



## Outcome: Health & Wellbeing

### Volunteer case study: Caroline – TCV Camden Green Gym

*“My level of fitness has been maintained since retirement, and even increased to some degree, in that my cholesterol level has dropped, my blood pressure is steady and my bone density has improved thanks to the regular weight-bearing exercise that Green Gym provides.”*

**Through the work of The Conservation Volunteers, people improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing, by being outdoors, active and connected with others.**

A wide range of TCV activities provide opportunities to improve physical and mental health and wellbeing through physical activity and social interaction. It was at a TCV Green Gym that Caroline experienced this and continues to volunteer in her 70s.

Caroline has been volunteering with Camden Green Gym since 2014 after wanting to find something worthwhile to do for herself after retiring. After her first session clearing ivy and brambles, Caroline was hooked, and since then she has reaped the health benefits.







Caroline is not the only one seeing such improvements. In one study, 83% of Camden Green Gym participants report that they were more physically active and 67% reported better mental wellbeing.

Green Gym has a variety of evidence to highlight the impact on mental health, including research by University of Westminster showing group members having higher levels of well-being and lower levels of stress. Recently we completed a four-year long review of the impact of Green Gym with University of Westminster and Essex University, which showed an increase in mental health scores as a result of participation with sustained benefits for over a year.



In addition to improving her physical and mental wellbeing, Caroline says that volunteering with TCV has developed her knowledge about the local urban environment and the need to enhance the diversity in green spaces around Camden in both public and community places.

**93% of our volunteers feel their well-being has improved since volunteering with TCV**



Source: TCV impact figures 2020

For Caroline being part of Green Gym has been a win-win situation, benefiting both herself and the world around her.

*"I was shown the schedule of project activities for the next month, saw that the next session was in the park across the road from me, and that no previous experience was required, just a readiness to get stuck into activities.*

*I thought this was exactly what I needed, and was drawn in from my first session clearing ivy and bramble in around the pond in Waterlow Park.*

*After retiring I wanted to find a purposeful, congenial, part-time activity, outdoors if possible, and with some aim of 'helping'. Now I like to think that I am doing something to enhance both the local environment and my own mental and physical health."*



*"We have a lovely group of volunteers of mixed ages and backgrounds. We always have a variety of tasks and make it as inclusive as possible. Some volunteers like hard, physical work such as chopping back vegetation or sawing. Others prefer gentler exercise like planting tree whips.*

*Whatever people do they are getting fresh air in a green environment, which is conducive to stress relief and relaxation."*

**Maria Schlatter, TCV Camden Senior Project Officer**

**Find more ways how TCV supports volunteers with their health and wellbeing and how you can help by visiting our website.**



**[www.tcv.org.uk](http://www.tcv.org.uk)**

