UK Association for Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (UK ASTH) Professional Development Forum Summary Notes, 28th April 2026

17 attendees

Topics: Recap/update, Continuous Professional Development (CPD), the role of the association

Chair: Ben Thomas, Thrive Notetaker: Emma Martindale, Trellis

1. Welcome, recap and update, Fiona Thackeray

Fiona updated the forum on progress towards establishing the UK Association for Social and Therapeutic Horticulture (UK ASTH) and its professional register. The association is intended to strengthen professional recognition, support consistent practice and provide reassurance to the public and organisations using therapeutic horticulture services.

The application forms and process for the different routes to registration will be road-tested. Participants also discussed the importance of making the register useful to practitioners as well as the public. A proposed benefit is permission for registrants to display an ASTH logo on their websites and materials, signalling registration; awareness of the logo will take time to develop.

2. Continuous Professional Development (CPD), Emma Martindale

Discussion supported a flexible, outcomes-focused approach to CPD that prioritises the quality and relevance of learning over simply counting hours. CPD expectations should be proportionate to the amount of work a practitioner undertakes and flexible enough to fit different roles, working patterns and requirements from other professional or awarding bodies.

Key points and suggestions from attendees:

- Focus on reflection, learning and outcomes: what are you working towards, how will you meet the need, how will you know it is working, and what difference has it made?
- Recognise varied forms of evidence and learning, including written reflection, photographs, diaries or notebooks, reading, and learning through practice.
- Offer simple recording options, potentially including a standard template or Excel spreadsheet, rather than requiring everyone to the same format.
- Use case studies as practical models and include guidance showing the different ways CPD can be recorded.
- Use supervision to set goals and identify development needs. Practitioners may also find it helpful to set aside dedicated time for professional development.
- CPD should be seen as supportive rather than a burden: quality, relevance and practical application are central.

3. The role of the Association, Fiona Thackeray

The association could help build a connected professional community for a workforce in which many people work alone. Participants highlighted the value of collective support, peer learning and reducing the isolation and mental-health risks that can accompany lone working.

Explore ways for registrants to find one another by geographical area and area of practice, enabling practitioner-led local networking.

Consider a way for practitioners to indicate whether they are willing to offer supervision, alongside potential collective supervision opportunities through Trellis/Thrive.

Ensure registration offers clear benefits to practitioners as well as protecting the public, including professional recognition and opportunities for connection and development.

A longer-term possibility raised was accreditation or registration for organisations, which could support confidence in referrals and help address situations where organisational expectations conflict with professional standards.

Reduced fees for Trellis/Thrive membership or training were noted as a potential benefit.

4. Summary and next steps

Continue developing the registration process and road-test application forms for the different routes.

Develop practical CPD guidance and examples, including case studies and accessible recording options such as a simple template or spreadsheet.

Consider how the register can support practitioner networking, peer/collective supervision and clear benefits for registrants.

Next forum: 27 October 2026, 6.30–8.00pm.

Recording: //www.youtube.com/watch?v=h7PB4OzjVl4