

Bruton Annual Town Forum 2026

The Growing Space:

The Growing Space is a Social & Therapeutic Horticulture charity working with The Balsam Centre in Wincanton. We work with a wide range of people and organisations within a 10-mile radius of the town.

We provide mood-boosting nature-based activities that help lift depression, reduce anxiety, overcome learning disability, and enable people to learn new skills while benefitting from working collaboratively on projects that improve public outdoor spaces.

Activities also enable participants to gain a sense of pride through achievement and articulate what they perceive to be barriers to employment and community participation.

We have large greenhouses, lots of space for fruit, flowers and vegetables, and wildlife gardens with a large pond. We directly engage about 100 people a year of all ages in activities. We have 7 dedicated volunteers helping us to deliver therapeutic services and maintain the gardens. We indirectly benefit over 1000 people within a 10-mile radius of our site.

The groups and activities we continue to run regularly run are:

Young People and Nature

We offer activities to young adults aged 18 – 25 who are experiencing mental health problems and missed out at school and college. The aim is to help them get more motivated for work and training.

Gardening and Propagation Groups

Participants in both groups can clearly identify goals, build confidence, add structure and stability to their week, and take advantage of the mood-boosting power of caring

for plants. We propagate all the plants needed in our gardens and always have plenty to spare for giving away in return for donations.

The Compost Crew

Participants in this group help us make the compost and leafmould that feeds all our wildlife, flower and vegetable gardens around the Balsam Centre. This is an active, all-weather group, nothing puts us off! Last summer we started making our own peat free multi-purpose compost and experimenting with its nutritional qualities.

Learning Disability Day Services

We offer a comprehensive service for referral through Adult Social Care Teams, or self-referral. Participants get lots of support from our horticulture workers and are invited to set goals that help them learn, progress and become more independent in their communities.

The charity has attracted lots more local funding and donations in the last year, and we have expanded significantly despite the current financial climate. We now have a part-time administrator, a fundraiser, a second horticulture worker, and an art and crafts practitioner.

The new wildlife garden arts and crafts workshops that we have been running are specifically designed to engage people with the natural world. With materials for crafting gathered from the gardens. Everything is made of natural materials.

This year we also started a new project looking after the planters in Wincanton Town Centre and this has so far been a great success, increasing the impact of the charity's work. We hope we can expand this into other towns and villages locally through involving trained volunteers.

We've been developing new partnerships with many other organisations and agencies locally, particularly those involved in conservation and habitat management. Our aim is that these new partnerships will widen opportunities for the charity's beneficiaries to join community activities that improve their physical and mental health, as well as having a positive impact on the local environment.

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May 2026