

A young boy with dark skin is holding a clear plastic magnifying glass over his right eye. He is looking through the lens. In the background, another child's face is partially visible, looking towards the camera. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with yellow and green foliage.

TGC

Our case for support

**Help reconnect people
with nature**

Since 2008, The Garden Classroom (TGC) has facilitated more than 196,000 creative outdoor experiences, enabling thousands of urban people to thrive.



Welcome - you're in good company



TGC

Our current corporate supporters include:



Sainsbury's
Good food for all of us



UBS



**Sovereign
Network
Group**

**Stronger
Starts.** **TESCO**
Every little helps





The threat of nature deprivation is real


"No one will protect what they don't care about, and no one will care about what they have never experienced." Sir David Attenborough


The need for nature connection in North East London

For people:

 Islington and Hackney are amongst **the most densely populated local authorities in England & Wales** and 71% of Islington and 75% of Hackney residents do not have access to a private garden (as compared to the national average of 13%). This is what Friends of the Earth describe as a **'nature deprived' environment**. The Mental Health Foundation explain the significance of this in their 2021 report in which they highlight nature as a 'critical factor' in prevention and improvement of poor mental health


 Children are suffering from 'nature deficit', a problem that is particularly acute in cities. According to a 2022 survey, **three-quarters of UK children** spend less time outdoors than prison inmates

 The boroughs are also amongst the most ethnically diverse in the country (ONS 2021 Census) and Natural England (2019) reports that **ethnic minorities have 11 times less** access to greenspace. Only 20% of children from global majority backgrounds visit green spaces compared to 40% of white children

 Economic deprivation prevails, with **43% of Hackney and 38% of Islington children live in poverty** (after housing costs) representing the 3rd and 6th highest rates among all London boroughs

 Older people are at a **higher risk of social isolation** given increased rates of poverty and disability in the area.

For the environment:

 In 2019, **82.9% of England's population lived in urban areas**, a proportion that is trending ever upwards. It is vitally important that we proactively enable urban people to understand and connect with the natural world, not just for their own wellbeing, but crucially so they **care about it and want to protect it**. As highlighted in the recent Dasgupta Review: *"Creating an environment from an early age where we are able to connect to nature is essential for self-enforcement in protecting and valuing nature"*





TGC is uniquely suited to address the problem

TGC grew from the seed of a community-driven initiative by our founder and local resident Marnie Rose, who was inspired by her own urban childhood experiences; visits to her Nan's allotment plot in East London, regular visits to Wanstead Flats and Suntrap visits to Epping Forest inspired her to tackle the lack of nature connection opportunities for urban people.

From our pioneering, yet tiny beginnings, we have grown sustainably and now offer a wide range of unique, transformational nature connection experiences to some of the most nature-deprived people in the UK.

"... I recognise that TGC is the most comprehensive outdoor education specialist service provider in London. They have created something which is inspirational and timely and which benefits thousands of young people every year." Professor Justin Dillon, University College London

Wellbeing and sustainability remain at the heart of everything we do as we look to implement our new three-year strategy which will allow us to better serve our communities for the long-term and, by listening and responding to their needs, create greener, wilder, happier and healthier lives for all.



Feel the impact



TGC

- TGC has delivered **7,140** sessions since 2008 and facilitated over **196,000** visits to nature connection activities delivered in and for the community
- We are currently supporting around **230** unique beneficiaries a week. Since the pandemic, which hugely amplified the importance of nature connection, we've supported over **40,000** unique beneficiaries
- We work with **20%** of Islington's schools and School Federations to provide high quality outdoor nature connection experiences to local children in local parks. **75%** of these schools have above national average eligibility for free school meals
- **3,505** children have experienced inclusive countryside day visits and residential, led by trauma informed practitioners and benefitting from a specialist Food Officer
- **1,920** children have benefitted from Urban Forest School, with **94%** of teachers and parents agreeing or strongly agreeing that sessions made their children happier and **97%** agreeing or strongly agreeing that sessions improved their physical wellbeing
- **27% of all TGC beneficiaries** attend our free nature connection activities. Community partnerships with Age UK, Bright Start Islington, LBI Adult Community Learning, Healthy Generations, Hackney Marsh Partnership and Hackney School of Food increase reach and foster inclusivity.
- **120 trainees** have taken part in Level 3 Forest School in-person training and **over 150 teachers** take part in INSET training to take learning outdoors each year, embedding knowledge and skills in the local education system.



“

I like doing these garden sessions with you – they remind me of being at home in Afghanistan.”

At Argyle School, where 90.2% of children speak a language other than English and over 60% are eligible for free school meals, the need for nature connection is critical, especially in an area with some of the highest air pollution levels in the country. At Forest School, a child who had recently arrived from Afghanistan, initially very quiet, opened up after discovering a fig tree in the garden, sharing happy memories of growing figs and cooking over a fire at home before fleeing from the Taliban. Her teacher noted this was the happiest she had ever seen her, illustrating the profound impact of our sessions in fostering emotional connection and wellbeing for children who need it most.



Our areas of work



In everything we do, we focus on increasing access to nature for all, not just for its multiple human benefits but more importantly so that everyone learns to respect and protect the natural world. **Our programmes are for the old and young; we are proud to support every part of our community.**

Our programmes



We are bolstered by our volunteers

TGC is supported by more than 20 regular part time volunteers with a passion for education and the outdoors.

We also offer corporate activities in local green spaces which blend volunteering with staff wellbeing, ensuring camaraderie and fulfilment of CSR objectives.



I enjoyed feeling part of making a difference in the local community.”

“TGC inspired me to follow my dreams and become a primary school teacher.”

“I gained a sense of belonging with my team.”





How we distribute funds

For every £1 we spend

92p goes directly to nature connection activities

8p goes to vital support costs – like fundraising

Our full annual report and accounts can be seen [here](#)

How you can help us

Tailor your support to include one or a combination of the following:



Donations – from one-off donations to staff fundraising and payroll giving, donations can be dedicated towards a specific project or go towards the running costs of our nature connection programmes.



Sponsor a school – a fantastic way to build long-term value into your CSR initiatives, engage with and support local school children in need.



Volunteer – choose from bespoke team building volunteering experiences or long-term placements to support our education sessions.



Co-creation – we welcome the opportunity to work with corporate partners to develop our nature education programmes through a shared ethos and objectives.



Pro-bono support – we look to engage corporate supporters for specialist pro-bono support as needs arise.



Team challenges – we can help build employee engagement by supporting everything from bake-offs to sponsored events like local half-marathons; your employees can make a real difference through their efforts and help further our mission.



With your help we can



Leverage resources to deeply connect with local communities and respond to the need for nature connection in the most nature deprived environments



Build capacity to reach new cohorts of beneficiaries and to respond to a growing skills shortage in the green economy



Nurture a respect, understanding and responsibility to care for the local and wider environment, benefitting both people and planet health



Practise good stewardship in order to increase our efficiency and ensure the trust of our generous donors

Get in touch

www.thegardenclassroom.org.uk

Anna Woodward, Corporate Fundraiser
Park Building, 2 Newington Green, Newington Green, London N1 4RF
Registered charity no 1168587





www.thegardenclassroom.org.uk

