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Communities &
Local Government

Sustaining Success in Parks

A rapid evidence review on successful methods of working for parks teams

Objective and methodology

In 2024, the London School of Economics conducted an evidence review into the successful methods of working for local authority parks teams.

- Review is based on in-depth, semi structured interviews conducted with council officers, elected councillors and with representatives of community organisations.

- Secondary research methods included a web-based survey distributed by interview participants.

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Islington

- **127 parks and green spaces**

- **72.6 hectares**

- **Net parks costs: £4.077 million**

Leeds

- **94 parks and green spaces**

- **4,000 hectares**

- **Net parks costs: £4.077 million**

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Key Findings

1. **Parks and green spaces support a diverse range of local authority agendas**

2. **A collaborative partnership with the community multiplies the benefits that parks and green spaces deliver.**

3. **A forward-looking, supportive and innovative organisational culture fosters good practice.**

4. **Prioritising quality improves the varied benefits of parks and green spaces**

5. **Expanding inclusivity ensures all residents benefit from green spaces.**

6. **Focus on using evidence, data and research can streamline decision-making, improve communication, and lead to collaborative partnerships.**

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Leadership and Vision

"If you want to maintain as good and well-staffed a service as possible, it has to be delivering and feeding into the core agenda." (Islington Council respondent)

1. Strategic Integration.

2. Trust and Support of Leadership.

3. Supportive Organisational Culture.

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Collaboration and Partnerships

"(There is) a positive attitude from the council that the volunteers are there to help rather than being interfering busybodies. [There is] a formal structure in place that recognises friends-of groups and is flexible enough to deal with different levels of skill and commitment." (Leeds charity respondent)

1. Internal collaboration.

2. Community partnerships.

3. Protecting community-engagement resources.

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"You can create a new green space and cut the ribbon on it, but what happens to it 10, 20 years down the line? That's where so much of the [parks] funding crisis is. How do you sustain the quality of those spaces? Funding is always for capital projects, but it's the maintenance within that we need to talk about." (Leeds City Council respondent)

1. Focusing on quality.

2. Expanding Inclusivity.

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"If you don't give them that information to defend your corner, then unfortunately they're going to lose those battles that they're having at a high level." (Islington Council respondent)

1. **Collecting data to quantify operational value**
2. **Situating strategic-planning activities in research.**
3. **Collaborating with research partners.**
4. **Sharing data and evidence with decision-makers.**

Recommendations

1. **Embed green spaces within local authority's core strategies**

2. **Establish a collaborative way of working focused on shared outcomes.**

3. **Nurture an innovative, forward-thinking and trusting organisational culture..**

4. **Enable transformational change by focusing on strategic support, rather than short-term capital, to local governments.**