

Improving wellbeing through nature during Covid-19



This study sought to understand how people were using parks and nature to support their wellbeing.

Well-maintained accessible nature-rich green space, near to peoples' homes have taken on a new importance in urban areas over the past few months.

The study took place at a time of unprecedented events during which people were required to limit the time that they spent outdoors in order to protect their health. The main findings of the research were:

- Most people said that their local parks were within easy walking distance
- Parks were safe to visit and it was possible to socially distance.
- During lockdown having parks close to home were important to local people to use to support their wellbeing.
- Some used parks as a social space, a place to meet friends, or an opportunity to get out of the house. For others it was a place that they could use for exercise.
- Everyone who took part in the survey could identify a link between wellbeing and spending time outside and told us that spending time in nature was important for their wellbeing.
- The study learnt that spending time outside and in parks was important as it had a positive impact on their mood.

One family said:

"Our daily walks have been the highlights of most days. They are our reset button and a source of inspiration, calm and delight."

- For others the pandemic gave an opportunity to spend more time in nature observing it, and told us that being close to nature had a positive impact on their well-being.
- While many people were able to benefit from access to parks, and were able to use green spaces to support their health and wellbeing, the study highlighted the barriers and inequalities that limit access for some people.
- These people were not able to spend time outside because of poor physical or mental health, limited mobility, lack of toilet facilities or worry about spreading or contracting coronavirus while visiting parks.
- There were some who had no access to outdoor spaces as they had no gardens or parks were too distant.

Frances Bennett Director of Let's Go Outside and Learn said

"The strongest impression from the study was that at a time of chaos, uncertainty and isolation from the outside world, local people used nature to create meaning and purpose in

their lives in order to cope better with negative feelings. Barriers mean that this is not something that everyone was able to benefit from and in an urban environment there is a need for well-maintained accessible nature-rich green space near to every ones homes.”

Mairi McLeod Director of Let’s Go Outside and Learn said:

“This study builds on our experience, we strive to understand the barriers and needs of people living in Richmond. We will use our deeper understanding of the link between wellbeing and nature to develop new projects that meet the needs of those who would benefit most from spending time outside. ”

Councillor Julia Neden-Watts Chair of the Environment, Sustainability, Culture and Sports Services Committee, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames said:

“This insightful piece of work illustrates how valuable our local parks and open spaces are. Many of us have relied on these spaces during lockdown for daily fresh air, exercise or just as a place to try and relax and find solace among the trees. There are important points here too about the value of regular exercise, and about time spent with family, and the many pressures people have faced in their daily lives. We are fortunate to have such lovely parks to enjoy – and in challenging times, this survey serves also as a reminder that we must collectively take care of them so that they remain a wonderful resource for us all, continuing to provide invaluable habitat for other species and giving a boost to our mental and physical wellbeing.”

The synopsis and full report can be found on the website together with other related reports produced as part of a wider project to support the work of Let’s Go Outside and Learn CIC.

Read the reports here: <https://www.lgoal.org/stay-connected-with-nature/>

- [Supporting Wellbeing through Nature during the Coronavirus 2020](#)
- [Synopsis of Supporting Wellbeing through Nature during the Coronavirus 2020](#)
- [Improving Wellbeing through Nature in Richmond: an exploration of the benefits of using nature as a wellbeing resource](#)
- [Designing outdoor learning activities to support wellbeing](#)

Note for editors

Let’s Go Outside and Learn CIC was established in 2015 and over the last few years has developed a strong ethos of working with vulnerable groups to encourage access to outdoor environments in order to benefit health and wellbeing, and to break down barriers to accessing parks and open spaces in the London Boroughs of Richmond and Hounslow.

By promoting learning outdoors, we aim to show the benefits that the natural environment can bring to improved health and wellbeing. Local parks and open spaces are a great place to bring people together, to learn and socialise. We encourage environmental stewardship in all our projects.

Funding support for the study was received from the Heathrow Community Trust and we are grateful to the South West London Environment Network for their help and support with the survey work.

