

A large, stylized yellow hand graphic is positioned in the upper left and center of the page. The hand is open, with fingers spread, and is rendered in a bright yellow color against the orange background. The graphic is semi-transparent, allowing the orange background to show through it.

Parks for Health

Marketing for Wellbeing Guide



The Islington and Camden Parks for Health (PfH) project is one of eight Future Parks Accelerator (FPA) projects chosen across the UK that are finding new ways to manage and fund parks and open spaces across entire towns and cities.



Camden [shared assets]

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following contributors to this guide- Catherine Graham (Castlehaven Community Association), Kate Comer (Yes Club Yoga) and Kim Segel (Wilmington Square Community Gardening Club). Together, they have used their experience and knowledge as practitioners in the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector to contribute to producing this advice and guidance.

How to use this guide?

This guide is aimed at organisations from the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector. You can use this guide:

- As a resource providing ideas, tools and guidance for the everyday delivery of activities or services,
- As a tool for further further research or funding applications, using the website links contained in this guide.

Who is the guide for?

Are you currently delivering wellbeing activities in parks or interested in starting a wellbeing activity in a park? Then this guide is for you - particularly if you want to understand more about how to promote and market your activities to improve the number of people involved and the quality of experience they have.

This guide has been created by members of the voluntary, charitable and social enterprise sector in Camden and Islington who currently hold wellbeing activities in parks.



Introduction

People look to parks for their physical activity and opportunities to be in the fresh air.

Nature has also been a source of solace and calm for many, as more people became more aware of their local park during the Covid-19 pandemic. Many activities such as yoga, mindfulness and exercise classes have been practiced outdoors in parks and green spaces.

Meeting up in a park is a popular place for family members and friends to catch up with each other, and the recent increased interest in nature conservation and outdoor volunteering opportunities has encouraged community groups and others to trial and test more activities in a park setting. This exemplifies how being outdoors in parks and other green spaces can provide space and opportunities for activities that improve wellbeing.

Why Parks for Health?

Parks are a crucial part of the urban infrastructure for health provision and provide the context for residents to make healthier decisions. Investment in parks and green space therefore presents a cost effective opportunity to promote health and wellbeing.

Parks allow people to be generally active and maintain fitness:

Contact with parks for two hours per week reduces the risk of poor health by 45%.

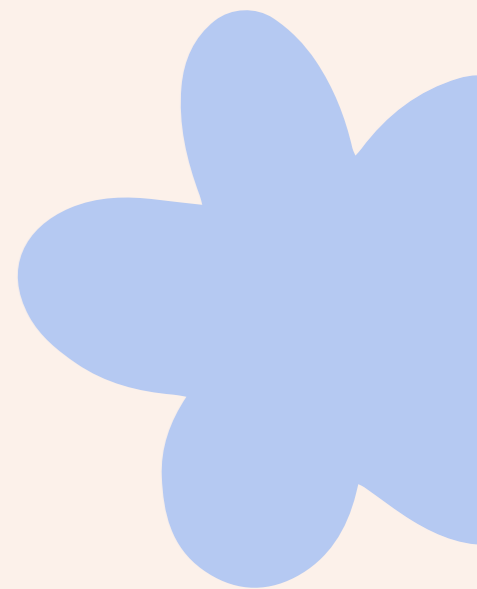
Use of parks cuts the risk of heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes by 50%.

Use of parks at least weekly is associated with a 43% lower risk of poor general health.

Parks offer an opportunity to practise the NHS five steps to mental health and wellbeing: connect with other people; be physically active; learn new skills; give to others; pay attention to the present moment (mindfulness)

Parks are an excellent place to be active, which cuts the risk of dementia and Alzheimers disease, heart disease, stroke, bowel, breast and womb cancer, type 2 diabetes and other health conditions.

(Source: Parks in Camden)





What do we mean by wellbeing activities?

Wellbeing activities include any activity that improve mental, physical or emotional health – or a combination of all three!

Examples of wellbeing activities

Yoga in the park

Kate from YES Club has been delivering yoga classes in some of Camden and Islington's parks - she explains how her classes impact the health and wellbeing of the community:

"My wellbeing classes are gentle movement based and include yoga, pilates and mindfulness to promote strength and flexibility in mind, body and spirit. These are accessible to everyone."

Therapeutic gardening

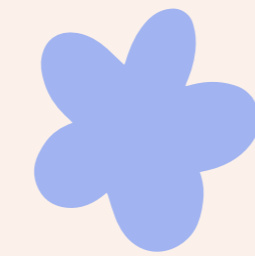
Catherine from Castlehaven Community Association has been delivering wellbeing activities based on therapeutic gardening:

"Get Fit, Get Active, Get Gardening is a bespoke therapeutic gardening sessions for groups such as Mind in Camden. The sessions are every Wednesday in the community park and aimed at anyone wanting to improve their physical and mental health wellbeing."

Other projects

Castlehaven Community Association is planning to run a project in 2022 in partnership with the Camden and Islington NHS Recovery College which works with people recovering from mental ill health.

The Gardening for Wellbeing sessions will be delivered at Castlehaven using the horticultural hub and cover topics such as Caring for Houseplants, Growing Vegetables and Herbal Tea and Mindfulness.



How do green spaces impact our health and wellbeing?

A causal model of the impacts of urban spaces on health and wellbeing

The diagram demonstrates the processes that enable green spaces to impact the health and wellbeing of humans, from specific characteristics of a green space through to the different aspects of health and wellbeing that are affected.

The diagram underlines the importance of the many different aspects of a park that can be important for wellbeing activities and the journey that unfolds from the characteristics of a green space that influence the environmental, social and economic impacts. Those impacts will then affect the health and wellbeing of humans and organisms around the green space. For example, accessibility issues such as bus routes and toilet facilities could be important to note as potential barriers to people attending park activities and the extent to which they can participate in a healthy lifestyle and experience health and wellbeing benefits.

(Source: WHO Europe: Urban green spaces: a brief for action 2017)



How to market wellbeing activities

Step 1. Research

Research Checklist

As a first step, you may want to carry out some research. Ask yourself:

- ✿ What are the needs of the local community? How can those needs be met?
- ✿ What is going on already in your local area?
- ✿ Who do you want to target?
- ✿ Are there groups of individuals who you could support by adapting your activity?
- ✿ Can your activity be adapted to the outdoors?
- ✿ You may also want to focus on long term behaviour change and relationship building. Can you partner up with another practitioner to run a joint project? For example, Castlehaven Community Association in Camden will have a social prescriber based at the centre from early 2022 working in partnership with the Prince of Wales GP practice.
- ✿ Let the social prescriber know what activities you offer, and what positive outcomes you are aiming for so they can refer individuals to your activity.



How to market wellbeing activities

Step 2. Adapt your marketing materials to your target audience

Target Audience Checklist

- ✿ Use a combination of marketing methods, e.g. posters on notice boards in parks, leaflets or email newsletters.
- ✿ Use social media networks like Nextdoor to advertise events and activities. Use appropriate and varied means of communication e.g. ensuring you are targeting your communications to people in the local area, local online groups, local cafe notice boards, etc.

- ✿ Try to avoid relying solely on social media to promote activities as it is not always age friendly. Some communities may not have access to private computers or smartphones.
- ✿ Consider translating your flyers into other languages to be circulated in schools, community centres, medical practices etc.
- ✿ Run a taster session to create opportunities for someone who may be more hesitant to join a new group.
- ✿ Have a stall at a community event and do a demonstration of the activity.
- ✿ Build up your membership, and set up an email list to share news and announcements.
- ✿ Be patient! It can take a while to build up attendance to an activity, which can be a challenge if it is a time limited project.
- ✿ Get to know other organisations in your community you can partner with and who can help promote your wellbeing activity – do they have a regular newsletter or website which can be used to promote your programme?
- ✿ Local leaders are a good point of contact. This can include religious leaders or organisers of a community garden, local walks or other activities. They can communicate and mobilise the client base more effectively.
- ✿ Have flyers to hand when delivering your activity so you can hand them out when you meet neighbours in the park.
- ✿ Integrate the health and wellbeing benefits of your activities and outdoor spaces in your communications.

How to market wellbeing activities

Step 3. Consider the benefits of location



Location Checklist



- ✿ What are the benefits of the park's location and the ease of hosting activities there?
- ✿ Are there inside/covered alternatives available to you in the case of poor weather?
- ✿ Is your activity inclusive? In term of age, religion, race, gender, sexuality, people with disabilities, people with children?
- ✿ Is there storage for equipment used by park groups?
- ✿ What are the park's problems and assets? You could carry out a SWOT analysis (an analysis of its strengths and weaknesses, and its external opportunities and threats)
- ✿ Can you use a shelter or similar structure if there is one?
- ✿ What permissions, information or licensing need to be addressed if you require music or other features? (Each council will have different requirements)
- ✿ Is the location accessible in terms of travel? Bus routes, bike paths etc. And in terms of wheelchair access, buggy access?
- ✿ Does the parks location have accessible facilities such as disabled toilets and baby changing facilities?



Case study

Socially prescribed yoga class in Caledonian Park

By Kate Comer, trained yoga, mindfulness and wellbeing teacher for all ages and abilities.



About the project

In partnership with Islington Council, YES Club's wellbeing classes started a pilot for some socially prescribed activities in September 2020. These were for the local community, inclusive of everyone, and free of charge. They took place weekly in the fantastic visitors centre at Caledonian Park, which

had been closed to the public since the first lockdown. This meant they weren't beholden to the weather, which was fantastic but it isn't that common that parks have such a space available. It is a particularly beautiful space with large windows just by the clock tower and it has a toilet, storage and a café nearby.



The challenges

My wellbeing, yoga and mindfulness classes were well appreciated but not as well attended as we would've liked.

There were a few contributing factors here: Firstly, it was tricky for people to get prescribed by their GPs as they were backlogged from Covid; so I am not sure how much prescribing or promotion took place. Secondly, people were perhaps concerned about being inside and not necessarily aware that these classes were able to go on (in the first lockdown everything had closed down). Lastly, my class was preceded by another yoga class hosted by Age UK.

It was decided to make these classes open to everyone, including people not socially prescribed, so promotion/marketing was needed. We printed flyers and posted them locally in the doctor's surgery, the local shops and cafés and on the notice board of flats.

Things were difficult as there was a lockdown again and I think people were cautious and uncertain. Eventually the project closed due to further lockdown restrictions so the sessions hardly had time to get going.

What worked well?

It was a lovely project and the feedback from those that attended was very positive. People were particularly happy about getting out and socialising again after the long first lockdown.

One attendee said she had felt quite isolated and lonely and coming to the park to do yoga had many positive effects, including helping alleviate her anxiety, reduce stress and give her a purpose and meaning to life. Another attendee who was pregnant was really pleased to be able to go to a class as she had previously had to shield. She said it was truly a blessing to get out, to move and to enjoy the local park and she couldn't believe more people hadn't jumped on the opportunity.

There are so many wonderful wellbeing benefits from coming to parks and participating in activities; from helping to lift one's mood, to promoting positive social interaction and much more. I truly believe pre-Covid the sessions would have been better attended and had a chance to grow and be a real asset to the community.



Case study

Wilmington Square Community Gardening Club

By Kim Segel, founder of Wilmington Square Community Gardening Club.



About the project

Over the pandemic and in particular lockdown, the Square was used by countless people through the day. It was a genuine haven: people were relaxing, meeting and exercising, or just walking or observing the nature around them. I noticed two things. The first was that if the garden was already littered, people tended to be less careful about their own refuse. The second was that although a much appreciated space, it looked unloved. So I started to litter pick, and I started to “guerilla garden”. I started weeding and planting without express permission to make the area more attractive. I occasionally got assistance from neighbours, especially from kids who were keen to dig and sow seeds. I was particularly interested in planting flowers to both beautify the garden and attract pollinating insects.

After a short time, I saw the benefits of formalising what I was doing. Although still in its infancy, the Wilmington Square Community Gardening Club was born. I made contact with the council and met with the park ranger, got Public Liability insurance by tucking the club under the auspices of an existing community group (with a constitution and bank account),

and created a Facebook page. I sought donations of seeds and tools using social media and most importantly, I let people know what I was doing.

What worked well?

We have done a number of gardening days with one very large autumn bulb planting and clearing day. We planted 20kg of daffodils. We have got some seeds and bulbs as well as a few tools donated, and secured a safe place to store these close to the Square. We asked the local Co-op to donate post-work snacks so that we could socialise after the gardening to build community relationships.

To publicise the event, we put up posters around the neighbourhood, on estate and community notice boards, posted on social media including on Nextdoor, and we personally invited people in our networks.

The autumn gardening event was so successful that people asked to be notified of further activities. The working group was diverse and people participated for as long as they wished, with most staying through the morning. People met new neighbours, chatted and worked together and reported that they enjoyed their activities.

Learning library

Health and wellbeing

Link 1:

The NHS provides self help tools and guides on health and wellbeing.

Link 5:

The Five Ways to wellbeing as set out by What works wellbeing.

Link 2:

The Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust provides definitions of wellbeing.

Link 6:

The Five Ways to wellbeing by National Park City.

Link 3:

Health and wellbeing information provided by National Parks, England.

Link 7:

A New Scientist article explaining how green spaces can improve mental health.

Link 4:

The Mind Charity enlists the Five Ways to Wellbeing.

Link 8:

The notion of the 15 minute city and what it may mean for London.

How to market and promote

Link 1:

The Parks Community organisation provides marketing material advice to friends of parks groups.

Link 2:

A guide by the Parks Community to assist London 'friends of' groups promote their green spaces.

Link 3:

London National Park City website which provides info for those running activities in parks in London.



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