



New River Green Good Neighbours Scheme

Health and wellbeing Insight Report September 2018 to August 2019

1. Introduction

The New River Green Good Neighbours Scheme (GNS) has been funded since 2012 in partnership with Islington Giving. It tackles isolation and improves the health and wellbeing of residents of the New River Green estate through an asset based Community Development model. We engage local residents who are experiencing isolation, financial hardship, and poor mental or physical health in community activities, enabling them to share their skills, lead and shape the activities that are delivered. It is funded by Islington NHS Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and Islington Giving.

The GNS is hyper local with all of the activities focussed around New River Green estate in the Canonbury area. The GNS is run from our office at the Walter Sickert Community Centre, Canonbury Crescent, London N1 2FB.

Over the past year, we have increased our focus on implementing the Five Ways to Wellbeing (New Economics Foundation, 2008) within our work. This looks at 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, move your mood
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 some mental health problems, improve physical health and also help people to flourish.

Activities and developments to the scheme are run in a partnership between volunteer residents and our Good Neighbours Scheme Coordinator, Nicky Ludgate. Residents help to deliver all of the GNS' groups and activities. They are developed in partnership with residents and new ideas which emerge from residents' discussions are explored and actioned.

The regular activities delivered by the Good Neighbours Scheme include free yoga and meditation classes, a community garden and gardening sessions, football for young children, weekly arts and crafts sessions and coffee mornings, a lunch club and film nights. We also deliver seasonal events for the community to bring a wider group of neighbours together and open up community spaces and deepen community connections on the estate.

A relational approach is fundamental to the scheme. Friendships and mutual support are valued and seen as a basis for improving individuals' health and wellbeing in the

long term. We encourage people to share their stories and welcome new residents. In fact, groups are more about relationships than the activities in themselves.

2. Methodology

We have used a wide range of evidence in this report, including

- Statistical information on the numbers of group/ activity users and attendees.
- An annual survey of a sample of residents which gathers in-depth feedback about how the scheme impacts their wellbeing. This survey is based around the Five Ways to Wellbeing and is influenced by the Warwick Edinburgh short scale. We have used quotes from residents who have completed the survey within this report and they are highlighted in coloured text.
- Case stories to illustrate the improvements to wellbeing and reduction in isolation that the Good Neighbours Scheme enables.

In addition to the evidence in this report we are currently working in collaboration with the CCG to measure issues around loneliness and its correlation with how GNS has positively impacted on this social issue. We are also working with the CCG to identify links between the impact of GNS activities and access to medical services. A cohort of 30 willing GNS participants have been identified. Their NHS numbers will be used to track their access A&E, hospital and GP services, to try and determine whether involvement in GNS has had an impact of their use of health services.



3. Overall numbers of people attending events and activities, September 2018 – August 2019

- Total attendances: 3,947
- Average number of attendees per month: 328
- No of individuals who have attended weekly activities during the year: 322
- No of new people in the year: 27
- No of regular weekly volunteers: 16 (additional volunteers who assist at one-off events only are not included in this figure)
- Total no of volunteer hours: 360
- Formal volunteering average number of hours per month: 43
- Informal/natural volunteering average no of hours per month: 2.25

4. Regular groups and activities

Coffee Morning

Number of Groups run across the year: 32

Average monthly attendance: 14 people

"The coffee morning get together is a great start for the week. It's done a great good for my social life and it has inspired me to care about the wellbeing of other people other than myself."

Lunch Club (Monthly)

Number of Groups run across the year: 8

Average monthly attendance: 10 people

"I feel happy when I'm here and forget my problems."

Over 55s Film Night (monthly)

Number of Groups run across the year: 7

Average monthly attendance: 7 people:

Gardening

Number of Groups run across the year: 18

Average monthly attendance: 8 people

"It gets me out of the flat."

Arts and Crafts

Number of Groups run across the year: 31

Average monthly attendance: 15 people

"I help the arts and crafts teacher. I have gained new skills from her too."

Yoga

Number of Groups run across the year: 27

Average monthly attendance: 14 people

"How to do yoga. It helps to calm me down."

Mindful Meditation

Number of Groups run across the year: 26

Average monthly attendance: 5 people

"I so look forward to the weekly sessions & they have improved my anxiety."

Football 5-11s

Number of Groups run across the year: 20

Average monthly attendance: 10 people

Community Gym (a new activity this year since June 2019)

Number of Groups run across the year: 5

Average monthly attendance: 8 people

"I like coming to the club and I have become more active."

Family Fitness (a new activity this year since January 2019)

Number of Groups run across the year: 21

Average monthly attendance: 3 people

5. Events

The seasonal events are very well attended. They draw people into the regular activities and to use our Connect service, which can help any social support needs that they have.

Events run from September 2018 to August 2019 have included:

- Autumn Community Day in October 2018 (350 attendees).
- Christmas 2018 fete (90 attendees)
- Stay and play Christmas party (65 attendees).
- Christmas lunch party for regulars (35 attendees).
- Football club Christmas party (65 attendees).
- Spring wellbeing event in April 2019 promoting a variety of local health and wellbeing opportunities, including blood pressure checks, health checks, massage and nail painting (150 attendees).
- Summer garden party open to all residents in June 2019 (35 attendees).
- Community Fun Day in August 2019 (150 attendees).



- A summer trip to Southend in August 2019 (50 attendees).

6. Evidence on wellbeing outcomes

In August 2019, we gathered 50 surveys which looked the GNS impact on the Five Ways to Wellbeing. The respondents attended a range of our regular activities and some residents answered only some of the questions, which is represented in the feedback received.

Full graphics showing the outcomes of the survey can be seen in Appendix 2.



Be Active

98% of respondents said that they were more physically active as a result of taking part in GNS activities. Last year out of 34 respondents' answers, this was 85% - an increase this year of 13%.

Incredibly, 92% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their health has improved as a result of taking part in GNS activities. Again an increase from last year from 79%.

Connect

58% of people said that they felt more positive about the neighbourhood, 37% a bit more, with the remainder 5% saying that they did not know.

Keep Learning

92% of people said that they had learnt new skills, which included supporting each other with problems, arts and crafts skills, gardening, knitting, mindfulness, football and patience.

Take Notice

35% of residents said that they felt closer to others all often or all of the time. 65% of people said that they felt closer to other people some of the time/ occasionally.

58% of people consulted said that they felt more relaxed all of the time or often as a result of taking part in GNS activities. 32% said that they felt more relaxed some of the time or occasionally.

38% of respondents felt better able to deal with problems all or most of the time. 59% they felt this way some of the time or occasionally. 3% either did not answer or did not feel more able to deal with their problems.

Interestingly only 40% said that taking part made them feel more optimistic about the future all or most of the time – a drop of 19% from last year. This may be due to external factors outside of the GNS' control.

67% of residents responding reported that taking part made them feel more useful often or all of the time. 33% said that they felt more useful some of the time.

Give

Of our respondents, 37% reported that they had often given time or shared their skills with others since being part of the Good Neighbours Scheme. 44% had given time occasionally, and only a fifth, 21% either declined to answer or said that they had not contributed in some way. This reflects the project's ethos of resident participation in leading the project.

Comments received included:

"Giving the people the same opportunity."

"Pleasure in knowing I have tried to help people to be more relaxed."

"Making others feel calm and relaxed."

"Thinking and helping others stop worrying about yourself, giving more to others, helping them with medicine."

"Have recommended the classes to friends."

"To understand other people's problems better."

"You learn things from other people."

"To help them confidence to come and realise it's fun."

"It makes me feel good sharing my skills with others."

"Mixing with other people, feeling good about myself."

"Being part of a team."

Wellbeing Highlights for Residents

We asked what people have enjoyed about being involved with the activities at New River Green GNS. A range of the responses are listed below:

"More fit, interacting with other people."

"Getting out of my flat."

"Meeting people."

"I have only been here a few weeks, but have enjoyed it very much."

"Being with people of all ages."

We asked if people felt that their health and wellbeing is better since joining the GNS and in what way. The range is again represented in the quotes below:

“More relaxed.”

“Better than before.”

“Yes when I am able to attend I feel more relaxed and positive.”

“Feel a lot healthier and fit.”

“Yes it gives me things to do and I have a laugh.”

“Yes better, less anxious, able to care for myself better.”

Links between the GNS and other Help on Your Doorstep projects



Website and social media

From September 2018 to August 2019 Help on Your Doorstep's website www.helponyourdoorstep.com had 7,928 visitors in over 13,105 sessions.

The page on our website with information about the Good Neighbours Schemes has had 897 page views and the events page, which lists all the Good Neighbours activities and events has had 602 views.

We regularly share updates about Good Neighbours events and activities via social media. We currently have 745 followers on Twitter and 211 likes on Facebook.

Connect advice and guidance service

Nicky, the GNS Coordinator, works very closely with the Connect Advisors at Help on Your Doorstep. This requires clear brokering and signposting between these sister projects. Residents present with complex issues on a regular basis, there are invariably additional underlying causes to issues. Through GNS's early interventions, issues can be identified, and community remedies used (e.g. residents supporting one another around particular issues they themselves have been confronted with – meaning less redress to formal medical and social services).

“Helping others has helped me feel useful and like I have a purpose again.”

Promoting health self-management

The New River Green GNS, along with the whole of Help on Your Doorstep has been working in partnership with Whittington Health (WH) to provide local residents

in the Canonbury area with free courses to self-manage their long term health conditions.

The Whittington Health self-management courses include the Expert Patient Programme (EPP), the Diabetes Self-Management Programme (DSMP) and the New Beginnings programme (NB) which is for people with mental health conditions.



The New River Green GNS has been identifying possible participants who would benefit from these programmes through its activity groups and helping refer people on to courses.

Taster session

The GNS worked with WH to help promote an EPP course at St Mary's Church (N1), which started on 9 April. A short taster session was delivered as part of the Monday coffee morning to residents.

As a result of the taster 7 people were interested to learn more about the courses and 3 people went on to enrol on to the EPP at St Mary's.

Quotes from participants:

"I feel more positive and am enjoying it."

"It was great to meet other people with the same condition. I felt like I wasn't alone."

"I can't wait for the next course."

GP advice project

Since January 2018, a member of the Canonbury Connect Team has been attending the GP waiting room at River Place Health Centre once a week to offer advice and guidance and referral support to patients. Through the team working and brokering between GNS and Connect the Advisor has been able to refer clients presenting with

underlying social issues (such as isolation) as well as addressing the challenges of the presenting issue/s.

Health and wellbeing information

We further developed our health and wellbeing information service funding by Cloudesley. This provides information about local opportunities and activities around the Five Ways to Wellbeing to residents with long term health conditions and/or disabilities via SMS and email. We will continue to promote this via the GNS. The information service sends links to relevant information on our website and recipients are encouraged to contact our Connect service for more information/ help accessing any of the opportunities that they are interested in. Initial information can be seen on our website at www.helponyourdoorstep.com/Pages/Category/5-ways-to-wellbeing.

7. Conclusion / plans for year ahead

One of the strengths of the GNS project expressed by residents is the fact the programme is hyper local. Residents like how accessible the sessions are, mostly due to access barriers around their ill health. Some of the key factors expressed by residents relate to isolation, depression and poverty. With limited independent social opportunities GNS offer residents a space of self-help and diversion. Some of the challenges include ensuring ownership is expressed within micro volunteering and not reliant on the paid staff. The way the programme is delivered is about encouraging group responsibility. The success of the project means that demand outstrips the activities available. The Good Neighbours Scheme in New River Green continues to develop and provides regular opportunities for community members to connect and take part in activities which demonstrably improve wellbeing and decrease isolation.



Nicky, our GNS Coordinator, wants to build on the residents' growing confidence in shaping the project by offering them more opportunities for leading and encouraging them to meet outside of programme hours. For example, there have been trips to Sadlers' Wells, the local community gardens and cafes – arranged without her assistance.

We always aim to find new residents who might benefit from the scheme, and Nicky continues to do weekly outreach, supported by volunteers, to talk to residents about what is going on in their community.

As an organisation we are planning to increase the teamwork across the Good Neighbours Schemes and encourage increased sharing of learning and resources across our 3 GNS schemes in the Borough. We are exploring an online monitoring tool, which could improve our understanding of how many people use the 3 GNS schemes and how often. The Community Development Team manager adds capacity to the project supporting Nicky in a more structured way. More strategic work is planned around further embedding GNS within service reforms in prevention and early intervention.

Appendix 1

We use the Five Ways to Wellbeing (New Economics Foundation, 2008) to help us to assess our impact on residents' health. The sample case studies below show the impact of our work on residents for each of the Five Ways.

Case study 1 – Connect, Be active

Background: Resident A had moved to the area in January 2019, living with her son, she had multiple ill health diagnoses. She is also partially sighted. Other family members live outside the area.

“So many my age group that need something like this to meet up social, as communication is so important –gets you out the house. Made my circle of friends is so much bigger.”

How they came to GNS: When the local doctor's surgery, the Resident A found a GNS leaflet and contacted the GNS Community Coordinator and a one-to-one visit was organised at the office. Through this engagement the resident was linked to a number of community activities, including coffee morning, arts and crafts and the gardening project.

The difference GNS has made to this person's life: Through engaging with GNS activities Resident A has gone from an isolated older woman to someone with a number of friends. Being local, the service user has engaged in activities outside the home has become more mobile.

“I noticed that human contact is being lost with being replaced with appliances such as iPad, TV, computers, so these groups give me the human interactions. The most important necessities of life is being with people.”

Case study 2 – Connect, Give, Take notice, Be active, Keep learning

Background: Resident B, an older local resident in his late 50s had lived with his mother, who sadly passed away a few months ago. The passing of his mother was unexpected and the effects were felt strongly by the son and he became very depressed.

How they came to GNS:

Through talking to a neighbour, he was chaperoned to the arts and crafts sessions. Resident B found it very difficult to mix at first. Also he has agoraphobia for over twenty years and so even coming to the sessions was challenging. Through engagement work of the GNS Coordinator, the resident was encouraged to come along to other sessions and attends two other additional activities.

The difference GNS has made to this person's life

"Yes, I am now talking to people a lot more. I have found a couple of good friends who I can talk to properly"

Resident B now attends more sessions, including the Southend excursion which is a significant achievement as he hadn't left the local area since 1976. Through engaging with gardening and other classes Resident B says he has learnt new things. He states that he now notices what's going on around him a lot more and he now goes out more.

"I'm learning to socialise more and be around people more, as it's been difficult as I've had no friends."

It was noted that the resident was very helpful with others on an excursion.

"I do help people now. I helped a group user at Southend find her way as she gets confused and has bad eyesight."

Case study 3 – Connect, Keep learning, Be active

Resident C, a recently widowed woman who has lived locally for 37 years. She had been a carer for her partner for many years until he passed away. She said she felt very isolated and realised she needed regular support.

How they came to GNS: Resident C became aware of GNS through a number of doorstep visits. She and her partner had visited the community centre a few times until his health had deteriorated. She had kept GNS/Connect leaflets and took the step to phone and visited the GNS Coordinator and was encouraged to attend activities.

The difference GNS has made to this person's life: Resident C has attended numerous activities

"I have started to make new friends and to use community services. There is always something for me to do and go to."

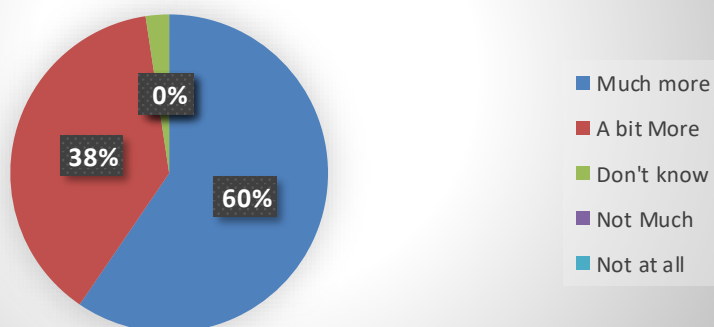
Resident C has said she has developed stronger social and life skills. She has escorted less mobile residents to hospital.

"None of this has been easy and sometimes I walk away crying and glad to be alone. But it is so worth it for the friendships, info and community."

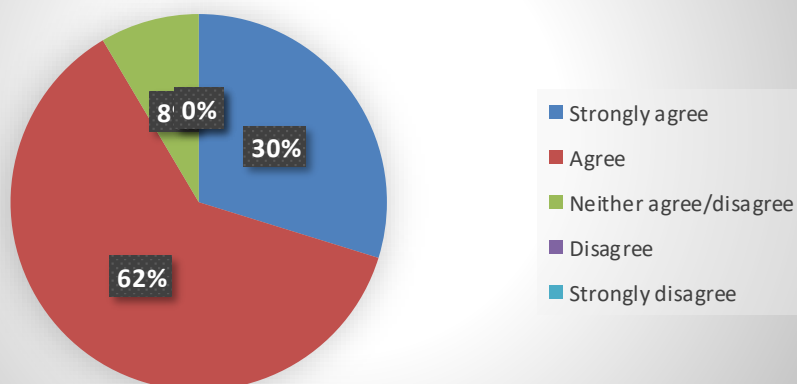
Appendix 2

Results of Resident Feedback Survey Conducted August 2019

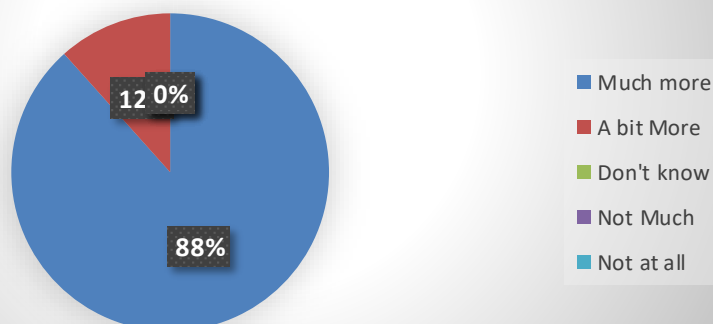
How much more physically active are you as a result of taking part in GNS activities?



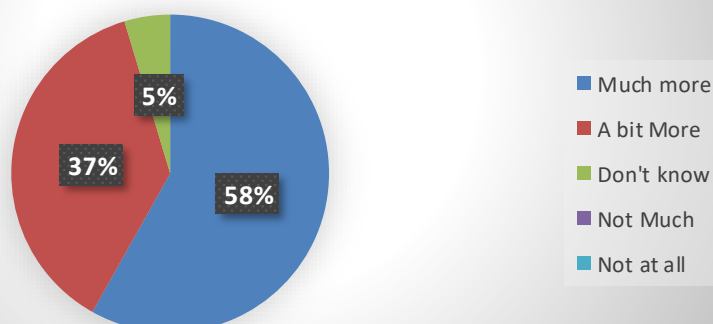
Do you feel your health has improved as a result of taking part in activities?



Do you feel more positive about your neighbourhood since participating in the Good Neighbours Schemes?



Do you feel more connected with your neighbours than before attending the Good Neighbours Scheme?





Comments following on from the question - Have you learned new skills?

"Meeting new people, feeling more confident"

"More outgoing in myself"

"To be in touch with my breathing"

"Helps me better able to help with my problems. Mindfulness helps me cope with my arthritic pains. Helping me to be more mobile, as less pain, more movement."

"Better balance at yoga and more creative in art"

"Much more about gardening and art"

"Just about art"

"Patience. Drawing, making things - more patience"

"How to do yoga. It helps to calm me down. Arts and crafts keep my mind active."

"To be more considerate for other people. Yoga"

"I help the arts and crafts teacher. I have gained new skills from her too."

"Card making, jewellery making, pom-poms and flower making. Also, a spot of gardening."

"How to do art more properly."

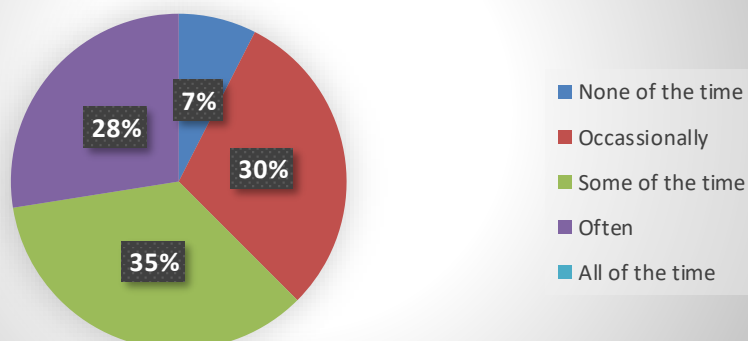
"To be more confident."

"Being involved with other people. Feeling good about myself."

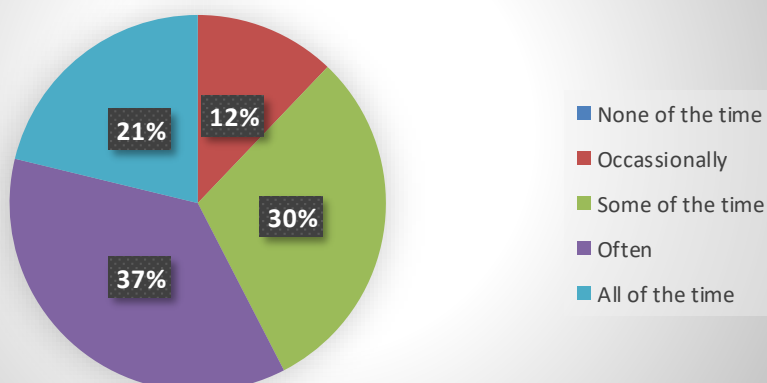
"Card making."

"I got to the GNS and connect and I get support from both."

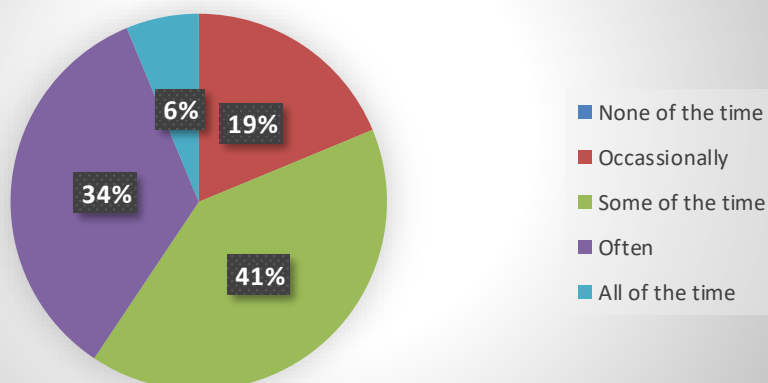
Taking part in GNS has made me feel closer to others



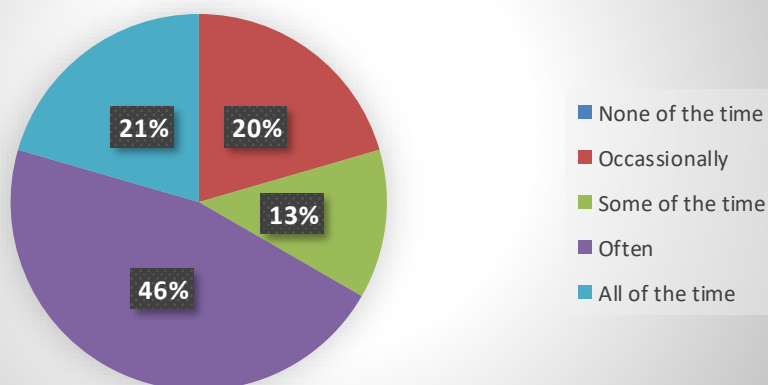
Taking part in GNS has made me more relaxed



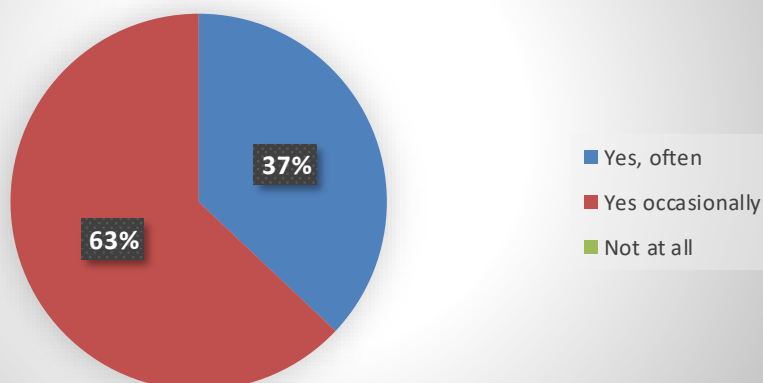
Taking part in GNS has made me more optimistic about the future



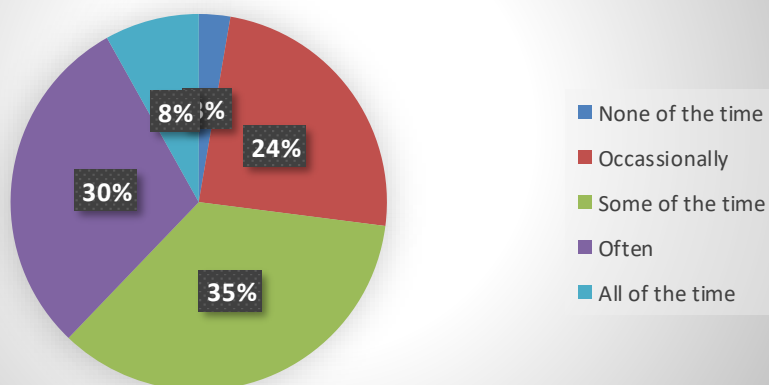
Taking part in GNS has made me feel more useful



Have you given or shared your skills with others since being part of GNS?



Taking part in GNS has made me better able to deal with my problems



What have you enjoyed about being involved with the activities at New River Green?

“More fit, interacting with more people.”

“I have only been here a few weeks. I have enjoyed it very much.”

“Being with other people of all ages.”

“Comfort that other people feel the same as me and a sense of community.”

“Meeting up with everyone. Feeling better. Everyone from staff to members of the groups so friendly and helpful. Joy to attend.”

“It helps me to get out of the house and keeps me active in mind and body.”

“Gives me a “get and feel good” feeling.”

“Meeting different people.”

“Being with other people and learning new things.”
“More social understanding.”
“Chatting to the people here.”
“Just being around people of all ages and being able to care about others.”
“It’s good to help people in the community.”
“I have enjoyed meeting new people and learning new skills and making friends.”
“Helpful with solving my problems.”
“Meeting people and getting out of the house
“Meeting new people.”
“Coffee morning and bingo – Kings Cross GNS.”
“Meeting people feeling good about myself and greeting other people.”
“Helping manage events.”
“Making new friends and having things to look forward to.”
“Meeting people, pleasant snacks, exciting.”
“Friendly, atmosphere, talking with people.”
“Getting me out of my flat.”

Do you feel that your wellbeing is better since joining the GNS? In what way?

“Feel a lot more healthier and fit. “
“Yes.”
“More relaxed.”
“Yes, when I am able to attend, I feel more relaxed and positive.”
“Yes better, less anxious, able to cope better.”
“Definitely.”
“My health and breathing are far better.”
“It makes you come out of the home.”
“Yes, it gives me things to do and I have a laugh.”
“Yes, as I feel happy when I’m here and forget my problems.”
“Yes.”
“Yes, because I like coming to the club and I have become more active.”
“Yes, slimmer.”
“Not so isolated.”
“I like the get-togethers.”
“Health wellbeing is better.”
“I feel hearty in myself.”
“Exercise and interesting groups.”
“Better than before.”

In response to any other comments, residents stated the following:

- “That more people should take part and been given the opportunity.”
- “I am very pleased to have been told about it.”
- “I so look forward to the weekly sessions and they have improved my anxiety.”
- “Keep up the good work.”
- “Long may all its’ activities continue.”
- “It would be good to have even more classes as the people are so lovely.”
- “Any new activities will be welcome.”
- “I just enjoy coming.”
- “The name speaks for itself: Good neighbours.”
- “Useful and helpful.”
- “More classes (dance) (keep fit).”
- “It is lots of fun and we enjoy coming here.”
- “Keep it up.”
- “Staff and everyone gets on.”
- “Hope more people are willing to take part and feel good about themselves.”
- “More exercise classes.”
- “Good, organised and keep it up.”
- “Friendly staff and volunteers.”
- “The GNS and connect has been good for me.”