

# New River Green Good Neighbours Scheme

## Health and Wellbeing Insight Report October 2020 to September 2021



## Responding to the community's needs during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Help on Your Doorstep is a company limited by guarantee registered in England & Wales no 06960313 and a registered charity no 1133145.  
Registered office 13 Elliott's Place, London N1 8HX. © Help on Your Doorstep, 2021

## 1. Introduction

The New River Green Good Neighbours Scheme (GNS) has been running since 2012. The GNS is hyper-local for the residents of Northampton Street, Canonbury Street, Canonbury Crescent, Walter Sickert, Marquess Estate and New River Green Estate in N1.

Help on Your Doorstep manages the New River Green GNS. Islington Giving and the NHS North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group jointly fund the GNS.

The GNS aims to build a stronger, more resilient local community by addressing issues related to isolation and improving the health and wellbeing of New River Green Residents. It uses an asset-based Community Development model. Residents have a real stake in the planning, development and delivery of activities and initiatives.

The overall goal of the GNS is for people to thrive, have a good quality of life and live in happy and healthy communities. To achieve this, the GNS focuses on the following intermediate outcomes, working to ensure that residents:

- have the skills, knowledge and confidence to achieve their goals
- participate in activities that improve their wellbeing
- have good access to support networks
- are supported by high quality services
- are positive about themselves
- work together for the common good.

The GNS has developed a focus on the [Five Ways to Wellbeing](#) (New Economics Foundation, 2008), enabling residents to:

1. [Connect](#) - talk and listen, be there, feel connected
2. [Keep learning](#) - embrace new experiences, see opportunities, surprise yourself
3. [Give](#) - your time, your words, your presence
4. [Be active](#) - do what you can, enjoy what you do
5. [Take notice](#) - remember the simple things that give you joy (also listed as be mindful/ care for your mental health).

Evidence suggests that even a small improvement in these five areas of wellbeing can help to decrease mental health problems, improve physical health and help people to flourish.

A relational approach is fundamental to the scheme. The GNS values friendships and mutual support, which are a basis for improving individuals' health and wellbeing in the long term. The GNS encourages residents to share their stories and welcome new residents. In fact, groups are more about relationships than the activities in themselves.

The GNS is staffed by a full-time Senior Coordinator – Nicky Ludgate. The GNS is based in the Walter Sickert Community Centre, which is at the heart of the New River Green estate.

Help on Your Doorstep's approach of community outreach and partnership working is embedded in the GNS. Staff and volunteers carry community outreach including door knocking, distributing leaflets and posters. The GNS also works closely with other voluntary and statutory organisations in the area.

Help on Your Doorstep (HOYD) also provides its Connect advice service to New River Green residents and has a small Connect team based at Walter Sickert Community Centre. The Connect service can help with a wide range of issues:

- Children, young people and families matters
- Domestic violence
- Employment and learning
- Health and wellbeing
- Housing including disrepair, risk of homelessness, home safety and fuel costs
- Legal problems
- Money including debt, welfare benefits and financial hardship
- Self-isolation during the Coronavirus crisis and access to food and other essential supplies.

This report covers the period from October 2020 to the end of September 2021. During this time, the work of the New River Green GNS has been hugely affected by the Coronavirus pandemic. The GNS has adapted its services to meet the needs of residents as government restrictions and guidance has changed. At the beginning of the reporting period – October 2020 - there were stringent social distancing measures in place. These began to ease in March 2021 when groups of up to six people could meet outside. The GNS was able to fully return to the Walter Sickert Community Hall in September 2021, with Covid-safe risk assessments precautions in place.

The impact of the pandemic on the New River Green community has been huge in terms of social, economic and health costs. The GNS has worked hard to support residents and help them maintain their health and wellbeing, especially those who are isolated and vulnerable. The GNS has adapted its services throughout the year to continue to provide responsive, appropriate, Covid-Safe services.

The evidence in this report shows the positive impact that the GNS has on the health and wellbeing of the residents, providing essential services that helped residents remained connected and maintain their physical and mental wellbeing.

## 2. Methodology

We have used a range of evidence to gather information for this report, including:

- Reports written by the Senior GNS Coordinator
- Photos from events and activities
- Statistical information on the numbers of group/ activity users and attendees.
- Information from a survey that completed by 53 New River Green GNS residents in October/ November 2021
- Case studies

## 3. Overall delivery of activities, events and support

	1 Oct 2020 – 31 Sep 2021
Unique individuals	414
New users	267
Total attendances and one to one support	2,737
Number of regular activities	312
Total attendances at regular activities	2,098
Number of one-off events	4
Total attendances at one-off events	91
One-to-one support e.g. phone calls/ referrals/ deliveries	639
No of people supported through one-to-one support	163
55% of our interactions were with people living in the 20% most deprived areas of the country	

Comparing these overall figures to last year (please note that last year's report covered a 13-month period (1 September 2019 to 30 September 2020):

- The GNS worked with a total of 414 people this year, similar to the 437 unique individuals supported last year.
- The GNS reached 267 new users this year, which is 172 more than last year.
- The GNS had 2,098 total attendances at its regular activities this year, which is 870 more attendances than last year.
- The GNS supported 163 residents this year through one-to-one support like phone calls, referrals to the Connect advice service or deliveries. This is 130 more people in this way than last year.

## **4. Overview of the GNS response during the Pandemic**

The New River Green Good Neighbours Scheme is one of three Islington Good Neighbours Schemes run by Help on Your Doorstep. Throughout the Pandemic the team responsible for the all three Good Neighbours Schemes has worked together to navigate the restrictions in place due to the Pandemic and provide COVID-safe support to support the health and wellbeing of residents.

The Good Neighbours Team had weekly online meetings to support each other, develop new ideas and to troubleshoot the challenges posed by the Pandemic to individual residents and the GNS communities. The team developed a Coronavirus Road Map to help plan its way out of lockdown and ensure compliance with the various restrictions that have been in place during the year.

Pre-Covid, New River Green GNS held its activities in the Walter Sickert Community Hall, which is in the centre of the Marquess estate, N1 2FB. Islington Council runs the Community Hall, and they allow the GNS to use the hall for its regular activities free of charge. The GNS approach to working through the Pandemic has been to stick to business as normal, as far as possible, by adapting activities to the prevailing COVID restrictions. During the early days of the pandemic the GNS team decided to replicate its normal timetable by shifting to online, over the phone and outside delivery methods as appropriate.

The GNS has also adapted by staying connected with vulnerable residents by phone and scheduling in regular times to call them. WhatsApp has become a key way of keeping in touch with residents. WhatsApp groups have been set up for all the different regular activities. The GNS uses its WhatsApp groups to keep people informed about activities and opportunities. The residents use the groups to stay connected with each other and support each other.

The GNS has also adapted by doing more deliveries and doorstep visits to residents. This has included food distribution and doorstep visits to check on health and wellbeing of vulnerable and isolated residents. The GNS has focussed even more than usual on outreach during this period, posting flyers through letterboxes, putting posters on noticeboards and talking to residents in the streets. When residents have additional support needs the GNS make referrals to Help on Your Doorstep's Connect advice service which can link residents into support from other community services.



## 5. Activities and events, 1 October 2020 – 30 September 2021

*“The GNS is a lifeline for me before and during Covid. They have managed to create events and reach out to the most vulnerable in the community....”*

*“when I am not at the GNS activities or volunteering I feel low”*

*“The classes gave me a reason to get up instead of just staying in bed as I often used to do before I joined here”*

### Regular weekly activities

Total no of activities delivered: 312

Total attendances at regular activities: 2,098

During the initial lockdown many of the regular weekly New River Green GNS activities were re-established online, using the usual instructors to ensure familiarity and reassurance. The GNS also started an additional weekly group telephone chat via a Freephone number, for people who were not able to get online. The GNS Coordinator promoted all the activities by distributing flyers across the area, posting them through people's doors and putting them up in community areas.



- **Coffee morning** held online until the beginning of September 2021 when it returned to the Walter Sickert Hall. This is a social gathering which and starts the week on a positive note and celebrates key events like resident birthdays. Held 43 times, 72 unique users, 355 attendances (average weekly attendance 8 residents)



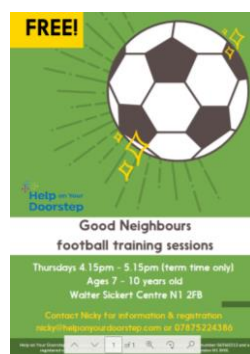
- **Chair based exercise** sessions have been delivered online, outside and inside during the year. For part of the year two of these sessions were held every week, one online and one outside. These sessions are suitable for people with limited mobility and have really benefited our older residents, helping them to stay mobile when their options to be active have been very limited.  
59 sessions held, 48 unique users, 365 attendances (average session attendance 6 residents)



- **Arts and crafts** sessions started outside in the Communal Gardens in April 2021 and inside in the Walter Sickert Hall from August 2021. These sessions have been really popular and residents have decorated tote bags and cushion covers. Held 16 times, 43 unique users, 188 attendances (average weekly attendance 12 people)

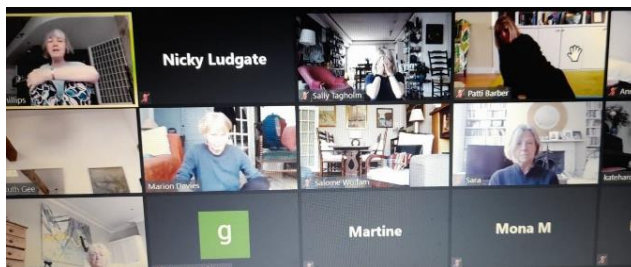


- **Football training for children** held online until May 2021 when sessions were able to return to Walter Sickert Hall. Government Covid guidelines meant that activities for children were able to return inside earlier than adult activities. Held 27 times, 41 unique users, 160 attendances (average weekly attendance 6 children – this has risen to 8 now the sessions have returned to the hall)



*“My son goes to the football club he really enjoys it that’s makes me happy.”*

- **HITT exercise** held both outside and inside throughout the year. Attendance at the sessions was kept to a maximum of six residents when the rule of six applied outside and then inside.  
Held 42 weekly sessions, 22 unique users, 148 attendances (average weekly attendance 4 people)
- **Mindful meditation** held online throughout the year.  
Held 42 sessions, 47 unique users, 402 attendances (average weekly attendance 10 residents)
- **Hatha Yoga** held online for most of the year, returned to the Walter Sickert Hall on 14 September 2021.  
Held 37 sessions, 61 unique users, 283 attendances (average weekly attendance 8 residents)



- **Mary's gym sessions** started again at the end of June 2021.  
Held 9 weekly sessions, 10 unique users, 37 attendances (average weekly attendance 4 residents)
- **Gardening club** in the Community Gardens for residents with garden boxes.  
Held 6 times in the year, 20 unique users, 48 attendances (average session attendance 12 residents)
- **Monthly lunch club** restarted on 29 September 2021 – 17 residents attended, and Canonbury Community Police Officers popped in for a chat.



- **Group telephone chat** hosted throughout the year until August 2021 via a Freephone number.  
Held 32 sessions, 21 unique users, 99 attendances (average weekly attendance 3 residents)



## Events

Total number of events delivered: 4

Total number of residents attending events: 91

The GNS held a [Christmas Celebration online](#) event with singing and games such as bingo, attended by twelve residents.

In May 2021, the GNS organised a [workshop for children](#) delivered by the Little Angel Theatre Workshop. The workshop was focussed around a tree of hope. It aimed to enable the children to express their hopes and fears for the future, set in the context of the Pandemic. Nine children and four parents attended the workshop.



In June 2021, the GNS held a [community barbeque](#) in the Walter Sickert Community Garden. This was a celebration as restrictions were starting to ease and the GNS was able to get a larger group of adults together outside. Twenty residents, including three volunteers, attended the barbeque.



In July 2021, the GNS residents celebrated the easing of restrictions with a [day trip to Southend-on-Sea](#). This is usually an annual GNS outing, which had not been able to go ahead in 2020. Forty-six residents went on the day trip, many of whom had not been outside the local area since the start of Pandemic in March 2020. It was a breath of fresh air and lifted the spirits of the residents.

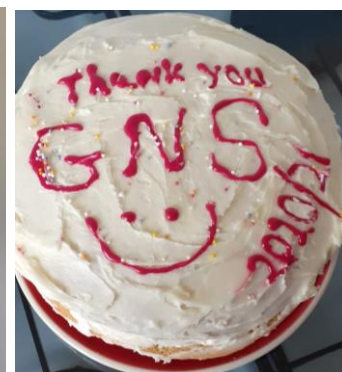


## Appeals and competitions

Christmas 2020 was different than usual and the GNS had to think about new ways of bringing Christmas cheer to residents. We held a [Festive Bags of Cheer](#) appeal, asking residents who could to donate items which we made into Christmas hampers. These hampers were hand delivered to the most vulnerable, isolated GNS residents and families experiencing hardship. We delivered a total of 25 Christmas baskets.



In Spring 2021 there were still stringent restrictions in place in terms of social gatherings. The GNS launched a [Good Neighbours Got Talent Competition](#) to promote positivity and communication. The GNS team asked residents to share their talents, and entries included cakes, bird houses and artwork. There were adult and children category winners and runners up, who received certificates and prizes.





## 6. Walter Sickert Communal Gardens

The GNS manages the Walter Sickert Communal Gardens on behalf of the Islington Council. The garden has played a major part in the GNS delivery during the past year. It is a very accessible, inviting green space, just behind the Water Sickert Community Centre in the centre of the Marquess estate. The garden enabled the GNS to hold Covid-safe activities outside, which meant that face to face activities were possible even when there were still restrictions on inside gatherings. The gardens boost the health and wellbeing of residents in many ways – helping residents stay active through gardening, providing a space for other GNS activities and providing a green space in the heart of the estate.

*“The communal gardens saved my life in lock down, I have no garden and without this, I don’t know how I would have coped!”*

Quote from resident at Community Reference group in October 2021

The usual gardening activities have continued throughout the year, with the GNS allocating twenty gardening boxes to grow fruit and vegetables to residents. In the summer, Islington Council gave the GNS a grant of £1000 by to buy six new garden boxes. Resident gardeners worked with the GNS Coordinator to assemble and fill the new boxes and refurbish old boxes that were falling apart. The new boxes were then allocated to residents who had expressed an interest in growing food and gardening.



In September 2021, the GNS gardening group won silver in the Islington in Bloom Garden Competition, for their outstanding work in our communal gardens.



## 7. Support, advice referrals and deliveries

Throughout the year the GNS has adapted its services to meet the health and wellbeing needs of residents in the challenging context of the Pandemic. This has resulted in a greater emphasis on supporting residents by phone, referring them to the Connect advice service and doorstep visits/ deliveries.

### Support by phone

Number of phone calls made to vulnerable residents: 529

Number of individual residents supported by phone calls: 147

Telephone outreach has become a much bigger part of what New River Green GNS does since the start of the Pandemic. It started during lockdown with weekly phone calls to the most vulnerable and isolated residents. The GNS has also made referrals to Help on Your Doorstep's volunteer befriending project, which was set up in response to the Pandemic. The project matches with residents with a volunteer befriender, who then phones them on a regular basis.

### Referrals to the Connect advice team

Referrals made to the Connect advice team by GNS: 36

Individuals referred by the GNS to the Connect advice team: 22

The GNS has also worked closely with Help on Your Doorstep's Connect team to get residents the help and support they need on a wide range of issues. Referrals made and support given has been varied and has included:

- Referrals to HealthWatch for digital support
- Referrals to foodbanks and Council services
- Referrals to the Resident Support Scheme for essential white goods
- Referrals and support around housing needs, including homelessness, moving to assisted living, dealing with anti-social behaviour and repairs.

In April 2021, the GNS organised a Connect advice pop-up in the Communal Gardens. This was a Covid-safe drop-in space for advice, aimed at making the Connect service accessible to people who were not likely to reach out by phone or email, during a period when the Connect office was not open to drop-in callers. A total of ten residents received advice from the Connect team at the pop-up and a resident had his census return completed by a member of the Census team.

### Deliveries and doorstep visits

A lot of this work is not recorded and has become part of the GNS daily routine. During the year, the GNS delivered at least **fifty food parcels** to residents in need in partnership with Rose Bowl Youth Centre and Cross Street Baptist Church.



During lock down the GNS put together activity kits made up of reading books, arts and crafts materials, crosswords and sudoku, and hand delivered them to vulnerable and isolated residents and families experiencing hardship.

The GNS also remembers the birthdays of the most vulnerable and isolated residents. During lockdown, the GNS visited residents to deliver flowers and a card on their birthdays.

## 8. Volunteers

Volunteers are essential to the success of New River Green GNS and instrumental in the delivery of GNS activities and events, and in the outreach undertaken to reach new residents.

This year the GNS has had nine formal volunteers. All the volunteers are residents, and most started as GNS users and then moved on to become volunteers. The GNS encourages natural/ informal volunteering, which involves residents helping at activities, supporting others to attend and doing what they can to support the GNS and their community. Many of our residents are natural volunteers, as indicated by the recent survey (see Section 10) which found that 49% of residents had been able to help others during the past year.

A volunteer runs the weekly arts and crafts sessions, and volunteers are essential in the delivery of coffee mornings. A group of volunteers also oversees the Communal Gardens. When the GNS Coordinator had Covid in September 2021 the GNS was able to continue with all but one of its planned activities with the support of the volunteer team.

Two volunteers attended first aid training organised by the GNS this year and successfully gained their first aid qualification.



The New River Green GNS relies on volunteers to achieve its aim, improving the health and wellbeing of the community. Volunteering also greatly benefits the health and wellbeing of the volunteers themselves. Helping others gives them a real purpose, builds their confidence and makes them happier.

## 9. Partnerships

The GNS collaborates with many different organisations to maximise the impact of all the services available in the area. Key partners this year have included:

**Sadlers Wells Theatre** who give GNS group users the amazing opportunity to attend their fantastic shows at a reduced price of £3 per ticket. They recently came to the User Reference Group to tell residents about their offer.

**Mary's Gym** are a great partner. The GNS runs free weekly visits to their gym for residents.

**Rose Bowl Youth Centre** has collaborated with us to support local people throughout the Pandemic, including partnering on food distribution. They recently came to the User Reference Group and our residents were really interested to hear about community issues from a youth perspective.

**Cross Street Baptist Church** has donated food and toiletries to residents, which the GNS has helped to distribute.

**NHS North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group** provided training around the Coronavirus vaccine for GNS staff in February 2021. This enabled the GNS team to have well-informed conversations with residents about the vaccine and encourage residents to get vaccinated.

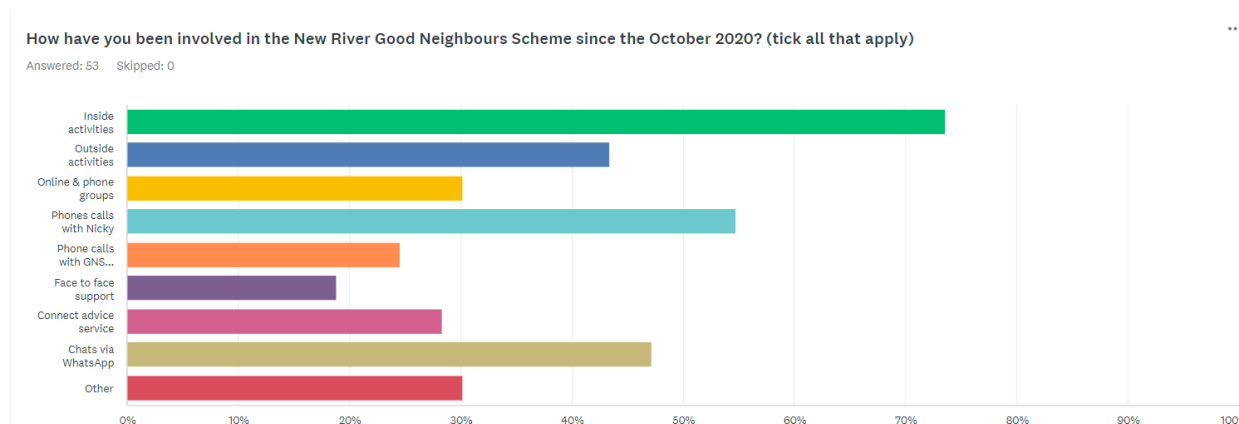


Help on Your Doorstep also shared Government and NHS information about the vaccine through its website and social media channels.

## 10. Resident survey

In October 2021 we sent an online survey out to residents in contact with the New River Green GNS. We also contacted residents who are not online and went through the survey with them over the phone and asked the residents who attended our Reference Group in October to complete it. In total fifty-three people completed the survey.

### How have residents been involved in the GNS since October 2020?



Between October 2020 and September 2021 out of the 53 respondents:

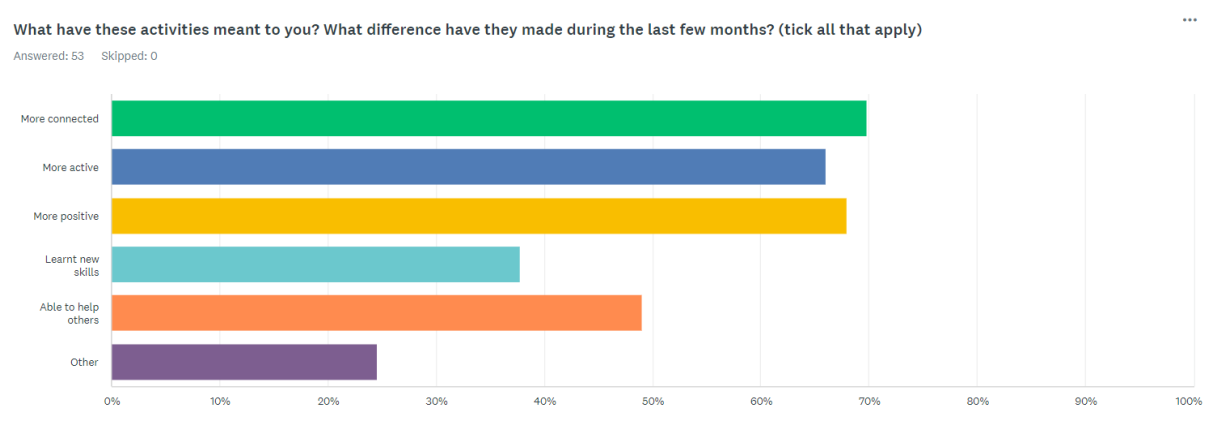
- 74% had attended inside GNS activities
- 55% had phone calls with Nicky, the GNS Coordinator
- 47% had been involved in GNS chats via WhatsApp
- 43% had attended outside GNS activities
- 30% had been involved in GNS online/ phone groups
- 28% had been referred by GNS to Help on Your Doorstep's Connect advice service
- 25% had been in contact with GNS volunteers or other residents by phone
- 19% of respondents had face to face support from the GNS, including doorstep visits and deliveries.

Comments made by residents about the support they received/ other ideas:

- *"The GNS is a lifeline for me before and during Covid. They have managed to create events and reach out to the most vulnerable in the community during the last 2 years. I'm glad to be involved whenever I can in activities that Nicky Ludgate has organized over the last year plus. I only hope they continue to get the support and are able to continue the yoga, coffee mornings, football, film nights, seasonal fairs. Christmas is coming up & we haven't had the chance to interact as a community. This is a vital network in the community & I hope you continue to support GNS. Thank you for your help."*

- *“GNS are always willing to help other if they can, especially Nicky.”*
- *“Singing group.”*
- *“They have been a lifeline with their help. Someone to talk to in the difficult times and it's good to have some sort of routine in my life mentally and physically. I would be lost without the new river good neighbour scheme.”*
- *“More trips”*
- *“I come here to meet a Friend at coffee morning”*
- *“We miss the film afternoon we used to have once a month”*
- *“Perturbed about losing the end of the month film show last Friday of the month post covid”*
- *“It gives a reason to get up in the morning and helps me to remember what day it is”*
- *I started GNS as a group user and have become a GNS volunteer.”*

## What difference have GNS activities made for residents?



When asked what difference involvement in the GNS has made to them:

- 70% of the 53 respondents are more connected
- 66% are more active
- 68% are more positive
- 38% had learnt new skills
- 49% had been able to help others
- 25% said that the GNS has had other impacts for them

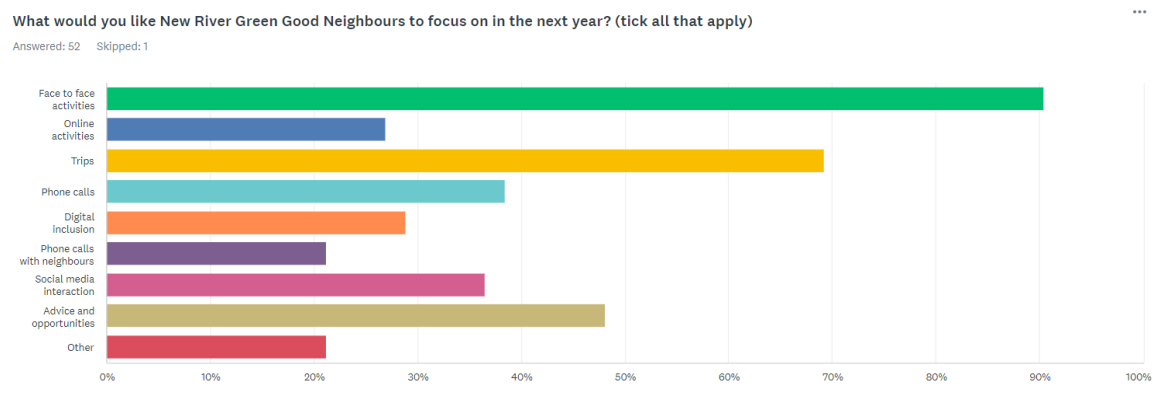
Information about the other impact and further comments about the difference GNS has made included:

- *“My son goes to the football club he really enjoys it that's makes me happy.”*
- *“Getting housing sorted”*
- *“Helps me to relax I suffer bad anxiety and the chair exercise at coffee morning helps me and gives me something to get up for”*
- *“I play music in groups, so I try”*



- *"I am more in touch with my community and have knowledge of other services from GNS"*
- *"Great to know the help is there"*
- *"when I am not at the GNS activities or volunteering I feel low"*
- *"This is a friendly group I have attended other community group and didn't feel comfortable"*
- *"Without going to the gym getting up & out to GNS is a form of exercise for me as there isn't a direct bus to GNS Canonbury"*
- *"more informed and also connected to the community of what's happening as we were coming out of lock down and my child now is back at football"*

## What would residents like the GNS to focus on next year?



We then asked residents what they would like the GNS to focus on in the next year:

- 90% said that they wanted to return to face to face activities.
- 27% said that they would like to focus on online activities.
- 70% said that they would like more trips to places like the seaside, canal and other interesting people
- 39% said that they would like us to continue to phone them.
- 48% said that continuing to offer links to advice and opportunities was important.
- 37% said that social media was an important focus.
- 21% want us to continue with the group phone calls.
- 29% wanted help to get online and learning digital tools

Comments on further support we could provide included:

- *"Got more confidence in myself"*
- *"Continue with the young children's activities /football"*
- *"Support with digital inclusion packages"*
- *"I would like mindfulness to be back in the hall as I'm not very good with zoom and the exercise class on a Monday with Winston who is amazing to be on a different time than the Monday morning coffee club as a lot of the*

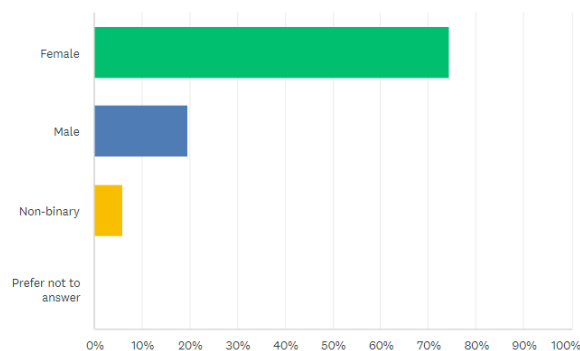
*exercise are about learning to breath and concentrate on your breathing which is good for mental health hard when so much noise coming from the chatting of the morning coffee club”*

- *“Achieve my fitness goals”*
- *“helping me to organise a small project of making dolls clothes”*
- *“we are going to have digital learning and I want this the most”*
- *“Theatre & panto outings”*
- *“I would like the trip to be changed from Southend to somewhere else such as Eastbourne or Bournemouth”*
- *“I like that GNS signposts to other services e.g.: Sadlers Wells ticket scheme”*

## About the residents who completed the survey

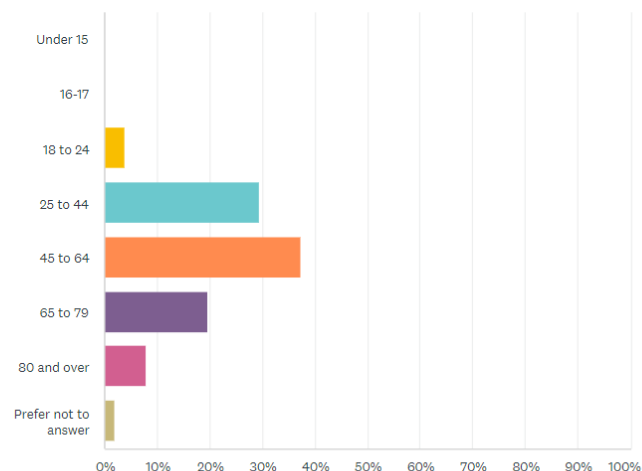
What is your gender?

Answered: 51 Skipped: 2



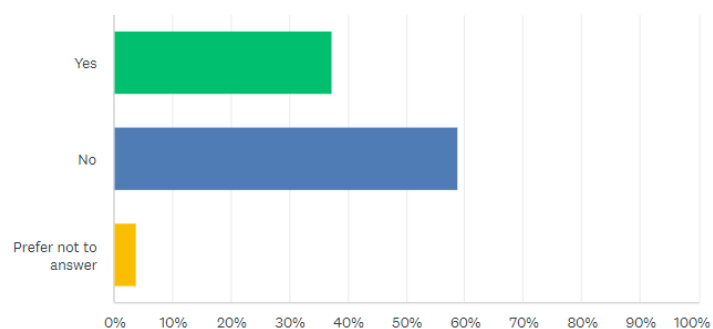
What is your age?

Answered: 51 Skipped: 2



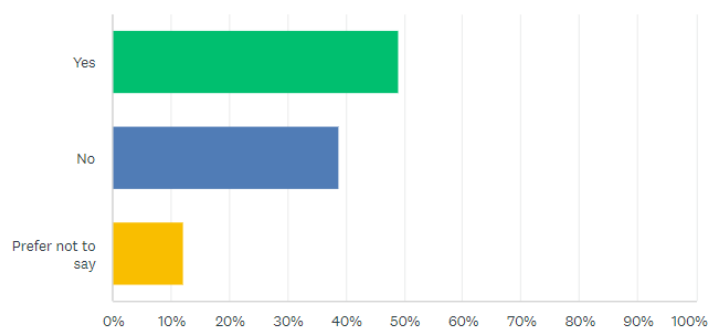
## Are you disabled?

Answered: 51 Skipped: 2



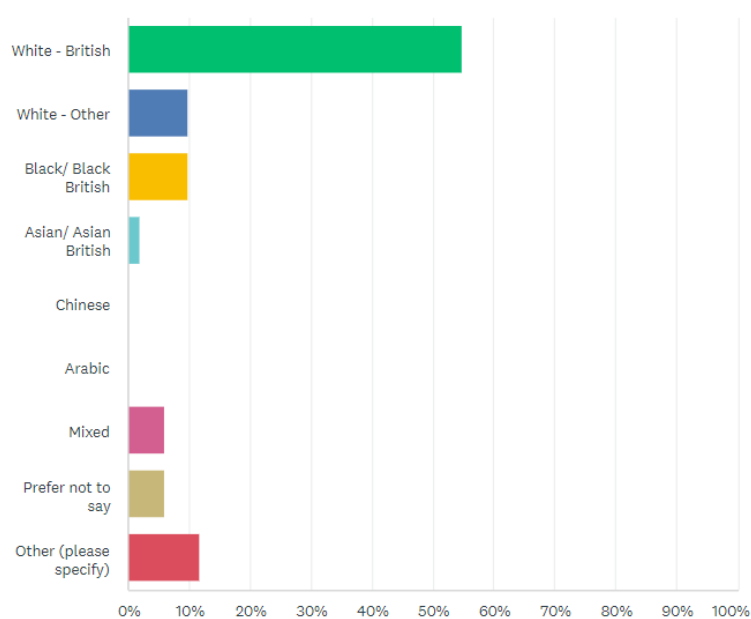
## Do you have a long term health condition?

Answered: 49 Skipped: 4



## Which race/ethnicity best describes you? (Please choose only one.)

Answered: 51 Skipped: 2



## 11. Case studies

### Resident story 1 – Daniel

Daniel is a 54-year-old single man who has been living alone on the Marquess Estate for 12 years. He has a long-term health condition and has been attending GNS activities now for around six years.

Daniel first contacted the GNS through Help on Your Doorstep's Connect advice service. He met the GNS Coordinator in the Connect office and she encouraged him to attend a coffee morning.

Daniel now attends many GNS sessions including coffee mornings, arts & crafts sessions, lunch club, garden club, chair-based exercise, mindfulness, and events. He also now volunteers at coffee mornings, arts and crafts sessions and in the gardens. Involvement in the GNS helps him to manage his health condition and the GNS Coordinator has noticed a marked improvement in his health and wellbeing.

#### How has the GNS made a difference to Daniel?

**Connect:** Daniel is now connected to his community and has made friends.

**Be Active:** Daniel takes part in our chair-based exercise classes.

**Learn:** Daniel has learnt creative skills through attending arts and crafts sessions.

**Give:** Daniel has volunteered at GNS activities, setting up & clearing away.

**Take Notice:** Daniel really enjoys our Mindfulness sessions, and you can see a clear improvement in his mood.

Daniel says he is so glad that he is extremely glad that he joined GNS as it is “a blessing to me, a gospel statement” .... “I like the community spirit and atmosphere. We get teas and coffees, and it passes the morning so upliftingly. We don't want it to end. We want the sessions to be longer and we look forward to them, thank you so much.”

### Resident Story 2 – David

David is a 49-year-old single man living alone in the Canonbury area. He has lived here for 31 years. David has several health problems including diabetes, social anxiety and depression.

Just over three years ago, Nicky, the GNS Coordinator, met David on the street and told him about the GNS. David attended a coffee morning, reluctantly at first. He got talking to Nicky about issues he was having, and she made him an appointment to see a Connect adviser. Connect made referrals to Citizens Advice Islington and arranged cleaners to go into his flat. David was hoarding and was too depressed to be able to deal with the issue himself. Connect also referred David to Age Concern and to Occupational Therapy for a walk-in shower, as he has mobility issues.



David continued to attend GNS coffee mornings but was very shy and reluctant to speak with other residents. He then decided to come away from bad company he was keeping and stick with the GNS group. He decided to try his hardest to overcome his shyness and the difficulties he had with issues with being in crowds of people.

Then the Pandemic started and the country went into lockdown. David tried joining the GNS online coffee morning and joined the GNS phone chat a couple of times. Nicky also stayed connected with David with regular phone calls and he had a Help on Your Doorstep Volunteer Befriender for a while. Coming out of lock down David spoke to Nicky about helping at GNS activities and with outreach. David has taken a massive leap forward and has become a responsible, trustworthy and dependable volunteer.

David has helped the GNS distribute flyers, with outreach and getting the GNS timetable out into the community. He also helps to deliver GNS activities, including the coffee morning and arts session. He also helped with shopping for the garden BBQ event. David is now such a reliable, trustworthy volunteer that he is a key-holder for the Walter Sickert Centre. He helped run activities while the GNS Coordinator was stuck at home with COVID.

#### How has the GNS made a difference to David?

**Connect:** David is now connected to GNS staff, volunteers and other GNS residents.

**Be Active:** David has tried the GNS Marys Gym session and the chair-based exercise session, but he did not really enjoy them. His volunteering, however, means that he is much more active than before. He has lost five kilograms in weight and feels much healthier.

**Learn:** David's social skills have come on leaps & bounds. He engages with other residents in GNS groups.

**Give:** David volunteers at the activities, setting up, clearing away, making drinks and talking to other users.

**Take Notice:** David now goes on lots of walks and even went on trip by himself to Southend recently. He enjoys life much more now.

*"If it wasn't for Nicky and the GNS, I wouldn't have done any of this, I would have sat indoors for another 10 years. I am enjoying helping everyone now. I now wouldn't be without it!"*

## 12. Moving forward

The level of engagement in GNS activities, survey results and feedback included in this report show that the New River Green has continued to support the health and wellbeing of residents throughout the Pandemic, adapting its services to meet new needs in challenging circumstances. The GNS will continue to deliver services in this agile, responsive way.

Due to changes within the GNS team the staffing of New River Green GNS changed in November 2021. Nicky has been promoted to GNS Manager and is now responsible for the New River Green GNS and the Bemerton GNS. Tracey Boothe has started as a Community Development Worker and will work with Nicky across the two GNS areas.

To help inform future activities, in October 2021, the New River Green GNS held a Community Reference Group meeting. Thirteen GNS residents attended the meeting. It focussed on the issues that are currently affecting the health and wellbeing of residents.

- One of the topics of concern identified is the current road closures, implemented as part of the Low Traffic Neighbourhoods. Residents reported that the scheme is pushing cars onto the main roads and is causing congestion. Also, the little white hopper bus service has stopped, making it harder for the elderly, or those with poor mobility to get to the shops. To help residents raise these concerns with the Council the GNS is holding a focus group in December 2021 with representatives from the Safer Neighbourhood Team.
- Another area identified for action was that residents have noticed that there is more litter on the streets. To address this the GNS is going to organise a litter pick in January on the Marquess Estate.
- Another concern was drugs and gangs congregating on the Marquess Estate. Clive, Manager of the Rose Bowl Youth Centre was present at the meeting and gave a talk with advice on 'gangs,' myths and preconceptions about young people and how to report the hot spots to the Safer Neighbourhood Panel. Clive's talk was warmly received by the residents, giving some of them a new perspective on young people in the area.
- The residents asked for more digital learning as being online had become so crucial during lockdown. The GNS are liaising with HealthWatch, who are hopefully going to attend GNS groups to deliver digital help sessions.

The GNS team has made further links with local partner organisations after presenting at the Help on Your Doorstep Partners meeting in November 2021. The NHS Health & Wellbeing team are planning to visit our groups to talk about

community health and link residents into available support. 'Art for Dementia' will be attending our Arts and Crafts sessions in the new year.

New River Green GNS Timetable 2021					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
09:30-10:00				ACHD	
10:00-10:30				Arts and Crafts group	
10:30-11:00	Coffee Morning		Walter Sickert Centre	Walter Sickert Centre	
11:00-11:30	Walter Sickert Centre		Walter Sickert Centre	Walter Sickert Centre	
11:30-12:00					
12:00-12:30					
12:30-13:00					
13:00-13:30					
13:30-14:00					
14:00-14:30					
14:30-15:00					
15:00-15:30					
15:30-16:00					
16:00-16:30					
16:30-17:00					
17:00-17:30					

As of November 2021, all but one (the monthly movie afternoon) pre-Covid GNS activities are back in place. The GNS is now delivering most activities face-to-face in Walter Sickert Community Hall, with Covid-safe measures in place. The resident survey showed that 90% of residents preferred face-to-face activities. Another strong preference, 70% in the survey, was for trips and outings. In October and November 2021, the GNS has taken resident groups out on a canal boat and to a Chinese buffet in Camden. The GNS hopes to be able to continue to deliver activities in this way, but if further Covid restrictions are introduced, it will have to adapt its services again.

## 11. Thanks

- Thanks to Islington Giving and the NHS North Central London Clinical Commissioning Group for their continued and ongoing funding and support.
- Thanks to Islington Council for their continued support.
- Thanks to partner organisations and instructors.
- Thanks to all the residents who have got involved, attended activities and supported others in their community.
- Thanks all our volunteers and staff.

