

Seeds of change project update Winter 2019-2020

The Seeds of Change project is managed through Richmond Council Parks department. It aims to encourage more use of parks and open spaces by local people. There are 2 strands to the project:

1. Walk this way
2. Friendly Parks for All

1. Walk this way

Audience – families and schools

The work references the findings from Natural England Monitor of Engagement with Natural Environment for children which found:

- Only ¼ of children in England spent time outside in the average month.
- The reasons children spent time in nature are diverse and change as they get older.
- Children and young people benefit from being in nature in a number of different ways.
- Parents, guardians and other family members are an important influence on children's engagement with nature.
- There is a substantial difference in the numbers of children regularly spending time outside between the most affluent and most deprived communities.
- Children from black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds are less likely to spend time outdoors than children from white backgrounds.



assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/828838/Monitor_of_Engagement_with_the_Natural_Environment_MENE_Childrens_Report_2018-2019_rev.pdf

As part of the project downloadable activity sheets were developed for use in parks and open spaces. These included:

- Discovery Walks for families. Activity sheets to complete while out in the park for a walk. These are arranged by age.
- Learning walks for schools arranged by curriculum subject
- Out of the Woods. Which aims to teach children about trees through scientific investigation. These school resources aim to stimulate all the senses, encourage an investigation of the local area and supports subjects across the curriculum.

Out of the Woods

Worksheets for Key Stage 1 & 2



The activity sheets can be downloaded from:

https://www.richmond.gov.uk/services/parks_and_open_spaces/explore_richmonds_parks_and_open_spaces/walk_this_way

The activity sheets aim to provide free, unhindered access to healthy opportunities, promoting healthy lifestyle and supporting individual's health and wellbeing so that more children and families are able to benefit from access to parks.

2. Friendly Parks for All

Audience people who face barriers to engaging in the natural environment / parks

Friendly Parks for All – Project aims

The project aims to:

- Encourage use of parks and open space by residents for leisure, learning and for the benefit of their health and wellbeing.
- Increase the number and diversity of people inspired by and enjoying parks.

The work references the findings from [Natural England Monitor of Engagement](#) with Natural Environment and the [Natural England Outdoors for All](#) project which found that people are less likely to use the natural environment for recreation and health benefits, due to mental, cultural or physical barriers. This includes people:

- with physical disabilities



- with learning disabilities
- living with mental health illness
- from Asian and minority ethnic communities
- living in deprived areas
- who are young or elderly

A list of those who the project is currently working with is given below.

The project aims to:

- understand the barriers that exist for certain user groups
- improve existing access
- create new access opportunities
- build partnerships to deliver opportunities
- improve impact, reach and quality of access
- share ideas and good practice

The project has two main strands:

- Work to understand the barriers for individual groups, and to make local parks more accessible for people who face barriers to using outdoor spaces
- Friendly Parks for activities targeted at specific groups

Friendly Parks for All

The project gives opportunities to:

- Demonstrate health and wellbeing benefits from spending time outside;
- bring people together in local parks to socialise;
- develop opportunities to engage with the natural environment for all members of the community ;
- explore local open spaces and the local ecology in a safe and accessible way;

to offer the opportunity of getting involved in other opportunities including health walks, volunteering in parks, using outdoor gyms;

- encourage and nurture a sense of belonging through the use of local open spaces;
- encourage and nurture environmental knowledge and understanding within the community.

In order to understand barriers to accessing parks we have conducted 3 consultations.

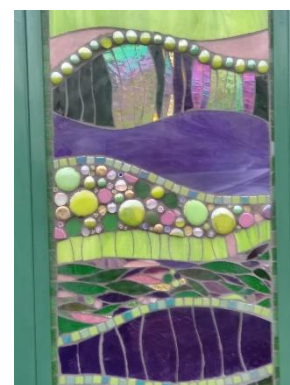
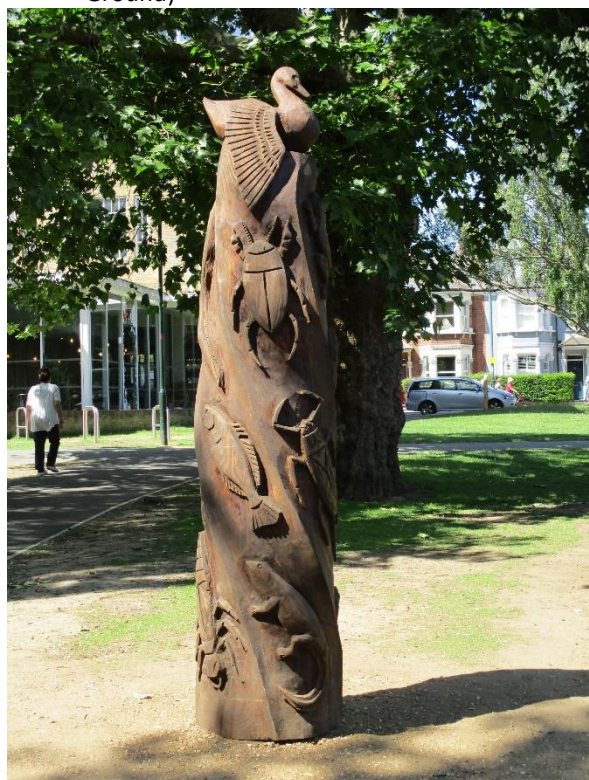
1. People with dementia and their carers. [Dementia Friendly Parks](#) This included a consultation report and recommendations for the development of the Friendly Parks for All project. Subsequent to this an audit document to assess work required to develop a Friendly Parks was developed. (2017)
2. Heathfield Recreation Ground, [Fitness Equipment Improvements](#) The gym equipment at Heathfield Recreation Ground was upgraded to encourage healthy living and exercise. Equipment included items that are aimed at people of all ages and abilities. Some of the new equipment was aimed at elderly users or those with limited mobility and designed to encourage mobility and co-ordination. (2019)
3. [People who are blind and visually impaired](#) This consultation sought to understand how blind people or those with visual impairments and their families currently use parks, what they like about our parks, any barriers to visiting them, and what would improve the quality of the experience of using our parks. (2020) Recommendations will be developed from the consultation for implementation later in 2020

Three local parks have been developed to increase access to the parks for a specific group of park users. In order to meet the aims of the project the project team has worked closely with local charities including the Dementia Action Alliance, the Alzheimer's Society, Ruils and Richmond borough Mind. We have also used public consultation for example around outdoor gym equipment for older people, especially those with limited mobility. Two further parks are currently being developed as Friendly Parks.

Schemes have included the following features:

- improved paths through resurfacing,
- a waymarked route around each park using the distinctive Friendly Parks for All emblem
- aids to orientation around parks including exit and entrance markers

- a focal point for the park such as a public sculpture designed by community groups. In Barnes this is a carved totem pole featuring pond animals, in Ham mosaics and a curved bench, in Heathfield Recreation Ground a sculpture designed by students from Richmond College studying art and design
- increased number of benches around the waymarked route
- inclusion of disabled parking in streets adjacent to the park
- information boards on the history and ecology of all sites
- a series of monthly activities to encourage use of the park.
- online downloadable activities for use in the park.
- a sensory trail which includes a barefoot path (Heathfield Recreation Ground)
- safe access to Barnes Pond for pushchairs and wheelchairs (Barnes Green)
- outdoor gym equipment designed for people with dementia and people with limited mobility (Heathfield Recreation Ground)

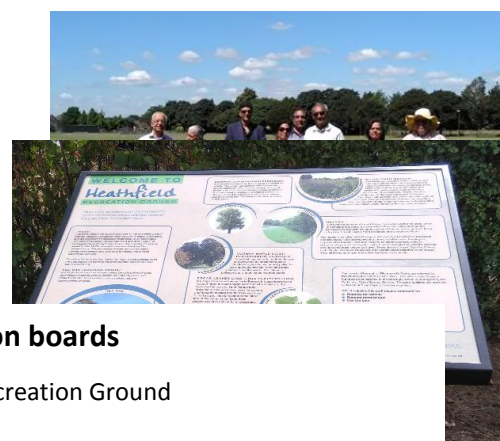


Central meeting points

Barnes Green, Ham Village Green and Heathfield Recreation Ground.

Examples of entrance and exit markers

Barnes Green and Ham Village Green



History and ecology information boards

Ham Village Green and Heathfield Recreation Ground

Summary of Friendly Parks for All				
Barnes Green Friendly Park 2017	Ham Village Green Friendly Park 2018	Heathfield Recreation Ground Friendly Park 2019	Kneller Gardens Friendly Park 2020	Carlisle Park Friendly Park 2020
Audience				
People with dementia and their carers	People with dementia and their carers	People with dementia and their carers People with limited mobility People with sensory deprivation	People with dementia and their carers People with visual impairment / blind Carers People with mental health problems	People with Disability People with special needs Carers
Project engagement				
FISH Barnes	Dementia Action Alliance	Dementia Action Alliance	Achieving for Children Visual impairment team	The People Hive charity
Alzheimer's Society Dementia Action Alliance Richmond Carers Centre Ethnic Minorities Advocacy Group (now Multicultural Richmond) Libraries Barnes Business Association GP's Patient Participant Group Volunteer Nature Buddies	Alzheimer's Society Woodville Centre Richmond Carers Centre Grey Court School Local craftsmen Friends of Ham Village Green Volunteer Nature Buddies	Alzheimer's Society Homelink Age UK Marathon Sports Trust Richmond Collage design students Local craftsmen TCV Ethnic Minorities Advocacy Group (now Multicultural Richmond) Friends of Heathfield Recreation Ground Volunteer Nature Buddies	Alzheimer's Society Pets as Therapy Charity Richmond Carers Centre Local charities: Ruils, Richmond Mind, Art and Soul, Richmond Aid Local craftsmen TCV and Richmond Green Gym Ethnic Minorities Advocacy Group (now Multicultural Richmond) Friends of Kneller Gardens Volunteer Nature Buddies	3 local schools Local craftsmen Friends of Carlisle Park Volunteer Nature Buddies
Features installed to improve accessibility				
Improved paths A waymarked route Aids to orientation around parks including exit and entrance markers A focal point / meeting point. A carved totem pole featuring pond animals Increased number of benches	Improved paths A waymarked route Aids to orientation around parks including exit and entrance markers A focal point / meeting point. Mosaics and a curved bench Increased number of benches	Improved paths A waymarked route Aids to orientation around parks including exit and entrance markers A focal point / meeting point. Heathfield Recreation Ground a sculpture designed by students from Richmond College studying art and design Increased number of benches	Improved paths A waymarked route (2020) Aids to orientation around parks including exit and entrance markers (2020) Increased number of benches	Improved paths A waymarked route (2020) Aids to orientation around parks including exit and entrance markers to be designed by local schools (2020) Increased number of benches (2020)

Disabled parking in streets adjacent to the park Information boards on the history and ecology of all sites	Information boards on the history and ecology of all sites	Information boards on the history and ecology of all sites	Disabled parking in streets adjacent to the park Information boards on the history and ecology of all sites suitable for people with visual impairments	Information boards on the history and ecology of all sites suitable for people with visual impairments (2020)
Monthly activities to encourage use of the park Online downloadable activities for use in the park Safe access to Barnes Pond for pushchairs and wheelchairs	Monthly activities to encourage use of the park Online downloadable activities for use in the park	Monthly activities to encourage use of the park Online downloadable activities for use in the park Sensory trail Outdoor gym suitable for people with limited mobility	Monthly activities to encourage use of the park (2020) Online downloadable activities for use in the park (2020) Tree trail for people with visual impairments (2020) Other facilities for people with visual impairments to be defined (2020)	Monthly activities to encourage use of the park (2020) Online downloadable activities for use in the park (2020) Other facilities to be defined (2020)

Friendly Parks for All activities in parks

There is also a programme of activities that sits alongside the work in individual parks aimed at encouraging access to parks.



Monthly Accessible Walk and Walk with Ralph

The activities are listed below:

Project activities					
Wellbeing walk	Accessible Walk	Walk with Ralph	Carers Walk	Volunteer Buddies	Nature
People with mental health problems People with disabilities	People with dementia and their carers	People with dementia and their carers People with limited mobility People with sensory deprivation	Carers	Volunteers to support project	
Project engagement					
Friendly Parks for All project Ruils (an independent living charity)	Friendly Parks for All project Ruils	Friendly Parks for All project Pets as Therapy	Friendly Parks for All project	Friendly Parks for All project Let's Go Outside and Learn	

Richmond Mind Volunteer Nature Buddies	Walking for Health Volunteer Nature Buddies	Friends of Kneller Gardens Volunteer Nature Buddies	Volunteer Nature Buddies	
Engagement figures 2019/20				
12 sessions/year 150 attendances	12 sessions / year 60 attendances	8 sessions / year 50 attendances	4 sessions / year 40 attendances	16 volunteers
Proposed engagement figures 2020/21				
300 attendances	120 attendances	40 attendances	180 attendances	30 volunteers

As more parks are included in the Friendly Parks for All programme there will be additional activities included in the engagement programme targeted at different groups who face barriers to accessing the natural environment e.g. we are currently developing a Friendly Park for the visually impaired or we will develop existing models in other parts of the borough e.g. additional carers walks, or accessible walks. This will ensure that the spread across the borough of accessible parks with accessible activities is evenly spread and that there are activities targeted at people who face particular barriers.

4. Social impacts of cafés in parks

Through the Friendly Parks for All project we are working with cafés operators who are based in parks to understand the social benefits of these cafés. The ongoing work is highlighting the benefits to park users, and those employed in the café business. The final report will be available later this month. The cafe operators were asked for examples of the role that the café has had in the community this year. We were particularly interested in positive comments or case studies which demonstrate how the cafes have helped to reduce social isolation and increase a sense of belonging to the local community. To date the work has highlighted that parks play an important role as:

1. A focal point for socialising
All cafes were able to demonstrate examples of their role as a focal point in the park for socialising and increasing wider social networks as well as interaction between community members. They gave examples which show a positive impact for people at risk of isolation and helping to overcome barriers that may prevent some people in marginalised groups from taking part, especially where there are facilities appropriate to the group.
2. Bringing the generations together
There were also examples of how cafes act as a venue for bringing together different social or generational groups. The café operators demonstrate how cafes in parks have a role to increase social networks of older people who use the cafes as somewhere they know that they can meet people and enjoy social interactions.
3. Fostering a sense of community
Discussion from the café operators showed that cafes in parks can positively affect a sense of belonging and inclusion. Some cafés have close links with the Friends of parks groups, so they also foster a sense of pride in the achievements of the Friends groups.
4. Improving employability

Volunteers

Two of the cafés make use of volunteers to run their café. The Sunshine Café uses volunteers with additional needs, people with disability and young people not in education, employment or training and people with mental health issues in order to provide work experience and social benefit. They currently have 4 volunteers but have trained 20 volunteers over the year with an average length of service of 2 weeks, but some stay for longer.

Employment and training opportunities

A total of 32 young people had been offered training roles in these 3 cafés over the last year, one café employing on 20 young people over the year but concentrating in summer months when the park is busy and regular staff on holiday. In 3 cafés these were young people with additional needs not in training, education or employment. Café Sunshine employs people with disabilities. "Parents talk about increased confidence levels and skills linked to engaging with members of the public. One member of staff has been part of the team since 2009 and previously did not make eye contact with customers. Now he can manage the café with little supervision and talks confidently to customers." Café Sunshine

Summary

The model that has been developed allows the opportunity to work with partners to help improve the quality of everyone's experience of parks, gain a better understanding of barriers, issues and priorities to help improve engagement in parks, create new opportunities for local people to access parks and use lessons learnt in all other parks and build partnerships to test the model further and share ideas and good practice.