

# Progress in Practice

## Green Gyms

There are over 50 Green Gyms located across the UK, co-ordinated by BTCV. They help people improve their health by taking part in practical conservation activities

### Summary

The aim of BTCV Green Gyms is to improve the health of communities living in areas of social, economic and environmental deprivation by enabling them to improve their local green environment. BTCV Green Gyms create a sustainable resource in the local community as well as benefits for individuals. The typical BTCV Green Gym programme will provide physical exercise from the gentle to the strenuous, will take place for at least one half-day a week and be focused on a particular area such as school grounds or allotments.

BTCV Green Gyms enable people to improve their health and fitness by taking part in practical conservation activities. They are sited in areas of urban and rural deprivation where there are open or green spaces that need to be improved, including parks, school grounds, woodland, allotments and derelict land.



Yvonne Trchalik, Green Gym Development Manager, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, said:

*“BTCV Green Gyms have encouraged people to think more widely about health and creative ways of improving health. The Gyms have helped individuals to develop, increase their leadership skills and self-confidence, and have been a stepping stone to employment.”*

**Links and organisations involved:** The British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) ([www.btcv.org/greengym](http://www.btcv.org/greengym)) works in partnership with Primary Care Trusts, local authorities and community groups. A steering group is set up to identify priorities, funding and communities. The Green Gym is a Registered Trade Mark of BTCV.

### Contact:

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BTCV Green Gyms help people like Nick, who lost his job due to depression. Nick's GP prescribed antidepressants, but Nick "didn't like taking them because of the side effects." His GP then recommended the BTCV Green Gym. Nick comments that "it is important for people to be involved in useful work. The Green Gym has also given me the stamina to be able to do the job I am doing now. I would find it hard to do a 12-hour shift if I hadn't got any stamina."



**Ron Turner, South East Regional Director for the Health Development Agency, said:**

*"To deliver the health inequalities agenda, Primary Care Trusts need to work closely with Non-Governmental Organisation projects, such as BTCV Green Gyms. These are already well engaged in building social capital in local groups and communities, particularly in the areas of improving mental health, encouraging physical activity and reducing social isolation."*

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