

# The Conservation Volunteers

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*Connecting people and green spaces*



# The Conservation Volunteers (TCV)

We bring people together to create, improve and care for green spaces.



Our teams of dedicated, passionate staff and volunteers work with communities across England, Northern Ireland and Scotland, and through our community network, we support local community groups across the UK.





In 2019 we worked with....

101,000 people

23,000 school children

14% of our registered volunteers are from a BAME community

18% of our registered volunteers have a disability

25% of our registered volunteers are in the top 20% most deprived UK areas

65% of our registered volunteers commit their time on a regular basis

7,000 employees from partner organisations volunteer their time for our cause

100+ partner organisations work with TCV across the UK

...and celebrated 60 years of conservation work!





## We have transformed...

1,500 green spaces in UK communities

Delivering 130,000 volunteer days at 12,500 projects

120m of dry stone wall built or repaired

60 ponds improved

66,000 trees planted

56km of footpath constructed or built

40 hectares of woodland managed

50 hectares of meadow managed

6.75km of hedgerow planted or laid

15km of waterways improved

1000 homes for nature improved

224,000 trees distributed to community groups, contributing to...

...over 1 million trees in the past 4 years!

TCV's Green Gym™ was originally set up in partnership with Dr William Bird in 1998 on Sonning Common.

The aim: to prescribe group based outdoor activity (ideally with a purpose) instead of or as well as more traditional medical routes.

TCV now has around 100 TCV led and community led Green Gyms in the UK.

*Sonning Common Community Green Gym - celebrating its 20th anniversary.*



**GREEN  
GYM™**



“Group based physical activity with a purpose”

← Three to four hour sessions →



**Social Return On Investment:**

For every **£1** spent on Green Gym, **£4.02** is returned  
*Social, Environmental & Economic\* outcomes (NEF).*

*"(Volunteering with TCV) has made me look at the urban environment with a fresh eye and made me meet people outside my usual circle.*

*The mixture of exercise and socialisation by stealth where you are engaged in a common task has improved my physical and psychological wellbeing, giving me a reason to leave the house on a Tuesday."*

**Andrew, volunteer**



*"I have completely enjoyed the volunteering days with the TCV. It's not always easy or comfortable work, but we always leave with a sense of achievement and pride.*

*I have learned that a little mud, rain and cold temperatures won't stop a determined group of volunteers in making a real difference"*

**Sean, Green Gym volunteer**



# Trust Me I'm A Doctor

The BBC commissioned a study, undertaken by the University of Westminster on “how to beat stress”. Over an 8-week period participants took part in:

- Green Gym (structured, group-based conservation activity),
- Yoga
- Mindfulness
- Control Group



"Just 8 weeks of participation in TCV's Green Gym showed clear enhancements in the cortisol awakening response which is beneficial for health and well-being. Participants also reported marked reductions in anxiety, as well as reduced feeling of stress.

This study looked at mental health, however, the physical activity and social nature of Green Gym is likely to have many other health benefits that warrant further research."



Professor Angela Clow – University of Westminster

# Review of the impact of TCV's Green Gym™ programme

The University of Westminster and Essex University reviewed the data from 892 different volunteers who'd taken part in the Green Gym programme over four years.

- Key findings:
  - TCV's volunteers had **significantly lower mental wellbeing prior to starting the GG programme**, as measured by Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS), and this was **significantly lower than UK normative values**
  - By the first follow up point on average three months later these SWEMWBS scores had **increased to be in line with the UK average**
  - Importantly the evidence also suggested that the increases in wellbeing were sustained for over a year
  - ONS measures also showed significant increases in personal wellbeing and satisfaction with social life. There were also increases in happiness and reductions in anxiety, but these were not statistically significant



# Camden Green Gym

An average of  
12 registered  
volunteers  
attend each  
session

Covers around  
40 small  
reserves, parks  
and gardens  
across Camden

Weekly  
sessions on  
Tuesdays and  
Thursdays

Works closely  
with Friends of  
Groups to  
support their  
work

Runs a  
programme of  
open-access  
nature skills  
workshops and  
wildlife surveys

Works closely  
with a social  
prescribers and  
rereferral  
agencies



# Waltham Forest Nature Conservation Contract

3 Green Gyms based in parks running weekly sessions

10 sessions per month with the Biodiversity Action Team

Programme of family and adult learning and an under 5's club

Support of Friends of Groups – training, forum and practical sessions

School sessions at two parks

A weekly over 50's club



## Adult Learning

**Sun 5th May Dawn Chorus. 5am-7.30am**  
Join us for our annual dawn chorus walk and talk with local birder Tim Harris. We'll identify bird song as we stroll round the park spotting birds. Followed by a free light breakfast.  
*Meet Sam at main entrance to park by William Morris Gallery on Forest Road*

**Sat 15th Brilliant Bees 11am-1pm**  
Join Lloyd Park's Community Gardener to celebrate the brilliance of bees. We'll learn about the different types of British bees, how they support our health and wellbeing and what we can do to support them in our city gardens by exploring bee friendly planting in the park. We'll finish with a cold drink and honey tasting.  
*Meet by the stables building next to the tennis courts.*

**Fri 9th Aug Bat Night 8.30-11pm**  
We'll take an evening stroll through Lloyd Park using detectors to locate and identify bats.  
*Meet 8.30pm at main entrance to park outside William Morris Gallery on Forest Road*

**Sat 14th Sept Edible Plants and Foraging 11am-1pm**  
Lloyd Park's Community Gardener will introduce us to sustainable and responsible foraging, including a tour of the park to discover which common plants are edible. We'll finish with nettle tea and time to share ideas and recipes.  
*Meet by the stables building next to the tennis courts.*

## How to get involved

All our events are organised on behalf of the London Borough of Waltham Forest by The Conservation Volunteers.

For more information about any of the events please get in touch with Vicky Peet on 07870 678 571 or e-mail [v.peet@tcv.org.uk](mailto:v.peet@tcv.org.uk)

All activities are FREE\* and all are welcome to join in on the day. We will try to accommodate everyone BUT all activities are on a first-come basis. \*Donations are kindly welcomed.

All events take place in:

## Events in the park

April 2019 – March 2020

# Thanks for listening...



# GREEN GYM

## Green Gym Evaluation Summary



‘Fitter and better outside’

# Introduction

We have become significantly less healthy as a nation owing to changing lifestyles and working conditions. Much work is now sedentary, with people tied to computers; cars, buses and trains take us around with minimum physical effort; and too many people eat cheap, calorie dense fast food. The result is an epidemic of obesity and related health conditions that the NHS struggles to address with the usual medical model, which tends to treat symptoms and not causes. Type 2 diabetes, musculoskeletal disorders, some cancers and other conditions are largely preventable and can be mitigated by active lifestyles that address both physical and mental wellbeing.

Green Gym does this by bringing people together to take part in outdoor activities that bring sustainable improvements to local green spaces. The programme, which is underpinned by social action theory, reduces isolation, increases fitness and psychological wellbeing, improves people's health knowledge and develops sustainable community-led groups. TCV is proud of Green Gym and the benefits it delivers. This has been reinforced over the past year with recognition such as a health and wellbeing award from the Royal Society for Public Health and achieving level 2 on the Nesta Standards of Evidence. We are now working with several NHS Trusts and local authorities to support the health and social care sector more directly in preventive health and social support programmes.

**Craig Lister, Managing Director of Green Gym**

# Report Summary

Green Gym supports positive changes in the health of participants and the green spaces they create and maintain by weekly participation in outdoor activities, for example conservation, park management and growing food. Volunteers in Green Gyms become more physically active while improving their local environment. Studies show Green Gyms increase both personal and community resilience - through helping to improve people's health and wellbeing, and fostering sustainable community activity, improving the environment for all.

Our new evaluation followed more than 90 Green Gym volunteers for 3 months - From December 2015 to March 2016. This summary reports our results and includes references to other Green Gym research.



# Green Gym improves mental wellbeing

Mental wellbeing scores improved over 3 months with a quarter of volunteers reporting a decrease in anxiety.<sup>ii</sup>

## Wellbeing improves; anxiety reduces



Nine out of ten volunteers attributed at least some of their mental wellbeing to participating in Green Gym. For some, participating offers much needed respite:

*"I've got a son with special needs and the wife's got mental health problems, so between us we survive on benefits... just coming here gives me a break."*

For those struggling with poor mental health, often combined with challenging personal and family conditions, Green Gym offers a safe space where they are given respect and treated with empathy:

*"There is no judgement [in Green Gym], no preconceived ideas about what you are or where you've been, what you did, what you haven't done."*

Because Green Gym focuses on shared outdoor activities, volunteers meet others, make friends and increase their opportunities for social engagement. For a number of volunteers, weekly participation at a Green Gym is the only time they speak to and spend time with others.

Volunteering also has a positive impact on attitudes and behaviours towards the environment, lifestyles and willingness to engage in the local community.<sup>iii</sup>

**Green Gym reduces social isolation: Over 80% of volunteers feel closer to people in their local area, which is worth over £700,000 in social value.<sup>iv</sup>**



**Green Gym has established a social return on investment (SROI) measure of over £4 of social value per £1 invested.<sup>iv</sup>**

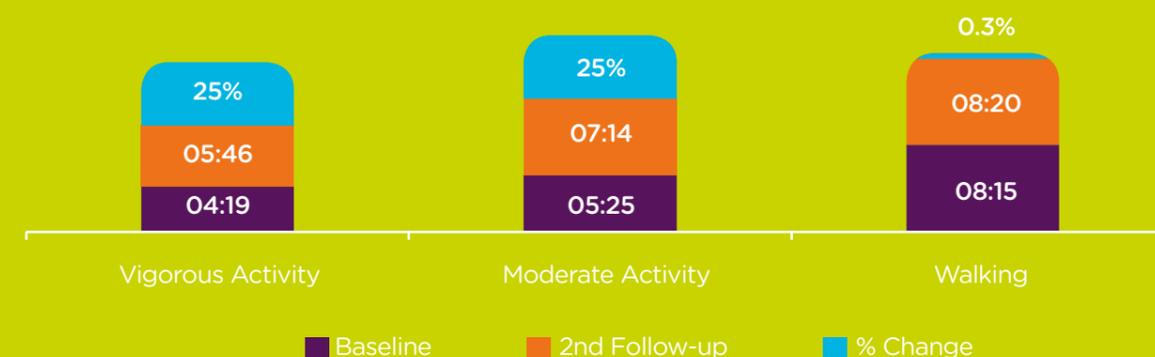
**The personal benefit for individual, regular volunteers is worth over £4,600 in social value.<sup>iv</sup>**



## Green Gym improves physical wellbeing

On average, volunteers said they spent 50% more time engaged in vigorous and moderate activities by the end of the 3 month study period. Volunteers were walking more too. Nine out of ten attributed their higher physical activity to participation in Green Gym.

**Volunteers increase the amount of time spent in vigorous and moderate activities**



n=92 (baseline)  
n=79 (2nd follow-up)

A number of volunteers said being fitter came from a change in dietary habits – eating more fresh vegetables and less junk food and takeaways – a result of growing food at a Green Gym:

*“I know how to grow fruit and veg now in the garden; I know how to cook seasonal veg, so I make a lot of soup now.”*

Encouraging healthy living is a part of the Green Gym approach and helps to support lifestyle change, particularly for conditions such as diabetes:

*“Finding out I was diabetic, I had to change my diet anyway, so I cut out all sweets and cakes [and at Green Gym] they do try and promote healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle.”*

Green Gym also supports weight loss. An evaluation in Northern Ireland found that more than 80% of volunteers lost weight after becoming more active as a result of Green Gym.<sup>vi</sup>

*Our Social Return on Investment found that increasing the physical health of volunteers by as little as 33% is worth £2.6 million.<sup>iv</sup>*

# Green Gym improves employability

Participation in Green Gym is an opportunity to get back into work. Many hope to update skills, gain experience and obtain a reference through volunteering:

*"I used to do gardening years ago... so it's the sort of thing that I want to do as a job, but I've been unemployed for a long time, so I thought it may be a good way to refresh my skills."*

Getting back to work can be difficult. Green Gym volunteering can help restore confidence, teach new skills and establish a routine – helping people get their foot back on the job ladder:

*"I think some of it is taken out of my hands, the jobs that need doing – it's not all my responsibility to decide what they are – there's a structure here that makes me do stuff."*



## Summary

Financial constraints have placed significant strain on the NHS and social care sector. The big increase in conditions associated with sedentary lifestyles is costing an estimated £8.2 billion a year. One in four British adults experience a mental health problem annually – and psychological and physical health problems are costing the NHS alone more than £11 billion. The Department of Health recognises that Green Gym has a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of those who take part and they directly support the reduction of health inequalities by targeting recognised at-risk groups. Green Gyms reduce the demand for health and care services by helping those who are susceptible to preventable illnesses to become more active and those impacted by isolation and loneliness to join a socially inclusive environment.

For more information on this report contact: [j.beishon@tcv.org.uk](mailto:j.beishon@tcv.org.uk) or [n.munoz@tcv.org.uk](mailto:n.munoz@tcv.org.uk)

- <sup>i</sup> Beishon J, Munoz N (2016). I feel fitter and better being outside: Green Gym evaluation report. TCV.
- <sup>ii</sup> ONS questions used to measure wellbeing. <http://bit.ly/1YIGsMW>
- <sup>iii</sup> TCV (2014). Volunteering impacts. <http://www.tcv.org.uk/volunteering/volunteering-impacts>
- <sup>iv</sup> NEF/TCV (2015). TCV's impact: Organisational social return on investment. Summary findings. For more information on this report email [n.munoz@tcv.org.uk](mailto:n.munoz@tcv.org.uk)
- <sup>v</sup> IPAQ questions used to measure physical wellbeing. <http://growyourwellness.com/tools/physical-inactivity-assessment/international-physical-activity-questionnaire-ipaq>
- <sup>vi</sup> Collins K (2015). Independent evaluation of the Green Gym programme delivered in Northern Ireland.
- <sup>vii</sup> Public Health England. About obesity: Lifestyles and behaviours. [https://www.noo.org.uk/NOO\\_about\\_obesity/lifestyle](https://www.noo.org.uk/NOO_about_obesity/lifestyle)
- <sup>viii</sup> Naylor C, Das P, Ross Shipa et al (2016). Bringing together physical and mental health. <http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications>



# Join in, feel good

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 The Conservation Volunteers  
 @TCVtweets

Summary report

# Securing the future

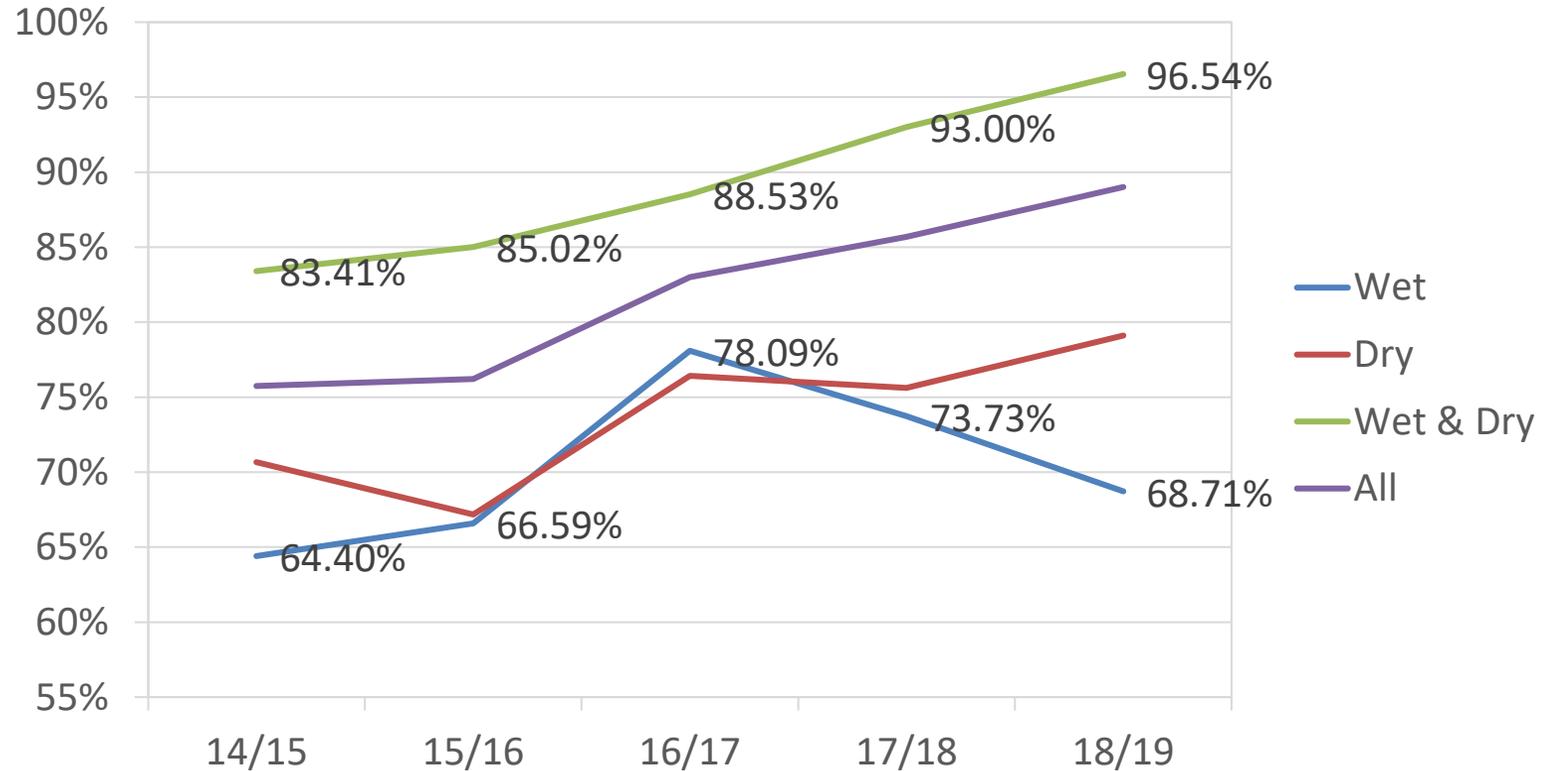
of public sport and leisure services

A report on behalf of APSE, the LGA and CLOA





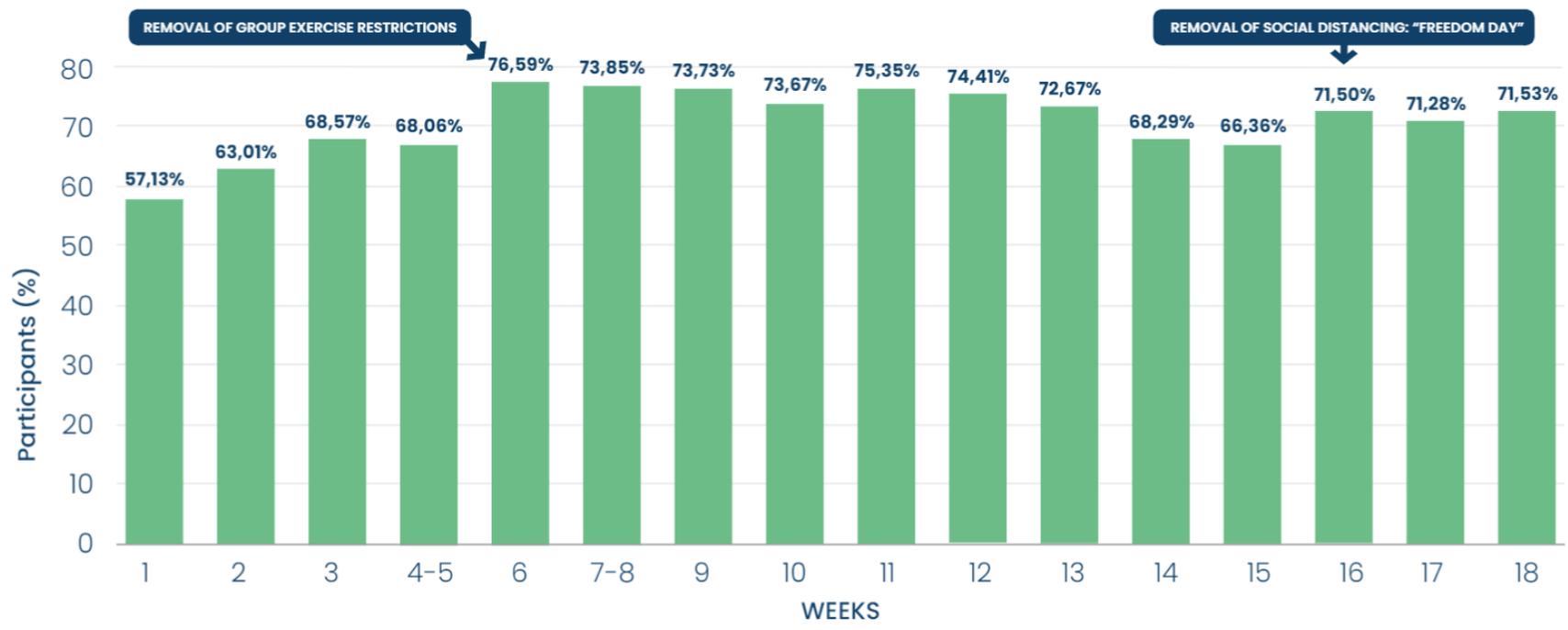
## APSE Performance Networks - Operational recovery Ratio



# Participation Analysis



### PARTICIPATION RECOVERY GRAPH 2021 VS 2019



# Financial Analysis

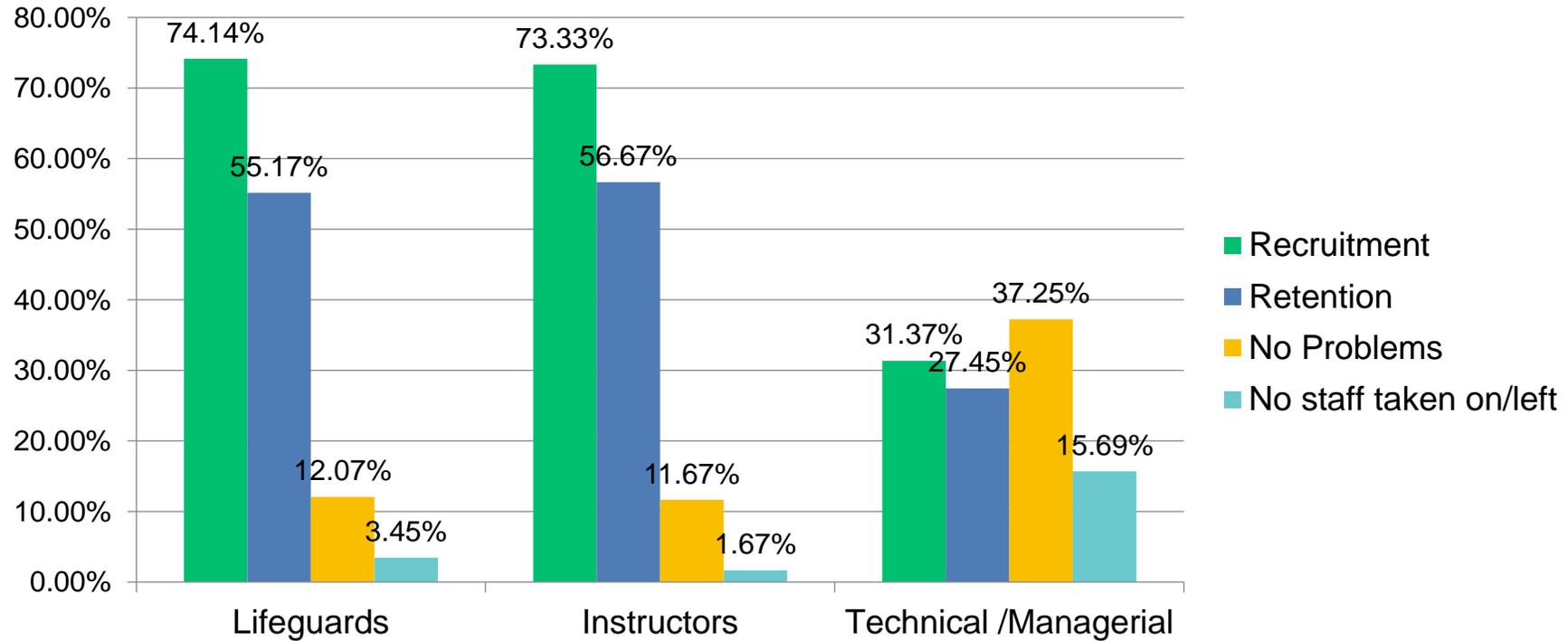
INCOME PER VISIT	
NATIONAL 19	NATIONAL 21
<b>£3.20</b>	<b>£4.61</b>
MAY 19 – JUL 19	APRIL 21 – JUL 21

OP COST PER VISIT	
NATIONAL 19	NATIONAL 21
<b>-£3.01</b>	<b>-£5.11</b>
MAY 19 – JUL 19	APRIL 21 – JUL 21

SUBSIDY PER VISIT	
NATIONAL 19	NATIONAL 21
<b>-£0.19</b>	<b>£0.50</b>
MAY 19 – JUL 19	APRIL 21 – JUL 21

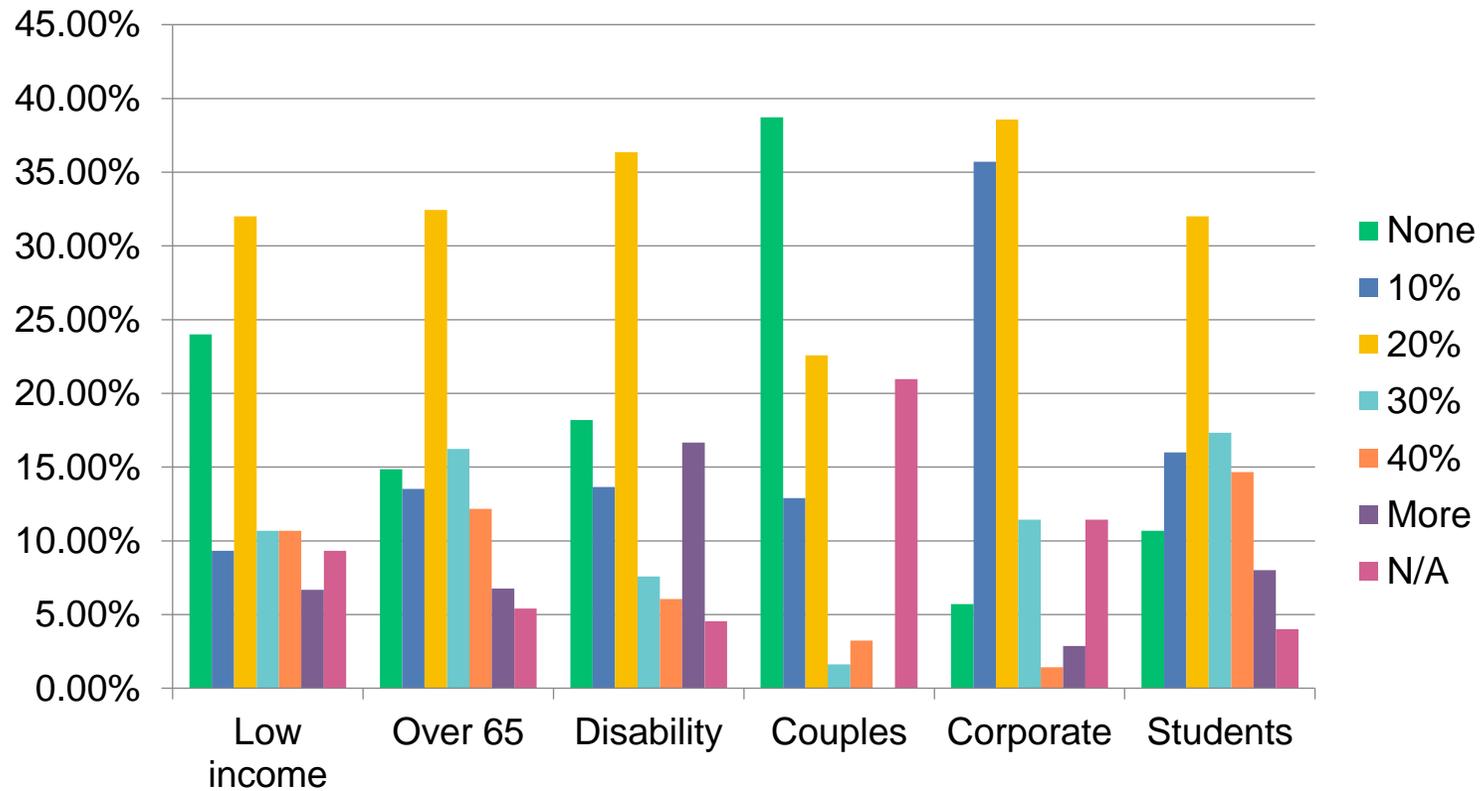
% COST RECOVERY	
NATIONAL 19	NATIONAL 21
<b>106.24%</b>	<b>90.26%</b>
MAY 19 – JUL 19	APRIL 21 – JUL 21

### Where have you had difficulty recruiting or retaining staff (over the last 12 months)





### Membership package discounts offered





**Public sport and  
leisure services**



# Co produced review-The future of public sport and leisure (starting a conversation)



- **Scope** (within the context of the role of councils in creating an active place)
  - Provision of Leisure Centres, Pools and Sports facilities, indoor and outdoor (but not grass sports pitches)
  - Sports development/community sport
  - Physical activity interventions/Supporting the development of physical activity opportunities.

# The future of public sport and leisure

## Questions

- Why do Councils provide sport and leisure services?
- What do you think is the role of Councils in providing sport and leisure services going forward?
- What impact do you think COVID-19 is going to have on future service delivery
- Is the sector focussing on the right things?

### **Process**

- Build on the sector chat already happening
- Creating a momentum for positive change

## Process: Sector survey and roundtable discussions

- Over 250 responses to the survey across England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland with representative mix of types of Council
- Over 200 people involved in roundtable discussions that included;
  - DCN
  - LGA
  - APSE
  - Sport England
  - cCLOA
  - UK Active
  - CLUK
  - Swim England
  - Active Partnerships Network
  - Individual conversations with sector influencers/leaders

## Key messages from discussions

- Genuine appetite for change came through from conversations
- Conversations were very open and often challenging
- Leisure centres dominated conversations
- Immediate problems often dominated discussions
- A view the sector itself has created its own problems, but it is understandable within the context of Local Authority budgets
  - Not about blame. The sector hasn't failed.
  - The sector has been incredibly successful in delivering efficiencies, but at what long term cost?
- There was a desire to have something that could be used to effect change and push back on the continuing expectation of more and more savings.

## Key findings

- That **fundamental systemic issues** with the funding of public sector sports and leisure provision have been building over the past decade and have been hugely exacerbated as a result of COVID-19. Increasing reliance on those that can afford to pay.
- *The continued focus on expenditure savings and income growth is not sustainable when the sector is up against changed customer participation trends (80% of pre COVID) as well as needing investment in building stock and a much greater focus on its' role in levelling up.*
- **Councils play a central leadership role in creating active places**, connecting diverse Government objectives through planning, active travel schemes, parks and playground provision, and their leisure facilities
- **Public sport and leisure services are unique** among leisure providers for their reach and support for communities, providing lifelong opportunities for all to be active and the bedrock for community and elite sport. Breadth and depth and cross cutting value (economy/health/civic pride etc)
- **Public sport and leisure services are integral to COVID-19 recovery** supporting communities to recover and helping relieve pressures on NHS services
- **Community sport and physical activity development is essential** in expanding the reach of services and helping to address health inequalities

## Key findings

- **Public sport and leisure services are under immediate risk of operational failure** and face critical long-term damage without immediate further support.
- **The public provision of swimming facilities cannot be fulfilled by private operators.** It is essential for ensuring tens of thousands of primary school children learn important water safety skills and learn to swim each year. Trends on learn to swim are going the wrong way and young people from poorer backgrounds are achieving proportionately less.
- **Ageing leisure assets make a significant contribution to carbon emissions,** and investment in decarbonising assets can help to meet net-zero targets and reduce running costs in the longer term
- The **voice of the public sport and leisure sector is fragmented,** which has weakened its ability to influence at local and national level. The sector aligns best with Health/wellbeing.
- **Investment in professional leadership and skills development** is required across sport and leisure and health partners to develop the services needed by communities in the future, support collaboration and drive further integration of services.

## Key findings

**Health and wellbeing was seen as the main (but not the only) reason for provision of services**

**The sector is keen to expand on its existing contributions and to work collaboratively with partners such as the NHS to further enhance its preventative offer for mental and physical health. Collectively, our respondents identified the following ambitions for their services:**

- **Working to integrate more closely with health systems**, including the new integrated care systems, deliver increased social prescribing opportunities, and take GP referrals, building on existing work.
- **Ensuring that new contracts build in additional social value to communities**, whether through apprenticeships, outreach and activities targeted at less active groups, or purchasing from local businesses.
- **Thinking strategically about what is needed** for the facilities of the future, including co-location with other services and the role they may have in high streets of the future.

## **2 “Asks” of Government**

- **The National Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, to take the lead role in embedding PSL services within health systems, coordinating closely with DCMS and DLUHC**
- **Invest in the Public sport and leisure facility stock to bring down carbon emissions, create new jobs (especially young people) and secure vital community assets.**

## Recommendations

1. DCMS should establish an equivalent programme for public sport and leisure services to its “Valuing culture and heritage assets capital: a framework towards informing decision making” programme. The new programme should **make statistics and evidence** publicly available to aid the articulation of the value of public sport and leisure services locally and nationally in line with Her Majesty’s Treasury (HMT) green book.
2. DCMS and MHCLG should work in partnership with local government to build a robust case for the **sustainable investment in public sport and leisure services**, to be put forward to HMT for the Comprehensive Spending Review 2021. It should recognise the wider policy objectives that these services contribute to and be supported by the new Office for Health Improvement and Disparities, the Department for Health and Social Care, the Department for Education and NHS England in recognition of the critical role public sport and leisure services play in addressing their objectives.

## Recommendations

3. The Department for Education should work with Government departments and councils to map the provision of swimming facilities, investing to address gaps or future gaps in the system and making targeted support available to enable schools to **invest in learn to swim** and swim safety where the system is currently failing.
4. Councils should consider what **social value outcomes** they want to achieve through public sport and leisure services and implement these outcomes in all council activity, as well as in procurement activity and activities such as outreach work to support those who are most vulnerable.
5. Sport England (and other home Sports Councils), UK Active and CIMSPA should work together to provide **professional development opportunities** that meet the future skills needs in a post-COVID-19 world. This work should consider what is needed to tackle inequalities in access, including the implications of digital inequalities.

## Recommendations

6. Investment should be made available to enable Sport England and partners within the LGA, APSE and CLOA to continue to **provide leadership development for portfolio holders and officers at a strategic level**. A key element of the programme should be supporting elected members and officers to make the linkages with the wider system, including health systems.
  
7. **The Local Government Physical Activity Partnership (LGPAP)** should enhance its capacity, increase its visibility and engagement with the Government, and accelerate its work.

## Next steps

- Parliamentary launch delivered 14<sup>th</sup> September
- Long version of report nearing production
- Political engagement in the weeks ahead
- APSE National Sport and Leisure Seminar 4<sup>th</sup> November (sector engagement and action)
- LGPAP- preparations/web presence/OHID engagement
- Pursuing the asks and recommendations

# The Future of Public Leisure

January 2022  
Overview Slides



Grant Thornton



**SPORT  
ENGLAND**

# Introduction and purpose

- The **public sector's role in delivering sport and leisure facilities, assets and services is critical.**
- It is a **service that has been stretched to breaking point by Covid-19.**
- It is also **a service at a cross-roads and change is required.**
- Sport England is developing a **"Future of Public Leisure"**

## **The purpose of the "Future of Public Leisure" report is to:**

- **Demonstrate** the positive impact of the NLRF in supporting the sector
- Understand where the sector is currently and what further support is required
- Show how the sector is working collaboratively to support LA's to deliver change and create an active health and wellbeing service
- Demonstrate to Govt the opportunity to create greater value through investment

**The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of this report, its key messages and the vision it sets for the future.**

**The next step is to articulate the collaborative working, support and resources provided by key stakeholders across the sector being deployed to assist the public sector to meet the challenges ahead and develop a more resilient active wellbeing service.**

**The following slides provide a high-level overview of what the report will cover.**



# Public sector leisure: Pre-Covid-19

**2,729**

public sector owned  
leisure assets

**83%**

run by 84 external  
operators for 267  
local authorities

**10**

largest providers  
deliver services to  
168 local  
authorities (63% of  
all LAs)

**11.8  
million**

participants, 234  
million unique  
visits

**£301  
million**

Social value  
between May and  
June 2019

**£150  
million**

Invested in  
opening new  
facilities

## A broad portfolio of facilities

In addition to leisure centre, LAs own and manage 1,198 artificial grass pitches, 21,592 grass pitches and 6,836 specialist sport facilities

## Creating significant social return

Including positive impacts on mental wellbeing, social and community development, the creation of social capital and improved physical wellbeing

## But reaching the end of their "useful life"

68% of sports halls and swimming pools were built more than 20 years ago

# NEW MUNICIPALISM

Delivering for local people and local economies

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