

The formation of The UK Association for Social and Therapeutic Horticulture, and an associated professional register – Frequently Asked Questions (last updated 9/1/24)

1. What is The UK Association for Social and Therapeutic Horticulture?

The UK Association for Social and Therapeutic Horticulture will be the professional body for those working in, studying, or with an interest in Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (STH) in the UK. The aims of the Association will be to inspire and champion excellence in Social & Therapeutic Horticulture (STH) and to develop the STH profession for the benefit of the public's health and wellbeing.

The Association will:

- set and uphold professional standards and maintain a register of 'approved' or accredited STH practitioners
- encourage the professional growth of STH practitioners
- encourage people from all backgrounds to train and develop the required skills to become STH practitioners
- represent STH to commissioners, policy-makers and opinion-formers and work to ensure that the wider public understands what STH is, how it can be beneficial and how to access it.

Part of the Association's role will include developing and holding an accredited register of practitioners.

2. Why is a register needed for Social and Therapeutic Horticulture?

Practitioners working in this area tell us that they want more support, supervision, clear career routes, professional development opportunities, and recognition. They are often working alone or in small organisations, with patchy funding and limited resources but still delivering great services for those who need them. Despite the many years of STH practice in the UK, their professional skills and capabilities are not formally recognised or appropriately funded.

For participants, the rapid growth in organisations offering nature-based activities without recognised standards and processes in place may increase the risk of inappropriate referrals, inadequate service provision, and potential lack of awareness of safeguarding and protection, which could be damaging to individual participants and the whole profession. The lack of agreed and recognised standards and processes also constrains referrals and opportunities for people to benefit from therapeutic horticulture.

The new Association for Social and Therapeutic Horticulture and the associated professional register will set out to tackle these issues.

Please see the video below for a summary of the presentations from Trellis and Thrive at the Social and Therapeutic Horticulture Professional Development Forum on 22/8/23. These presentations outline the history of the need for an association and a register, and the work in this area so far.
[Professional Body for Social & Therapeutic Horticulture \(STH\) - 22nd August 2023 - YouTube](#)

3. What will be the requirements for those wishing to join the register?

More work is needed to define the specific role(s) to be included on the register and their related professional standards and code of ethics. These will be agreed upon in consultation with those attending the Professional Development Forum meetings, as will recognition of prior learning and

experience (e.g. hours of / time in practice). Those attending the Professional Development Forum will be invited to take part in working groups to look at these issues.

4. Who will be able to join the register?

The register will be open to those who meet the agreed standards and with the required education, training, and/or work experience and who are working in Social and Therapeutic Horticulture.

5. Will I have to pass an exam to join the accredited register?

Further research and consultation are required to ensure that the entry requirements for joining the accredited register are fair and proportionate, and also ensure that those joining the register meet the required standards.

6. What is the Professional Standards Authority (PSA)?

The PSA “protect the public by overseeing the regulation and registration of healthcare professionals” (PSA, 2023).

Please see more detail on their website including a list of accredited registers: [Healthcare Regulation | Professional Standards Authority](#)

Their work includes:

- Reviewing the work of the regulators of health and care professionals
- Accrediting organisations that register practitioners in unregulated occupations
- Giving policy advice to Ministers and others and encouraging research to improve regulation.

The Professional Standards Authority (PSA) accredits registers of people working in health and social care who are not regulated by law so that participants, their GPs or other health professionals can have confidence choosing such services. The new Association will register with the PSA so that STH Practitioners are also given this recognition.

7. Can projects/organisations/groups join the register?

The register will be for individual practitioners. Projects or organisations will gain credibility for their STH services by being able to demonstrate that they are employing or working with registered practitioners.

Social Farms & Gardens host a Quality Mark scheme where organisations and STH projects can be self-assessed. [The Green Care Quality Mark | Social Farms & Gardens \(farmgarden.org.uk\)](#)

8. Will participants of services be involved?

We will be developing a plan of consultation to include participants in the development in the work of the new Association.

Once there is a Professional Standards Authority (PSA) accredited register in place, participants can also share their experiences directly with the PSA.

[Share your experience and feedback of accredited registers \(professionalstandards.org.uk\)](#)

9. What is the timeline for this work?

This is dependent on funding and further discussions between Trellis, Thrive, and the Professional Development Forum. We are currently developing a project plan in more detail and will continue to discuss this at forum meetings.

10. How much will it cost to join the register?

There will be significant costs associated with the creation and continued work of the Association and with accreditation by the PSA which will need to be met in part through register fees. However, this needs to be balanced with making the register accessible and beneficial to those wishing to register. We have been looking at the costs of other similar Associations worldwide and those of registers in the UK to provide benchmarks and we will work with Professional Development Forum to set fees at an appropriate level. This will be discussed further at future Forum meetings.

11. Can I join the Association if I don't want to be on the Register (yet)?

There will be a category of membership to allow those who are not practicing as an STH practitioner or do not yet feel ready to be on the public register to join the Association. This requires further work and discussion with the Forum members.