

the care forum



anniversary

**Avon Wildlife Trust (AWT)
Communities and Nature (CAN) Programme independent
evaluation**



Completed by the Research and Evaluation project group
at The Care Forum

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Executive Summary

The Communities and Nature (CAN) Programme was funded by the Big Lottery Fund and delivered by the Avon Wildlife Trust (AWT) from January 2013 to December 2015. The project engaged with 15,282 individuals through nature and wellbeing activities, providing a total 20,011 engagement opportunities.

AWT commissioned The Care Forum (TCF) to evaluate the project and provide a clear analysis of the effectiveness of CAN's activities, which aimed to improve the health and wellbeing of marginalised communities through outdoor nature activities. Using the agreed outcome indicators as a guide, TCF assessed the degree to which health and wellbeing, social inclusion and connection to green spaces are increased.

Intended outcomes were achieved or surpassed almost across the board, with many voices and stories as testament to the effect CAN had on lives. The analysis of data has given a clear indication that CAN achieved its purposes in increasing wellbeing and community cohesion, reducing isolation and creating opportunities for people in the target areas.

Outcome 1

People from vulnerable groups will feel less isolated, feel more included with improved health and wellbeing – 4,598 individuals: 6,591 engagement opportunities.

88% indicate improved health and wellbeing. 83% feel less isolated and more included.

The most frequent theme arising in feedback was the opportunity to socialise. People with learning disabilities reported the most significant increase in connection (100%) followed closely by those on a low income (96%).

Outcome 2

Young people not in employment or training will have improved self-confidence, better life skills and have improved health and wellbeing – 1,370 individuals: 2,479 engagement opportunities.

86% indicate improved health and wellbeing. 85% entered work or training.

Comments are peppered with the words 'enjoyment' and 'confidence,' indicating that CAN's activities involving young people were hugely effective and popular. 96% of young people said they learned something new during the project, while 85% were inspired to be involved with something connected with nature.

Outcome 3

Low-income families and elders in socially-deprived communities will have improved access to a better quality natural environment, increasing their quality of life – 6,996 individuals totalling 7,462 people engagements

75% will use their green spaces more. 88% reported that their quality of life had been improved.

It is clear from feedback that a huge amount of work was done by many sections of the community to improve green spaces and to make them more accessible for local residents. The clearance and creation of paths and benches was particularly popular with families and elders.

Outcome 4

Communities with higher indices of deprivation will be more cohesive with more people involved in creating a better environment

Group and community leaders mentioned increased community cohesion by participants and residents affected by the groups' work. More families or individuals took part in activities who would not otherwise have such opportunity, with many locals using an area of green space near their homes that they had never known existed, or never before wished to enter owing to lack of inspiration. Alongside this participation featured learning and enjoyment, both key ingredients in lasting cohesion.

Key Findings

Beneficiaries have learnt about wildlife as a result of their participation, have contributed to their own wellbeing, and had positive consequences for the wildlife.

Local residents who know what their greenspace is home to are more likely to protect it and will be able to apply that understanding in other areas of their lives.

Many respondents indicated their wish to work with AWT on future projects. If this is borne out, it would be an excellent outcome of CAN to have formed these alliances. Many comments centred on the knowledgeability and skills of AWT staff regarding wildlife and outdoor skills; this was often cited as a reason that such activities would not continue without AWT involvement.

CAN has been deemed a highly successful project particularly for such scale and time-frame. A more fluid evaluation would be possible. Recommendations include:

- A pro forma for feedback and clear guidelines for collecting qualitative data
- Future development of outcomes and targets are 'put to the test', modelling any questionnaires
- The group leader questionnaire gave ample opportunity for frank and open answers; this should be kept.

1. Introduction

1.1. Communities and Nature Programme

The Communities and Nature Programme was funded by the Big Lottery Fund and delivered by the Avon Wildlife Trust from January 2013 to December 2015.

Its purpose was to improve health and wellbeing, increase self-confidence and social skills, and reduce social isolation among marginalised communities and communities with higher indices of deprivation. In order to achieve this, the programme engaged beneficiaries with nature and practical outdoor activities.

The stated outcomes of the programme were:

- Outcome 1** People from vulnerable groups will feel less isolated, feel more included with improved health and wellbeing
- Outcome 2** Young people not in employment or training will have improved self-confidence, better life skills and have improved health and wellbeing
- Outcome 3** Low income families and elders in socially deprived communities will have improved access to a better quality natural environment, increasing their quality of life
- Outcome 4** Communities with higher indices of deprivation will be more cohesive with more people involved in creating a better environment.

Working collaboratively with 95 groups in Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) and North Somerset, the project delivered or took part in 723 sessions to 20,011 people.

1.2. Aims of the evaluation

The academic research and wider evidence base indicates that huge personal and community benefits are to be gained from engaging with nature and undertaking projects that improve the natural environment. Avon Wildlife Trust's experience as an organisation demonstrates this too. However, little analysis has been undertaken about the impact of such engagement and involvement on individuals using a quantitative evidence base that links people's stories to the research.

The evaluation will therefore seek to provide clear analysis of the effectiveness of CAN's activities, while also convey the personal stories.

The fundamental question, using the agreed outcome indicators as a guide, will be the degree to which health and wellbeing, social inclusion and connection to green spaces are increased as a direct result of the CAN programme.

2. Background

2.1. Avon Wildlife Trust

Avon Wildlife Trust (AWT) is the largest local charity working to protect wildlife in the West of England area.

With the support of over 17,500 members, 1,500 volunteers and corporate support, it is the largest local charity working to protect wildlife and inspire people. It manages 36 nature reserves and runs award-winning educational and community programmes. It also works with landowners to reduce the decline in wildlife by creating a Living Landscape.

CAN was developed from the experience of the AWT's People and Wildlife Programme (2009-2012) which delivered opportunities for new audiences to engage with nature.

2.2. Context

According to local government statistics, the areas involved in CAN were all within the 10% most deprived wards in England in 2010¹ In an era of increasingly polarised income and opportunity, an accumulation of evidence exists for the need for a programme that reconnects people, encourages outdoor volunteering and inspires self-empowerment^{2,3}. In Bristol, the annual quality of life showed, at the beginning of this project, that:

- only 23% of people 'feel influential' in their community, much lower than other core cities
- community cohesion is lowest in the city's deprived areas
- low levels of community volunteering (23% citywide) are not improving
- levels of inactivity are growing among disabled and BME communities.

The evidence base for using outdoor and community work as a catalyst to reverse these trends comes from AWT's own experience and a wealth of research including the RSPB (Dr W Bird, 'Natural Thinking' 2007)⁴ and Natural England (Stone, Hillsdon & Coombes 'Green space access, green space use, physical activity and Reaching Communities overweight' 2011)⁵. The latter demonstrates the significant benefits of green spaces for health and wellbeing. The research underlines that access to, and engagement with, green spaces are an important factor in public health efforts to promote physical activity and reduce obesity.

3. Methodology

3.1. Five Ways to Wellbeing

Five Ways to Wellbeing is a tool developed by the New Economics Foundation⁶ to measure and more effectively advocate for steps toward wellbeing. It has been adopted by health and social care charities⁷ and government⁸ as a recognised measurement for mental wellbeing. The Five Ways are: Connect; Be Active; Take Notice; Keep learning; Give.

AWT has used this tool as a basis for measuring the success of CAN when choosing its objectives, forming survey questions and recording qualitative data.

3.2. Engagement and inclusion

The project used various methods to ensure the maximum possible inclusion. These included:

- Developing strong partnerships with community development workers and health improvement teams in order to maximise their local knowledge and contacts with targeted groups
- Attending Neighbourhood Partnership meetings, Friends of Park groups, health sector meetings
- Approaching target audience organisations, for example the Brandon Trust
- Posters advertising events, some produced jointly with local council community teams displayed in suitable locations such as community centres/cafes, libraries, drop-in centres, etc.
- Community newsletters
- Facebook page (throughout 2014) informing CAN audiences of project work days, project updates, relevant information. It linked with other community groups. Updates continued on AWT's main Facebook page.

The target groups for CAN were:

- vulnerable groups, split into five subcategories, reflecting indices of deprivation: people on a low income, refugees and asylum-seekers, people with mental ill-health, people with a learning difficulty, and Black and Minority Ethnic people;
- young people, particularly those not in education employment or training (NEET);
- families and elders from low-income areas;
- communities in the 10% most deprived areas in England.

3.3. Data collection

The data collection methods were an iterative process during the life of the CAN project. This was in an attempt to find the most suitable ways to track engagement and record thorough equalities monitoring data, whilst ensuring the validity of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Methods used and included in the final analysis:

- Survey of beneficiaries: this went through three iterations, whereby questions were altered slightly to give more useful results. The surveys were uploaded on to SurveyMonkey by AWT staff
- Observations: these were collected and collated into a table by AWT staff to record individual observations not covered by surveys. This was particularly useful considering engagement with people with a learning difficulty or English as a second language
- Wellbeing scale: an adapted scale was used to measure changes in the attitudes and wellbeing of regular beneficiaries at the beginning and end of their participation. There were a number of barriers to undertaking the scale with the beneficiaries, resulting in a small sample size. Those results without both baseline and endpoint data have been excluded from the analysis
- Feedback forms from group leaders: open-question form used particularly in qualitative analysis.

Data from the first year have been excluded from the final analysis Their inconsistency across different activities made them difficult to analyse alongside the remainder of evidence. Although these data offer evidence to support the evaluation, they have been analysed separately from the deep analysis of other evidence.

3.4. Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed in Excel, using Pivot Tables to draw out patterns and comparisons. These have been illustrated in this report using charts and according to project outcomes.

Qualitative data were analysed and attributed to the objectives of each activity set. This was done by:

1. sorting the feedback into beneficiary groups (young people, vulnerable groups, etc.);
2. drawing out all comments that linked to any outcome related to that activity, or to delivery;
3. identifying and colour coding positive, negative and 'interesting' comments so they could be more easily identified
4. numbering each comment to denote the outcomes it related to;

5. grouping comments for each beneficiary group, according to outcome to identify themes;
6. marking comments relating to community cohesion and legacy with 'C' and 'L' respectively, as these were not specifically referred to in the questions asked, so did not have a number.

Comments that did not relate to outcomes were also compared and considered to see if there were commonly occurring or outstanding features, for example negative comments, which were uncommon but important to convey.

4. Analysis: Big Lottery Outcomes

The outcomes were decided at the beginning of the project, in relation to the funding specification.

The stated outcomes of the programme were:

- Outcome 1** People from vulnerable groups will feel less isolated, feel more included with improved health and wellbeing
- Outcome 2** Young people not in employment or training will have improved self-confidence, better life skills and have improved health and wellbeing
- Outcome 3** Low income families and elders in socially deprived communities will have improved access to a better quality natural environment, increasing their quality of life
- Outcome 4** Communities with higher indices of deprivation will be more cohesive with more people involved in creating a better environment.

The total figures recorded for indicators and activities for the Big Lottery Outcomes can be found in Table 1. on page 10. Further analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data for each outcome follows.

Table 1. Total indicators and activities against the four outcomes for the project

		Indicators and Activities	Total	% of project target	Unique ind.	% who are unique
Outcome 1	A	7,480 people from vulnerable groups having social interactions with others in the wider community through practical projects and nature activities	6591	88%	4598	70%
	B	75% of participants sampled Feedback from people from vulnerable groups indicates improved health and wellbeing	88%			
	C	60% of participants sampled People from vulnerable groups report feeling greater inclusion/involvement in the wider community	83%			
	D	496 nature activities, 33 per quarter	561	113%		

Outcome 1 - People from vulnerable groups will feel less isolated, feel more included with improved health and wellbeing

Outcome 2	A	2,160 young people receive support and training to improve confidence through involvement in the project	2479	115%	1370	55%
	B	75% of participants sampled Feedback from young people involved with the project indicates improved health and wellbeing	86%			
	C	55% of participants sampled Young people who have been involved in the project in training or employment (better life skills, improved self-confidence)	85%			
	D	143 Community Nature Projects 11 per quarter	148	103%		
	E	110 young people take on leadership role	119	108%		

Outcome 2 - Young people not in employment or training will have improved self-confidence, better life skills and have improved health and wellbeing

Outcomes 3 and 4 overleaf

		Indicators and Activities	Total	% of project target	Unique ind.	% who are unique
Outcome 3	A	7,320 low income families and elders in socially-deprived areas become directly involved in improving their environment through community nature projects	7462	102%	6996	94%
	B	75 % of participants sampled Feedback from low-income families and elders indicates greater use of natural environment	75%			
	C	60% of participants sampled Feedback from low-income families and elders indicates they feel their quality of life is improved	88%			

Outcome 3 - Low income families and elders in socially-deprived communities will have improved access to a better quality natural environment, increasing their quality of life

Outcome 4	A	6 communities develop and deliver a significant project to improve their natural environment involving a diverse range of people in those projects	6				
	B	16,960 Number of people that have been involved in projects to improve the environment Pro-active	16532	97%	12964	78%	
	C	3,040 Number of people that have been involved in projects to improve the environment Reactive	3479	114%	2318	67%	
	D	20,000 Total proactive and reactive	20011	100%	15282	76%	
	E	5,000 Number of people indicating an interest in being more involved in community projects	4632	93%			
	F	Qualitative feedback from community leaders about the impact of the project on community involvement					Community Leader Questionnaires
	G	People that have been involved in projects develop their own stories and toolkit for other communities to develop and deliver community nature projects launched with a beneficiary and community-led conference					Celebration Event & Five ways to wellbeing

Outcome 4 - Communities with higher indices of deprivation will be more cohesive with more people involved in creating a better environment

4.1. Outcome 1: People from vulnerable groups will feel less isolated, feel more included with improved health and wellbeing

4.1.1. Quantitative

Avon Wildlife Trust recorded 6,591 people from vulnerable groups taking part in CAN. This represents 88% of the target for this group. It was hoped that 75% of these would report improved health and wellbeing as a result of taking part. With 88% of the sample (302) who were asked answering 'Yes' or 'Yes a little' to Wellbeing questions, the target was surpassed (figure 1).

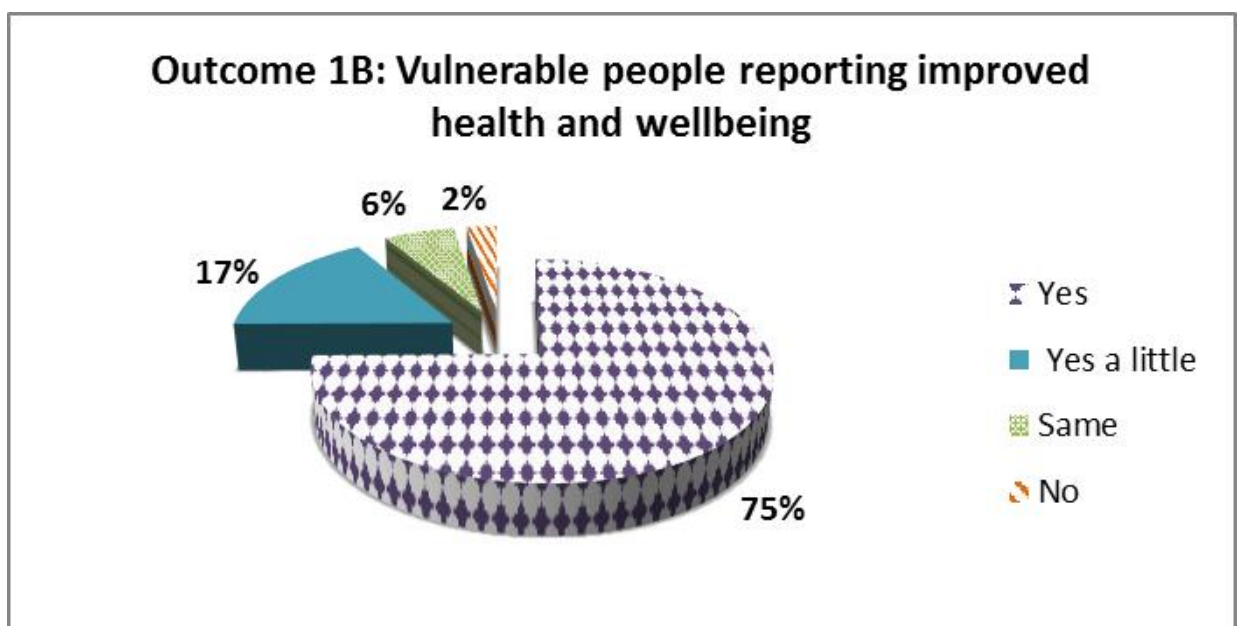


Figure 1

Overall, 83% of people in vulnerable groups reported feeling less isolated or more connected (figure 2), exceeding the target of 60%.

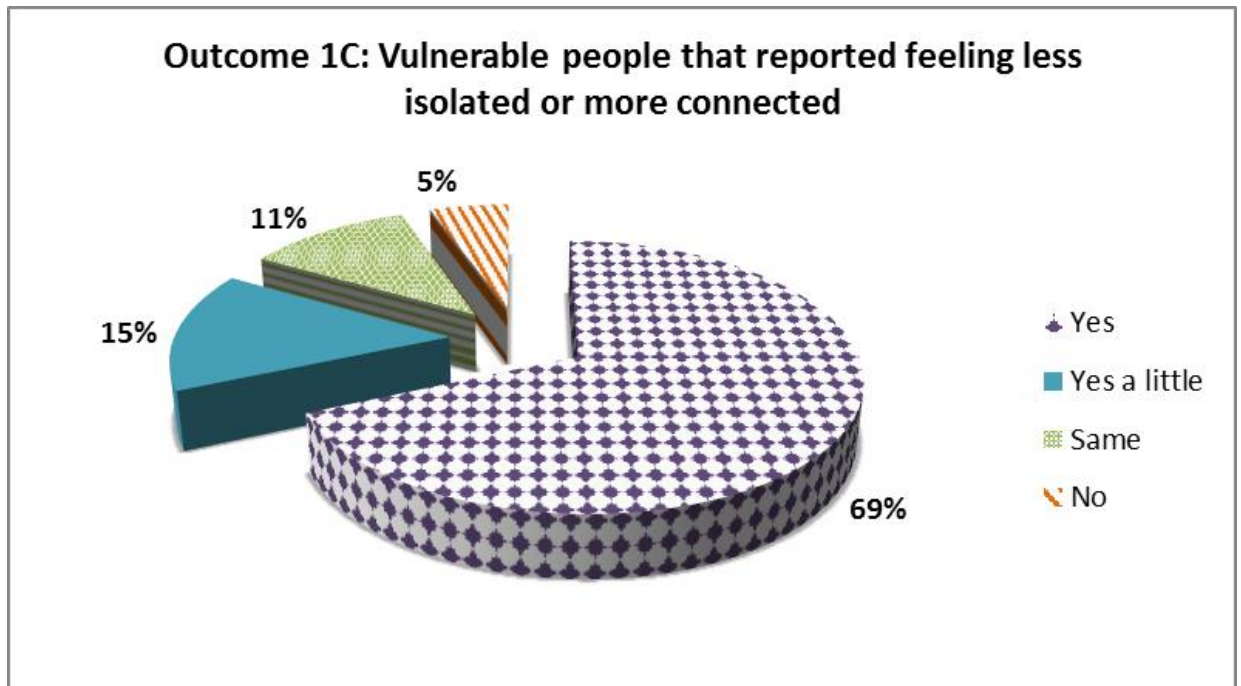


Figure 2

Within this group, people with a learning disability reported the most significant increase in connection (100%); those on a low income followed closely (96%); whilst those with mental ill health benefitted the least, with 77% still feeling less isolated or more connected, although this figure is still considerably greater than the target.

Outcome 1C: "I felt more connected to others" (split by demographic)

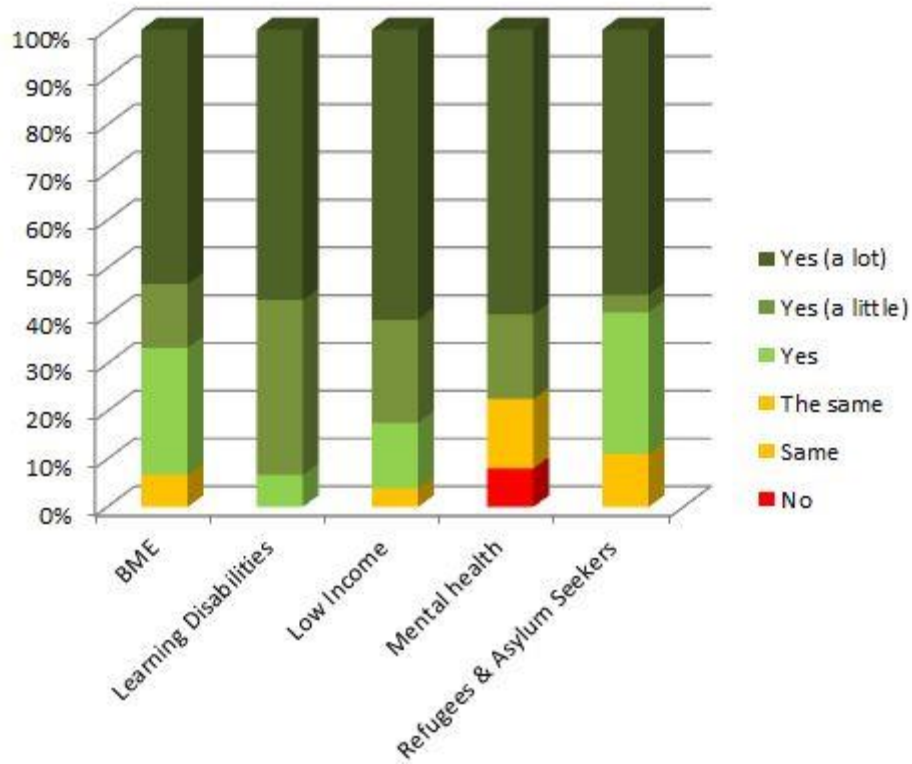


Figure 3

4.1.2. Qualitative

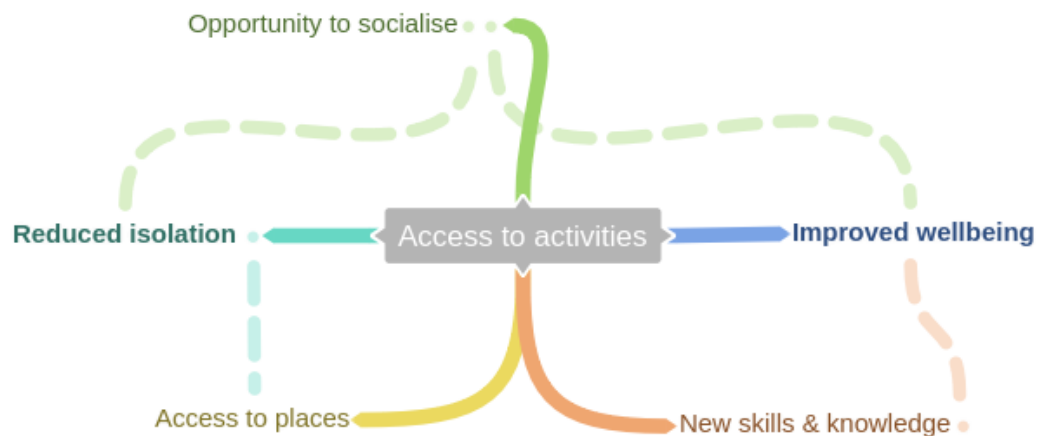


Figure 4: Thematic map for outcome 1

All feedback returned regarding vulnerable groups supports the quantitative data in indicating that the outcomes were achieved. The most frequent theme arising in feedback about vulnerable groups was the opportunity to socialise. The activities were praised as being an excellent opportunity to bond with others and reduce social isolation whilst carrying out a task that was physical and/or challenging.

Another theme was the opportunity to access places or activities not usually available, owing to lack of resources. This was marked in the refugee group, whose members do not have the resources to leave the city, and of a group who were able to go on a guided bike ride. In a low-income community, the residents were able to learn new skills and knowledge about the wildlife. Both were particularly excited at the opportunity to make a fire from scratch.

“I like picking up litter. I don’t like it when people drop litter; it is bad.”

- Learning disabled beneficiary

“Cleaning up. Cutting down the ivy tree. There was a gravestone under it”

- Learning disabled beneficiary

“I didn’t know all the different trees in the park.”

- Low-income beneficiary

Bristol Refugee Rights (refugees and asylum-seekers): “It was very touching... to see members of our group who didn’t all know each other beforehand working, sharing and enjoying the experience together. I could visibly see how much they got out of the visit.”

- Group leader

“We had a high number of local disadvantaged families... learning new skills such as tool use... food preparation... and wildlife Identification... Most of the participants had never done [these] before.”

- Group leader

“It nurtures an environment of friendship and comradeship, which develops relations in the community... Many of our group were amazed to see the surrounding countryside.”

- Group leader

“The rides we did with [CAN] provided valuable opportunities to socialise, reduce social isolation and improve health and wellbeing through... cycling in the countryside.”

- Group leader

4.2. Outcome 2: Young people not in employment or training will have improved self-confidence, better life skills and have improved health and wellbeing

4.2.1. Quantitative

Over the life of the project CAN delivered 148 events to 2,479 young people, surpassing its target to reach 2,160 over 143 events. It was found that 86% of this group reported improved health and wellbeing as a result of taking part (Figure 5). The sample size for health and wellbeing was 144 and for training and employment 155.

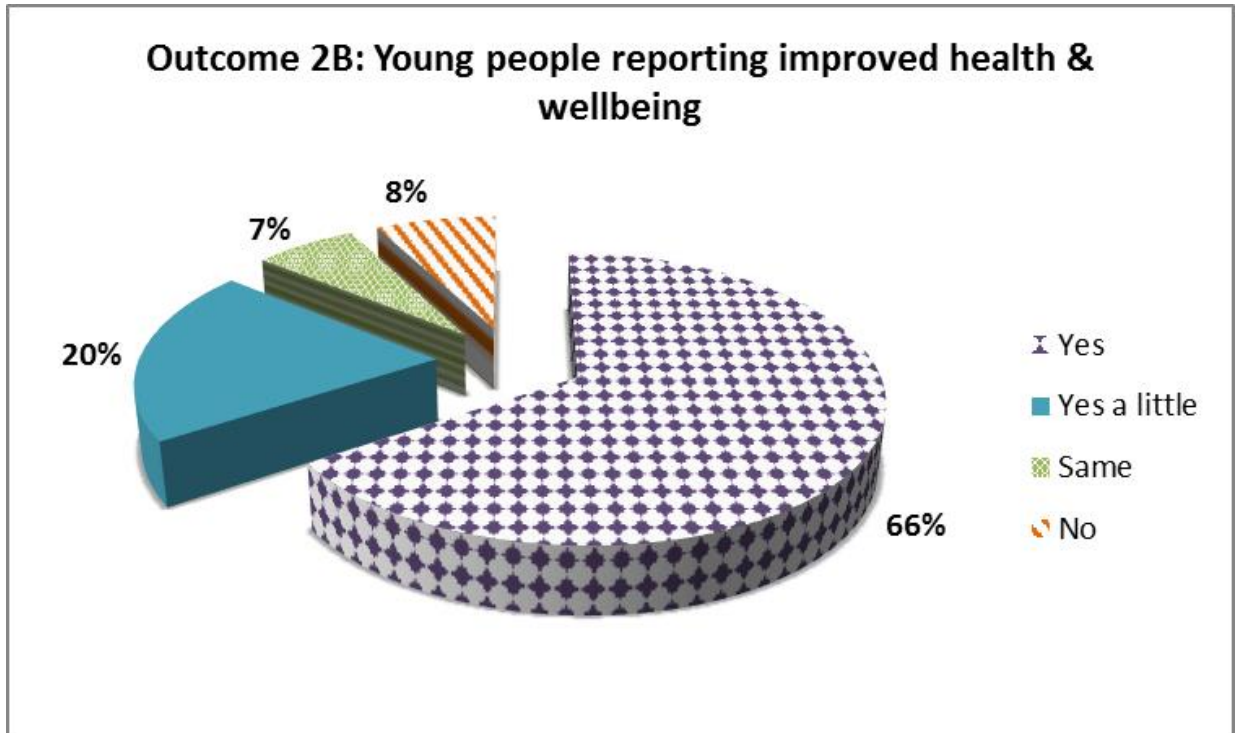


Figure 5

Even more impressive was the number of young people entering work or training after taking part which, at 85%, was hugely above the 55% goal (Figure 6).

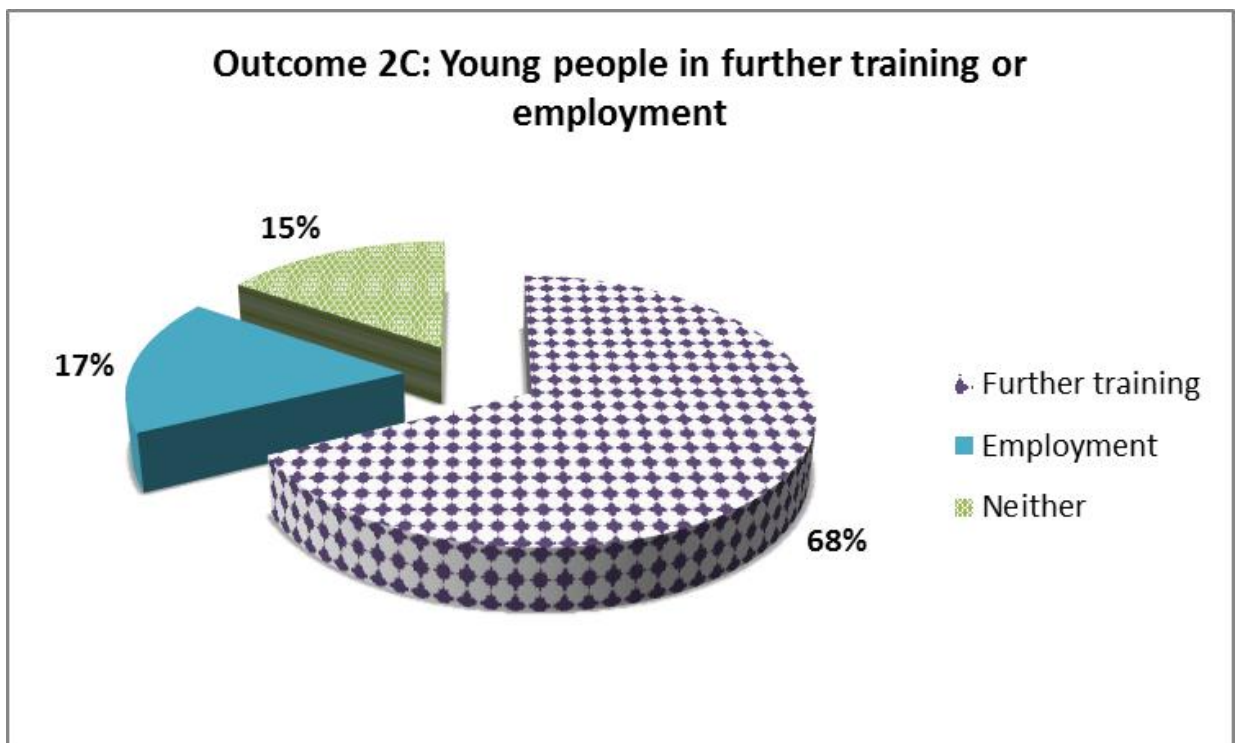


Figure 6

Eighty percent of young people surveyed said they had been inspired by CAN to be involved in something connected with nature, whilst 119 individuals took on a leadership role during their participation. 96% of young people said they learned something new during the project, while 85% were inspired to be involved with something connected with nature.

4.2.2. Qualitative



Figure 7: Thematic map for Outcome 2

All leaders of groups working with young people considered their outcomes for CAN to have been met. The feedback from and about the groups of young people indicates that CAN was wholly successful in achieving its outcomes for this group. Comments are peppered with the words ‘enjoyment’ and ‘confidence,’ indicating that CAN’s activities involving young people were hugely effective and popular. There are many references to improved communication, concentration and new skills. Furthermore, the feedback shows that many young people were newly inspired to spend time outdoors. 93 young people were awarded a John Muir Award as a result of taking part. For some, this was their first award or certificate.

Many comments indicate that other sections of the community expressed gratitude to the young people for their work. Alongside that are reports of pride and a sense of achievement by the young people. The two can reasonably be linked.

Finally, the relationships between the young people or their progress in social ability were notable. Video footage of interviews with one group showed clearly the strong friendships formed during their participation in CAN. Many group leaders reported huge improvements in collaborative working, problem solving and co-operation,

which are invaluable for successful employment. A group of young people with mild learning disabilities, including Autistic Spectrum Disorder, made significant progress in their ability to work together. One of these people also overcame a fear of dogs as a result of her participation, meaning she could 'visit her grandparents for the first time in years.'

"The experiences I had at Folly Farm would last a lifetime. It was the greatest and [most] educational thing I've done and [I] would recommend it to everyone."

– NEET beneficiary

"I am a 'stay in your bedroom' kind of person. Through ... this project I have discovered I like to take challenges and risks outside. I am now going to go for the Duke of Edinburgh Award."

– NEET beneficiary

"...It has been pleasure for the community... to watch them enjoy and take pride in what they have achieved. We are enormously grateful for their involvement."

– Member of local partner organisation

"It has brought healthy food, fresh ideas, positivity... and has inspired [young people not in education employment of training] to use the outdoors and [the community centre nature area] more."

– Group leader

"It was incredible the amount of impact this programme [had] with the young people, enjoying their surroundings and taking pride in their areas. Team work... communication, self-esteem and focus increased."

– Group leader

4.3. Outcome 3: Low-income families and elders in socially-deprived communities will have improved access to a better quality natural environment, increasing their quality of life

4.3.1. Quantitative

The number of low-income families and elders engaged in CAN events totalled 7,462, representing 102% of the target. Their likely use of green spaces as a result of the project was calculated according to their reported connection to green space and their wish to be more involved in community projects. From this it can be surmised that 75% of the sample asked (183) will use their green spaces more (Figure 8), the breakdown of which can be seen in Figure 9.

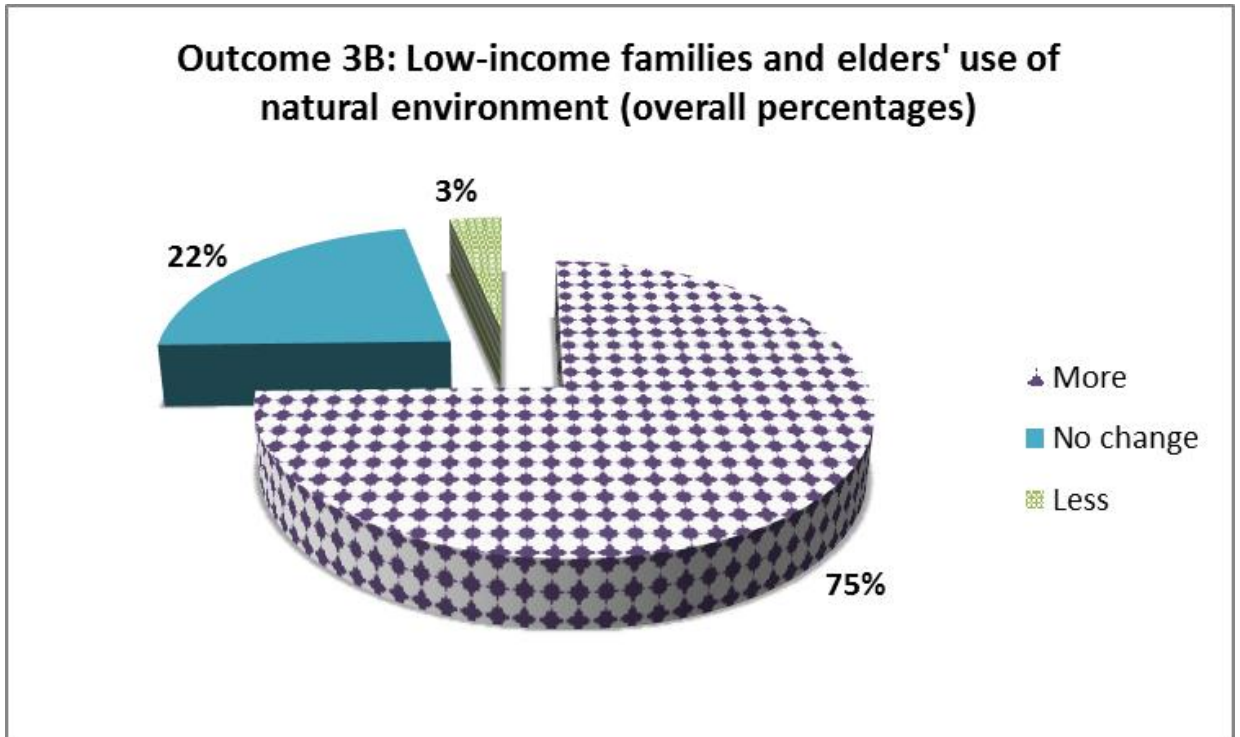


Figure 8

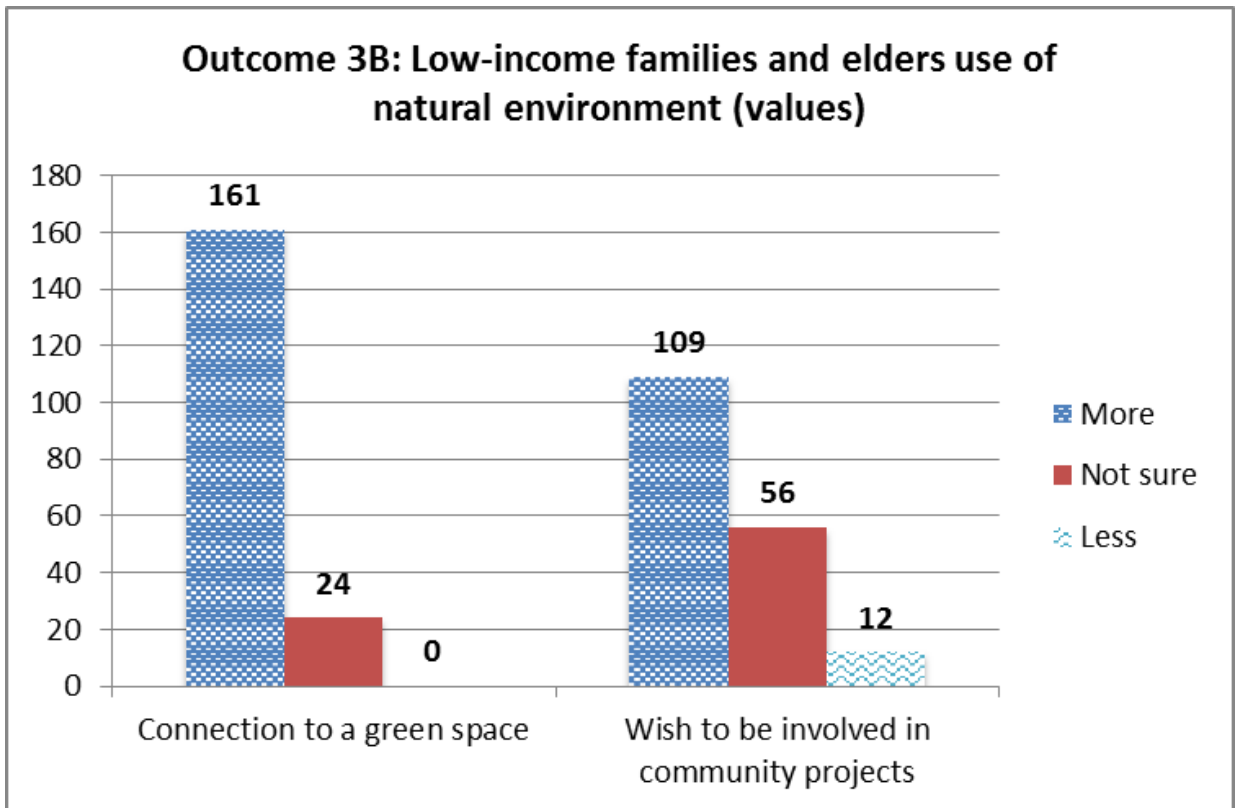


Figure 9

The incidence of these groups reporting improved quality of life was high, at 88% (Figure 10). Every non-white respondent answered positively to a question about improved quality of life.

A table of outputs, showing the amount of work done on improving green spaces, can be seen in section 4.4.1.

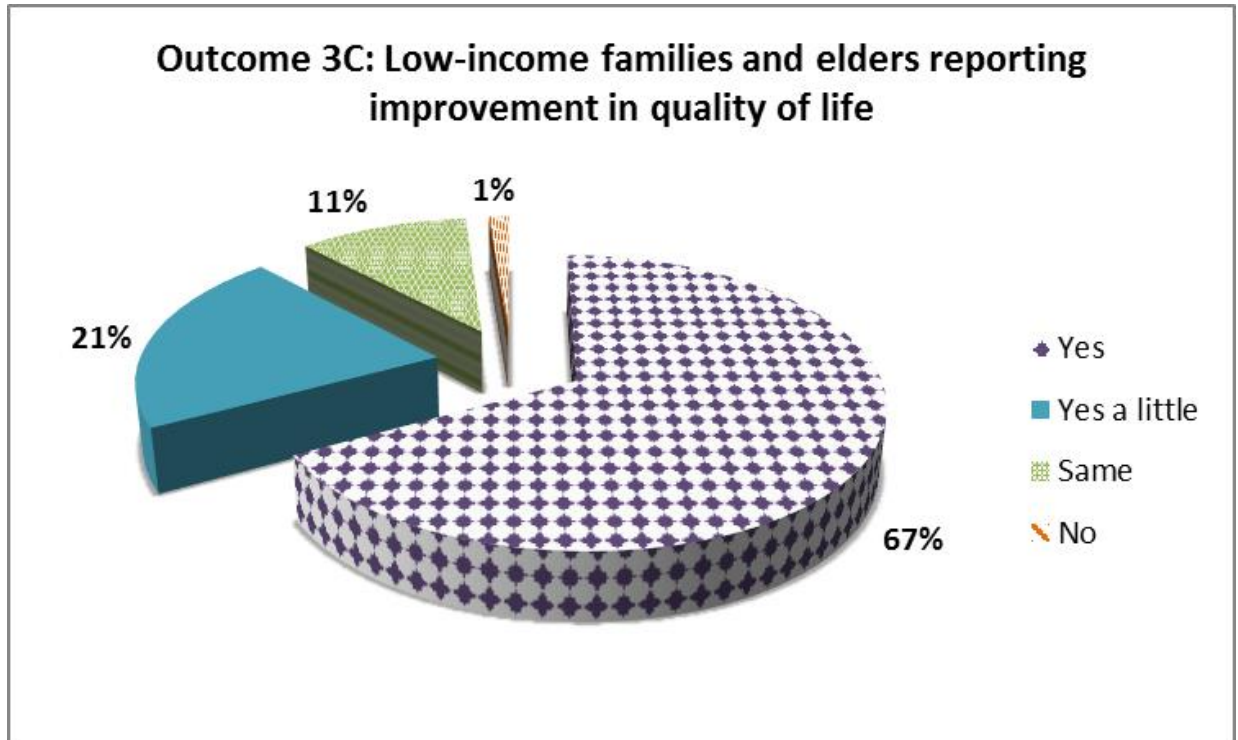


Figure 10

4.3.2. Qualitative

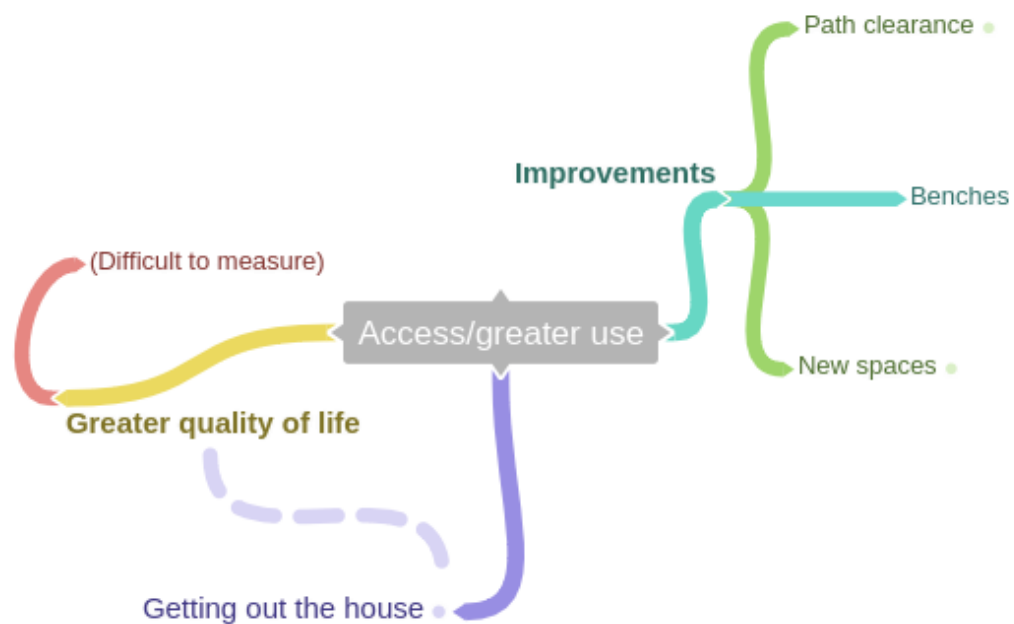


Figure 11: Thematic map for Outcome 3

All but one respondent said that the objectives of their participation were achieved in this area. The one that responded with a negative went on to provide evidence that they were met. There was one further comment that pointed out the difficulty in evidencing improvement in wellbeing. This was in the context of the impermanence of residents in that area and relatively short-term nature of their engagement, resulting in difficulties measuring longer-term effects.

It is clear from feedback that a huge amount of work was done by many sections of the community to improve green spaces to make them more accessible for local residents. The clearance and creation of paths and benches was particularly popular with families and elders. A negative comment from one group leader was that the volunteers were too infirm to be a viable workforce. However, it is countered by comments from residents describing their delight at the changes made, indicating that the work got done and has improved locals' quality of life nonetheless.

“Oh my lord... So many beautiful places on your doorstep and you just wouldn't know.”

– Elderly beneficiary

“My health's not been brilliant recently but I'm so glad I came out to help, I feel so much better than if I'd stayed at home!”

– Elderly beneficiary

“I have been having a hard time at work recently and have felt very tense. I just feel like it has all fallen away. I feel so relaxed.”

– Low-income family

“Before South Street Park was redeveloped... parents with young children had to walk at least a mile in any direction to find a park.”

– Group leader

4.4. Outcome 4: Communities with higher indices of deprivation will be more cohesive with more people involved in creating a better environment

4.4.1. Quantitative

- Avon Wildlife Trust worked with 6 identified communities over the life of CAN. These were defined geographically, using local authority areas: Hartcliffe and Withywood, Bristol; Bedminster, Bristol; Easton and Barton Hill, Bristol; Southmead, Bristol; Southward, Weston-super-Mare; Twerton and Whiteway, B&NES. Many people involved identified themselves as members of multiple communities and therefore more communities may have been impacted
- 16,532 people were pro-actively involved in the project (see Appendix 2) which is 97% of the target total number
- A further 3,479 people were involved ‘reactively’ (see Appendix 2 for calculation)
- The combined total number of proactive and reactive participants was 20,011 or 100.05% of the target
- 4,632 total number interested in more community projects
- Qualitative data have been embedded throughout the analysis, grouped under the outcome it relates to.

4.4.2. Qualitative



Figure 12: Thematic map for Outcome 4

Beneficiaries were not asked specifically to comment on this outcome area. Owing to this, and to its applicability to all beneficiary groups, comments on this theme were marked with a 'C' and gathered into a group apart from other outcome areas.

Without fail, and in their own way, each of the community group leaders mentioned increased community cohesion by participants and residents affected by the groups' work. The overriding theme was of families or individuals taking part in activities who would not otherwise have such opportunity. There were also many mentions of locals using an area of green space near their homes that they had never known existed, or never before wished to enter, because of inaccessibility or lack of inspiration. Alongside this participation featured learning and enjoyment, both key ingredients in lasting cohesion. Some examples of comments from a local resident and group leaders:

“Using the local park... for sessions and community gatherings has linked us with a number of other agencies and forged the way for future outdoor gatherings in the local area.”

– Group leader

“[We] will be using the Timebank allotment a lot more as a consequence of this.”

– Group leader

“... All the work, time and effort spent on Dundry Slopes have had a really great positive effect on the land, wildlife and the community... more people in the community will use the slopes [and] take pride and ownership.”

– Local resident

“We cannot thank and praise the CAN team and Horizons/Young Bristol teams enough. They have not only helped us to physically transform our park, but have been instrumental in bringing together the local community to work together.”

– Group leader

“A number of elders from the Asian Day Centre (right next to the courtyard) came out and thanked the young people for their hard work.”

– Group leader

An end of celebration event took place at AWT’s Folly Farm Centre in December 2015. Based around the Five Ways to Wellbeing, it included nature craft activities, guided wildlife walks, talks and storyboards produced by groups with which the project had worked. The event was well attended and people enjoyed sharing their experiences.

5. Analysis: additional findings and impacts

5.1. Equalities and demographic profile

As CAN specifically targeted communities suffering multiple indices of deprivation, often intersecting, these data were recorded for all beneficiaries throughout the life of the project. As is evident from the four intended outcomes, the data have been analysed according to some of these indices. The headline equalities statistics are as follows:

- Within vulnerable groups, 6,591 people engaged. Based on survey data, this group represented 44% of all beneficiaries and was divided into people with: low income (11%); a learning disability (7%); mental ill-health (14%); refugees and asylum-seekers (6%); and black and minority ethnic (BME) (7%)
- However, 16% of respondents identified as BME across all categories, indicating that over half of BME people were listed in a different category – most frequently in ‘refugees and asylum-seekers’. Of all BME respondents, 71% lived in the area of Easton and Barton Hill
- The majority of respondents in the low-income category (63%) were from the Hartcliffe & Withywood area of Bristol
- Just under 24% of respondents were disabled. Of this group 17% were BME
- The ‘Elders’ category made up 19% of all respondents, which matches closely the percentage of people aged 60+ (20%). A further 15% were aged 50-60, indicating that many people of that age group took part and were recorded in a different category
- 2,479 young people aged 14-25 took part in CAN. They accounted for 10% of survey respondents, half of whom were school age. 89% were White. The same percentage was from Hartcliffe & Withywood.

5.2. Delivery

All but one group leader reported that there were no gaps in CAN delivery. The sole request was for training for writing funding applications in order to further the work themselves.

Many comments centred on the knowledgeability and skills of AWT staff regarding wildlife and outdoor skills such as firefighting. This was often cited as a reason that such activities would not continue without AWT involvement; group leaders appear

not to have the skills or confidence to lead outdoor sessions of the type on offer through CAN, and would need support or training to do so.

Respondents also praised AWT staff for their understanding of their client audience, leading to well-pitched and appropriate delivery that “*allowed them to feel at ease,*” and of their willingness to carry out all planned activities whatever the weather.

5.3. Target groups

Much of the qualitative data demonstrates that the benefit of an activity applied to more than one target group. This was most obvious in cases where people were recorded in one category. For instance a ‘young person’ or ‘elder’ might also have a learning difficulty and/or come from a low-income family (see 4.1.).

More subtly, cases were reported where one group carried out some work in a green space which led to improved confidence and skills for themselves, but also better access for elders or families using that space; and concurrently improved community cohesion (see quotes in 3.2.1 and 3.4.2). In this way, much of the quantitative data understate the positive impact from each activity or engagement.

5.4. Legacy of CAN project

5.4.1. Environmental legacy

A great number of community green spaces have been improved or added to by CAN groups and volunteers. The following outputs were recorded:

Bird boxes and bug homes built	Bug hotels built	Trees planted	Bulbs planted	Wildflowers planted	Practical volunteering sessions	Meadow creation (m ²)	Vegetation management (m ²)
637	5	1,745	1,550	2,345	393	596	1,290

Table 2: Environmental outputs

Much of the qualitative feedback mentioned beneficiaries learning about wildlife as a result of their participation. Whilst, according to the Five Ways to Wellbeing, this has contributed to their own wellbeing, it also has positive consequences for the wildlife in those areas and elsewhere. Local residents who know what their greenspace is home to are more likely to protect it and will be able to apply that understanding in other areas of their lives.

Furthermore, the AWT staff members were able to identify rare species in some locations that were not previously known to be there.

5.4.2. Social legacy

As evidenced by the project's four outcomes, there will be a notable social legacy of CAN. Additionally, there will be a knock-on legacy in the form of community-mindedness and voluntary action. Feedback from group leaders and case studies mentioned participants going on to volunteer at nature reserves, local wildlife groups, park clean-up schemes and allotments. At least six people took on their own allotments as a result of taking part in CAN activities. Some groups that CAN collaborated with reported increased engagement in their regular activities; one stated that the activities involving AWT attracted record numbers to their event, a community bike ride.

Aside from the impressive number of young people entering employment, shown by the quantitative data, further instances were reported of CAN influencing further outcomes:

- A lady who had moved to the UK from Thailand used the skills learned to start her own gardening business
- 105 people went on to further training.

5.4.3. Partnership legacy

CAN succeeded in working with 95 groups or community organisations during the project. Each one that gave feedback expressed gratitude for that link and for the expertise that AWT brought, with many also expressing a wish to collaborate on future initiatives. As a result of CAN, those community organisations went on to form further relationships. It also gave rise to a new project, 'Growing Together,' which was formed and is funded for two years as a result of a partnership between Alliance Homes, The For All Healthy Living Centre and the CAN Project.

6. Conclusions and Future for Communities and Nature in Avon

The analysis of data has given a clear indication that CAN achieved its purposes in increasing wellbeing and community cohesion, reducing isolation and creating opportunities for people in the target areas. As was mentioned at the beginning, there is evidence of outdoor activity being an excellent conduit for such work, and Avon Wildlife Trust can consider its work in CAN as now being part of that body of evidence.

In looking at how this was achieved, there were some key factors: successful community engagement, particularly by means of partnering organisations working with disadvantaged groups; skills and dedication of staff, which was praised by many; appropriate monitoring and data collection; and an approach whereby activities and delivery were well matched to beneficiary groups. For example, success with young people was due to working in good partnerships with youth organisations which aimed to get young people back into training and employment.

Intended outcomes were achieved or surpassed almost across the board, with many voices and stories as testimony to the effect CAN had on lives in Bristol, North Somerset and B&NES. The impacts of CAN on these communities and individuals are difficult to measure long-term, particularly those effects that are more personal. It would be a worthy exercise to follow up with some of the groups in months or years to come in order to ascertain, for example, how crucial CAN's role was in the entry of young people into work or training or whether improvements to greenspaces have continued to increase community cohesion on a long-term basis. This could also serve to demonstrate whether the quantitative or qualitative data were more useful in painting a picture of the extent of CAN's success.

Many respondents indicated their wish to work with AWT on future projects. If this is borne out, to have formed these alliances it would be an excellent outcome of CAN.

7. Recommendations

Although CAN has been deemed highly successful, the following points should be considered for improvements to future projects, particularly those regarding scale and time-frame.

7.1. Pilot

Although preliminary investigations were completed prior to the launch, a pilot would have been invaluable as a way to work out what type of monitoring data are useful and the best ways to collect it in one or two formats that could be used throughout the three year project. This is especially pertinent given that, as there were so many activities, many staff were involved in collecting data. A *pro forma* for feedback and clear guidelines for collecting data that were consistent throughout would have resulted in higher quality data, and therefore more illuminating analysis and evaluation.

The methods used to collect and record data were suitable for the project. For example, AWT staff carrying out the surveys on paper and inputting the data into SurveyMonkey, as this likely resulted in more consistent, complete and useable data compared to beneficiaries self-inputting. It will also have made the feedback process more accessible. Data recording was of a high level with one staff member recording most data. The use of pre-planned data spreadsheets and clear instructions on how to input data could have led to more clarity in the data when analysis was required.

7.2. Clarity of terms

The outcomes and targets of the project use various terms and concepts without defining exactly what they encompass. For example, 'better life skills' or 'taking a leadership role' are easier to demonstrate when the parameters for these have been established at the beginning of the project.

More thought was required for the questionnaire answer categories to ensure measurement was meaningful. For example, respondents were asked questions such as 'Did ___ increase?' and were able to answer 'Yes', 'No' or 'The same.' In that case, both 'No' and 'The same' could imply that the item being measured did not increase.

It is recommended that future development of outcomes and targets are 'put to the test' in this respect by testing and modelling any questionnaires. An adviser external to the application and development process could be useful for this, as they come without background knowledge or assumptions.

7.3. Sample Data

The sample data were not systematically collected from across all the target groups. In future target sample sizes should be calculated beforehand to gain a sample representative of the general population. Again a *pro forma* outlining how each individual was chosen to take part in evaluating the project, e.g. randomised sample with a certain percentage of each group, or through targeted sampling. In general the sample sizes collected could be argued to be sufficient for the project evaluation. Funders may wish to see a greater percentage of the participants sampled and may specify this in contracts. For more statistically significant results a larger sample may be required.

7.4. Qualitative data

Lots of effort went into recording quotes including emails and other feedback in order to provide qualitative data as evidence for this evaluation. In particular the feedback form for group leaders was well thought out as it gave ample opportunity for frank and open answers.

Recording of quotes by AWT staff could, however, lead to bias in selection of quotes. The reported qualitative data were therefore limited to those methods where opportunity was given for both positive and negative feedback. This was also overwhelmingly supportive of CAN. A *pro forma* at the start of the project outlining how the qualitative reporting will be collected in an unbiased way would strengthen the evidence in support of CAN. Bias could be avoided or mitigated with good training, or by recording and transcribing all sessions and recording quotes verbatim, but this would be a very lengthy resource-intensive process.

7.5. Continuity of researchers and evaluation

AWT consulted with a number of research experts during the life of the project, bringing a high level of rigour for a project with such a range in time, beneficiary groups and staff. Although CAN staff had BLF outcomes and indicators to report on, the monitoring and evaluation by CAN had no clear rationale when devising and collecting evaluation. This meant that some information was unclear.

A stronger and more fluid evaluation would be possible for future projects if a single person or organisation, ideally Avon Wildlife Trust or a trusted research partner, managed the monitoring and evaluation from start to finish, or by more clearly defining partnerships and methods at the beginning of the project.

A clearer rationale and process thought out at the beginning of the project would have enabled a clearer method and evaluation.

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9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Survey questions

1. Outcome: Vulnerable Group/Young People/Families and Elders/Other
2. Project Area
3. Event and Place
4. Date
5. Name
6. Postcode
7. Gender
8. Age
9. Do you consider yourself to have a disability?
10. Ethnicity
11. After the session, do you feel more connected to your green space?
12. Would you like to be involved in more community projects?
13. At the end of the session how do you feel about the questions below? [5 ways to wellbeing]
 - a. I felt connected to others
 - b. I learnt something
 - c. I feel more active
 - d. I noticed my surroundings
 - e. Inspired to give / Be involved in something connected with nature
14. Do you feel that being surrounded by nature has a positive effect on your health, wellbeing and quality of life?

Appendix 2 – Calculation of unique beneficiaries

During the funding application process, AWT had to indicate to Big Lottery Fund- the percentage of people engagements (16,960) that would be individuals (unique beneficiaries). The below describes these calculations.

Direct pro-active unique beneficiaries

AWT's People and Wildlife project engaged with a diverse range of beneficiaries with a similar profile to those that will be engaged with by the Communities and Nature Project. In 3.5 years the project has achieved 22,350 people engagements of which approximately 76% of that number have been unique beneficiaries. This 76% figure is therefore being applied to the Communities and Nature project to give an indication of the number of unique beneficiaries it will achieve. We call this group direct pro-active beneficiaries in the table below and we will be able to measure this.

Direct reactive unique beneficiaries

The number of people engagements applied to the Communities and Nature project relates to the number of engagements that will be directly and pro-actively organised by the project. This is based on an average sized working group (about 15 people) engaging at any one activity as a conservative estimate. However, because the project is being delivered in the heart of communities, we have reviewed this and estimated that a significant number of people from within the community will become beneficiaries of the project through our partner organisations inviting them to take part in the activities through a more casual arrangement.

For example, we can expect that we might involve 15 people from a beneficiary group (refugee, people with disabilities) in a bulb planting environmental improvement project at a specific community project. However, the partner community organisations may also involve people in this activity through the contacts they have and so we consider that many more people will be beneficiaries as a result. We have estimated that perhaps 33% of the activities we organise will attract as many people this way as through our own pro-active work and we have defined these as reactive beneficiaries and we will be able to measure this.

Indirect beneficiaries

We know that many people will gain health and wellbeing improvements and other benefits as a result of the projects undertaken in communities, but that they will not become directly involved in the physical activity itself. CABE estimates that 79% of the population use their local greenspaces, especially those close to their home. The number that may benefit from the projects is very difficult to estimate, but since these improvements will be in publicly accessible spaces, we have estimated that 20% of the local population may become indirect beneficiaries of the project within one year of the improvements made, but we will be unable to measure this.

Beneficiaries

Beneficiary type	Calculation basis	Number
1) Direct pro-active	76% of people engagement	12889
2) Direct reactive	33% of activities attract people	4253
3) Indirect	20% of total ward population of 91011	18202
Total direct unique beneficiaries	1+2	17142
Total beneficiaries	1+2+3	35344

Appendix 3 – Template of feedback form for group leaders

Communities and Nature Feedback Form

Project Name

Location

Start and end dates

Project partners

Who was the audience for this project?

Project Brief

Aim

Objective 1:

Objective 2:

Objective 3:

1. Did the project succeed in its aims and objectives? How do you know? Please give as much detail as you can under each objective

2. Were there any highlights or noticeable changes during the project you would like to share?

This could be for an individual, a circumstance, specific activity that stands out etc

2a. Any additional comments or feedback from other members of the group?

3. What aspects of the project do you think worked well and why?

This could be specific activities, connections with local people, logistics etc

4. What aspects of the project didn't work so well and why?

This could be activities, facilities, connections with local people, bad weather, tasks not being completed, etc

5. Were there any gaps in delivery? i.e. staff supervision/ capacity, lack of knowledge/ understanding of client audience, inappropriate sites/facilities etc

6. Has the project led to any new activity or relationship/partnerships?

7. Will your project be able to continue without the support /funding from AWT and why?

Transport, tools, lack of knowledge& skills etc. Is there any small sustainable way that the project could continue i.e. litter pick, walks on reserves?

8. What impact has the Communities and Nature Programme had on your project?

9. Is there a need for a similar project to continue and why?

10. Who would benefit from the project and why?

11. Any other comments

Appendix 4 – Regular groups table

Group name	Group type	Group description	Group location
Tomorrows People	Young People	Young people, (NEETs), generally aged 17 - 19. Aim is by the end of the course they are in education/training	Central Bristol
Asylum Seeker Allotment Project	Asylum Seekers	Asylum seekers allotment, safe space for volunteers, growing, harvesting, cooking and sharing food	Easton
St George day Centre	Adults with Learning Difficulties	Day centre	Easton
Riverside	Young People with Mental Health issues	Residential centre/support for young people with severe mental health problems	Fishponds
Changes Bristol	Adults with mental health distress	Local charity offering support to adults experiencing mental health distress	Barton Hill but group session are proposed to be held at Folly Farm
Single Parent Action Network	Young children with carers/parents	Charity supporting one-parent families	Easton - group to visit Barton Hill Walled Garden
KTS Training	Young People	Young person's skills training provider	Southmead
On Track Walking group	Walking for health group	Aimed at those new to walking or people recovering from illness or injury.	Easton
Sirona - "Rake up and grow"	Young people with Learning difficulties	Project supports and trains group with gardening and horticultural skills/qualifications	Twerton, Bath
Growing Together, Great Rhyne Community Allotment	Mainly Young People and long term unemployed many with learning difficulties and mental ill health	Project to support the local community by offering gardening and wildlife experiences, RHS level qualifications, a place to socialise together on the allotment.	Weston Super Mare. Bournville

Chocolate Garden	Local residents	Tranquil area for local people to sit	Weston Super Mare. Bournville
Colleridge Road Allotment	Local residents	Project for local people to garden and families and young people to enjoy nature activities	Weston Super Mare. Bournville
Brandon Trust - WSM	Adults with learning disabilities	Project to Support the friends of Jubilee park to maintain and improve the park for wildlife. Obtaining their John Muir Award	Weston super mare, The Coronation
Dundry Slopes	Local Residents	Mixed group from older people, long term unemployed, mental health problems. Aim is to set up a Friends of group, and volunteers	Dundry Slopes, Hartcliffe
Headway	People recovering from head injuries	Outdoor activities in the garden at the Centre. Offers occasional trips to reserves.	Withywood Centre, Hartcliffe
Horizons	Young People with mild learning disabilities	Horizons is a course run through Hengrove College to build confidence and independence through community projects and experiences	Mainly at Herbon Burial Ground and South Street Park, but also at Dundry Slopes
Milestones	Adults with learning disabilities	Based in Knowle, only a small group of 2 or 3 get involved and join Horizons Group	Hebron in Bedminster
Roots Project	Refugees, Asylum Seekers and older people	Individuals vary each time- the project works with BCC Health Improvement Team offering trips out of the city tp reduce isolation	Based in Easton. Trips out to AWT nature reserves (Mainly Folly Farm)
Young Bristol	Young People	Young People obtaining their National Citizen Service (not necessarily deprived backgrounds)	Dundry Slopes and Hebron /South Street Pk
Wild Wellbeing Walking Group	Mental health	Self supported mental Health Walking group -	All sites - So far Dundry Slopes & Folly Farm

Appendix 5: Wellbeing (Warwick Edinburgh) questionnaire
Communities and Nature (CAN) Project



Avon

Evaluation questionnaire

Date _____ Group _____ Your initials _____

Male Female

Age: 0 - 4 15 - 19 35 - 44 65 - 74
 5 - 9 20 - 24 45 - 54 75 - 84
 10 - 14 25 - 34 55 - 64 85 +

Do you consider yourself to have a disability? Yes No

Ethnicity: White Mixed ethnic background Asian/Asian UK
Black/ African / Caribbean/ Black UK Other ethnic group

Postcode: _____

Please complete this questionnaire by **drawing a circle around the number that you agree with** next to each statement

Health and Wellbeing

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Agree Strongly)

My general health is good 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
My quality of life is good 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I feel healthy and active 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I feel cheerful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

I feel motivated to take on new challenges 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I have been feeling useful 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I feel confident talking in a group 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I feel inspired to learn new skills 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 10 = Agree Strongly)

I feel part of my community	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I find it easy to make new friends	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I feel confident talking to new people	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I feel connected to others in the group	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Life skills

I work effectively in a group or team to achieve goals	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I show initiative and have good leadership skills	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I manage my workload and time effectively	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I am a good listener	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I am a good problem solver	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Your feelings about the environment

Being outdoors is an important part of my life	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I feel in touch with nature	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
I care about the environment	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Nature has a positive effect on me	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(1 = never, 10 = more than once a day)

How often do you visit your local green space	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
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(1 = Not at all; 10 = All of the time)

How inspired do you feel to visit other green spaces	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
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It would be great to have your comments on what do you think you will get out of/ learn from the session/s with Avon Wildlife Trust (please write below)

Thank you for your time and effort. Your answers will be kept confidential.

Evaluating our projects ensures that we deliver appropriate activities to suit people's needs. Your answers can help secure future funding so that more people can benefit from improved health and wellbeing and protect our local wildlife.



needs.