



GREENUP – LAKESIDE AND PARTICIPATORY PROGRAMME: SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT

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The evaluation in numbers:

165

staff survey respondents

111

post-activity reports

3

case study interviews

29%

increase in people observed using the Lakeside area post-redevelopment

75

patients attending stroke physiotherapy sessions in the new Lakeside space

9.5/10

satisfaction rating by attendees of the Lakeside participation programme

27%

increase in survey respondents saying they visit the Lakeside for a break at least once a month post-redevelopment

This report was created with the assistance of an enterprise CoPilot AI. This was done in accordance with the CW+ AI Policy and the UKES [‘AI in evaluation: Good practice guidelines for practitioners’](#).



Project background and context

Local context

In October 2024, CW+ launched the GreenUP project at West Middlesex University Hospital's Lakeside to improve access to nature and wellbeing for patients, staff and visitors. Supported by a £166k Greener Communities Fund grant, the initiative introduced new planting, accessible pathways and spaces for outdoor activities, alongside features such as a zebra crossing and a mural to enhance wayfinding. The project also benefited from significant in-kind support, donations and volunteer contributions, including saplings from NHS Forest and landscape design assistance.

Before:



After:





Research context

Research shows that exposure to nature in hospitals can reduce stress, improve wellbeing, and enhance staff satisfaction and productivity. These benefits are especially relevant given NHS survey data indicating high levels of work-related stress and staff considering leaving their roles. Studies and systematic reviews further demonstrate that access to greenery and nature-based interventions can lower stress hormones, boost cognitive function and combat fatigue – critical factors for healthcare staff and patient safety.

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation of the GreenUP project was undertaken internally with support from a dedicated evaluation advisory group, comprising:

- Katie Shaw (Hammersmith Community Garden Association)
- Lewis Elliott (European Centre for Environment and Human Health, University of Exeter)
- Lucinda Thomson (Sustainability Manager, Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust)
- Peter Massini (London Wildlife Trust)

The group helped to identify three key outcomes: increased awareness of the Lakeside, increased use of the Lakeside, and increased enjoyment of the Lakeside. A mixed-methods approach was chosen that would compare data for the summer months of 2024 (pre project delivery) and 2025 (post project delivery). Methods included surveys, observations, interviews and biodiversity assessments.

The effect of weather

Preliminary results showed that the weather had a significant impact on the extent to which staff engaged with outdoor spaces, including the Lakeside. The summer of 2025 was significantly drier and hotter than 2024, and this may well have played a role in changes seen in the results below.

Results

Increased awareness of the Lakeside

In a comparison of staff survey responses, **awareness of the Lakeside area increased from 84% to 95%**. Although the drivers of this change are not clear, word of mouth between staff members is potentially a significant factor.



Survey data suggests there were also **slight increases in awareness of other gardens** around the site, and respondents also reported being **slightly more likely to talk to patients or visitors about other green spaces** around the hospital with patients or visitors.

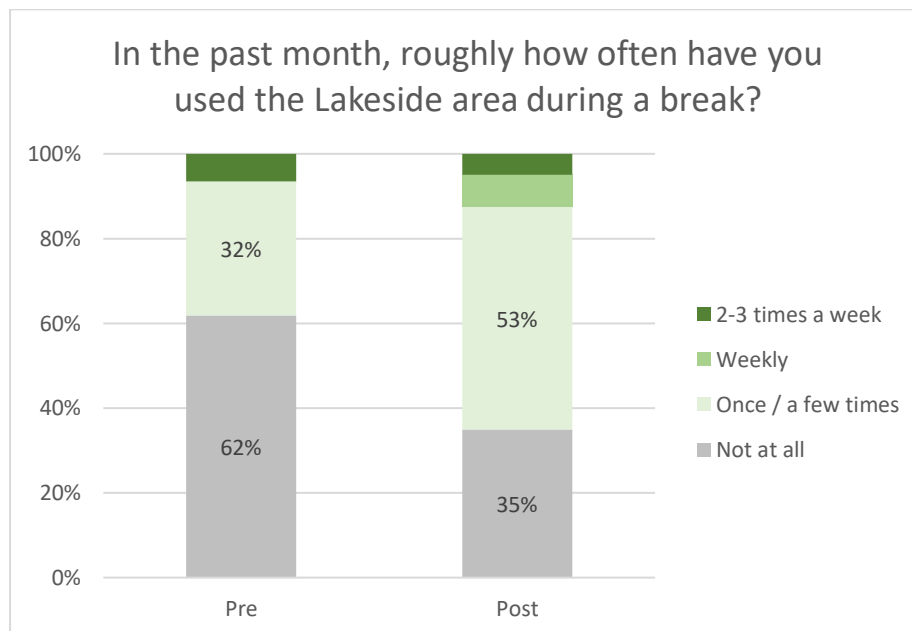
Increased use of the Lakeside

Post-project surveys show a **notable increase in time spent outdoors during the workday**, with 21% more respondents reporting 5-30 minutes outside and a 17% rise for 10-30 minutes. Ombea touchpoint data also indicates **higher engagement with the Lakeside**, with logged visits increasing from 60 to 86 between comparable pre- and post-project periods.

Observations on warm, sunny days revealed a 29% rise in median occupancy (from 14 to 18 people), with a maximum of 31 recorded.

68% of survey respondents had visited the Lakeside before redevelopment, and over half of these said the changes led them to visit more often. **Break usage increased significantly**, with 27% more staff visiting at least once in the past month.

‘Previously the area was nice and sunny but very bland and sterile. There were no walking paths to go for a little stroll even when the weather wasn't necessarily nice enough to be sitting outside. Now there are wildflowers to look at as well as the lovely little vegetable beds, lots more wildlife, and lovely paths to walk through. The area is more aesthetically pleasing and more relaxing now, you really feel like you're enjoying a slice of nature.’





The Lakeside Activity Programme – registrations and attendance

A central element of the GreenUP programme was introducing a new season of participatory activities at Lakeside, hosted in a bespoke structure. After a pilot in October 2024, **94 scheduled sessions** received registrations across over six months, including exercise (yoga, Pilates), nature-based activities (Kew Gardens, Abundance London), and arts and crafts.

Bookings were managed via a dedicated Eventbrite page, generating **257 registrations from 70 individuals**, mostly nurses and midwives (44%). **Attendance totalled 244 across 140 individuals**, averaging four per session, though figures likely understate actual participation. Exercise and dance sessions were most popular, followed by nature-based activities. Two-thirds of registrants were NHS staff, but community participation grew steadily, reaching parity by the end. Sessions were typically held at lunchtime or early evening, with slightly higher registrations for evenings but better lunchtime attendance, partly due to drop-ins at nature sessions.

There are notable examples of sessions that have seen good attendance (especially in warmer and drier weather). Staff-led afterwork exercise sessions saw some of the most consistent rates of attendance, with most attendees staying for the whole session. Another popular session was that run by Kew Gardens, which successfully attracted a large number of drop-in attendees on lunch breaks in the space.





Stroke physiotherapy at the Lakeside

During the pilot there were **13 successful physiotherapy sessions** at the Lakeside for inpatients of Redlees ward. There were **79 attendances by patients**, an average of 6 per session, and some patients were able to use the space on multiple occasions. These return visits brought further benefits: for example, one patient was able to plant seeds at an early session and then pick the produce at a later session.

Reports from these sessions suggest that patients were keen to participate in the sessions and enjoyed being outdoors, in particular enjoying being in the sun and the chance to include gardening activities in their rehabilitation. Reports mention **improved mood** for patients, and one patient said they thought the session would help them sleep better.

Rhiannon Clement, a physiotherapist working on Redlees Ward, described her experience of using the space with patients:

'The space is quite adaptable. For some of the more high-level patients it provides different mobility challenges, such as different kinds of surfaces, while lower-level patients can do more in a chair.'

'It's nice to have the space to be able to do group sessions, where people can see how each other are getting on, and have an opportunity to sit and chat a little bit as well and get to know each other.'

'It also provides opportunities to practise things that they would be practising when they get home, like gardening. Sometimes we would have the exercise session and then plant some seeds, and then some patients were able to return to the space later to see how their plants have grown.'

'It became something they could talk to their families about, and I heard about people's families going and looking at the space, sometimes taking the patients out as well (when that was safe to do).'

Increased enjoyment of the Lakeside

Post-project surveys show a **clear improvement in staff perceptions of the Lakeside**, with 71% of respondents using entirely positive words to describe it compared to 59% before. Themes such as **peace, relaxation, nature** and **landscaping** all increased in prevalence, while mentions of distance and access declined. Staff also rated the space significantly higher in meeting their needs, with the average score rising from 4.6 to 6.5 out of 10.

Perceptions of the Lakeside as a 'relaxing environment' improved, with agreement increasing from 76% to 90%, and 83% of those who used the space prior to the project said **the redevelopment made it more restful and positively impacted their experience.**



‘The Lakeside is a breath of fresh air. As NHS staff, stepping out there even for a few minutes helps clear your head. It’s quiet, green, and just feels different from the usual buzz inside. Whether you’re grabbing a moment alone or chatting with a colleague, it’s the kind of space that reminds you to slow down and take care of yourself too.’

Lakeside Participation Programme – participant experience

13 participants completed a survey about the Lakeside activity programme, most of whom were NHS staff from various specialisms. Attendees reported **high motivation to continue** activities, **increased time outdoors**, and **strong nature connectedness**, though this may reflect pre-existing differences. All respondents were likely to register for future sessions, and those who attended gave an **average recommendation score of 9.5/10**.

‘I think the CW+ lakeside activity is one of the best things I have participated in since I joined the trust nearly four years ago.’

‘The mosaic workshop was a great opportunity to try something creative and new, that may not otherwise have been accessible.’





Case study – Poppy Wilson

Poppy Wilson, an MRI Superintendent Radiographer at the hospital, told us about her experience of attending both Pilates and gardening sessions (run by Kew Gardens) at the Lakeside.

‘I was very interested to try both gardening and exercise. I didn't have any expectations and was keen to find out what it's like.

‘My overall impression has been very positive, because it's very relaxed. The people leading the activity have been very approachable, very laid back, and make everyone feel very welcome.’

Poppy told us about the importance of the social aspect of the sessions, and the advantages of in-person activities that are held outdoors:

‘It's been great to meet people who have similar interests, and to not talk about work even though we are at our workplace.

‘This sort of wellbeing activity is more beneficial when conducted face to face – I prefer the direct contact rather than an online workshop. Personally, I distance myself from online activities because we're doing so much through work. Meetings, discussions, webinars – you name it, there is so much online engagement.

‘Being outdoors has a huge benefit. Having this beautiful and tranquil outdoor place in London is certainly a great advantage. It is a space for staff able to step away and switch off from busy and demanding work environments.

‘To be honest, I don't really mind if it's a bit drizzly or raining, because I just enjoy the fresh air, and the chance to step away from the desk and embrace being outside.’

Poppy also reflected on the benefits of taking part in the sessions:

‘Mentally, I felt more relaxed after the sessions. They helped me deal with stress and tension, and I felt more positive going back to work.

‘I also felt more supported by the Trust. I think the sessions can help the workforce feel engaged, as their needs and interests have been valued, and this may improve workforce recruitment and retention.’



Biodiversity

Before and after the Lakeside redevelopment, London Wildlife Trust conducted ecological surveys, concluding that new planting could deliver **a noticeable ecological uplift** if properly maintained. The wildflower meadow, featuring species like wild carrot, yarrow and ox-eye daisy, was highlighted as particularly valuable for attracting pollinators such as butterflies, moths and bees, while added perennials like lavender and rosemary may enhance foraging opportunities for birds.

Staff perceptions of biodiversity also improved, with agreement that the Lakeside was 'rich in biodiversity' rising from 58% to 70%.

'The area has more wildlife now rather than just being a large plain lawn, so it feels like a break from the office/ward environment and a proper chance to experience a bit of a nature away from work for a bit, so it's much more relaxing.'

Conclusion

This report evaluates the GreenUP programme's redevelopment of WMUH Lakeside and its associated participation programme. Findings indicate the project successfully increased staff use of the space, particularly for lunch breaks and during good weather, and made the area more attractive and relaxing, with the covered structure enabling diverse outdoor activities. The programme demonstrates that creating a suitable outdoor environment and offering structured activities can effectively enhance opportunities for staff and the wider hospital community to engage with nature.

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