



Next to Nature:
Oasis Nature Garden
Evaluation 2014-2016







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Children's Foreword



"[I like] playing hide and seek, and shadow monsters because it's really fun!" (Child, aged 5)



"[My favourite day was when we sat] round the fire in the dark watching it, and baking bananas and chocolate." (Child, aged 9)




"In summer we can do water guns and there are caterpillars and we can play games and can learn stuff." (Child, aged 7)



"That it is so so so so so so big and it is AMAZING." (Child, aged 6)

"Cooking and having someone to talk to (staff and kids), and the fire." (Child, aged 10)

A composite image showing children engaged in garden activities. The top half shows two children, a girl and a boy, working together to plant or dig in the soil. The bottom half shows a close-up of a young girl with blonde hair, wearing a pink shirt, focused on her work in a garden bed. The image is overlaid with three colored curved banners containing text.

***"Loads of people come
that I can play with...
and nature, I admire it."***
(Child, aged 10)

***"Digging up roots, getting my hands
messy! [big grin]"*** (Child, aged 6)

"It's the best place to be"
(Child, aged 8)

Director's Foreword

Oasis Nature Garden has been providing innovative and exciting learning opportunities for local children for over 40 years. For the past three years, support from the Big Lottery Reaching Communities Programme has enabled services to expand and grow in response to the needs of the local community in Stockwell. Children, families and the community have embraced the new opportunities and extended opening hours, and have confirmed what we predicted: Oasis Nature Garden is a unique space that effectively engages children and families, and directly improves physical and mental health. It also provides opportunities for a wide section of our community to increase their skills and grow in confidence. The report shows that children who regularly attend the garden:

- are more active, spend time outdoors, and have improved physical and mental health
- learn new skills and try new things, leading to increased confidence
- have improved teamwork, social and communication skills
- feel happier!

Additionally, parent-child relationships improve as quality time is spent together as a family. Adults report new skills, improved confidence in the outdoors, and an increased knowledge of nature-based activities. During the past three years, Forest School activities have consolidated and become a vital resource for children, families and schools. The hands-on nature activities for under-5s are very popular with younger families and consistently oversubscribed. The Saturday community days have taken longer to establish and are now gathering momentum with the help of regular volunteers.

Our Next to Nature project has been a huge success, and we have an ambitious plan to maintain core services, and develop Saturday community days and the café. A new building is also a priority for the next four years, as is developing an innovative sustainability plan that will ensure generations to come can be Next to Nature at Oasis Nature Garden.

Executive Summary Report

The Nature Garden meets the needs of the local community, and demand for its services often exceeds supply at peak times. The potential for the garden to support more local children, families and adult residents is dependent upon a balance of internal fundraising, income generation and external grants. This report evidences the local need and the success of the current service provision. The garden's success is due to a combination of factors:

- an understanding of users' needs
- flexibility and adaptability to those needs
- a highly skilled, diverse and experienced staff team
- a unique site with great potential for supporting skills progression, learning, physical and mental health, and engagement with nature

Key Findings

Outcome 1- As a result of coming to the garden children are more active and spend more time outdoors, which research shows is beneficial to their mental and physical health. Children are also developing fine and gross motor skills, trying new things, showing progression, and being given opportunities to thrive in whatever skill they choose. Children can now identify, cook and serve tasty healthy vegetarian recipes, using home-grown produce that they have sowed, tended to and harvested. The Garden Café project has been successful in encouraging children to try and develop healthy new recipes to sell.

Outcome 2- As a result of coming to the garden children's emotional wellbeing is supported and they feel happier. Most users do not have a garden at home, so Oasis Nature Garden is an essential resource. It provides local families with a free, open outdoor space in which children can grow and develop. Children's teamwork, social and communication skills have improved through coming to the garden. Their confidence has also improved, and they are inspired to be more creative and take managed risks in an outdoor environment. and Saturday community sessions, to ensure increased attendance.

Outcome 3- As a result of coming to the garden, parents and children have been given the chance to improve their relationships and spend quality time together as a family. Adults report having more confidence in the outdoors and learning new skills. They also report increased knowledge of nature-based family learning activities. The Garden Café has created a welcoming, social atmosphere and encouraged more families to stay longer.

Key recommendations of this report:

1. Maintain the existing and ongoing managerial, contracted and sessional staff hours needed to keep the current services running. These include under-5s stay and play, Forest School, Saturday community days and visiting group sessions.
2. Increase hours for gardening staff to maintain, develop and improve the garden for the benefit of the users and in terms of biodiversity, involving the local community and a team of volunteers.
3. Appoint a 'garden-to-plate' worker to supervise food growing and cooking with the children, run the Garden Café for families during the under-5s stay and play session and Saturday community days, and cook with the community at events.
4. Appoint an additional under-5s worker to support the popular current stay and play session, with the potential to deliver a second session targeting disadvantaged parents in the local community.
5. Research and remove the barriers preventing more disadvantaged families from the local area from accessing the under-5s stay and play and Saturday community sessions, to ensure increased attendance from families from a more diverse range of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds.
6. Build a new fit-for-purpose indoor space, hosting an indoor classroom, a teaching kitchen, a seated café space, and potentially an outdoor nursery to build sustainable income generation and maximise community use.



Section 1:

Context & Methodology

Background

Oasis Children's Venture has provided outdoor environmental and adventure play opportunities for Stockwell and Lambeth residents for over 40 years. The charity has three sites catering for a range of ages and needs: the nature garden, the adventure playground and the go kart track. The Inclusion Project works across the three sites and ensures that disabled young people are supported and provided with the same opportunities as non-disabled young people in Lambeth. Demand for Oasis' services has risen by 825% in four years, from 200 registered users in 2013 to 1850 in 2017.

The nature garden was set up in the 1970s by local parents on waste ground, and over the years has turned into a thriving space for environmental play and learning in the heart of London.

The garden is open seven days a week throughout the year. During term time, schools and nurseries book one-off, curriculum-linked environmental education sessions or long-term Forest School programmes. After school and in the holidays, children aged 5-11 years attend the child-led environmental play and Forest School activities provided for local families. Families and the local community can enjoy the garden, take part in workshops and cultural events, and spend quality time with their children on Saturdays and at the under-5s stay and play session. On Sundays the garden is open for private hire and birthday party bookings only.

Methodology

This report analyses a variety of quantitative and qualitative data collected by nature garden children and staff in 2014-16 in order to assess the full impact of the Next to Nature programme.

1. Child user interviews (113 interviews, 2015-16)
2. Parent and carer user surveys (100 online and paper surveys, 2015-16)
3. Parent and carer user interviews (10 Interviews, 2014-16)
4. School education teaching staff surveys (31 surveys, 2014-16)
5. Forest School teaching staff surveys and interviews (13 staff, 2014-16)
6. Adult Natural Thinkers course feedback (21 respondents, 2014-16)
7. Saturday community day feedback (comments, 2016)
8. Forest School observational data (six months, 2016-17)
9. Afterschool club sample week activity staff record (five daily sessions, December 2016)
10. Afterschool club sample week child star chart (five daily sessions, December 2016)
11. Buddy award child achievement data (2016)
12. Community event evaluation (halloween, October 2016)
13. Nature garden staff focus group (seven staff, February 2017)
14. Weekly cooking activity record (2016)
15. Local area research and analysis (online, 2016-17)
16. Literature review (online, 2016-17)

"It's a green space in London, but it is a unique green space - it's not just general grass. [It is unique] because of the planting and the interactive nature of it, and being in a built-up area with lots of people who don't have a garden." (Gardener, staff focus group)

Data Discussion

Some of the parents interviewed and surveyed were adults whose children were too young to be interviewed. Parents with children of primary age who attended the afterschool and holiday playscheme often work long hours and some do not drop off or collect their children from the garden. So, despite attempts to pass on paper or online surveys, or ask for interviews, many working parents could not be reached for feedback.

The afterschool club sample week study conducted in December 2016 provides a snapshot of the activities (sometimes seasonally variant) at that time. This could be replicated quarterly throughout the year to gain a more in-depth snapshot of services for comparison.

The Physical Space

The garden has a greenhouse and 13 raised allotment beds, growing a variety of seasonal, organic fruit and vegetables such as chard, rhubarb, beetroot, broccoli, potatoes, strawberries, bok choy and carrots. In addition to the beds, the garden boasts a number of fruit trees and soft fruit bushes, as well as a wide variety of culinary and medicinal herbs.

Produce from the garden is cooked on the open fire pit in the woodland, in the cob oven, or using the small classroom kitchen. The classroom (which seats 15 children) and veranda provide a much-needed indoor space for resource storage, indoor activities, and kitchen and toilet facilities.

The garden is a haven for wildlife in the heart of the city, boasting three ponds that are abundant with frogs and newts in the summer, a wild flower meadow and a small woodland. The site is thriving as a wildlife habitat, hosting a variety of native flora and fauna including rare species such as greater stag beetles and ivy broomrape. The garden boosts biodiversity in the area, as well as being a fantastic natural learning resource for Londoners.

"It's paradise amongst concrete."
(Parent and carer online survey, 2016)



"It is [a] fantastic oasis in the city."
(Parent and carer survey, 2015)

Local Area & Project Context

The Oasis Nature Garden is situated in Stockwell in North Lambeth, one of the most densely populated places in the country (State of the Borough, Lambeth 2015). It is surrounded by residential and council estate housing, where the majority of garden users live. "It has a complex social and ethnic mix, with large African and Portuguese populations, and a focus for UK Black Caribbean population" (State of the Borough, Lambeth 2015).

Lambeth is London's eighth most deprived borough, 22nd in England (IMD 2015), with Stockwell hosting some of the most deprived residents. Single parent households make up 10% of the local population, 70% of residents live in flats with limited or no access to outdoor space and 87,000 locals live in poverty (State of the Borough, Lambeth 2015). Lambeth has one of the highest rates of underage pregnancy and higher than average recipients of out-of-work benefits, while 37% of 19-year-olds lack qualifications and 25% of all 11-year-olds are obese (London Poverty Profile 2014). A new government action plan aims to tackle the rise in childhood obesity, stating that it can lead to long-term health conditions such as type 2 diabetes, with children from low-income backgrounds being most affected (Gov.uk 2017).

Recent government research showed that 10% of children had not visited a natural environment within the last 12 months, and that children from low-income or BAME (black, Asian and minority ethnic) backgrounds were less likely than white or high-income children to visit nature (Natural England 2016).

Children are increasingly spending less free time outside. A recent survey showed that 'three-quarters of UK children spend less time outside than prison inmates' with a fifth of children not playing outside at all, and children today having less opportunity to play outside than their parents (The Guardian 2016). Less time outdoors and more time indoors is less conducive to physical activity and promoting physical health (Preventative Medicine 2016).

"We love it. It's one of the best things about our local area. It provides a valuable green space in the city." (Parent survey, 2015)

"A rare opportunity in a London life to get stuck into the outdoors." (Parent survey, 2016)

A growing number of statistics reveal shocking discoveries such as that 78% of children do not know broccoli grows on a plant, 29% do not know carrots grow underground, and 5% think strawberries grow in the fridge (LEAF Linking Environment and Farming 2015).

The Oasis Nature Garden is unique in its services to local residents. Other outdoor provision in the area is limited to unsupervised, publicly accessible parks with fixed play equipment and minimal 'wild' space. Staff report that parents often mention this, citing issues with dogs, dog faeces, litter and unsafe adults or children. Other supervised spaces are usually adult focussed or charge a fee for specific activities for children. In contrast, the garden provides a managed wild space to explore and learn in, protected by the native hedgerow, perimeter fence and locked gate.



Staff Profiles

"[I like that] adults play games with the kids." (Child, aged 10, interview, 2016)

Oasis Nature Garden staff are knowledgeable and experienced in working outdoors with children.

"We have a great variety of skills on our staff team, which means that the children benefit from all their fantastic experience, and they are key to the success of the garden."
(Nature garden manager, staff focus group)

Staff are qualified teachers, environmental educators, Forest School leaders, play workers, nursery nurses, artists, musicians and/or gardeners, each with many years' experience in outdoor learning, gardening and play. The head gardener has been with the charity for many years and oversees the day-to-day maintenance of the garden as well as planning food growing and site conservation tasks for the year ahead.

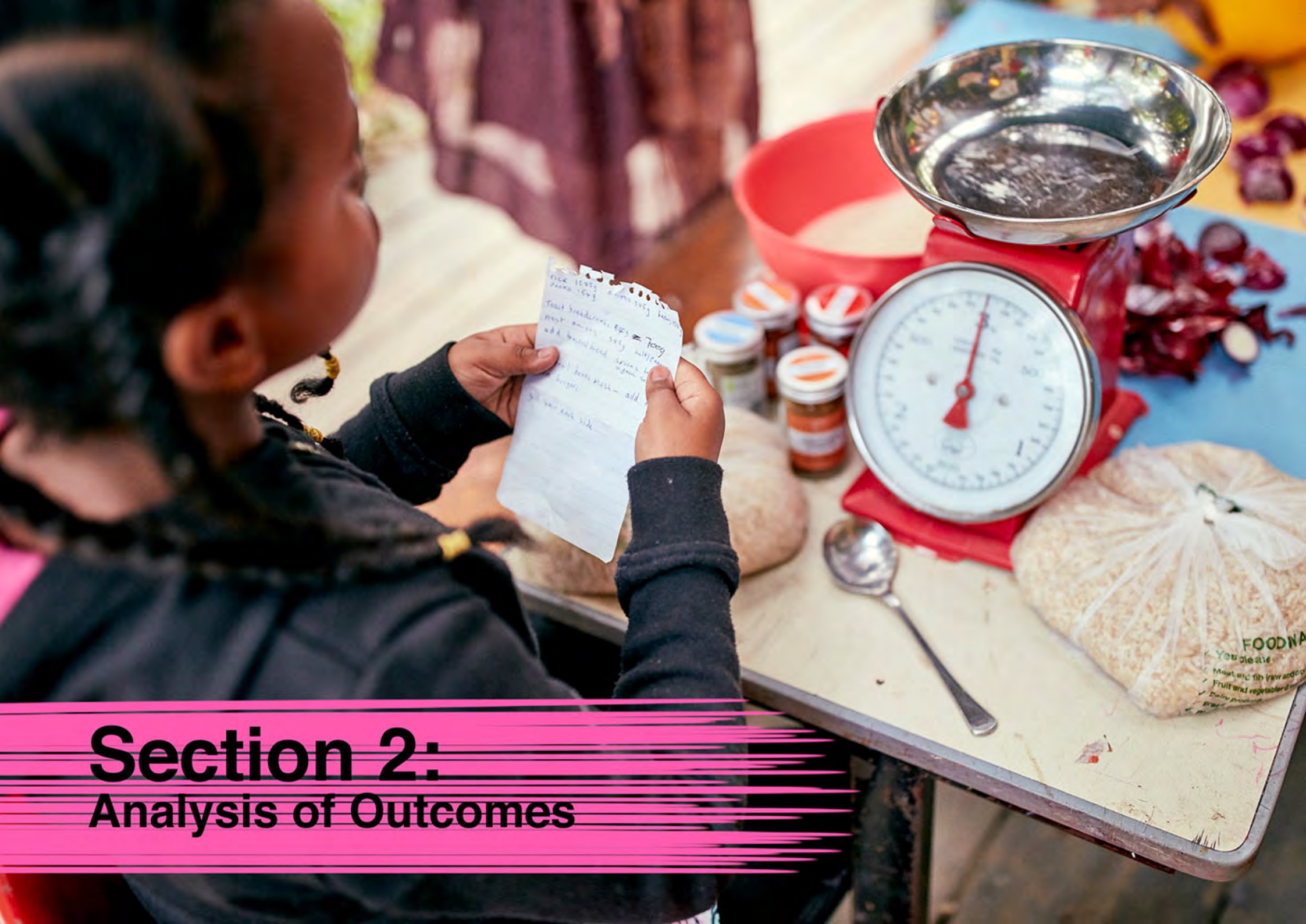
The staff team is supported by an increasing number of new volunteers, including two new gardening volunteers working alongside the head gardener.

"Those working with the children are all professional in their responsibilities and very sensitive to the individual needs of those in their care, then they create a sense of activities, learning and play whilst protecting the autonomy of all the children." (Parent and carer survey, 2015)

"The thing I like best about the garden is the staff. Because we make lots of stuff."
(Child, aged 9, interview, 2016)

"The male staff has a positive, nurturing approach towards my son, who is fatherless. It's local, free, quality, innovating childcare."
(Parent, and carer survey, 2016)

"We are entirely satisfied with how the garden is organised and the obvious commitment of each member of the staff. Our children like and trust them." (Parent, parent and carer survey, 2015)



Section 2:

Analysis of Outcomes

User & Garden Profile

One year at Oasis Nature Garden: July 2015-June 2016

Analysis of one year's attendance statistics shows the garden was used in the following ways:

- Mon-Fri after school Forest School sessions: 4495 visits from 451 children (222 of whom were new)
- Saturday community sessions: 837 visits from 179 children and 290 adults (205 of whom were new)
- Weekly under-5s nature playgroup sessions: 795 visits from 227 children (138 of whom were new) and 189 adults
- Holiday playscheme sessions: visits from 1237 children
- Forest School sessions: 4069 visits during 301 sessions, from 57 school and nursery groups (including 10 groups from schools for children with disabilities), from 774 children

Analysis of one year's user statistical data shows the profile of the garden's users:

- Gender: 50% identified as male, 50% as female
- Age: 0-4yrs 26%, 5-9yrs 55%, 10-14yrs 1%, 20-24yrs 1%, 25-34yrs 3%, 35-44yrs 9%, 45-54yrs 3%, 55-74yrs 2%
- Disability: non-disabled 95%, disabled 5%
- Ethnicity: Asian 1%, black 20%, white 27%, mixed 16%, other 36%

Partnership Working: 2014-16

- Green Shoots Foundation: fellow Lambeth charity twinning Oasis Nature Garden with a school in rural Cambodia, in order for the children to share their progress, achievements and tips on community food growing throughout the year

- Making Routes Project: interactive and inclusive arts collaboration between Oasis, South London Gallery and Battersea Arts Centre
- FairShare: cooperative alleviating food poverty by providing healthy food that the children can cook themselves as part of the nature garden's summer playscheme 2016
- Gingerbread: single parent meet-up group hosted by the nature garden on the first Saturday of the month since summer 2016
- La Retraite: local Roman Catholic girls' secondary school that placed four young people as volunteers at the garden to gain essential work experience
- Capital Growth: for 2017 Oasis Nature Garden has been selected to be one of just six London 'hubs', showcasing best practice and adult trainings, plus being supported by Capital Growth. The garden also ran The Big Dig community event in 2015 and 2016, and will do so again in 2017
- Natural Thinkers: adult training in engaging children in the natural environment through play
- Stockwell Partnership Group: annual Portuguese festival for the community
- Local schools, such as: Larkhall Centre for Children with Autism, The Michael Tippet School, St Anne's Primary School, St Andrew's Primary School, Keyworth Primary School, Stockwell Bright Horizons Nursery
- Sutton Community Farm: hosting an organic and affordable veg box scheme for local residents
- Chelsea Fringe Festival: the garden was part of the Fringe Festival in 2015
- London Environmental Education Forum (LEEF): an organisation that delivers 'engaging children in nature' training to London outdoor educators, and of which an Oasis Nature Garden staff member is a fellow
- Hyde Housing, Studley Estate Tenants and Residents Association, Stockwell Green Tenants and Residents Association: partners for large Christmas community event in 2015

Outcome 1 - CYP report increased physical activity and improved bodily health through self-directed and practical, hands-on learning experiences at Oasis Nature Garden

"We live in a small flat on the fifth floor, so the nature garden has been my daughter's main opportunity to explore the outdoors." (Parent survey 2016)

81% of child users do not have their own garden at home (child interviews, 2016)

"At home mostly you are stuck on the TV just watching it and here you get to play around and do lots of stuff." (Child, aged 9)

1.1 Health and Physical Activity

When interviewed, 81% of children using Oasis Nature Garden's after school and holiday playschemes said that they did not have their own garden at home. When asked the question, 'What would you be usually be doing if you didn't come to the nature garden?' (chart 1.1 below), 64% mentioned only sedentary activities, such as using technology, reading on the sofa, eating, playing with toys or doing homework. In total, 44% mentioned technology specifically: iPad, TV, Xbox, YouTube, computer. Only 16% mentioned physically active activities such as going to the park, playing football or going to another after school club, and 4% mentioned both active and sedentary activities. A further 16% either said they didn't know, or commented on how they would feel, for example,

"If I didn't come to the nature garden I would be crying... because I want to play." (Child, interview, 2016)"

IF I WASN'T AT THE NATURE GARDEN, I WOULD BE...

■ Sedentary ■ Active ■ Both ■ Don't Know

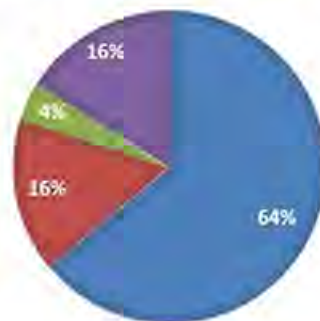


Chart 1.1 Activity levels of the children if they did not attend the garden

This shows the importance of the after school and holiday playscheme provision in helping the children keep healthy and active in the open air. The alternative activity for the majority of the children would be using tech indoors at home, a potential contributing factor to the rise in childhood obesity, which is a topical issue for Lambeth (Local Area and Project Context, Section 1).

"[At the nature garden] I run about more - more than [at] school." (Child, aged 9)

To assess the variety of gross motor skill opportunities provided at the garden, the staff monitored afterschool club activities over one week of normal provision using an observation recording form [Appendix]. This sample provides a one-week snapshot of the types of active outdoor play that are available over the course of a whole year for local children and families.

Table 1.2 Examples of active games observed over one week of afterschool club

Active game example	Notes from staff observation record
Running and chasing games, eg 'it'	The children were "out of breath, excited, happy" and games lasted around 20-30 minutes
Shadow monster	Seven children dressed up as monsters in the dark and "took turns to chase and be chased...each game lasting around 15-20 minutes"
Usain Bolt challenge	"Running around the garden as many times and as fast as they can."
The 'no adults allowed' game	"A large group were playing a self-initiated running and creative play game... exact game was a slight mystery, but very active around the garden."
Run from the spiders!	Six children were "jumping, swinging and running away from imaginary spiders"
Catching and throwing	Using a soft ball, lasting 15 minutes
Jumping from treehouse	"Jumping [from] treehouse, not done before, teaching [them] how to do it safely, properly" lasting around 10-15 minutes
Scarf swinging invention game	Six children invented an active game involving swinging a lot of scarves, lasting around 10-15 minutes
Wheelbarrow rides	Four children "were giving each other wheelbarrow rides for 20-30 minutes. Played well with each other and took turns, [took] time doing activity."

Most games were initiated by the children themselves, some by staff. Staff comments show that many activities got the children active and out of breath, covering a wide variety of gross motor skills that are essential for children's physical development:

"It's a great space to run around... playing, making up games, and gardening, which can be quite physically demanding."
(Gardener, staff focus group)

In addition to staff observations, the children were also involved in providing data. A star sticker chart [Appendix] was placed on the wall of the classroom so that the children could add a sticker to the chart if they agreed with the statements that day. Almost half of the children (48%) attending the sessions in the sample week said they played a game that involved running, thereby increasing their heart rate and providing essential physical exercise in the fresh air.

Staff commented that the sample week was in December, when attendance was at its lowest and indoor play at its highest due to the weather. The percentage of children being active in the garden is likely to rise significantly in the warmer months due to higher attendance and children being dressed more appropriately for outdoors.

1.2 New Physical Skills & Abilities



Running and chasing



Cooking on the fire



Climbing



Hammering



Catching, throwing & batting



Painting & making

The Buddy Award System

"The best thing about being a buddy is feeling proud of yourself and achieving something." (Child, aged 11, 2016)

The buddy award system is a successful initiative from the nature garden staff. Children pick a buddy topic, and - supported by the staff - learn to master the key tasks in their own time, to achieve a complete buddy award.

"Am I a buddy now? Whoopee! I feel so alive!"
(Child, aged 7, 2016)

"It gives the kids achievable goals."
(Staff focus group)

The children take ownership of and manage their own achievements and ambitions. The award consists of a badge, a certificate, a small prize awarded at an informal group 'ceremony' and privileges - for example, chef buddies can cook in the kitchen under supervision, and support other children in writing recipes and preparing food. The system breaks down key skills into achievable tasks, some more challenging than others, including a mix of both gross and fine motor skills practice. It also provides a framework for activities and ensures that the garden resources and staff members' extensive knowledge are used for the benefit of the children's development.

Between the buddy system's inception in autumn 2015 and July 2016, 196 tasks were achieved (shown as stars on the wall chart) and 15 children had been awarded buddy status. Children must demonstrate that they are not only competent in each task, but are confident enough to teach others. As such, it can be a real challenge for children to achieve each task to the required level, making the final buddy award even more rewarding.

Table 1.3: The buddy system and key tasks

Buddy Award System					
Fire	Garden	Nature	Chef	Team	Carpentry
Collected fire wood	Sowed seeds	Knows 5 garden birds	Cooked using a recipe	Help with an event	Can use a saw safely
Chopped up fire wood	Weeded the vegetable beds	Knows 10 garden plants	Cooked using something we grew	Works well with other children	Can use a hammer safely
Safely lit a fire	Re-potted plants	Knows 10 garden mini-beasts	Did all the measuring for a recipe	Makes people feel welcome	Can use a drill safely
Successfully used a fire steel	Watered regularly	Knows 5 pond creatures	Remembered a recipe	Helps look after the garden	Made something out of wood
Was the fire chief	Harvested fruit and veg	Knows 5 garden trees	Knows the names of 5 herbs and how to use them	Listens and communicates well	Knows how to keep themselves and others safe whilst working with tools
Cooked using a fire					

We asked: “What is the best thing about being a buddy?”

“The buddy programme is very fun, it gives children a push to achieve something and it is fun to experience new things. The best bit about being a buddy is feeling proud of yourself and achieving something.” (Child, aged 11, chef, nature and carpentry buddy, 2016)

“I’ve been coming here for five years. I’ve been fire chief. I’d like to be a team buddy and a fire buddy because I like to entertain people and it’s fun helping to make fires!” (Child, aged 10, working towards being a fire buddy, 2016)

“I think that the best thing I’ve done is to bake bread by heart, no recipe! Butter, flour, salt, herbs from the garden, mix it all up, bake on a tray in the oven. When it came out we sliced it up and ate it around the fire.” (Child, aged 7, 2016)

“I’m a natural chef!” (Child, aged 9, chef buddy, 2016)

Learning Key Life Skills

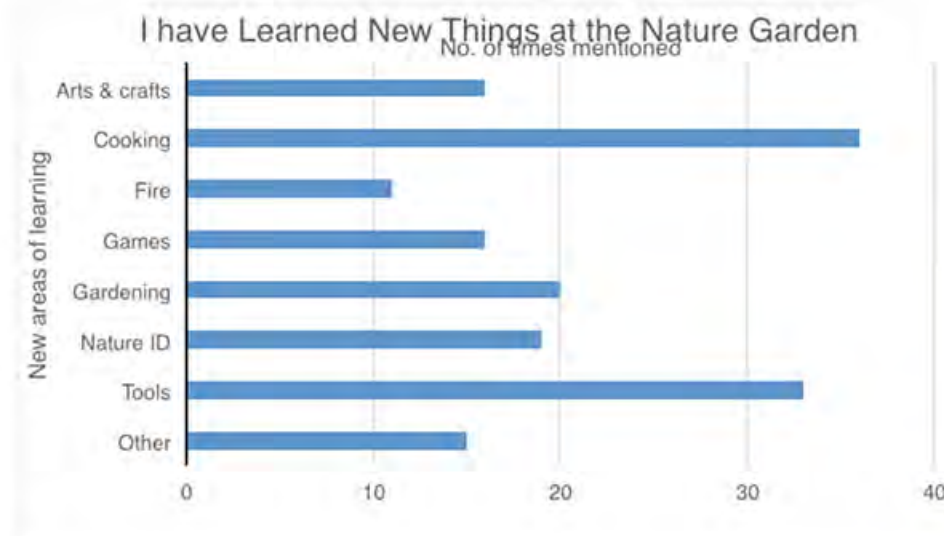
“When we make popcorn on the fire, you have to be careful - you can't go too close to fire if people cooking.” (Child, aged 7)

“[I have learned] how to cook lots of things that I can now cook at home.”
(Child, aged 7)

“[I have learned] how to cook safely. How to grow and sow seeds. How to repot plants.” (Child, aged 10)

The children are given the opportunity to gain key life skills, which are essential for them to live happy, healthy, independent adult lives in the future. In the user interviews, children were asked ‘What have you learned?’ Chart 1.4 below shows the frequency with which each skill was mentioned (some children gave more than one answer).

Chart 1.4: Frequency of topic areas mentioned in total during child interviews



The most frequent answer was ‘cooking’, followed by ‘tools’. Cooking activities are usually focussed on healthy eating, using recipes and measuring accurately, safe use of kitchen equipment, time keeping, budgeting for shop-bought ingredients, and harvesting and preparing garden produce.

Tool activities include projects such as sawing wood to build a bird house, hammering nails to make a toy or selecting the best fresh greenwood for whittling. For both cooking and tools, children learn how to use a knife safely, which tools and safety equipment to use for different jobs, and how to dynamically assess risk. These results prove that many skills are being developed at the garden beyond the assumed areas of gardening and identifying wildlife. Activities link together, building the children’s knowledge and understanding in these areas holistically. Children also mentioned other miscellaneous areas of learning 15 times (Chart 1.4, ‘Other’). This included risk assessing the outdoor environment, being kind to wildlife, learning how to make friends and being respectful to each other. These - in addition to learning how to eat and cook healthily - are key life skills.



“I have learned to make a table out of wood.”
(Child, aged 8)

1.3 Food Growing & Healthy Eating

"By growing them you will get healthier by eating the healthy food." (Child interviews)

When asked whether they had planted seeds at the nature garden, 69% of children interviewed agreed that they had. The remaining 31% of children were not sure, had not planted seeds before, or had started attending the garden last summer or autumn, after the seed-planting season.

The staff encourage children and their families to play a key role in tending to the food-growing areas, and to take ownership of the space, like a community allotment. Afterschool club children review the success of the previous year's crops and help choose the seeds for the coming season.

Regular users of the nature garden know where their food comes from - they sow, tend and harvest a variety of their own crops throughout the year, from garden to plate. This provides a positive antidote to statistics showing an increasing number of children not knowing where the food on their plate originated (Local Area and Project Context, Section 1).

"Chips is healthy here - it has the skin of potatoes and we plant them and grow them, they aren't like McDonald's." (Child, aged 7)


Planting seeds is good because...



"To have learnt how to grow our own crop."

"Good because I don't plant that much elsewhere."

"It's good to help nature, it attracts bees to make honey."



***"I planted and harvested potatoes. I liked harvesting potatoes and being able to cook with them."* (Child)**

Cooking chips - whether potato, sweet potato, carrot, or parsnip - from scratch is one of the children's favourite activities. Food growing and cooking go hand in hand, and are a core focus of the activities at the nature garden. Every Thursday is cooking day, when the staff support the chef buddies to cook food for snack time, to sell at the under-5s stay and play session, and as a take away to share with family.

This encourages children to reconsider ingredient choices and adapt familiar recipes to make them healthier, such as by removing sugar or adding fresh fruit and vegetables grown in the garden. The children have learned to cook and invent a variety of dishes, from three-cornered leek and herb empanadas to nettle and chard pancakes, and from berry jam tarts to elderflower jelly.

However, both food growing and cooking are focussed activities requiring the leadership and dedication of a skilled staff member. Staff report that children frequently ask for more of these activities, which should be a core focus of the nature garden, maximising use of the site's unique resources (staff focus group).

Opportunities for further development are dependent on being able to appoint a new dedicated staff member to plan and lead these activities with the children.

"Sometimes it turn to food that we eat."

"Fun because [you] get to see what you have created."

"I've planted seeds that are very tiny and if it gets lost in the soil you can't find it! Until it grows and then you can find it."

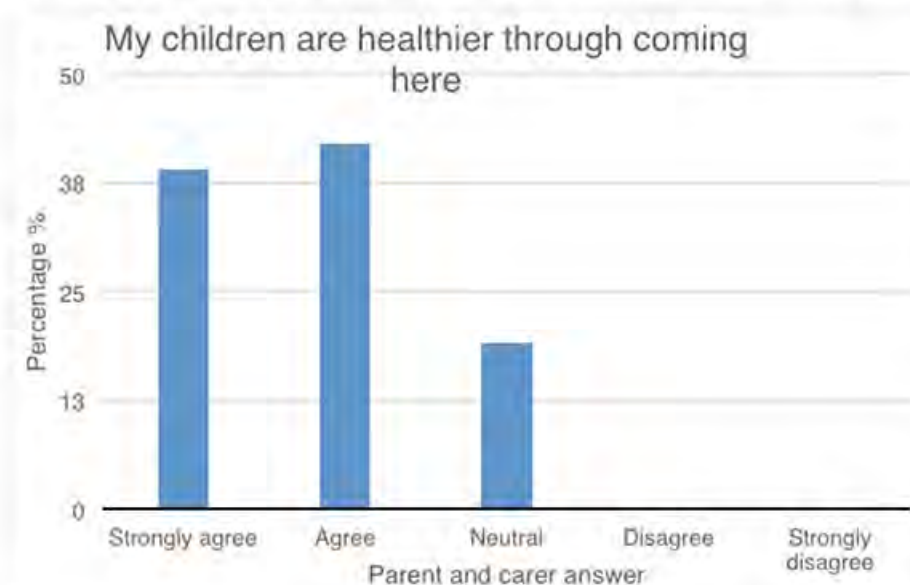
Healthy Eating

81% of parents and carers agreed that their children were healthier as a result of coming to the nature garden ('strongly agree' and 'agree', chart 1.5)

"I eat healthily at Oasis and school... but not at home. I could be more healthier." (Child, aged 10)

"I tried a pomegranate here - they're sweet and have lots of seeds! I've not had this at home before." (Child, child interviews)

Chart 1.5: parent and carer survey 2014-16, healthier children



Healthy eating, particularly reducing sugar and increasing fruit and vegetable intake, is encouraged through the cooking activities: "We have tried to keep our ingredients as pure and simple as possible. We have contributed to health by lessening these amounts of refined sugar and using unfussy ingredients, also our homegrown organic produce." (Weekly cooking activity record, 2016)

In addition to learning about healthy eating through adapting and inventing recipes, and using fresh garden-grown ingredients, children are offered free seasonal organic fruit and veg to snack on throughout the afterschool club sessions.

"It's great that they aren't allowed to go out and buy sweets at the local shop, 100%! We need more fruit to give them - they're always keen." (Staff focus group)

Children often arrive hungry after school, and snacking on fresh fruit and vegetables encourages healthy life choices they might not be offered at home.

Children are given the opportunity to try new flavours and new foods at the garden, including tastes they might not be offered elsewhere.

During the afterschool club sample week, 67% of children ate food at the nature garden that they wouldn't eat at home. This figure is likely to rise during the summer months when more produce is ready for harvest at the garden (afterschool club sample week 2016).

The children are encouraged to play with their food - they enjoy getting into pairs and playing blindfold taste test games with both garden-grown crops and shop-bought produce. Some children tasted foods they had never come across before: avocado, coriander, beetroot, coconut, pumpkin seeds, lime, cress, sharon fruit, physalis, brussels sprouts, green chilli, passionfruit. Sometimes the game is played using crunchy vegetable sticks to dip into homemade humous. These games, along with harvesting and cooking different fruits and vegetables from the garden, make healthy eating fun and encourage children to try new foods. The activities expand their taste buds and willingness to be adventurous with food, supporting them in making healthier food choices that will hopefully stay with them into adulthood.

What does 'healthy eating' mean?



"You need to eat lots of fruit. I've tried new vegetables here, eg fresh chilli and beetroot."



"I eat healthy things here because I eat fruit here."



"Not eating sweets - eat more fruit and veg. Herbs are sometimes healthy and tasty."

"Healthy eating meant that you can grow food and stay strong."



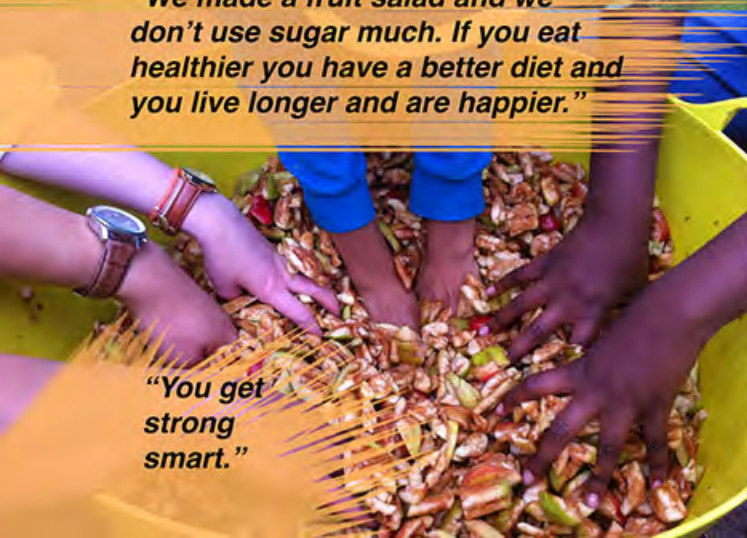
"We made a fruit salad and we don't use sugar much. If you eat healthier you have a better diet and you live longer and are happier."



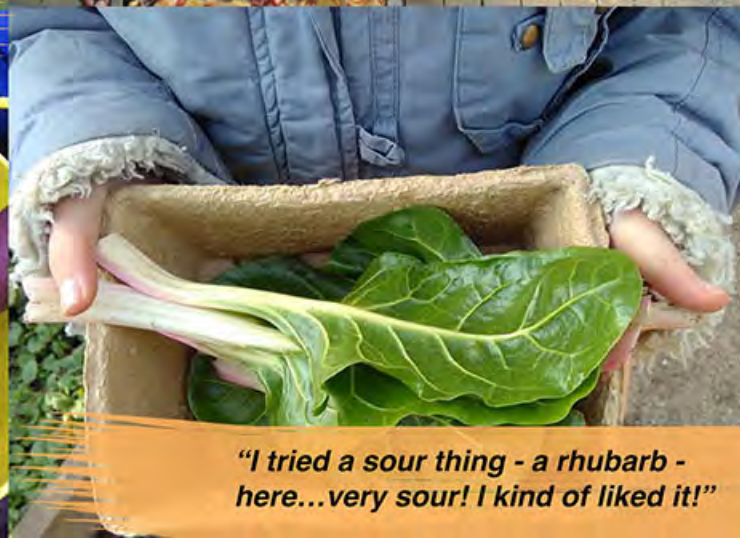
"I didn't know that plants make flour and the [fruit] comes from trees."



"[It is healthy] to eat fruits - I eat more when I'm here. I like strawberries and cherries best."



"You get strong smart."



"I tried a sour thing - a rhubarb - here...very sour! I kind of liked it!"



Case Study 1.1 – Child A

Child A has been attending the nature garden every day after school for two years. He does not have a garden at home, and has told staff that he does not enjoy sports.

“When he first started he was very clingy... he used to only interact with adults and needed a lot of encouragement to help him do an activity he wouldn’t normally do.” (Staff focus group)

Observations of his play and interactions in the garden showed that he avoided physical activity and removed himself from his peers.

“I learnt how to be a chef buddy: I had to learn 10 herbs that grow in the garden, to be careful with a knife and how to cut safely with a knife”. What does healthy eating mean? “It means lots of exercise and don’t eat sweets and things that are bad for you. I eat healthily at Oasis and school... but not at home. I could be more healthier.” (Child A, interview, 2016)

How is the garden different from home? “There’s more space here.” What would you be doing if you weren’t at the garden? “Watching TV or YouTube.” Child A agreed that coming to the garden made him feel happier, and that he runs around more at the garden than elsewhere.

Becoming a chef buddy has been an important step for Child A.

“Now he is more comfortable to interact and play with other kids, join in games, his general confidence has improved. The buddy system was excellent for him, because he saw he was achieving, getting somewhere. It’s visual - he can put his star up on the chart himself.” (Staff focus group)

He now leads simple cooking activities, supporting other children with key skills. He takes pride in the result, shares food with his peers and takes home samples for his family to taste. He has learned a lot about healthy eating, including how to cook his own healthy snacks at home without sugar or salt, and trying new foods.

“[Child A] ate a whole bowl of pumpkin seeds, something he said he had never eaten before at home. He loved them.” (Staff observation, December 2016)

Child A has progressed and developed due to the range of unique activities offered, as well as staff time and care. He is enthusiastic about activities at the garden, and “expresses how he would just be sitting at home otherwise.” (Staff focus group)

There are other children who would equally benefit from the same focus, but the scope for this is limited due to staff and site capacity, equipment and resources costs. “The more money we have, the more of this we can do.” (Nature garden manager, staff focus group)



Case Study 1.2 – Cooking & the Garden Café

In spring 2016 the chef buddies attending the afterschool club on Thursdays started a new pilot project - to bake healthy snacks to sell to the parents and children at the under-5s session the next morning. It was a winning formula. It challenged the children to come up with tasty, healthy and homegrown recipes each week and it provided the parents and under-5s a much-needed boost to their morning of energetic outdoor play.

The project was self-sufficient. Although the bakes were sold on suggested donations, they still made money, which was put back into buying more ingredients for cooking. Reviews from the parents were fed back to the children, so they could see which recipes were the most successful and build upon that knowledge. The positive impact of this model meant that the afterschool club children learned

first-hand how to adapt favourite dishes to remove sugar and salt, to lower fat or use healthy fats, and to boost the bakes with fresh vegetables, fruits and seeds.

“They love it! The kids really enjoy cooking, they feel responsible and learn about eating healthily.” (Nature garden manager, staff focus group) The under-5s session has also been positively affected by this partnership project between the two sessions. Staff and parents report that the café boosts the community and social atmosphere, creating a pleasant space for parents to relax, while their children enjoy healthy snacks using ingredients grown on site (staff focus group). The café has been essential to encourage parents to attend regularly even through the coldest, wettest months (parent and carer interviews 2016). The home comforts of a café might be useful in enticing to the sessions families who are new to the outdoors, allowing them to integrate and relax at their own pace. The pilot café model has run for 12 months and is considered a resounding success. Staff and adults attending Saturday community day heard about the project and requested a Garden Café on Saturdays too (Saturday community day feedback). We hope this will be a major boost to increase and sustain attendance numbers on Saturdays throughout the year. However, to ensure the smooth running and sustainability of the project staff report that,

“We need more equipment - new tablecloths, a coffee machine to raise money and save time (people could help themselves), another member of staff to man the café to free up my time with the families.” (Under-5s worker, staff focus group)

The pilot demonstrates that the demand is there and, by increasing the capacity of the Garden Café through extra staffing, a more kid-friendly kitchen to cook in and a more pleasant covered café seating area, sales from the bakes could provide a financial boost for the garden and help towards future financial sustainability in an uncertain economic climate.



“These [nettle, chard and herb pancakes] are gorgeous! Thanks for the recipe, we have been making them at home all week - my husband loves them!” (Parent of under-5, February 2017)

Outcome 1 Findings Summary



***"He's loved running around and playing with other children, and getting to do things he could never do at home."** (Parent and carer survey, 2016)*

- Most users do not have a garden at home, so using the garden means children are more active and spend more time outdoors, which research shows is beneficial to their mental and physical health. A combination of active, child-led play and adult-initiated games encourages optimum physical activity, including practising fine and gross motor skills.
- The buddy system has been a great success. Children are gaining new skills, trying new things, building in confidence, showing progression and being given the opportunity to thrive in whatever skill they choose. It has been a useful activity framework for staff.
- The skills and knowledge the children develop include key life skills they might not learn elsewhere, necessary for them to live an independent, healthy and happy adult life.
- Children can now grow, identify, cook and serve tasty, healthy vegetarian recipes, using home-grown produce they have sowed, tended to and harvested - from garden to plate. Some also share their skills and knowledge with their families at home.
- The pilot Garden Café project has been successful in building a partnership between afterschool and under-5s garden users, with the variety of bakes demonstrating the many ways homegrown produce can be turned into healthy snacks. The café has created a positive community atmosphere during sessions, and provided essential sustenance during a cold, wet winter.
- More equipment, resources and staff are needed to continue and develop the Garden Café, including extending it to Saturdays to help increase attendance and provide a sustainable income source for the garden.

Outcome 2 – CYP will report increased emotional wellbeing and improved social skills as a result of participating in project activities

"I felt good, and I had all the bad things about other people out of me."

(How does the nature garden make you feel?) (Child, aged 7)"

"Because of the children we work with, their parents find it hard to take them out and show them things. Good to know what nature feels like, looks like, for real. Some of the activities here they'd never experience it anywhere else - their parents don't take them out. London isn't the place where you can get a fire up, and most of them live in a flat - no back garden, not able to access this or experience it."

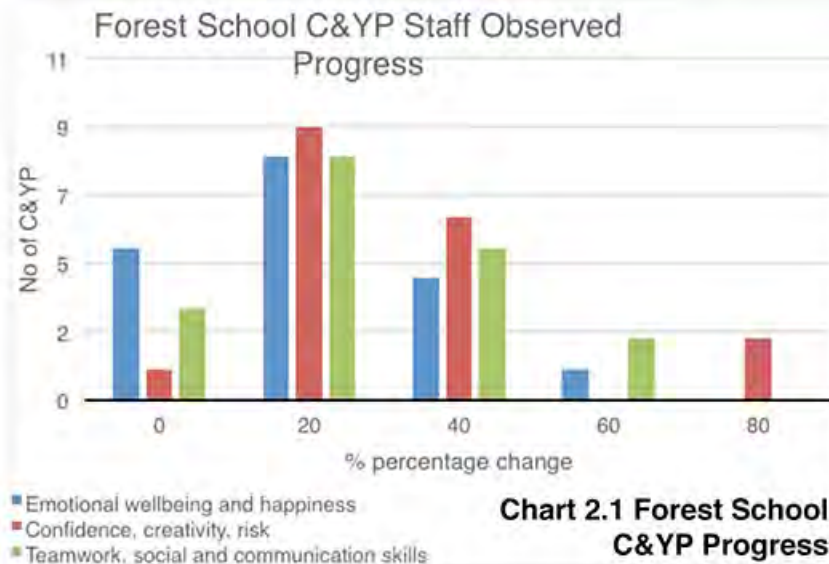
(Teacher, interview, Forest School 2016)

Forest School

Long-term Forest School programmes are delivered to school and nursery groups all year round. Groups attend one session every week and enjoy a variety of challenging new activities and experiences, designed to improve emotional wellbeing and social skills.

What does Forest School look like at the nature garden? "It gives children a chance to explore and lead their own sessions... my topic right now is 'building', so they may build a den, a castle, a city of dens! Encourages wider creativity, pushes them beyond their comfort zone, challenges them with tools and working together in pairs or larger groups. The children tend to play parallel, so Forest School brings them together to work and breaks down boundaries at home, for example it teaches parents and children that it is ok to be dirty."

(Forest School Leader, staff focus group)



For six months, staff collected weekly observational data from three school groups, to assess the impact of long-term Forest School and children and young people's progress (September 2016 – February 2017). [For nursery group progress see case study 2.1] In chart 2.1, between 45% and 50% of children who took part in the Forest School programmes in autumn term 2016 and spring term 2017 saw a 20% improvement in the three areas. Between 22% and 33% saw an improvement of 40% in the three areas.

Some children and young people improved in these key areas by 60% or 80%, demonstrating that individual children progress at different speeds, with some reaping the benefits of the programme sooner than others. Some were assessed as not progressing at all - potentially due to irregular attendance affecting progress, or pupils with additional needs such as autism being affected by unrelated changes, for example moving house. This data provides the Forest School leaders with valuable insight into which children or topic areas may need greater focus for future sessions.



"He's always happy when he leaves here, never in a bad mood." (Parent, 2016)

Emotional Wellbeing (Happiness)

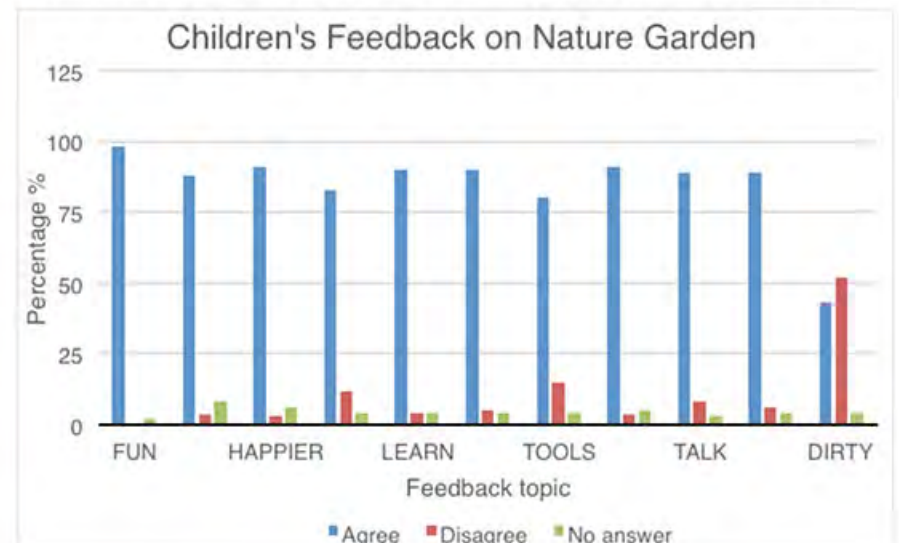
Research shows that "urbanization is a potential threat to mental health and wellbeing", with people reporting feeling happier when living in areas with more green space (Psychology Science 2013). Lambeth is a densely populated borough, so the nature garden is an essential greenspace for wellbeing.

"Some children have never been in a 'nature' environment so really enjoyed the experience." (Teacher, education survey, 2015)

Children report that they feel good being on site. ***"It's better cooking here because you can see the world from the window!! [gesturing with her hand out to the garden]"*** (Child, aged 8)

Feedback from 113 children surveyed between 2014 and 2016 showed that 91% felt happier, 90% more confident, 91% had made friends, and 89% talked more at the garden (chart 2.2).

Chart 2.2 children's feedback on nature garden topic areas



This will have a beneficial effect on their overall emotional wellbeing and improve their social skills. As many of the children are regular users (daily or weekly), this is likely to have a significant positive knock-on effect on their development outside of Oasis too.

The wide range of activities offered to children means that there is something for everyone - an activity to suit every learning style or interest.

"[I like watering seeds] because it's fun and I like it when they grow, and they turn into something nice. It makes me happy."

(Child, aged 9)

Children who are kinaesthetic learners (who learn by doing) may struggle in the current school system, needing space and active learning opportunities to thrive. The child-led play ethos of the nature garden and its staff means that children have this opportunity to learn by exploration.

When asked, 98% of children agreed that the garden is 'fun' and 90% agreed that they learn new things (chart 2.2). It is a garden for the children, a supportive place they can call their own and unwind in nature after a long day at school - essential for positive mental health and wellbeing.

Confidence Trying New Things, Being Creative & Taking Risks

"I think it helps the children I look after with the confidence to explore and try new things – [child's name] has quite repetitive play behaviours when indoors, outdoors [he is] much more open to exploring." (Childminder, parent and carer survey 2016)

Boosting self-esteem in childhood is essential to ensure that the child has the best chance of a happy life. "Low self-esteem often begins in childhood... If you have low self-esteem or confidence, you may hide yourself away from social situations, stop trying new things and avoid things you find challenging... Living with low self-esteem can harm your mental health, leading to problems such as depression and anxiety." (NHS 2017).



Staff at the garden are experienced in supporting children to be creative and take managed risks. The buddy award system has worked as a good tool to encourage children to be creative and learn new skills, and the visual progression towards being a fully fledged buddy builds confidence (section 1.2; table 1.3). Activities such as the lemonade stand (case study 2.2) are examples of how staff support child-led projects that not only teach new skills, but build confidence.

“[The] support [is] appropriate to allow smaller successes that build confidence to do harder tasks.” (School teacher, Forest School programme, 2016)

“It has helped both of my children to be more confident when trying different vegetables which they have grown.” (Parent survey 2015)

Interview and survey results show 90% of child users agreed that coming to the garden made them feel more confident (chart 2.2), 92% of parents and carers agreed that their child was gaining confidence through trying new things (chart 3.1, section 3) and 75% of school teachers strongly agreed that their pupils had more confidence in taking risks (chart 2.3).

During the afterschool club sample week, children were asked to put a star sticker on the chart if they had ‘tried something new today’. In the sample week 41% of children said that they had tried something new. Experiences included using bicarbonate of soda to make 3D

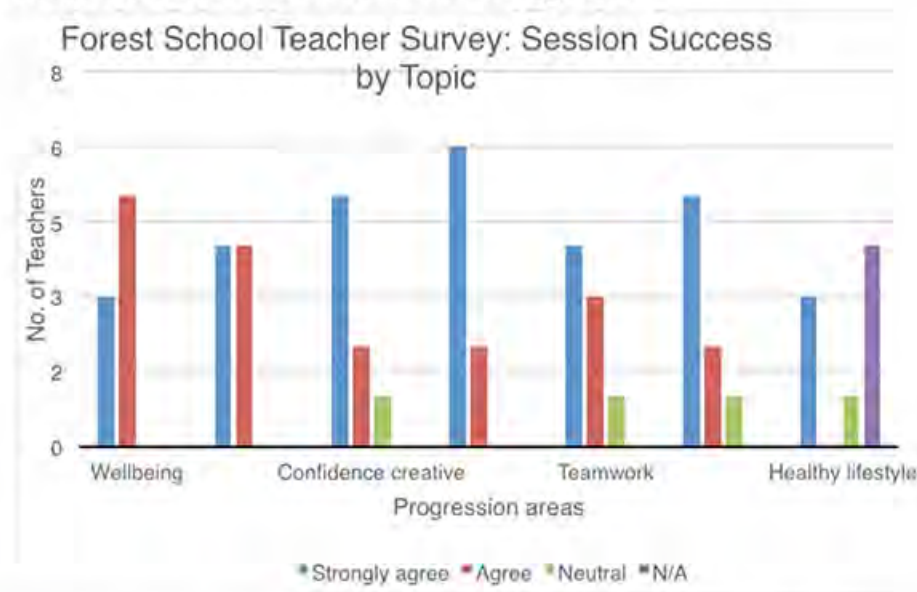


art, telling scary ghost stories around the fire, tasting new foods (section 1.3- healthy eating), learning new active games and making erupting volcanos. When children feel confident to try new things, it demonstrates their trust of the staff and activities they provide, as well as high self-esteem. Some children conquer old fears through regular visits to the garden.

“All children enjoyed picking up the snails and they wouldn’t normally touch snails.” (Teacher, education survey 2015)

Feedback from school teachers whose pupils participated in Forest School programmes in 2014-16 showed that they felt their pupils had progressed greatly in a few key areas.

Chart 2.3 Forest School teacher survey 2016



The most positive response from the teachers was in relation to confidence in taking risks. Chart 2.3 above shows that six out of eight teachers (75%) strongly agreed that their pupils progressed in this area, followed by five teachers out of eight (62.5%) for confidence in being creative, and improving social and communication skills.

There is an increasing body of research on the benefits of risky outdoor play, as summarised by the Health and Safety Executive: "Play - and particularly play outdoors - teaches young people how to deal with risk. Without this awareness and learning they are ill equipped to deal with working life... Seeking to protect them from every conceivable hazard, rather than sensibly managing the genuine risks they face, ultimately leaves them in harm's way, not to mention robbing them of memories that last a lifetime." (Health and Safety Executive website)

By regularly spending time at the nature garden, children learn these vital life skills, as well as creating positive lifelong memories.

Developing Teamwork, Social and Communication Skills

"The nature garden has changed me." (Child, aged 9)

"My child is much more confident as she's a lone child. She doesn't talk at home, but she's more social here, so nature garden has opened her up and she has made friends."
(Parent survey, 2016)

Buddy tasks (table 1.3 - section 1) at the garden are designed to boost team, social and communication skills as much as individual skills progression. Staff encourage children to 'team up' to help each other achieve the tasks they find challenging, for example testing each other on identifying culinary herbs and how best to use them in cooking. Buddy roles include mentoring younger children and supporting them in their learning, which boosts social and communication skills across ages.

Team games (table 1.2 – section 1) are actively encouraged daily at the garden, and staff report that disagreements between children inevitably and regularly ensue. This provides a good opportunity to facilitate a dialogue between children to resolve any issues, and promote positive communication and team work. Children agree that they have made friends at the garden (91%), and that they talk more (89%) (chart 2.2- emotional wellbeing).

They are encouraged to verbalise their likes and dislikes in an appropriate manner, and learn how to self-manage low-level disagreements and challenging behaviours in other children.

Chart 2.4 School Feedback Survey, Quality and Staff

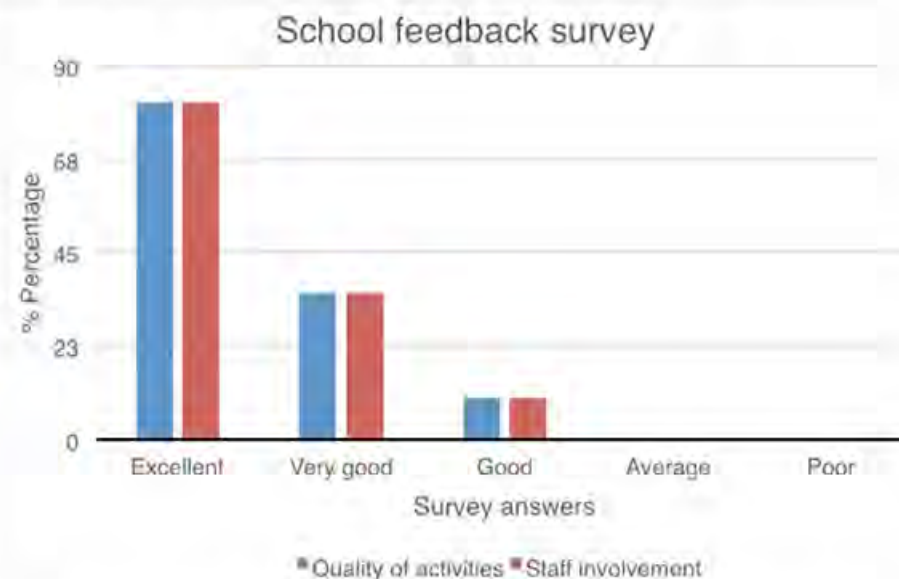


Chart 2.4 above shows the results of the education and Forest School teacher surveys, with the majority, 80%, agreeing that the quality of the activities and staff involvement with the children were excellent. This shows the high level of service provided for local children and young people by the nature garden.

In autumn 2016, the garden staff worked together to create a plan of action to support a child who regularly exhibited challenging behaviour and low self-control when angry. Through providing consistent boundaries across the team, plus emotional support and practical tools to help him acknowledge and evaluate his own behaviours, the child began to integrate and communicate well as part of his social group.

“For me, the nature garden has changed me. Before, I used to be a little naughty boy, and now I’ve got better when I get angry and I try to breathe 10 times to calm down and then tell an adult.” (Child, aged 9)

During one session, the child observed a younger child reacting angrily to a social situation, and said to a member of staff, ***“That used to be me.”*** (Staff focus group).

This is an example of how the staff team work independently and together to improve essential social skills for the benefit of the service users.

“He needs the space to feel relaxed and be himself, to mess around and not feel pressured to be a certain person or behave in a certain way.” (Nature garden manager, staff focus group)

There are other child users exhibiting challenging behaviour who would benefit from this approach, however more staff are needed in order to achieve this.

“Interaction with adults is really beneficial... with more staff we could have a better input.”
(Nature garden manager, staff focus group)

Case Study 2.1 – Bright Horizons Stockwell Nursery, Manager Interview

“I’m in a proper classroom here!”
(Nursery manager, 2017)

Bright Horizons nursery is a few minutes’ walk from the nature garden, and many of the children live in the surrounding council estates. The nursery has been bringing children to the nature garden for weekly Forest School sessions since November 2014.

Nursery manager Paul explains why he continues to bring the children to the Forest School sessions at the garden.

“The learning activities in Oasis’ Forest School are outstanding and well delivered. Children’s needs are met in accordance to their standards - linked to EYFS. Staff and children have benefitted a lot and this has helped a lot for children’s development.”

Activity topics vary: healthy eating, natural food, ingredients, literacy, numeracy, knowledge and understanding of the world, caring and conserving the environment, looking after wildlife...



"Now they all know what this actually means. And they do it in nature - they can see the whole process... children have been able to plant seeds and observe the cycle of growth and care. It links to the classroom." And it all links perfectly into the EYFS framework: "We observe and see their progress, and implement it into our paperwork."

The physical space and potential to practice gross motor skills are also important reasons for visiting. ***"They like the obstacles: jumping, balancing, completing complicated tasks, all activities have been great - all have benefitted all the children."***

Paul talks about nursery schools often not having the outdoor space or natural resources, or being able to afford equipment that is available to primary schools: ***"We can't do this at our site, we don't have the space. Learning at the nature garden is a major difference to being at nursery - this is proper nature here, you can explore with real soil and get dirty."***

Despite the lack of space, Paul tries to harness the benefits of the garden sessions back at nursery: ***"I've changed half of the area in my classroom to be a nature area - using things they have collected here - sticks, leaves, soil... this is their Forest School! The staff are more motivated and more creative. Personally, it's given me motivation to go and collect natural things to use in class. It's encouraged indoor nature creation activities - bringing the outside in. It enhances their experience and encourages communication."***

The Forest School sessions have excited the children, who in turn have enthused their parents too: ***"The children are so excited, it's all they talk about all day back at school: what they've learnt, what they've experienced. They share this with their parents... a lot of parents have asked [about the sessions] - they've seen the excitement and benefits and want to visit the nature garden at weekends."***

And it is not only the parents who are enthused - staff new to Forest School have found it eye-opening too: ***"Before I started coming, I didn't know what to expect, or what 'Forest School' was! I thought: 'a school? In a forest?!' I thought they would just be running around, picking up flowers, and then go home. It's surprising for me."*** (Nursery assistant, Bright Horizons 2017)

Manager Paul talks about how his staff have got ***"vital knowledge and skills"*** and have gained an understanding of ***"how they can implement everything they've learnt back at nursery"***, so increasing the benefits for the children. When asked whether his staff enjoy supervising the sessions, Paul grins: ***"Staff fight to get to come here!"***



Case study 2.2 – The Lemonade Stand

“We made a lemonade stand and asked people passing by to buy lemonade. I was confident enough to ask passers-by to try some. It helped make me feel more confident in general”
(Child, aged 10)

Totally creative! An encouraging enterprise. They were really proud of themselves!” (Staff focus group)



The lemonade stand was a child-led project that started in the first wintery months of 2016 and ran until the autumn. ***“The children were asking for lemons to be halved and sprinkled with sugar to suck, they noticed it tasted familiar and asked staff how lemonade was made.”*** (Staff focus group)

Recipes were tried and tested by the children, including using agave syrup and honey instead of sugar to make the drink healthier. They decided to share their recipes with the public walking past the gates of the garden, and asked if they could build something to display their lemonade jug and cups. ***“A completely independent idea from the children - they came to us, it was child-led, to help them build [a lemonade stand] from scratch with scrap wood...it must’ve taken a term to build and they ran it from spring ‘til the end of summer.”*** (Staff focus group)

The project was successful due to the variety of roles required to design, build and run the stall. It required excellent teamwork, social and communication skills, as well as offering the opportunity to share and learn practical skills and key life skills. ***“There was so much to it... carpentry, painting, design, making the lemonade, confidence speaking to the public and manning a stall, organisation - who bought the lemons? Sugar? How much should they sell for? Working out their costings... Yes, that was really interesting - they didn’t realise how much lemons and sugar cost!”*** (Discussion, staff focus group)

The project came at a time when staff noticed new, younger children starting to attend regularly, and thought that this was an opportunity for the older children - who had been attending for many years - to share their skills. ***“It was a great way to give the older ones more responsibility... we do a lot for the younger ones so it was good to give a project to the older children... they had to look after the money, it was a big responsibility.”*** (Staff focus group)


The completed stand is still used by the children for role play games and brought out for events, and it will likely be used to sell lemonade again in summer 2017.

Outcome 2 Findings Summary

"He's happier here, fresh air and freedom! It's completely different from school and enclosed space." (Parent, 2016)

"[My child leaves Oasis...] happy, loving, and more caring to people." (Parent, 2016)

- Feedback from parents, teacher, children and staff confirm that Forest School provision at the garden has been a great success in helping children progress in a variety of important areas, such as emotional wellbeing, confidence in taking risks, creativity, developing teamwork, and social and communication skills.
- The children are learning key life skills, essential for building emotional resilience and robust mental health as they move towards adulthood, providing the best chance of a happy and successful adult life.
- Education sessions run by experienced garden staff are curriculum linked and benefit whole class groups as well as being adaptable to support individual children with their specific needs. School and nursery staff have benefitted from the sessions, influencing their approach back at school.
- The dedication and expertise of the staff team have been crucial for the garden to continue to provide a supportive and welcoming space that allows children the freedom to thrive. More staff would mean more children exhibiting challenging behaviour would benefit from dedicated support, and more hands-on team building projects could take place.



"The project also provides a supportive and nurturing environment where children feel accepted and appreciated. This has immense benefit for children who are less confident or experiencing other challenges... and there are several children we support in whom this can be clearly seen as a significant support to their ability to socialise and contribution to their emotional well-being." (Nature garden manager, staff focus group, 2017)

Outcome 3 – CYP and families will report new outdoor confidence and improved family relationships as a result of participating in project activities

It's the only bit of green/nature she gets." (Parent, 2015)

Families are increasingly feeling the pressures of modern life, with studies showing that opportunities for spending quality family time together are dwindling. One study reported that a quarter of parents spend just 34 minutes a day undistracted with their children, because of the stresses of modern life (The Mirror, 2015).

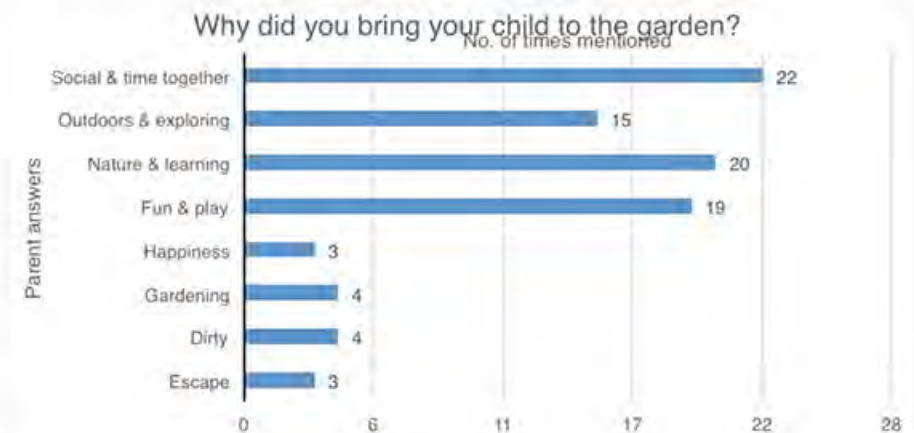
Despite this, there has been a recent surge in the media (The Guardian, 2013) stressing the importance of parents getting their children outdoors. Recent initiatives such as the National Trust's 50 things to do before you're 11¾ and Project Wild Thing (with the review "This film will change your life"), encourage parents to do just that. But is this happening, and are the messages reaching the diverse sectors of the Stockwell community that use the nature garden?

On registering either themselves (if their child is under 5) or their child (over-5s) at the garden, parents and carers fill in a baseline form. One question asks: 'Why did you bring your child to the nature garden?'. Chart 3.1 below shows the frequency of each answer from new users in 2014-16. Some parents gave more than one answer.

The topic parents mentioned most as a reason for bringing their child to the garden, representing 24% of the answers, was the social aspect - spending quality time together as a family, or to meet and make new friends. Another 22% of answers mentioned experiencing nature and learning about wildlife, while 21% mentioned having fun and playing, and 17% mentioned being outdoors and exploring.

"[I have] learnt the importance of playing with my son and engaging in outdoor activities. A messy child is a happy child so don't be conscious of getting dirty and wet." (Parent survey 2016)

Chart 3.1 Parent and carer baseline form: why did you bring your child to the garden?



Why did you bring your child to the garden? [selection of answers]

"Escaping the concrete."

"Quality time in nature with my children. New experiences for my children – mud kitchen, plant identification, relaxing."

"Time with my child, outdoors exploring and meeting other parents – feeling part of a community."

"Growing food to eat to widen children's palate choices."

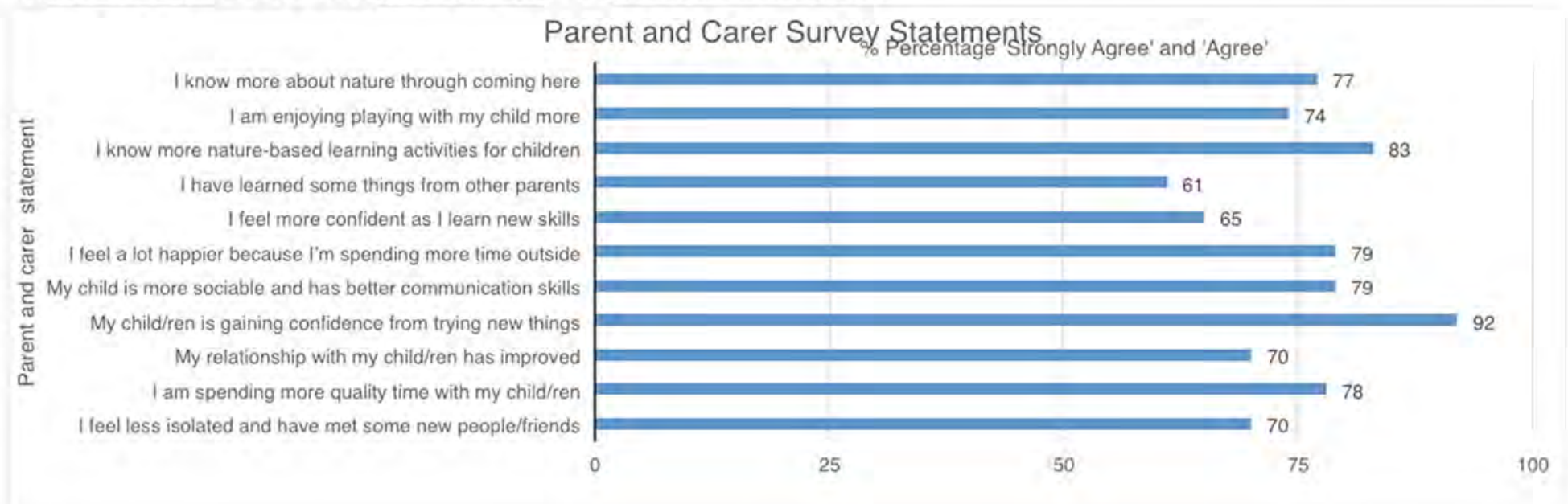
“Child to interact happily with others in natural surroundings.”
“Allowing my children to learn social and outdoor skills, watch television less.”
“Outdoor play in a safe environment, get to know local families, experience of having a garden when living in a small flat.”
“Here my son can be a child.”

However, many of the new registrations would have been for parents of children under 5 years, and so they would be enjoying the garden along with their child. In reality, working parents of children over 5 years old who use the service regularly after school or in the holidays have told staff verbally that they use the service because it is free childcare, which is much needed but rare in London.

“I really really need my children to go to the holiday club... I work and don't have anyone to look after them and childcare is too expensive.” (Parent, February 2017).

In the current political and socio-economic climate, the services provided by Oasis are crucial in order to keep local families afloat. As part of annual feedback, parents of child users were asked to fill in a parent and carer survey form to evaluate their experience of using the garden. Chart 3.2 below shows the percentage of respondents who either strongly agreed or agreed with the statements. The results are discussed in the subsequent sections.

Chart 3.2 Parent and carer survey, strongly agree or agree with statement 2016



3.1 Parent-Child Relationships & Spending Quality Time



"Friday is my special day with my son and we have such a wonderful time together at the brilliant life-changing mind-altering Oasis!"

(Parent and carer survey, 2016)

"I feel really good here because I can see every parent is enjoying themselves, it lifts my spirits... the nature garden takes my mind off of everything else in my life."

(Parent and carer interview, 2016)

Chart 3.2 shows that 74% of parents strongly agree or agree that they enjoy playing with their children more because of coming to the garden, 78% strongly agree or agree they are spending more quality time with their children, and 70% strongly agree or agree their relationship with their children has improved.

Several parents and carers attending the under-5s stay and play session mentioned the difference between the garden and alternative group play spaces in the area, such as the local park or an indoor one o'clock club:

"One word...FREEDOM. Going to the playground is fun for my child but not for me. At Oasis we are BOTH 'fed', both feel enriched from the experience."

(Parent and carer survey, 2016).

The uniqueness of the space shone through:

"Where else can you explore in the mud and plants, without finding a needle or a can of beer?"

(Parent and carer interview, 2016);

"We are both calmer outside, indoor playgroups are far more frenetic."
(Parent and carer survey, 2015).

“Why do you come to the under-5s stay and play session?”

“It’s a very friendly and warm environment.” (Parent, 2016)

“A brilliant space for us to spend quality time at the end of my working week. And a lovely community too.” (Parent, 2016)

“It’s hard to find places like this in London. It’s so refreshing! It really makes me feel happy being outdoors.” (Parent, 2016)

The weekly under-5s Garden Café (case study 1.2 – the Garden Café), which offers parents, carers and children hot drinks and homemade healthy snacks (often heated on a fire that they have helped build), has helped to draw in the numbers and sustain people throughout the winter. Staff report that users have stayed longer and are more inclined to use the garden as a social meeting space, even when the weather is cold or wet. What motivates parents looking for somewhere to spend time with their children is not solely based upon the benefits of outdoor play for their child (chart 3.1), as might be assumed. It is also based upon what they gain themselves personally from spending time in such a unique green space: peace of mind, calm, a community atmosphere and a ***“very friendly and warm environment”*** (parent and carer survey, 2016).

“Home comforts encourage families new to the outdoors to visit, allowing them to integrate and relax at their own pace... the Café is brilliant.”

(Under-5s worker, staff focus group)

The benefits to adult users could be given more focus at the garden, in terms of supporting the whole family (case study 3.1) with the stresses of austerity and modern life that adversely affect parents and carers from the local area. The single parents’ group that meets on Saturdays, in partnership with Gingerbread, is a step in the right direction. However numbers need to be increased to provide the community support that families need from that service.

Casual comments to staff about reliance on food banks and lack of money to donate (staff focus group) hint at the struggles many families in Stockwell face, and the garden is a great space in which to strengthen emotional wellbeing and resilience in adults, as well as children, to deal with such challenges.

“I feel really good here because I can see every parent is enjoying themselves, it lifts my spirits. Since she was born I have struggled with depression and the nature garden takes my mind off of everything else in my life. Seeing birds, trees, having little treats like fruit, tea, coffee. It’s a way for us adults to be children too!” (Parent and carer interview, 2016)



3.2 Adult Outdoor Confidence & Learning New Skills



"I don't like snails, so I often have to face my fear at the nature garden." (Parent and carer survey, 2016)

"I've learnt things from coming here too - if I haven't come here I would never have put my hand in soil. I thought it was dirty before, but now I grown my own plants at home! These things I never did before coming here!" (Teaching assistant, Forest School programme, 2016)

"I am more aware of the benefits of outdoor learning and feel more confident taking the children through the activities." (Nursery staff, Natural Thinkers Training, 2015)

Natural Thinkers was a training programme for parents, carers, childminders and nursery staff. It was a series of three sessions to introduce an outdoor learning ethos and nature-based play activity ideas, and three courses were run between 2014 and 2016.

Over 30 adults were trained through Natural Thinkers by the nature garden staff between 2014 and 2016. Of those that gave feedback, 86% agreed that the course was "excellent" and they would recommend it to others (Adult Natural Thinkers Course feedback, 2014-16). Skills taught on a Natural Thinkers training course include: using games to engage children in the natural world, harnessing nature for art and craft activities, safe tool use and woodwork, adapting activities to suit children's learning styles or schemas, and understanding the benefits of outdoor play and learning.

Feedback shows that the programme was a success:

"I am more aware of the benefits of outdoor learning and feel more confident taking the children through the activities."

"Confidence to explain to parents why good."

"Organise more outdoor activities all year round."

"I recommend that the training becomes compulsory."

"Every child minder should attend."

"Inspired me with new ideas."

"I would be able to use the natural resources (sticks stones mud :) etc) that we find at the park for doing more activities."

"Benefits of the activity and how to introduce kids to social skills."

"Trying things I have never done before."

In 2016, Saturday community days (appendix: Saturday Community Day Workshop Flyer) focussed on encouraging adult users to get involved in the garden by promoting the morning gardening club and the weekly adult afternoon workshops. Workshops taught a wide variety of skills, such as carpentry, wildlife identification, foraging and wild food, food growing and healthy eating recipes, fire lighting and campfire cooking, seasonal arts and crafts, reducing, reusing and recycling, and homemade herbal beauty products. All activities demonstrated to local residents how to harness the natural world in their daily life and make products that were practical, beautiful, helped the environment or saved them money:

"it was lovely to be able to do something new... really therapeutic. GREAT EXPERIENCE. Thank you." (Parent, Saturday community day feedback 2017).

The items they make create a link between the garden and home, consolidating a positive relationship with Lambeth families and encouraging them to use their new-found skills at home with their children.

The under-5s stay and play session and the adult workshops on Saturdays have encouraged adults as well as children to engage with the garden. Some parents and carers shared their own fears about being in the outdoors, and how coming to the garden has helped them.

How does an outdoor Forest School stay and play session benefit the adults?

"It educates the parents - often they live in an environment where they wouldn't expect to get dirty or interact with these things... it provides positive pressure from other parents - if one parent lets their children get muddy, then the others start to feel confident and comfortable with it, and think, 'Oh that's ok, my child can do that too.'" (Under-5s worker, staff focus group)

"What I like most is how it changes your parenting style just by being here. It's the only time of the week where I never say 'no'! He is really coming out of his shell... it teaches me the importance of allowing him to have the ability to explore." (Parent and carer interview, 2016)

"It has encouraged me to spend time outside in all weather." (Parent and carer survey, 2015)



Dirt & Messy Play

Feedback from child users whose parents do not use the garden, such as users of the afterschool or holiday clubs, shows that many of their parents and carers may not understand the benefits of messy, muddy play in the outdoors: ***“I had fun it was messy and dirty which I like but then my mum says ‘why are you so dirty!’*** (Child, aged 9). Results of the child user interviews showed that only 43% of children agreed that they liked to get dirty, whereas over half the children, 52%, said they disagreed with the statement (chart 2.2 p.28). When prompted further, the reasons behind this were interesting:

“[I don’t like] soil in my shoes and clothes as my mum has to wash them.” (Child, aged 6);

“[I don’t like getting dirty] because my mum tells me off... I’m allowed to get dirty only on Fridays.” (Child, aged 7).

Staff reported that they had observed several children not taking part in activities such as cooking, running around outside when muddy, or arts and crafts.

For children to grow up resilient and without fear of the outdoors, it is essential that their parents and carers are confident too.

“[Child’s name] said her sister [her carer while her mum worked long hours] had told her she wasn’t allowed to do cooking or run around outside because it laddered her school tights and got her uniform dirty. I suggested to her to bring a spare change of tracksuit trousers in her school bag everyday so she could have fun with the others. This week she was wearing the trousers - and had a great time!” (Nature garden manager, 2017).



Aversion to dirt or creepy crawlies is not only limited to parents. Teaching staff have also needed to learn to relax in the outdoor environment to support their children to do the same:

"I've learnt things from coming here too - if I haven't come here I would never have put my hand in soil. I thought it was dirty before, but now I grown my own plants at home! These things I never did before coming here!" (Teaching assistant, Forest School programme, interview 2016)

Barriers that prevent children fully engaging with the natural environment at the garden need to be understood, discussed and challenged by garden staff to ensure that all children have the opportunity to access the same activities in the same way.



3.3 Parent Knowledge of Leading Nature-Based Learning Activities with Their Children

"I feel inspired to learn more about nature and gardening - such [as] growing your own edible plants" (Parent survey, 2015)

"[I have] learnt the importance of playing with my son and engaging in outdoor activities. A messy child is a happy child so don't be conscious of getting dirty and wet." (Parent survey, 2016)

Parents and carers of child users at the garden come from a diverse range of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds (section 1- user statistics). Many will have grown up in urban areas such as London, while others will have spent their childhoods living in different countries. Thus, the relationship with nature, wildlife and the outdoors will inevitably vary between families. Conquering fears - such as of creepy crawlies, wet weather and dirt (section 3.2 – adult confidence and learning new skills) - is the first step for many parents, and one that can only be achieved through regular attendance at the garden.

The Saturday workshops, activities at the under-5s stay and play session, Natural Thinkers training, visual display of children's creations on site; these all provide parents with the inspiration to get out there with their children: *"Spending time outdoors in unstructured play, this is so important to families without a garden. We have been inspired to start a communal garden in our block of flats."* (Parent and carer interview, 2016).

Of parents surveyed, 83% agreed that they knew more nature-based learning activities for children through coming to the garden and 77% agreed that they knew more about nature (chart 3.1). Parents attending the Saturday workshops (appendix - Saturday community day workshop flyer) went home not only with the items they had made, but a crib sheet of how to make them again: *"These [nettle, chard & herb pancakes] are gorgeous! Thanks for the recipe, we have been making them at home all week"* (Community Day feedback, 2017)

Attendance at the under-5s stay and play session is high, often at full capacity, and attendance on Saturday community days has been steadily rising since a new drive to advertise in autumn 2016. However, staff report that many of these new users do not fully represent the socio-economic and ethnically diverse local area. Therefore, local families from lower income or more disadvantaged backgrounds may not be accessing or benefitting from the services, and the increase in numbers seems to be from more affluent parents who already understand the benefits of outdoor play.

Targeted outreach to local low income parents, and a second under-5s session focussing on engaging harder to reach families, are required to ensure all families are accessing the services. Increased resources such as staff time to advertise locally and deliver additional sessions, and all-in-one wet weather suits and wellies to encourage reluctant or busy parents to let their child get wet and muddy, will all help towards increasing family user diversity.

The garden staff might also decide to focus on engaging the parents and carers of child users of the afterschool and holiday clubs - those parents who rarely spend time in the garden apart from at drop off and collection times. This could involve encouraging them to attend the Saturday community day sessions, inviting them in for a short activity at collection time, or by sending them home with a crib sheet of suggested activities. By targeting users who have mentioned financial hardship most, who come from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, and [based on child user feedback] who are most likely to have negative views of messy play and creepy crawlies, the garden could have a greater impact in the local community.

Case Study 3.1 – Supporting the Whole Family, Building Community

“The nature garden is a wonderful place. My daughter is disabled and it's truly one of the most inclusive places I have been. We have been consistently welcomed and included.”

(Parent and carer online survey, 2016)

“We've used [the nature garden] differently to each other. Her mother did a box making workshop, plant support weaving workshop (on Saturdays). Together: we've made a fire and baking bread workshop. Our son: playing with friends, making new friends, being in nature, activities with nature, climbing, dens, mud kitchen. Me: making friends, being in nature, feeling relaxed.”

(Parent, 2016)

“Before I started coming here I was bored and lonely in the local area... Oasis nature garden is very different... [you] have a good sense of ownership, people are more a part of it.” (Parent, 2016)



The nature garden offers services to support and nourish the whole family. Of parents surveyed, 70% agreed that coming to the garden made them feel less isolated (chart 3.1).

However, the current economic and political climate has placed pressure upon the garden's service users.

"A mother of one of the afterschool club children apologised for not donating money to Oasis for daily use of the services. She said her phone had been cut off, and that she got her food from a food bank... she asked if Oasis could do a food bank scheme too." (Nature garden manager, staff focus group)

"How has the service made the most difference to you?"

Free or Affordable Childcare:

"It has really help with providing afterschool care for my children for no cost." (Parent 2015)

"The service have provided difference experience such as going to forest walks, insects circus, London Eye... some of these things I wouldn't be able to afford on my own or do not know about it if wasn't using the services." (Parent, 2015)

"The nature garden has been a great help to us, especially during holidays and after school." (Parent 2016)

"I think is a fantastic idea/place for the children to come after school. Also is free of charge its help parent who are on a low income." (Parent, 2016)

Making Friends, Creating Community

"Improved sense of community, well-being in nature." (Parent, 2016)

"It's helped a lot because I've moved a lot nearly every year in London and I didn't have friends or know anyone, so I come here regularly and stay 2 hours. I've made friends through nature garden." (Parent, 2016)

"A place to meet like-minded local parents. There is a more continuity at this group than most other groups I've been to, so it's nice to see the same faces each week. It's great to have somewhere for my boy to run around and let off steam. As we don't have much outdoor space at home." (Parent, 2015)

"It's different from school - more like family - people care about each other." (Parent, 2016)

Reducing Stress of City Life

"As the title/name of the garden suggest, it is in fact genuinely as OASIS for children and carers." (Carer, 2015)

"Since she was born I have struggled with depression and the nature garden takes my mind off of everything else in my life. Seeing birds, trees, having little treats like fruit, tea, coffee. It's a way for us adults to be children too!" (Parent, 2016)

"Feel more relaxed, sociable. It is an important part of my experience living in the area." (Parent, 2015)

"It's amazing and has improved the quality of life for us and families living locally." (Parent, 2016)

"It makes being in the city feel manageable and I don't feel the need to escape so often." (Parent, 2016)

"Great! Love the sessions. Calm slice of nature in the city." (Parent, 2015)

The recent news of the closure of the local Stockwell Community Centre (2017) demonstrates that the nature garden's free or donation-only services are more crucial than ever - free childcare, a space to relax from life's pressures and de-stress, a social community space to meet friends and make new ones, free food in the form of organic fruit and freshly cooked healthy snacks, and staff who create a supportive environment and signpost to further services.

Supporting parents, carers and the whole family is unique to the nature garden. It is the only Oasis site currently offering regular sessions to families with children under 5, and adult workshops and whole family activities on Saturdays. The Garden Café has been a great success during the under-5s sessions, and would do well to be extended to the Saturday community days. With families increasingly feeling the pressure of austerity, the garden should build more space for parents and carers, whole family groups and supporting community cohesion.



Case Study 3.2 – Community Events: Alien Garden for Halloween

“Strange glowing trees and plants never seen, mysterious eggs and tentacle legs, ooziings of slime and a space ship...what once was a familiar play space will, for one night only, become an alien garden. It's our annual Halloween spectacular with a twist.”

(Alien Garden Event Flier 2016)

In 2016, the garden ran a number of community events on Saturdays, including The Big Dig in partnership with Capital Growth, Brazilian Day in partnership with the local Brazilian community, Slavic and Polish Day with Stockwell Partnership, and the eagerly awaited annual Halloween extravaganza entitled 'Alien Garden', in partnership with the Making Routes Project [appendix]. These events are popular among users and are an essential tool to encourage community cohesion, introducing new users to the garden.

“The Halloween event appears to offer a high-profile platform to attract local families and to showcase unexpected, creative play opportunities.” (Nicky Sim, Making Routes evaluation 2016)

Analysis of the 'Alien Garden' community event, the most popular event at the garden that year, showed that **“nearly 400 people attended the event... all dressed up in a range of very inventive outfits.”** (Nicky Sim, Halloween Evaluation, 2016). Attendees were a mixture of parents with young children, and older children enjoying the event with friends. Evaluation on the night showed that the vast majority of attendees lived in the local streets surrounding the garden - only 29 people indicated that they lived outside of the immediate area - so the event was enjoyed by the local community.

The Oasis inclusion team and nature garden staff made sure that the event was accessible to disabled people, with a wide variety of spooky, out-of-this-world activities on offer to draw in the crowds: storytelling around the fire, alien disco, slime pit, giant tentacles, spooky haunted greenhouse. The staff team transformed the garden, which delighted new and regular users alike:



"THANK YOU THIS WAS AWESOME! Loved the wrapping paper snakes!"



"All I see was scary but I liket."

"I like it it is fun and it was so scary."



"How cool is that it was fantastic."

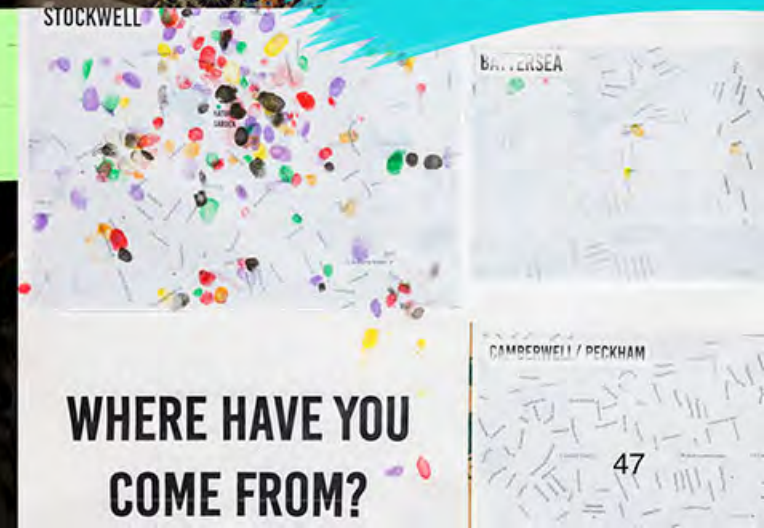


"I fort that it was grait."

"Great party!! I'm coming back next year."



"The evening has been fantastic, kids have had a great time, the way you have decorated the nature garden has been out of this world."



WHERE HAVE YOU COME FROM?

Many families told staff that they look forward to the Halloween event every year, a solid date in their calendar: "Thank you the kids enjoy every year for the last 3 yrs!!!" In other feedback, some parents have commented that the garden should have "more events throughout the year" ("How could we improve our services?" Parent and carer survey, 2015). Quarterly events are now taking place on Saturdays and advertised locally: "Community events are a fantastic way to promote the nature garden and what we do, plus encourage more people from the local area to get involved and use the garden... They are a tool to bring together the diverse communities of Stockwell, raise some money, and experience the wide range of activities the Garden can offer!" (Saturday community manager, staff focus group)

- Due to the current political and socio-economic climate, families today are under an increasing amount of pressure, especially residents living near the garden. The potential of the garden to benefit the whole family and build community could be developed further, with particular focus on engaging with all sectors of the local community. This would help more disadvantaged families benefit from the garden.

"It's v pleasant to be here, it lifts your spirits, there is always someone to talk to, I like to see happy kids roaming around and getting dirty, in the park you can't do this, there's not many things you can do. I really like that kids are looked after properly, and if they fight or argue, they aren't left to deal with it, they are supported by the adults to work things out." (Parent, 2016)

Outcome 3 Findings Summary

- The nature garden supports local families by providing a welcoming space in which to spend quality family time together. It is unique in its provision of free, supervised natural outdoor play and learning opportunities in the local area.
- Many parents and carers report that they visit the garden because it makes them feel happy, and is a uniquely calm and safe green social space in which they can relax and make friends. Some use the garden primarily for their own enjoyment, rather than just for their child's benefit. A regular café on Saturdays would create a more welcoming community atmosphere and should help to increase attendance numbers.
- Some adult users need to overcome fears of the outdoors to use the garden fully. This - in addition to gaining knowledge and understanding of the benefits of outdoor exploration and messy play in childhood - will result in greater support of child-led play outdoors, benefitting the child's development and parent-child relationship.



"Spending time outdoors in unstructured play, this is so important to families without a garden. We have been inspired to start a communal garden in our block of flats." (Parent, 2016)

Challenges Discussion

User Diversity:

It was acknowledged that ethnic and socio-economic diversity needed to be considered within the users of the under-5s stay and play session and the Saturday community days, to ensure all members of the local community have access to the service. Users of other services provided by the garden are more diverse. The Saturday community day's single parent group, in partnership with Gingerbread, is low on numbers and needs promoting. A managers' meeting was held to discuss these issues, and it was agreed that more focus needed to be given to the methods and locations used to advertise services, including the need to target certain groups. The current under-5s session was agreed to be full to capacity and a success, so a second group in addition to the current one would be the best way forward. This should reach sections of the community who are unaware of the current service.

Attendance Numbers:

In 2016 the nature garden managers started to focus on increasing attendance numbers for Saturday community days and the Gingerbread single parents group. New marketing materials were produced in autumn 2016 and promoted via a variety of new channels to reach target audiences. Numbers for Saturdays and the Gingerbread group have been steadily increasing, with many new users now recommending the sessions to their friends.

However, some sessions have the opposite issue: ***"In the warmer months there is often a queue to get into the under-5s stay and play session and the holiday playschemes, and afterschool club is often full... we often have to turn children away because we are at capacity."*** (Staff focus group). Staff have witnessed arguments arising due to children jumping the queue or desperate working parents trying to get their children a guaranteed place because of their need for free or affordable childcare. Increased staff and site capacity, plus increased budget for equipment and resources, would mean that more children and families would benefit, and fewer families feel so desperate.

School and nursery groups have recently reported reduced budgets for sessions at the nature garden, and it will be increasingly difficult to find groups able to pay the full cost of the service. Therefore more funding for the nature garden is crucial to continue these important services.

Forest School ***"is an incredibly successful way of introducing children to their environment... we need more staff trained in this and more facility for sponsored places for schools."*** (Nature garden manager, staff focus group)

Volunteers:

The garden did not have many volunteers and it was recognised that volunteer support could be an important boost. In 2016-17 advertisements were sent out to encourage local residents, and others with particular skill sets, to become involved in the garden as a regular volunteer. In autumn 2016 four young volunteers from a local secondary school supported the afterschool club on a 52-week placement scheme, and the garden now has three dedicated gardening volunteers who are working with the gardener to boost its food-growing capacity and share skills in the process.

The garden is now able to offer volunteers, young people and staff AQA certificates in food growing, gardening for wildlife and other related areas. These provide evidence of skills and achievement and transferable life skills, and ensure that improvements are made to the garden in a structured way. The certificates could be essential evidence to help volunteers or young people secure paid jobs in a related sector, and could be instrumental in attracting regular volunteers to support the garden.

Gardening:

"We need more gardening hours to develop the garden, to make it a nicer place for people to visit, nicer environment for children and more interactive - more sensory plants and more edible." (Staff focus group)

Gardening is a key activity that children and families clearly enjoy, and that encompasses a wide variety of roles and tasks. Gardening is good because ***"I like digging up roots, getting my hands messy! (big grin)"; "I keep the leaves away with a wheelbarrow and 'leaf hands' which lift leaves and put them in wheelbarrows."*** (Child, aged 8)

However, to maintain the garden takes time and expertise from the gardener and other staff. The staff discussed the potential of the garden and their hopes for developing it further in line with the needs of local users. However, this requires time and money, which is in relatively short supply in the present economic climate.

"I don't have enough time to do what I need to do in the garden... gardening is very time consuming and needs expenses - new plants and diversity of planting areas... we want to maximise food growing which takes time, and we have a lot of bigger trees which need tree surgeons who are expensive."

(Head gardener, staff focus group)

"We need a designated kids' gardener and more gardening time - it's such a big old garden!" (Staff focus group)

The nature garden and the local community who use the space would benefit from more staff hours to develop the garden, especially the food growing and interactive sensory areas. This would encourage greater engagement through participation and activities.

A New Building:

"We sooo need a new building... less time taken fixing things and rearranging storage... Our current building is noticeably old, others like it have been decommissioned ages ago... The kitchen is very separate and very small, the main space is more like a corridor." (Staff focus group)

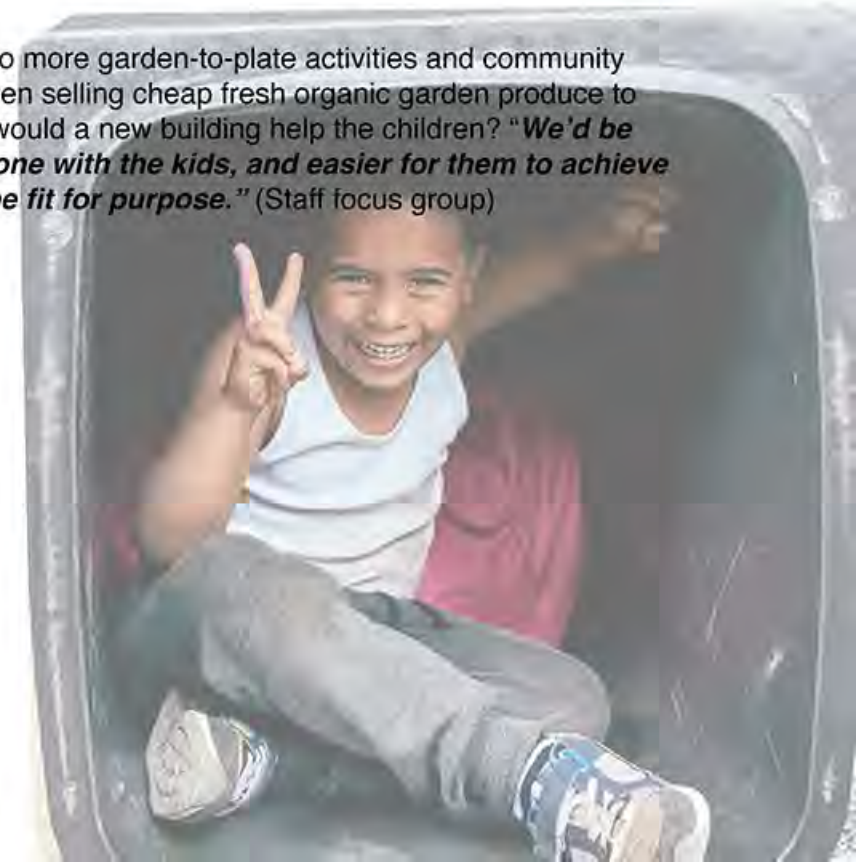
"The building is the wrong aspect, it's falling apart." (Staff focus group)

"It's not inviting to cook in, not a good advertisement for us, it looks a bit shabby. Is it secure? Not really. Not enough space to come inside if it's cold- it gets full with 8 under-5s! The veranda leaks too. You can't do activities in big numbers in here because of the limited space." (Staff focus group)

During the staff focus group the site building was discussed. The team decided they needed a new building that met these criteria:

- An inside base centre for winter warmth to allow more kids to come
- More accessible and inclusive (wheelchair friendly)
- Larger indoor space, able to fit a whole class inside
- A showcase eco building - a grass roof, a living wall, an indoor growing space
- A biology and cooking centre
- Community involvement - maybe even within the build itself
- Relaxing, welcoming, lighter, more modern and appealing
- Large windows, bringing the outside in
- An open, larger kitchen designed for teaching cooking
- A better designed office and staff room
- Maybe a café seating space for the community
- A suitable space for groups to hire so that the garden can sustain its own income

Staff were keen to do more garden-to-plate activities and community cooking, perhaps even selling cheap fresh organic garden produce to local families. How would a new building help the children? ***"We'd be able to get more done with the kids, and easier for them to achieve because it would be fit for purpose."*** (Staff focus group)





Section 3:

Conclusion

The nature garden is a unique site that meets the needs of the local community, and staff report that demand for its services exceeds supply for sessions involving childcare at peak times. There is further potential for the garden to support more local children, families and adult residents, as set out in the recommendations below.

Key recommendations of this report:

1. Maintain the existing and ongoing managerial, contracted and sessional staff hours needed to keep running the current services, such as under-5s stay and play, Forest School, Saturday community days and visiting group sessions.
2. Increase hours for gardening staff to maintain, develop and improve the garden for the benefit of the users and biodiversity, involving the local community and a team of volunteers.
3. Appoint a garden-to-plate worker to supervise food growing and cooking with the children, run the Garden Café for families during the under-5s stay and play session and Saturday community days, and cook with the community at events.
4. Appoint an additional under-5s worker to support the popular current stay and play session, with the potential to deliver a second additional session targeting disadvantaged parents in the local community.
5. Research and remove the barriers preventing more disadvantaged families from the local area from accessing the under-5s stay and play and Saturday community sessions, to ensure an increase in attendance from families from a more diverse range of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds.
6. Build a new fit-for-purpose indoor space, hosting an indoor classroom, a teaching kitchen, a seated café space, and potentially an outdoor nursery to build sustainability in income generation and maximise community use.

“We love it, it’s one of the best things about our local area, it provides a valuable greenspace in the city.”

(Parent and carer survey, 2015)

This report shows the local need and the success of the current service provisions. Success is due to a combination of factors: an understanding of the needs of users, flexibility in sessions and staff approach, a highly skilled, diverse and experienced staff team, and a site with great potential to support skills progression, improved physical and mental health, and engagement with the natural environment.

In the current highly pressurised political and socio-economic climate, the services provided by the Oasis Nature Garden are essential to ensure the mental and physical health of local families, and promote positive community cohesion at a time of rising hate crime

(Islamophobic hate crime up by 70%, BBC Online 2015). It is crucial that the service for local users remains free or donation only so that those on low incomes, and without suitable childcare or outside play spaces, are not excluded from the garden. This aspect will become increasingly important as austerity forces other services to close and London families continue to struggle financially.

The nature garden is a home from home, a garden for everyone, a children’s ***“paradise amongst concrete”*** (parent and carer survey, 2016). It continues to provide a unique opportunity for children to benefit from a healthy, and potentially life changing, outdoor childhood in the heart of the city.

“If Oasis wasn’t there, it would severely limit our access to safe outdoor space.” (Teacher interview 2016)

“With more staff we could have a better input.” (Nature garden manager, staff focus group)



Section 4:

Appendix

**HALLOWEEN
2016!**

OASIS NATURE GARDEN, Larkhall Lane (corner with
Stuley Road) **10 min walk from Stockwell Tube**

ALIEN

**FIRE DISCO CAFE
GAMES STORIES
& AMAZING ALIEN
LANDSCAPE
TO EXPLORE!**

*Dress as an alien, halloweeny,
or as your own unique self*

GARDEN

Accessible toilet, flat paths no steps

**MON
31ST OCT
6-6:30PM**
Under 5s only
6:30-8PM
5-11 yrs

**ALL children
must be accom-
panied by a re-
sponsible adult**

£2.50
per child aged 2+
ADULTS FREE

CONGRATULATION YOU ARE NOW A
Gardening Buddy



THIS CERTIFICATE IS AWARDED TO _____ FOR SUCCESSFULLY DEMONSTRATING

Weeding the vegetable beds

Sowing and growing organic seeds

Repotting plants

Help water the garden regularly

Harvesting the fruits and vegetables grown

I AM VERY HAPPY TO DELIVER THIS CERTIFICATE ON _____



Oasis Nature Garden: Forest School Monitoring – additional sheet Dec 2016

Name of School:

Your Name:

Date of Sessions:

Age of C&YP:

Total no. C&YP:

Total no. Adults:

1. How would you rate the quality of the activities provided? (Please circle)

Excellent Very Good Good Average Poor

Any additional comment:

2. How would you rate the staff involvement with your class/group? (Please circle)

Excellent Very Good Good Average Poor

Any additional comment:

3. How would you rate the children's improvement with...

a. Increased emotional wellbeing/happiness? (Please circle)

Excellent Very Good Good Average Poor

Any additional comment:

b. Confidence to try new things? (Please circle)

Excellent Very Good Good Average Poor

Any additional comment:

c. Confidence to be creative? (please circle)

Excellent Very Good Good Average Poor

Any additional comment:

d. Confidence to take risks? (please circle)

Excellent Very Good Good Average Poor

Any additional comment:

e. Developing teamwork skills? (please circle)

Excellent Very Good Good Average Poor

Any additional comment:

f. Social and communication skills? (please circle)

Excellent Very Good Good Average Poor

Any additional comment:

g. Understanding healthy eating and lifestyles? (please circle)

Excellent Very Good Good Average Poor

Any additional comment:

4. How would you rate the effectiveness of the sessions in supporting your learning back at school? (please circle)

Excellent Very Good Good Average Poor

Any additional comment:

Any further comments on the impacts or benefits of the programme:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.

Gemma Hindi

Nature Garden Manager

nature@oasisplay.org.uk

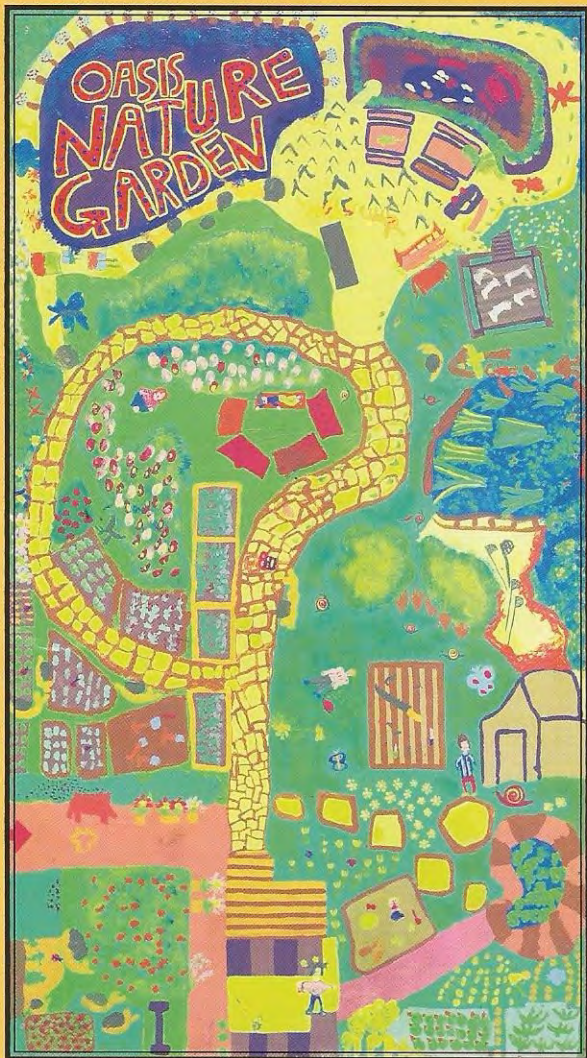
SEPT - OCT 2016 - AUTUMN 1

SCHOOL GROUP OBSERVATION RECORD

Name of Group/School:

Class

Name:	M/F: M	Age: 6 7	SEN Status: ASD	1.1	1.2	1.3	2.1	2.2	2.3	
Date	Staff	Quote/Observation	Context/Activity	Physical Health / Level of Activity	New practical skills / abilities	Awareness food growing / healthy eating	Changes to emotional wellbeing, happiness	Increased confidence, creativity, risk-taking etc.	Teamwork, social and communication skills	Notes and other noticed outcomes
22/9/16	Ros / Rebecca	Non-compliant. climbing on railings tree house.	Toy trail around the garden- getting to know the garden	3	1	1	3	2	1	
29/9/16	Ros / Rebecca	- Enjoyed using instruments during welcoming song.	Little Red Riding Hood story cards- story trail around the garden- straw, sticks and stone houses - song with instruments	3	1	1	3	2	1	
6/10/16	Ros / Rebecca		Little Red Riding Hood story cards- wolf and pig masks	3	1	1	3	3	1	Pushing boundaries- capping behaviour. climbing on railings. familiar with space.
13/10/16	Ros / Rebecca		Playdough mixing- blocks wall making	2	1	1	4	3	1	Sat on bench by gate- pulling sticks- snapping.
20/10/16	Ros / ??? CASS		Food colouring painting + mud painting. Free play- digging, mud kitchen, etc.	3	2	1	4	4	2	





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Lucy Granville



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Oasis Play shared **Capital Growth's** post — at **Oasis Nature Garden**

Published by Gemma Hindi [?] · 21 April at 12:40 · London · 🌐

Join us tomorrow for Garden Family Fun with **Capital Growth** !

The BIG DIG: Saturday 22nd April, 10.30 - 4pm, Oasis Nature Garden

Digging! 🥕 Seed & Bulb Planting! 🌱

Wood Fired Pizza Cooking! 🍕 Pond Dipping! 🐸

Explore our magical wildlife garden in the heart of the city. Bring a picnic and the whole family.

Morning: pond dipping, gardening, pizza dough making.

Afternoon: gardening, pizza cooking.

Refreshments available, Seedlings for sale, Wheelchair accessible.

FREE ENTRY or DONATION (£2 suggested, but whatever you can afford)

#thebigdig #BigDig2017 #gardening #saturdayfamilyfun

#saturday22ndapril #communitygardening #stockwell #london

#thingstodowiththekids #gingerbreadsingleparents #lambethgingerbread

#CapitalGrowth #foodgrowing #wheelchairaccessible



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628 post reach this week

PLEASE DONATE
YOUR LEFTOVERS
HELP KEEP OUR
GARDEN FREE



**SIGN IN
HERE**



I tried something
new today

I played a game that
involved running today

I ate food here that I
Wouldn't eat at home

I feel happier from
coming here

Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				



Nature Garden Survey: Winter 2016/17

1. M / F Age: Ages of children:
2. Date: Date you first came to Nature garden:

Do you have a garden at home? Yes / No

3. How have you and your child/ren used Nature Garden over the past year?

4. What is your overall opinion of the Nature Garden?

5. Please describe any information, advice or training you have received to help you play with your child:

6. Please tick one column to let us know how much you agree with the following statements about the difference coming to Nature Garden has made to your life:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly dis-agree
I feel less isolated and have met some new people/friends					
I am spending more quality time with my child/ren					
My relationship with my child/ren has improved					
My child/ren is gaining confidence from trying new things					
My child is more sociable and has better communication skills					
I feel a lot happier because I'm spending more time outside					
I feel more confident as I learn new skills					
I have learned some things from other parents					
I know more nature-based learning activities for children					
I am enjoying playing with my child more					
I know more about nature through coming here					
My child/ren are healthier through coming here					

7. Please describe how the service has made most difference to you:

8. Please describe how the service has made most difference to your child/ren:

a) If your child/ren were not at Oasis, what would they usually be doing?

9. Anything you have not enjoyed? Or ways the service could improve?

Thanks for your help. Your feedback will help us to develop the Nature Garden.



Saturday Community Day

Every Saturday 10.30am-4pm

At Oasis Nature Garden

Larkhall Lane (chr Studley Rd) Stockwell SW4 6SP

Join us for gardening in the morning and workshops from 1.30pm including natural arts & crafts, cooking and woodwork. Or just explore and enjoy the garden!

All ages welcome. Children must be supervised by an adult at all times

FREE (suggested donation £2)



For more info:
saturdaynature@oasisplay.org.uk
020 7622 8756

Spring 2017 Afternoon Workshops

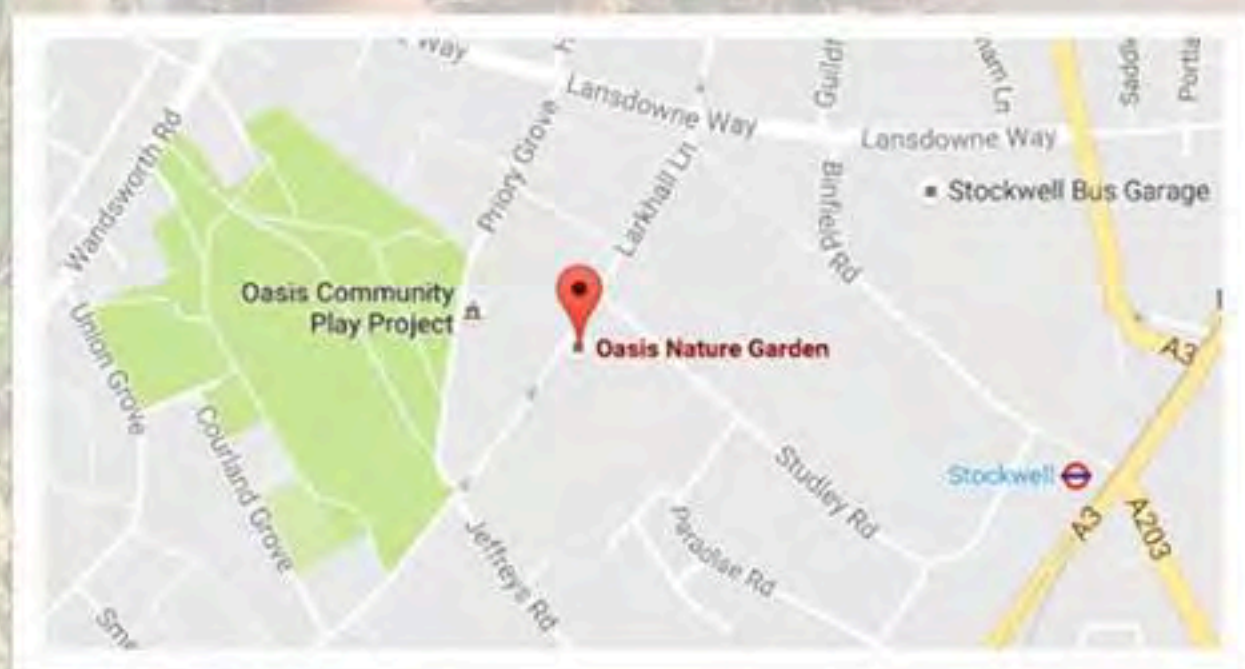
1.30-3pm



Workshops are aimed at adults but families are welcome

- | | |
|--------|--|
| Mar 04 | Garden Pancake Cooking
Gingerbread single parents group 11-12 |
| Mar 11 | Mini-Beast Hotels 1 : green woodwork and homes |
| Mar 18 | Garden Art - toadstools |
| Mar 25 | Spring Community Event! Bulb planting, Storyteller, Cobb Oven cooking. Family fun ☺ |
| Apr 01 | Mini-Beast Hotels 2 : bug hunts and homes
Gingerbread single parents group 11-12 |
| Apr 08 | Garden Art - bunting |
| Apr 15 | Chocolate Egg Treasure Hunt! |
| Apr 22 | The Big Dig Community Event: potato planting, gardening, digging, seed bombs! |



Where to find us





Bring your family to our

Spring Celebration!

Saturday 25th March

10.30am – 4pm



**Bulb Planting! Storyteller!
Cobb Oven Pizzas!**



FREE entry, donations welcome

**All ages welcome, children must be supervised
Wheelchair accessible**



**Oasis Nature Garden
Larkhall Lane (cnr Studley Rd)
Stockwell
SW4 6SP**

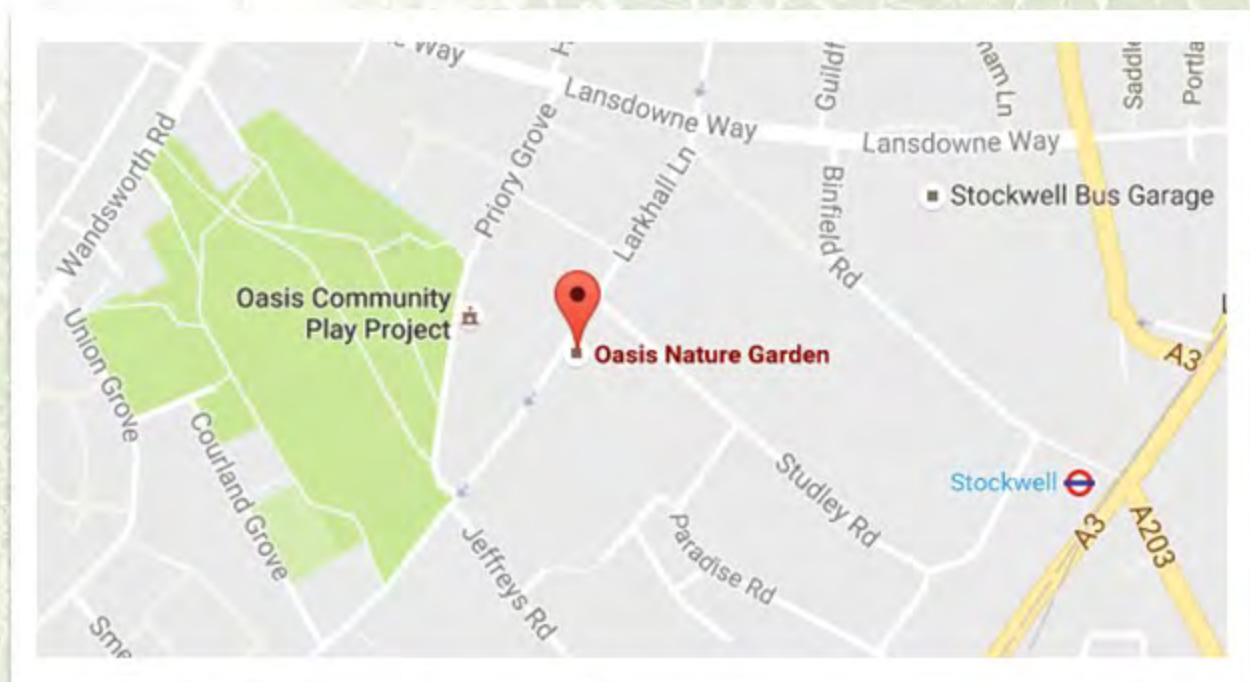


020 7498 2329

saturdaynature@oasisplay.org.uk



Where to find us



Saturday Community Days

10.30 – 4pm

The Oasis Nature Garden is open every Saturday throughout the year. Join us!

Bring a picnic and just enjoy the garden, or get involved!

10.30 – 12noon Gardening

1.30 – 3pm Adult and Family Workshop

FREE entry, suggested donation £2

Come support your local charity and relax in our beautiful woodland garden!



Oasis Children's Venture
33 Priory Grove, Stockwell,
London SW8 2PD
Tel: 020 7622 8756
Email: info@oasisplay.org.uk