

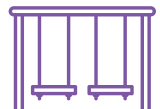
# Young, Green, and Well

## Post-event toolkit

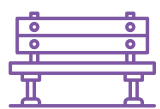
### Key findings

- ▶ Young Londoners shared that they are aware of the mental health benefits of green spaces but struggle to prioritise their mental wellbeing due to responsibilities, expectations, and workloads that leave them with little time to focus on themselves.
- ▶ They consistently stated that the public sector should be the primary provider and maintainer of green spaces and that other organisations can provide programming.
- ▶ They reported feeling like they are “aging out” of green spaces once they hit a certain age (e.g., 14 or 15), and other park users making them feel unwelcome like they are not allowed to access some structures/facilities.
- ▶ They mentioned that broken or poorly maintained facilities and equipment, litter, graffiti, vandalism, dog waste, and broken fences discouraged them from visiting green spaces, and negatively affected their mental health and wellbeing.

### Top recommendations



To identify where there is poor access to, or exclusion of young people from, green space design, maintenance, management, and decision making so that positive changes can be implemented.



To provide shelters, all-weather spaces, and tree canopy cover for protection during wet, windy, or sunny weather, and provide places to sit and socialise.



To help young people to prioritise spending time in green spaces as part of their daily routine for mental health benefit and promoting green social prescribing providers and activities to them.

## Download the report: Young, Green, and Well

### Programme

Report launch on 19 October 2022, at the Mental Health Foundation

Speakers	Designation
Mark Rowland	CEO, Mental Health Foundation
Joanne McCartney	Deputy Mayor for Children and Families, Greater London Authority
Hamida Diriye	Young Persons Health Project Officer, Parks for London

### Recording



Click to watch the [event recording](#), and download the presentation slides [here](#).

### Q&A

Below are some questions from the audience and answers from our panelists: Moska Saidy (research participant, aged 19) and the report’s co-authors, Hamida Diriye and Dr Meredith Whitten, Researcher in Residence at Parks for London.

#### “ What are some of your fondest memories in green spaces?

Moska: Most of my fondest memories in green spaces are from my childhood. During my childhood, green spaces were the default thing. Whenever there was an event—if there was a birthday party we’d have a water fight in the local park, a weekly picnic with my family and meet up with some family friends—whatever it might be, it’s always at a green space.

#### “ Are there any influential people, now or in your childhood, that helped you use green spaces more?

Moska: My parents love green spaces—that was definitely a driving factor. In terms of school, my primary school was quite small, and they pushed green spaces on us because the park was right outside, so you’d finish school and go play in the park for about two hours.

A key individual at this school was a Teaching Assistant who really loved gardening and she was the one who introduced it into our school. She made flowerbeds across the school and started a compost initiative. We all used to get so excited about the compost bins and throwing our orange peels in there because you’d open the bin, and you’d see ladybugs and worms. She was really helpful as she explained the science, the biology, and ecosystems behind it.

#### “ How do you prefer to get information about what’s happening in parks?

Moska: To make sure that activities are accessible through digital means such as social media and newsletters so that young people can hear about it before visiting the park, as well as on notice boards so they are aware of activities happening now or in the future while they are in the park.

Hamida: Loads of young people said that they wanted a variety of different methods to find out what activities are happening in their local parks—having it only on social media, for example, is not ideal as they might miss it.

#### “ What kind of influence do young people want to have and in what ways do they wish to get involved?

Hamida: Young people often described not knowing what changes are happening in their local green spaces. Changes and decisions are made without their influence. It was important to them to be a part of the whole process—more than just a consultation. They are a key stakeholder and should be in the room when things are being decided.

Meredith: Young people often talked about wanting to get involved in the community group or the friend’s group, but it is really inconvenient as meetings are happening during school or work hours. There was also a perception of being seen as the “token young person.”

We should be mindful that the age group we studied was 16–25 and a big portion of this group is no longer engaging in the education system. We naturally want to equate young age with school age and that is not the whole story about this group. So, it’s equally important to be engaging young professionals as much as we engage the school-aged young people.

Moska: It’s important to make meetings accessible to young people, and perhaps have a forum where they can post their thoughts and suggestions.

#### “ Did young people discuss funding of green spaces?

Hamida: There was a strong sense that local councils and the government should be taking care of green spaces more, that relying on the volunteering sector alone is not the way forward, and that we are overburdening them as they shouldn’t be a bandage for the whole system.

Meredith: Poorly maintained green spaces had a negative effect on their mental health and wellbeing. They connected the lack of funding, investment, maintenance very directly with making them feel worse than if they hadn’t gone to the green space.

## Contribute to the Action Plan