



**Camden Outdoor Gyms Evaluation
Phase I
March 2011**

“Creating a physical environment in which people can live healthier lives with a greater sense of well-being is a hugely significant factor in reducing health inequalities.....Numerous studies point to the direct benefits of green space to both physical and mental health and wellbeing. Green spaces have been associated with a decrease in health complaints blood pressure and cholesterol, improved mental health and reduced stress levels, perceived better general health, and the ability to face problems. The presence of green space also has indirect benefits: it encourages social contact and integration, provides space for physical activity and play, improves air quality and reduces urban heat island effects. ”

Marmot, M. (2010) *Fair Society, Healthy Lives: Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England post 2010*. [The Marmot Review](#)

“I think in years to come people will look back (on outdoor gyms) and see the way that people were helped to lead healthy and active lives. ”

Bismark Mensah, Outdoor Gym Peer Activator, NHS Camden Annual Public Health Report (APHR) 2009/10. [NHS Camden APHR](#)

About Pro-Active Camden

Pro-Active Camden (PAC) is a strategic partnership committed to the development and improvement of sport and physical activity within Camden. PAC is one of 33 Community Sport and Physical Activity Networks (CSPANs) in London. It shares a common purpose with many others across England – to increase participation in sport and physical activity and to encourage people to lead healthier lifestyles.

PAC is made up of a number of key physical activity stakeholders across the borough and includes: The London Borough of Camden (LBC); NHS Camden (NHSC); Greenwich Leisure Limited; Central YMCA; Voluntary Action Camden; Volunteer Centre Camden; Jubilee Halls Trust; SportsAid; London Sports Forum for Disabled People; UCLU (UCL Students' Union); Pro-Active Central London; Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust; Hampstead Heath Organisation; and West Euston Partnership.

More information about Pro-Active Camden can be found at [PAC website](#)

Acknowledgements

This report was written by Barry Kelly and James Fry (both NHSC).

The questionnaire survey was funded by the London Borough of Camden Active Health Team.

A number of other people and organisations also contributed to this evaluation report, including: Trish Tenn (LBC); Sarah Ruane (LBC); Dan Devitt (NHSC); Gary Forbes (NHSC); Justin Hill (LBC); Phillip Gill (LBC); Dalya Marks (NHSC); Paul Fox (NHSC); Teresa Garrard (NHSC); Nigel Robinson (LBC) Olivia Mensah (LBC); Phil Rumbelow (Jubilee Hall Trust); Alexandria Hingley (UCL); PAC steering group; and Plusfour Market Research Limited.

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Executive summary

Background

The Camden outdoor gym programme is the largest of any borough in the UK. Eight sites opened in 2009 with most Camden residents living within 20 minutes of an outdoor gym (see appendix I). The investment in outdoor gyms followed on from a physical activity needs assessment, which identified that people in Camden found cost and access both barriers to being more physically active.

This report is the first stage of the evaluation of Camden's outdoor gyms which aims to identify: use of outdoor gyms; increases in individual levels of physical activity as a result of outdoor gym use; and to establish what the barriers are preventing other Camden residents from using the outdoor gyms.

The questionnaire survey

- Questionnaires were administered over a five day period (25th, 27th, 29th, 30th and 31st October 2010) inclusive of each of the four sites: Kilburn, Polygon, Cantelowes and Lismore.
- Over the five days interviewers observed 518 people using the outdoor gym at the four sites.
- 249 interviews were conducted: 56 at Cantelowes, 105 at Kilburn, 41 at Lismore and 46 at Polygon.

Key findings

- 26% of people using the outdoor gyms did not previously exercise.
- 31% of participants used the gyms 1-2 days per week, 31% 3-5 days per week and 12% 6-7 days per week.
- 46% of people surveyed had increased their levels of physical activity since the outdoor gyms had been installed.
- 94% of participants would recommend using the outdoor gym to a friend.
- 85% of people walked, ran or cycled on their way to use the outdoor gym.
- When asked about what would encourage more use, 55% of participants thought the gyms should be better publicised.

Other findings

- 19% of participants used the leisure centre as well as the outdoor gym, while 15% had stopped using the leisure centre in favour of outdoor gyms.
- When asked about what would encourage more use, users at Polygon (33%) and Cantelowes (37%) highlighted safer parks, while 48% of users at Polygon suggested having a personal trainer.
- 18% of people surveyed had undertaken at least the recommended amount of physical activity of 5 days of 30 minutes or more physical activity in the previous 7 days.
- More men (61%) were using the outdoor gyms than woman (35%). 4% of participants did not provide information on gender.
- 70.3% of users were aged 35 or over.
- The outdoor gyms were popular among BME communities. 12% of respondents were Black African (compared with the Camden population of 4.8%) while 5.6% were Black Caribbean (compared with the Camden population of 1.6%). Only 37.8% of the respondents were White British which is well below the estimated Camden population of 52.4%.
- 12% of people using the outdoor gyms were unemployed.

Recommendations

Promotion

- Encourage more women to use the outdoor gyms especially through organised sessions or 1-1 support. Initial pilot could be considered at Polygon, Kilburn or Cantelowes, which had lower levels of female use.
- Consider how best to promote outdoor gyms locally. For example, given the high percentage of people willing to recommend friends or family an incentivised recommend a friend/family scheme or another option might be to make the sites more family friendly.
- Further work required with health care providers to promote outdoor gyms and wider physical activity offer including the getting Camden active z-card.

Supervised or 1-1 sessions

- Consider additional organised sessions or 1-1 personal trainer support at sites with lower levels of activity. Initial pilot might be considered at Polygon site.
- Work with local leisure providers to run more 1-1 personal trainer supervision or organised sessions.

- Further work to encourage more users to do the recommended weekly level of physical activity on the outdoor gyms. This could be supported through supervised or 1-1 sessions.

London Borough of Camden parks

- Work with LBC parks to identify where and how safety could be improved at certain outdoor gym sites. Initial pilot work might focus on Polygon or Cantelowes where improving safety was raised as a way of encouraging more use.

Outdoor gyms phase II evaluation

- Phase II evaluation should have a particular focus on barriers for female users, barriers associated with park safety issues, family friendliness of sites and patterns of use i.e. time spent using equipment and types of equipment used.

Pro-Active

- Ensure that outdoor gyms are utilised as part of Pro-Active Central and Camden Olympiad proposals.

1.0 Introduction

Outdoor gyms have been popular in the Americas, Australia and China for a number of years, with several areas of the UK also recently introducing them to local parks and open spaces.

Outdoor gyms are similar to conventional indoor gyms but use equipment specially designed for use outdoors. Outdoor gyms are: free to use, can be used in all weather conditions, suitable for varying fitness levels, don't require any specialist equipment or clothing and suitable for people of all ages and abilities.

The largest single investment programme of outdoor gyms in the UK to date was in the London Borough of Camden, where eight sites opened in the summer of 2009.

This report is phase I of the evaluation of Camden's outdoor gyms.

1.1 Background

The investment in outdoor gyms in Camden followed on from an extensive physical activity needs assessment, which identified that Camden residents found both cost and access a barrier to being physically active. The needs assessment also found that 42.8% of people were interested in using a gym. In light of these findings, NHS Camden and the London Borough of Camden, through the Pro-Active Camden partnership, embarked upon a programme of activities aimed at increasing levels of physical activity, specifically amongst those that were inactive. As well as outdoor gyms, a number of other activities were launched including: Give it a Go, which offered free gym and leisure centre access to Camden residents in receipt of benefits; GP walking maps, which offered walking routes for health professionals to 'prescribe' to patients; and Green Gyms, which offered an alternative form of physical activity through gardening and land conservation.

A number of these activities also aimed to provide a more local and sustainable form of physical activity, which encouraged people to be outdoors and use their local open and green spaces.

The outdoor gyms were funded by NHS Camden with an investment of approximately £500k, and delivered in partnership with the London Borough of Camden (LBC) and Pro-Active Camden (PAC).

The outdoor gyms sites were selected using a number of criteria, which included: estimated adult obesity rates; four wards with highest premature mortality rates; index of multiple deprivation; and access i.e. that Camden residents should live within a 20 minute distance of an outdoor gym.

Following a consultation with local residents, the following eight sites were selected (see appendix I for map of eight sites):

Outdoor gym site	Camden ward
1. Argyle Square Open Space	(Kings Cross)
2. Cantelowes Gardens	(Cantelowes)
3. Cumberland Market open space	(Regents Park)
4. Kilburn Grange Park	(Kilburn)
5. Maygrove Peace Park	(Fortune Green)
6. Polygon Open Space	(St Pancras & Somers Town)
7. Swiss Cottage	(Swiss Cottage)
8. Lismore Circus	(Gospel Oak)

The aim of the outdoor gyms was to help contribute towards achieving the targets set out in the Camden Local Area Agreement (LAA), which included:

- National indicator (NI) 8 Adult participation in sport and active recreation (especially those currently inactive or where cost is a barrier to access).
- NI 56 Obesity in primary school age children in Year 6.
- NI 120 All-age all cause mortality rates.
- Local D: Reduce inequalities in premature mortality rates by narrowing the gap between the worst four wards (priority wards) and the borough average.

1.2 Aims and objectives of outdoor gym evaluation

The overall aims of the outdoor gym evaluation are to:

- establish levels of use of the outdoor gyms
- identify who is using the equipment
- establish what barriers prevent use

- determine whether any further investment in similar initiatives should be considered

The evaluation has several key objectives:

- To identify the average use of outdoor gyms sites.
- To identify where individual users have increased levels of physical activity as a direct result of outdoor gym use.
- To identify aspects of the outdoor gym experience which could be improved upon by current users.
- To establish what the barriers are which prevent other Camden resident's from using the outdoor gyms, especially those living within 0.5 miles of each site.

It was agreed that the evaluation should be divided into two phases. Phase I will focus on existing users of the outdoor gym equipment and phase II will focus on those living within 0.5 mile radius of an outdoor gym site but not currently using the equipment. This evaluation covers only Phase I but the findings should be used to help inform phase II.

1.3 Outdoor gym phase I evaluation methodology

The outdoor gym evaluation was overseen by the steering group which was established in 2010. It was originally the intention that volunteers would be recruited to undertake the evaluation. However this presented some logistical and resource challenges, not least being able to adequately cover 8 locations. Following discussions with the steering group it was agreed that the evaluation would concentrate on four of the outdoor gym sites based on location, LAA priority ward, number of equipment pieces and geographical spread. The four sites selected were:

- Cantelowes
- Kilburn Grange Park
- Lismore Circus
- Polygon.

In addition, the target groups for the research were:

- Adults over 16 in Camden
- Older people over 50
- Residents living in four priority wards: Kentish Town; St Pancras & Somers Town; Gospel Oak and Kilburn.

It was agreed that phase I would be conducted using questionnaires which would be administered by interviewers at each of the four locations. In addition, it was agreed that some observational data would be collected at each of the sites and interviewers would record the number of people using the outdoor gyms and not just those that agreed to be interviewed.

The evaluation consisted of the following stages:

Stage 1 - Literature review

NHS Camden library team undertook a literature review of outdoor gyms which included a number of the sources on the National Electronic Library for Health, Google, BHF Active, Sport England and healthcare databases (MEDLINE, HMIC, BNI, EMBASE etc.).

Stage 2 – Develop questionnaire

A questionnaire was developed using Formic questionnaire design software (see appendix 2).

Stage 3 - Recruit research company to administer questionnaires

With the support of funding from the London Borough of Camden Active Health Team a research company Plusfour Market Research Limited were recruited to administer the questionnaires.

Stage 4 - Conduct interviews over 5 day period at each of the 4 sites

Plusfour Market Research Limited had interviewers present at each of the four locations over the 5 selected days. In addition to administering the questionnaire survey interviewers also recorded the number of people attending each of the sites.

Stage 5 - Scan and analyse questionnaires

The questionnaires were scanned and analysed by NHS Camden. Analysis was done using a combination of both Formic and Microsoft Excel.

Stage 6 – Report and dissemination

Report written by NHS Camden and distributed to the steering group, PAC members and NHS Camden staff for comment.

2.0 FINDINGS

2.1 Literature review

A brief literature review was undertaken to establish if any other research or evaluation had been conducted on outdoor gyms. A number of sources on the National Electronic Library for Health, Google, BHF Active, Sport England and healthcare databases (MEDLINE, HMIC, BNI, EMBASE etc.) were accessed but little information was found on outdoor gyms specifically.

The majority of the literature focused on generic aspects relating to use of open and green space. These include the benefits green space and their use have on: physical and mental health; obesity; cardiovascular disease; anti-social behaviour; health inequalities; blood pressure; cholesterol, improved mental health and reduced stress levels; perceived better general health; and improvements in social capital and community cohesion to name but a few.^{1,2,3}

In terms of material which specifically referred to outdoor gyms, the most relevant information was from the Adidas Adizone project. Adizone are multi-sports sites which form part of the London legacy for the 2012 Olympics. The Adizones incorporate similar equipment to that of the outdoor gyms but also combines this with sports aimed at younger people, including, basketball, football, tennis etc. While it is important to acknowledge the difference of Adizones from more conventional outdoor gyms there were a number of relevant findings from the Adizone survey. These included: 61% use them at least once a week; 59% spent at least 20 minutes per visit; 65% said that the Adizone had helped them become more interested in sport; and 75% didn't have gym membership.⁴

The Jubilee Hall Trust, who ran supported outdoor gym sessions at Lismore Circus, also collected data on participants. Jubilee Hall delivered 260 sessions at the outdoor gym at Lismore Circus with 2242 visits (an average of 9 people per session). Of those attending the sessions 1413 (63%) were by people from BME communities. In a follow up questionnaire with 118 participants the survey found that; 44% said they had made new friends, 43% had changed their diet, 40% had tried a new physical activity, 37% had lost weight, 35% had improved their flexibility (they were able to stretch in places they previously couldn't), 30% said they had improved their strength (they were able to lift objects they previously couldn't) and 27% said they 'felt more sociable'⁵. In addition, a HAFOS report for Jubilee Hall Trust in 2009 found that 27% of people had heard of the outdoor

gyms and 11% had used them. The survey also identified a number of other aspects people might be interested in, which included, attending organised sessions (21%) and receiving more information on outdoor gyms (31%).⁶

2.2 Questionnaire survey

The questionnaires were administered at four sites: Kilburn, Polygon, Cantelowes and Lismore over five days (25th, 27th, 29th, 30th and 31st October 2010). 518 people were observed using the equipment during the 5 day period.

Data can be broken down for each site:

- Cantelowes: 113 people observed with 56 interviews conducted (50% of people using the site)
- Kilburn: 274 people observed with 105 interviews conducted (38% of people using the site)
- Lismore Circus: 65 people observed with 41 interviews conducted (63% of people using the site)
- Polygon: 66 people observed with 46 interviews conducted (70% of people using the site)

In total, 249 interviews were conducted over the four sites. 160 (31%) people declined to be interviewed, some of whom had been interviewed in the days previously. Interviews were conducted during week-day hours of 08:00 – 18:00 and week-end hours of 10:00 – 16:00.

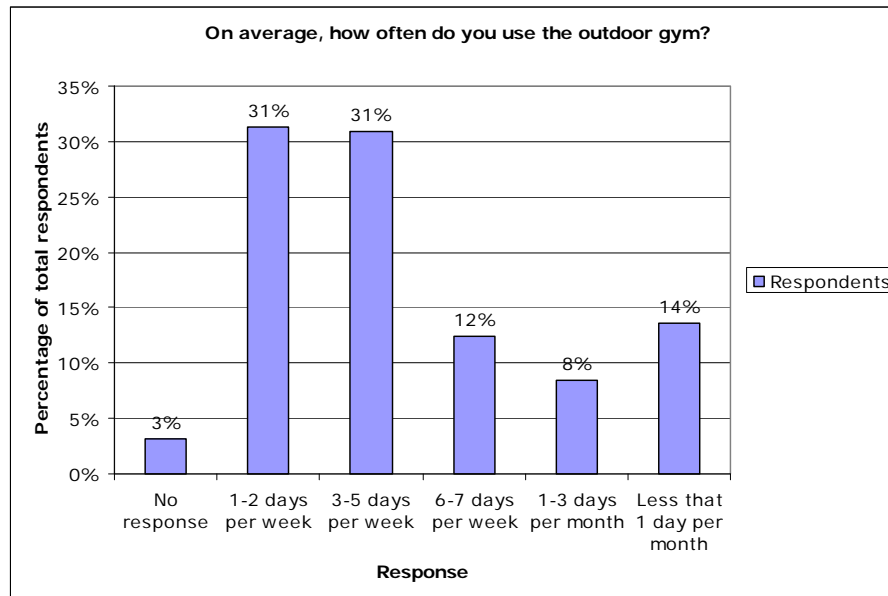
The questionnaire covered two areas. The first, focused on the use of outdoor gyms, the experience of using them and overall levels of physical activity. The second section focused on details about the individual user (age, gender, ethnicity etc.) and potential for follow up.

2.3 Outdoor gym use and physical activity levels

2.31 Outdoor gym use

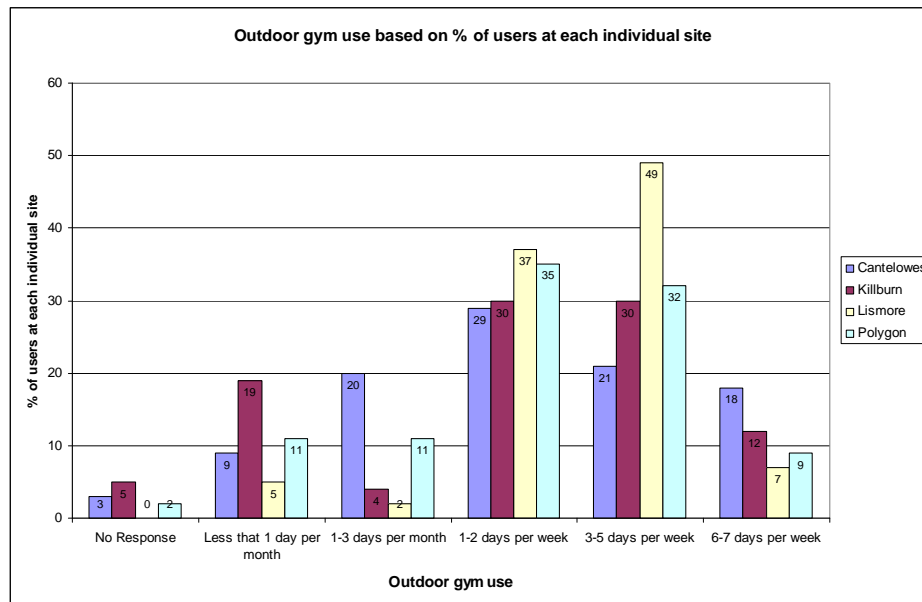
Of the 249 people interviewed 74% used the outdoor gyms on more than 1 occasion per week. Chart 1 below shows the average outdoor gym use. 31% of participants said they used the gyms 1-2 days per week, 31% 3-5 days per week, and 12% 6-7 days per week. Of the remaining people interviewed 8% used the gyms 1-3 days per month and 14% used the gyms on average 1 day per month.

Chart 1: Average outdoor gym use



Approximately 30% of users across the locations use the gyms 1-2 or 3-5 days per week. The one exception to this was the Lismore site which had 49% of users exercising between 3-5 days per week (see chart 2).

Chart 2: Outdoor gym use based on percentage of users at each individual site

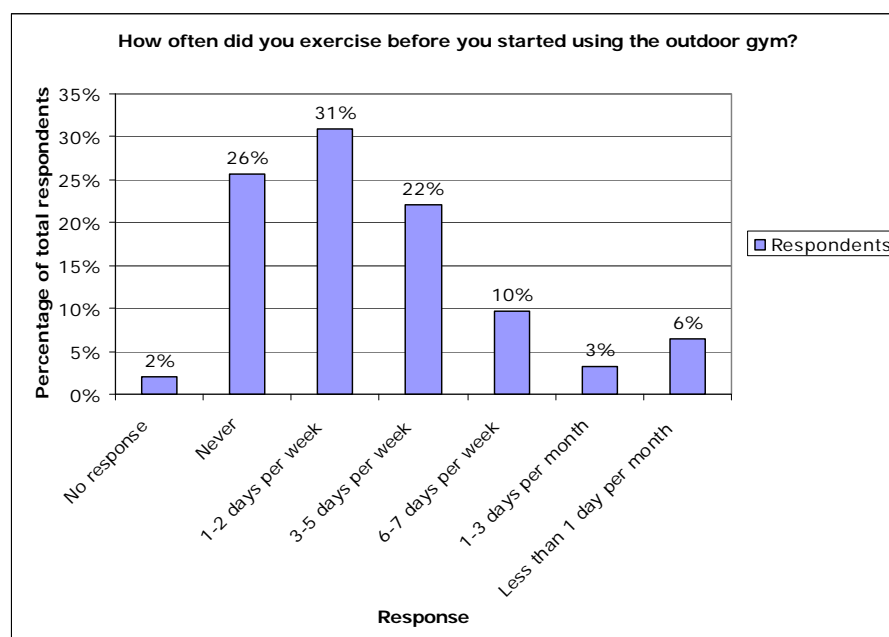


Further analysis on age and ethnicity across the use at the four sites did not highlight any significant variation with regard to usage.

2.32 Exercise before starting to use the outdoor gyms

The survey also aimed to identify activity levels and patterns of exercise before people started using the outdoor gyms. Chart 3 below shows activity levels before outdoor gym use. Of the 249 people interviewed, 26% never exercised at all, 6% exercised less than one day per month, 31% already exercised 1-2 days per week, 22% exercised 3-5 days per week, and 10% exercised 6-7 days per week and 6 % exercised only 1-3 days per month.

Chart 3: Exercise levels before using outdoor gyms

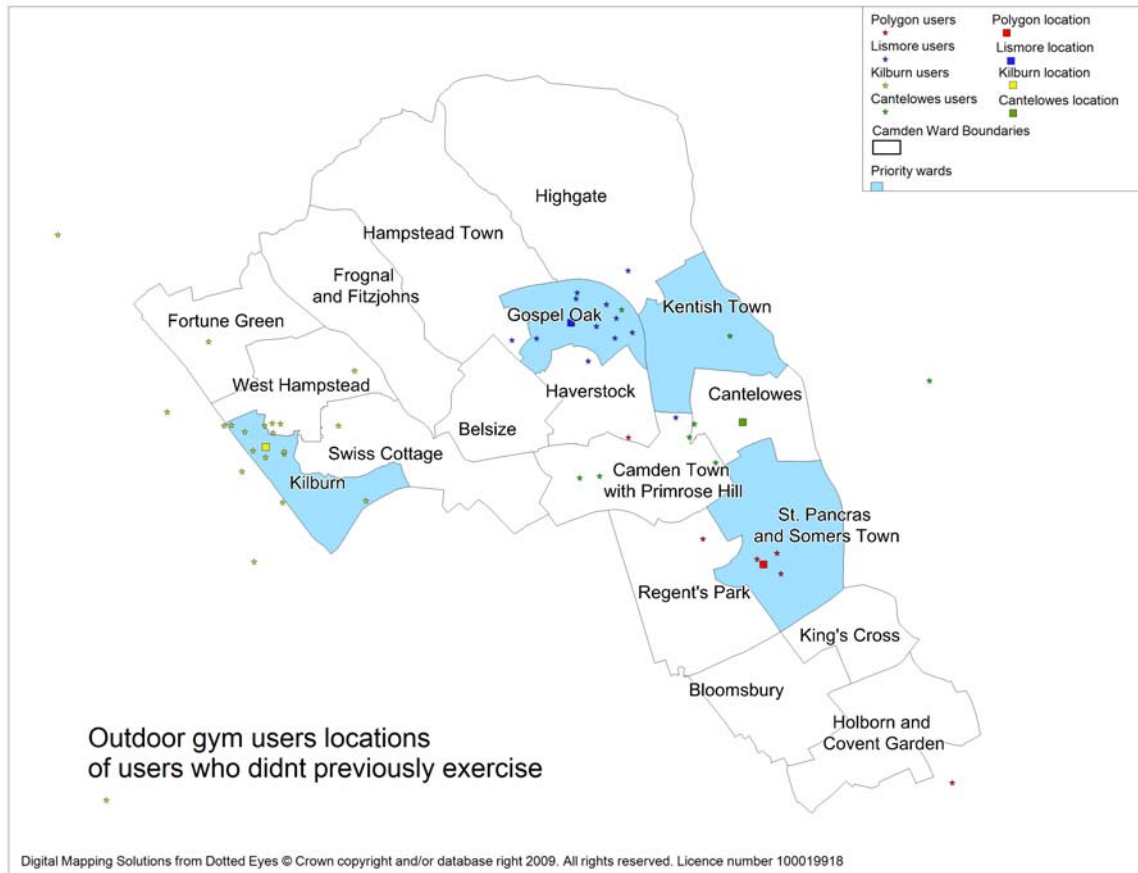


While there were clearly a number of users who were already exercising to around the weekly recommended amount as set by the Chief Medical Officer¹, with 32% of users exercising between 3-7 days per week, a greater number of people were not. Of particular note is the 26%, or 65 users, who were not exercising at all prior to using the outdoor gyms. While the survey does not allow us to determine how long the 26% of people had been inactive for it does represent a high percentage of users new to exercise. It is also worth noting that, 32% of these 65 participants were men using the outdoor gym at Kilburn.

Map 1 shows the place of residence of the 26% people who were not previously exercising. It can be observed that a large proportion of those users reside in the four target wards (Kilburn; Gospel Oak; Kentish Town; and St Pancras and Somers Town) as denoted by light blue.

¹ The Chief Medical Officer recommends that adults undertake a total of at least 30 minutes a day of at least moderate intensity activity on five or more days of the week. Chief Medical Officer (CMO) (2004) *At least five a week: Evidence on the impact of physical activity and its relationship to health*, London: Department of Health (DH)

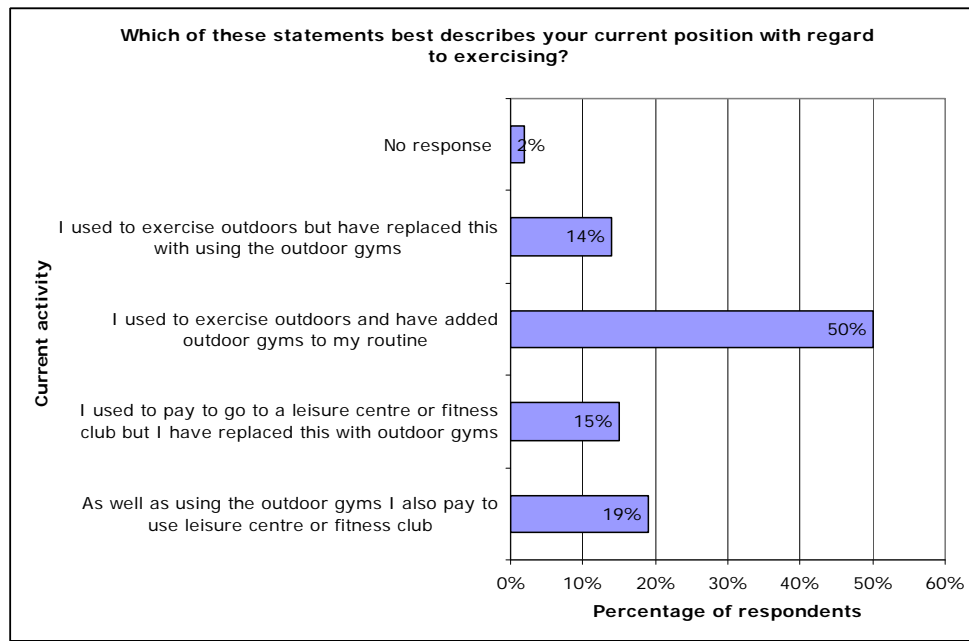
Map 1: Location of outdoor gym users who weren't previously exercising



2.34 Incorporating outdoor gyms into existing activities

For those people that were undertaking exercise prior to using the outdoor gyms, the survey aimed to find out how they had integrated outdoor gyms into their routine or if it had in fact replaced other activities. Of the 181 (73%) people that responded to this question, 50% had added outdoor gyms to their existing outdoor activities such as walking and running, 19% paid to use the leisure centre while also using the outdoor gyms, 15% had replaced leisure centre use with outdoor gyms and 14% of people had replaced other outdoor activities such as walking and running with outdoor gyms (see Chart 4).

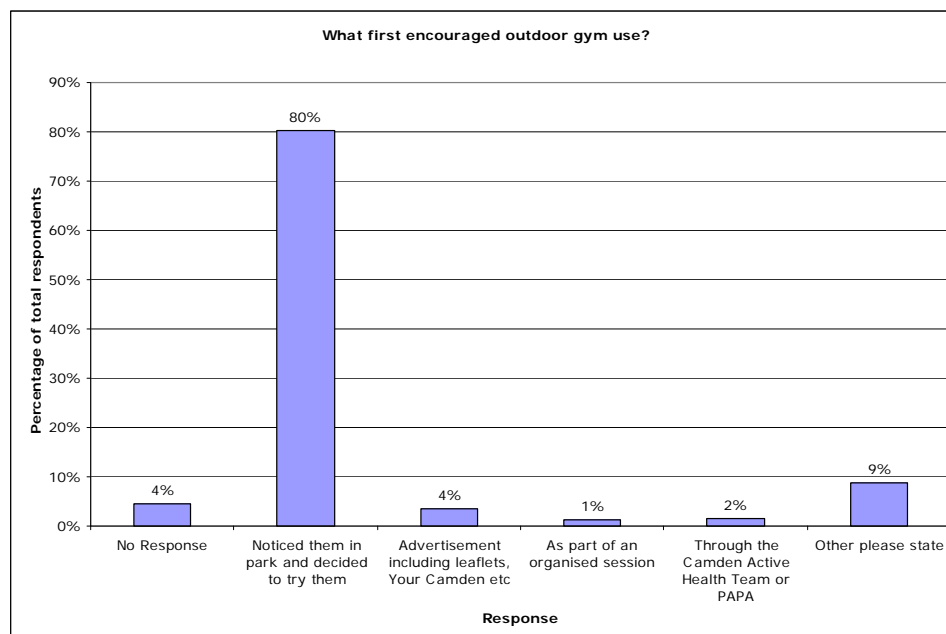
Chart 4: Incorporating outdoor gyms into existing activities



2.35 What encouraged use of outdoor gyms

A large majority of those questioned on what had first encouraged them to use the outdoor gyms cited seeing them in the local park, with 80% of respondents suggesting this. Only 4% of people had been encouraged to use them through advertisements, with organised sessions through the Camden Active Health Team or Jubilee Hall Trust combined accounted for a further 3% of respondents (See chart 5). 4% of respondents who answered 'other' said that they had first heard about the gyms through a friend/neighbour/partner which had encouraged them to use them.

Chart 5: What first encouraged outdoor gym use

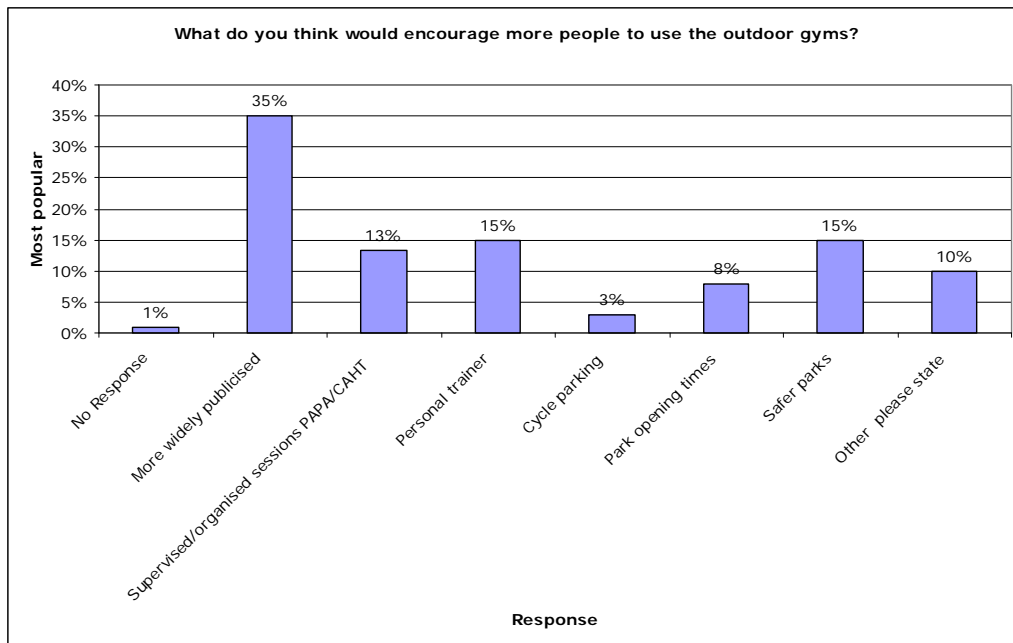


2.36 What would encourage more outdoor gym use

Chart 6 shows what participants felt would encourage greater outdoor gym use. The percentage figures are based on overall percentage of responses as participants were able to select as many responses as required.

In order of most popular, 35% (n=138) thought the gyms should be more widely publicised, 15% (n=58) suggested as personal trainer; 15% (n=57) safer parks; 13% (n=50) supervised/organised sessions; 8% (n=31) park opening times; 3% (n=10) cycle parking; and 1% did not respond. Of the 10% (n=38) that suggested 'other' options the most popular suggestions were modifications to the equipment (n=9) e.g. gears on cycles and that more equipment should be available (n=6).

Chart 6: Encourage more outdoor gym use



When we look at what would encourage more use from a site perspective. 33% of people surveyed at Polygon and 37% of those at Cantelowes suggested that safer parks would encourage greater use (with Kilburn 12% and Lismore 17% respectively).

Also worthy of note were the users at the Polygon site who expressed interest in organised sessions and personal trainers. 48% of people surveyed at Polygon thought that a personal trainer would encourage more use with 26% also suggesting that organised sessions would. 26% of users at Cantelowes suggested that organised sessions would encourage greater use, while 25% also thought personal trainers might. More widely publicising the gyms was popular with the users of Lismore (78%), Kilburn (62%) and Polygon (48%).

Table 1 provides a breakdown of what respondents thought would encourage more use at an individual site level.

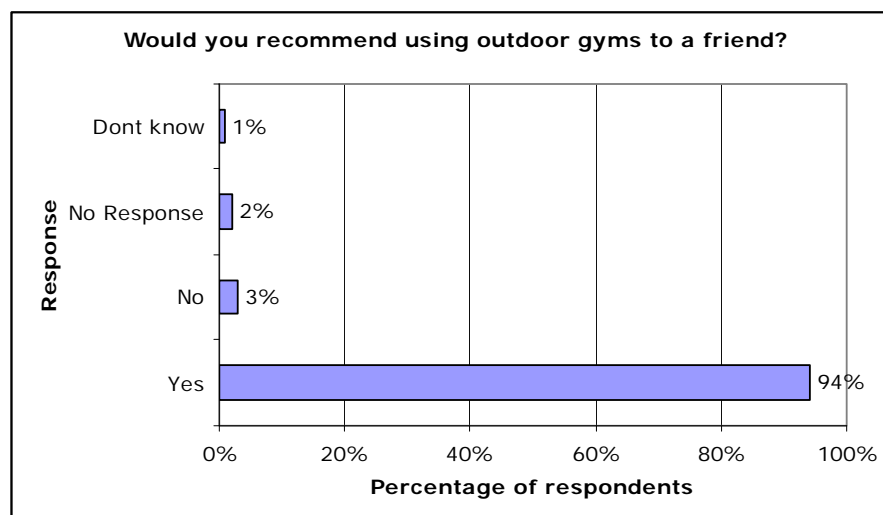
Table 1: What would encourage further use of outdoor gyms by site

What would encourage more people to use the outdoor gyms?		Selected responses			
		Safer parks	Organised sessions	Personal Trainer	More widely publicised
Outdoor gym site	Polygon (n=46)	33% (n=15)	26% (n=12)	48% (n=22)	48% (n=22)
	Kilburn (n=105)	12% (n=13)	10% (n=11)	16% (n=17)	62% (n=65)
	Lismore (n=41)	17% (n=7)	29% (n=12)	10% (n=4)	78% (n=32)
	Cantelowes (n=56)	37% (n=21)	27% (n=15)	25% (n=14)	34% (n=19)

2.37 Recommend outdoor gyms to others

One of the key measures of success of the outdoor gyms is whether the users of the equipment would recommend them to other people. Of the 249 people interviewed, an overwhelming majority of people (94%) said that they would recommend them. Only 3% of users said they wouldn't (see chart 7).

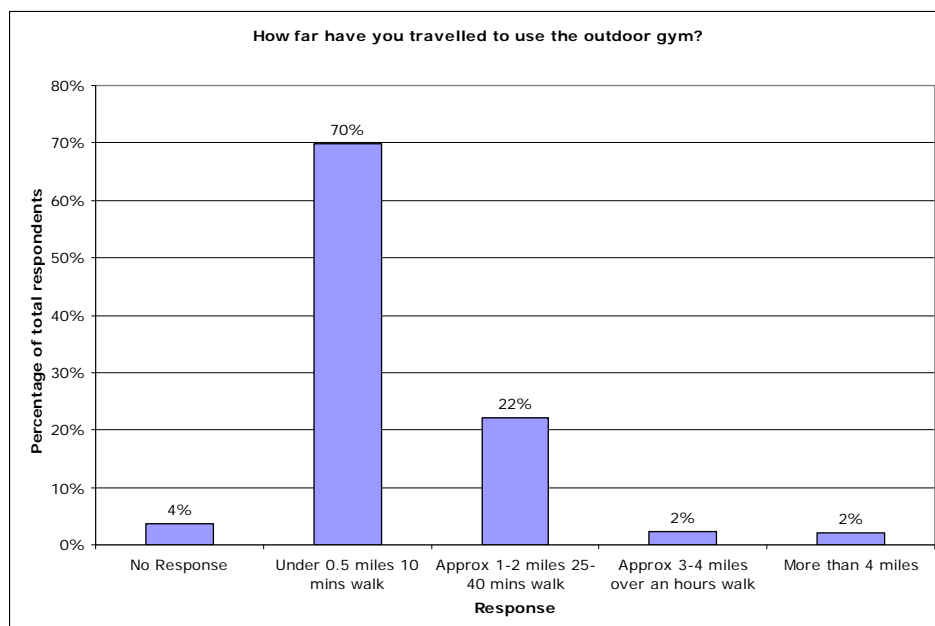
Chart 7: Recommend outdoor gyms to a friend



2.38 Distance travelled to use outdoor gym

Chart 8 shows the distance that users travelled to use the outdoor gyms. A large majority of the users travelled relatively short distances to use them with 70% travelling under 0.5 miles (or 10 mins walk); 22% travelling approximately 1-2 miles (25-40 minutes); and 4% travelling more than 3 miles.

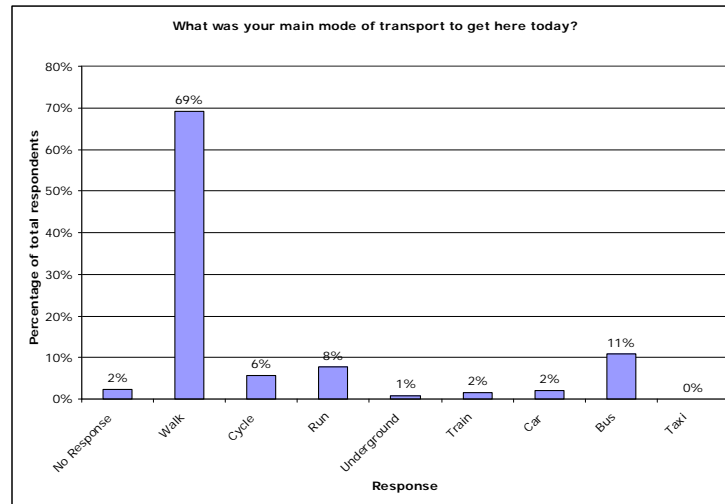
Chart 8: Distance travelled to use the outdoor gym



2.39 Mode of transport to use the outdoor gym

Chart 9 shows the mode of transport people use to travel to the outdoor gyms. Of the 249 people interviewed, a majority of them had used active forms of travel to get there, with 69% walking; 8% running and 6% cycling. Of the 11% that used the bus, 8% travelled between 1-2 miles and 3% travelled 3 miles or over.

Chart 9: Mode of transport to get to the outdoor gym



2.310 Physical activity undertaken in the last week

Of the 249 participants interviewed, 17% had undertaken at least the recommended weekly amount of exercise as recommended by the Chief Medical Officer¹. 7% had exercised on 7 days, 1% had exercised on 6 days and 10% had exercised on 5 days. A number of people were also close to achieving the recommended daily amount with 9% on 4 days. 26% of respondents had exercised 3 days in the past week and 23% on 2 days (see chart 10).

Chart 10: Number of days physical activity in the last week

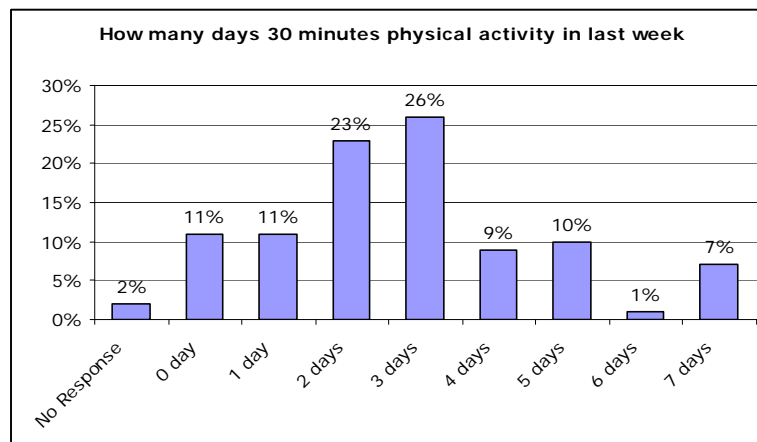


Table 2 provides a comparison between activity levels of respondents before installation of outdoor gyms and levels of physical activity in the week prior to completing the questionnaire survey.

Figures to the right of the red line in table 2 denote where an increase in physical activity levels were present when activity levels from the previous week were compared with levels of activity prior to using the outdoor gyms. The comparison suggests that 46% of people surveyed had increased their levels of physical activity since the outdoor gyms were installed.

Table 2: Comparison of exercise levels pre-outdoor gym installation with days exercised in previous 7 days prior to completing survey

Comparison of physical activity pre and post outdoor gyms		Number of days exercise (including outdoor gym use) of 30 minutes or more in past week								Total increase
		0 days	1 day	2 days	3 days	4 Days	5 days	6 days	7 Days	
Exercise levels before using outdoor gyms	Never	n=3	n=17	n=8	n=16	n=10	n=4	n=4	n=1	n=60 (24%)
	Less than 1 day per month	0	n=3	n=3	n=7	n=1	n=2	0	0	n=13 (5%)
	1-3 days per month	0	n=1	n=3	n=3	0	n=1	0	0	n=4 (1.5%)
	1-2 days per week	n=6	n=12	n=22	n=22	n=6	n=3	0	n=4	n=34 (14%)
	3-5 days per week	n=2	n=3	n=9	n=18	n=8	n=11	0	n=4	n=4 (1.5%)
	6-7 days per week	n=1	0	n=2	n=4	n=4	n=4	0	n=8	n=0 (0%)
										n=115 (46%)

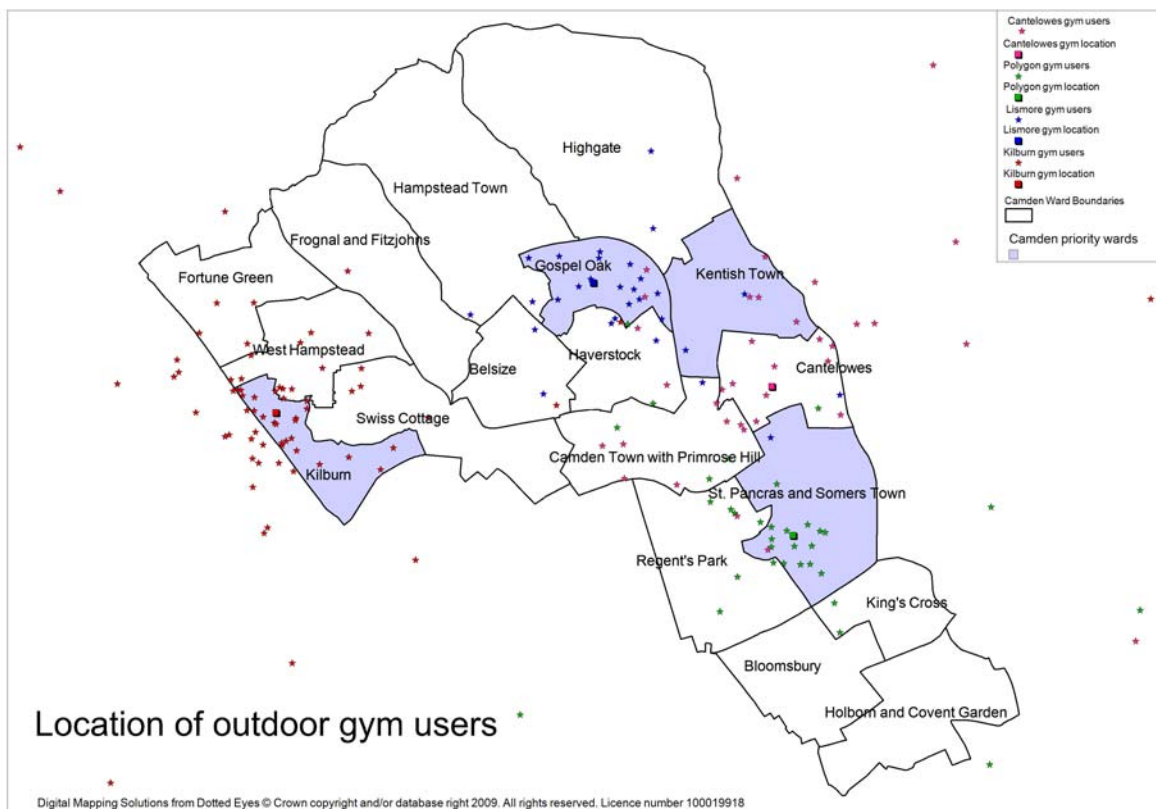
2.4 About the outdoor gym users

2.41 Outdoor gym user's place of residence and site visited

The majority of outdoor gym users lived within a short distance of the outdoor gym sites that they used. There were, however, instances where other sites were used. Map 2 shows place of residence, the outdoor gym site used and the four priority wards. It is also evident from Map 2 that a number of users lived in the

priority areas and used the gym closest to them. Interestingly, several respondents were from outside Camden and lived in the neighbouring boroughs of Brent, Westminster and Islington. Several people were also from outside the London area.

Map 2: Residence of outdoor gym users surveyed and outdoor gym site visited with overlay of four priority wards



2.42 Age of outdoor gym users

The age of those using the outdoor gyms was varied and fairly evenly spread across the middle age ranges, with under 16s and over 75s accounting for less. The percentage of users by age were: 16-24, 7%; 25-34, 20%; 35-44, 25%; 45-54, 24%; 55-64, 13%; 65-74, 7% and over 75, 2% (see table 3). Comparison with Camden population suggests that the people in the 35-64 age range were better represented when compared with the Camden average and the Active

People Survey 4³. The level of respondents under 16 was below the Camden average as most of those under 16 did not take part in the survey.

Table 3: Age of respondents compared with the Camden population

What age are you?	% of respondents (with actual no.)	Camden population age based on GLA projections 2010 ² .	Difference (+ or -) with the Camden population	Active People Survey 4 Camden 2010 ³
No Response	0.8% (n=2)	-	-	-
Under 16	2% (n=5)	17.4%	-15.4	-
16-24	7.2% (n=18)	9.5%	-2.3	30.3%
25-34	19.7% (n=49)	24.5%	-4.8	
35-44	24.5% (n=61)	18.8%	+5.7	27.5%
45-54	23.7% (n=59)	11.8%	+ 11.9	
55-64	12.9% (n=32)	8.4%	+4.5	13.3%
65-74	7.2% (n=18)	5.1%	+2.1	
75 +	2% (n=5)	4.5%	-2.5	

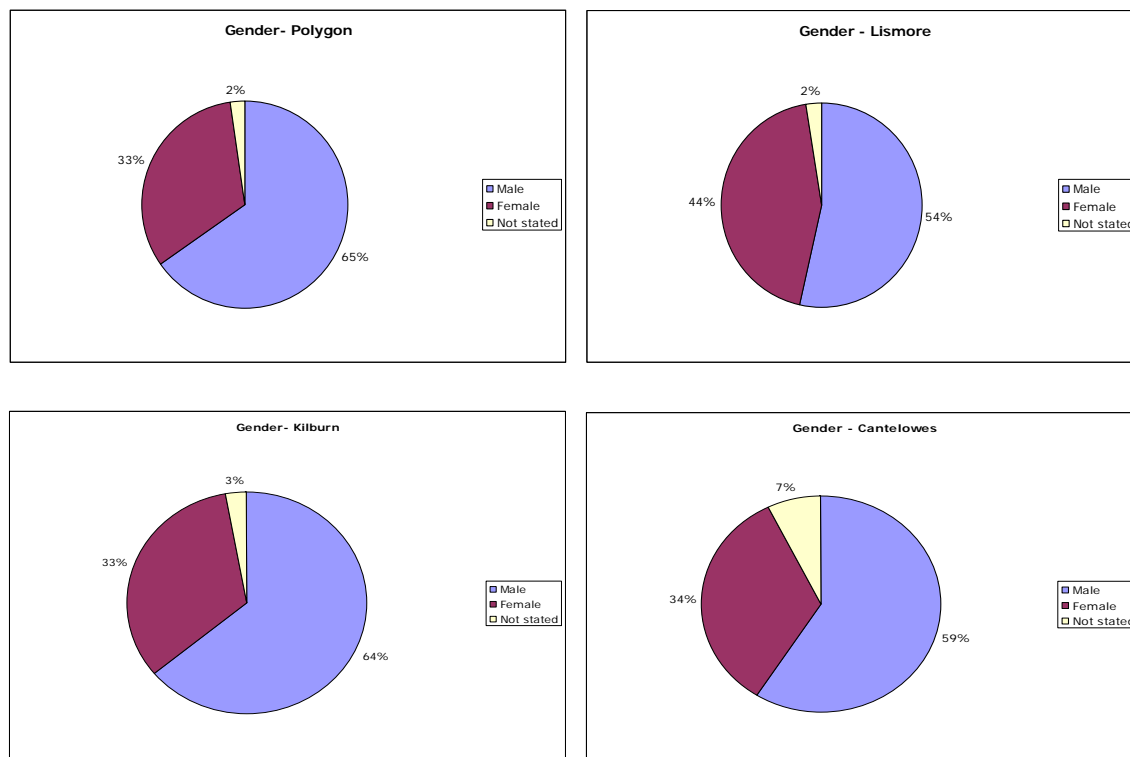
2.43 Gender of outdoor gym users

The majority of those surveyed were male with almost double the number of men than woman. 61% of respondents were male, 35% were female and 4% didn't respond. Clearly far fewer women are using the outdoor gyms, especially when women account for 51.5% of the Camden population. While a variation in levels between male and female would be expected as found in Camden Active People Survey², it is the level of the variation found that is of interest. Chart 13 shows the gender breakdown for each individual outdoor gym site.

² Population data from GLA 2008 using mid year estimate projections 2010. Available from www.london.gov.uk

³ Active People Survey 4. Available from http://www.sportengland.org/research/active_people_survey/active_people_survey_4.aspx

Chart 13: Gender breakdown of each outdoor gym site



2.44 Ethnicity of outdoor gym users

The ethnicity of outdoor gym users was in the main representative of the Camden population (see table 4). However, variations were evident with three groups. 37.8% of the respondents described themselves as White British which is below the estimated Camden population of 52.4%, a variation of 14.6%. Respondents describing themselves as Black or Black British: Black Caribbean accounted for 5.6% of the survey while the estimated population in Camden is 1.6%, which is a variation of 4%. Similarly respondents describing themselves as Black or Black British: Black African accounted for 12.4% of people surveyed which is above the estimated Camden population of 4.8%, a difference of 7.6%.

Table 4: Ethnicity of respondents compared with the Camden population

How would you describe your ethnicity?	% of respondents (with actual no.)	Camden population based on ONS data 2007 ⁴	Difference (+ or -) with the Camden population
No Response	0.4% (n=1)	N/A	-
White: British	37.8% (n=94)	52.4%	-14.6
White: Irish	3.2% (n=8)	3.1%	+0.1
White: Other White	15.7% (n=39)	15.7%	-
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	2.4% (n=6)	0.8%	+1.6
Mixed: White and Black African	1.2% (n=3)	0.5%	+0.7
Mixed: White and Asian	2% (n=5)	1.5%	+0.5
Mixed: Other Mixed	3.6% (n=9)	1.5%	+2.1
Asian or Asian British: Indian	2.8% (n=7)	4.1%	-1.3
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	2.6% (n=4)	1.1%	+1.5
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	2% (n=5)	5.5%	-3.5
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian	3.6% (n=9)	1.3%	+2.3
Black or Black British: Black Caribbean	5.6% (n=14)	1.6%	+4.0
Black or Black British: Black African	12.4% (n=31)	4.8%	+7.6
Black or Black British: Other Black	0.4% (n=1)	0.5%	-0.1
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group: Chinese	3.2% (n=8)	2.9%	+0.3
Other Chinese or Other Ethnic Group: Other	3.2% (n=8)	3.3%	-0.1

2.45 Employment status of outdoor gym users

The employment status of outdoor gyms users was fairly representative of the Camden population with the exception of those in full time employment. 32% of

⁴ Ethnicity data taken from ONS Experimental statistics 2007. Available from www.statistics.gov.uk/

outdoor gym users surveyed were in full time employment compared with the Camden rate of 52% (see table 5). A high percentage of respondents (17%) were also part of the student population. The ONS 2001 census suggests that about 11% of the Camden population are students, however that figure is now likely to be higher.

Table 5: Outdoor gym users employment status v Camden average

Employment status	Outdoor gym users	Camden (ONS Nomis 2010) ⁵
No Response	2%	Na
Full-time employment	30%	52%
Part-time employment	16%	12%
Student	17%	Na
Unemployed	12%	8%
Self-employed	7%	12%
Incapacity benefit	0.5%	6%
Retired	10%	20%
Carer	5%	

2.46 People with long-term limiting illness

Of the 249 people surveyed 10% (n=25) had a long-term limiting illness which compares with around 16% in the ONS 2001 census.

⁵ Camden data from www.nomisweb.co.uk

3.0 Discussion and recommendations

3.1 Principal findings

Overall the level of use of the outdoor gyms was high with 43% of those surveyed using the outdoor gyms between 3-7 days per week. In addition, and perhaps the most notable finding, was that 26% of people surveyed described themselves as never having previously exercised prior to using the outdoor gyms.

The survey also identified that 46% of users had increased their levels of physical activity since the outdoor gyms were installed, with around 18% of those surveyed undertaking the recommended amount of exercise in the previous week before the survey. Most participants live in close proximity to the gyms and travel to the gym by either walking, cycling or running. The gyms are more popular with men than woman and a high number of users live in one of the four priority wards: Kilburn; Gospel Oak; Kentish Town; and St Pancras and Somers Town.

More Black Caribbean and Black African people used the gyms when compared with the Camden population, while less White British people used them when compared with the population. 94% of people surveyed said they would recommend the outdoor gyms to a friend.

Factors that would encourage more people to use the outdoor gyms were, publicise them more widely, have sessions with personal trainers and make the parks feel safer.

3.2 Limitations

The survey had a number of limitations which are important to acknowledge. Given time constraints the questionnaire had to be concise and some questions were excluded. As a result information which might have proven to be beneficial during analysis was omitted. This included, the length of time users spent during each outdoor gym visit, the type of equipment (cardio etc.) used and how many outdoor gyms sessions contributed towards the previous seven days of physical activity in the week before.

In addition, the survey was undertaken at the end of British Summer Time which meant daylight hours were reduced. Anecdotal evidence has previously suggested that the outdoor gyms are more frequently used in the summer months.

3.3 Conclusion

The findings of the survey are very encouraging as demonstrated by the levels of use of the outdoor gyms and satisfaction levels (94% of participants willing to recommend the outdoor gyms to friends and family). The findings also show that the outdoor gyms are used by people of all ages, ethnicities and employment status. Crucially, in the four sites where the survey took place the outdoor gyms were being used by people that didn't previously exercise and by those living in areas of deprivation, which again can be witnessed by the number of respondents residing within any one of the four priority wards of Kilburn, St Pancras and Somers Town, Gospel Oak and Kentish Town.

There are also several issues which need to be explored further. For example, lower participation of woman using the gyms, associated barriers for women and also potentially running more targeted or 1-1 sessions at certain sites. It is also interesting to note that 55% of people suggested that the gyms could be better publicised especially given that significant resources were allocated to publicise the launch of the gyms in 2009, including local leaflets, bus shelter adverts, billboards and publicity in London Borough of Camden publications. Further consideration will need to be given on how the outdoor gyms are publicised or promoted in the future, which potentially means that there should be a greater emphasis on integrating with a wider physical activity offer or potentially through clinical care pathways.

A list of recommendations can be found below.

3.4 Recommendations

3.41 Promotion

- Encourage more women to use the outdoor gyms especially through organised sessions or 1-1 support. Initial pilot could be considered at Polygon, Kilburn or Cantelowes, which had lower levels of female use.
- Consider how best to promote outdoor gyms locally. For example, given the high percentage of people willing to recommend friends or family an incentivised recommend a friend/family scheme or another option might be to make the sites more family friendly.
- Further work required with health care providers to promote outdoor gyms and wider physical activity offer including the getting Camden active z-card.

3.42 Supervised or 1-1 sessions

- Consider additional organised sessions or 1-1 personal trainer support at sites with lower levels of activity. Initial pilot might be considered at Polygon site.
- Work with local leisure providers to run more 1-1 personal trainer supervision or organised sessions.
- Further work to encourage more users to do the recommended weekly level of physical activity on the outdoor gyms. This could be supported through supervised or 1-1 sessions.

3.43 London Borough of Camden parks

- Work with LBC parks to identify where and how safety could be improved at certain outdoor gym sites. Initial pilot work might focus on Polygon or Cantelowes where improving safety was raised as a way of encouraging more use.

3.44 Outdoor gyms phase II evaluation

- Phase II evaluation should have a particular focus on barriers for female users, barriers associated with park safety issues, family friendliness of sites and patterns of use i.e. time spent using equipment and types of equipment used.

3.45 Pro-Active

- Ensure that outdoor gyms are utilised as part of Pro-Active Central and Camden Olympiad proposals.

References

¹ Marmot, M. (2010). Fair Society, Healthy Lives: Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England post 2010. www.marmotreview.org

² Faculty of Public Health (2010). Great outdoors: how our natural health service uses green space to improve wellbeing: an action report. www.fph.org.uk/uploads/r_great_outdoors.pdf

³ Natural England (2009). Our natural health: role of natural environment in maintaining healthy lives.




<http://naturalengland.etraderstores.com/NaturalEnglandShop/NE179>

⁴ The Great Outdoor Gym Company (2010) The Adizone programme: a team effort. [www.tgogc.com/pdfs/adiZone impact study.pdf](http://www.tgogc.com/pdfs/adiZone%20impact%20study.pdf)

⁵ Jubilee Hall Trust (2010) Demographic data from sessions held at Lismore Circus outdoor gym. Available on request from Phil Rumbelow Jubilee Hall Trust philrumbelow@jubileehalltrust.org

⁶ HAFOS (2009) Health & Fitness Omnibus Survey 10 Local Report for: Jubilee Hall Clubs. Available on request from Phil Rumbelow Jubilee Hall Trust philrumbelow@jubileehalltrust.org

Appendix II

Evaluation of Camden Outdoor Gyms

The questionnaire should be completed by the Interviewer

Date of interview Time
(e.g. 10 10 2010) (e.g. 18:45)

Outdoor gym site? ☐ Polygon ☐ Kilburn ☐ Lismore ☐ Cantelowes

ABOUT USE OF OUTDOOR GYMS

Q1) On average, how often do you use the Outdoor gym?

☐ 1-2 days per week

☐ 3-5 days per week

☐ 6-7 days per week

☐ 1-3 days per month

☐ Less than 1 day per month

Q2) How often did you exercise before you started using the outdoor gym?

☐ never (if never, please go to Q4)

☐ 1-2 day per week

☐ 3-5 days per week

☐ 6-7 days per week

☐ 1-3 days per month

☐ less than 1 day per month

Q3) Which of these statements best describes your current position with regard to exercising?

☐ As well as using the outdoor gyms I also pay to use a leisure centre or fitness club

☐ I used to pay to go to a leisure centre or fitness club but I have replaced this with using the outdoor gyms

☐ I exercise outdoors (e.g. run, walk) and have added outdoor gyms to my routine

☐ I used to exercise outdoors (e.g. run, walk) but have replaced this with using the outdoor gyms

Q4) What encouraged you to first use the outdoor gym?

☐ Noticed them in park and decided to try them

☐ Through the Camden Active Health Team or physical activity peer activator project (PAPA)

☐ Advertisement (including leaflets, Your Camden etc.)

☐ Other (please state)

☐ As part of an organised session (Jubilee Halls etc.)

Q5) What do you think would encourage more people to use the outdoor gyms? (please tick all that apply)

☐ More widely publicised

☐ Park opening times

☐ Supervised/organised sessions (PAPA, CAHT)

☐ Safer parks

☐ Personal trainer

☐ Other (please state)

☐ Cycle parking

Q6) Would you recommend using outdoor gyms to a friend?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Don't know

Q7) How far have you travelled to use the outdoor gym?

☐ Under 0.5 miles (10 mins walk)

☐ Approx 1-2 miles (25-40 mins walk)

☐ Approx 3-4 miles (over an hour's walk)

☐ More than 4 miles

Q8) What was your main mode of transport to get here today?

☐ Walk ☐ Cycle ☐ Run ☐ Underground ☐ Train ☐ Car ☐ Bus ☐ Taxi

