

Stepping into the garden of Charnwood Lodge Residential Home you are greeted with a huge burst of colour. The abundance of plants and the rockery provoke memories of a childhood garden. Wind-chimes, rustling plants and the aroma of herbs stir the senses, inviting you to explore, touch and experience the surroundings. It is clear this is no ordinary garden.

The enclosed walled garden at Charnwood Lodge provides healthy stimulation for residents. Charnwood provides permanent, respite and day care for older people, including people with mental health problems, in Scotland.

Joining residents and colleagues at their home in the Scottish town of Dumfries, we take advantage of the lovely sunny day, as they tell me all about their brand new sensory garden.

"The purpose of sensory gardens is to encourage users to really interact with their surroundings." Service manager, Shirley McTeir explains.



"The garden is divided into four areas - sound, sight, scent and touch." Explains Shirley.

"The previous garden was looking very tired and drab - it needed a brand new design to breath some life back into it."

The new garden is designed with separate beds of plants and objects intertwined by a 'figure of eight' looped stone path.

"We have created a garden that excites the senses, and all the plants and objects have been carefully selected for their sensory value." Shirley adds.

Ronnie Moreland



"We have built a safe and inspirational environment for residents that will give them space to relax in as well as stimulate their memories." Shirley explains.

The donation of a stunning water feature to the home last spring marked the beginning of this transformation.

"One of our residents, Steve Chisholm, died last year. Steve really enjoyed being outdoors and he spent a lot of time in the garden." Shirley explains.

Steve's family wanted to construct a water feature in his memory at Charnwood Lodge.

"It was such a fantastic idea - a memorial for Steve as well as an object for individuals to enjoy for years to come." Says Shirley

"We researched a lot about sensory gardens - and found that water features were central themes. So we felt this was the perfect opportunity to create something special at Charnwood.

The water feature has pride position in the sound section of the garden. "With the nearby seating area we have created a tranquil place that we hope Steve will be proud of." Shirley adds.

The sensory garden was built in May when residents, colleagues and friends got together and in just one day transformed their garden. Linda Irving, team administrator, was the main organiser behind the event.

"We displayed posters to encourage volunteers to come along on the day to help out, and we also sent out letters to various local businesses asking for donations of plants etc to enhance the garden." Linda explains.

# Charming Charnwood Lodge



Team leader Pheona Malcolm (left), Mary McCormack (centre) and service manager Shirley McTeir

"We got a huge response from colleagues, the local community and friends and relatives of residents.

"Local builders and businesses donated materials and plants, and a team of volunteers from my local church came to lend a hand." She adds.

It was an early start on the day with the arrival of flowers, tools and plants. Soon the garden was filled with keen volunteers, happy to help with the planting, digging and building.

Ronnie Moreland has lived at Charnwood Lodge for almost 5 years and was delighted when he found out about plans for the new garden.

"I really enjoy spending time in the garden, especially the greenhouse next door where I grow tomatoes - so I was really looking forward to it."

Ronnie was involved in the whole process from planning what flowers to plant to getting stuck in on the day.

"I planted all the hanging baskets which are now placed on the garden walls - they have just started to bloom and I am really pleased with them." He adds.

Ronnie's friends Helen and Bryce McCormack and his two daughters Mary and Nora came along to lend a hand.

"It was fantastic having my friends

and family to help too. The day was really enjoyable - it was hard work but everyone got stuck in and surprisingly there were no arguments!"

The new sensory garden is certainly a popular spot and residents, friends and colleagues are really proud of their hard work.

Shirley says "We are continually adding to the garden - everyone has great ideas and over the years it is going to really come into its own."

"We are all delighted with our new garden, it has already become a treasured part of our home and one that we hope will remain so for years to come." She concludes.