

## The health benefits of joining Green Gym

People have many different reasons for joining a local Green Gym but whatever the reason, everyone is welcomed into their local group.

Research shows that:

- 100% of participants interviewed during the National Evaluation by Oxford Brookes University agree that taking part in the Green Gym has benefited their mental health, boosting self-esteem and confidence through learning new skills and completing new tasks
- Green Gym provides moderate physical activity: People who are regularly active at this level are 50% less likely to suffer from a heart attack or stroke than inactive people
- Working out in green spaces is a great way to relieve stress and can help to combat depression
- Taking part in the Green Gym improves muscle strength, which is particularly important for older people, helping to maintain independence in later life
- Participants report feeling fitter and having more energy than before
- Almost a third more calories can be burnt in an hour of some Green Gym activities than in doing a step aerobics class.

**Volunteering** can increase volunteers' longevity, improve their mental health, keep them fitter, and enable them to cope better with illness when it occurs. Volunteering also has a positive impact on a range of factors affecting health service users including their self-esteem, disease management, adoption of healthy behaviours, compliance with medical treatment and relationships with health care professionals.

### Definitions

*Health* - 'is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'. (World Health Organization, 1946)

*Volunteering* - 'is an activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives'.

With thanks to Volunteering England who commissioned the University of Wales, Lampeter to carry out a survey to assess the health effects of volunteering.