

Attracting and retaining new plotholders: BAF April 2015 workshop notes

Bringing in new plotholders

- Open days (selling cakes, etc.)
- Liaise with local schools – can make parents more aware of the site
- Once an application is received invite the applicant to visit the site and give them a realistic idea of what they're likely to have to take on
- Make access to the waiting list dependent on them visiting the site
- Notice on gate
- On-going conversation with those on the waiting list
- Manage vacant plots so they're not too difficult to take on, e.g. cover with membrane
- Sign on gate, in local shops, surgeries, schools and on telephone poles

Inducting new plotholders

- Develop a suggestions book
- Have a day's experience on a plot – managing expectations
- Use a probationary period, e.g. 6 months
- Buddy system – offering advice/ support
- Handbook or welcome pack with tips, rules, site map, list of events, info on equipment available
- Show them any books/ magazines available in the site hut
- Show around the site and point out where things are
- Show friendliness in communications
- Have starter, small plots
- Explain volunteering expected

Retaining new plotholders

- Compliment as well as offering practical advice
- If inspection shows new plotholders need to do more: encourage them; use a friendly tone, e.g. in emails; agree a schedule of work
- Identify gaps in their knowledge as part of a skills survey when they start
- Social events: visits to gardens and other sites; BBQs; quiz nights; seed swaps
- Visibility of committee members (e.g. making themselves known to new plotholders)
- A well-managed, tidy site will encourage new plotholders to keep their own plot tidy
- Honour promises, e.g. of skips
- Involve plotholders, e.g. invite opinions on site issues
- If plotholders are unwell for an extended period one option is that they give up their plot but go to the top of the waiting list when they're well

Some useful links for new plotholders

- Woodhouse FAQs for new plotholders
<http://www.woodhouseontheweb.org.uk/frequently-asked-questions/>
- Child's Hill Handbook for tenants
<http://childshillallotments.moonfruit.com/handbook/4587206734?preview=Y>