



# **What are the barriers young people face in accessing high quality green spaces in Hulme, Moss Side and Longsight?**

*A research project initiated by Natural England and completed by Genna Spiteri, Be Well (The Big Life Group) with the support of Sow the City CIC*



# Introduction

The Big Life group was commissioned to undertake research in the areas of Hulme, Moss Side and Longsight (H/M/L) in order to identify any barriers that young people (ages 13-25) face when trying to access high quality green spaces. Be Well CYP (Children & Young People) was asked to adopt this project due to the close links our coaches have within the community, and the connections we have with pre-existing provisions for young people in Manchester. With the research piece focussing on 3 main areas in central Manchester, the coach for this area was asked to help lead on the project (Genna Spiteri/GS).

This research was conducted by GS with the support of Joseph Campbell (JC). The groups of people contacted for the research piece were those who used youth provisions, such as youth clubs, social youth groups, people already involved with green space activity, as well as school children, university students and professionals. Professionals targeted were those from Manchester City Council, youth workers and teachers; these people had close ties to the community and our chosen demographic, so it was logical to gather their experiences.

The results of this project will be used by Natural England to help adapt these spaces and break down barriers which young people face, and the approach outlined here will also be repeated by Natural England in other areas of the country.

## Research question

What are the barriers young people face in accessing high quality green spaces in Hulme, Moss Side and Longsight?

## Aims and objectives

### *Aims*

The aim of the research piece is to help identify what barriers young people ages 13-25 face in accessing high quality green spaces in Hulme, Moss Side and Longsight. For transparency, 'high quality green spaces' refers to any parks, allotments, community spaces/gardens, rivers, canals or lakes. We aim to gather the opinions of young people aged 13-25 from a broad range of backgrounds (gender, ethnicity, sexuality, additional needs) as well as having detailed discussions with professionals (council members, youth leaders, teachers) to help identify the barriers young people are facing, as per the research question.

### *Objectives*

- To gather the voices and insights of young people aged 13-25 in Central Manchester, with a focus on the areas of H/M/L. The aim for this was to gather the voices of around 50 young people.
- To gather the insights of relevant professionals in H/M/L as to what patterns they see in young people and their access to high quality green spaces.
- To identify prominent reasons as to why young people aren't using green spaces in H/M/L.
- To enable young people and relevant professionals to shape and influence the future of their local green spaces.
- To host taster sessions with the support of external organisations such as Sow the City to help engage young people in green space activities.



# Recruitment

To recruit diverse volunteers for our youth green space research project we targeted various organisations. High schools, such as Manchester Academy High, were a great starting point to gather a substantial number of youth voices in one place. Through GS's connections with Mthrive GS was able to access some schools to promote the project and request to run focus groups with a few students. GS also contacted Proctor PRU (Pupil Referral Unit) who were open to us speaking to their young people. It was important to connect with institutions such as Proctor as they provide alternative education to high need students, and many of these students identify as being neuro-diverse (specifically with ADHD). GS used connections with youth organisations to promote the project with targeted outreach through community projects such as youth clubs and youth community groups (namely Gorse Hill Studios).

It was important to ensure that our methodology was accessible for all groups of diverse young people. To do this, we enlisted the help of our colleagues to put together a survey of specific questions (tailored by GS off the back of the questions raised by Natural England). It was important to have a digital version of the survey as some of the targeted groups preferred to do the survey remotely as opposed to in person. Due to the nature of GS's work as a Mental Health & Wellbeing coach for young people aged 13-25, there was immediate access to a diverse group of young people, and GS discussed the project with them and offered them the opportunity to take part. Due to GS's connection with these young people, they were readily available and willing to support the project. To help recruit young people, Be Well produced a flyer (Appendix 1) to distribute at venues, to put on notice boards, and for young people to pass between them. The flyer had a working QR code attached which took people directly to the online survey.

## Key Research Themes

- Attitudes of young people towards local green spaces
- Which ways, if any, do young people use their local green spaces
- People's experience of local green spaces (negative and positive)
- Knowledge of what is available for young people in local green spaces
- What do young people enjoy in their local green spaces? What's working?
- What do young people want from their local green spaces?



# Methodology

The three specific questions for us to investigate, as requested by Natural England were:

- ***What are the fundamental barriers children, young people and families are facing in accessing high-quality green space, in the areas of Hulme, Longsight and Moss Side? (\*Q1)***
- ***What are the wider impacts for children, young people and families who are unable to access high-quality greenspace in Hulme, Longsight and Moss Side? (\*Q2)***
- ***What do children, young people and families believe needs to be done to remove the fundamental barriers to accessible & high-quality greenspace in Hulme, Longsight and Moss Side? (\*Q3)***

The specific questions asked by Natural England clearly needed answers from different sectors of society, both public and professionals. The lived experience of local young people was the most valuable source of information, but GS understood that '***What are the wider impacts for children, young people and families who are unable to access high-quality greenspace in Hulme, Longsight and Moss Side?***' Would require support from specific professionals in the form of structured conversations.

With our target audience being aged between 13 and 25, it was clear that these questions would require breaking down to make them more participant friendly. GS re worded and broke down the questions to make them accessible for the target audience. See the first draft of the questions below.

- ***What area do you live in (pick a ward, enter partial/full post code)?***
- ***What parks /green spaces do you know of from the list (include all parks and green spaces from the 3 target areas)?***
- ***How often do you use these spaces?***
- ***What stops you from using these spaces?***
- ***Have you had any bad experiences in these spaces?***
- ***What good experiences have you had when you've used these spaces?***

Once GS developed a structure for the information gathering, Be Well put together a more in-depth survey for participants (Appendix 2)







# Surveys

We gathered data through surveys from a sample of young people in our target communities. This gave us flexibility in terms of the distribution method, using either electronic or in person channels, depending on the accessibility limits of our participants. For both online and in person surveys, consent was gained from the participants with a Participant information sheet (Appendix 3). Survey responses were recorded online using Smart Survey and the participation of the young people was easily monitored.

Although we risked a low reply rate using the Survey method, we mitigated this by targeting where it was sent. We ensured that our participants were mostly in formal settings, such as classrooms and youth groups, there they felt there was a sense of authority in the room, which helped encourage them to participate. As the survey was being completed by young people, GS made sure to have a physical presence as much as possible, which was to avoid any misinterpretation of questions or phrases, and to give the young people an opportunity to ask any questions. Surveys can be inflexible and can cause fatigue if they are too long. To mitigate these issues, the survey was designed using plain language, and be as simple and non-repetitive as possible, and kept relatively short and open.




## Findings from Survey participants

The survey participants ranged from the age of 13 to 25, and there was a gender split of 51.85% Male (including trans man), 40.74% Female (including trans woman), 3.7% Non-binary and 3.7% Not Stated. Amongst this cohort, 96.3% still identified as their born gender, with 3.7% identifying with a different gender than assigned at birth. Below you can see the that the sexual orientation of our participants was quite varied, providing a relatively comprehensive cross section. This was also true of the ethnicities of our participants

What is your sexual orientation?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Heterosexual or straight		81.48%	22
2	Gay or lesbian		3.70%	1
3	Bisexual		7.41%	2
4	Don't know or not sure		3.70%	1



We ensured to include care leavers and participants with disabilities. The disabilities disclosed ranged between Autism, ADHD, Skeletal disabilities, OCD and dyslexia.

15. Do you have any disability?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Yes		22.22%	6
2	No		70.37%	19
3	Prefer not to say		7.41%	2
			answered	27

37.04% of participants also disclosed long term illnesses ranging between Autism, Fibromyalgia, Anxiety, Depression, EUPD, OCD, Personality disorders and Asthma.

We asked young people to identify, from comprehensive lists, green spaces in their local areas that they had heard of before, every park or green space on the list was accounted for by participants, and when asked how often they use these spaces, 29.63% stated that they don't use these space at all, with the remaining percentage being a relatively even split between 'once a week', 'once a fortnight' and 'once a month'. When asked **'What are your general feelings towards these green spaces you have ticked above?'** the main identified themes were:

- These spaces are needed in urban areas as there isn't much greenery
- They're nice spaces
- They aren't very safe
- Young people feel nervous going there
- It's mostly blank/baron space
- There's nothing for 'older' young people to do in these areas (parks usually only have play areas aimed at young children)

When asked what stop them from using these green spaces more often, the common themes were repeated:

- Not feeling safe
- Boring for young people / nothing to do
- Feeling worried in that setting

The young people were also able to identify their own negative experiences in these areas:

- Harassment
- Anti-social behaviours
- Witnessing / being victims of crime (mugging, flashing, murder)
- Dirty and uncared for area



The main reasons young people enjoyed green spaces linked into their appreciation of nature:

- Enjoying a park on a summer's day
- Calm and peaceful
- Beautiful colours
- Fresh air for mindfulness
- Feeling zen and relaxed
- Enjoying Moss Side carnival
- Having fun with friends
- A good place to 'chill' when you feel down

When considering what would make these areas more accessible for them, they responded with answers which counteracted the themes they identified earlier:






- Safer environment
- Organised activities
- More equipment
- Cleaner area
- Better lighting
- Food vendors/pop ups

We asked the participants what type of activities they thought would encourage them to use the local green spaces and all their suggestions were 'organised' activities such as (but not limited to):

- Running club
- Yoga club
- Group walks
- Car boot sales
- Markets
- Football
- Drawing zone
- Basketball
- Litter picking
- More sports
- Cultural activities

Our participants explained that if the above activities were organised in the community, they would use green spaces more often than previously suggested. They believed more people would make use of the green spaces, people would feel happier, and it would give young people more opportunities.



28. If these specific activities were available for you, how often do you think you'd use these spaces?				
Answer Choices			Response Percent	Response Total
1	Every day		14.81%	4
2	Once a week		44.44%	12
3	Once a fortnight		22.22%	6
4	Once a month		11.11%	3
5	Hardly ever		7.41%	2

## Conclusions from surveys with young people ages 13-25

- The main reasons young people aren't using green spaces are due to concerns around safety and a lack of suitable activities for their age range.
- Young people would enjoy organised activities as they would feel safe in an organised environment.
- If more activities were arranged for young people, they would use green spaces more often.

## #BeeWell Data Comparisons

GS and JC used a working relationship connection to facilitate a conversation between Be Well and #BeeWell. #BeeWell are a collaborative group: The University of Manchester, The Gregson Family Foundation, and Anna Freud, who, together with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) use a co-created survey which is delivered annually in schools to find out what affects young people's wellbeing and what can be done to improve it. They formed a #beewell steering group to push their responses from participants and GS used their 2023 data (provided with approval) to further evidence the findings of our initial survey. We used 2023 survey data for the comparisons, linking in with Year 10 students (age14-15) who live in the post code catchment areas of M12 through to M18. Their Youth Steering Group set the direction and priorities of their work for acting upon the data and celebrating young people – a true representative of the young voice. #BeeWell have now heard from 100,000 young people across Greater Manchester as part of their programme, so connecting with them and using their data to help evidence our findings was of great importance.

The #BeeWell data showed a higher number of minority ethnic children felt there were good places to spend their time, as did CisHet girls and boys compared to LGBTQ+. White British children did more activities outside of school, compared to minority ethnic children, as did CisHet boys when compared to CisHet girls. Through all the data collected, 77% of overall participants claimed to feel safe in their local areas. From the #BeeWell data we can see that only 63% of young people felt like there were good places to spend their free time in the local areas, which complemented the research findings, as the majority of our participants felt like there weren't enough organised activities in green spaces, locally.



# Taster Sessions

Upon gathering the findings and identifying themes from the surveys, GS hosted taster sessions for the young people who identified in the survey and via working relationships, that they would like to take part, with the support of Sow the City. These participants were targeted directly and Be Well produced another flyer with the details of the taster sessions included to distribute among prospective participants (Appendix 4). The nature of the sessions was dependant on the outcomes of the survey, and were to take place with the support of external organisations such as Sow the City. The taster sessions chosen were Plant Orchestra, Willow weaving, Foraging for wild food and Mono-printing. We created back up settings for these workshops in case of adverse weather conditions due to the time of year, but the main focus was to engage with nature and have a dry meeting point afterwards.

1. Plant orchestra – in Hulme park and use of Zion centre room. **10/03/2025 3:30-5:30pm.**
2. Willow weaving – in Hulme park at seating area & access to the Zion Centre if conditions are poor. **17/03/2025 3:30-5:30pm.**
3. Foraging for wild food – Chorlton Water Park **24/03/2025 3:30-5:30pm.**
4. Mono-printing – in Hulme park at seating area & access to the Zion Centre if conditions are poor. **25/03/2025 3:30-5:30pm.**

The chosen activities were hosted by Sow the City based on their current offering. Activities were all accessible and non-gender specific, to engage as many young people as possible. Our participants were sourced from the survey and existing Be Well clients, we also reached out to 42nd street Nature Connect group for additional participation.

Before the sessions could commence, the participants were sent Be Well referral forms, which meant we were able to input them into our system to track their wellbeing outcomes using the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scales (WEMWBS). This scale was initially developed to enable the measurement of mental wellbeing in the general population and the evaluation of projects, programmes and policies which aim to improve mental wellbeing. The participants were also sent a 'one pager' to introduce them to GS, this included a photograph, so the participants knew who to look out for at the meeting point, plus a quick blurb to help the young people connect with GS, as a few of the participants had never met GS before (42nd Street nature connect participants). To ensure participants attended the sessions, GS text them 3 days before the session, and again on the morning of the session.

Upon attendance to the taster sessions, clients were asked to fill in an Assessment (the standard Be Well assessment) in order gauge an idea of their emotional state before the taster sessions began (Appendix 5). The same questions were to be asked at the end of the taster sessions, this enabled us to track changes in their emotional measures after the sessions were over. This was the most accurate way to check for any WEMWBS improvements, but we also wanted to know how people were feeling immediately before and after the sessions, this would show us the instant impact of the sessions. For us to track this we produced a wellbeing tracker which was to be filled in before and after each session (Appendix 6).

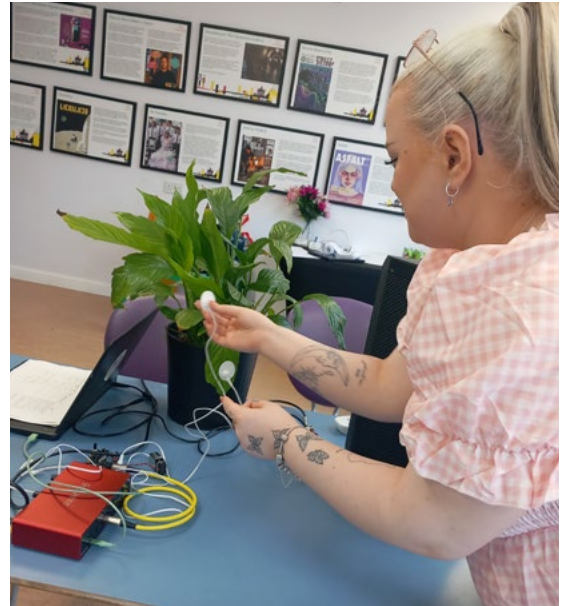
At the start of the sessions, facilitators and participants wrote name badges for themselves so that we all felt familiar, and we spoke about the research and the goals around our sessions. Refreshments were provided.



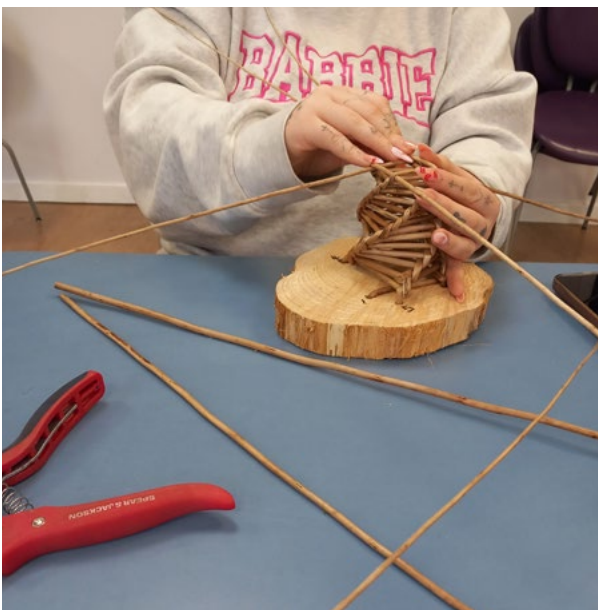
## Session 1 – Plant Orchestra

At session 1, only 2 of the confirmed 5 participants attended (H & R), however this enabled the 2 participants to get to know each other and build rapport between themselves and the facilitators. During the session, we ventured out to Hulme park for a walk and talk session and then used the garden at the Zion Centre to find some plants to take back indoors. The machine (pictured) changed the electrical signals made by plants into music. Sensors connected to the leaves of the plants measure the electrical signals made through natural processes like photosynthesis. These signals are transformed by music making equipment and converted into sound. The participants used the session to make their own piece of music.

During the first session, our participants bonded well, and the small group helped them felt at ease. The participants bounced ideas and positivity off each other, along with creative input. On the wellbeing tracker, before the session, the participants used words such as 'stressed', 'anxious', 'excited' and 'apprehensive' to express how they were feeling. At the end of the session, participants used the tracker again and explained that they felt 'amazed', 'educated', 'happy', 'social', 'motivated' and 'relaxed'. The participants also swapped telephone numbers and hoped to arrange to go on some nature walks together in the future.



## Session 2 – Willow Weaving



'R' was unable to attend this session, but 'H' was still motivated to attend so the session went ahead. 'H' felt at ease and excited for this session after enjoying the last session. During the session, the facilitator taught 'H' how to identify Willow, and spoke about its use throughout history. At the start of this session 'H' recorded that they felt happy, tired and stressed. At the end she felt chilled, relaxed and that the session had been therapeutic. 'H' made a willow bird feeder, a crown which she intended to add dried flowers to at home and got to freestyle. This session was a useful way to help 'H' be open to conversation and we spoke about meaningful activities, mindfulness and ways to stay in tune with your body to avoid burn out.



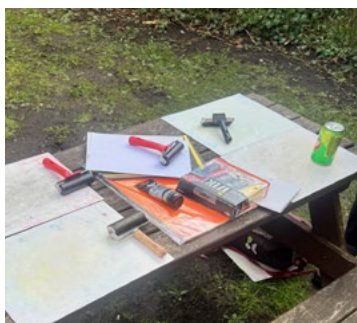
## Session 3 – Foraging at Chorlton Water Park

Due to prior commitments, and other confirmed participants not showing up, we only had 'H' attend this session. Her feelings before session were tired, stressed and sad. During this session, 'H' learnt that you can drink the sap from a birch tree (pictured) and was amazed to find that it tasted quite similar to coconut water. We also located and tasted wild garlic, 'H' noticed that there was a lot of it around and the facilitator explains that was because it's an invasive species. The facilitator helped 'H' to identify different types of mushrooms and discussed their medicinal properties. GS and 'H' used the session to discuss 'H's home life and how it was important for them to intentionally make time for themselves and their future goals. 'H' said that she was really enjoying the taster sessions and spoke about engaging with the Boiler House (Moss Side) and Sow the City in the future to try and find some like-minded people. After the session, 'H' said she felt 'calm' and 'at peace'



## Session 4 – Mono-Printing

At this session, both 'R' and 'H' were able to attend, and 'R' told us how she really missed the sessions over the last 2 weeks that she was unable to attend, she said she almost felt 'angry' that she had to miss the sessions because they gave her a much needed sense of purpose, and a reason to leave the house. Both Participants were feeling 'excited' and 'ready to be social' before the session. At this session, we ventured to Hulme park again for a walk, and chatted about how the participants weeks had been, we gathered some plants and used ink, rollers and card/paper to create impressions of the plants. 'R' really enjoyed using the leaves with prominent veins, and 'H' liked to see how the flowers and petals would print. The session was full of laughter and bonding.



'R' agreed to be interviewed on film by Sow the City to help produce a video about the taster sessions. Before filming, she explained that this was 'massively' out of her 'comfort zone' but she was enjoying the sessions so much that she felt excited to be given an opportunity to talk about them and promote them. After the session, with it being the final session, GS, 'H' and 'R' had a debrief in the Zion centre to chat about how they were feeling as the sessions were coming to an end. Both of the participants felt motivated to do more in green spaces but were upset that the sessions had ended as they had really enjoyed them.

## *Findings from taster sessions with Sow the City*

By using the 'wellbeing tracker' for before and after sessions, it was evident to see that the sessions immediately helped our participants feel more relaxed, motivated, calm and social. At the beginning of our taster sessions, 'H's WEMWBS score was 17, at the end of the sessions 'H's WEMWBS score was 22, this indicated that the taster sessions had a positive impact on her overall wellbeing. 'R' had a similar increase in wellbeing score, with an increase from 10 to 23. Both clients had an overall improvement in their scores and attributed this to how the taster sessions made them feel 'social' and 'relaxed'. It is clear from the results of the sessions that the participants felt a sense of enjoyment and satisfaction from attending, and both expressed a wish to connect further with socially prescribed nature-based projects going forward, namely with Sow the City.

Taster sessions vlog: [Be Well CYP-Natural England Research Project](#)



# Structured Conversations with Professionals

This method was vital in understanding what relevant professions see around the patterns of young people accessing high quality green spaces. The people approached were those who work alongside young people, with their best interests at heart. Due to the nature of the work of these chosen professionals, they felt passionately about the project and were willing to meet and discuss. Being able to approach professionals meant that we were able to dive further in to answering Natural England's \*Q2

## *Findings from Structured Conversations with Professionals*

**Professional at Gorse Hill Studios:** 'A' runs a group called Good Vibes Only (GVO) which was set up because of the lack of safe green spaces in the Gorse Hill/Old Trafford area. Although this doesn't fall specifically in the outlined areas requested by Natural England, they're only a stone's throw away, and young people often use neighboring spaces. This group gives young people a space to voice their concerns and to make action plans of how to be safe when they do go out in to these areas. The group is invitation only (this helps the young people feel like their space is protected) and the group provides a safe space on a Friday night for young people to get together and chat about any concerns they have about their local green spaces, and ways to keep safe.

'A' spoke about how gardening isn't something that particularly interests young people, they enjoy things like basketball, football and creativity. 'A', whose 2 teenage sons attend GVO, spoke about the fears that young people have around being subject to 'stop and searched' by the police, she believed racial profiling plays a part in this and often sends group texts to the young people who attend GVO to remind them how to safely navigate these situations. 'A' explained that the young people also hold fears around youths misbehaving and them being put in danger due to the actions of others. 'A' commented that as young people don't feel safe using green spaces, it has a wider impact on their mental health. 'A' believes that if these spaces received more investment, lighting, and purpose driven activities for young people, they would be used more often and this would help improve the mental health of this generation, and future generations.

**Professional from M13 Youth Project:** 'N' explained that the purpose of the youth project is to work together with young people in their local communities to enrich their lives; through co-creating relationships, conversations, safe places and activities that foster fun, learning, action and transformation. 'N' explained that, specifically in Hulme, certain parks get more attention than others. She went on to comment that Hulme park, with it being quite central and visible, gets a lot of attention. In 2023, Hulme park was supported by #projectswish as part of Basketball England, for a full revamp of their basketball courts. 'N' noted that other local areas, specifically naming Barracks Park, get left behind and see little to no investment. 'N' said that if more investment was made into other parks in the area, the spaces would be more appealing to the local young people. After this conversation, GS attended Barracks Park and was able to witness that the space was deserted, isolated and barren. The equipment was mostly worn and broken, and facilities were few.





**Professional from Manchester City Council Neighbourhood Community Development**

**Officer (NCDO):** 'P' understood that young people mostly use parks and green spaces for organised events such as carnival or cricket in Alex Park. Moss Care St Vincents (MSV) Housing and local youth worker 'KW' from Moss Side Power House host events in the local parks and green spaces in Moss Side and 'P' notes that young people do attend these events.

'P' noted that the green spaces do get used in school holidays, but that's often when trouble can arise, most notably the recent murder of Prince Walker-Ayeni (17) who was stabbed and killed on Raby Street play area in April 2024. Organisations such as Moss Side Powerhouse do often bring young people out on to the parks as part of their organised activities. 'P' identifies that the green spaces in Moss Side do get used for organised purposes more than anything else. Manchester City Council often host 'Pitch up and Play' where they take equipment such as Giant Jenga to the parks, but the uptake is very low on these events, most recently at Barracks Park, 2 people attended. When the same event was hosted at Birchfield's park, the equipment was used heavily, however there was also an organised playscheme happening at the same time which helped boost peoples use of 'pitch up and play'.

GS asked what 'P' thought would happen if there were more organised events for the community, 'P' believed that organised activities would make people feel safer and in turn this would mean that more young people would use their local green spaces. 'P' explains that when she lived in Moss Side, she would not take her young children to the local parks as they don't have many facilities and they're seen more as 'cut throughs'. The bigger parks were described as 'destination' parks as they had more useful and fun facilities for young people, 'P' understands that the smaller parks in Moss Side and Hulme suffer as there isn't enough to do to keep people occupied, and said that if there were more organised events in these spaces, this would draw more people in.

One key factor that was pointed out was that 'the playing-out generation is gone', with further probing 'P' noted that young people spend much more time indoors with technology as opposed to being outside in green space. In her experience, from talking to local parents and working in a community role, it's clear that parents don't feel comfortable letting their children out alone in local green spaces due to the lack of safety. Due to the reputation of these areas, it was important to discuss the stereotyping of young people. 'P' commented that when young people do congregate in green spaces, they are assumed to be a gang and often get moved on, and because of this stereotyping, they're often subject to stop and search orders, which they are not fond of, so try and avoid putting themselves in these situations.





During the conversations with 'P' we walked around 3 of the Moss Side green spaces and it was clear that these spaces are 'cut throughs' as opposed to places to meet, due to the lack of facilities, it was noticeable that there were no picnic areas or similar, in these spaces. There are ample amounts of barren space (pictured), but no space for much recreation, except for equipment for young children (pictured). To conclude, 'P's observations were that the areas need more organised community events as these types of events encourage the community to come out in to the spaces, and the organisational element helps reduce the rate of crime.

**Professional at GM MOVING:** 'K' said that GM MOVING run a project in North Trafford and they took a 'whole systems' approach to that chosen area with a focus on women and safety. They delivered a lot of bystander training over a short period of time in North Trafford (tips on how to step in if you see bad situations happening), they had local walk abouts and also worked with policy makers to help nudge things the way they wanted. GM MOVING asked the local community to put on a play about things that make them feel safe and unsafe and then the community had an opportunity to say what they would change in that situation to make it safer. This method of appreciative enquiry was helpful as policy makers were there to listen to feedback and this gave them an opportunity to listen to what was already working.

Some of the results that were found from this project related directly back to young people: young people had a darker experience of safety in society, and they didn't like the idea of being watched by other people (ie neighbourhood watch). Young people avoid going out as they don't want to be seen as being antisocial or in a gang. 'K' was certain that safety plays a huge part in young people and their use of green space. We also discussed the possibility of running 'place reviews' with young people where we would facilitate young people in all going to a specific area together and have a working conversation around how these areas make them feel, what they like about the area and what they would change, given the chance.

**Professional from Manchester City Council:** 'M' mentioned safety as one of the key factors when considering young people and their main barrier to accessing their green spaces. MCC are currently trying to make these spaces safer, for example, the bushes are quite tall, so they are spending time making them smaller to ensure clear sight lines. Hulme park is a great example of this as they cut all of the bushes down in 2023 and this appears to have made the environment feel safer. This was evidenced in the way that around 400 young people came out for the Hulme park Halloween event and much of the feedback was around how the park felt safer due to the clear sight lines. 'M' mentioned that the local community prefers events which are community lead, and they often choose not to engage in events which have been organised by MCC. 'M' explained that safer parks, better lighting, clear sightlines and community organised events would help young people access these areas more frequently and confidently.



**Professionals from Ground Work:** 'M' & 'J' talked about how their work enabled people to explore green spaces and how they link in with other organisations such as 42nd street in order to run wellbeing courses in green spaces. They often use Trafford Ecology Park (pictured) for this work and this proved to be a successful space for them as the young people feel safe due to the eco park being secure and private. 'M' & 'J' said that safety is a factor that young people bring up a lot when talking about their use of green spaces, and they understand that, given safer options, young people would engage in green space activities more often. The success of their wellbeing courses is evident, with young people often asking to have additional sessions.



### ***Common themes and conclusions from conversations with Professionals***

It is clear from the conversations above that there are 2 main themes which stand in the way of young people accessing high quality green spaces: a lack of suitable things to do and an issue around young people feeling safe in these areas. These points were touched on by every relevant professional that was included in this project, and all professionals also pointed out that they believed that young people's health and wellbeing would see improvements if they did connect more with their local green spaces. The local communities seem to have a detachment from organisations such as Manchester City Council, with less attendance occurring at events organised by them. However, when events are more community led, they have a higher attendance. Based on the above conversations it would be fair to identify that the following points would support young people in accessing green spaces in H/M/L:

- Make the area safer with clear sight lines
- Arrange organised activities with a community focus
- Help the area to become a 'destination' space with the addition of better facilities



## Conclusions & Further recommendations

Throughout the study, there was a focus from young people around feelings of safety, and although the majority of the participants in the survey indicated that they had never had negative experiences in green spaces, they were well versed in the knowledge of other people's negative experiences. This was a contributing factor in their reasoning for not using green spaces as much as they would like to. The conversations with professionals showed that the community use Hulme Park more than other local areas, and this seemed to be attributed to the work that Manchester City Council have done in ensuring the park has a safer feel to it by introducing clear sight lines. This evidence-based outcome will be shared with local park rangers with a view to have further work done in similar green spaces to make them feel like safer environments.

One main factor seemed to focus on the lack of organised activities. Most survey participants expressed that even with their safety concerns, they would feel happy and comfortable to attend organised activities such as running, yoga, group walks, car boot sales, football clubs, arts and crafts and more culture-based activities. Although some communities have spaces (such as Hulme Garden Centre) there is a focus on older members of the community, with most activities on site taking place during school hours. Our research found that if more activities were arranged for young people, they would use green spaces more often and would feel safer. Social prescribing can play a leading role in this measure, through encouraging charities such as Mandem Meetup and Sow the City to host more organised activities in local spaces. The best way to target local young people to encourage them to attend would be through advertising in schools/collages, via social media or through a local social prescribing service such as Be Well.

Based on the results of the study, it is evident that young people have fewer opportunities to learn how to enjoy and thrive in a nature-based setting. With the dynamics of heavily populated areas, many young people spend their childhood in flats, which don't often have an attached green space or garden, so they are sometimes unaware of how to enjoy green spaces. One of the main recommendations based on the results of this study would be to target young people in their current spaces, such as schools and colleges. One suggested example of this would be to run a nature lead course in schools in our target areas, bringing green activities into the existing curriculum. Targeting young people where they are would ensure participation and help further a connection between young people and green spaces. The work of Sow the City could heavily influence this, such as using the Plant orchestra session alongside a music lesson or using foraging and plant cultivation in Catering class. If a school's budget was able to facilitate these actions, more young people would benefit and learn how to engage with green spaces, as well as learning new skills.

The main takeaways for removing the barriers young people face in accessing high quality green spaces are:

- Additional lighting and clear sight lines in parks and green spaces
- Target young people where they already are (schools and colleges)
- Encourage organised activities by existing charities and organisations
- Provide equitable access during non-school hours
- Advertise through social prescribing and social media.



## ***A final word from Dr Thomas Smart, Natural England***

This report adds to a growing body of research demonstrating the value of local green spaces to the health and wellbeing of our communities, particularly for vulnerable or marginalised groups that may suffer from unequal access to high quality natural spaces in their local area. The improved WEMWBS scores demonstrated by participants in the Be Well/Sow the City taster sessions are a testament to this, providing tangible, observable benefits to their wellbeing in the short-to-medium term, which is fantastic to see.

Understanding how these benefits can be scaled up to involve more members of the community will be an important next step, and this research has identified some of the barriers and possible solutions that social prescribers, green space managers, and local government can use to address these issues. It is important that we meet CYP 'where they are', which could include greater engagement with local schools and PRUs to promote the use of green spaces where young people spend most of their daytime. Investing in our parks and green spaces to improve perceptions of safety, increase aesthetic value, and foster a sense of community ownership of these spaces must be a priority, and can inform future projects relating to green spaces such as the Greater Manchester Mayor's Green Spaces Fund.



## Appendix 1 – Survey Flyer



# Get into the Green

Scan the QR code and tell us what would make local green spaces better for you

SCAN ME



For 13-25 year olds in Hulme, Longsight and Moss Side

[www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/BeWellNaturalEngland](http://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/BeWellNaturalEngland)

**BeWell**  
Find your own happy



# Appendix 2 – Survey

# NATURAL ENGLAND

## Be Well & Natural England survey

0%

### 1. Introduction

Be Well and Natural England need your voice! We're speaking to young people aged 13-25, based in Longsight, Moss Side and Hulme, about their local green spaces. This work is part of the Bolin to Mersey Nature Recovery Partnership.

The five minutes you generously give to complete this survey will help inform this important piece of work. Before we start, please answer the below two questions.

1. How did you hear about the survey? \*

2. Would you like to be involved in Be Well Green taster sessions in April or May 2025? \*

3. If you answered yes to the previous question, please leave your contact details below.

Email

Phone

4. Please confirm that you have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet in this [link](#), and that you consent to taking part in this study \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

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### 2. Demographics

5. What is your age? \*

6. What is your gender? \*

7. Is your gender identity the same as at birth? \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Prefer not to say

8. What is your sexual orientation? \*

9. Do you have additional access requirements? \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

If you answered yes, please comment further:

10. What are your religious beliefs? \*

11. What is your accommodation status? \*

12. What is your ethnicity? \*

13. Are you a care leaver or currently living in care? \*

☐ Yes - a care leaver

☐ Yes - currently in care

☐ No

☐ Prefer not to say

14. Are you a carer? \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Prefer not to say

15. Do you have any disability? \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Prefer not to say

If you answered yes, please provide further details:

16. Do you have a long-term condition (this includes mental health conditions and neurodivergence)? \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Prefer not to say

If you answered yes, please provide further details:

17. What ward do you live in? \*

Other:

18. What is your postcode? \*

### 3. Survey questions

19. What parks /green spaces have you heard of from the list below? \*

**Moss side**

☐ Alexandra Park

☐ Moss Side Community Park

☐ Raby Street Play Area

☐ Moss side Millennium Green

☐ Range Road Community Park

☐ Whitworth Park.

☐ Allotment

☐ Community gardens

☐ Canals, rivers or lakes

**Hulme**

☐ Hulme Park

☐ Barracks Park (St George's)

☐ Allotment

☐ Community gardens

☐ Canals, rivers or lakes

**Longsight**

☐ Birchfields Park

☐ Croxson Park

☐ Nufford Vale

☐ Allotment

☐ Community gardens

☐ Canals, rivers or lakes

☐ Other (please specify including which ward):

20. How often do you use these spaces? \*

21. What are your general feelings towards these green spaces you have ticked above? \*

22. What stops you from using these spaces? \*

23. What negative experiences have you had in these spaces? \*

24. What good experiences have you had when you've used these spaces? \*

25. What do you think would make these spaces feel more accessible for you? \*

☐ Safer environment

☐ Organised activities

☐ More equipment

☐ Cleaner area

☐ Community projects

☐ Other (please specify):

26. What specific activities would you like to take part in in these green spaces? \*

27. If these specific activities were available for you, how do you think this would affect your community? \*

28. If these specific activities were available for you, how often do you think youd use these spaces? \*



## Appendix 3 – Participant Information Sheet

Be Well BLCtr 061 (v1) CYP Client Participant Sheet Date Created: October 2024 PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET Research project title Children & Young Person's Access to Greenspace in Manchester Project- a co-produced evaluation with 13-25 year olds in Longsight, Moss Side and Hulme. Part of the Bollin to Mersey Nature Recovery Partnership Research investigators and contact details: What is the research about? This study examines the views of young people, aged 13-25, on green spaces; the social and cultural barriers faced in accessing green spaces; and the perceived impact of green spaces on well-being. This research project will use interviews and surveys as primary data-collection methods. The research aims to develop an understanding of the factors influencing 13-25-year-olds access to and use of green spaces in South Manchester, specifically Hulme, Moss Side and Longsight. The hope is that this will inform future funding into green spaces in the local area and will also inform Natural England on the repeatability in other parts of the UK (other major cities) This research is conducted by Be Well, part of the Big Life Group in collaboration with Natural England What will my involvement be? You will be asked to complete an online survey and participate in a small-group online interview (with cameras off and names and any other identifying features removed). Do I have to take part? Be Well BLCtr 061 (v1) CYP Client Participant Sheet Date Created: October 2024 Participation in this research study is voluntary. You do not have to take part if you do not want to. If you do decide to take part, you will be required to indicate consent. How do I withdraw from the study? You can withdraw at any point of the study, without having to give a reason. If any questions during the online survey or interview make you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer them. Withdrawing from the study will have no effect on you. If you withdraw from the study, we will not retain the information you have given thus far. What will my information be used for? 1. This co-produced piece of work with CYP and families will aim to explore the barriers and some solutions to connecting young people with nature, with the aim for this to inform other national pieces of work with this high-profile charity. Will my taking part and my data be kept confidential? Will it be anonymised? The records from this study will be kept confidential. Only four named people will have access to any audiovisual recordings and to individual survey responses. These are Joseph Campbell- Be Well CYP and Male Engagement Team Leader, Genna Spiteri-Be Well CYP Mental Wellbeing Coach, George Coombs-Senior Officer - Health and Environment (North West Cheshire to Lancashire Area Team and Dan Aris-Programme Delivery Manager-Be Well. Collective survey results and interview transcriptions may be shared with Natural England, but all names and identifying information will be removed before this data is shared. Further, your name will not be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. All digital files, transcripts and summaries will be given codes and stored separately from any names or other direct identification of participants. Although quotes from the data may be used, no identifying details, such as name or affiliation, will be used. Instead, participants will be identified by a randomly assigned number (e.g. respondent 8). Are there any risks involved in this research? Participating in the research is not anticipated to cause you any disadvantages. What are the benefits for taking part in this research? Be Well BLCtr 061 (v1) CYP Client Participant Sheet Date Created: October 2024 Whilst no immediate benefits for those people participating in the research are anticipated, it is hoped that this research will provide beneficial understanding and impact regarding how urban green spaces can be designed, managed and maintained to encourage access and use by 13-25 year olds in Hulme, Moss Side and Longsight, which will make positive contributions to mental wellbeing. It may be possible to provide travel expenses to workshops and taster sessions and it is hoped that refreshments will be available in one form or another. Results of this research will be shared with participants through a published report. The data will not be used by any member of the project team for commercial purposes. Therefore, you should not expect any royalties or payments from the research project in the future. Data Protection Privacy Notice We will collect personal information from participants in this study and under UK General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) we must have a lawful reason for doing so. The lawful basis that we rely on is that you have given us your consent and you can withdraw this consent at any time. We will also collect



special category data such as your sexual orientation, religious beliefs, ethnicity, etc. We collect this information in order to monitor diversity of participants. The lawful reason that we rely on for processing this information is that you have given us your consent. We will hold your data only for as long as is necessary to complete and report on the study and for no more than 12 months from the end of the study. Questions or complaints If you have any questions regarding this study please contact genna.spiteri@thebiglifegroup.com If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the conduct of this research please contact joseph.campbell@thebiglifegroup.com If you have any questions about how we use your personal data please contact loz.housden@thebiglifegroup.com

1. Be Well BLCtr 061 (v1) CYP Client Participant Sheet Date Created: October 2024 I have read and understood the study information. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. 2. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and can withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason. 3. I agree to any interviews being recorded and understand that my camera will be turned off during the online interview. 4. I understand the information I provide will be anonymised and will be shared with Natural England who will use it to inform other similar national pieces of work and with other parties who have an interest in the result including but not restricted to Friends of Hulme Park 5. I agree that the information I provide can be quoted in research outputs. 6. I understand that any personal information that can identify me – such as my name, address, will be kept confidential and not shared with anyone other than the named researchers.

## Appendix 4 – Taster session flyer



**Have Fun in the Green**

In March we've teamed up with Sow the City to put on some great one-off fun stuff to try in local parks and to see what you think

Check out what's going on, when and where and give us a shout if there's any you'd like to try

For 13-25 year olds in Hulme Longsight and Moss Side

**BeWell**  
Find your own happy



**Plant Orchestra**  
Monday 10th March  
3.30-5.30pm  
In Hulme Park

**Willow Weaving**  
Monday 17th March  
3.30-5.30pm  
At Hulme Park seating area

**Foraging for wild food**  
Monday 24th March  
3.30-5.30pm  
Chorlton Water Park

**Monoprinting**  
Tuesday 25th March  
3.30-5.30pm  
In Hulme Park, seating area

To book your place and get some more info on any of these  
E. Genna.Spiteri@thebiglifegroup.com



# Appendix 5 – Be Well assessment

Copy of Be Well Assessment (if applicable) – please note even partial completion of outcome measures can be helpful to kickstart a client's journey and their progress.

## About Me

1 Date of assessment 

2 Is this an 'in work' assessment? Yes / No

## 3 General Outcomes

Please rate the following concerning your health and well being?  
5 = confident/ in control; 1= not confident/ in control

4 Physical Health 1 2 3 4 5

5 Mental Health 1 2 3 4 5

6 Staying in Work 1 2 3 4 5

7 Looking for Work, Training or Volunteering 1 2 3 4 5

8 Being More Connected 1 2 3 4 5

9 Money 1 2 3 4 5

10 Housing 1 2 3 4 5

11 Family 1 2 3 4 5

## 12 Community Connections

Do you feel connected to community activities?

13 Exercise/fitness clubs? Not connected Connected a little Connected a lot

14 Attendance at community groups? Not connected Connected a little Connected a lot

15 Informal support group? Not connected Connected a little Connected a lot

16 Hobby/specialist interest group? Not connected Connected a little Connected a lot

17 Spending time with friends and family? Not connected Connected a little Connected a lot

18 Employment support? Not connected Connected a little Connected a lot

19 Training? Not connected Connected a little Connected a lot

20 Volunteering? Not connected Connected a little Connected a lot

21 Work Experience? Not connected Connected a little Connected a lot

22 Specialist services e.g. weight management Not connected Connected a little Connected a lot

23 Weight management groups discussed if relevant to the client? Yes No

24 MCC Digital Inclusion Team? (07860 064 128, BeWell, name, number, area, language) Yes No

25 Which community projects have you discussed with the client? \*

Did Not Discuss Other Advantage Dyslexia Alchemy Arts Barlow Moor Community Association Blossom Breathworks CMCM Art CeeBee Gold Climbing Calm Connect Support Creative City Douglas Ethnic Health Forum Evans Sent Ltd Evermore Environmental Fit Over Fifty GMESS GMYN Global Vision Initiative HMR Circle Healthy Me Healthy Communities Humans MCR Integrated Maternity Invisible Cities Leukaemia Care Levenshulme Inspire (Cooking) MUD Manchester Mind (FFA) Manchester Settlement Mandem Meetup Manley Park Migrant Support MileShy Club Nurturing Foundations Odd Arts Our Happiness Factor Proper Job Theatre Rainbow Haven Read Easy Reform Radio Respect For All Sale Sharks Sing Yourself To Better Health Smart Works Sonder Radio String Of Hearts Syrian Community Council Tackling Minds The Joshua Tree The Peoples Network Thrive WETA We Are Survivors Widows Empowerment Trust Withington Baths Wythenshawe Community Run Wythenshawe Good Neighbours Yellow Jigsaw

## 26 WEMWBS - Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts.

Please choose the answer that best describes your experience of each over the last two weeks.

27 I've been feeling optimistic about the future All of the time Often Some of the time Rarely None of the time Client did not wish to respond N/A

28 I've been feeling useful All of the time Often Some of the time Rarely None of the time Client did not wish to respond N/A

29 I've been feeling relaxed All of the time Often Some of the time Rarely None of the time Client did not wish to respond N/A

30 I've been dealing with problems well All of the time Often Some of the time Rarely None of the time Client did not wish to respond N/A

31 I've been thinking clearly All of the time Often Some of the time Rarely None of the time Client did not wish to respond N/A



## Appendix 6 -Wellbeing tracker for taster sessions

### WELLBEING IN GREEN SPACES

*We appreciate your participation in our study! Please answer the below questions before & after the session today, all answers will be kept anonymous.*

**Question 1.** Are you currently attending session 1, 2, 3 or 4?

**Question 2.** Use 3 words to describe how you are feeling upon arrival to our session

**Question 3.** Use 3 words to describe how you are feeling after our session today, feel free to leave additional feedback!