



Parks and Greenspaces Strategy Focus Groups Report

July 2023

Insights report from Haringey Parks and Greenspaces Strategy Focus groups

Introduction

A number of focus groups were held to inform the Parks and Greenspaces Strategy.

The rationale for holding the groups was to hear from residents who are rarely, if ever, asked for their views on parks.

The views expressed are not meant to be definitive but rather to illustrate that different groups in the community would likely identify some different priorities were they to be asked.

The groups were held between April 2022 and January 2023 with the following:

- Young people accessed via Parkview academy school. Two groups. One all boys and the other 8 girls and 2 boys
- Young adults accessed via Rising Green. Two groups. One male and one female
- Disabled people. Four groups accessed via Disability Action Haringey (3 groups) and Pedal Power.
- LGBTQI people accessed via Wise thoughts.
- MIND users.
- Older people accessed via the Older Person's reference group and Haringey Circle

The groups were for up to 10 participants and were used to explore some or all of the following topics depending upon how discussions developed:

- Current usage of parks if any and the parks used, what participants did and who they visited parks with?
- Participants views about how safe and welcoming they thought Haringey parks and green spaces were.
- The extent to which the facilities in parks and green spaces were meeting their needs.
- How the Council might best support them and their peers to use parks
- How could parks and green spaces be improved in ways that would encourage participants to use them or use them more often?
- The top three changes that they would like to see in parks?

Some of the key feedback from each of these is captured in the following sections.

Section 1: Young people from Parkview academy school aged from 11-14. Two

groups. One all boys of white ethnic origin and the other 8 girls and 2 boys of mixed ethnicity.

Parks used (boys): Lordship Rec, Markfield, Bruce Castle, Chestnuts, Finsbury, Downhills, Ali Pali.

Parks mentioned as being used (mixed group), Lordship, Enfield Town Park, Downhills, Chestnuts, Ali Pali, Finsbury.

Q1. How safe, welcoming and accessible do you feel Haringey's parks and greenspaces are?

Boys group.

Summary

- Other users either other young people or adults can be off putting.
- Other factors mentioned as making participants feel unsafe included:
 - How well they knew the park.
 - Fear of knife crime
 - People taking or dealing drugs
 - Concerns about being robbed of either a phone or a scooter.
 - The presence of homeless people

There were mixed views about the police with some welcoming a police presence as a safety measure whilst others felt that they were likely to be unfairly targeted if the police were in the park of view.

Play areas were viewed as safe spaces as they were for younger people.

Bigger parks could feel unsafe with the potential for becoming separated and being at greater risk of being assaulted or kidnapped.

Lighting was reported as being important in making them feel safer but some participants would not feel safe using the park when it was dark.

Quotes

"I wouldn't feel safe at night."

"The size of the park can be off-putting. If it's too big it may not feel safe_ there is the possibility of being separated or being kidnapped and hurt."

"The play area feels safer as its specifically for children."

"It depends on which park. There is lots of knife crime."

"I'm worried about theft. Phone or scooter."

"Some other users can perceive teenagers as 'troublemakers' so I avoid parks."

"If police are patrolling in the park, this can make me feel unsafe- I'm afraid of being targeted by the police."

“If police are in the park people may ask “why are they here.”

“Parks are /feel safer during the day and less so at night.”

Supplementary questions were asked about views on the police and dogs in parks.

Q. Do you view the police as friendly?

Summary

Based upon the responses, some of the participants felt uncomfortable about the presence of the police.

Whilst the idea of their being someone in the park responsible for security was welcomed, an alternative to the police was suggested.

Quotes

“You can’t know by looking at them.”

“If you see the police, it can make you want to leave the park in case something is happening. If police are in the park people may ask “why are they here”. It can be off-putting.”

“Instead of the police, could you have parks security or adults?”

Q. How do you feel about dogs in parks?

Summary

There were a range of responses to this question which appeared to be related to the participants personal experiences with dogs.

There was some support for designated areas for dogs and their owners and also for stronger regulations about the training of dogs

Quotes

“I’ve been bitten by a dog. It was on an electronic collar. More dangerous dogs should be on leashes.”

“I don’t feel scared but I understand why others would.”

“I like walking my dog in the park. But there should be stricter rules on training dogs to behave.”

“It can be traumatising if you are attacked by a dog at a young age.”

“Could parks have specific areas for dogs and their owners to socialise. This could make people feel safer.”

Q1. How safe, welcoming and accessible do you feel Haringey's parks and greenspaces are?

Mixed group

Summary

- Groups can feel scary/intimidating.
- Older teenagers/young adults were particularly mentioned as being of concern
- Girls reported receiving unwelcome and uncalled for attention from strangers.
- Concerns about people carrying knives could put them off using parks.
- Enclosed areas could be more scary than open areas and better used parks felt safer.
- Dogs were a concern for some of the group though for others the presence of dog walkers made them feel safer.
- The time of day and the presence or not of lighting could affect their feelings of safety.

Quotes

"Some are safe but a lot are not welcoming. For instance as you enter Lordship Rec there are drunk people."

"People can come up to you and you are not sure what they are going to do."

"I can feel scared of being followed in the park by older kids or by drunk people."

"I'm afraid of people with knives and it can feel too scary to go to the park."

"I feel safe- its good when its open (landscape) and people can see what's happening. Enclosed areas are more scary. E.g., at Lordship Rec in areas where there are more trees, I feel more vulnerable."

"Areas with few people around feel unsafe."

"You can meet new people but also people who are disturbing particularly when these are older kids."

"They can be in big groups and take up all the space and be intimidating."

"The time of day and if there is lighting makes a difference."

"A lack of lighting makes parks more threatening."

"When you hear stories of knife crime and abuse it puts you off."

"Dogs can be scary when they bark or come near you. Could there be allocated areas for dogs?"

"Some electric scooters are too fast. They can be hazardous. There should be a speed limit."

“I like dogs. When people with dogs are around it can help me to feel safe, particularly at night.”

(Supplementary question)

Q. Should electric (and non-electric) scooters be allowed in parks?

Summary

This question was briefly discussed in response to the enthusiasm of one participant.

Points raised included:

- Dedicated paths (that could also be used for other wheeled transport.
- Dedicated areas
- Speed limits
- Interaction/implications for other users with the presence of scooters.

Quotes

“There could be paths for scooters and bikes.”

“It can be unsafe for people with buggies or walkers so you need a different path or area.”

“Have speed limits for scooters.”

“Parents should be more mindful of their young children when scooters are present.”

Q2. To what extent are the facilities in parks and green spaces meeting your needs? Boys group.

Summary

- Strong focus on sports facilities by this group with references to MUGA’s and facilities for football, basketball and outdoor gyms. The lack of maintenance of these areas also mentioned and statement that some are used even when felt to be unsafe. Would like more sports facilities
- Community Hubs as per Lordship Rec were popular though unaffordable for some of the participants who would like to see corner shops in parks to enable them to purchase drinks/snacks and remain in the park.
- Would like toilets and for these to be better maintained where provided.
- Request that playgrounds/play equipment such as bigger swings be provided for older kids.
- Also a mention of more nature areas, seating to promote social interaction and of areas where smoking is banned.

Quotes

“Facilities are well used even when they are poor with uneven surfaces, holes in grass etc.”

“More community hubs in parks like the one in Lordship Rec.”

“Outdoor gyms are good but get broken a lot.”

“Toilet facilities. There aren’t enough and they aren’t nice.”

“There are unused areas such as the bowling greens. Could empty buildings be converted into Hub buildings?”

“Cafes can be very expensive. A small shop could sell snacks and drinks and be more affordable or cafes could reduce their charges.”

“Playgrounds aren’t fair for older kids as the equipment is for younger ones. Could there be more things available for older kids i.e., bigger swings.”

“Benches have also been taken away which is not fair, you need more benches for all ages.”

Parks should work for everyone.

Some park MUGA’s can only be used by inputting a gate code or paying to use them. They should be more accessible.

“There should be areas for smoking and for non-smokers.”

2. To what extent are the facilities in parks and green spaces meeting your needs? Mixed group.

Summary

- Parks offering a range of facilities were liked such as Alexandra Palace and Finsbury Park
- More sports facilities with every park having one or more facilities for sport and/or exercise.
- Playgrounds/play equipment for older kids also requested by this group.
- Toilet provision important and more toilets needed. Current toilets unattractive/unhygienic.
- Parks should be offering facilities for all ages and interests.
- Seating areas highlighted as important for socialising

Quotes

“More sports areas so people who cannot afford gyms can use them.”

“The existing equipment needs to be looked after better.”

“Playgrounds and toilets are important. The existing toilets are unhygienic. Playgrounds are for younger kids. They are not suitable for older ages. Could there be more for older kids (12+)?”

“The Enfield Town Park has lots of facilities for play, sports, a café and toilets and is a good example.”

“Parks should be diverse and divided into different areas that appeal to different groups.”

“Might not be fair to have an older kids’ playground only. It should be open to everyone with a mix of equipment for all ages. Signs saying the play area is for specific ages can be off-putting.”

“Should be better maintenance of sports equipment like football nets and basketball nets.”

“There is a lack of toilets in parks.”

Supplementary question.

Should there be more facilities in parks for girls? Or women and girls only areas or activities?

Summary

- Toilet provision with access to sanitary pads was mentioned as important.
- Toilet provision should be inclusive
- Overall, parks facilities should be open to people of all cultures

Quotes

“Toilets should offer sanitary pads.”

(Toilets) “Shouldn’t be only for women and girls as this could deter non-binary/trans people to use them and it feels discriminative.”

“Facilities should be open to all cultures.”

Q 3. In your experience how well maintained are the parks you use or are familiar with?

Boys group.

Summary

- Concerns about the amount of litter including dog waste.
- Concerns about sports pitch maintenance
- Smaller parks noted as being maintained less well
- The condition of some benches noted as poor

Quotes

“People need to take more responsibility for picking up their litter.”

“There is litter in grass areas and dog poo is left.”

“There are not enough bins in parks. The bins are not spread out enough and they can fill up before they are emptied so that rubbish can spill out of them. Could volunteers help with litter?”

“The holes in grass pitches need looking after.”

“The smaller parks are worse kept which is off putting.”

“People need to change. People will litter regardless, they don’t care. Can we educate them? No!”

Q 3. In your experience how well maintained are the parks you use or are familiar with?

Mixed group

Summary

- Strong focus on hygiene and cleanliness
- Poor maintenance viewed as putting people off visiting parks

Quotes

“They’re not hygienic.”

“Equipment is often broken or missing.”

Should be more shops and cafes.

“More bins are needed.”

“Badly maintained facilities deter people.”

“I haven’t seen anyone maintaining parks. There should be more people maintaining parks but the public should still be responsible for their mess/litter.”

“Toilets should be more hygienic.”

“Who do you go to to report broken equipment?”

Q4. Comments from both groups about their experience of activities or events in parks

“In Markfield, there are lots of nice family /group activities and gatherings-there should be more of these.”

“Could there be more events in the parks that target teenagers?”

“The Wireless festival is disruptive. Residents should be given discounted tickets.”

“It can be hard to find places for students to volunteer as part of their Duke of Edinburgh award.”

“I would like to go to more music festivals.”

““I would like Bike and scooter race events.”

““I would like Woodcraft Folk.”

Q5. Respondents top three changes they would like to see in parks.

Boys group

Change mentioned	No of participants who said this
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More sports facilities/better maintained	4
Shops	2
Improve playgrounds	2
More volunteering opportunities	2
Wider paths for bikes, bike rental, more cafes, parks feeling safer, more events, better lighting, more information about what's on in parks, more benches (all 1 mention).	1 mention of each

Mixed group

All of these changes were mentioned once.

- More hygienic
- Special places for dogs
- Speed limits for bikes and scooters
- More lakes
- More sports facilities
- More diversity in parks (more for disabled people)
- More lighting
- Better maintenance
- Dedicated areas targeting different groups
- More emphasis on safety
- Make parks be for everyone
- That communal places can be for everyone
- More toilets
- Dedicated bike lanes
- More bins

Footnote from teacher attending the session.

Male students from BAME backgrounds did not want to participate as they don't visit parks because they are scared of being targeted and they don't feel that anything would change if they shared their views.

Section 2: Young adults accessed via Rising Green. Two groups. One male of mixed ethnic origin and one female of black and mixed ethnic origin, all of ages 18-25

Parks used by young men's group (6 attendees).

Woodside Park; to chill or to exercise. With friends and by myself

Woodside Park; for laps. Finsbury Park for basketball. Arnos Grove with friends and family when younger.

Hyde Park for events with friends

Lordship Rec for football, Finsbury Park to meet friends, cycle and play football and table tennis. Parks are a problem when it gets dark.

Lordship Rec, Bruce Castle Park, Downhills Park, Springfield Park for socialising/parties and sport. And gardening

Downhills and Chestnuts parks. There used to be a youth building in Chestnuts.

Parks used by young women's group (3 attendees).

Don't use parks now. Doesn't feel like parks are really for us (young women). My family does for health and fitness. There's not much to do for my age. More if you are younger or older. The parks I have used include Lordship Rec and Russell Park."

Don't use parks now. I used to use Finsbury Park for tennis and when the park was dark (in the winter) I would use the Arsenal stadium. There isn't much for me to do but I like to walk in Downhills Park.

I used to use parks for the sports facilities like basketball. I would spend the whole summer there. I'm hesitant now because of the guys on the courts. I take my nephews to parks now.

Q1. How safe, welcoming and accessible do you think Haringey's parks are?

Young men

Summary

- The group tended to feel parks were safe and welcoming though parks in some areas can feel unsafe and the time of day you visit as well.
- Other groups of young people can be threatening
- Certain parks wouldn't be visited unless you are a local
- Dogs can be off-putting.
- Lighting was identified as helpful to improving safety
- Poor visibility was highlighted as making them feel less safe
- The presence of litter was viewed as a sign of a park feeling less safe
- Parks being clean and well maintained was an indication that they were safe

Quotes

"More lights are needed for safety."

"How safe you feel depends on the time of day and the park (and the area it is in)."

"(other) large groups of young people can feel unsafe. It can be confrontational at night... "what are you doing here?"

"They are 100% welcoming."

“Some dogs can be scary. I was running and a dog decided to chase me..... keep dogs on leads.”

“Rubbish and litter and a lack of bins puts me off. If I’m here and the bin is 200m away I’m going to drop it.”

“If it’s after school, the presence of secondary school kids can put me off.”

Q1. How safe, welcoming and accessible do you think Haringey’s parks are?

Young women

Summary

- Feel unsafe and male dominated though has not had specific bad experiences
- Men catcalling younger girls is a problem
- There is a lack of lighting, limited facilities and parks can feel unclean
- The presence of homeless people can be threatening.
- (Some) dogs can make you feel unsafe.
- Some areas can feel overcrowded which can be intimidating

Quotes

“As a female, they could be safer. Though I’ve had no bad experiences they feel male dominated, unsafe and intimidating. “

“They don’t feel welcoming... lack of lighting. Some modernisation would be good.....A shop?”

“Parks aren’t clean e.g., the play equipment at Ducketts common. They feel dangerous. They need lights. Finsbury Park is scary. It goes pitch black.”

“Finsbury Park can feel overcrowded for instance the BMX area and can become very intimidating and there’s also anti-social behaviour.”

“Aggressive men targeting young schoolgirls with catcalling “is off-putting.

“Also, dogs (off-putting). They’re not always on a leash- there should be a dedicated space for dogs but also spaces for no dogs.” “Owners should clean up after their dogs. -dogs can be unpredictable.”

“The aggressive behaviour of younger kids (younger teens) is a problem.”

Q2. Are the parks that you use providing the facilities that you want?

Young men

Summary

- Strong feedback from this group about more sports facilities as this is the main reason for many of them to use parks
- Toilets. Where they exist, they are in poor condition. Young men will frequently use a bush if there are no toilets available
- More natural areas such as woodlands would be welcomed
- The ability to see animals was mentioned
- Opportunities to hold BBQ's/eat
- More information about the park including having QR codes to access information from websites about the parks facilities and activities.

Quotes

"Parks toilets are rough or broken"

"Lakes. The lake in Lordship is dirty. You should put barriers around it."

"More woodland areas like the one in Lordship Rec."

"Animals: Clissold Park has got deer"

"More signs for information and QR codes to access information about the site and activities from the website."

"BBQ's and food."

Q2. Are the parks that you use providing the facilities that you want?

Young women

Summary

- Decent toilets!
- More recognition that mobile phones are central to young adults lives so chargers and USB ports.
- An area for BBQ's
- Water fountains
- Facilities need to be regularly cleaned
- Separate facilities for bikers and joggers
- Better signage
- Wardens to make parks feel safer
- Netball courts. Existing courts are dominated by boys/men for football and basketball.
- A roller skating facility
- More information
- More shaded areas in summer

Quotes

"Would be good to have a table to charge phones- we are generation Z and a bench to attach USB's to."

“Definitely need clean toilets- in Haringey cleanliness of toilets is very poor.”

“Would be good to have a track for bikers and joggers. Bikers go everywhere and are off putting. They need their own space.”

“Good to have an area for BBQs for families- not everyone has a garden”

“Outdoor gyms need to be cleaned- the thought of them not being cleaned is off putting.”

“Would be good to have wardens during the day.”

“Roller skating is very popular and would be good. Roller nation at Bruce Grove is really well used. Though the space would need to be flat.”

Sports facilities are male dominated. They are always used for basketball or football. Could there be netball courts?

“More sheltered spaces, especially in summer to sit in shade.”

Q3. Comments from both groups about activities and events in parks they would like

“Hosting community events e.g., a basketball tournament helps to get people together – more community days.”

“Yoga in the park.”

“Table tennis tournaments organised for older people in Lordship rec.”

“Community days, programmed activities, clean ups.”

“Organised sports tournaments.”

Q4 Is there anything the Council could do to encourage you to use or enjoy parks more?

Young men.

Summary

Facilities mentioned included:

- A covered area for when it's raining
- More facilities as some parks offer very little
- Good cafes

Activities mentioned included:

- more community events and activities in parks:
- Dog show
- Art
- Festivals /carnivals
- Circus
- Beer festivals
- Food festivals

- Markets (boot sales, food, clothes)

Management and maintenance suggestions included:

“You see lots of bird poo. It needs to be cleaned up.”

“If you want parks to improve, they need staff for security, safety and maintenance.”

“Staff with visible/identifiable uniforms”

Q4 Is there anything the Council could do to encourage you to use or enjoy parks more?

Young women.

- Nice flowers
- Prettier and more inviting
- Benches and better cleaning- make the benches more comfortable.
- Newer facilities such as newer swings
- Hidden trails like Parkland walk which should be publicised
- Maps included in park signage.
- Outdoor cinema (at Lordship Rec)

Q5. What would be the best way of communicating with you about parks?

Feedback from the young women’s group

- Social media or on-line for young people
- Tik Tok, Facebook and Instagram
- There could be Tik Tok videos of all parks in Haringey.
- Put videos about parks on the Haringey website.

Q6. Respondents top three changes they would like to see in parks.

Young men

Change mentioned	No of participants mentioning this
Dogs on leads	2
More lighting	2
More table tennis tables, more cafes, more ponds, Indoor play areas, cleaner/less litter, better maintenance (flowers, shrubs and cleanliness), better security, more wildlife areas, more park events.	1 for each change mentioned

Young women

- Nicer attractions, signage and maps
- Flowers and lights (on the floor and on benches)
- More comfortable and prettier benches.
- Better lights
- Better maintenance (keep clean)
- More/ better facilities (basketball courts and playgrounds)
- Water fountains/water dispensers for filling up bottles
- More female orientated sports facilities e.g. netball and volleyball.

Q7. Anything else we have missed that you would like to tell us?

Young women

- Wireless. It's disgraceful. Too disruptive. You only find out about it on the day.
- There should be better security at events and a better clean up.
- Ponds are not well kept. Could you paint the linings? They're not nice.
- Ponds are dirty!
- Toilets. The fact that there are no toilets e.g., at Ducketts Common and you see men peeing against trees.
- Male and female toilets should be separated for security reasons.

And again from the Young Women's group

Q8. Would you be interested in being part of a Friends group?

"They can be a bit snobby- they tend to be a bit middle class."

"Could there be a young person's Friends?"

Section 3. Disabled people. Four groups accessed via Disability Action Haringey (3 groups) and Pedal Power.

Groups were mainly of older adults of mixed ethnicity with both physical and learning-disabled attendees. 15 attendees in total with nine M & six F.

Q1. Parks used and activities undertaken

Chestnuts (tennis), Finsbury (tennis and biking, fitness, recreation), Down Lane, Fairland, Priory, Waterlow Park (Camden), Clissold (Hackney), Elthorne (Islington), Downhills.

Q2. How safe, welcoming and accessible do you feel Haringey's parks and greenspaces are?

Summary (access)

- Access to toilets is very important to be able to visit and remain for any period of time in the park.
- Gradients which may be experienced as challenging for other users can be impossible for disabled users.
- Aligning drop kerbs with park entrances and to access facilities within the park is needed to access the park independently. The alternative can mean needing to travel a much greater distance
- Some users can rely on other people to be able to access parks and they may not have anyone to help them.
- Providing electric charging points for wheelchairs would help people to remain in the park longer.
- The quality of paths/path surfacing is very important in determining if a site can be used
- Paths can sometimes be blocked with soil or materials left making them impassable for wheelchair users
- Access is reported as being worse for everyone including wheelchair users during Finsbury Park events
- Some disabilities are visible. Some, like autism, are not.
- The entrance to where Pedal Power store their bikes is very uneven
- Sloped bench seating can be unusable where you have limited mobility.
- More information about access issues in parks would be empowering for disabled people.

Summary (safety)

- Parks being dark at night can feel unsafe.
- Having access to a member of staff in the event of an accident or illness would improve feelings of safety
- There are reported issues with drug dealing and muggings at Finsbury Park at night.
- Report that someone attempted to rob the participant at Priory Park

Quotes

“Finsbury Park has been revamped and the disabled part is in a valley and not accessible as it is too steep to climb. The accessible toilet has only recently been put in. “

“At Chestnuts Park, the toilet in the café is not accessible and the alternative public toilet doesn’t work.”

“Downhills Park is very dark in the evening and can feel unsafe.”

“The restoration of Lordship Rec didn’t make provision for accessibility.”

“Access could be improved by ensuring that dropped kerbs are aligned with park entrances.”

“A further improvement is to provide charging points for electric wheelchairs as my time in the park is limited by the length of time my wheelchair will remain charged and often, I have had to leave before I wanted to.”

“I used to go to the park but don’t now as my parents are too old to take me.”

“On the path that I use to access PP sessions, soil has been dumped.”

“Overall Finsbury Park feels safe but not during festivals. I was refused access/ Wireless blocked access for me during the festivals. This **was not disabled** access but any access.”

“For safety, there used to be park keepers and it would be nice if there were staff walking around in case someone has a problem including a medical problem or that there is a place to go to. Perhaps the café?”

“Toilets are v important.”

“It doesn’t feel unsafe to me though my son was attacked close by Manor House Gate.”

“I wouldn’t use the park after dark.”

“I get tired very easily when walking and need to rest frequently so benches and their being available are important.”

“When its late, I don’t feel safe and it would be good to have a warden to escort people out or to have lighting.”

“Night-time is when the worst problems occur in Finsbury. There is a big issue with drug dealing by the Finsbury Park gate. You also hear about muggings and murders and its off putting.”

“When coming to Finsbury Park, there are no drop kerbs for wheelchair users and no lighting at night.”

“Fairland Park is accessible for people on wheelchairs.”

“I drive to Finsbury Park. The gates can be locked. I’m a blue badge holder and it would be helpful to have some parking bays at the entrance.”

“There is anti-social behaviour; the use of the bushes to go to the toilet, the use of the basketball courts for social gatherings, less policing than has been the case in past times.”

“I’m always thinking about safety.”

“I try and stay in the middle of paths rather than the edges but if they are in poor condition, it can feel unsafe in the wheelchair.”

“I feel that the community should have more information about parks provision for disabled people.”

Q2. To what extent are the facilities in parks and green spaces meeting your needs?

Summary

A lot of the feedback continued to be about how access could be improved.

- Play provision in Haringey is viewed as poor by parents of disabled children who want more accessible provision in playgrounds e.g., swings, roundabouts etc.
- Paths need to be widened in most parks to accommodate the range of users including wheelchairs (and their families /friends, cyclists and runners.
- Where water fountains are provided, their height must be accessible for wheelchair users.
- Suitable toilet provision is limited to a small number of parks and can be difficult to access if reliant on obtaining a key from a staff member. Toilets are a key element in making parks more accessible
- Access by car is not possible now in most parks and making space available close to parks “and providing drop kerb access would help ameliorate this.
- More trees, lighting and a security presence were also mentioned

Quotes

“What I would like is to be able to go to the park and have a cup of tea and talk to people.”

“There’s extremely limited accessible playground provision in Haringey compared to Islington where I used to live. You need facilities available locally, not to have to travel miles.”

“The Changing Places toilet in Finsbury Park is hidden away, and it is difficult to get the key from the member of staff.”

“The parking used to be better when you had meters.”

“A toilet attendant in the playground would make that area safer.”

“I think we need more trees, security and lights.”

“More benches.”

“Accessible toilets are a main concern and if these aren’t available, I can’t go (to the park).”

“I am able to book tennis courts on-line.”

“I’d like there to be a table tennis table in Chestnuts Park.”

Q3. What are your expectations regarding vehicle access to parks?

Summary

- Feedback indicates that the presence of cars is viewed as undesirable by some disabled people and also that parks should be serving more local needs that can remove the need for car travel
- However there is also a recognition that not all usage is to your local park particularly when you are taking children or meeting friends or attending a group or activity and in these instances a car may be necessary to give disabled people the ability to access parks.
- As a matter of policy, all parks should provide information on the Council website about arrangements for car access by Blue Badge holders.
- Parks should aim to make arrangements for nearby dedicated street parking if parking within the park is not considered feasible.
- Accessible kerbs are again highlighted as critical with the need to ensure that these are not blocked

Quotes

“The information about accessing Finsbury Park by car is limited.”

“I’d like to see provision for Blue Badge holder parking either in or close to the park.”

“Where provision for Blue Badge holders is made, this must allow sufficient room on either side to get in and out.”

“Parking could be either in the park or outside (drop kerbs must be provided).”

“There is not enough provision currently.”

“I find it very difficult to use my own car to the park with my family”

“Parks should be prioritising local people so you should be able to walk to them.”

“Am prepared to pay. Finance not an issue but the lack of (suitable) “provision is.”

“There is nowhere to park at Lordship Rec (and its steep!).”

“Chestnuts Park is more accessible.”

“More on street disabled bays would help solves this issue.”

“I don’t use a car to go to the park. Finsbury Park used to be half devoted to parking. This really undermined the ambience for me. Since the pandemic there is no parking. This has meant that there is lower pollution in the park. There have also been no travellers staying in the park since this was brought in. I would for them to continue to not have parking please. People would often park over the limited curb cut outs making it less accessible”

Q4. Are the parks that you use providing the facilities that you want?

Summary

- Getting into the park, getting around the park via accessible pathways and having access to toilets are fundamental requirements most frequently mentioned by participants.
- These areas would need to be supported by effective management and maintenance
- Providing information on-line about facilities and accessibility would support usage by disabled people.
- Where pathways become flooded, they can become an insurmountable barrier for disabled people
- Other facilities such as more benches, accessible outdoor gyms, improved signage, CCTV cameras and a map of the park were also mentioned.
- As with all users, where facilities are provided but in poor condition or poorly maintained this is off-putting.
- Also, a strongly expressed desire to be able to use cafes without having physical barriers to overcome

Quotes

“Cannot access the café in Finsbury Park (though the staff are very helpful and will come out and take my order. These are important facilities for users and need to be brought up to date and made accessible. At Finsbury, the doorway of the café is too narrow.”

“Clearer signage and a decent map.”

“CCTV cameras for safety.”

“Access to adapted equipment in the park.”

“It would be great if there was a disabled loo in every park. That way I could always be certain of there being one, without having to research every trip out of the house. I would use the internet to find more info.”

“More disabled loo's and changing places toilets would be brilliant. It would be great if they were better kept as they can be run down.”

“I can say the park doesn't have spacious playgrounds.”

“Paths are often poor quality. They are poorly thought through and lack curb cut outs in logical places. The entrance from Endymion Road to Finsbury Park by the baseball field has had a very cracked path for 6+ years. They've patched it but it gets worse every year.”

“Pedal power in Finsbury Park do disabled cycling. They deserve more funding and a wheelchair accessible path to the running pitch. Lots of very disabled people struggle to access that resort due to the access”

“More benches should be added in the park.”

“It's worth considering how the events in the park are often not accessible. I want to go to wireless festival, but they are not replying to my access requirement emails.”

“Accessible outdoor gym equipment.”

“Pathways is the biggest problem. At Chestnuts Park, when it’s wet the park floods onto the pathways and they become inaccessible and a hazard.”

Q5. Are there changes to staff management and maintenance you would like to see?

Summary

- A mixed response with some participants very happy with parks staffing and maintenance and others less so.
- A staffing presence to offer assistance if required was identified by some participants
- Having staff responsible for enforcement of bye laws was identified as a measure that could improve feelings of safety and help to increase usage
- Litter and debris were reported as hazardous for wheelchair users.
- As reported previously, gaining access to the Changing Spaces toilet facility in Finsbury Park was dependent upon getting the key from a staff member
- The improved maintenance at Finsbury Park was recognised
- Where improvements to provision are being made for disabled people, they should be involved in decision making

Quotes

“There are no parkkeepers these days. Only a phone number. This is difficult for instance when you come across a lot of scattered rubbish though this has improved in the last 6-12 months.”

“After events, you can come across debris and broken glass which can be hazardous to wheelchair users.”

“Much better over the last few years. The garden team in Finsbury Park are very friendly and always say hello. Fewer large parties would be appreciated as the loud sound systems spoil the space for me in the summer.”

“My park is well maintained. It’s always clean the staff are friendly and always ready to help. It’s accessible to a lot of locals and it engages us. I love my local park.”

“Parks are not very well maintained.”

“I don’t see staff though it doesn’t stop me using parks. Some enforcement would be helpful as this would help to make people safer. You could have rangers on bikes.”

“It would be good to have playground attendants and toilet attendants.”

“I have noticed that the Council is seeking to improve provision for disabled people in parks, but they are not asking disabled users what is needed and instead are doing what they (the Council) think is needed.”

Q6. What events and activities would you want in parks?

Summary

A range of suggestions made in response to this question including:

- Music
- Arts
- Education
- Gardening

Quotes

“Archaeological focused activities such as litter picking with an antiques angle (antique rubbish).”

“Smaller acoustic events.”

“Free community events”

“A tree walk in the park.”

“Guided tours.”

“Talks about the history of the park.”

“Something that is family orientated. Big events with lots of people and loud music put me off”

“What will make me want to go to the park more is that more safety should be provided and provision of additional equipment for adults also like seats.”

“You could offer gardening tips for the local community to help engagement.”

Section 4. LGBTQI people accessed via Wise thoughts. 6 attendees, five male and one female of mixed ethnic backgrounds.

Q1. Parks used and what do you do?

“Downhills Park for walking and socialising over coffee. “

“Alexander Park and Ducketts Common plus Finsbury Square “

“London Fields, Victoria Park and Hoxton for walking.”

“Markfield Park for walking. “

“I mainly use parks in Enfield where I live. Firs Farm, Grovelands, Forty Hall and others.”

“In Haringey, I use Ducketts Common (Pride event), Lordship Rec which I really like as its good for walking through and has very mixed usage. I’m a loner and I mainly go by myself.”

“I like events in parks. I go to Finsbury Park in summer when the weathers good.”

“I used Finsbury to Markfield and back for walking in lockdown. I met lots of new people. Also, Ducketts for the Pride picnic”

“I use Finsbury Park, Ali Pali, Downhills and Markfield Parks to meet with friends, for socialising and for walking.”

“I use Markfield Park, Ali Pali (as part of a wider arts programme) You can see the video of Indian dancing on our website.”

“We also use parks to outreach to the LGBTQI communities. For instance, the G Fest with Furtherfield.”

Q2. How safe and welcoming do you think Haringey parks and green spaces are?

Summary

- Parks being well maintained makes them feel safer.
- Respondents cited a range of other uses that could make them feel unsafe including drug dealing, ASB, scooters and motorbikes, cyclists and joggers.
- A desire for other users to be more aware and respectful (of being older and slower) was raised
- Parks were not felt to be safe after dark though lighting would help with this.
- Toilets were identified as important for facilitating usage (again as an older person
- A staffing/security presence would support feelings of being safe
- Welcoming signage was important
- Expressing intimacy feels unsafe for participants in Haringey parks.
- A range of suggestions were made by the group to make parks more welcoming and safer including more LGBTQI events, awareness training for staff and more security staff

Quotes

“I use Markfield but after 5pm it can feel scary because of drug dealing.....it’s not patrolled. Safe in the day not the evening.”

“Parks can feel safe during the day for me but not in the evening because of drug dealing and anti-social behaviour. You need more security in parks in the evening and at night.”

“Overall, I feel at ease with cyclists though some are not considerate. Scooters and motorbikes are the biggest nuisance.”

“I am older and I feel that some users are not respectful of my being slower. People need to be made aware and reminded about other people being different (slower).”

“Lighting would be helpful. Ducketts is well lit at night. Where I live (in Enfield) I won’t use parks at night because it’s too dark, drug dealing takes place and it feels menacing.”

“There are many cyclists in Markfield and this can be a problem. Recently someone’s handlebars touched my shirt. The paths are too narrow.”

“Where toilets are provided and these are clean and safe, you feel more welcome.”

“Having security in the park can help make you feel more secure.”

“Feeling safe is especially important. The park being clean helps you to feel more welcome.”

“I would like there to be a sign as you enter the park. “Welcome all”.”

South American families often use Markfield on Saturdays and leave litter.

Supplementary question- How comfortable do you feel expressing intimacy such as holding hands or kissing?

“The presence of some groups can make me feel uncomfortable. For instance, young people in Markfield Park can sometimes feel threatening.”

“I cannot say I feel safe all the time in any Haringey Park.”

“There used to be parks police. Since they were cut the Safer Neighbourhood Team haven’t taken on their role and this would make parks in Haringey feel safer. You need a proper police force with powers of arrest.”

“I’ve used Markfield Park for 40 years. None of the parks feel safe and welcoming or places I would feel comfortable to express intimacy except at specific LGBTQI events otherwise I can’t express my identity and sexuality.”

“You will get hate crimes against community members for holding hands.”

Supplementary Question 2. What does the Parks service need to do to help overcome this?

“Try and encourage more (LGBTQI+) events at different parks around Haringey.”

“Greater training for LBH staff on awareness and inclusion.”

“All parks staff should be trained to undertake engagement with diverse communities.”

“Get the parks police back as they are a better guarantee of safety than events.”

“Education is the solution. Policing only works when they are present. Sometimes when I see eastern Europeans, I don’t feel relaxed as they can get drunk and become violent.”

“Should be a clear message. **“We will not tolerate discrimination.”** And this should be communicated so it impacts on people’s thinking.”

“Opportunities should be created for meeting/ intermingling around common interests. This would enable people to get to know each other.”

“LB Enfield have posters everywhere about Pride in the Park events and there is a Rainbow Market in Enfield.”

Q3. To what extent do the facilities in parks and green spaces meet your needs?

Summary

- Toilet provision is important as it enables people to stay in the park longer. A supplementary question was asked about this.
- “Welcoming” signage at entrances could help set a positive tone
- Noted that some activities have both positive and negative qualities for different users
- Suggestion for “women only” areas
- Range of additional suggestions for different types of facilities and features

“Toilets. Disabled toilets with keys are good.”

“More cafes and more seating. Haringey residents should have a discount in cafes.”

“You are more likely to stay longer in a park if there’s a toilet. Also, a café and lighting encourage you to stay longer. I love outdoor gyms and where you have instructions about how to use the equipment this enhances your usage.”

“There is a sensory garden in Bloomfield Park and in Chestnuts Park the play equipment is good for people who are blind/partially sighted.”

“A sculpture trail.”

“You need to maintain what you already have otherwise it becomes off putting.”

“More flowers and fauna. This is very limited in Haringey and it needs to be well maintained.”

“Welcome notices at entrances saying **“WELCOME ALL”** and these should be environmentally friendly and welcome **“HUMANS and NON-HUMANS.”**

“Some activities have both positive and negative aspects such as walking dogs and bike riding. Could there be a **women only** space?”

Supplementary Question. What about toilet provision?

“Shouldn’t have mixed toilets as some cultures don’t wish to mix genders. Spaces should accommodate people who are non-binary and gender fluid. There is no single solution to this but you should start with women only provision.”

“Single sex and single toilet provision is the easy option.”

“Have no gendered toilets plus toilets for disabled people. I would favour mixed use single toilets.”

“London Fields toilets appear to work well (mixed use single toilets).”

Q4. How could the council best support you and your peers to use parks?

Summary

- Importance of making parks feel welcoming for LGBTQI people was emphasised and that this could be advanced in a number of ways.
- Also very important for the Council to continue to engage with this community.
- As per question 1, the Council could look to support the outreach programme in parks to the LGBTQI community

Quotes

“Through a combination of all the things we have been saying.”

“Security, activities, feeling able to express ourselves, feeling welcome (specific areas for dogs plus lots of dog bins and recycling bins.”

“Courses such as be hiving. Free events and music. There is a need to reach out to people with mental health issues as otherwise they may not use parks.”

“So that it feels like we are being taken care of and that the park feels like its **“your house”**.”

“Parks being well maintained.”

More flowers and gardens.

Q Is there anything else that is important to you?

“We’ve covered a lot of ground. This needs to be taken into account and acted upon.”

“Could the Council engage more with groups like ours to deliver activities for different communities? We could do this with Friends of groups. It could be LGBT and the Friends of.....”

“It would help if the Council reached out to us and similar groups. The Youth Service use this approach. “

Section 5. MIND users. 6 attendees, five female and one male of mixed black, Asian and white ethnicities. Older with four over 50’s and two under 50’s

Q1. Do you use parks, which parks do you use, what do you do and who do you visit with?

“Priory Park (since I was a child).”

“I use stationers Park. I take my granddaughter.”

“I like Finsbury Park. “

“I used to take my daughter and grand kids to Ducketts common.”

I'm sight impaired- Bruce Castle has a Peace Garden with a canopy where you can sit.

There are lots of facilities at Lordship.

I also use Chestnuts. I like sitting, enjoying fresh air and listening to music.

Downhills.

I like attending community events in Lordship and Chestnuts. At the Bridge Renewal event they offered freebies.

Q2. How safe, welcoming and accessible do you think Haringey's parks and greenspaces are?

Summary (safety)

- Other park users can feel threatening including teenagers, men, rough sleepers, dogs and people taking drugs
- Finsbury Park feels unsafe after dark and lighting could improve this
- Some other users are reported as being abusive
- One participant reported nearly being abducted from Finsbury Park as a child and that she would not go to Finsbury Park now.
- A staffing presence for help/assistance was also identified as important.
- One respondent requested a panic button be made available in the event of emergency situations

Quotes

“Finsbury Park has shelter but it doesn't feel safe as lots of men gather there. Teens can also feel threatening even if they aren't.”

“I have no problems in Stationers Park. I feel wary in Finsbury Park though nothing has actually happened there. There are lots of druggies and rough sleepers and I wouldn't go in the park at night. When it's dark as it wouldn't feel safe.”

“As a girl, I was nearly abducted in Finsbury Park. The park keeper intervened to save me. I would never go to Finsbury Park by myself ever again. If anything went wrong, who would I turn to?”

“Safety isn't something that has crossed my mind. But thinking about it, if I saw a group of young lads I would be on my guard. Perhaps more lighting would be good in Finsbury Park. Its dark as hell.”

“You can't stop groups of guys walking through the park.”

“I like parks but I’m fearful of dogs.”

“I walk my dog first thing in the morning. I say my prayers as soon as I enter. Though it is a safe park.”

“In the evening, teenager’s smash bottles.”

“Could there be a panic button/safety button/alarm available?”

Summary (welcoming)

- Participants from this group appeared to be more likely to feel anxious in parks and also more likely to be put off by encountering either other users perceived as threatening or conditions such as poor maintenance.
- However, parks were felt to be good places for reducing anxiety
- ASB such as drug taking, drinking alcohol and subsequent littering detracted from people’s sense of feeling welcome.
- (poor) maintenance including the presence of litter was off-putting
- (high) Café prices were also a barrier
- Activities targeting this group were seen as helpful
- More and larger signage was reported as being needed
- A staffing presence would help participants to feel safer and more welcome

Quotes

“Parks try and cater for everyone but can be very noisy. I like it when its peaceful/ I like peace gardens.”

“There are lots of facilities at Lordship. They provide a free lunch on a Thursday.”

“I like Finsbury Park. I’ve no complaints. However, the café prices are high so I can’t use it.”

“There’s a bench near one of the gates where the druggies and alkie sit. They leave bottles.”

“At Downhills, everything needs to be cleaner. There’s rubbish on the floor; people don’t clear up.”

“Every park has an outdoor gym now which is great.”

“Now who can you go to in the park? There is no one (staff member) there.”

“I like sitting and watching what’s going on.”

“I find signage too small and there should be more of it.”

“Teens smoke wacky baccy. It stinks.”

“I used to go with my son. I find it relaxing in parks. The river stinks. There are more facilities for younger ones.”

“Some people are abusive. They sneer at you.”

“They are good for settling anxiety.”

“It’s nice to get out of my flat and sit outside.”

Q3. The extent to which the facilities in parks and green spaces are meeting your needs.

Summary

- Limited response to this question.
- Toilets, cheaper food in cafes, shelter, CCTV and animals were mentioned.

Quotes

“We need (clean) toilets. They were taken away in the 70’s.” They have partly been replaced by toilets in cafes but you can only use them when the café is open.

“I would like more places that provide shelter. I use a lot of parks and one major complaint I have is the lack of shelter if it is raining.”

“I would like animals and lighting. Also, at Ali Pali, it gets s very muddy on some of the paths so I would like better surfacing that doesn’t get muddy.”

“CCTV could help with protection.”

“I’d like there to be cheaper food in the cafes and more adventurous play facilities for older kids.”

Q4. How could the council best support you and your peers to use parks?

Summary

- Participants mentioned a further range of facilities and events. Facilities included:
- Paddling pools and sand play. a Peace Garden, A Go-karting Facility, better lighting and more notice boards
- For events and activities, the following were mentioned: community events, cooking, ESO, volunteering.
- Noted that not everyone is on-line and if so, how might they find out about events and activities.
- One participant asked for help in starting to use the outdoor gym

Quotes

“More community events, paddling pools and sand play, activities around cooking, recycling and ESOL would encourage me to attend.”

“I’d like a Peace Garden but it would get used by druggies- could it be policed by volunteers? You could put up signs for instance Are you interested in helping look after Ducketts Common?”

“Better lighting. This would help when it starts to get dark.2

“If you are not on-line, it’s very hard to find out about events in parks. They are not advertised elsewhere.”

“More notice boards. However, these are rarely updated. Banners outside the park.”

“I live in Hornsey but I’m poor. What is there that’s free?”

“You have put a lot of wetland in. Why? The one at Lordship Rec stinks! There is also one opposite St Marys School.”

“Using the outdoor gym in Finsbury Park. I would like some help with learning how to use the equipment.”

Q5. What would the top three changes be that you would like to see in parks?

Change requested	Number of participants mentioning this change
More lighting	3
More toilets, cleaner parks, shelter, better maintenance, no dog poo	2 each
Improved access for disabled people, a panic alarm, better play facilities for younger children, safer, better signage, more sports facilities, cafes more affordable	1 each

Section 6. Older people. Twenty one attendees, mixed genders and ethnicities

Q1. Do you use parks, which parks do you use, what do you do and who do you visit with?

Lordship, Down Lane, Bruce castle, Alexandra Palace, Highgate Woods, Queens Wood, Oliver Tambo, Chestnuts, Downhills, Finsbury, Russell, Tottenham Green.

Q2. How safe, welcoming and accessible do you think Haringey’s parks and greenspaces are?

Summary (safety)

- Issues raised about the presence of drug addicts
- Concerns about women’s safety.
- A number of parks are used after school in the winter when it gets dark much earlier. Lighting could improve safety.
- A security/police presence or patrols would be welcomed.
- The use of footpaths by cyclists who travel too fast and where room is limited.

- Concern generally about the potential for conflict on footpaths between walkers, cyclists, buggies, wheelchairs and scooters.
- Path surfacing could be improved.
- Other users can be rude/intolerant
- Women are being approached for sex at Tottenham Green
- Cafes can help with improving feelings of safety.
- An emergency help system using either staff or technology would improve feelings of safety.

Quotes (safety)

“On summer evenings, Chestnuts is full of drug addicts. It puts me off.”

“I’m not personally in favour of cyclists.”

“Paths are not wide enough (for cycling). Each park should be assessed to understand its use.”

“Tottenham Green doesn’t feel safe after dark.”

“We should invite the Community Safety Partnership and the police to discuss safety in parks and ask the police for crime reports in parks.”

“Cyclists and walkers should be separated and e scooters should be banned.”

“The path from Alexander Park School to Oliver Tambo should be lit after dark.”

“Cafes make a difference; some parks can feel very isolated.”

“The tunnel going under Muswell Hill Road to Alexandra Park is particularly dangerous.”

Summary (welcoming).

- The presence of dogs can be off putting in certain parks when you are taking children
- The presence of other users offers reassurance.
- The presence of litter and detritus puts people off.
- Some users would like there to be more notices about acceptable behaviour

Quotes (welcoming).

“If the park isn’t well used it can feel scary.”

“I can’t take my grandchildren to Russell Park. It’s a park for dogs.”

“Litter is a problem particularly in the summer –parks need bigger, and more litter bins and they must be frequently emptied. Cleaning up after dogs and drug use including nitrous oxide canisters is also a major problem.”

“There should be notices telling adult cyclists to keep away from other users.

Summary (accessibility)

- It was felt that all parks should be accessible and have facilities to enable access such as adequate path width for two wheelchairs, well maintained paths, accessible toilets and ramps.
- Nature reserves could improve accessibility by having paved areas at entrances for wheelchairs as well as other measures.
- Tree roots were highlighted as causing significant issues where they caused uneven surfacing.
- There are different agencies managing parks in Haringey and it would be helpful if they were all to agree a common approach to areas such as cycle use.
- The availability of toilets can be crucial for this age group to be able to use the park.
- The provision of seating at regular intervals can both help accessibility and is an important facility for promoting social interaction for older people.

Quotes (accessibility)

“There is no disabled equipment. All parks should be accessible.”

“My daughter is in a wheelchair; she has cerebral palsy. There was a gap in the path surfacing and her wheelchair tipped over.”

“You could use the international symbols for notices. People don’t need words.”

“You can’t use Queens wood with a wheelchair.”

“Toilets are now high on the agenda partly because of the pandemic, but the issue is that public toilets (in Haringey) don’t have clear line management.”

“Different rules operate in different parks, for example City of London parks, Highgate Wood, and Queen’s Wood, don’t allow bikes and they are locked at nighttime.”

“The tree roots on some roads, for example Culver Road, mean wheelchair users must drive on the road.”

3. Other points made

There is a need to use the skills and knowledge in the Friends of the Parks groups.

The group suggested bringing together groups with mutual interests, including schools, to listen to each other's points of view.

Structures activities in parks - Chestnuts has done this and has run all-night basketball sessions and it was felt that this could be done in other parks.

There needs to be a clear approach towards monitoring if the Strategy is going to be effective.

Uses parks for walking (health) and this is much more pleasant where parks are well maintained.

Haringey walking groups are good for meeting people and socializing. They also help to overcome loneliness and isolation.

There could be a walk for autistic adults with a sensory garden.

4. The groups collective top 3 changes that they would like to see. (Reference group)

1. Toilets – better access to clean toilets that have disabled access.
2. Paths – made good, problem with tree roots for wheelchairs which lift the tarmac.
3. Clear guidance around park rules which people are made aware of and are monitored.