

# Growing Lives, Growing Potential



*The impact of the Growing Lives approach  
on developing skills and assets  
amongst adults with multiple needs*



**G**rowing Lives is an easy-entry learning project that provides mentoring and support alongside a range of skill-building activities such as gardening, woodwork and art.

The project is aimed at people who have faced homelessness and other issues like mental ill health, learning disabilities, social isolation, enduring health problems and low self-esteem. It offers a safe, supportive environment where people can build the skills and tools they need to make long-term changes to their lives, empowering them to set and pursue their own goals and reach their potential.

So far Growing Lives has been open to people in Erewash, Amber Valley and Derby City. Many participants are Derventio Housing Trust residents and clients. The project is based in Cotmanhay, Ilkeston, which has been identified as one of the most deprived wards in the country. Local councils and national Government have named it as a priority for interventions in employment and skills; health and wellbeing; safer communities and economic wellbeing. Its surrounding wards are all ranked in the lowest 10% or 20% in the Indices of Multiple Deprivation.

Our ultimate aim is to help people who are facing these problems to increase their resilience and lead happy and fulfilled lives by addressing common barriers, such as:

- ▶ Lack of skills and confidence
- ▶ Boredom and social isolation
- ▶ Poor physical and mental health or wellbeing

During the past year we have monitored performance, measured outcomes and consulted with participants. This has given us a clear picture of the impact of the project on beneficiaries and the local community. Our findings, outlined in this report, will help us to shape the future of the project and attract support.

*“ I was really impressed by Growing Lives, the set up is amazing. Growing Lives can help people gain experience in a wide range of areas, not only in regards to work experience but personal experience too, it's clear to see there are real benefits to the project. ”*

**Andrew Tuck, Employer Accountant for Acorn Training**

# The Growing Lives Approach

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Speaking to participants and staff and carefully keeping track of outcomes has helped us to develop an effective programme that achieves results. We have used our experience to develop what we call the SPARK approach:

## Support

Our staff team have used their expertise, experience and compassion to turn Growing Lives into a place where people feel safe, valued and listened to. Each participant receives person-centred support.

## Participate

We have made the project as inclusive as possible by providing transport and equipment, and holding small-group sessions. We use participant feedback, surveys and consultation to design and shape the project.

## Assets

Growing Lives focuses on the existing skills and potential of participants, instead of their needs and problems. The goals of the activities and support are based around skill-building, personal development and working towards a positive future.

## Resilience

Growing Lives supports people to be able to cope with the ups and downs of life and adapt to stress and adversity. This is particularly important for people who are facing social isolation or have mental health conditions.

## Knowledge

Each activity is designed to build soft skills such as teamwork, and to help participants learn something new. This learning and skill-building will have a positive impact on each participant, and will help them to move towards their learning and employment goals.

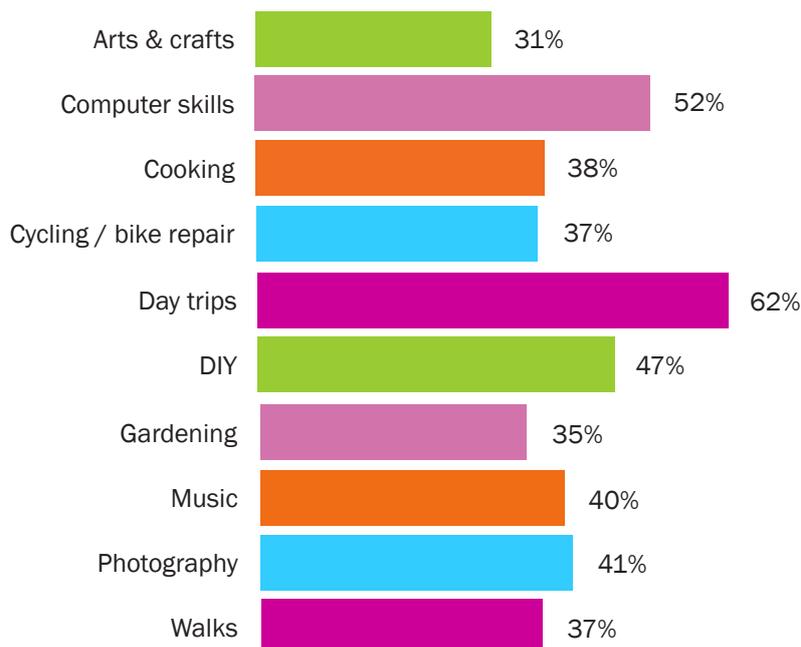
# Design through Consultation

We always listen closely to people. We developed Growing Lives in 2013 in response to what people wanted, and participants have shaped the project through their views and suggestions. We gather and use feedback from people's comments each day. In a recent consultation, the things people said would help the most were:

- ▶ Everything on one site
- ▶ Transport for people with a disability or living far away
- ▶ Open 5 days a week
- ▶ A safe supportive environment, with understanding and compassionate staff
- ▶ Easy-access taster sessions
- ▶ Access to further training and education opportunities
- ▶ More information for potential beneficiaries
- ▶ Better opportunity to develop social networks



## Most Requested Activities



# Meeting Local and National Priorities

## Health and Wellbeing

Through Growing Lives' ongoing commitment to personal development, promoting healthy activity and building resilience, the project impacts positively on key health priorities:

- ▶ Building community assets
- ▶ Promoting recovery through provision of local services
- ▶ Adopting a whole person approach
- ▶ Promoting healthier lifestyles
- ▶ Improving mental and physical wellbeing

## Recovery

In line with Derbyshire's commitment to develop the recovery community, Growing Lives promotes the five ways to wellbeing:

- ▶ **Being connected:** social relationships are critical for promoting wellbeing and for acting as a buffer against mental ill health for people of all ages.
- ▶ **Being active:** exercise is essential for slowing age-related cognitive decline and for promoting wellbeing.
- ▶ **Taking notice:** heightened awareness enhances self-understanding and allows the making of positive choices based on your own values and motivations.
- ▶ **Learning:** continued learning through life enhances self-esteem and encourages social interaction and a more active life.

- ▶ **Giving:** individuals who report a greater interest in helping others are more likely to rate themselves as happy. Research into actions for promoting happiness has shown that committing an act of kindness once a week over a six-week period is associated with an increase in wellbeing.

## Skills and Employment

Growing Lives supports the overarching Employment and Skills Strategy for Derby and Derbyshire by:

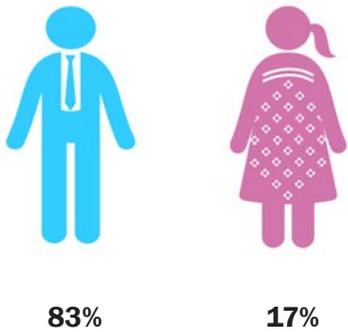
- ▶ Supporting people, particularly those furthest from the labour market, to overcome barriers to employment such as health and wellbeing and skills interventions
- ▶ Promoting volunteering, work experience and work tasters as routes into employment
- ▶ Supporting people in hard times, particularly those facing financial exclusion and the impacts of welfare reform and to support the needs of communities facing economic and social exclusion



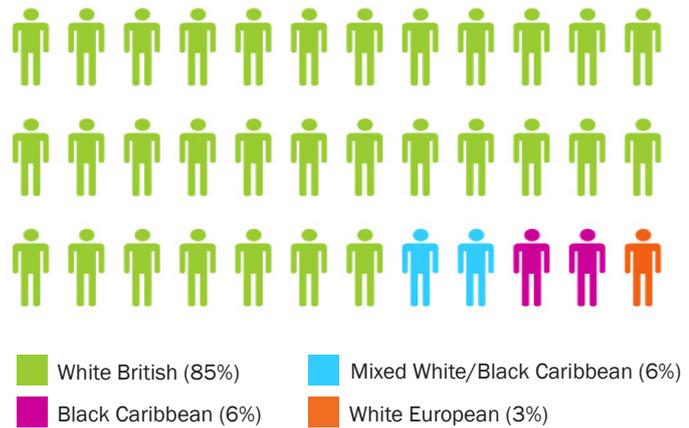
# Who We Work With

In the 12 months from April 2015, 36 individuals have accessed Growing Lives and benefited from our approach. Every participant has their own unique history, current circumstances and aspirations. Most come to us with multiple needs and are amongst those furthest away from the labour market.

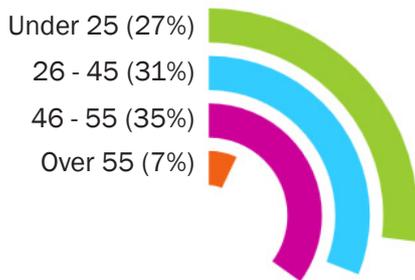
## Gender



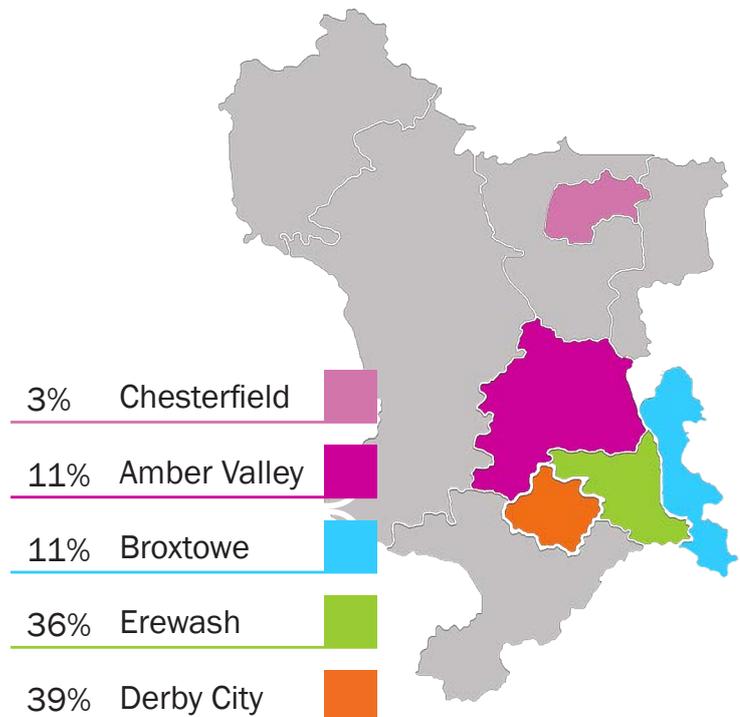
## Ethnicity



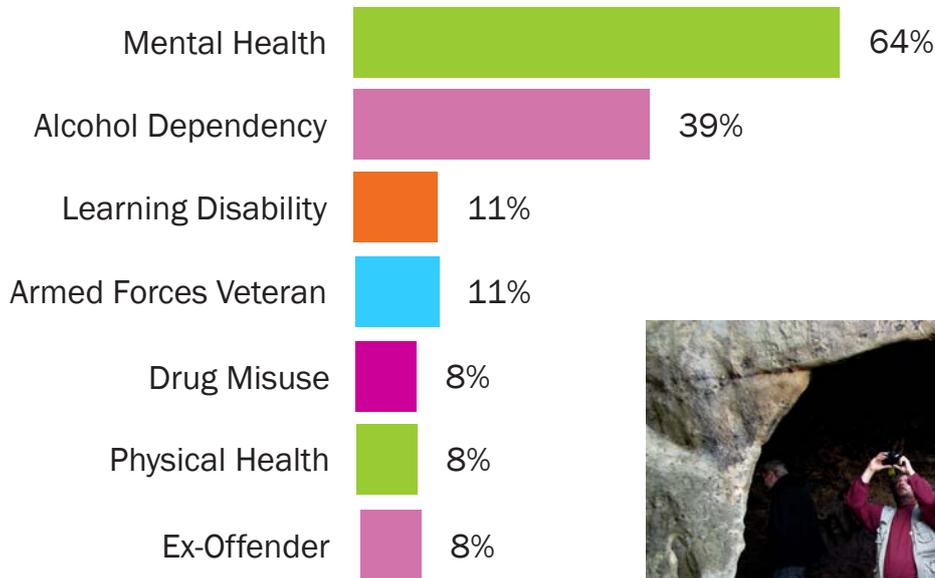
## Age Range



## Home



## Barriers Faced



Many of the people who access Growing Lives have more than one barrier.



Paul moved to Erewash with his partner about three years ago. Everything was good at first, but after a while they started to drift apart and have arguments. She told him to leave their home, and Paul was left homeless.

Paul went to the council and they put him in touch with Derventio Housing Trust. Derventio provides housing and support for people who are homeless - we moved him into a shared home and his support worker Emma started to work with Paul to address his problems. One of the first things she did was tell him about Growing Lives.

Paul gets involved with everything that Growing Lives has to offer, from photography to tending to the chickens: "Because of Growing Lives my confidence and motivation have gone through the roof. There's a real sense of satisfaction, and staff recap on the day so you see what's been achieved. With me having epilepsy and dyslexia as well, it keeps my mind busy and gives me a sense of achievement. I want to take the experience and the things I've learned and do something similar as a job - a handyman role or something similar."

## Paul's Story

# Making a Difference

Growing Lives promotes skill-building and learning and helps people to achieve positive change in their lives. We work to release people's untapped potential and help people to move closer to employment.

As well as improved employability, participants benefit from better mental health and wellbeing, increased confidence and self-esteem, and they gain tangible new skills that they can use in their day-to-day life.

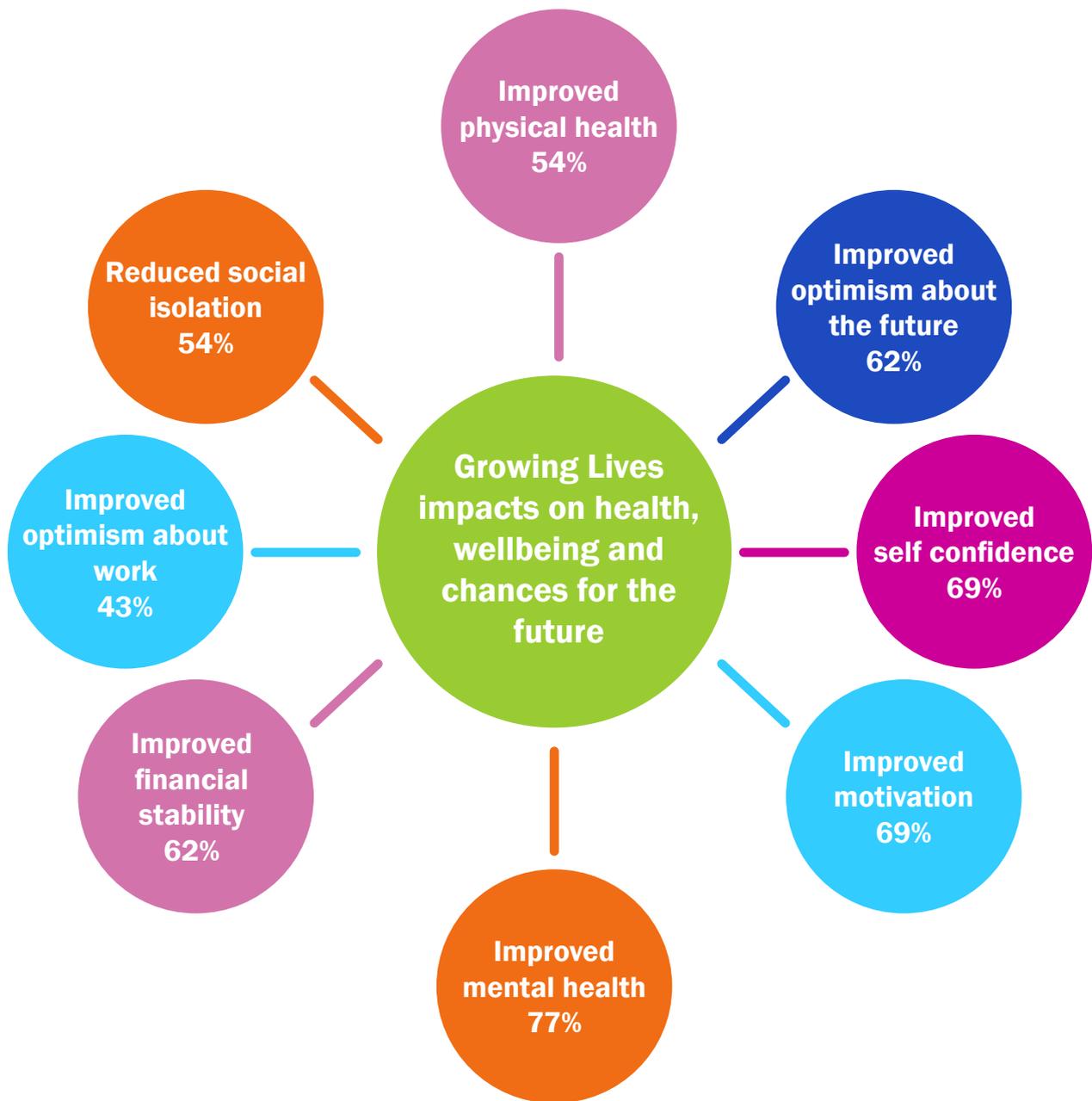


Growing Lives leads to the following benefits:

- ▶ Improved physical activity
- ▶ Improved mental health and wellbeing
- ▶ Improved social skills
- ▶ Improved access to education/employment
- ▶ Improved resilience
- ▶ Reduction in substance misuse

*I had bad depression, so life was hard and feeling that things weren't going my way*

*I was really up and down emotionally*



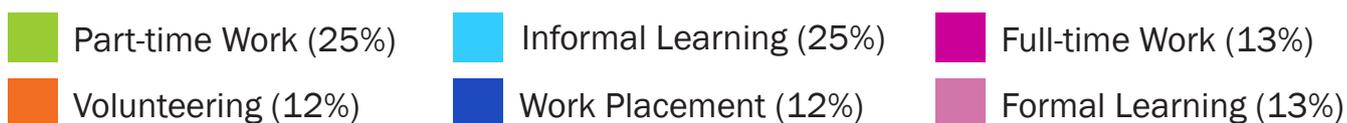
*“ I feel loads better in myself and have been off medication for a long while. I am happier and able to cope with the ups and downs of life. ”*



## Moving on from Growing Lives

Growing Lives is a flexible project and people can come for as long as it suits them. However we are always pleased when people progress in their lives. In 2015/16 26 people moved on from Growing Lives, 32% positively, typically moving on to further learning, work-like activity or employment.

### Positive Exits



**“** It’s changed my perspective on what I want to do. I want to do something similar as a job. Growing Lives gets you work ready. **”**

# Case Studies

## A, Male, 26



### Before Growing Lives

A was long-term unemployed and suffered with anxiety and depression. He was referred to Growing Lives through Derventio's Talent Match programme, which supports young people into employment.

### At Growing Lives

A started Growing Lives as a participant in April 2015. He then took on a work placement on the project which he completed in six months later. A enjoyed being in the garden planting and harvesting. By the time he completed his work placement he was leading small groups in garden activities.

### Outcome

A has successfully secured full-time employment with Derventio Housing Trust, which has impacted positively on his mental wellbeing.

### Social Value of Outcome

**£47,533**

## D, Female, 24

### Before Growing Lives

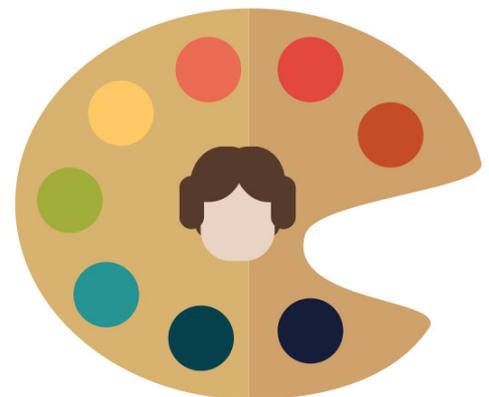
D lacked self esteem, felt isolated and did not have the confidence to try new things because of her learning disability.

### At Growing Lives

D began to access Growing Lives in 2013. The project gave a nurturing and safe environment where she could try things for the first time, such as mosaics and photography. D says that she feels that she is doing something worthwhile.

### Outcome

As a result of her experiences and increased self confidence developed through participation on Growing Lives, D has a better social life and has now moved to independent accommodation. She also volunteers with Derby Healthwatch.



### Social Value of Outcome

**£22,784**

## C, Male, 28

### Before Growing Lives

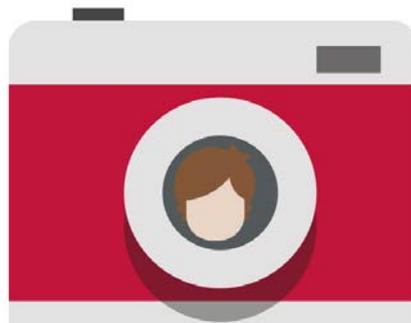
C experienced mental health problems, including anxiety and depression. He self medicated with alcohol.

### At Growing Lives

C was one of the first residents who moved into the house adjacent to Growing Lives, giving him easy access to the project. He built his confidence by taking part in the different activities on offer. However, it was the Change the Picture photography course funded by Arts Council England where C really blossomed.

### Outcome

C has now stopped drinking and his mental health is much improved. He now has part-time employment in the hospitality sector.



### Social Value of Outcome

**£64,129**

## H, Male, 24

### Before Growing Lives

H first came to Derventio as a young homeless person. He was working hard to become more independent, and so he asked his support worker if he could go to Growing Lives.

### At Growing Lives

H really came out of his shell when he was involved in building the chicken coop. He loved being in the workshop and learning new skills.

### Outcome

H is now in part-time employment and holds his own tenancy on Derventio's Rooms4Two scheme.

### Social Value of Outcome

**£8,576**



# Social Value of Growing Lives

***“Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a method for measuring and communicating a broad concept of value that incorporates social, environmental and economic impacts. It is a way of accounting for the value created by our activities and the contributions that made that activity possible”***

**(Social Impact Scotland)**

For a project of this sort it is important that we are able to show the social value. We have entered Growing Lives data collected from the beginning of April 2015 into the HACT Social Value Calculator 2015.

The Social Value Bank, developed by HACT and Simetrica, is the largest set of methodologically consistent social value metrics ever produced. It is used by the social housing sector and beyond as a tool to enable a greater understanding of the impact and value of community investment activities.

This tool has helped us to calculate the social value of regular participation for the 36 people who accessed the project over the last 12 months.

**£54,540**

The value of 36 people taking up a hobby

**£63,666**

The value of 18 people taking regular exercise

**£23,987**

The value of 17 people taking up gardening

**£63,828**

The value of 36 people having regular contact with the voluntary sector

**“ A typical day would consist of 12+ hours sleep, mostly during daylight hours. Waking life would at best involve incessant TV watching and cannabis/alcohol consumption, and at worst self-harm and suicide ideation. I felt very pessimistic and did not hold out much hope about my future or everyday life. ”**





These figures clearly show the significant impact that Growing Lives has had on the wider community.

**£19,570**

The value of 8 people moving to further learning and work-like activity

**£199,520**

The value of 16 people gaining more control of their lives

**// I am getting nearer to my old self. There are still times when I do feel low but not as much. Thinking more clearer now. Putting on weight slowly //**

**£281,974**

The value of 14 people improving their physical health

**£522,480**

The value of 20 people improving their mental health

Figures calculated using *Community investment values from the Social Value Bank*; Authors: HACT and Daniel Fujiwara ([www.hact.org.uk](http://www.hact.org.uk)/[www.simetrica.co.uk](http://www.simetrica.co.uk))  
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