considered lazy (chapter six and seven). It also went against the natural and seasonal cycle of the growing process – the appreciation of which was also important for valuing nature (see chapter five). Gardeners who engaged in these (mal) practices

⁵⁷ In MacIntyre’s account, justice, truthfulness and courage are identified as the virtues which are integral to realising the internal goods of practices, since without these virtues practices will be easily corrupted by the power of institutions (MacIntyre, 2007: 193-194). Whilst MacIntyre’s specific virtues were also important in this setting, I would suggest that the more specific virtues I have identified in the above were integral to the practice of gardening.

were debarred from achieving ‘the standards of excellence, or goods internal to the practice’ (MacIntyre, 2007: 191). This was because they were unable to acquire and exercise the virtues of commitment, responsibility, care, industriousness, and patience necessary to access these goods in the first place.

Moreover, in keeping with MacIntyre’s (2007) contention, accessing these goods not only enriched the life of the individual, but also the community. The satisfaction volunteers and service users derived from the project had nothing to do with external goods, but rather concerned the value of contributing to the realisation of those shared internal goods which sustained the gardening community. This provides further evidence for Sayer’s (2011) abovementioned argument concerning the importance of our commitments and attachments for our identity and wellbeing (see 8.2.3). It was only by learning to become part of this community, that this community could be sustained and enjoyed by others. Thus, learning to become part of this community was also an internal good. The virtues of hard-work (industriousness), resourcefulness, and self-sufficiency were important in this respect, as this community was created with limited financial resources.

Whilst the changing environment in which the project operated (both the growing health and safety regulation, and the increase in funding over the years) threatened to make the virtues of self-sufficiency and resourcefulness redundant, project workers endeavoured to sustain these virtues, sometimes breaking the rules in doing so, because ‘it is the character of the virtue that in order for it to be effective in producing the internal goods which are the rewards of the virtues, it should be exercised without regard to consequences’ (MacIntyre, 2007: 198).

Thus, John and Anne displayed what Aristotle would have termed virtue of character, evident in the fact that these virtues were not only exercised through gardening, but also through other practices, such as building a home, raising a family and in Anne’s case caring for her disabled mother (see chapter seven). Their exercise of these virtues was not merely accidental, or performed for the purposes of utility – although this is not to say that neither of them ever experienced conflict in respect of how they prioritised the goods, and their corresponding virtues in their various chosen practices – but rather, it authentically reflected who they were as individuals, and

determined what goals or goods were worthy of pursuit. They continued to display these virtues in their work, because for them, these virtues were goods in themselves, and by displaying them they encouraged service users to do the same. Because of this, John and Anne embodied what it was to live well, since the exercise of the virtues 'is necessary and a central part of such a life, not a mere preparatory exercise to secure such a life' (MacIntyre, 2007: 149).

For MacIntyre (2007), such virtue of character is lacking in modern society. As discussed above, this is because in his view modern life is too fragmented for individuals to form the kind of coherent narrative (what he terms the unity of a narrative quest) that would allow them to exercise the virtues in the unitary way needed to realise their *telos*. Without this unity, the individual's narrative quest becomes fragmented and thus invisible. Consequently, the specific virtues an individual will need to realise his or her *telos* will also become unintelligible to them. In the case of John and Anne, however, there was a sense of an evolving narrative which had informed a coherent thread to their lives, giving them a sense of purpose, or *telos*. This was evident in the way that they talked about their career trajectories, and how they had come to end up at the project – because it felt right and like a 'good' thing to do.

There was no doubt that service users and volunteers also valued and respected the way that John and Anne manifested these virtues in all they did. Everyone, myself included, wanted to be more like them. Not only did John and Anne act as the best judges of what constituted excellence in gardening, but also, through their possession and exercise of the virtues needed to achieve excellence in this practice, they also taught us a bit about what it was to live well and to flourish. This was why service users related to them as mentors, hoping that they too could one day possess this wisdom (chapter seven). Thus, rather than seeing, as Dan did, service users' seeming deference to John and Anne's authority as a failure on the part of the project to empower and instil autonomy, I would argue that this was merely reflective of MacIntyre's contention that virtues and goods can only be achieved 'by subordinating ourselves within the practice in our relationship to other practitioners' (MacIntyre, 2007: 191).

8.3.2 The Internal goods of care

MacIntyre's (2007) practice-centred approach to virtues would most likely not consider care a practice for the same reasons that he has argued that teaching is not a practice. For MacIntyre, teaching is an activity which is always done for the sake of something else (i.e. the transmission of skills, knowledge and wisdom), and so does not have its own ends (internal goods). This means it can only be used to facilitate involvement in practices, practices which, in MacIntyre's view, always have an educative element to them (see MacIntyre and Dunne, 2002: 9). Thus, although both teaching and care would require the exercise of virtues, these virtues are not acquired through these activities, since for MacIntyre virtues are primarily acquired through practices (MacIntyre, 2007).

However, here I argue that in the case of the project care functioned as a relational practice which had its own criteria of excellence. The inclusion and appreciation of the whole-person represented the chief internal good of John and Anne's care practice as mental health workers, and achieving this good constituted part of what it was to realise excellence in their practice. The virtue of *phronesis* played a central role in their capacity to achieve this good, and Sayer's (2011) particular utilisation of this Aristotelian virtue has resonance here.

As discussed in chapter six, John and Anne wanted to support the wellbeing of service users regardless of whether it led to the realisation of external outcomes. This meant that achieving excellence was not wholly tied to external goods, but rather, was about securing the best possible outcome for each individual regardless of whether or not it resulted in the realisation of an external good of a 'move on'. Whilst this sometimes conflicted with achieving the external goods of the organisation ('moving on'), it did not signal a failure on the part of the organisation to realise its founding mission, because the outcome was considered by the project workers to be the best one for the wellbeing of the individuals in question.

Shifting project workers' care practice to favour the pursuit of external goods, such as qualifications and 'move ons', would not be without consequence for service users' wellbeing. Delivering a credential would in effect have standardized and rationalized the work of project workers to make them more efficient, since it

represented a logical, means-end, procedural mechanism to move service users through the project. Indeed, the managers favoured the introduction of a credential as a more effective evaluative tool for the project's work than the messier and trickier task of capturing soft outcomes. However, whilst this may be the case, it does not necessarily mean that this would result in better outcomes for service users. Indeed, project workers believed it was cruel to move people on before they were ready (chapter six), and the two years they were given to move service users on was seen as arbitrary and meaningless (chapter four). Developing a mechanism (the acquisition of a formal qualification) to make this end goal more achievable, went against their judgement of good practice in their work, since this outcome was not always appropriate. Shifting their practice would entail the use of a different sort of reasoning which did not make sense to them.

The difference Sayer (2011) draws between instrumental rationality and 'practical wisdom' or '*phronesis*' is of significance here. Instrumental or means-end rationality concerns the use of reason to decide the most efficient and effective way of reaching a particular end goal. The introduction of a qualification on the project was underpinned by this form of reason, since it was fundamentally about making the project more efficient and effective at moving service users on. '*Phronesis*' or 'practical wisdom' on the other hand, concerns the deliberation and evaluation of ends, and thus necessarily entails attentiveness to the context and the particulars of the situation. Decisions which involve the use of instrumental thinking will often be evaluated in terms of how 'rational' they are, whereas decisions which involve the use of 'practical wisdom' will be evaluated in terms of how 'reasonable' they are (Sayer, 2011). This subtle difference is important when considering the implications of introducing a qualification.

In the case of project workers, the exercise of '*phronesis*' or 'practical wisdom' necessary for achieving the internal goods of their practice was entirely contingent on being able to deliberate about different ends in terms of what would be *reasonable* for particular individuals, given the specific circumstances of their characters and situation (e.g. the cases of Eric and Mike). Adopting more procedural and standardised mechanisms, such as those used to teach, assess and award a qualification, to achieve the already-given end of a move on, would therefore place

no importance on what is reasonable, but only on what is seen as *rational*. This would evaluate project workers' practice only in terms of its efficiency and effectiveness to achieve these already-given ends. Given that project workers were concerned with what ends were best for each individual, making decisions on the basis of what was rational when the outcome of this decision would affect the lives of others, was seen as wholly inappropriate.

Indeed, if project workers' practice could be broken down into rationally ordered, 'standardised measurable units' (Sayer, 2011: 59) then this would most certainly indicate that something was wrong, since they were not dealing with objects, but rather with other human beings, each of whom, as Sayer (2011) emphasises, has their own strengths and frailties. The importance Anne attributed to being able to develop genuine and positive relationships in her practice of care is worthy of note again here (see 6.2.4), because being attentive and responsive to each individual's needs hinged on knowing what these strengths and frailties were, and developing quality relationships was crucial for accessing this type of information⁵⁸.

For the project workers the extent to which their work was conducive to achieving internal goods was a better reflection of whether their work was true to the organisation's values. In their eyes, the success of their practice was measured by how well they were able to provide a moral education that would enable service users and volunteers to become part of this community, and in doing so, develop the strength of character necessary for them to live well and seek out their own version of the good life beyond the project.

8.4. How is the tension between internal and external good experienced by members of the organisation?

Chapter seven displayed most explicitly the differences between managers and project workers in respect to which goods should be prioritised by the service.

⁵⁸ Sayer (2011) refers to Patricia Benner's (1994) discussion of the importance of getting to know patients for good nursing practice (Benner, 1994 cited in Sayer, 2011).

Because the managers were removed from the everyday gardening and care practices of the project, success for them, was understood in terms of how effective the project was at realising external goods (outputs and move on outcomes). This is not necessarily surprising because internal goods can only be appreciated by participation in practices, and more importantly through seeking excellence in these. Moreover, given the current financial situation, the managers' preference for external goods over internal goods is equally unsurprising as it is these goods which hold the greatest currency amongst commissioners charged with the task of ensuring public services are both effective and good value for money.

The external good of a 'move on' was also useful for securing the external goods of status and prestige, which helped the service to be regarded highly and to receive continued support. In MacIntyrean terms, Lles would be regarded as an institution which housed and supported the practices of its individual projects, and which necessarily depended on external goods to sustain the practices which it housed. As a result of this dependence, the internal goods of the practices of the project would always be vulnerable to the acquisitiveness of the institution (MacIntyre, 2007:194). John's annoyance with Head Office for taking the credit for the work that he and Anne did (see p91) takes on further meaning when this relationship between practices and institutions is considered. Using the work of the project to gain the external goods of status and prestige diminished the integrity and value of John and Anne's practice, reducing it to its capacity to secure external goods. This overlooked not only the internal goods, but more importantly, the virtues they exercised in pursuit of excellence in their work. However, whilst this caused John understandable irritation it did not actually threaten the integrity of their practice in the same way they feared the introduction of a horticultural qualification would.

Accreditation would shift the emphasis to the acquisition of external goods, and in doing so, reduce their practice to the acquirement of a number of particular skills or functionings, and these skills and functionings were somewhat divorced from the practice of gardening. The type of learning that accreditation involved – indoors, and on computers⁵⁹ – was at odds with the acquisition of the skills necessary to garden

⁵⁹ Whilst delivering the qualification would still involve gardening, large parts were meant to be done on a computer – plant identification, for example. Although Dan told Anne it would only take

well on the project. These skills were necessarily embodied and tacit in nature (chapter seven). Although this meant that it was difficult to articulate them and to translate them into an external good, they represented the internal goods which were intrinsic to the realisation of excellence in their gardening practice. Whilst the managers wanted to reduce gardening to the acquisition of a tradable qualification, the rest of my participants were resistant to this because in this particular setting gardening constituted a practice.

My earlier discussion of how my participants viewed cheating is evidence for this (see 8.3.1). Although the historic gardeners knew *how* to cultivate plants from seedlings, they did not always put these skills into practice, often taking short cuts to secure immediate impact (external goods). Their apparent skiving is worthy of note again here (see p186). Because they did not seek to achieve the internal goods of their practice, they did not possess the right habits, dispositions, and virtues necessary to ensure that their practice flourished, and consequently took little joy in their work⁶⁰. The project worker's desire to 'pass on' the right skills, but also the specific virtues, concerned not only the production of a flourishing garden, but also the production and sustenance of a community where people were able to do well and flourish too.

The skills, habits and virtues needed to become a good gardener could only be acquired through ongoing participation, and the introduction of a qualification threatened this. This was because it entailed a shorter immersion (up to one year) in this community – which was part of the appeal to managers who were concerned about institutionalisation – but also, and more importantly, because it would mean that gardening would be related to only as a means to realise an end which was removed from this practice.

The managers did not understand this because for them gardening was practical activity, and doing this activity was unlikely to result in a job. A more readily

up one day out of the four a week she worked, she felt that in practice it would take up more due to the different attendance levels and patterns of different services with the result being that less time would be spent out in the garden overall.

⁶⁰ I am well aware that other circumstances may have been responsible for this behaviour; for example, the gardeners may have felt undervalued or overworked. Just because someone lacks a virtue doesn't mean they are necessarily to blame. Note the significance of the virtues being cultivated dispositions. MacIntyre's lament concerning the lack of virtue specifically hinges on the fact that there are limited opportunities for individuals to acquire and exercise virtue today.

transferable form of capital was thought to ensure a greater likelihood of the latter, and would also make it easier to move individuals on, thus increasing the production of another external good. By saying this I do not wish to argue that managers were not concerned with the wellbeing of service users, but rather, that they ultimately had to balance this concern with the need to improve the production of external goods in light of the perceived threats to future funding. Without funding the project would not exist, hence external goods were the focus for managers.

If the project no longer worked towards acquiring the internal goods of its practices, however, the values which these practices sustained would also die with its practices. The project workers were well aware of this, and therefore the focus for them was on sustaining practices. The view of the project workers therefore supports MacIntyre's (2007) contention that practices cannot flourish in conditions where virtues are not valued, 'although institutions and technical skills serving unified purposes might well continue to flourish' (MacIntyre, 2007: 193). However, the fact that project workers were so committed to their practice to realise internal goods, goes against the more pessimistic assertion from MacIntyre that the pursuit of internal goods has been wholly undermined by the acquisitiveness of institutions in modern society. Lles being an institution which existed in a third sector setting may have had some significance for this, because the practices this institution housed, whilst not immune from the pressure to achieve external goods, were still relatively sheltered from the market. However, the pressure placed on the managers to be more effective at realising external goods was putting the vital function of these practices in jeopardy, and in doing so, threatened to undermine how the project achieved the ultimate good of wellbeing.

As explored in the empirical literature in chapter two, many third sector organisations appear to be under similar pressures, but there has been little exploration of what this really means for those who work, volunteer and use the services of these organisations, or for the sector in general. The importance attributed to the achievement of internal goods to express the lived values of the organisation by my participants suggests that pressure to change practices has grave implications for the third sector, because these practices are understood as central to members' wellbeing. If this is taken to be the case in other organisations within

the sector too, then this research has important implications not only for the health and vitality of values within the sector, but more importantly, for the wellbeing of those who work, volunteer and use the services of these organisations, and more broadly for the capacity of society to create a plurality of 'goods' conducive to individual flourishing.

8.5 Implications for third sector theory and research

In chapter two I argued that whilst values have been understood as being central to the purpose and functioning of third sector organisations, there has been little empirical literature which has sought to explore what these values are, and what they mean in practice, beyond the bland and generic (e.g. altruism, pluralism, self-help) principles that can be easily harvested from organisational mission statements. My research sought to explore the link between values and practices in more detail by looking at the lived values of a third sector mental health garden project. Although the findings from this research cannot be applied to the sector as a whole, I would argue that any research which attempts to do so is misplaced in its endeavour, since this research shows that values are not abstract and transferrable, but rather can only be understood within the particular settings and practices in which they operate (MacIntyre, 2007). With this in mind, the final part of this chapter seeks to show how the theoretically informed answers to my research questions can add to the third sector literature on how the role of values in these organisations is understood, and the value of these organisations in wider society.

8.5.1 Values and the third sector: moving beyond instrumental versus value-rationality to understand the function of values in third sector organisations

As discussed in chapter two, the centrality of values to third sector organisations has been understood as what makes these organisations distinct from the organisations of the state and the market. Value-rationality as opposed to instrumental-rationality is therefore at the roots of how these organisations function.

For my participants, achieving internal goods was integral to expressing the lived values of the organisation. It was only by achieving these goods that these values were realised. Project workers and volunteers were drawn to the project because it provided them with an avenue to express their own values, and this was specifically done through their participation in the everyday practices of the project. The centrality of values to these organisations has largely been forgotten in more recent literature on the sector. This research provides empirical evidence to show that values are integral to the existence and functioning of third sector organisations supporting what third sector theorists and commentators have long argued about the sector (Rothschild-Whitt, 1979; Kramer, 1981; Lohmann, 1992; Jeavons, 1992; Paton and Cornforth, 1992; Mason 1996; Paton, 1996; Rothschild and Milfosky, 2006; Billis, 2010; Rochester 2013). Indeed, for project workers, the desire to inculcate these values in service users was understood to be an important part of their role as mentors, mirroring Jeavons (1992) and Cloke et al (2005) in particular, who note how those who work and volunteer in these organisations often use their work to spread their message beyond the realm of the organisation. However, the lack of an explicit Christian ethos in this research is perhaps more reflective of what Cloke et al (2005) may identify as a secular humanist ethos in action, in that it was project workers' conception of the good in particular, that service users were encouraged to adopt.

For the project workers and volunteers, the practices and processes (or the means) adopted were more important than the outcomes the project was formally designed to achieve, supporting what has been found in the other research literature (Cairns et al 2007; Packwood, 2007; Cunningham, 2010; Milbourne, 2013). However, by exploring the link between values and practices, this research sheds some light on why practices and processes are important within these organisations. The fact that practices were pursued as ends in themselves exemplifies the function of these organisations as spaces for expressive behaviour where there can be 'play for the sake of play; work for the sake of work; energy spent for the sake of spending' (Mason, 1996:xi). Being able to do this was an important motivating factor for project workers, who seemed to value their autonomy and the freedom to organise their work in line with their own personal values. This research therefore provides empirical evidence for some of the normative assumptions that have been made by

third sector scholars regarding the perceived distinctiveness of these organisations for those who choose to work in them (Paton and Cornforth, 1992; Mason, 1996; Frumkin, 2002).

It is important to recognise that, for the most part, project workers were committed to realising the external goods of the organisation, and did not see these as being incompatible with Lles's ethos or their own personal values. However, the fact that managerial efforts to shift their practices to make them more effective at securing the external good of a 'move on' was a source of disagreement, provides empirical evidence for the sort of strain Mason (1996) argues can arise from too much focus on outcomes or the instrumental goals of the organisation. Whilst the project workers wanted service users to move on and live full and independent lives beyond the project, the achievement of this external good was only viewed as a positive if it was realised in conjunction with the achievement of the internal good of wellbeing. Thus for those service users who felt moving on would be detrimental to their wellbeing this end goal (external good) was not considered appropriate.

If values are realised through practices, then changing practices is not without consequence for values. This finding complicates Billis' assertion concerning the legitimacy of voluntary organisations. Billis (2010) and others (Jeavons, 1992; Taylor and Langan, 1996; Nevile, 2010) argue that the legitimacy of voluntary organisations rests on the degree to which they fulfil the mission to which the donors, members and volunteers subscribe. This mission will be determined by the shared values of the members of the organisation, and will therefore influence the ends or outcomes the organisation chooses to achieve, and subsequently the means which are adopted to achieve them. My research suggests, however, that the internal legitimacy of an organisation – its value-integrity in the eyes of its members – does not depend solely on the external outcomes of the organisation, but is also tied in with the particular processes and practices it adopts. For the project workers, volunteers and service users in my study, the values of the organisational community were realised through the achievement of internal goods, whereas for managers these values were realised through the achievement of external ones.

Billis (2010) might contend that the conflict between means and ends identified in my research is merely indicative of the fact that this organisation functioned as a hybrid, and thus displayed all the tensions you would expect to see in an organisation which had to balance its value-rational roots with the more instrumentally-rational imperatives of a bureaucratic organisation. Indeed, such an interpretation would certainly fit some of the evidence presented in the preceding chapters. For example, the drive to deliver a qualification would make the project more effective at realising external goods, but in doing so it threatened to make the service more formal and uniform, which was resented by project workers and was discouraging to some of the volunteers. In support of the conclusions drawn by Milligan and Fyfe's (2005) study, the pressure to professionalise the sector may 'crowd out' opportunities for volunteers to express a moral vocation (see also Rochester et al, 2001). Further, in line with what has been concluded in the empirical research in England (see Buckingham, 2009; 2010; Milbourne, 2013), it seemed that this hybridising pressure stemmed directly from the need for Lles to better appease its funders in light of the increasing competition for statutory funding. However, given Billis' (2010) understanding of organisational legitimacy, it is unlikely that he would conclude that instrumentally-rational imperatives were beginning to compromise the value-rational roots of the project, since the goals or outcomes the project worked towards were ostensibly in keeping with Lles's value-driven mission.

The evidence presented in this research, however, suggests that the values embedded in the practices of the organisation's members were indeed under threat. Theorists such as Billis may not reach this conclusion because the concept of value-rationality he adopts has its own limitations for understanding the role of values within these organisations. Whilst the value of inclusion, the whole-person, and autonomy were ends in themselves, to argue that that differences of opinion between the managers and project workers merely exemplified the tension between the Weberian notions of instrumental and value-rationality (or between the instrumental function and the value-expressive function of these organisations, as it is also termed in the third sector literature) does not fully capture the reality of how values functioned on the project. This is because 'a belief in the value for its own sake...*independent of its prospects of success*' (Weber, 1968: 37 my emphasis) is

indicative of a dogged attachment to values which was most certainly not evident in this research.

For example, whilst project workers aimed to promote the value of autonomy and independence, the project workers' person-centred approach meant that they also needed to be attentive and responsive to the individual needs of service users (to appreciate the value of the whole person). Respecting the frailties and capacities of each individual therefore also meant that their work sometimes 'failed' to promote the sort of autonomy and independence that the organisation sought to realise (chapter six). Some service users took ten years to move on, whilst others moved on within a year; but this was acceptable to them, because to achieve this end in the same way in every instance would have been inappropriate. Just as the false dichotomy between independence and dependence is unable to illuminate how the project promoted autonomy, the opposing concepts of value and instrumental rationality that inform much of the third sector literature do little to elucidate the role of values in the practices of the project.

Although the virtue-ethics of Aristotle also argues that virtues should be exercised regardless of the consequence, I would suggest that the relationship between virtues of character and the virtue of '*phronesis*' or 'practical wisdom' discussed in chapter six is a more useful way of understanding the role of values in these organisations. Project workers used what Sayer (2011) would have termed their 'practical wisdom' to evaluate and assess the appropriateness of the ends in each particular instance, and this sort of wisdom was contingent on having virtue of character. Being able to apply one's values or virtues in the right way, at the right time and in the right place, was central to this sort of wisdom. Thus, even though project workers believed in, and worked towards the overarching aims and external goals of the project, sometimes these aims were considered inappropriate for securing the wellbeing of the individual in question.

Sayer's particular interpretation of the Aristotelian notion of 'practical wisdom' may therefore be a more useful concept for understanding the function of values and the work of third sector organisations, especially those which deliver human services.

This is because this form of reason, unlike instrumental means-end reasoning, takes into account the ends, and the particulars of what is being reasoned about – in the case of this research, the wellbeing of individual service users. For Sayer (2011) value-rationality and its concern about how ends or values which are already taken-as-given are met, is itself a variety of instrumental reason, and thus, can only partially account for how values influence our behaviour and action in everyday life.

This research shows that the location of values at the abstract level of organisational mission cannot take account of the complexity of how values function at the level of practice. The conflation of value-integrity with the aims stipulated in the mission also means that value-integrity will invariably be evaluated in relation to the external goods or outcomes that are realised. This was why the managers did not see that imposing more instrumentally-rational practices on the project would undermine the project's values, because the outcomes the project aimed to produce remained the same. Moreover, if MacIntyre's (2007) assertion is also correct, then the pursuit of external goods at the expense of internal goods is synonymous with the erosion of value-integrity. Because the concept of value-rationality abstracts values from what it is that is being reasoned about (i.e. these values are just ends in themselves, rather than in reference to anything in particular), it cannot take into account the context specific nature of their application. It therefore leaves values at the mercy of the sort of means-end instrumental reason which threatens to undermine them.

The centrality of practices to values demonstrated in this research suggests that a defence of voluntary organisations' values needs to be about more than a defence of mission, but also about a defence of practices. In line with Lohmann's (1992) theory of the commons, the values or virtues which were realised on the project stood 'on their own merits as human endeavours' and 'do not need to be thought of in terms of utility maximisation or goal attainment to be seen as reasonable pursuits' (Lohmann, 1992: 15). Consequently, efficiency 'should not be the only yardstick by which to judge success' (Rochester, 2013: 148).

8.5.2 The value of the third sector: moving beyond outcomes (external goods)

Whilst I do not want to diminish the importance of outcomes, we do need to recognise that the practices of third sector organisations have value in themselves for those who participate within them. Moreover, in this research practices were necessary for realising internal goods, and these were understood by project workers, volunteers and service users to produce a more thorough and authentic sense of wellbeing than the acquirement of external goods alone. Although the broader notion of social value is supposed to be incorporated into outcomes (Harlock, 2014), potentially allowing for more recognition of internal goods, the evidence from this research suggests that as far as managers saw it, outcomes were those which were easily quantifiable and tended to relate to direct outputs, rather than those more intangible and indirect 'soft' outcomes associated with the practices of the project. Thus, although this research did not specifically explore the perspective of funders, in keeping with Arvidson et al's (2010) concern about the focus on evaluative tools to capture the sector's value, for managers there was still a sense that if it 'cannot be measured, it cannot be managed' (Arvidson et al, 2010: 10).

My research therefore lends support to some of the concerns Harlock (2014) raises about the problems with capturing and evidencing the broader social value which third sector organisations can deliver. The managers felt under increasing pressure to produce outcomes which could be easily measured because they had trouble evidencing the more intangible soft outcomes, and this was what underpinned the rationale for changing practices. Consistent with the empirical evidence in England, there was a sense that these softer outcomes were not appreciated by funders (Packwood, 2007; Baines et al, 2008; Rees et al, 2014). The pressure to deliver hard outcomes exerted what could be understood as a hybridising effect, as managers focused on making the service more marketable and appealing to commissioners, speaking their language, and taking on more of the qualities of statutory provision by adopting a more uniform service. This finding lends support to Buckingham's (2010) sobering conclusions regarding the effect of contracting on voluntary organisations' practices and values (see p 31).

It is interesting that managers did not express any fears about professionalising the service. From their perspective, soft outcomes – such as the enhancement of physical health through exercise, increased socialisation, and the role the project played in keeping individuals out of hospital (all of which were difficult to evidence) – could automatically be acquired through the processes involved with gaining a qualification. Whilst there is some truth to this, it nonetheless overlooks that what service users and volunteers valued about the practice of gardening in this setting, was precisely the informal and flexible approach project workers adopted to fostering their engagement in this practice, encouraging attendance to be self-motivated, and promoting interest and enjoyment, as demonstrated in chapter six. Project workers were resistant to the rationalisation of their work because this flexibility was what enabled their work to be person-centred. There is a danger that adopting more formal learning practices in order to produce hard outcomes will make third sector work less responsive and flexible to the needs of service users, as was found in Milbourne's (2013) research on voluntary organisations in England, where practitioners felt that the pressure to achieve hard outcomes undermined their capacity to develop appropriate goals with individual service users (see Milbourne et al, 2003; Nevile, 2010 also).

Further, it may also be alienating for service users and volunteers who, for the most part, attended purely for enjoyment. Whilst these findings cannot be generalised onto all services delivered by third sector providers, the fact that it in a small way echoes what has been found in Milbourne's research, suggests that more ethnographic and longitudinal research into the experiences of practitioners, volunteers and service users may be useful for gauging the full implications of how the broader drive to 'professionalise' the sector impacts on delivery and practices, as well as the meaningfulness of the services they produce.

Unfortunately, my research can offer little in the way of advice in respect to how third sector organisations can better articulate the value of what they do to commissioners in a way which ameliorates the pressure to achieve external goods, since my own participation in practices, as described in the methods chapter, was central to the evidence presented here. From the perspective of commissioners, the method of participant observation would mostly likely be perceived as lacking

objectivity and biased. Further, unlike commissioners, my research did not seek to evaluate the effectiveness of the service or assess its value-for- money, so my conclusions are limited in this respect. That said, I would argue that the seeming preoccupation with external goods to determine and assess value is itself always going to be limited, since investment can only be justified if the value it produces can be turned into the same currency (Westall, 2009).

Further, in line with Arividson and Kara's (2013) and Westall's (2009) concern, the different understandings of value evident in this research, show that the focus on how to best measure and capture value still leaves out important questions concerning what outcomes are valued and by whom, and in turn, what are the practices necessary to realise them. Consequently there is a need to include the experiences of service users, practitioners and volunteers in the investigation of values, since this research suggests that they are likely to articulate value in a way which goes beyond the dominant discourses of value which are concerned with utility and external goods. Indeed, the more quantifiable outcomes identified as valuable by the managers in this research certainly suggest that the evaluative tools⁶¹ adopted can and do shape what constitutes an outcome and, as Arividson and Kara (2013) suggest, what is considered a laudable outcome also promotes particular values. In this instance, securing the outcome of a 'move on', regardless of how good this was for the wellbeing of the individual in question, was deemed better than keeping service users 'on the books', thus reinforcing the idea that inclusion in wider society and the pursuit of external goods, such as money and status, is the ultimate aim of third sector organisations. In support of Rochester's (2013) argument, there is therefore a need to question the appropriateness and desirability of adopting more business-like practices in the sector.

If outcomes are always tailored to resonate with what commissioners want, then the intrinsic value of practices is likely to continue to be overlooked. Rather than rendering practices ineffective by virtue of their lack of capacity to produce external goods, articulation of the internal goods of practices, and in turn, the virtues which

⁶¹ Although it must be noted that this research did not specifically explore whether or not Lles adopted the evaluative tools such as the SROI, there was evidence to suggest that quantifiable outcomes were preferable to qualitative ones.

are needed to acquire these, invites a new way of looking at both the role of values in these organisations, and the value of these organisations in wider society. However, if MacIntyre's (2007) assertion that internal goods can only be known through practices is correct, then articulating this value to funders who are removed from these practices is always going to be difficult. Nonetheless, in keeping with MacIntyre's argument, this research also suggests that practices and the communities which sustain them are the wellspring of values, and the foundation of meaningful lives. A diverse third sector which is relatively sheltered from the pressures of the market and the need to produce external goods, may therefore be suitable terrain in which practices can thrive, and this itself is worthy of funding. Not only does this mean that third sector organisations should be protective of their indigenous practices, but in recognition of this, caution should be taken when advocating the role of these organisations as a means to realise more general policy ends, such as social inclusion. If a purely instrumental attitude is adopted towards the sector, these ends are no longer ends in themselves, but rather, serve as a means through which to achieve other ends. Consequently, the very practices and activities which draw people to participate in these organisations in the first place are at risk of being transformed in the pursuit of these policy driven ends (Carmel and Harlock, 2008).

9.0 Conclusion

This research has sought to offer a theoretically and ethnographically rigorous analysis of the relationship of values to practices, and the value that was accorded to practices on a third sector mental health garden project from the perspective of managers, practitioners, volunteers and service users. Whilst the scope of this research was small, the broader policy context in which third sector organisations are situated cannot be ignored when drawing conclusions.

However, these conclusions and their respective policy implications will depend on the perspective that is taken when assessing the findings from this research. It is important to acknowledge, more specifically, that the relevance of 'values' to third sector organisations may support both a conservative and a socially critical perspective. On the one hand, it may be consistent with the 'communitarian' approach which seeks social harmony and the integration of diverse groups and individuals into the dominant norms of mainstream society. On the other hand, it may support a critical perspective, with intellectual roots in Marxism and Critical Theory, which treats the structural and cultural forms of mainstream society as essentially pathological – a 'sick society', in Erich Fromm's words – and the values and practices of marginal communities as both a refuge from and a critique of this society.

9.1 Communitarianism

Much of the empirical data lends itself to a communitarian perspective. The sense of wellbeing and meaning which was derived from being part of the project community, along with the shared conception of the good within this community, would sit well within the philosophical idea of communitarianism, which emphasises the centrality of community, as opposed to individualism, for our identity. The political thought of Aristotle (2002) and MacIntyre (2007) which were drawn on for the interpretation of

my data also has particular resonance with this particular aspect of communitarian thought, since both challenge the dominant liberal conception of the individual⁶².

Drawing on ideas which are Durkheimian and quite conservative in nature, communitarian thinkers bemoan the rise of individualism, associating it with the loss of the common values which function to bind us to society, resulting in the rise of social problems, such as social exclusion. This school of thought has garnered increasing political attention, most notably within the neo-communitarian discourses of New Labour's 'third way' and more recently the Conservative's 'big society'. From this perspective, community and third sector organisations are regarded as 'fixers' of the more anomic effects of neo-liberalism and rising individualism, since they can foster the trust and social capital needed to make communities and individuals more harmonious as discussed in chapter two (Putnam, 1993; Giddens, 1998). Such arguments were present in much of the policy discourse concerning the need for greater involvement of third sector organisation in service design and delivery (HM treasury 2002: 16; HM Treasury 2005:23-24; OTS, 2006; WAG, 2008a; 2008b; Welsh Government 2014a; 2014b).

The project studied in this thesis would no doubt be viewed by communitarians as an important facilitator of the civic virtue and the social capital needed to repair some of the more pathological social and psychological effects of neo-liberal individualism. For example, the inculcation of traditional bourgeois norms and values, such as self-sufficiency and the work ethic, along with the acquisition of important life skills, would be understood as crucial for developing the resilience needed to move on from the project and then to contribute to the functioning of wider society. Project workers and managers in many respects shared this perspective. However, whilst the work of the project is likely to be judged as worthy of funding by adherents of communitarianism, its lack of effectiveness at moving individuals on would no doubt be understood as one facet that the project would need to improve, since it was only providing a partial fix to the issue of social

⁶² Although it is important to note that MacIntyre's Marxist roots differentiate him strongly from communitarian thinkers. For MacIntyre, not only is conflict integral to the evolution and health of any tradition or practice, but the utilisation of values to maintain the harmonious functioning of a socio-economic system he is a vociferous critic of, would be untenable, and represent the kind of instrumental use of values he opposes.

exclusion for those with mental health problems. Communitarians may conclude that in order to demonstrate its full value and potential as a service, the project needed to enhance its effectiveness at moving individuals on. This perspective, whilst acknowledging all the positive qualities that being included in the project community engendered, would essentially view the project in instrumental terms – that is, in terms of its capacity to ‘fix’ social problems. By viewing third sector organisations as fixers, the communitarian perspective would implicitly favour the pursuit of external goods, positing that these organisations can and do provide quick and cheap solutions to the moral and cultural problems that the state claims it is unable to solve, thus supporting the current policy preoccupation with outcomes, or external goods as I have termed them.

This preoccupation with external outcomes, however, is particularly problematic in the case of third sector organisations catering for people with mental health problems. This is because investment in these organisations may only be justified on the grounds that they can produce goods – such as a qualification, or paid employment – which can be easily converted into the same monetary currency invested, overlooking those outcomes (internal goods) which cannot easily be reduced to monetary value. Further, the more easily captured external outcomes (external goods) may be unlikely to provide the fix hoped for since mental health problems are integral to the society we live in. Thus, contrary to the conclusion which could be drawn from the perspective of communitarianism, these organisations should not be judged on their capacity to fix social issues. Indeed if I were concluding from the perspective of Eric Fromm, such a conclusion would be highly problematic.

9.2 Erich Fromm’s ‘Sane Society’

In chapter five I drew on Erich Fromm’s *‘Sane Society’* to explore some of my participants’ relationships to the more alienating and exclusionary aspects of modern society, particularly the dominant practices of work and consumption. For Fromm, modern capitalist society could not help but make individuals ‘insane’ because it fundamentally failed to satisfy our essential needs as humans, which he argued were our ‘need for relatedness, transcendence, rootedness, the need for a sense of

identity and the need for a frame of orientation and devotion' (Fromm, 1956: 65). These needs could not be realised under structural conditions that were fundamentally competitive and alienating⁶³.

From a perspective informed by Erich Fromm's psychosocial critique of capitalism, this mental health gardening project, whilst not a remedy for wider issues – indeed, it depended on these issues for its existence – provided a form of meaningfulness not found elsewhere. Its existence as a community in which the goods pursued were shared, engendered convivial rather than competitive relationships with co-workers, and meant that learning was done out of interest rather than acquisitiveness. Being and working with nature was also understood by my participants as being more in keeping with our own nature. It could be argued that the project therefore satisfied some of the needs identified by Fromm, such as the need for relatedness, rootedness, transcendence, and a sense of identity.

From this perspective, these organisations would be viewed as spaces of temporary respite from the alienation and exclusion experienced in wider society. However, they cannot be a fix for mental ill-health or the wider social problems associated with this, since mental health problems are integral to what Fromm understood as the 'pathological' nature of the world we live in. As long as alienating work and consumption practices dominate as the integrative forces in society, at best all third sector organisations charged with the task of realising external goods can do is foster a form of 'inclusion' which Fromm (1956) would have argued is likely to exacerbate issues of mental illness since it would mean re-integration into a capitalist work-consumer society which was fundamentally bad for us.

Nonetheless, what can be said is that the fact that the project existed as a space where individuals could flourish in some way, is important, and this was precisely because of the goods pursued and the virtues exercised in this setting (MacIntyre, 2007). Whilst I do not want to romanticise my participants' battles with mental health or their existence on the margins of society, judging voluntary organisations on their capacity to fix social problems is not the answer. Indeed, the evidence

⁶³ MacIntyre's (2007) argument about the fragmented and compartmentalised nature of life under modern capitalism and the impact that this has on the self, discussed in chapter eight, also has relevance here.

presented from this research shows that values are integral to the functioning of such organisations, and crucially, that being able to realise these values through one's commitments and practices provides an important avenue for individual flourishing. Thus, what this research adds that other work in the field has not been able to is theoretically informed empirical evidence that shows that being able to live these values through *practices* is what makes participation in these organisations meaningful. This means that the indigenous and normative practices that sustain these values, can and do have value in and of themselves, and are therefore worthy of defence – even when they fail to deliver the external goods that constitute 'value' in the eyes of funders and policy makers.

9.3 Policy Implications

As demonstrated in chapter two, the third sector has largely been valued in instrumental terms, being seen by successive governments in England and Wales to offer a 'comparative advantage' from the organisations of the state and the market when dealing with particular hard-to-reach client groups such as those who are socially excluded⁶⁴. Despite Welsh Labour's greater commitment to public services following devolution (Hughes et al, 2011), there appears to be a growing emphasis on partnering with the 'third sector and in some circumstances the private sector – to provide the best possible services' (Welsh Government 2014a: 10-11). Statutory funding for the sector has moved almost entirely from grants to contracts (WCVA, 2016). The most recent available figures from local authority funders show that 84 per cent of all their funding to the sector is now via contracts (WCVA, 2014). When this is coupled with the Welsh Government's focus on the need to secure outcomes

⁶⁴ Although as discussed in chapter two, the Labour administration in Wales has shown a greater commitment to public services, and has been less embracing of contracting-out services in general (Hughes et al, 2011). Further, Welsh Labour's continued commitment to a relationships of 'partnership' with the sector, as opposed to what has now been termed as a 'de-coupling' of the state and the third sector under the Coalition/Conservative Government's 'Big Society' agenda in England (see Macmillan, 2013a) does differentiate the Welsh policy context from the English one. Nonetheless, Chaney and Wincott argue that the recession may have tempered the differences between Welsh Labour and the Coalition/Conservative government in England (Chaney and Wincott, 2014).

in order to enhance efficiency and value for money in its public services (WAG, 2010b; Welsh Government, 2014a), it seems highly likely that this instrumental attitude will continue. In terms of what this means for the future of the project's practices it is difficult to say, since what is interesting about this research, is that it demonstrated that the project workers were able to sustain the internal goods of their practices despite the increasing pressure to focus their practice around the achievement of external outcomes, or rather, the external goods of their practice. Whether this continues to be the case only time will tell, since there was evidence to suggest that the flexibility around the contract's terms had something to do with the manager's good relationship with the commissioner, and there is no guarantee that the project will continue to deal with the same commissioner.

However, the fact that local contextual factors such as relationships seemed to be important, could also be taken as a reason to remain positive about the resilience of the project's practices, and thus the strength of its values, since it suggests that pressures emanating from changes in the funding terrain were not necessarily as deterministic as they first appeared. Nonetheless, the project still had to get better at moving people on, and it was already experiencing some tension around this issue. Given that pressures on public funding are unlikely to ease any time soon, there is a possibility that over time these funding trends may exert greater pressure on the project to change its practices to make them more effective at achieving outcomes. This may have implications for its practices, and in turn its values, since as argued in the previous chapter, values are rooted and sustained through seeking the internal goods of practices (goods of excellence). Further, these values are goods in themselves, and form part of what it is to lead meaningful lives. The fact that the third sector can serve as a space where practices can flourish, should therefore be celebrated and protected.

Thus, in support of Mason (1996), Frumkin (2002) and Rochester (2013) there needs to be greater recognition of the importance of these organisations as sites for value-expression. However, Rochester (the only UK-based scholar of these three) offers nothing in the way of policy advice, since for him, it is already too late for values in those organisations which are already in receipt of statutory funding. For him, values only remain at the centre of those organisations which still closely resemble ideal-

typical voluntary associations, and thus largely operate on the margins of the sector⁶⁵. This research suggests that this is clearly not the case, with the values of my participants playing an integral role in shaping the daily practices of the project. Departing from the somewhat more purist stance of Rochester, Frumkin and Andre-Clark (2006) argue that values should be a source of 'strategic advantage' for non-profits in the United States. This is not because these values are ends in themselves but rather because 'the commitments and values that donors, staff and volunteers bring to their work' are a source to be capitalised on (Frumkin and Andre-Clark, 2006: 160). For them, these organisations not only need to make more of their values when competing to win contracts, but also need to 'enhance efficiency as a means towards the end of greater mission fulfilment' and to 'respond to the public sector's desire for documented outcomes by finding innovative ways to measure the full range of outcomes that flow from non-profit social service activity' (Frumkin and Andre-Clark, 2006: 160). What these authors do not seem to recognise is that such an instrumental attitude to values potentially risks undermining these values if caution is not taken to pursue a balance of internal and external goods.

Whilst I do not want to deny the importance of delivering genuine meaningful outcomes for those who use the services of third sector organisations, the problem with the exclusive focus on outcomes in Government policy is that it is invariably driven by an economic rationale, which posits economic ends as superior to non-economic ends. Investment is justified in terms of costs and benefits, and outcomes deemed worthy of funding are those which can readily be converted into monetary value (Westall, 2009). This research has shown that values are 'goods' in themselves, and are therefore worthy of funding in any society which takes the wellbeing of its population seriously. Thus, if values, and in turn wellbeing, are to be truly appreciated, then policy needs to move beyond the measurement of organisational output and societal wealth in terms of economic value and GDP, and instead value those non-economic or internal goods which are constitutive of human flourishing.

⁶⁵ Although he argues that these organisations actually make up the majority of the sector, and are largely ignored by policy-makers and by scholars studying the sector.

The most obvious conclusion to draw here is that funding for third sector organisations should be less conditional, since their relative shelter from the market may make them suitable spaces for practices and internal goods to thrive. However, given the dominance of the market and external goods in our society, this alone is not enough. I would argue that policies which positively promote values (and value plurality) should also be adopted. Alternative policies could include those which promote genuine inclusion beyond paid work, such as a guaranteed basic income (as is currently being experimented with in the Dutch city of Utrecht (see Boffey, 2015)). This may also encourage the valuing of time over money, which could help to facilitate greater engagement in practices, and, in turn, the valuing of a plurality of 'goods' and values which arise from this. Others could include, providing more grant funding to third sector organisations, and funding for the provision of free spaces which offer opportunities for individuals to engage in practices and hobbies purely for the sake of enjoyment. Voluntary action should also be valued the same terms. Such policies may engender the broader cultural shift needed to foster more of an appreciation of internal goods, and consequently build a stronger foundation for eudaimonia to be achieved.

9.4 Limitations and directions for future research

Although I have been quite bold in my conclusions, the small-scale and ethnographic nature of my research makes it difficult to conclusively say how much my findings mirror the relationship between the sector and the state across the Welsh third sector more broadly. However, whilst this research looks at a service which is relatively niche and local, it is likely that the findings of this research will have particular relevance for third sector organisations delivering similar services in the field of mental health, and for those member-led organisations which actively have to maintain the balance between loyalty to their members, and the instrumental and often more publicly directed ends their organisation serves.

One particular limitation of this research is that I did not actually speak to commissioners. Thus, more research which seeks to uncover more concretely the influence of commissioners on the values and practices of individual organisations in

Wales would be useful, particularly in light of the ongoing cuts to core and grant funding, and the increasing encouragement of the use of procurement as part of the Welsh Government's drive to make efficiency savings (WCVA, 2016). Research which also seeks to investigate more closely the informal relations between commissioners and third sector organisations would also be useful here, as there was some evidence in this research that the terms of the contract were not strictly honoured, or expected to be honoured, in practice. This in itself suggests that there may be widespread normative opposition to and subversion of formally observable funding arrangements.

It is also important to note that the analysis of my data, and my subsequent conclusions, were the result of my immersion in the daily practices of one particular project within a large national organisation. Whilst this suited the operationalisation of my theoretical framework, this inevitably meant that I spent more time with project workers, volunteers, and service users than I did with managers. Had I spent more time with the two managers, it is possible that some altogether different interpretations of my data may have been made. For example, although the managers were more concerned with the pursuit of external goods, there was some evidence that they also recognised and valued some of the internal goods e.g. friendship and industriousness. However, because I did not spend that much time with them, I did not get to fully appreciate how they valued the different 'goods' of the project. Thus whilst it appeared that they were more concerned with the achievement of external goods, it may have been the case that they also tried to maintain the capacity of the project to sustain its internal goods too. Indeed, it is likely that their role, even if it was by virtue of their weak management, also influenced project workers' capacity to continue to pursue the internal goods of their practices. Spending more time with the managers may have invited a less stark contrast of the difference between managers' and project workers' perspectives than presented in the preceding chapters.

The utilisation of MacIntyre's theory of internal and external goods also has some implication here, since its very application is likely to invite quite stark conclusions. This is because MacIntyre, as a vociferous critic of capitalism, and of organisations in general, assumes that external goods will always be valued and pursued over internal

goods in modern society. Therefore the somewhat deterministic and anti-managerial view underpinning MacIntyre's theory, means that its empirical application can offer no way to elucidate the sort of organisational conditions (e.g. employment contracts, managerial qualities, or power dynamics) that may allow for internal goods to flourish within organisations. In light of this limitation, future research could also aim to explore the influence of these broader contextual and institutional arrangements, when operationalising MacIntyre's theory to examine practices within an organisational setting. For example, such an enquiry could focus on not only elucidating the internal and external goods of particular practices, but also aim to explicate what specific organisational conditions and/or qualities are important for a balance of these goods to thrive. This would no doubt add something to this usefulness of MacIntyre's theory for empirical application.

Notwithstanding this theoretical limitation, the lack of empirical research which is theoretically-informed suggests that there is certainly more scope for research which explores the relationship between values and practices in third sector organisations. The centrality of practices to values which has been demonstrated in this research suggests that adopting an Aristotelian practice-based approach may be particularly apt since, as argued earlier, it is compatible with value plurality, and thus with the diversity of values and practices that the organisations within the sector embrace.

While more critical commentators such as Rochester (2013) claim that there is no point in conducting research in those organisations which already provide services under statutory contract, since they already too closely mimic the values and practices of their bureaucratic funders, I would suggest that this research provides evidence to the contrary. Knowing more about whether other practitioners in the Welsh third sector are resistant to pressures to shift practices, and if so, how they resist them, would be of use since this research is limited to the local branch of one organisation. The adoption of ethnographic and longitudinal research would be also particularly worthwhile since there is a dearth of in-depth research on these organisations in Wales. Further, although I spent a lot of time with service users and was able to shed light on some of their experiences, the lack of interviews conducted amongst this specific group of participants is also a limitation. The fact that some service users felt uncomfortable with being interviewed suggests that there is scope

to develop more participatory and creative methods to illuminate further the experiences of service users. This may have generated some different insights, and would provide an important and interesting avenue to explore in future research. Nonetheless, the lack of service user experience elsewhere in the third sector literature means that this research certainly adds something here.

The main strength of this research, however, lies in my own long-term participation in the everyday practices of the project. It was only through adopting ethnographic methods that I was able to become thoroughly acquainted with these practices, and the internal goods that they nourished. This would not have been possible with interviews alone. Therefore, if we want to fully understand the work of these organisations, more ethnographic research of this kind would be fruitful.

9.5 Final word

Despite the above limitations, my research offers a new contribution to the field of third sector research. Adopting the virtue-ethics of Aristotle as a means to explore, and draw out more concretely, the relationship between values and practices in one organisation, has allowed for a more thorough exploration of values than has been done elsewhere in the field. In doing so, this research has not only shed light on what these values are beyond the more generic ones which are assumed to underpin the sector as a whole, but has also demonstrated how these values are realised through everyday practices.

The use of Macintyre's internal and external goods theory in particular, is also worthy note in terms of its contributory value. This theory offers a new lens to explore how the tension third sector organisations are often noted to experience with regards to their having to balance different logics, plays out specifically in relation to their values and everyday practices. In doing so, it also offers a way to move beyond the expressive and instrumental dichotomy, and thus draw research attention back to the relationship between practices and values within these organisations in a way that is sensitive to value plurality. More importantly perhaps, by taking the relationship between values and practices seriously, this theory also recognises the

importance of practices not only for value-integrity, but also for wellbeing. It therefore invites a new way of looking at the role of these organisations in wider society, and a re-consideration of the policy preoccupation with 'external goods'. If values are considered central to wellbeing, then the values of third sector organisations, and in turn, the practices they adopt to enact and sustain these values, are also 'goods'. In a world where external goods dominate, these goods are of value in themselves, and are thus something to be celebrated and protected.

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Appendix 1: Sample consent form

Thanks for agreeing to participate in my study. Before we begin, could you please sign the form below to show that you are aware of the following:

I.....consent to Joanne Blake interviewing me, and recording and transcribing this interview for use in her PhD thesis and subsequent academic publications.

I.....understand that my data, once transcribed, will be assigned a pseudonym and identifying characteristics removed to ensure anonymity.

I.....understand that the transcribed data will be retained for a period of at least 5 years.

Should you wish to withdraw from the study, or do not wish to answer a particular question, I will respect your wish, just let me know. Thank you for your time.

Signed..... Date.....

Appendix 2: List of Acronyms

CPN	Community Psychiatric Nurse
DOH	Department of Health
DWP	Department of Work and Pensions
GP	General Practitioner
HND	Higher National Diploma
JSA	Job Seekers Allowance
NAW	National Assembly Wales
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
NHS	National Health Service
OT	Occupational Therapist
OTS	Office for the Third Sector
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SROI	Social Return on Investment
STH	Social and Therapeutic Horticulture
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government
WCVA	Welsh Council for Voluntary Action
WWOOF	Willing Workers On Organic Farms