

Core Landscapes in Hackney

a Core Arts project



"Transforming meanwhile spaces to promote positive mental health for all."





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Mission Statement

Core Landscapes transforms meanwhile spaces to promote positive mental health for all: developing neglected, or inaccessible, sites into thriving green resources for the local community, through the imaginative use of sustainable urban greening techniques, community engagement and green education.

Working with referred beneficiaries, community volunteers, support volunteers and the general public, Core Landscapes aims to promote positive mental health for all, challenging misconceptions around mental ill health and enabling people to thrive. Core Landscapes impacts greatly on the lives of people amongst the most stigmatised and misunderstood in society with mental ill health, aiding recovery, prevention and ongoing self-care. We create a supportive community environment bringing people together from diverse backgrounds and assisting them to overcome barriers, fulfil their potential and make a full contribution to society.

Core Landscapes is a Core Arts project whose mission is to support and promote recovery, social inclusion and mental well-being through the arts, sports and horticulture and enhance service user experience.

"The time spent here is so valuable to me and gives me a sense of purpose."

"I like being around plants and like-minded people - everything about Core Landscapes is positive."

"I was given a succulent from the project lead, and I kept it in a jar for a while and finally planted it. It's flourishing and beautiful and I love to see plants grow. I like nurturing plants, other people, and myself."

"The classes have given me something to look forwards to each week."





About Us

Core Landscapes showcases what can be done with meanwhile sites in the city to promote positive mental health for all.

It is an outward-facing, forward-thinking, inspiring green project:

Core Landscapes is one of London's oldest, meanwhile community gardens and plant nurseries, using horticulture and environmental education to improve lives. Transforming underused spaces into green oases promoting positive mental health for all, reducing social isolation, and creating opportunities for individuals to improve their environment. We embrace inclusion, respect, tolerance and celebrate differences, delivering horticultural training to encourage stewardship of community green spaces long-term. We also support other community projects with advice and training - responding to specific local need + ideas.

The project contains a roof garden, garage garden, Core Arts members' garden, street planters and tree pits along Wardle Street, and a meadow area and community orchard in Homerton Grove - with support to create a new 1,600m2 community garden behind St Barnabas Church.

Positive Mental Health through Urban Greening

Core Landscapes promotes positive mental health using urban greening techniques that connect people to the natural environment and each other: raising awareness about the climate change and biodiversity emergencies, and empowering people to impact positively on their neighbourhood and on themselves.

By transforming neglected sites within highly populated urban environments Core Landscapes highlights the need for, and impact of, active green spaces within the context of mental health and climate change. Its impact can feed into dialogue with local authorities, developers and planners to think creatively about protecting, and increasing, community-based green spaces for mental

well-being and increased biodiversity within

the urban environment.

It began as a 'meanwhile' project in 2009 in Canning Town E16 and has moved 3 times across 3 boroughs since then. Everything was designed to be movable to make use of temporary sites; now the project is firmly rooted in Hackney.

"I think coming to Core landscape has greatly improved my Mental Health."

"It's very relaxing and calming to look after plants as well as being surrounded by them."

What we do

"The people make the gardens and the gardens make the people."

Core Landscapes' targeted beneficiaries create inspiring green community resources to facilitate recovery and personal development.

Through weekly gardening sessions and horticultural workshops, volunteers and students learn a broad range of practical and theoretical gardening skills and put them into practice. The propagation and maintenance skills learnt create and sustain the garden spaces and supply the micro-community plant nursery to further engage the general public with plant-buying opportunities and growing advice. Plants sold help towards materials and tools.

Transforming neglected green sites increases well-being and a sense of social value and connectedness, whilst addressing climate change mitigation. This has a cascading impact on the wider community, showcasing sustainable urban greening that can be used anywhere by anybody.

In Hackney Core Landscapes has created and now cares for:

- A Roof garden and Garage garden below
- Green Wall and Green Roof
- Core Arts' street-level members' garden
- 7 x Street Planters and
- 7 x Tree Pits along Wardle Street
- 60m long meadow strip and
- Community Orchard in Homerton Grove

Showcasing Sustainability

Core Landscapes promotes biodiversity and aims to keep its carbon footprint neutral. We reuse, recycle and repurpose, create organic compost and fertilisers, and harvest and divert rainwater through solar-powered irrigation systems. Core Landscapes self-generates income to feed into the project, through corporate engagement and plant sales, venue hire, workshop and consultation services.

- Upcycling and recycling
- Solar Power
- Water harvesting
- Composting
- Self-generated income
- Donation-in-kind

100% of visitors consulted enjoy the transformations made to the area and value Core Landscapes' presence in the neighbourhood.

Core Landscapes

- Promotes mental and physical health by empowering individuals and communities to improve their environment
- Develops activities that maximise social participation, enhance self-esteem and promote exercise and healthy living
- Breaks down stigmas associated with mental ill health
- Encourages social inclusion for all focusing on quality and equality
- Involves users in the planning process of the project
- Supports and empowers other community horticultural projects
- Facilitates the increase of horticultural and landscaping skills for life-long learning



Benefits

People engage with the project from all walks of life and may be very socially isolated with low self-esteem. During their time tending to the garden and learning about plants, people develop new-found skills and confidence: People make new friends, have opportunities to develop personally, feel part of something worthwhile, and work collaboratively to create beautiful spaces for the local community to enjoy. The skills developed enable people to produce and sell plants to the public and advise on plant choice and care. This can be life-changing; for feelings of self-worth and ideas for a more positive future.

100% of project participants and volunteers consulted feel they benefit from engaging with Core Landscapes.

Key Benefits reported include:

- Improving mental health
- Learning new skills
- Increasing confidence and self-esteem
- Giving to and being part of the community
- Improving physical health
- Working collaboratively
- Being outside
- Work experience opportunities
- Hope for the future

"Ilike learning about plants, interacting with people and building new relationships, supporting others; the environment is tranquil and calming, appreciating nature and being in the area. Preference of choice, physical or less physical work and solo or group work. Even when I'm having a bad day and I'm low in moods, I always leave here feeling a high and energised."

"While carrying out tasks it allows me to forget everything on my mind and enjoy the task that I am doing."





Five ways to wellbeing



Connect

Core Landscapes encourages peer-to-peer learning and support and is a safe space to make friends and learn from each other: sharing skills and knowledge across a wide range of cultures, ages and backgrounds.

Be Active

Gardening encourages meaningful physical activity throughout the year: Core Landscapes sessions help create structure in the week and motivation to get out and be physically active whatever the weather.



Take Notice

Gardeners rely on their powers of observation to care for their spaces: Core

Landscapes creates opportunities to develop these skills, slow down and take nature in supporting wellbeing.



Keep Learning

However experienced a gardener may be there is always more to learn: Core Landscapes encompasses individuals' ideas and suggestions for the project and is constantly developing in parallel with everyone engaged with it.



Give

For the time, energy and commitment people give to the project's

gardens - the gardens give back endlessly. Satisfaction from personal development and upskilling is further increased by seeing the pleasure others derive from experiencing the gardens they have helped to create.

"I've have learnt many gardening skills (sowing seeds, composting, plant division) but more than that its caring for and nurturing something."

"More than the technical aspect it helps me reset my body rhythm by being involved."

"I like getting out of my flat. When I'm in my flat I think too much, when I'm here I stop thinking about those things."



Core Landscapes:

- Helps people look after their mental and physical wellbeing
- Supports people who may be at risk of developing a mental health issue
- Helps with the recovery of people with existing mental health issues

Core Landscapes structured horticultural workshops and informal 'Green Care' sessions are for people with lived experience of mental health issues and/or physical conditions that affect mental health.

Workshops aim to:

- Develop confidence in gardening techniques and knowhow
- Promote positive mental health and self-esteem
- Aid progression paths into further volunteering opportunities, vocational training and employment skills
- Help to promote ongoing self-care

Outcomes are monitored according to the individual with a range of: feedback forms and surveys, case studies, Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Health Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), skill set monitoring and interviews with individuals. Service users input directs Core Landscapes' development and influences the programmes on offer creating relevant and effective opportunities for people to get the most from their time in the gardens.

Core Landscapes Services

A resource for:

Social

Client referrals and self-referrals

Groups

'Green Care' gardening sessions & Structured Horticultural Workshops

Core Landscapes delivers facilitated 'Green Care' (informal) gardening sessions and (structured) workshops for referred and self-referred people with lived experience of mental ill health who benefit from more support then the community volunteer programme can offer.

These promote:

Prevention

to aim for.

Recovery

Progression

'Green Care' is formally recognised as targeted therapeutic or treatment interventions that are specifically designed for people with a defined need and are delivered by trained/qualified practitioners. When people are ready and wish to they can join the community volunteer sessions or become support volunteers themselves to help others. This offers a

clear and stress-less progression path for individuals

"Now I feel confident when handling plants, I am not scared of the plants dying from handling them, before I wouldn't touch them thinking I might kill them."

"I learn something new every week and I enjoy my time here a lot."

"Sometimes
I feel like I
haven't achieved
anything in a
week but when
I come here and
get something
done, I feel
good."

"Coming here has improved my confidence - I'm continuing to work on this. It's been a life- saver for me. I don't think I would have coped very well if I wasn't coming here and staying involved with the group."









Volunteering at Core Landscapes

Empowerment through collaboration.

Core Landscapes' volunteer programmes actively promote community cohesion, reduce social isolation, facilitate peer-to-peer support, increase community involvement and support community champions to develop. The reciprocal relationship between garden and volunteer is essential to the project's success. Valuing volunteers' time, skills and ideas are an inherent part of Core Landscapes ethos: The people make the project.

We aim to listen to our volunteers' reasons for joining us and wherever possible, cater the activity to the volunteers' particular areas of interest, be it food growing, propagation, planting design etc. Volunteers can also have responsibility for particular areas within Core Landscapes for vocational and personal development. The garden is designed with inclusivity in mind and caters for a wide range of physical and emotional needs.

"It's very nurturing to be outdoors with plants and nature. Even if I'm physically unable to do very much it's nice to be here and have supportive teaching. After operations, you're a bit out of it but you're very supportive of peoples conditions and states."



Community volunteering:

For people who would like to help look after the gardens and plant nursery and by doing so increase gardening knowledge and boost mental wellbeing in a friendly and social environment. The programme also supports vocational placements for those who would like to progress careers in the green and caring sectors E.g. future community gardeners, professional gardeners, OT's, and social and therapeutic horticulturalists.

Support Volunteering:

For people with some (or lots of) gardening knowledge and/or training who would like to assist others in their learning. These may be people progressing from the "Green Care" or workshop programmes. Also for people who would like to gain community project experience for vocational purposes. Support volunteers are fully DBS checked and receive safeguarding training from Core Arts.

"I really enjoy the social aspect of coming to Core Landscapes and feel that there is an inclusive environment here."

"I like the supported structure and always feel confident when asking questions, mainly because I do not feel pressured if I need further clarification on something."

"I really love it here; it has helped me so much."

"Maybe it's a cultural thing but I used to always avoid the rain but since coming to CL the weather doesn't put me off, I just need to dress appropriately and embrace it."

"I have gained coping skills that have allowed me to manage things a lot better."

"It's nice to talk to people (here) and have chats. Its good talk to you (OT Student) you're funny and you're friendly."



"The placement really influenced my career in the job I applied for in the end (not in paediatrics as initially intended but in mental health). It changed everything after my placement."

their interest, their curiosity.

This it the main thing I've taken from here (and I want to) spread this - community nature

based coming together."

CONTRACTOR OF THE SECOND

Statistics p/a

80-150

Community volunteers

35-50

Referred beneficiaries

Support volunteers

300+

Corporate volunteers

Events

Volunteers' trips to gardens

5,000+

Visitors to Homerton Grove

43

Structured Workshops

86

Community Volunteer sessions

2,500+

Volunteer hours

Garden tours

Awards received

2,021 m²

Total land cared for



100% Positive from 100's of visitors:

A combination of referred beneficiaries with mental ill health, community volunteers, support and vocational volunteers, corporate volunteers, local residents, clinicians, patients and visitors, walking groups, visitors from other community projects, community network groups, and passers-by.

Recovery

"Coming here has been a lifesaver"

"It's definitely improved my self-confidence."

Motivation

"The weather doesn't scare me anymore, I embrace it" "I feel useful to the natural environment."

Social Aspect

"I look forward to the only conversation I get all week" "I really enjoy the social aspect of coming - there is an inclusive environment here."

Positive Thoughts

"I think too much, but when I'm here I just think about flowers"

"The sense of being integral to something makes me feel really good – being part of this is really nice."

Being in, and noticing nature

"It's tranquil and calming"
"Nature resets my bodies rhythm"

Increased confidence and sense of purpose

"The time spent here is so valuable to me, and it gives me a sense of purpose"
"Building something and seeing the finished article is very satisfying"

Physical Activity

"Doing the heavier jobs makes me feel good, it's a workout" "I needed this space for my own mental health, how much I enjoyed this environment. It has hugely influenced my whole career and whole life."



"I feel a lot calmer after I have been here. I have recently had some stress and mental health issues and found coming to Core Landscapes and doing gardening has really put it into perspective."

"I think gardening is a great social activity that can help with confidence and also promote knowledge of plants which is worthwhile for the future."





What can you learn at Core Landscapes?

Opportunities in:

- Soil management: all different soil types and properties
- Climate change awareness and mitigation: gardening sustainably
- Biodiversity: how to increase it
- Propagation skills: from root cuttings to division
- Food Growing: all year round
- Homemade fertilisers: wormery, liquid feeds, compost + leafmould
- Plant identification: wildflowers to trees and everything in between
- Pruning: when, how and why
- Planting design: how to engage in multiple ways
- Organic gardening: no need for chemicals
- Integrated "Pest" Control: working with nature
- Wildflowers: benefits to biodiversity
- Medicinal plants: traditional uses across the globe
- Carpentry skills: self sufficiency
- Sales skill: advising + selling to the public

43X structured horticultural workshops for mental health-based referrals

6X Specialist workshops delivered to other organisations

10x Specialist workshops received for volunteers + students

5x Consultation support for other community-based projects

5X Vocational volunteer placements

"Developing my own skills as a professional, as a person - How to keep a balance and take care of both (aspects). It felt good to care for people, but I needed it for myself too. I learnt so much from other people and their experiences and their resilience."

"Feel I connected with people, everyone there."

"The environment, it's like you don't know the space exists - with a fire station nearby and ambulances going past, but you've got the sanctuary, people and meaningful conversation."

New to Hackney... Core Arts Community Garden at St Barnabas Church

With support from Hackney Council, Core Arts is developing a new collaborative Community Garden behind St Barnabas Church (next door to Core Arts' creative arts centre). This will transform 1,600m² of underused land behind St Barnabas church E9 into an imaginative, co-designed, user-led community garden and event space. Managed and cared for by Core Landscapes' students and volunteers, and local residents including parishioners of St Barnabas, and facilitated by staff. Increasing biodiversity and demonstrating sustainable greening techniques. To include: a teaching hub, food growing, greenhouse, open lawn area, micro-plant nursery, pollinator-friendly planting, and orchard, with a fusion of UK woodland planting and tropical-inspired planting, reflecting the diverse cultural backgrounds locally.

Core Arts wins Gold at the Chelsea Flower Show!

The new community garden will rehouse plants and materials from Core Arts' Gold award-winning Chelsea garden designed by Andy Smith-Williams in 2022, and utilise other upcycled, recycled and repurposed materials throughout the design.

The garden will raise awareness about climate change and demonstrate mitigation techniques including Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SUDs), tree planting, solar-powered water harvesting irrigation techniques, permaculture and organic gardening techniques, key-hole garden and composting. A poly-pod will provide a sheltered workspace and enhance Core Landscape's capacity to propagate plants to keep this community garden and Core's other green spaces replenished long-term.

"The Core Landscapes team is ingenious with their sustainable approaches to solve challenges and employ their reuse and recycling philosophy. Nothing gets wasted here."

"I can see that many others find Core's gardens just as inspiring as I did, and that the ideas and knowledge gathered here are slowly spreading to other gardens and projects as well."





Promoting positive mental health at work

"Great day out! Very clear targets of what we should achieve, all the right tools / equipment to do the work."

Our Corporate Partners

Core Landscapes collaborates with the East London Business Alliance (ELBA) to connect with the corporate sector to deliver corporate social responsibility (CSR) days.

Mental ill health is rife in the workplace and is on the rise.

"Clear instructions of what to expect on the day. Thank you very much for enabling us to contribute!"

100% of corporate volunteers consulted report

that spending a day at Core Landscapes

benefitted their mental wellbeing.

Our creative CSR programme combines collaborative team building, with up-skilling and mental respite from the workplace, while transforming the local green environment and mitigating climate change.

Volunteers learn new skills in areas of landscaping, plant maintenance, carpentry, prepping and painting, and undertake much of the physical grafting to develop areas of Core's green spaces that some of our community volunteers are physically unable to do.

The income generated from CSR days brings invaluable revenue to the project whilst workers have a mental break from the office environment in beautiful community green spaces.

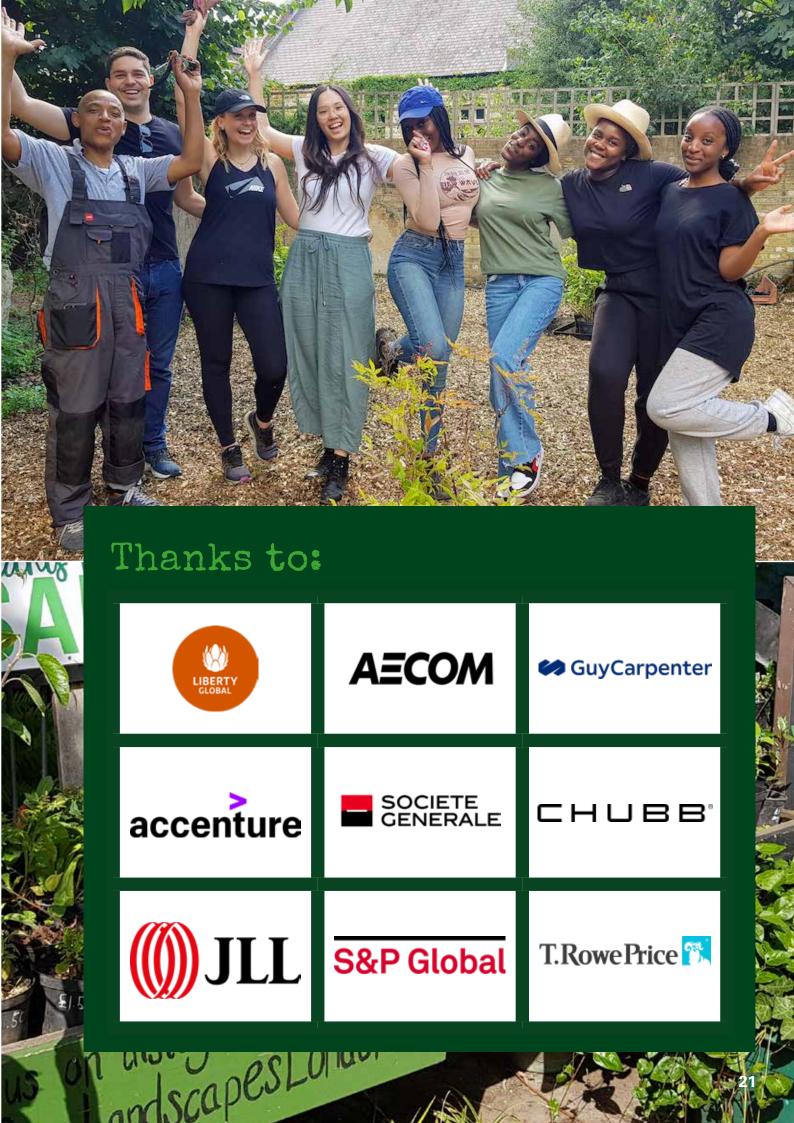
"Enjoyed being here. Well laid out facility. Instructions given were clear and we made good progress as a team."

"Thanks for guiding us through the day. Amazing to hear of the work the charity does."

> "It's been good to work outside. I've learn a lot and feel like we achieved a lot."

A win-win result for all.





Hot off the Press

Experienced at moving sites Core Landscapes hit the ground running after its relocation to the new Hackney site in 2019 having spent 2 years in Whitechapel and 8 years in Canning Town in Newham.

Navigating Covid-19, Core Landscapes adapted fast offering online engagement with a series of 50 films of garden tours, "how to" online sessions and remote Gardener's Question time zooms.

Along with greening up Wardle Street with street planters, tree pits, and meadow and orchard in Homerton Grove, Core Landscapes roof garden inspired garden designer Andy Smith-Williams to represent Core Arts at the World-renowned Chelsea Flower Show winning a Gold medal!



Awards

GOLD + OVERALL WINNER

"Environment Challenge" Award 2022 London in Bloom

GOLD

Chelsea Flower Show 2022

GREEN FLAG AWARD 2022/23

OUTSTANDING

"It's Your Neighbourhood" Award 2022 London in Bloom

GOLD

"Our Community" Award 2022 London in Bloom

OVERALL WINNER

"Our Community Award" London in Bloom Award 2018







A big thank you to all our Funders

- Grow Back Greener fund
- RHS Flourish Fund
- Our Space Award
- Hackney Council
- Kusuma Trust
- Hackney Learning Trust

Support and Partnerships

- Patron Mark Lane: Garden designer and broadcaster
- Fabric-Space: Architectural Design
- Jon Sheaf Associates: Landscape architects
- Project Giving Back + The Chelsea Flower Show
- Andy Smith-Williams: Chelsea Gold award designer

"We all know how important community gardens are for bringing people together, sharing stories and knowledge, growing food and flowers for the soul or simply being a place to go. To be at one with nature and surrounding yourself with plants that can positively make a difference both physically and mentally. Have fun and keep on learning."

Mark Lane garden designer, author and TV presenter and Core Landscapes patron











Core Landscapes - What next?

The existing Hackney sites and the new community garden will enable Core Landscapes to extend its outreach and continue to develop its services:

Hackney is the 2nd most deprived borough in London.

The mental health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is expected to persist for several years. Mental health problems in Hackney residents were already approx twice as high as national average pre covid. Experts predict a 'tsunami of psychiatric illness' in its aftermath (Tandon 2020) and an increase in;

- · common psychiatric diagnoses
- · psychological distress
- · anxiety, depression, substance abuse disorders
- suicide and suicidal ideations
- · social isolation

(www.towerhamletsccg.nhs.uk/our-work/mental-health)

"It's nice to feel like I made a difference."



- People respond positively to the natural environment
- Nature is used to help people recover and manage mental ill health
- Collaboration brings people together creatively to benefit the wider community
- People are able to support each other in their recovery
- → Hackney is under pressure for more and more housing.
- → There is a need to make the most of green spaces wherever they may be to promote positive mental health for everyone.

Biophilia: an innate tendency to seek connections with nature and other forms of life

- Numerous academic research has proven the benefits of gardening on mental health
- The NHS is buckling
- People do not just need clinical care to aid recovery or manage symptoms
- People want opportunities to manage their own mental wellbeing
- Core Landscapes offers excellent Social Return on Investment
- Core Landscapes greatly benefits both individuals and the wider community

The new community garden will increase capacity for Core Landscapes' service delivery and create many more green linked opportunities for people in Hackney.

The local community has told us they want active green spaces like Core Landscapes in their neighbourhood to use the project in the ways that suit them.



With continued support and funding we will increase staff capacity and greatly increase service delivery offering more opportunities for horticulture and nature to help manage mental health and wellbeing, aid personal progressions and individual fulfilment.

We create places of respite for students, volunteers, residents, workers, patients and visitors and places of inspiration for other community stewarded spaces across London and beyond.

core landscapes

Core Landscapes Community Garden and plant nursery

@ Core Arts

1 St Barnabas Terrace Homerton E9 6DJ

www.core-landscapes.co.uk

f communitymeanwhilegarden

orelandscapeslondon

For more information, please contact:

Community Volunteering:
Camila Barboza, Volunteer coordinator
Email: garden@corearts.co.uk
Tel: 07771 319 042

General:

Nemone Mercer Project Director Email: nmercer@corearts.co.uk

Tel: 07585 770 868

How to get there:

- Nearby buses on Wardle Street (Stop HA) 242
- Homerton Hospital arriving (Stop E) 236, 276, 394, 425, 488, W15
- Nearby buses on Brooksby's Walk leaving (Stop HB) 236, 242, 276, 308, 425, 488, W15
- Nearby buses on Homerton High Street (Stop H) 425
- Overground: Homerton

 5 mins walk from Homerton station.
 The station has daily services available to Clapham Junction,
 Stratford and Richmond.



Core Landscapes is part of the award winning mental health charity Core Arts in Hackney.

www.corearts.co.uk www.facebook.com/coreartshackney www.twitter.com/coreartshackney

charity no: 1043588 | company no: 2985939

core arts promoting positive mental health.

