



## GREEN GYM RESEARCH SUMMARY

### 1. An Evaluation of the Green Gym Pilot in Sonning Common, Oxfordshire, 1999\*

- ◆ Green Gym tasks are of sufficient intensity and duration to produce significant improvements in cardiovascular fitness, provided that they are performed on a regular basis.
- ◆ Participation in the Green Gym can benefit muscular strength (as measured by handgrip strength) leading to increased coping ability and reduced risk of functional limitations in later life.
- ◆ The main factors motivating people to take part in the Green Gym were keeping fit and being out in the countryside. However, factors motivating continued participation include the social aspect of working with a group, increased awareness of conservation and countryside issues and doing something worthwhile.
- ◆ Participation in the Green Gym has led to many volunteers incorporating some of the activities, in particular the stretching exercises, into their everyday lives.
- ◆ The Green Gym is viewed by participants as being beneficial to their mental health and wellbeing
- ◆ Long term adherence rates were encouraging with 72% of the participants involved in the research still active after 6 months
- ◆ 82% had not taken part in any previous conservation activities

### 2. An Evaluation of the TCV Green Gym at Portslade, East Sussex April 2002\*

The research sample consisted of 37 participants.

- ◆ There was a significant improvement in the Mental Health Component Score in the first 3 months of participation (as measured by the SF-12 health-related quality of life instrument).
- ◆ There was also a strong trend in the decrease in depression scores during the same time period.
- ◆ The project attracted a high proportion (30%) of unemployed participants.
- ◆ 44% of participants reported moderate or severe impairments in anxiety and depression.
- ◆ 86% of participants had never taken part in conservation work before.
- ◆ A small sample of participants showed significant increases in fitness.
- ◆ Waist-to-hip ratio decreased in the first three months and there was also a trend towards weight loss for the same period.
- ◆ Qualitative evidence collected from the interviews suggested that participants valued the opportunity to meet other people which the Green Gym provided.
- ◆ 'Being out in the countryside' is a major motivating factor for participation and adherence to the project.
- ◆ Long-term adherence rates at the Portslade Green Gym were encouraging, with 48% of participants staying involved for at least six months.
- ◆ Participants who had been given fitness tests during the research were significantly more likely to attend more frequently and adhere long term.

\* Both papers produced by the Oxford School for Healthcare Research and Development at Oxford Brookes University