Young People's Upper Grosvenor Gardens

Working with young people to create a manifesto for how Upper Grosvenor Gardens can better support enjoyment and engagement with nature

Insights Report

AUTHORS:

- GRANT WATERS, DIRECTOR
- NADIA LOWE, IMPACT RESEARCHER

DATE: SUMMER 2026

VERSION: REVISION 03

tranquil city

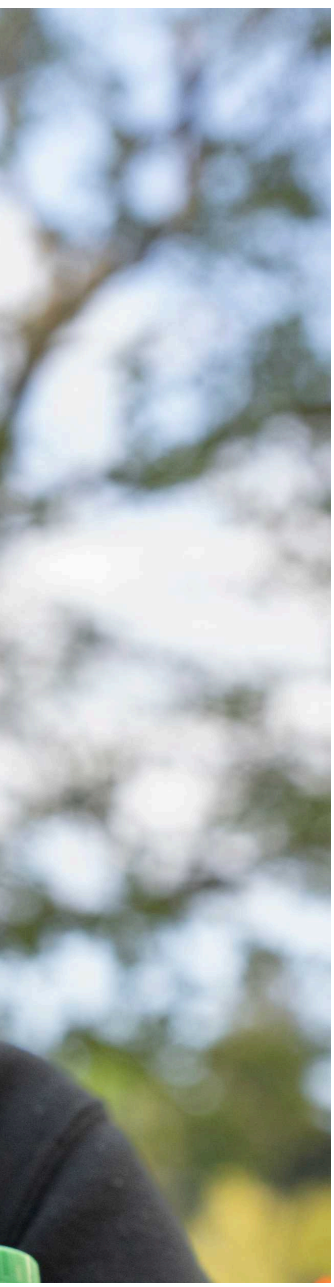
GROSVENOR



Session 2: Nature Walk (Photo: Lubka Gangarova)

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Research Question



What would an Upper Grosvenor Gardens envisioned by young people look like?

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Acknowledgements & Audit Report

Delivery Team

Tranquil City:
- Grant Waters, Director
- Nadia Lowe, Impact Researcher

London Heritage Quarter:
- Oliver Barden
- Ayesha Khalil

Grosvenor:
- Chloe McFarlane
- Nicola Rochfort
- Elizabeth Randall

Acknowledgements

We'd like to thanks our funders & partners:

Grosvenor
- People Positive Community Fund (2025)

Westminster City Council, Parks Team:
- Louise Handley

Caxton Youth:
- Stefan Filby
- Sarah Wilson-Black

Cardinal Hume:
- Rachel Neuer
- Aimee Kinniburgh

We received support and guidance from:

Youth Clubs:
- Cardinal Hume Centre
- Caxton Youth Organisation
- Churchill Gardens Youth Club
- The Feathers Association
- St Andrew's Club

Youth Charities:
- The Queen's Commonwealth Trust
- King's Foundation

Secondary school or colleges:
- Westminster City School
- Westminster Kingsway College / Capital City College Westminster centre
- Pimlico Academy
- The Grey Coat Hospital School
- London Park School Sixth Form

Audit Report

Version	Date	Description	Authors	Reviewer
00	June 2026	Draft for client comment	Grant Waters Nadia Lowe	Grant Waters Ben Warren
01	July 2026	Revised draft for comment	Grant Waters Nadia Lowe	Grant Waters Ben Warren
02	August 2026	Revised version incorporating Grosvenor & LHQ comments	Grant Waters Nadia Lowe	Grant Waters Ben Warren
03	September 2026	Minor amendments	Grant Waters Nadia Lowe	Grant Waters Ben Warren

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Contents

1. Executive Summary
2. Upper Grosvenor Gardens
3. Project Aims & Objectives
4. Why Young People?
5. Recruitment & Incentives
6. Programme Overview
7. Baseline Insights
8. Session Results
    a. Session 1: Kick-off
    b. Session 2: Nature Walk
    c. Session 3: Hear from Experts
    d. Session 4: Get Creative
    e. Session 5: Vision & Manifesto
9. The Manifesto
10. Programme Impact
11. Stories
12. Next Steps
13. References

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Executive Summary

Tranquil City, an environmental research and innovation company, partnered with London Heritage Quarter and Grosvenor to deliver a youth engagement programme focused on opportunities to reimagine Upper Grosvenor Gardens, a green space beside Victoria Station.

The programme engaged 22 young people across five structured sessions, building their understanding of green space design, planning and wellbeing; strengthening their confidence and sense of agency in shaping local spaces; and producing a youth-led manifesto to help inform future plans for the gardens.

The programme prioritised young people who either lived, studied or took part in a youth club in this part of Westminster. Young people in the area have less access to green space than peers elsewhere in London and the UK, while also facing pressures around education, employment, mental health and housing. The programme combined insights from the Voice.Opportunity.Power engagement model [4] and Tranquil City's Aewell Framework [1] to build a programme that was enjoyable and led to a meaningful manifesto.

Recruitment attracted 72 applications. 53% of applicants lived or studied locally, and were part of 6 youth groups, and 9 schools and colleges.

Young people took part in five sessions, across 5 weeks in April - May 2026. This included a kickoff workshop; a nature walk and journaling exercise in the gardens; expert talks on policy, inclusive landscape design and environmental psychology; a creative session generating vision statements and over 200 solution ideas; and a final session developing and pitching their youth-led manifesto to a panel of partners.

The resulting manifesto sets out seven of the group's priorities for Upper Grosvenor Gardens: a welcoming and accessible space; better connections to the surrounding area; more colour and natural light; comfort for people with allergies; opportunities for peace and quiet; more activities for everyone; and storytelling that reflects the gardens' heritage and nature. These priorities are set alongside a range of small, medium and large-scale solutions that help realise this manifesto for a more appealing, enjoyable and inclusive Upper Grosvenor Gardens.

The programme delivered measurable impact: participants' average skills confidence improved; their connection to nature increased, as well as their confidence in their ability to influence positive change in green spaces. By the close of the programme, participants described feeling inspired, happy, confident, excited, determined, creative, hopeful and purposeful.

22 attendees

22 young people attended 80% or more of the programme sessions, with 16 participating in 100% of the sessions.

+26%

in nature connection score, comparing young people's feelings before and after the programme sessions

+21%

in participant confidence level for important skills that they wanted to develop

+18%

in participants' confidence to make positive changes to green spaces in their area



Participants Nature Journalling (Photo: Lubka Gangarova)

"I've gained creativity and collaboration skills to create ideas that appeal to many different types of people."

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026



Workshop Activities (Photo: Mickey Lee)

"I feel like I've noticed more since this course, and in my personal life, I have ended up spending more time in nature."

Following from the programme, the manifesto and and shortlisted solutions will be finalised into a public-facing pamphlet for public launch. This is hoped to spark discussions for on-going improvements in and around the gardens and help shape how local partners and landowners approach future works and interventions.

The programme format, materials and activities will be developed into a template model to further engage young people in the planning and design of green spaces across London and beyond.

'Excellent'

overall programme rating by participants

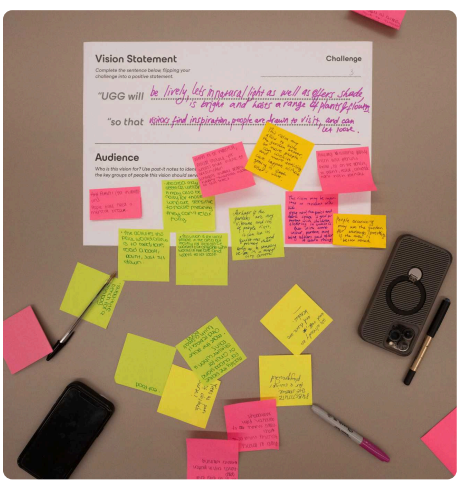
£3,048

paid to young people in London Living Wage equivalent rewards

1 x Manifesto

A youth-led manifesto outlining a bold vision for Upper Grosvenor Gardens and practical solutions for how to realise it.

"I've developed my confidence and knowledge in the environment. I've learnt how a few ideas can come together to make change."



Vision Statement (Photo: Mickey Lee)



A team presenting their yoga solution (Photo: Mickey Lee)

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Upper Grosvenor Gardens

Upper Grosvenor Gardens sits in the heart of Westminster, close to its sister space, Lower Grosvenor Gardens. It is a green pocket framed by mature trees, ornamental planting, benches and sculpture, including a striking statue of a lioness.

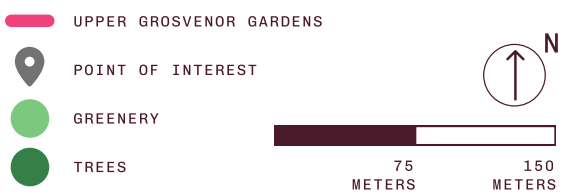
The gardens are owned and managed by Westminster City Council. The young people we worked with described the space as feeling bare, closed off and isolated, with gates that signal "look but don't touch" rather than welcome people in. The surrounding roads bring noise and traffic, access points are limited, and the gardens sometimes close earlier than their listed hours suggest. Together, these factors make the space harder to discover and linger in than it could be.

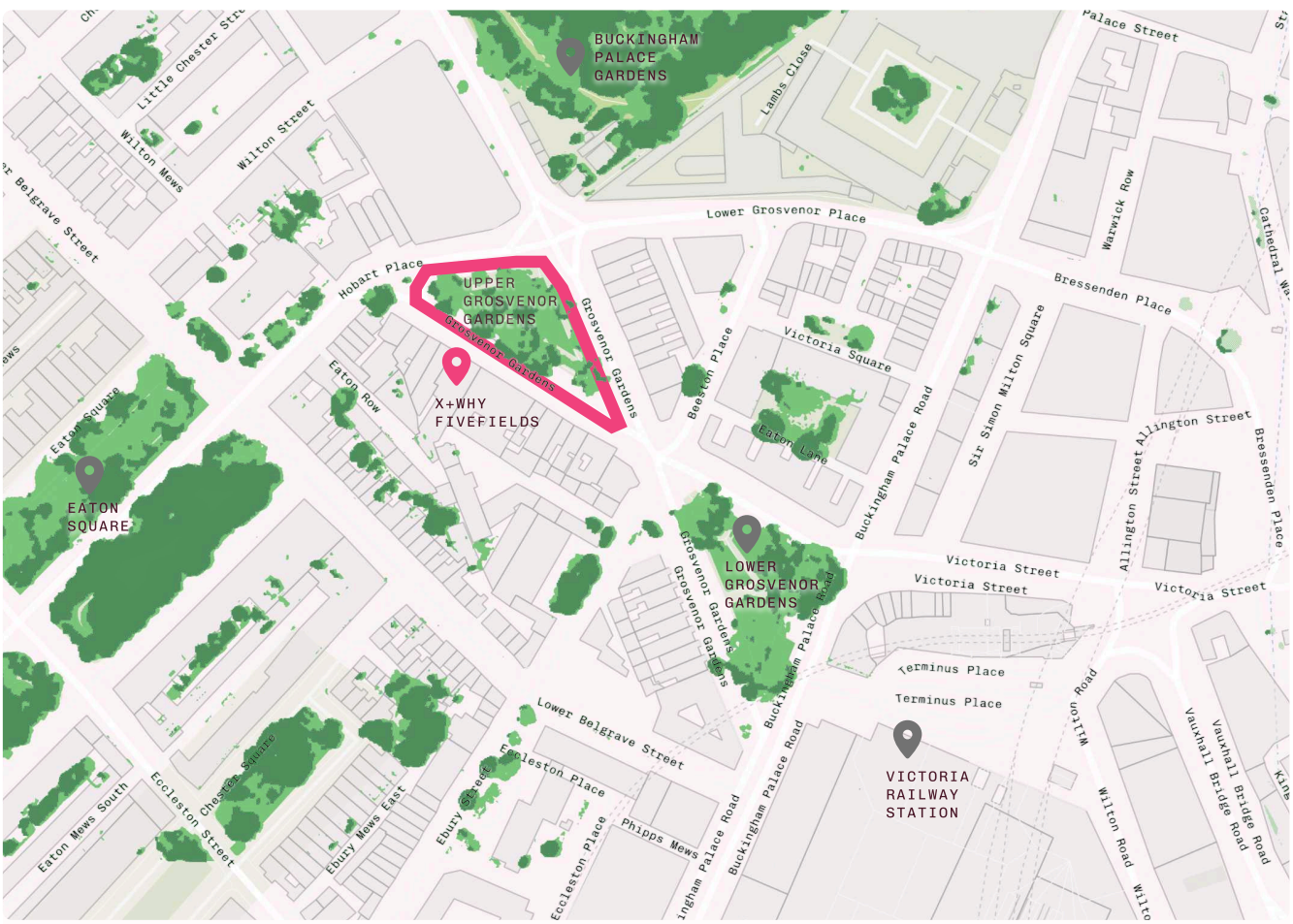
This report explores those challenges in detail and sets out a manifesto, created by young people, for how they might be addressed.

Challenges:

1. Limited awareness and signage for garden at nearby stations, high-streets, or hubs
2. Surrounding roads are difficult to cross to access the gardens
3. Gardens are shaded by large plane trees and buildings that reduce sunlight into the space and make it feel dark
4. High levels of noise and pollution due to surrounding traffic
5. Limited diversity of seating and only available on the perimeter of the park, restricts a variety of uses for the gardens
6. Few programmed events that encourage visits to the gardens outside of passing visitors

Map Key





Map showing the location of Upper Grosvenor Gardens and the venue for the sessions, X+Why FiveFields (© OpenStreetMap contributors, © Greater London Authority)

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Project Aims

Our central aim was to demonstrate a clear, repeatable process for involving young people in the enhancement of local green spaces, and to do so in a way that produces genuinely useful results for those planning improvements.

The programme was designed to support 20-25 young people to become informed advocates for Upper Grosvenor Gardens, equipping them with the knowledge, confidence and experience to contribute meaningful ideas. Research commissioned by Grosvenor (2020) highlighted a significant gap in accounting for the views of young adults in the consultation process - 89% of young adult's aged 16-18 have never been asked about their neighbourhood, and only 8% have ever attended a public consultation [2].

These aims align closely with the priorities of our partners, Westminster City Council, London Heritage Quarter and Grosvenor.

Objectives

- Engage up to 25 young people across five structured sessions.
- Build participants' understanding of green space design, planning and wellbeing.
- Improve participants' confidence and sense of agency in shaping local spaces.
- Produce a youth-led manifesto with evidence-based recommendations for consideration by local partners and landowners.
- Demonstrate how youth-led engagement can be delivered in a way that is enjoyable for participants, empowers them to think creatively about their environment, and produces tangible outputs for delivery.

It should be noted that this programme intended to generate ideas, spark interest and open up conversations for how underrepresented groups can take part in green space regeneration. Any future implementation of the manifesto is dependent on local partners and landowners.



A participant brainstorming creative ideas during a programme session (Photo: Mickey Lee)

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Why Young People?

We focused the programme on young people in this part of Westminster, a group that has less access to green space than in many other parts of London, the UK and beyond.

Young people in the area face a range of pressures, from gaining the practical experience that supports job and education applications, to challenges around mental health, housing affordability, isolation and a shortage of places to simply gather together. At the same time, their voices are often underrepresented in public consultation. This can be because the methods used don't appeal to them, the topic feels distant, or because they lack confidence that their views will genuinely influence the outcome. Design teams, in turn, often find young people harder to reach, without always understanding what motivates them to take part and stay engaged.

This is the gap we wanted to address. By combining the Voice.Opportunity.Power [4] engagement model, designed specifically to bring young people into the process, with our Aewell [1] approach to nature engagement and wellbeing assessment, we set out to create a programme that young people would actively want to join, contribute to and enjoy. Our goal was both to gather insight on how people experience the green space and to build skills for their early careers.

Recruitment & Incentives

We knew that reaching young people meant meeting them where they already are. We worked with Caxton Youth and Cardinal Hume youth charities, schools such as Grey Coat Hospital School, and local networks to understand what would appeal to their groups and tailoring the programme around their needs and aspirations.

Incentives were designed around what young people told us matters. Recognising the value of their time, we offered the London Living Wage for the full duration of attendance, five sessions of two hours each. Every participant also received refreshments, a certificate of participation and a personalised reference letter to support future job and education applications. We promoted the programme through posters and social media assets shared across partner channels.

Selection considered the strength of each applicant's interest statement, their connection to local youth groups, and whether they lived or studied in the area.

The result was an engaged and varied group, well placed to deliver immediate value through their recommendations while building longer-term skills and a lasting connection to their local environment.



Participants taking a break during a session at X+Why FiveFields (Photo: Mickey Lee)

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Recruitment Results

72

Applications

53%

Live or study in area

6

Youth Clubs

9

Schools, Colleges, Uni's

31

Shortlisted

25

Participants Confirmed

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Programme Overview

The programme brought together participants across five sessions, one per week, running from 14th April to 11th May 2026.

The five sessions:

1. Kick-off - building the team and benchmarking views on green space.
2. Nature Walk - exploring and getting to know Upper Grosvenor Gardens.
3. Hear from Experts - linking experiences to design and wellbeing evidence.
4. Get Creative - developing visions and brainstorming solutions.
5. Vision & Manifesto - prioritising ideas and pitching final proposals.

Measurement & Evaluation
We measured progress throughout. A launch survey captured aspirations and starting skill levels, short feedback surveys followed each session, and a closing survey reflected on what participants had learned and experienced.

Themes & Skills
The programme was designed to encourage participants to form new connections, collaborate as a team, and gain skills in the environment, landscape and planning sectors. to build their confidence to affect positive change. We believe this will build upon their confidence and improve their perception of how they can affect positive change in green spaces.

Programme Journey
The journey moved from foundation building and hands-on assessment, through expert insight, into creative development, and finally to a youth-led manifesto of prioritised, evidence-backed recommendations for consideration by local partners and landowners.



1 - Kick-off

14th April 4:30 pm-6:30 pm

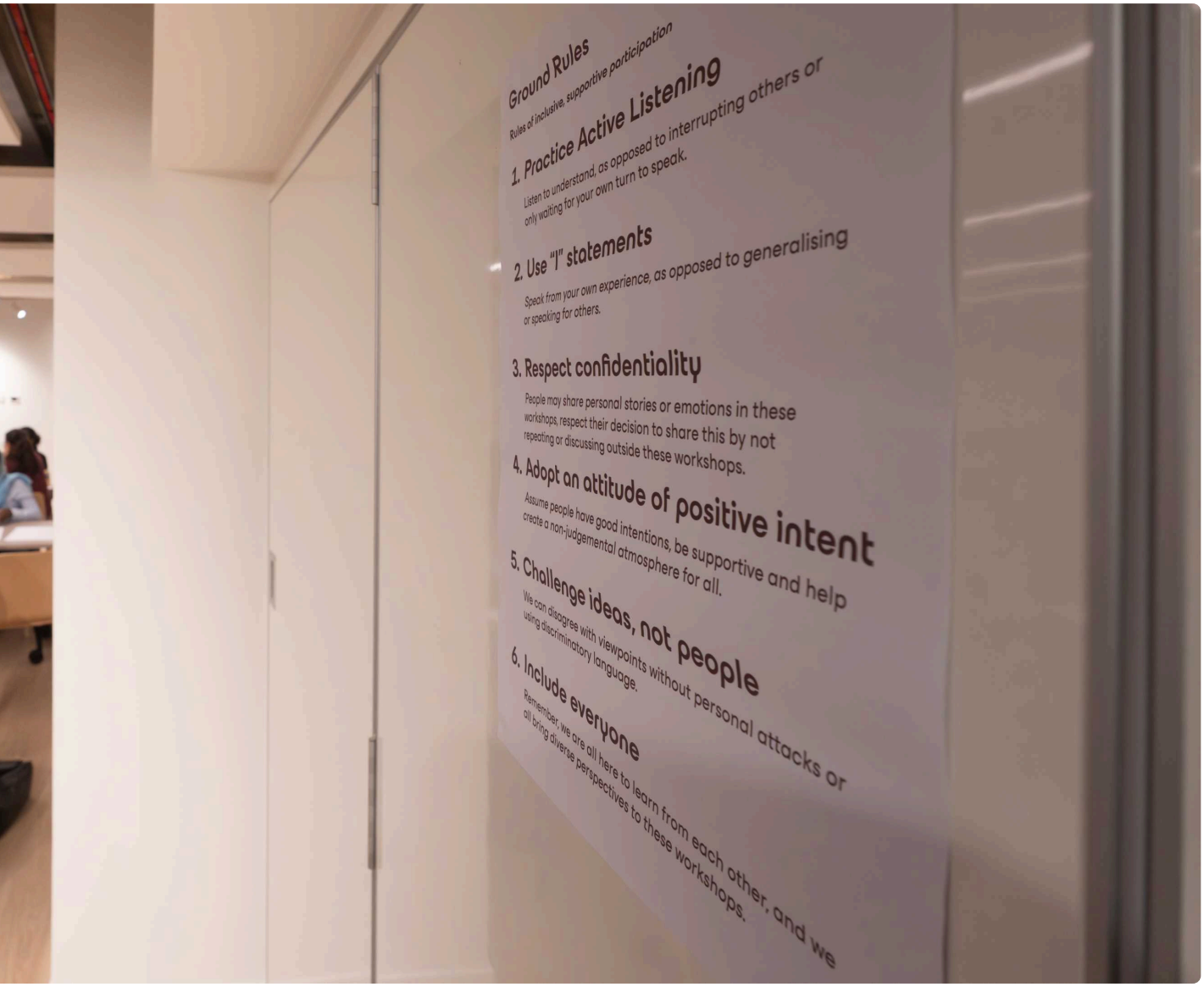
- Meet the team
- Set goals & aspirations
- Programme outline
- Q&A

2 - Nature Walk

21st April 4:30 pm-6:30 pm

- Explore the gardens
- Notice nature journals
- Reflect on wellbeing
- Share improvement idea and concepts

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026



Participants working in groups with the 'Ground Rules' in the foreground (Photo: Mickey Lee)

3 - Expert Sessions

28th April 4:30 pm-6:30 pm

- Visiting experts in environmental psychology and landscape design
- Discover what make spaces feel welcoming and restorative
- Connect to own experiences

4 - Get Creative

5th May 4:30 pm-6:30 pm

- Brainstorm ideas
- Sketch & expand ideas
- Group discussion and process to select key design ideas and concepts
- Construct an outline vision manifesto

5 - Vision & Manifesto

11th May 4:30 pm-6:30 pm

- Refine solution ideas
- Map onto vision statements
- Explore ideas for key next steps and communication
- Celebrate achievements!

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Baseline Insights

Before the sessions began, we asked participants a set of questions to understand where the group was starting from. This gave us a valuable baseline against which to measure change.

We explored why young people what they hoped to learn, and which skills they most wanted to develop. We also asked about their existing connection to nature, and how confident they felt in their ability to influence the green spaces around them.

"I care for nature and think it's a good thing - but feel like I should go out more in it."

"I have an awareness of nature, but not necessarily a relationship with it"

"Living in an urban area, I don't have as much of a connection to nature as I'd like to."

"The most important skill to me is building confidence in contributing my ideas within a co-design environment, as I want to ensure my perspectives are clearly expressed and have an impact."

"Growing up in London has introduced me to many green spaces, but London is still a city crowded with buildings, so I don't feel as connected with nature."

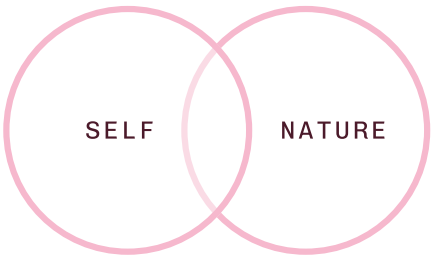


Quotes from the launch survey completed at the beginning of Session 1
Photo of a bluebell in Upper Grosvenor Gardens (Photo: Lubka Gangarova)

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

On Nature Connection

At the start of the programme, the average Nature Connection score across 17 responses was as per the circles on the right (AO03)



Nearly half of the comments shared that they either care for nature and have a desire to engage more with nature in some way, and others shared that they lack a connection to nature due to living in an urban environment or that they do not know what it means to be connected to nature.

On Skills & Learning

At the start of the programme, the most important skills people wanted to develop, are shown on the right. The average confidence level in those skills was 6/10 (60%).

COMMUNICATION SKILLS
CONFIDENCE
TEAMWORK
NETWORKING
TRANSFERABLE SKILLS
LEADERSHIP
CREATIVITY
PROFESSIONAL SKILLS
HOW TO CO-DESIGN PROJECTS FOR COMMUNITY WELLBEING
GAIN KNOWLEDGE OF PLACEMAKING, URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND ENVIRONMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

AVERAGE SKILL CONFIDENCE: 60%

A participant shared their confidence level was a 3/10 for 'talking to new people', while five other participants included communication skills as the most important skill they would like to learn. Besides communication skills, 5 participants stated their desire to gain confidence, with one person specifically stating, "The most important skill to me is building confidence in contributing my ideas within a co-design environment, as I want to ensure my perspectives are clearly expressed and have an impact," and another person sharing that both confidence and communication are important.

On Affecting Change

Out of 13 responses, the average confidence level for participants in their ability to make positive changes to green spaces in their area was 6/10.

6 out of 10

average confidence level to affect positive changes to local green spaces

- INTERESTED
- CONFIDENT
- VALUABLE
- NEEDED
- EXCITED
- CONCERNED
- IMPACTFUL
- CONFUSED
- DETERMINED

Out of 36 words given, the most used words for participants when describing how they felt about making changes to green spaces in their area were 'excited', 'confident', 'needed', 'determined', 'interested', 'valuable', and 'impactful. While most of the words were positive, 2 participants shared that they felt either 'confused' or 'concerned'.

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026
© TRANQUIL CITY 2026



Session 2: Nature Walk (Photo: Lubka Gangarova)

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Session by Session Results



How did the young people create their manifesto for Upper Grosvenor Gardens?

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026
© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Session 1: Kick-off

Objective: to establish a positive, working team and benchmark how the group perceives different types of green space.

We began with introductions and an icebreaker exploring childhood memories and how they connected to green spaces. Many in the group recalled a fond memory set in a green space with other young people, but only a handful felt they could have a similar experience today. That gap became something we wanted to help close.

In the first activity, participants shared what brought them to the programme, their links to the local area, their favourite places in Westminster and what they love most about nature. In the second, they responded to ten green space cards, from a woodland path to an urban pond, rating whether they would visit each and explaining why.

What we found was a group here for a real range of reasons. Many wanted to build confidence, communication skills and practical experience for their CVs. Others arrived with a clear desire to contribute to something meaningful, from positive change to creating more inclusive spaces. A few were refreshingly honest about wanting to be paid to share their ideas or to see more greenery near their school, and we welcomed that too.

When asked about their preferences of local green spaces, St James's Park and Vincent Square came up repeatedly as favourites. When it came to nature itself, birdsong, water and wildlife stood out: for this group, nature is something experienced through the senses.

The second activity invited the young people to rate a selection of 10 green space types for how likely they are to visit or avoid. The pond and ornamental gardens resonated most strongly, while playing fields and community gardens landed least well. A recurring theme was that beautiful spaces can still feel unwelcoming when their formality signals "look but don't touch." This insight has shaped how we think about Upper Grosvenor Gardens ever since.

Key headlines:

- The young people wanted to: build confidence, develop their communication skills, gain experience for their CV.
- They wanted to affect positive change and create more 'inclusive spaces'
- Their top rated garden elements were the flower displays in Lower Grosvenor Gardens and pond feature in the Japanese Garden, White City.

Layout: Circular chairs + 5 x breakout groups



YPUGG kick-off session group photo

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Objective:
To establish a positive, working team and benchmark how we all perceive a variety of green space types

Session Objective

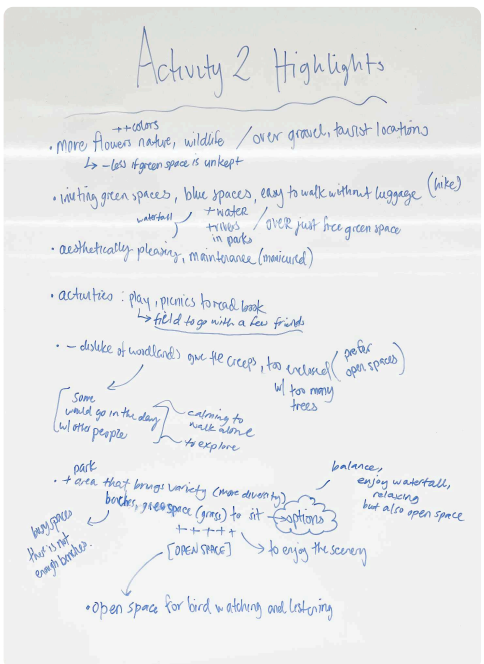


Participants shared views on a variety of green spaces

Agenda

1. Welcome & sign-in
2. Check-in
3. Session Explainer & Icebreaker
4. Activity 1: Get to know each other!
5. Break (5 mins)
6. Activity 2: Green Space Perceptions
7. Reflection & Debrief
8. Check-out
9. Thank you & Feedback Form

Session Agenda



Summary of green space type perceptions





Participants completing activity 2 in breakout groups

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Session 2: Nature Walk

Objective: to explore Upper Grosvenor Gardens directly and notice how the group responds to the space.

We walked over to the gardens and gave each participant a Nature Journal containing four creative tasks: focusing on the senses, seeking beauty, exploring emotions and finding meaning [3]. Working in groups and armed with digital cameras, participants chose a task and set off to document what they noticed.

Participants noticed the statue of a lioness, magnificent trees, flowers and shrubs. They heard birdsong alongside the wind, traffic and construction. They described the fresh scent of flowers and grass, mixed at times with the less welcome smell of traffic fumes. They touched roses, leaves and the smooth wood of the benches.

The group found beauty in the abundance of trees, the peonies, the light coming through the leaves, the benches and the sculptures. The space stirred calm, awe, fascination and joy, with the trees and flowers especially moving people, though pollen left some feeling rough. Participants even told stories of the garden's life, from the lioness and the London plane tree to a little and big pigeon.

Unfortunately, despite the later curfew listed on the council's website, we were asked to leave the gardens by 6pm and could not complete the planned second activity. We returned to FiveFields for a debrief and reflection, and to warm up.

What surprised us most was the creativity on display. Watching the group explore, sketch, interact and tell stories about the life within the gardens was a genuine highlight.



Completing the activities (Photo: Lubka Gangarova)

Key headlines:

- Things sensed were the statue of a lioness, enormous, magical trees, flowers scent, shrubs, people talking, wind, birdsong, cars, buses, motorcycles, construction, pollen, texture of leaves and smooth benches
- Emotions triggered were: calm, awe, fascination and joy, wonder, gratitude and 'felt rubbish' because of the pollen
- Participants really enjoyed the creative, story-telling and sketching activity.



Layout: Exploring Upper Grosvenor Gardens



Sketching in the Nature Journals (Photo: Lubka Gangarova)



Nature walk briefing in UGG (Photo: Lubka Gangarova)

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Objective:
To explore Upper Grosvenor Gardens, connect to nature and our surroundings and evaluate our experience

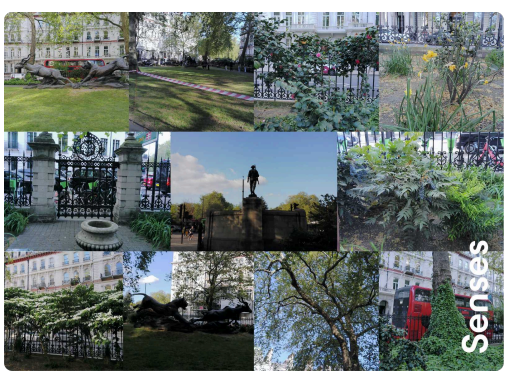
Session Objective



Agenda

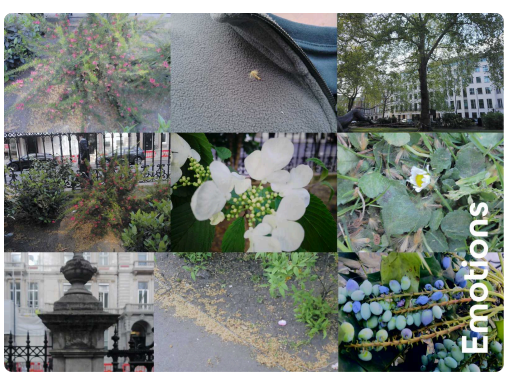
1. Welcome & Sign-in
2. Check-in
3. Session Explainer
4. Before Questions
5. Activity 1: Noticing Nature
6. Break
7. Activity 2: Rate the Spots
8. After Questions & Feedback
9. Check-out
10. Thank you!

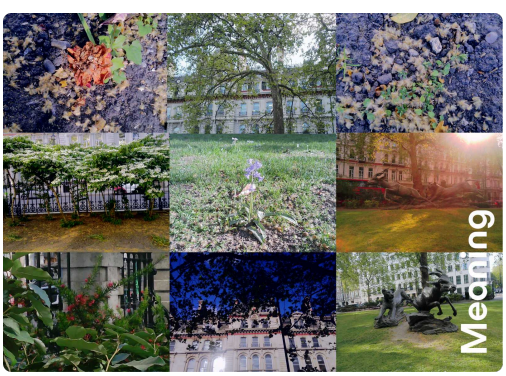
Session Agenda











Top left:
Participants sharing their views to the group during the nature walk

Centre right:
Participants taking photos of elements they noticed in the gardens with digital cameras

Left & bottom:
Photography from young people during the nature walk activities

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Session 3: Hear from Experts

Objective: to map the group's current experience of the gardens and connect it to what design and psychology tell us works in urban green spaces.

We opened by sharing notes and photos from the nature walk, revisiting what participants had found beautiful and the stories they had told. In the first activity, the group shared more than 50 features they liked, disliked or felt could be improved, then rated how strongly they agreed with a series of statements designed to reveal the gardens' strengths and weaknesses.

We then heard from our expert panel. Nadia Lowe and Grant Waters (Tranquil City) explained how environmental psychology shapes the way we use green spaces, how greenery can reduce impact of traffic noise, and how planting choices affect air quality and pollen. Oliver Barden (LHQ) shared his top five landscape design principles: accessibility and inclusivity; safety and comfort; things to do and flexibility; connection to nature; and a sense of place and community. Louise Handley, a Relationships Officer for Westminster City Council's (WCC) Parks, Greenspace and Cemeteries team, reflected on how realistic and needed the group's ideas were, and on the council's priorities for biodiversity, climate-resilient planting and welcoming spaces.

The group liked the large central tree, the flowers and small details, the open space and places to sit. They felt the gardens could offer more lighting, seating, colour and things to do, and feel more open and welcoming. Dislikes centred on pollen, the bare and isolated feel, limited access and surrounding traffic.

Key headlines:

- Appealing features in Upper Grosvenor Gardens were: trees, flowers, colourful elements, open space, space to sit, nice path to walk around
- Things that could be better were: more lighting, less shaded areas, statue positioning blocked lawn use, entrances felt closed off and poor signage/access
- Things that they didn't like: a lot of pollen from plane trees, bare and not very welcoming, feels isolated and not connected, traffic is dominating
- The group didn't pass through the area often, they felt only moderately connected to nature there, were unlikely to bring their friends, and were not inclined to return.

Layout: Seminar style desks with activity boards at the rear and a presenter and screen at the front for expert lectures



Louise Handley of WCC shared insights into green space policy and priorities of the local area



Oliver Barden of LHQ sharing top landscape design principles to help the group critique what they experienced at UGG

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Objective:
To map key evidence that informs and supports your own experiences in Upper Grosvenor Gardens

Session Objective

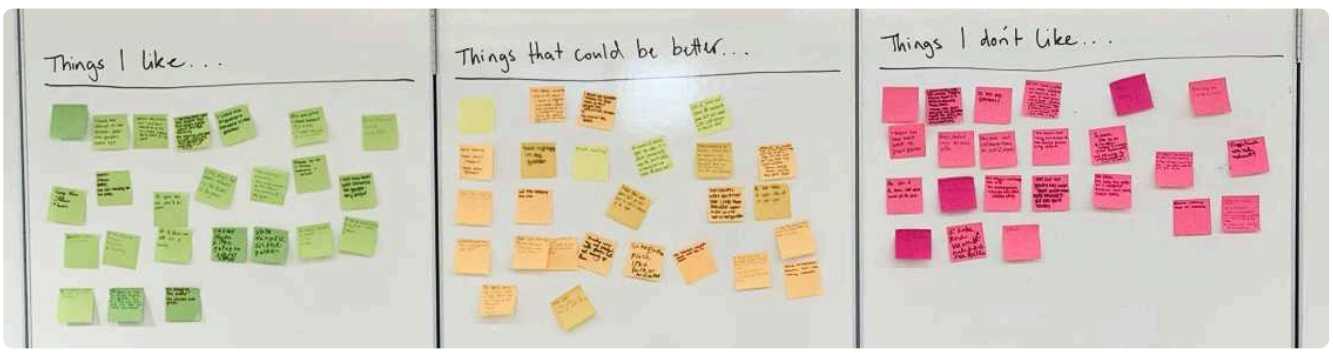


Nadia Lowe of Tranquil City shares 'Environmental Psychology 101' session to the group

Agenda

1. Welcome & sign-in
2. Check-in
3. Session Explainer
4. Activity 1: Reflections on UGG
5. Break (5 mins)
6. Activity 2: Hear from the Experts
7. Reflection & Debrief
8. Check-out
9. Thank you & Feedback Form

Session Agenda





Session outputs included a reflection on how the group liked or didn't like different elements in UGG and what elements could be better. They also reported back on how their use and perceptions of the space, such as being able to relax there, and if they would invite friends to visit the gardens. Generally, the group disagreed with the statements.

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Session 4: Get Creative

Objective: to turn the challenges identified so far into vision statements, and to develop a wide range of solutions to support them.

In the first activity, groups each took a single challenge and reshaped it into a vision statement, thinking carefully about how it affects them and others with particular needs. The statements they produced imagined a garden that:

1. Feels welcoming, safe and accessible.
2. Is better connected to Lower Grosvenor Gardens and feels safer to move through.
3. Is lively and full of natural light, shade, plants and flowers, inviting people to relax.
4. Uses low-pollen planting so visitors with allergies feel comfortable.
5. Has reduced noise so the public can make the most of the space.
6. Offers plenty to interest a range of visitors
7. Has statues that convey their meaning and spark interest.

This was a wide-ranging, practical and thoughtful set of aspirations, ready to be refined and prioritised in the final session.

Before the second activity, a short warm-up invited the group to substitute, combine and modify features in the garden to get them into a creative mindset. They then brainstormed an enormous list of solutions, more than 200 in total, ranging from colourful planting, grand entrances and signage to food markets, outdoor cinemas, yoga sessions, zip lines, bridges, ponds and basketball courts. The group truly thought outside the box.

The feedback was overwhelmingly excellent. This session asked for real mental energy, and we were impressed by everything the group put into it. After the groundwork of earlier weeks, it was clear they were excited to start shaping their vision for UGG.



Creative brainstorming (Photo: Mickey Lee)

Key headlines:

- The group was excited to begin offering their solution ideas for UGG
- The vision statement exercise help structure their thoughts from challenges to a positive future for the gardens
- Solutions ranged: layout, planting, biodiversity, water features, lighting, seating, tables, food and drink, events and programming, entrances, art installations and connection to nearby areas.

Layout: Group Workshop arrangement in teams of 4 or 5 with activity boards at the rear and front, and a presenter and screen at the front for expert lectures



Team member presentation of transforming a 'challenge' statement into a 'vision statement' (Photo: Mickey Lee)



Discussions about vision statements (Photo: Mickey Lee)

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Objective:
To create vision statements and develop a wide range of solutions that support each vision statement.

Session Objective

Agenda

1. Welcome & sign-in
2. Check-in
3. Session Explainer
4. Activity 1: Vision Statements
5. Break (5 mins)
6. Activity 2: Bring Your Visions to Life
7. Reflection & Debrief
8. Check-out
9. Thank you & Feedback Form

Session Agenda

Create a list of solutions that help realise the vision statements in Upper Grosvenor Gardens!



Consolidated solutions list generated by the group at the creative brainstorming activity (2), showing small (green), medium-sized (yellow) and large solutions (red). There were 80+ distinct ideas generated for improvements to Upper Grosvenor Gardens to help realise the vision statements.

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Session 5: Vision & Manifesto

Objective: to agree the final vision concepts and a prioritised list of ideas for the gardens.

This closing session brought everything together. In the first activity, each group was given a budget of three small, two medium and one large solution. Their task was to choose the six ideas they believed would most powerfully transform Upper Grosvenor Gardens, then craft a three-minute pitch, complete with reasoning and either a sketch or a live skit.

The pitches were a joy. Five groups presented, each with its own name and creative flair:

- UGG Before & After contrasted the gardens today, hard to find and traffic-heavy, with an easier, calmer, traffic-free future.
- Later to Grosvenor made the case for colour and welcome through flower baskets, maintenance, picnic equipment, free wifi, inventive seating and a new landmark.
- The Zen Zone imagined a peaceful retreat with yoga sessions, helped by quieter surrounding roads.
- Mission pictured a lively garden with a children's playground, community events, longer opening hours and a hopscotch grid.
- Live, Laugh, UGG envisioned a striking water feature, sociable garden tables and new statues reflecting the community's true heritage and diversity.

Across the five pitches, 23 solutions were shortlisted, spanning landscape and maintenance, design and wayfinding, things to do, events, and heritage and interest. Together they paint a clear picture of a garden that is welcoming, connected, lively, peaceful and rooted in its community.

We celebrated with pizza and a showcase of highlights. Our partners from Grosvenor and London Heritage Quarter were genuinely impressed, not only by the ingenuity of the ideas but by the care the group took in considering how each would change the experience of the gardens for real people.

Key headlines:

- Five pitches of UGG improvements combinations that included 3 x small, 2 x medium-sized and 1 large solutions
- Presentations included sketches, detailed plans, live demos and skits to demonstrate how their proposed changes will result in a better visitor experience.
- The groups showed such ingenuity and creativity, and had great feedback from the LHQ and Grosvenor expert panel

Layout: Group Workshop arrangement with a guest panel in the front centre to provide feedback on presentations and solutions



Detailed proposed plan of UGG by one workshop participant (Photo: Mickey Lee)

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Objective:
To agree upon the final vision concepts and a prioritised list of ideas for UGG.

Session Objective

Agenda

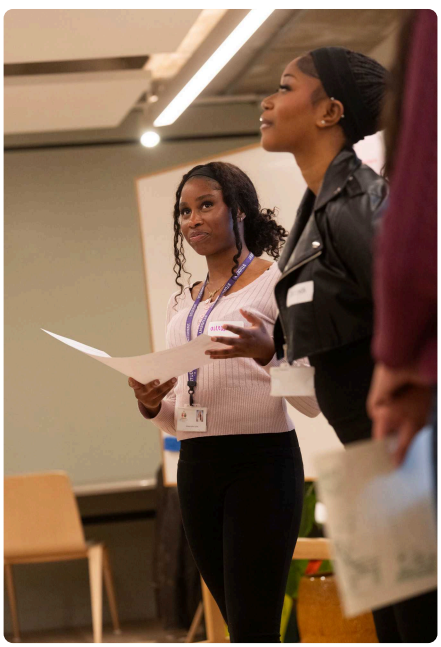
1. Welcome & sign-in
2. Check-in
3. Session Explainer
4. Activity 1: Develop a Proposal
5. Activity 2: Pitch Presentations
6. Celebratory Review & Reflect
7. Check-out
8. Thank you

Session Agenda



An expert panel (LHQ/Grosvenor) providing feedback. The panel were impressed by the practicality of the solutions, and how they considered the ways they might affect visitor experience (Photo: Mickey Lee)









Group presentations and skits of their proposed solution combinations, including programme yoga sessions, water features, better entrances and crossings from nearby areas, and more signage from Victoria station (Photos: Mickey Lee)

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026



Session 2: Nature Walk (Photo: Lubka Gangarova)

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

The Manifesto



So, what is the manifesto for Upper Grosvenor Gardens that the young people created?

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Young People's Manifesto for

Upper Grosvenor Gardens

Upper Grosvenor Gardens will...

Feel welcoming and more accessible
A safe, scenic space with easy entry that actively invites young people and the wider community in.

Be better connected to Lower Grosvenor Gardens
Linked to Lower Grosvenor Gardens and the surrounding area, so moving between gardens feels natural and safe.

Be lively with colour and natural light
Vibrant planting, natural light, and ample shade will make the gardens a place that inspires creativity and invites people to linger.

Be comfortable for people with allergies
Low-pollen planting that makes the gardens enjoyable for visitors with allergies, not just those without.

Offer peace and quiet
Reduced noise from surrounding traffic, so the gardens can be a genuine refuge and a place to make the most of.

Have lots going on for everyone
A varied and active programme that gives every visitor, whatever their age or interest, a reason to be here.

Tell powerful stories of its heritage and nature
Statues and heritage features will give context and meaning, so the gardens feel rich with history worth discovering.

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Ideas to realise this manifesto...

small ideas:
things that could be implemented in the shorter term...

1. Organise regular community picnic events where visitors can share food together
2. Create volunteering opportunities to take part in maintaining the garden
3. Offer yoga sessions in the garden, such as a organised classes or a designated self-use yoga area
4. Add information on Upper Grosvenor Gardens on Google Maps and other tourist maps
5. Extend opening hours beyond 6pm
6. Reduce mowing frequency to support wildlife
7. Carry out regular garden maintenance and keep the space well kept and attractive
8. Install outdoor games (hopscotch, noughts & crosses)
9. Make picnic equipment available for visitors
10. Install hanging flower baskets to add more colour

medium-size ideas:
things that need more planning and coordination...

11. Align aesthetic of Upper Grosvenor Gardens with Lower Grosvenor Gardens to connect the gardens
12. Install a safe, accessible pedestrian crossing connecting Lower and Upper Grosvenor Gardens
13. Install street lamps and safety lighting to connect the Upper and Lower Grosvenor Gardens
14. Install a water fountain to help settle pollen, attract visitors and provide a focal point to the garden
15. Provide a variety of seating and tables throughout the garden (benches, picnic tables, lounge chairs) to encourage people to socialise and dwell
16. Programme community events throughout the year, to introduce the garden to a new audiences
17. Install a fun children's playground to bring young families to the garden
18. Introduce food and coffee vendors
19. Free wifi in the garden!

big ideas:
things that will make a big impact but require considerable planning...

20. Commission and install a colourful, and interesting architectural landmark feature
21. Repurpose existing statues or commission new statues that are interactive and more representative of local community and heritage
22. Reduce traffic on roads between Lower and Upper Grosvenor Gardens to create a traffic-free connection and reduce noise and pollution
23. Merge Lower and Upper Grosvenor Gardens to reinstate the historic, larger garden!

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Programme Impact

22 young people completed 80% or more of the sessions, including 16 who attended every single session. We paid a total of £3,048.80 in London Living Wage rewards, and provided 22 references to support participants' job and education applications. Session feedback averaged between "good" and "excellent" throughout.

Most importantly, the group produced a clear, youth-led manifesto with a well-defined set of solutions. Westminster City Council, London Heritage Quarter and Grosvenor all attended sessions and are keen to explore how some of the manifesto's ideas might be turned into reality in the short, medium and long term.

Skills & Confidence
Participant's confidence increased by 21% in all important skills that they wanted to develop. Participants also reported gaining skills in 'solution building' and 'public speaking', which were not mentioned before the programme started.

Connection to Nature
Participant's nature connection score increased by 26% by the end of the programme, with 58% of participant responses mentioned that they increased their connection to nature because of the learning and engagement from the workshops.

Mentions of lower nature connection due living in an urban area also decreased by 67% compared to before the programme began.

Confidence in Ability to Affect Positive Change in Local Green Spaces
Following the programme, participants felt 18% more confidence in making positive changes to green spaces in their area.

"I've gained creativity and collaboration skills to create ideas that appeal to many different types of people."

"My ideas about nature have become more positive as I found out more about what I personally like and what I also might dislike."

"I feel like I've noticed more since this course, and in my personal life, I have ended up spending more time in nature."

"I've developed my confidence and knowledge in the environment. I've learnt how a few ideas can come together to make change."

+26%
in nature connection score , comparing young people's feelings before and after the programme sessions

+21%
in participant confidence level for important skills that they wanted to develop

+18%
in participants' confidence to make positive changes to green spaces in their area

4.7 / 5
overall programme rating by participants

£3,048
paid to young people in London Living Wage equivalent rewards

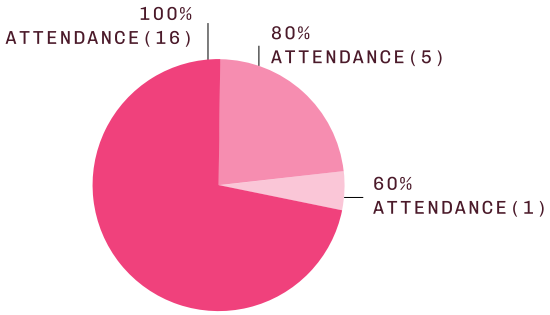
22
personalised reference letters provided to support job and education applications

1 x Manifesto
A youth-led manifesto outlining a bold vision for Upper Grosvenor Gardens and solution ideas for how to realise it.

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

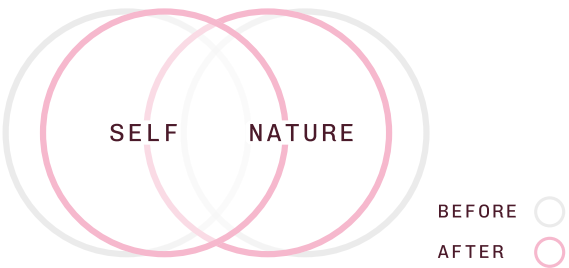
22 attendees

22 young people attended 80% or more of the programme sessions, with 16 participating in 100% of the sessions.



On Nature Connection

At the end of the programme, the average score of nature connection increased by 26% compared to at the start of the programme (AO04)



58% of responses in the closure survey mentioned their connection to nature increased because of the learning and engagement from the workshop. Mentions of longing to engage more with nature or guilt for not having done so decreased by 67%. While there were 3 mentions of a lack of connection to nature during the launch survey, no one described a lack of connection by the end of the workshop.

On Skills & Learning

Participants' confidence increased in all important skills that they wanted to develop. Solution building and public speaking were new skills developed that were not mentioned or expected to be learned at the start of the workshops.

OPEN-MINDED TO LEARNING NEW THINGS

PRESENTING/PUBLIC SPEAKING

SOLUTION BUILDING/PROBLEM SOLVING

COMMUNICATION SKILLS CONFIDENCE

TEAMWORK NETWORKING TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

LEADERSHIP CREATIVITY PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

HOW TO CO-DESIGN PROJECTS FOR COMMUNITY WELLBEING

GAIN KNOWLEDGE OF PLACEMAKING, URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND ENVIRONMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY



On Affecting Change

Comparing responses from the launch survey to the closing survey, there was a 17% increase in participants' confidence to make positive changes to green spaces in their area (6/10 to 7/10)

7 out of 10

average confidence level to affect positive changes to local green spaces

INSPIRED

HAPPY

CONFIDENT

EXCITED

PURPOSEFUL

PROUD

OPTIMISTIC

DETERMINED

HOPEFUL

CREATIVE

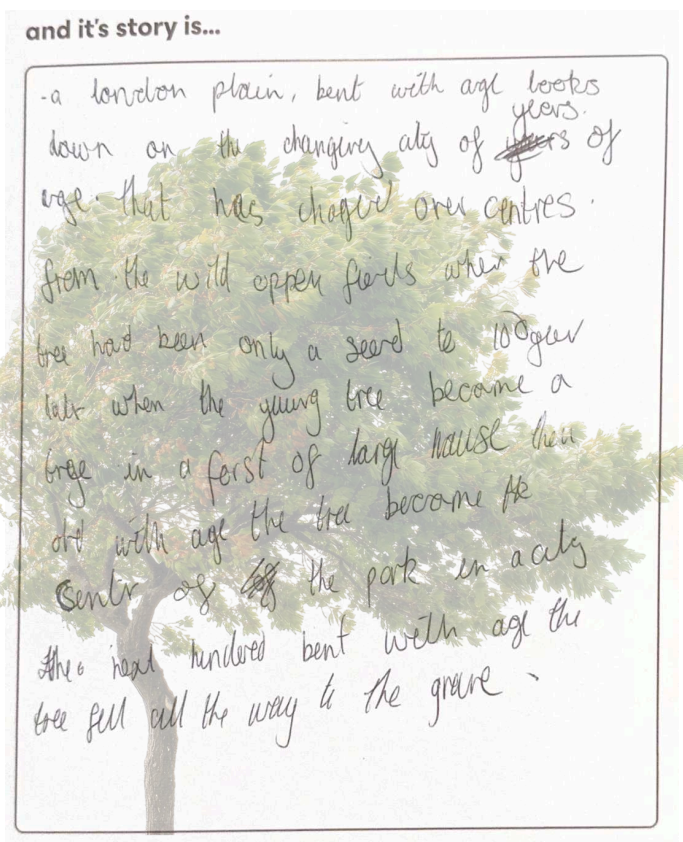
KNOWLEDGE

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Stories of Upper Grosvenor Gardens

One of the most uplifting elements of the workshops, was reading the stories told by the young people during the Nature Journalling exercises. The participants told stories of ancient trees and woodland, thinking about the history of the area and how the gardens came to be. Here are two stories we found particularly inspiring.

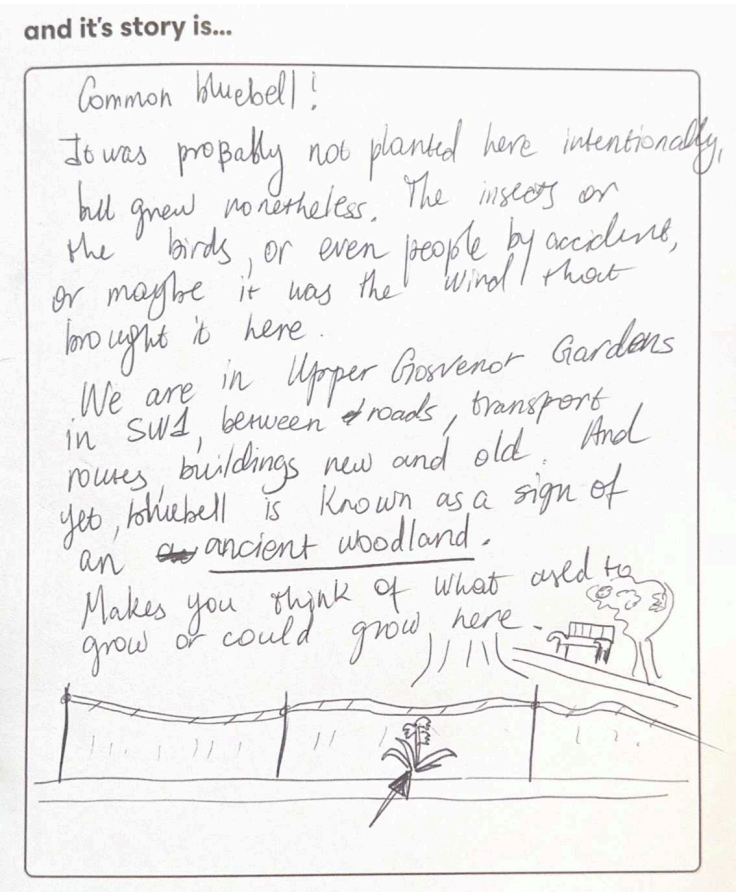
"A London plane, bent with age looks down on the changing city of years of age that has changed our centres. From the wild open fields when the tree had been only a seed to 100 years later when the young tree became a tree in a forest of large, then old with age the tree became the centre of the park in a city. The next hundred bent with age the tree fell all the way to the grave."



Story told in the 'meaning' activity during the Nature Walk session

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

"Common bluebell! It was probably not planted here intentionally, but grew nonetheless. The insects or the birds, or even people by accident, or maybe it was the wind that brought it here. We are in Upper Grosvenor Gardens in SW1, between roads, transport routes, buildings new and old. And yet, bluebell is known as a sign of an ancient woodland. Makes you think of what used to grow or could grow here."



Story told in the 'meaning' activity during the Nature Walk session

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

Next Steps

The manifesto that the young people have created will be publicised and used in feasibility discussions for future works in and around Upper Grosvenor Gardens. Here's how:

Finalise the manifesto

The shortlisted solutions and vision statements will be brought together into a polished, public-facing manifesto pamphlet, which we will share with participants for their feedback and input before it goes live.

Present to Local Partners & Landowners

The manifesto and this report will be presented to key local partners, landowners and Westminster City Council, to spark discussions and open up conversations on how young people, and other underrepresented groups, can meaningfully input into green space and parks redevelopment plans. The feasibility of solutions outlined in the manifesto will be discussed with local partners and landowners to determine how they could support and inform local area improvement plans. It should be noted that any future implementation of the manifesto and solution ideas generated by the young people will require coordination with Westminster City Council, who own and manage Upper Grosvenor Gardens. This shall consider cost, as well as planning permissions and approvals.

Public launch of manifesto

The young people's manifesto will be shared publicly so the widest possible audience can see what they have created. During the sessions, they shared ideas on how this could be widely distributed, including creating short TikTok content, showcasing the pitches, sharing in urban design challenges, partner newsletters and making use of established networks of LHQ and Grosvenor. We also hope to bring participants back together for a reunion to launch the manifesto.

Creation of workshop toolkit for future projects

We will provide template materials to form the basis of a programme pack for future engagement, helping share the insights, knowledge and methods used to empower young people across London, the UK and elsewhere to participate in green space planning and ensure their voices are heard!

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026

References

1. Aewell Framework

Tranquil City (2026) Aewell: Impact assessment framework and toolkit. Available at: https://www.tranquilcity.co.uk/ (Accessed: 12 June 2026).

2. Giving Young People A Voice

Grosvenor (2020) Giving young people a voice: increasing youth participation in how places are made & managed. Available at: https://www.grosvenor.com/property/uk-f346afcca4062fd904b22f82bec4831e/sustainability-e61a0d93d64824159703ac62da083e68/giving-young-people-a-voice (Accessed: 14 July 2026).

3. The Nature Connection Handbook

Richardson, M., & Butler, C.W. (2022). The nature connection handbook: A guide for increasing people's connection with nature. United Kingdom

4. Voice, Opportunity, Power toolkit

Grosvenor Britain & Ireland, TCPA, ZCD Architects and Sport England (2021) Voice, Opportunity, Power: A youth engagement toolkit. Available at: https://voiceopportunitypower.com/ (Accessed: 12 June 2026).

© TRANQUIL CITY 2026


tranquil city