



Appendix One

# Open Spaces Learning Programme Review 2019 - 2021

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## Executive Summary

The Open Spaces Department's innovative learning programme facilitates change across five impact areas: understanding, confidence, involvement, wellbeing, and nature connection.

The learning programme was developed in response to a growing consensus that spending time in nature is beneficial to health and wellbeing, and a concern over health and wellbeing inequalities as people in deprived areas of London face more barriers than most to accessing nature. The programme provides a key method for the City of London to contribute to the health and wellbeing of residents of some of London's most deprived communities through connecting them more powerfully to their local green spaces. Audiences include school children growing up in poverty, young people excluded from mainstream schooling, and local people from communities that are under-represented in our green spaces. Delivery is focused on spaces located near areas of high deprivation, with programmes operating from West Ham Park, Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest.

During the last two years the core programme was delivered and then adapted to continue to provide a service during the Covid-19 pandemic.

- In 2019 – 20 the learning team delivered a successful face-to-face activity programme for schools, play, youth, community groups and volunteers
- In 2020-21 the learning team delivered an innovative, adapted programme in order to reach audiences with limited access to resources and outdoor space during the Covid pandemic.
- The programme exceeded its 2019-20 participation targets; however, face-to-face engagement was restricted in 2020-21 due to the Covid pandemic.

As 2019-20 and 2020-21 were very different years, rather than directly comparing outputs this report describes the approaches and outputs for each phase of the programme.

### ***Key achievements***

- The programme engaged over 44,000 participants in facilitated learning activities 2019-21.
1. The school service reached students in London's most deprived boroughs including Tower Hamlets, Newham, Hackney, Islington, Haringey, Brent and Camden.
  2. The Green Talent programme worked with young people struggling in education and/or furthest from the job market, including pupil referral units, young carers and young refugees.
  3. Play activities at Hampstead Heath reached children and families from some of the most deprived wards to the south of the Heath, including Gospel Oak Ward where there is 39% child poverty.
  4. The programme adapted in 2020-21 with targeted initiatives in-line with each stage of the Covid restrictions, including printed activity sheets delivered via food banks, activity

videos for use in school playgrounds, in-school nature wellbeing workshops, outdoor wellbeing programme for groups of six, an adapted Covid-safe school programme and Covid-safe play programme.

5. The programme made a positive difference across the five learning impact areas:

**Connection:**

15% increase in participants' feelings of connection to the Open Spaces after taking part in the school programme 2019-21

**Confidence:**

107% increase in participants' feelings of confidence to explore Open Spaces after taking part in the learning volunteer programme 2019-20

**Wellbeing:**

29% increase in participants' feelings of wellbeing after taking part in the learning volunteer programme 2019-20

**Involvement:**

74% increase in participants' feelings of involvement after taking part in the Green Talent programme 2019-21

**Understanding:**

47% increase in participants' understanding of the importance of green spaces after taking part in the Green Talen programme 2019-21

- The programme's innovative approach to engagement through the Covid pandemic was featured in the Evening Standard, City Matters, Hampstead and Highgate Express, Pro Landscaper and Epping Forest Guardian.
- The programme has delivered vital aspects of the City of London Corporation's Corporate Plan, Social Mobility Strategy and Education Strategy.

## **Feedback**

*"It was fantastic to get outside, to a different – and very special space – and to do something real, hands on and outdoors... The learning ... was fantastic. No screens, no walls... Magic."* Headteacher, Eleanor Palmer Primary School, Camden (Hampstead Heath)

*"The session gave us a chance to see the children use collaboration skills, as well as concentration and resilience - all key values at Park Primary School. We would fully recommend this experience..."* Teacher, Park Primary School, Newham (West Ham Park)

*"Lockdown has been so tough on me and my son as he is only 13 months, so getting able to come here and see other children really makes me happy and seeing how happy he is in his face, thank you so much! We would be truly lost without this place."* Participant, One O'clock Club (Hampstead Heath)

*"As a busy family, it was fantastic to spend time outdoors together, work as a team and join in the fun and creative activities while learning new skills. The session was professionally organised, led by a very friendly and welcoming team member who put us at ease straight from the beginning."* Participant, family workshop (Epping Forest)

# Introduction

## ***Background***

The Open Spaces learning programme engages urban and deprived communities close to three open spaces: Hampstead Heath, Epping Forest (including Wanstead Flats) and West Ham Park.

The programme delivers five learning impact areas; understanding, confidence, involvement, wellbeing, and connection.

The programme consists of the following workstreams:

- a) Schools service operating out of Hampstead Heath, Epping Forest, West Ham Park
- b) Green Talent programme working with young people struggling in education and/or furthest from the job market
- c) Play activities at Hampstead Heath
- d) Volunteer development and community outreach work

The OS learning team brings together expertise in outdoor learning, schools, play, volunteering and youth work. Eight full time officers and one part time officer are located at the key delivery sites (Hampstead Heath, Epping Forest and West Ham Park), and an additional pool of casual educators and play workers support programme delivery.

## ***Rationale***

The learning programme was developed in response to:

- a growing consensus that spending time in nature is beneficial to health and wellbeing, whilst contact with nature is becoming more infrequent
- an understanding that access to green space is not equal, with people in deprived areas of London facing more barriers than most to accessing nature, which can impact on physical activity levels and mental health
- a concern that visitors to our Open Spaces are not always representative of the local communities, with Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups (BAME) and deprived communities under-represented
- a recognition that barriers to accessing green spaces exist for local communities, including fear of getting lost, a lack of confidence in the outdoors, a lack of understanding of the activities available, and a feeling that our spaces are 'not for them' (highlighted through consultation with communities adjacent to our Open Spaces)
- a concern about the attainment gap between disadvantaged school students and their peers
- a recognition of the value of play in young people's development, with natural play having a lasting impact on the development of children's connection, understanding and appreciation for the natural environment.



## ***Strategic value***

The programme contributes to the delivery of all three of the Corporate Plan's overarching aims and seven of the 12 outcomes. See appendix two for more information.

## ***Impact areas***

To tackle the challenge of a growing disconnect with nature and green spaces, the learning team design programmes to deliver change across five impact areas:

<b><i>Understanding</i></b>	<b><i>Confidence</i></b>	<b><i>Nature connection</i></b>	<b><i>Wellbeing</i></b>	<b><i>Involvement</i></b>
<b>People understand the value and importance of green space</b>	People are confident to use green spaces, as part of our activities or independently	People develop a sense of place with green spaces	People have restorative and meaningful experiences in green spaces	People take positive action for, and get involved with, green spaces

To maximise impact, the learning team target programmes to reach those who could benefit the most, including school children growing up in poverty, young people excluded from mainstream schooling, and local people from communities that were under-represented in our green spaces. A bespoke evaluation toolkit, developed in collaboration with academic partners at Derby University in 2018, has been used to measure impact across the five areas (information regarding this evaluation methodology is available on request), as well as a wellbeing evaluation toolkit developed by University College London.

## ***Learning principles***

A set of learning principles for schools and play inform programme development and delivery. The principles:

- map across the five impact areas
- bring together the expertise of the team and relevant research
- enable shared reflective practice and a shared vision for quality learning
- increase the level of active engagement of participants
- provide a tool for effective decision making and peer review

See appendix three for more information.

## ***Evaluation toolkits***

A bespoke evaluation toolkit developed by Derby University in 2018 was used to measure change across the five impact areas. An additional wellbeing evaluation toolkit from University College London was used to provide a more nuanced measure of psychological wellbeing. More details are available on request.

## Programme review 2019-20

The 2019-20 programme delivered:

- a) Schools service operating out of Hampstead Heath, Epping Forest, West Ham Park
- b) Green Talent programme working with young people struggling in education and/or furthest from the job market
- c) Play activities at Hampstead Heath
- d) Volunteer development and community outreach work

The 2019-20 programme reached over 40,000 participants and exceeded its participation targets by 7%.

### School services

#### **Overview**

High quality booked sessions were delivered to a wide range of schools at Epping Forest, Hampstead Heath and West Ham Park.

Sessions were delivered to support the National Curriculum and promote awe, wonder and inspiration as children learned through active engagement with the open spaces. Based on the unique features of the sites and the needs of schools, the programme provided rich opportunities to:

- Learn through first hand observation (e.g. exploring habitats, life cycles, seasons)
- Stimulate the imagination (e.g. creating stories inspired by nature, creating art work using natural materials)
- Give children an active role (e.g. pond dipping, orienteering, field work)
- Enable children to see the relevance and application of their knowledge and skills beyond the classroom (e.g. solving a real-life practical challenge such as assessing pond health or testing materials to build a dam)
- Uncover evidence of local history (e.g. finding bomb craters in the Epping Forest site)
- Develop team working skills (e.g. team den building).

The Epping Forest programme was based at The View visitor centre near Chingford, with sessions delivered in the adjacent forest and Tudor hunting lodge. The Hampstead Heath Programme operated from the Education Centre building in Parliament Hill Fields and the 'Glassroom Classroom' in Golders Hill Park, with sessions delivered in bespoke teaching gardens as well as the wider Heath. Both sites provided a variety of habitats for exploration. The Epping Forest and Hampstead Heath programmes have charges / income targets, and reach schools across multiple London boroughs, including Hackney, Waltham Forest, Harringay, Tower Hamlets, Islington and Camden. Programmes were offered from nursery to A level, with most visits coming from primary schools.

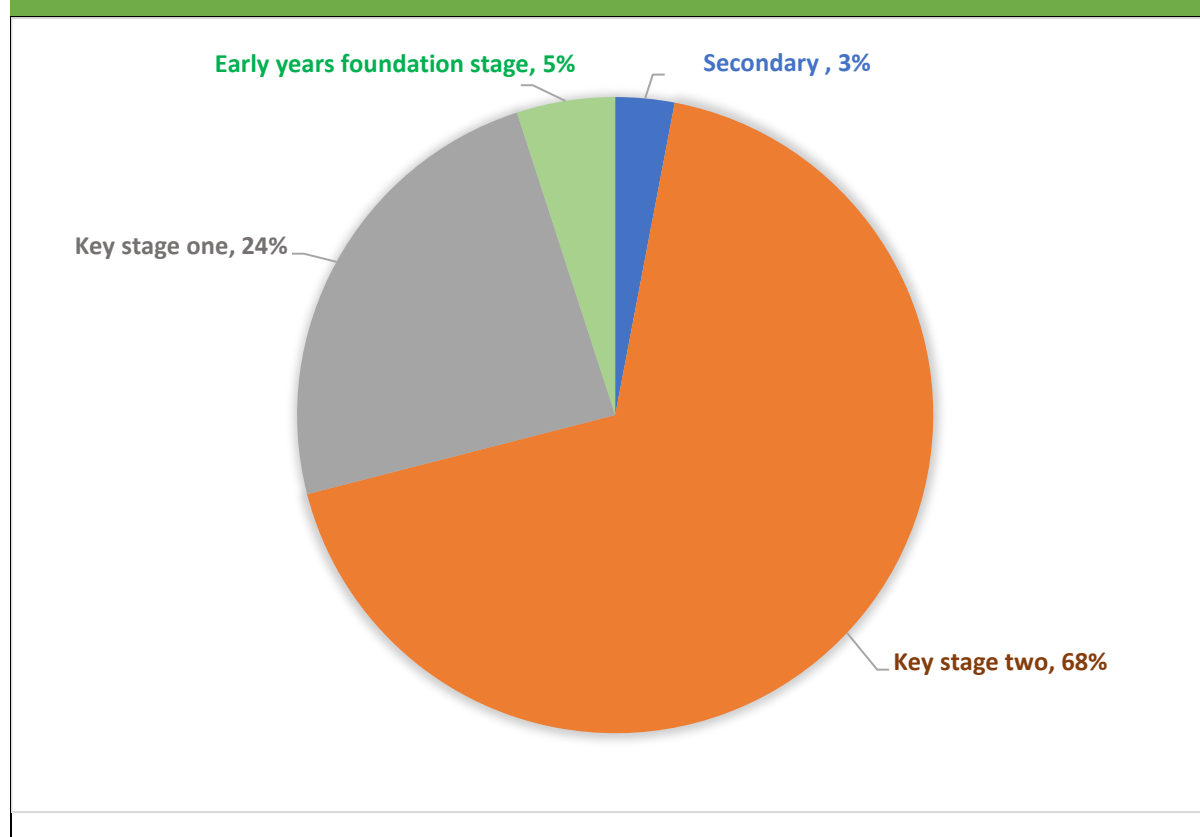
The programme at West Ham Park offers a free programme to primary schools in Newham, which is ranked in the worst four London boroughs for child poverty (Trust for London). The programme builds relationships with a small number of local schools, enabling repeat visits from multiple year groups, and works collaboratively with teachers to produce relevant outdoor learning sessions.

## Participation

School programmes	Target 2019-20	Actual 2019-20
Number of school participants at Epping Forest	2,640	2,589
Number of school participants at Hampstead Heath	8,360	8,554
Number of school participants at West Ham Park	3,200	5,033
<b>Total number of school participants</b>	<b>14,200</b>	<b>16,176</b>

The majority of participating students were primary school children from key stage two (7 to 11 year olds):

*Percentage of secondary, key stage two, key stage one and early years foundation stage students, 2019-20*

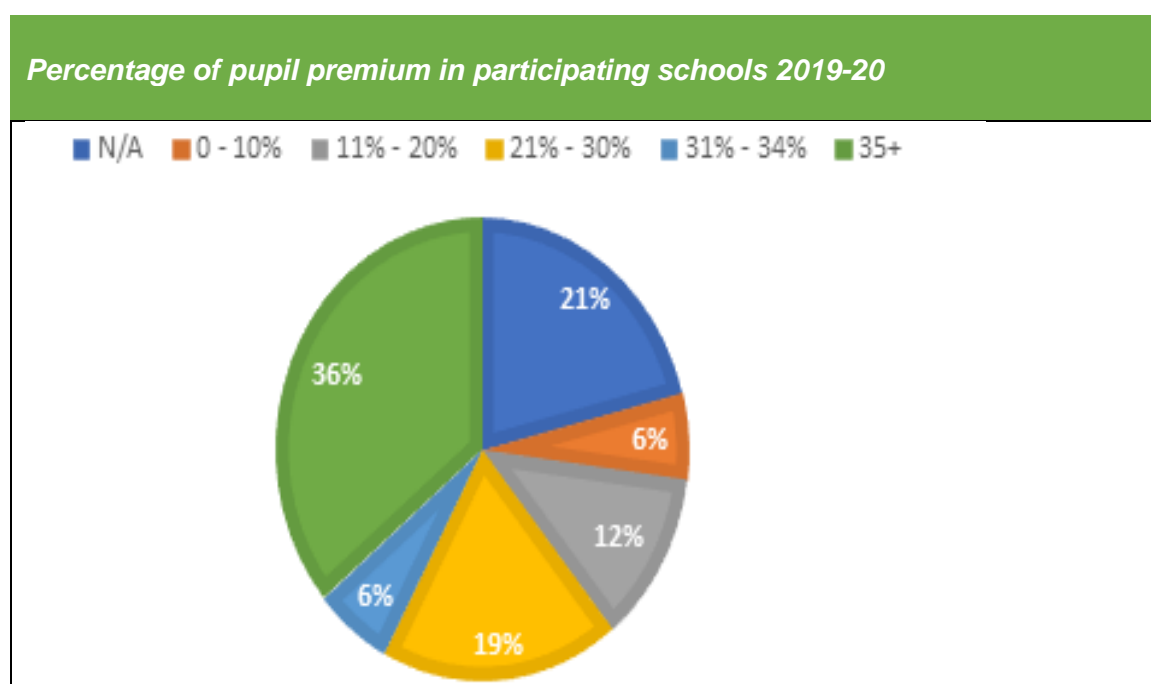




## ***Reaching disadvantaged school students***

There is a wide recognition and concern over the attainment gap between disadvantaged school students and their peers, and the OS learning programme has engaged schools in some of London's most deprived boroughs, including Tower Hamlets, Newman, Hackney, Islington and Haringey (see appendix 3 for maps illustrating the programme reach within areas of deprivation).

Pupil premium is an indicator of disadvantage as it is allocated to children who have been in receipt of free school meals, looked after or adopted from care. The average pupil premium level for primary schools in England is 21%, and 35% is high. Through monitoring school pupil premium as an indicator of disadvantage, we know that the school services have reached a significant number of these students; 36% of participating schools had a pupil premium level of 35% and above:



## ***Evaluation***

### **Connection:**

- 81% of participants felt connected or very connected to our Open Spaces after taking part in a school workshop.
- 19% increase in feelings of connection to Open Spaces, compared to a 5% increase in 2018-19.

### **Confidence:**

- 88% of participants felt confident or very confident to 'explore places like this' after taking part in a school workshop.
- 13% increase in feelings of confidence to explore Open Spaces, compared to an 8% increase in 2018-19.

## **Feedback**

*"Investigation with a practical application and context!"* Teacher, Kentish Town Primary School ('Soil Scientists' workshop, Hampstead Heath)

*"Children were able to experience aspects of Stone Age living as they were immersed into the forest environment. The session was great and nicely fitted into our work on the Stone Age to Iron Age. The objectives were met. Building the shelters was raw fun and the fire making was brilliant too."* Teacher, Mandeville Primary School, Hackney ('Stone Age Survival' workshop, Epping Forest).



*School students participating in an orienteering workshop on Hampstead Heath.*

## **School workshops**

All school workshops support the delivery of the National Curriculum. The school workshops offered at the different sites can be viewed on our website:

<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/hampstead-heath/learning-at-hampstead-heath>

<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/epping-forest/learning-in-epping-forest>

<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/things-to-do/green-spaces/west-ham-park/learning-in-west-ham-park>

## **Increasing participation**

During 2019-20 the school team created plans to increase the number of school students engaged in 2020-21, with an emphasis on schools with high pupil premium. The plans included new models of staffing and delivery, marketing, and increased income targets. These plans were put on hold due to the pandemic and associated school closures.

## Green Talent

### Overview

Green Talent worked with young people struggling in education and/or furthest from the job market, providing opportunities to explore careers in the environmental and green spaces sector. Targeting 13 – 18 year olds, as well as 19 - 25 year olds with additional support needs, the programme provided facilitated opportunities for young people to recognise and develop their individual talents and skills. For example, completing outdoor conservation tasks boosted resilience, confidence and self-esteem through the achievement of purposeful goals, and activities such as sharing food around a fire helped to build peer relationships by opening dialogues around a shared new experience. Case studies are available on request. Outputs included:

- Scoping study for the Green Talent project moving forward, including identifying target boroughs and youth provisions in boroughs adjacent to our Open Spaces sites.
- Respite session for Brent Young Carers - fire lighting, hot chocolates, and team shelter building challenge. An opportunity to pause responsibilities and enjoy spending time in nature.
- Culture Mile Work Experience programme - practical conservation and learning activities on Hampstead Heath (as part of a wider work experience programme led by Culture Mile Learning)
- Team building sessions for Wormwood Scrubs summer youth programme
- 12-week programme of outdoor learning and skill building at Meadway Pavilion Pupil Referral Unit, Barnet
- Horticulture hands-on learning sessions for Meadway Pavilion Pupil Referral Unit horticulture students, Golders Hill Park
- 10-week practical conservation programme for young people at Hampstead Heath
- Practical outdoor skill-building session for unaccompanied young refugees with the Refugee Council at West Ham Park .

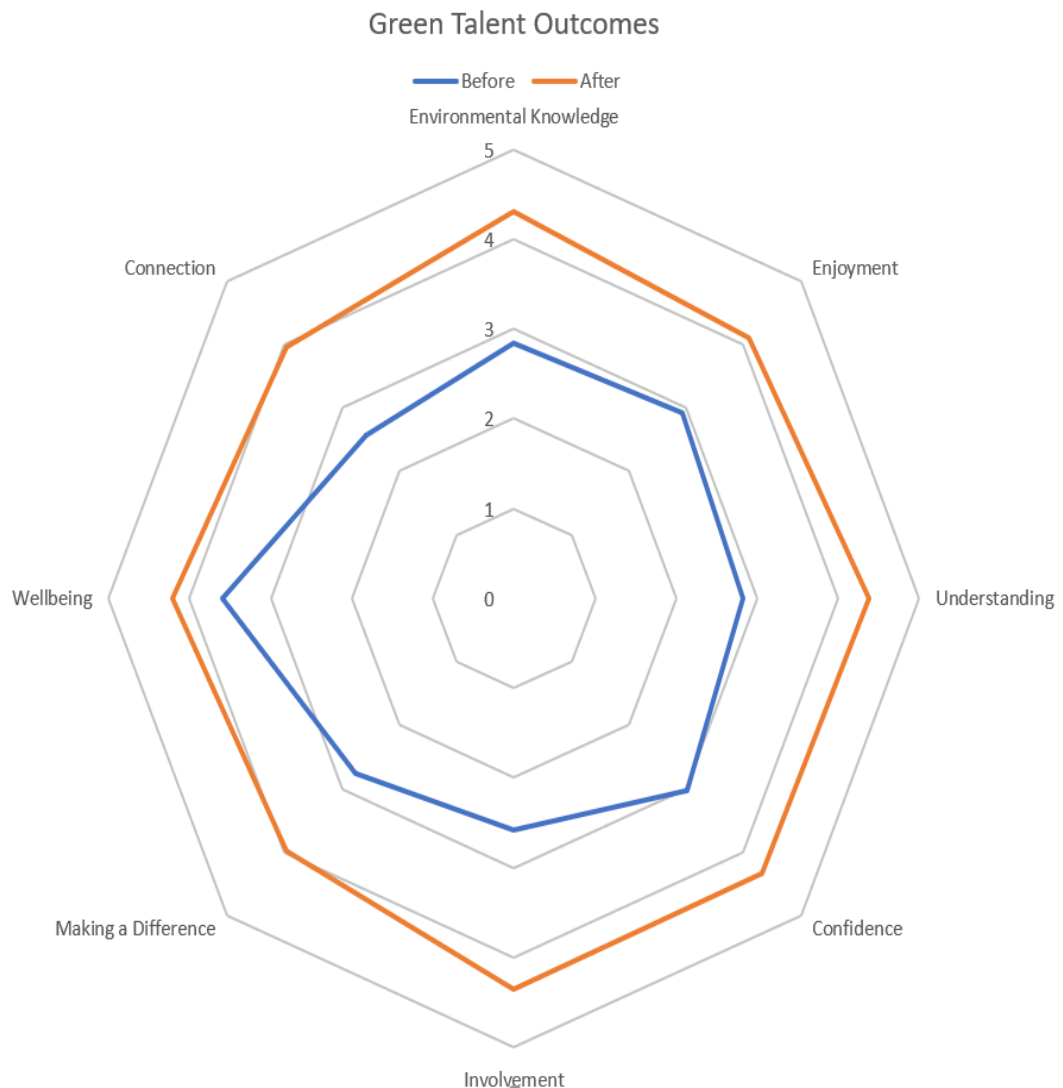
### Participation

Green Talent 2019-20	Target	Actual
Total number of young people participating in the programme	85	90

## Evaluation

Combining the evaluation toolkit developed in collaboration with Derby University together with some bespoke evaluation questions developed in collaboration with Green Talent Participants, the programme demonstrated a positive difference across the five learning impact areas as well as environmental knowledge, making a difference, and enjoyment.

The following 'outcomes star' shows participants' perceptions before and after taking part in Green Talent sessions.



## Feedback

*"It was great to see how the young people took to learning all the different skills you showed them... this was such a valuable experience for them all. From what the young people said afterwards they got a lot out of accomplishing the tasks and working together – making new friends, as some of them wrote on our feedback forms. You may also have heard them say that if they hadn't come they would just have been staying at home in their rooms, which is the worst thing for them in their situations."* London Manager and Senior Children's Psychotherapist, Refugee Council



*“I’ve really enjoyed being involved in this programme, it has given me the chance to take a much needed break from caring, meet other young carers and learn new skills. We’ve all really enjoyed this opportunity more than we thought we would. It has also been a great boost for our mental well-being”.* Participant, Brent Young Carers



Respite session for Brent Young Carers, Hampstead Heath

## **Play Programmes (Hampstead Heath):**

### **Overview**

Two play centres at Hampstead Heath provide both indoor and outdoor play facilities, with an Adventure Clubhouse providing play facilities for under-16s, and a One O'clock Club providing play facilities for under-fives and their parents/carers. The centres are located in the south of the Heath, adjacent to the borough of Camden, which is ranked in the worst four London boroughs for income inequality (Trust for London), and close to areas of deprivation such as Gospel Oak ward where there is 39% child poverty (Open Data, Camden Council).

The play centres bring individuals and communities together to share experiences and promote mutual respect and tolerance. Analysis of postcode data from participants shows that the centres are engaging people from wards where poverty is high, such as Gospel Oak and Haverstock, as well as wards in which most areas are affluent, such as Hampstead Town. The play facility provides an open, welcoming space in which communities can meet and engage in a shared interest regardless of background and circumstance, thus supporting community cohesion.

The play centres were staffed by playworkers who were able to support young people's play and learning. The Adventure Clubhouse was open from April to October, offering a school

holiday programme and after school provision. The One O'clock Club was open all year round, offering afternoon sessions every weekday.

Both provisions were free to access and provided a space where children could play and engage in activities that they had freely chosen, including both facilitated play and free play. Outdoor play included den building, sand, mud and water play, obstacle courses and circus skills. Indoor activities included mask making, leaf printing and badge making. At the Adventure Clubhouse, outdoor adventure play structures were also provided.

Children over the age of eight were able to visit without an accompanying adult, which enabled children whose parents/carers are not able to take them to activities outside school to participate.

## ***Participation***

The 2019-20 play programme exceeded its targets and exceeded 2018-19 participation:

<b>Play Programme 2019-20</b>	<b>Target 2019-20</b>	<b>Actual 2019-20</b>
<b>Number of young people attending the Clubhouse</b>	8,000	8,035
<b>Number of under-5s attending the One O'clock Club</b>	8,500	9,208
<b>Number of adults attending the One O'clock Club</b>	6,500	6,709
<b><i>Total number of participants</i></b>	<b>23,000</b>	<b>23,952</b>



Nature craft activity at the Adventure Clubhouse



Sensory activity at the One O'Clock Club



## Community engagement and volunteering

### Overview

The learning team inspire and enable under-represented local communities to access and enjoy our open spaces. The provide targeted programmes including family learning and play sessions and volunteering opportunities.

The team facilitate volunteering experiences which enhance well-being and build connection to the green spaces and provide training and development opportunities.

The team provide training and volunteer management resources for staff across the Open Spaces department.

### Outputs

- Partnership with 'Ambition, Aspire, Achieve', an organisation that works and supports families from very deprived areas in Newham, one of London's most deprived boroughs, supporting their audiences to engage with our learning programme and Open Spaces
- Social action project with a secondary school; the project developed activities and resources to engage residents in care homes in Waltham Forest, bringing aspects of Epping Forest to them (e.g. forest sounds, leaves, images, stories).
- Partnership with Newham Dementia group, looking at how a group of people with early dementia could access West Ham Park and what the Learning team could develop to engage with this group. Due to Covid restrictions this project was put on hold
- Development of new volunteer roles within the learning team – Epping Forest Schools Volunteer and Hampstead Heath Play Volunteer
- Partnership with UCL Art and Science faculty, supporting an undergraduate student to carry out a research project for our Learning Team. The project looked at how the Learning Team could make some activities more accessible to children with learning disabilities (case study available on request)
- Nature play programme on Hampstead Heath, designed to help families explore the natural world, understand the risks and benefits of natural play, and increase their confidence to play in natural settings. (Working in partnership with a range of local nurseries, play groups and family centres in Camden.).

### Participation

Programme strands	Target 2019-20	Actual 2019-20
Number of learning volunteers engaged with the programme	20	16
Number of community engagement participants	500	572

### Evaluation

Confidence: 107% increase in confidence to explore our Open Spaces after taking part in the 2019-20 learning volunteer programme.

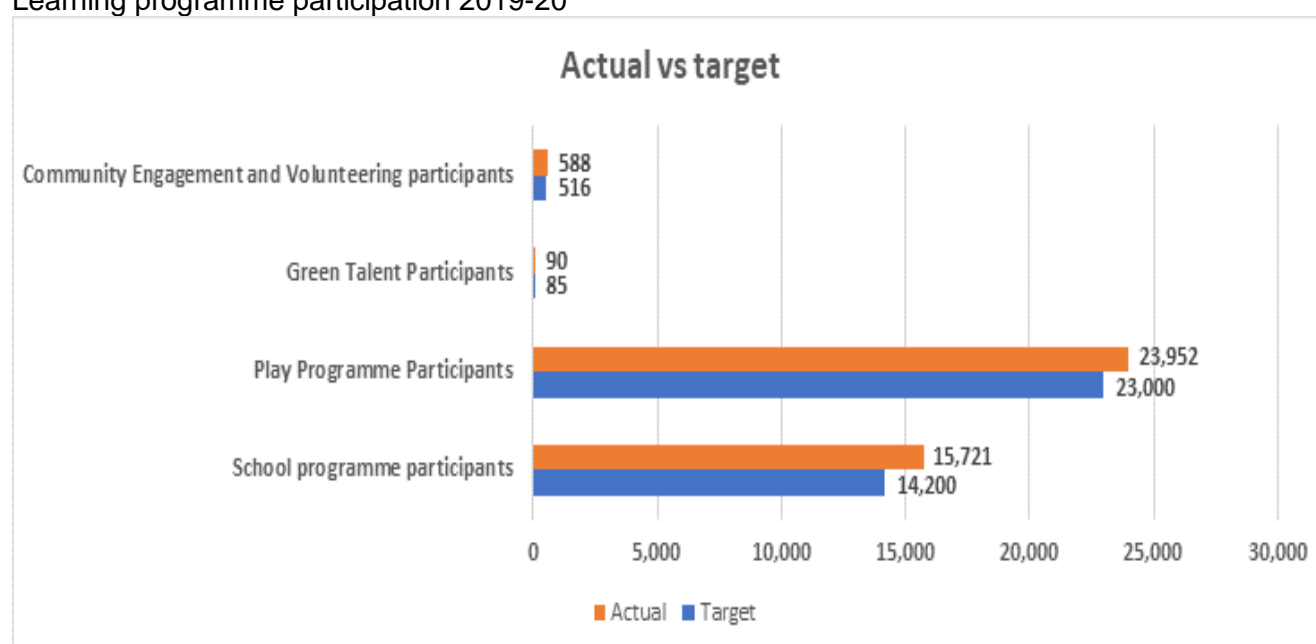
Wellbeing: 29% increase in feelings of wellbeing after taking part in the 2019-20 learning volunteer programme.

## 2019-20 Participation summary

The learning programme engaged 40,351 participants in 2019-20

Participants	Target	Actual
School programme participants	14,200	15,721
Play programme participants	23,000	23,952
Green Talent participants	85	90
Community engagement and volunteering participants	516	588
<b>Total</b>	<b>37,801</b>	<b>40,351</b>

Learning programme participation 2019-20



## 2019 – 20 Highlights summary

- Over 40,000 participants engaged in school, play, youth, volunteer and community engagement programmes.
- Programme evaluation demonstrated a positive change across the five learning impact areas.
- Schools in London's most deprived boroughs, including Tower Hamlets, Newham and Hackney, participated in the programme.
- Partnership with 'Ambition, Aspire, Achieve' facilitated programme participation for families from very deprived areas in Newham.
- Social action project for young volunteers helped to bring memories of Epping Forest to Waltham Forest care home residents.
- Bespoke respite session provided for young carers.
- Long term programmes for pupil referral units enabled young people to build confidence and skills.

## Programme Review 2020-21

The learning team had prepared for 2020 – 21 with plans and resources in place to increase school engagement and associated income targets at Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest, deliver a targeted programmes for youth, community and volunteer engagement and continue the successful play programmes. However, the restrictions imposed by the Covid pandemic posed challenges, including school closures. Whilst this impacted on the number of people the learning team could engage face-to-face, the team continued their focus on reaching people living in deprived areas of London, and developed programmes to support children, families and communities living with limited access to outdoor space and resources.

Rather than working within distinct project areas, the learning staff worked flexibly as a team to produce resources and activities. Staff adapted to new ways of working, moving from face-to-face engagement with people and the outdoors to home-based desk working, and learning new skills such as film editing and digital design. The team innovated and adapted the learning programme to accommodate each phase of the pandemic.

### March – July 2020

*Key restrictions introduced: UK in lockdown and schools closed (although vulnerable and key worker children could attend).*

During the first lockdown, the team created a brand-new series of nature-focused learning resources. Whilst there were already online resources available (e.g. National Trust and RSPB websites), the team sought to reach families who may have limited IT access, little/no outdoor space, and limited resources (e.g. crafting materials, science equipment). Activities were designed to use simple resources, such as old cereal packets and milk cartons. See [www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/learningprogrammeresources](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/learningprogrammeresources)

The team's nature-focused activities included both activity sheets and videos which schools and families could then do themselves, e.g. videos teaching children how to do a bug hunt and create eco art, and worksheets demonstrating how to make a bird feeder or sun catcher. The learning materials were sent to over 800 London schools, with teachers sharing the activities with the children at school and those at home, and printed activity sheets were shared via food banks, community centres and hostels, reaching families who may not have access to a computer or printer. The resources were also shared via local authority newsletters and websites (City of London, Camden, Islington, Newham, Brent, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest), and activity sheets were included in packs curated by Culture Mile Learning and A New Direction, reaching families in need across London.

The team also produced a learning pack of narrative based activities inspired by Epping Forest, history and time travel. A time travelling character, letters and clues engaged children in solving a mystery whilst exploring the history and heritage of Epping Forest from the home or classroom.

The team also developed guidance for managing volunteers during the pandemic for the Open Spaces Department. The guidance was regularly updated in accordance to changes within the Governmental guidance.

## **Outputs**

- 1 heritage learning pack
- 30 activity sheets
- 7 activity videos
- Vounteering guidance for the Open Spaces Department

(See [www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/learningprogrammeresources](http://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/learningprogrammeresources))

## **Reach**

- 800 schools via OS Learning newsletters
- 74 community groups across Camden, Waltham Forest, Newham and Hackney
- 7 local authority newsletters/websites: City of London, Camden, Islington, Newham, Brent, Tower Hamlets, Waltham Forest
- 300 families via food bank deliveries from Aishah Help (Newham, Hackney and Tower Hamlets)
- 150 families via 'Food for London Project' (Waltham Forest)
- 13,500 families via Culture Mile Learning Play Packs
- 6,800 London families via A New Direction 'Let's Create Packs'
- A new webpage was created to host the activities, and links were regularly shared via Open Spaces divisional facebook/twitter, City Corporation social media feed, the Lord Mayor's feed and the Policy Chair's feed.

## **Evaluation**

Evaluating the impact of the activity sheets and videos produced in the first few months of the pandemic was challenging. Initially the team focused on producing the resources and reaching children and families in need as a priority and did not develop an evaluation methodology prior to sharing these resources. Later in the year, they worked in partnership with UCL, supporting an undergraduate student to carry out a research study on the impact of these resources. Unfortunately, the data gathering phase of this project coincided with lockdown three where many staff in the community groups and charities (where the resources had been shared) were on furlough, making it very difficult to gather feedback. However, the surveys produced can be used again.

## **Feedback**

*"Thank you very much for the ideas during lockdown. I will be setting these as tasks for pupils via google classroom."* Teacher, Curwen Primary School, Newham

*"The learning resources and activity sheets provided by the City of London Open Spaces Team have been greatly appreciated by the families, children and young people we have been supporting during these challenging and unprecedented times. We have shared them as part of the weekly food and activity packs we have been delivering to the doorsteps of some of our most vulnerable children and young people during lockdown. Many of those we support do not have a garden or easy access to green spaces and have really been struggling during this period. The nature themed activity sheets and resources have been a really great way to promote positive activities and a great addition to the packs we've been delivering."* CEO, Ambition, Aspire, Achieve (Newham)





*Printed activity sheets delivered to England's Lane Hostel for homeless families in Camden, where families are living with limited space and resources.*



*Shelter created by Capel Manor Primary in Enfield, using one of our activity videos to engage the vulnerable and key worker children who were in school during lockdown one.*



*OS Learning resources included in Culture Mile Play Packs*

## **August 2020**

*Key restriction eased: Groups of six allowed to meet outdoors*

The team were able to work face-to-face with groups of up to five participants outdoors, and facilitated sessions at Epping Forest, Hampstead Heath and West Ham Park. In response to concerns over the impact of the pandemic on mental health, the sessions were designed to promote wellbeing by spending time in nature, learning new skills, discovering something new, being creative, and working together as a group. An evaluation toolkit developed by UCL was used to measure wellbeing before and after the sessions and results show that participants' wellbeing increased by an average of 22% after taking part in the session.

Activities included eco art, pond dipping, shelter building and nature crafts, and included both family learning sessions for all ages and nature-play sessions for children under 5 and their parents/carers.

The sessions were designed to keep people safe during the Covid-19 pandemic – the max group size was 6 (including the facilitator), and they took place exclusively outside with social distancing, hand washing stations or hand sanitizer are available, and all equipment cleaned before use.

The summer programme prioritized sessions for groups who may have struggled during lockdown, working with 'Ambition, Aspire, Achieve' in Newham to run a series of sessions for young people who have been struggling with anxiety and depression over lockdown, as well as other children and families local to its green spaces. The programme delivered a range of outdoor activities such as clearing leaves and watering plants, which boosted self-esteem and confidence.

### **Outputs**

- 56 Family Nature Wellbeing sessions at Hampstead Heath, Epping Forest and West Ham Park
- 35 Nature Play sessions for under-5s and parents/carers at Hampstead Heath
- 6 Nature Wellbeing sessions for young people suffering from anxiety and depression at West Ham Park

### **Reach**

- 232 family learning participants
- 144 nature play participants
- 33 young participants suffering from anxiety and depression

Sessions were fully booked at Epping Forest, West Ham Park and Hampstead Heath, although there were some cancellations due to bad weather.

### **Evaluation**

- 22% increase participants' sense of wellbeing after taking part in a family Nature Wellbeing Workshop.

### **Feedback**

*"We had a brilliant outdoor session in Epping Forest... Our 9 year old daughter had so much fun building a shelter in the forest and engaging in eco art activities such as leaf bashing and stick spider webs. As a busy family, it was fantastic to spend time outdoors together, work as a team and join in the fun and creative activities while learning new skills. The session was professionally organised, led by a very friendly and welcoming team member who put us at ease straight from the beginning."* Participants, Family Nature Wellbeing workshop, Epping Forest.





*Children from the 'Ambition, Aspire, Achieve' project helping to clear leaves and water plants in West Ham Park, boosting confidence and self-esteem.*



*Mini clay models created at a Hampstead Heath Nature Play session*

## **September – December 2020**

*Key restriction eased: Schools and indoor play provision reopen.*

The learning team launched a Covid-safe programme for schools and play, reorganising the school programme to take place entirely outdoors, and opening the two play centres with new safety measures in place. Covid-safe changes included school groups working in their bubbles, OS Learning staff maintaining social distancing, enhanced cleaning, advanced booking for play programmes, and limits on the number of participants.

The team developed two new programmes for delivery in schools – a ‘Nature and Wellbeing’ workshop designed in response to concerns over the impact of Covid on mental health, and a ‘Habitats and Minibeasts’ session designed to help students to discover more within the school grounds. These programmes aimed to accommodate schools who were unable to travel due to the pandemic.

The team provided a weekly ‘Nature School’ at an inner-city school in Newham for a group of children with autism. The school were unable to visit our sites due to Covid restrictions. The team worked with the school to enrich their outside space with logs and natural materials, and delivered a variety of activities to encourage social interaction, hands-on exploration and connection with nature, such as making pine cone bird feeders and observing bird life together. The school were so delighted with the positive impact the sessions are having on the children that they created a ‘nature school hub’ within their school so that all classes can benefit, and plan to visit West Ham Park as soon as it is safe for them to do so.

The team ran regular weekly sessions for students from White Trees School – a specialist school for looked-after young people who experience behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The young people benefitted from a varied programme designed to build confidence and connection with nature. The group spent time in Epping Forest, learnt new skills such as orienteering and wood carving, and contributed through activities such as litter picking.

The team ran Family Nature Wellbeing sessions at Epping Forest and Hampstead Heath over the autumn half term holiday.

The team continued to share activity sheets and videos, working with CoL’s ‘Our City Together’ team to include content within their newsletter and website.

### **Outputs**

- 2 new ‘in-school’ sessions developed
- 1 new ‘in-school’ weekly programme for children with autism
- New Covid-safe play programme and working practices for 2 play centres (Hampstead Heath)
- New Covid-safe school programme and working practices (Hampstead Heath, Epping Forest, West Ham Park)
- New weekly programme for looked-after young people with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (Epping Forest)
- 24 Family Nature Wellbeing sessions at Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest
- 2 facilitated sessions for young people suffering from anxiety and depression (West Ham Park, partnership with ‘Ambition, Aspire, Achieve, Newham’)

### **Reach**

- 1,192 on-site school participants (Hampstead Heath, Epping Forest, West Ham Park, 42 sessions)

- 102 in-school workshop participants (2 sessions)
- 36 in-school autism programme participants (5 weekly sessions)
- 447 participants at the One O’Clock Club
- 100 participants at the Adventure Clubhouse
- 116 family learning participants
- 13 young people suffering from anxiety and depression (partnership with ‘Ambition, Aspire, Achieve, Newham)

### **Evaluation**

Participants in bespoke sessions for young people suffering from anxiety and depression reported improvement across all five impact areas: connection, involvement, confidence, understanding and wellbeing.

### **Feedback**

*“In these challenging times, the staff at Hampstead Heath made our first school trip since March one to remember. With clear risk assessments, excellent pre and post visit communication and an amazing days worth of survival activities, it was a joy to see another side of our students beyond the gates of the school.”* Teacher, Carlton Primary School, Camden

*“The One o’clock club is a great place for young children, the two staff are wonderful and make us feel comfortable and make the children so happy, they always have time to talk and always there to help! Activities are fantastic and the resources are always so clean and tidy all the time. So happy when we come here!!”* Participant, One O’Clock Club



Primary school programme at West Ham Park – the students enjoyed festive wreath making.

## **January – February 2021:**

*Key restrictions introduced: UK in lockdown and schools closed (although vulnerable and key worker children could attend).*

Some learning team members were furloughed part time during the winter 2021 lockdown; however, when working, they continued to engage learners, and developed a flexible learning programme of activities for the key worker, SEND and vulnerable children who were attending school, which was offered to schools within walking distance of West Ham Park, Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest. For many schools it was challenging to come out on a trip at this time (reduced staffing due to illness or staff self-isolating and additional workload for teachers as they adapt to changes) however, a small number of local schools close to Hampstead Heath and West Ham Park were able to visit, often for regular weekly sessions. The outdoor learning sessions provided a great opportunity for the children in school to work together as a team, build wellbeing, and apply their classroom learning in a new context.

The team continued to run weekly in-school sessions for children with autism and worked with an evaluator to better understand the impact of the programme and the aspects of the development and delivery that enabled these outcomes.

The team continued to share nature-focused activity sheets and videos. The resources were shared with teachers across the UK via the Learning Outside the Classroom website and the UK School Trips newsletter, which has a search reach of over 400,000 educators, and via 'Find Fusion' - the CoL Education Strategy Unit's new digital platform for learning.

The team collaborated with the Refugee Council to provide a virtual exploration of Epping Forest for young unaccompanied refugee minors. The group of young people had experienced serious and often multi-layered trauma and took part in the session as part of a wider programme to help improve their wellbeing. Participants were shown an aerial video of drone footage over the Epping Forest area to give them a sense of the scale of the area, as well as being shown different areas in the forest by a learning officer using a live video link. The focus of the session was looking at the birds of Epping Forest, and the birds that the participants would be able to see in their local area.

Whilst the team was unable to work face-to-face with pupil referral units and looked-after children over January and February, they delivered a series of virtual sessions to New Rivers College (a pupil referral unit in Islington) based around skills and careers in the outdoors.

### **Outputs**

- 29 school sessions for vulnerable and key worker school children at Hampstead Heath and West Ham Park
- 2 virtual careers sessions for PRU participants
- 1 virtual tour of Epping Forest for young refugees
- 1 new play programme for Camden families developed
- 5 sessions 'in-school' weekly programme for children with autism

### **Reach**

- 350 on-site school participants (Hampstead Heath and West Ham Park)
- 36 in-school autism programme participants
- 9 young unaccompanied refugee participants (virtual session)
- 8 participants from Pupil Referral Units (virtual sessions)
- 1 evaluation report for in-school nature programme for children with autism produced by professional researcher



## **Evaluation**

An evaluation report on the in-school nature learning programme for autistic children is available on request. The report highlights key strengths of the programme, including a child-centred teaching approach, time to explore, within a natural environment, creative, playful and purposeful activities, and providing supported risks and appropriate challenges. The report findings will be used to inform future practice and will be shared with the environmental education community.

## **Feedback**

*"The children in my group are all from the local area and yet they were talking about how the activity helped them see the park in a whole different way. After several lockdowns, it was lovely to see the children enjoying themselves in their local green spaces while learning key skills and working together as a team."* Teacher, Park Primary School, Newham.

*"It was such a special session, many of the children got to try fire lighting for the first time in their lives. In addition, many had been stuck indoors for longer than anyone would want because of lockdown! I really liked how you gave them just the right amount of guidance but then let them experiment in a safe way. Flint striking was a real lesson in perseverance. The children all asked when we could return and I promptly booked the Soil Science session."* Teacher, Eleanor Palmer Primary School, Camden



School children taking part in a survival skills and team building workshop on Hampstead Heath

## **March 2021**

*Key restriction eased: Schools reopen March 8th; 6 people allowed to meet outdoors from March 29<sup>th</sup>.*

Having worked with a small number of schools within walking distance of the Heath and West Ham Park (supporting key worker and vulnerable children), many of the teachers involved were keen to bring those who missed out whilst home-schooling. The team were ready to welcome schools back to our sites with a Covid-safe outdoor programme.

The team continued to collaborate with Camden Council to identify families who had struggled during lockdown, and began working with Chance UK, a charity that supports children with behavioral and emotional difficulties through a mentorship scheme. Targeted marketing and a priority booking system for a series of Nature Wellbeing sessions was created in advance of a series of sessions running over April. This was successful in engaging a total of 111 participants from these target groups (72% of all participants).

The team developed an outdoor nature-play programme aimed at children and parents/carers who would normally visit the One O'clock Club on Hampstead Heath and developed marketing materials and Covid-safe play activities for the reopening of the One O'clock Club in mid-April.

The team supported a school in Newham to develop their school grounds into a sensory garden and relaxation zone for children with special educational needs and children who need some space away from a traditional classroom environment. The team were able to give advice on planting and will follow this up with a facilitated session for students to prepare and plant the area in May.

The team worked with five CoL employee volunteers, who supported learning officers in delivering outdoor learning sessions for schools.

The team collaborated with the CoL Learning and Development team to design and deliver volunteer management training for staff across CoL.

### **Outputs**

- 37 school sessions at Hampstead Heath, Epping Forest and West Ham Park
- 1 new play programme for Camden families developed
- 4 'in-school' sessions for children with autism
- 1 bespoke plan for an in-school sensory garden
- New training programme in volunteer management developed

### **Reach**

- 945 on-site school participants
- 51 in-school autism programme participants
- 45 Nature Play participants

### **Evaluation**

- 84% of participants felt connected or very connected to our Open Spaces after taking part in a school workshop.
- 84% of participants felt a strong sense of wellbeing in nature after taking part in a school workshop.



### **Feedback**

*"Year 6s really enjoyed the WW2 session at the park. As well as consolidating their knowledge of the topic, they were really stuck by how the park they know so well was impacted by the war - particularly seeing the bomb crater and allotment images and plot. The activities were all very hands on and having artifacts (and replicas) to physically interact with supported their engagement and understanding. All the sessions were carried out in a very safe way. We will definitely book this activity again next year."* Teacher, Park Primary, Newham

*"It's really nice to see them happy. They have smiles on their faces when they go there [to Nature School]. They really enjoy it. It makes me happy."* (Teaching Assistant, Nature School for children with autism, Newham).



Nature learning resources developed for the 'in-school' nature programme for children with autism

## 2020-21 Participation summary

The 2020-21 learning programme engaged 4,017 participants in learning activities facilitated by a learning officer. These numbers are significantly lower than the target due to the restrictions of the Covid pandemic, which limited both opportunities to safely engage with audiences and the numbers that could be safely accommodated.

The figures below do not include self-led learning, e.g. using activity sheets and videos created by the learning team.

Participants	Target	Actual
School programme participants	18,350	2,722
Play programme participants	23,000	736
Green Talent participants	150	85
Community, family and volunteering participants	600	474
<b>Total</b>	<b>42,100</b>	<b>4,017</b>

## 2020-21 Highlights summary

- Activity sheets designed for families with limited resources or access to outside space shared with over 20,000 London families during the Covid pandemic.
- Bespoke school programme for vulnerable children, children with special educational needs and disabilities, and key worker children, engaging 1,257 participants during Covid lockdown 3.
- Two new 'nature wellbeing' workshops developed in response to the impact of the Covid pandemic on mental health, engaging 400 participants.
- Bespoke activities and virtual tour of Epping Forest delivered for unaccompanied refugee minors.
- Bespoke outdoor sessions for young people in Newham suffering from anxiety and depression.
- New 'in-school' nature programme for school children with autism, delivering 14 weekly sessions.
- New covid-safe play programme engaging 736 participants, engaging children and families with limited play space at home.

## Summary 2019 - 21

- The Open Spaces Learning Programme delivered a successful two years, engaging 44,487 participants.
- Evaluation showed that the programme had a positive impact on participants' understanding, wellbeing, confidence, connection and involvement with nature.

Due to the Covid pandemic, the two years were very different:

- In 2019-20 the programme delivered a 'business as usual' programme of school, play, youth, community and volunteer engagement.
- In 2020-21 the learning team delivered an innovative, adapted programme in order to reach audiences with limited access to resources and outdoor space during the Covid pandemic and associated restrictions.

## Appendix two

### Strategic Value

#### Corporate Plan

The Learning programme contributes to the delivery of all three of the 2018 – 2023 Corporate Plan's overarching aims and seven of the 12 outcomes:

- ***Contribute to a flourishing society:***
  - 1. People are safe and feel safe.
  - 2. People enjoy good health and wellbeing.
  - 3. People have equal opportunities to enrich their lives and reach their full potential.
  - 4. Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need.
- ***Support a thriving economy:***
  - 8. We have access to the skills and talent we need.
- ***Shape outstanding environments:***
  - 10. We inspire enterprise, excellence, creativity and collaboration.
  - 12. Our spaces are secure, resilient and well-maintained.

The learning programme also supports delivery of the following corporate strategies:

#### **Social Mobility Strategy: Potential today, success tomorrow:**

- Everyone can develop the skills and talent they need to thrive
- Opportunity is accessed more evenly and equally across society

#### **Education Strategy:**

- Provide an educational experience that enriches and inspires through access to the learning opportunities that the City's cultural, heritage and environmental assets offer, combining creativity, innovation and enterprise alongside tradition and continuity
- Provide high quality exposure to the world of work at all stages of education to enable pupils to make informed career choices

#### **Open Spaces Department Business Plan:**

- People enjoy good health and wellbeing
- Nature, heritage and place are valued and understood
- People feel welcome and included
- People discover, learn and develop

## Appendix three

### Learning principles

A set of learning principles for schools and play inform programme development and delivery. The development of the principles involved combining relevant research with the professional expertise of learning team members to create a shared approach to learning programme development and delivery.

Team members' professional expertise (accumulated over time through reflection on experience of learning programme development, delivery and evaluation) was valued from the start and cross-referenced with academic research.

Recognising the importance of children having time to explore green spaces to build connection and confidence, and emphasising doing and discovering to support participants as active learners, are just some highlights from these principles.

The principles:

- map across the five impact areas
- bring together the expertise of the team and relevant research
- enable shared reflective practice and a shared vision for quality learning
- increase the level of active engagement of participants
- provide a tool for effective decision making and peer review

The learning principles are available on request.

## Appendix four

### Maps showing school programme reach and areas of deprivation in London

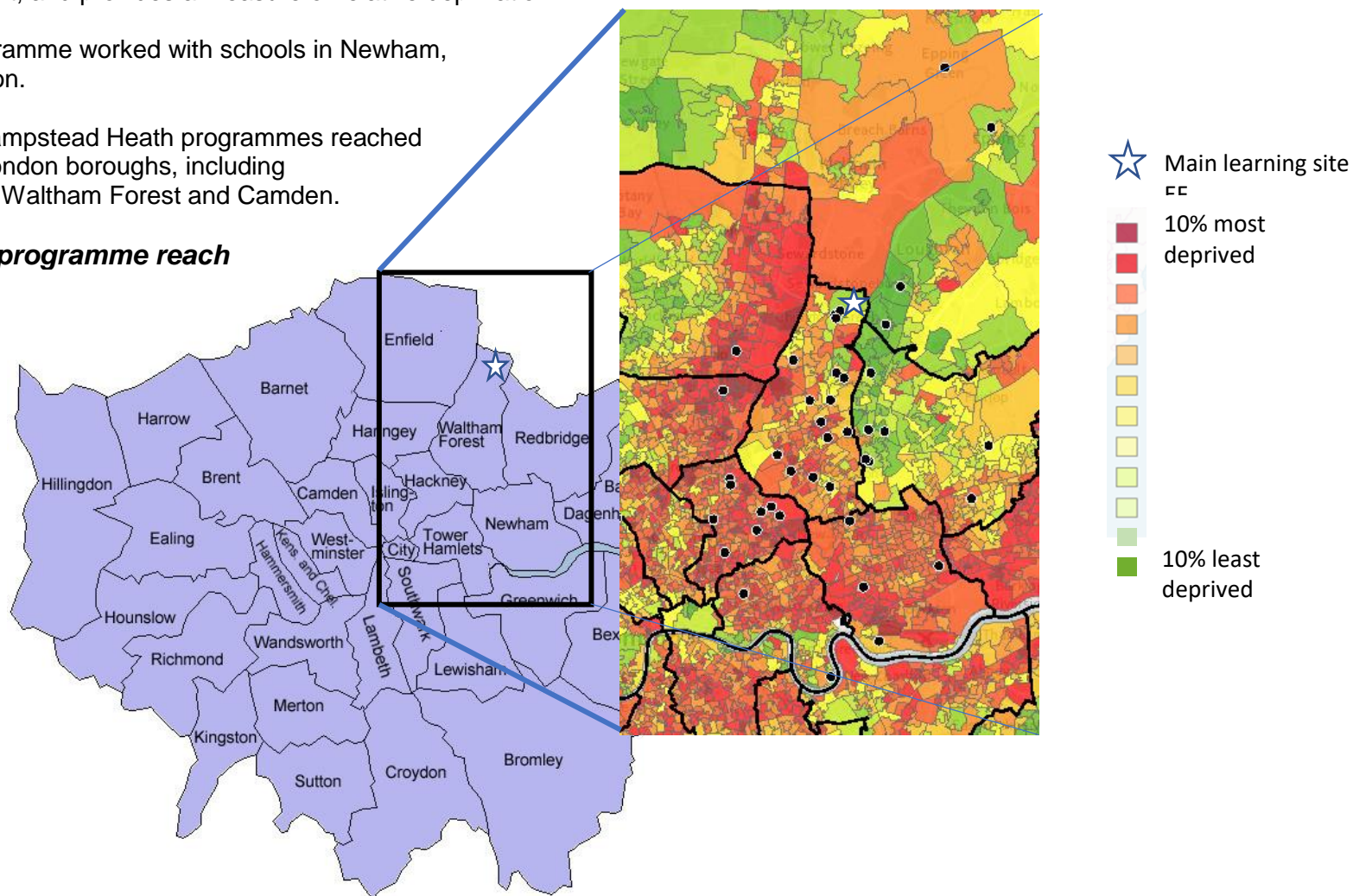
Data from the Government Index of Multiple Deprivation for England is shown on the maps using a coloured scale. Schools participating in the Open Spaces Learning Programme (2019 – 2021) have been overlaid on the map, showing programme reach.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation was created using indicators across seven domains: income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing and services, living environment, and provides a measure of relative deprivation.

The West Ham Park Programme worked with schools in Newham, and area of high deprivation.

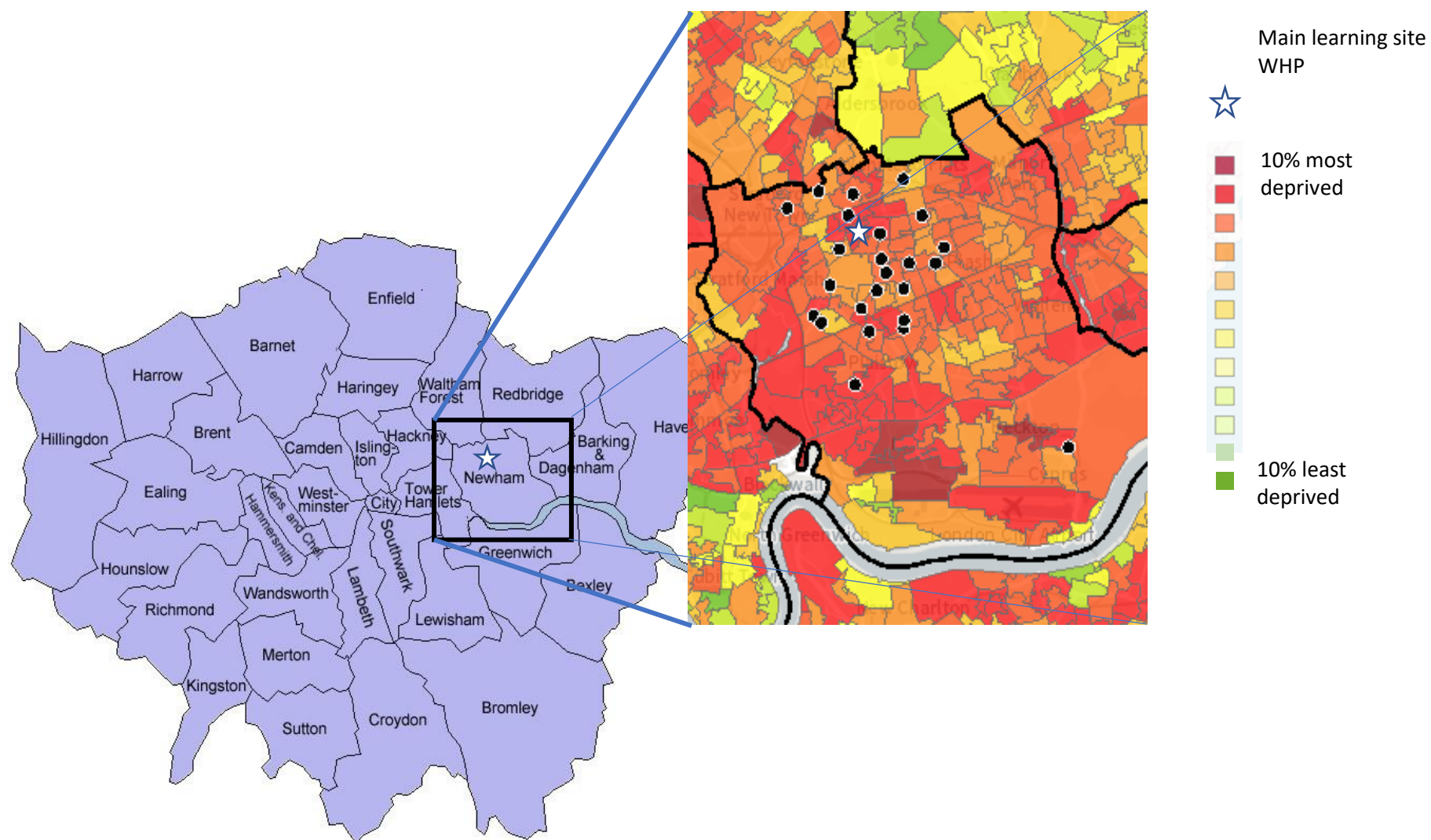
The Epping Forest and Hampstead Heath programmes reached schools across multiple London boroughs, including Tower Hamlets, Hackney, Waltham Forest and Camden.

#### ***Epping Forest school programme reach***





## West Ham Park school programme reach



*Hampstead Heath school programme reach*

