

Bruce Castle PlayZones and Calisthenics Engagement Report

September 2025

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1. Background

This report summarises the engagement undertaken in 2025 to inform the design and programming of the Bruce Castle Park Playzone upgrade and feedback on interest in calisthenics equipment.

In 2023 and 2024, prior to funding being awarded to Bruce Castle PlayZone, the council held three main strands of engagement as follows:

- An on-line survey,
- A number of focus group meetings including with The Friends of Bruce Castle Park, to inform the approach to Playzones and drawing on extracts from relevant meetings held to inform Haringey's Parks and Greenspaces Strategy approved by the Council in July 2023,
- Professional meetings including with:
 - The Haringey Playzone Consortium including engagement with The Friends of Bruce Castle Park,
 - Haringey sport and physical activity providers,
 - Haringey Football Forum,
 - Haringey Safer Parks for Women and Girls Network,
 - Tottenham Hotspur Foundation,
 - Streetgames,
 - Local clubs and NGB's,
 - Disability Action Haringey.

This engagement led to the selection of Bruce Castle as a priority site to receive an upgrade to the existing MUGA with a proposal for tarmacadam and football/basketball equipment. The engagement also helped to inform the approach towards booking and programming for community use and targeted groups.

Following the successful installation of a calisthenics gym in Finsbury Park in 2024, Steel Warriors approached the council in 2025 to discuss potential for installing another calisthenics gym in the north of the borough, dependent on external funding. Steel Warriors repurpose knives taken off London streets into outdoor calisthenics gyms. Bruce Castle Park was decided as the best location.

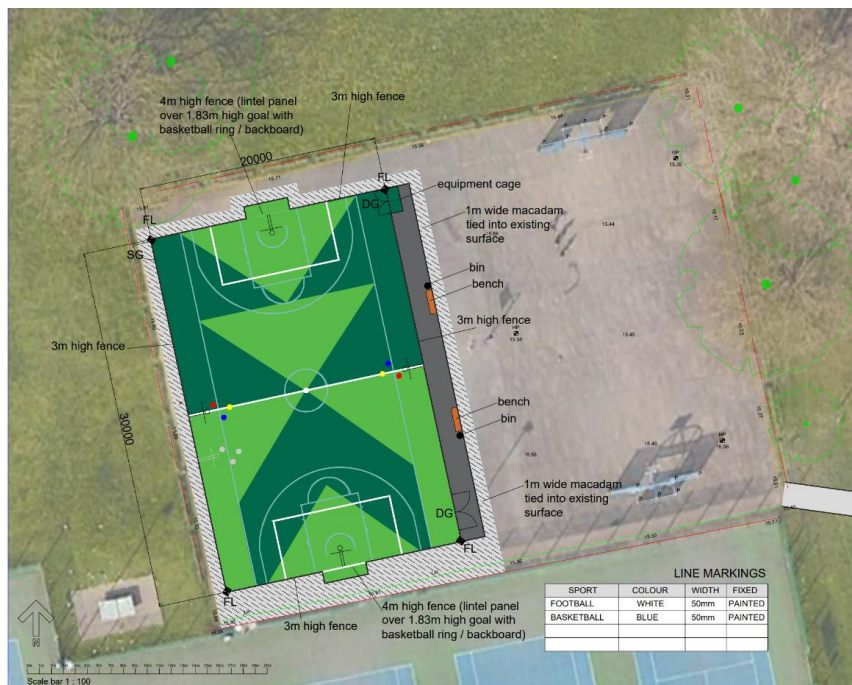
2. Engagement Overview

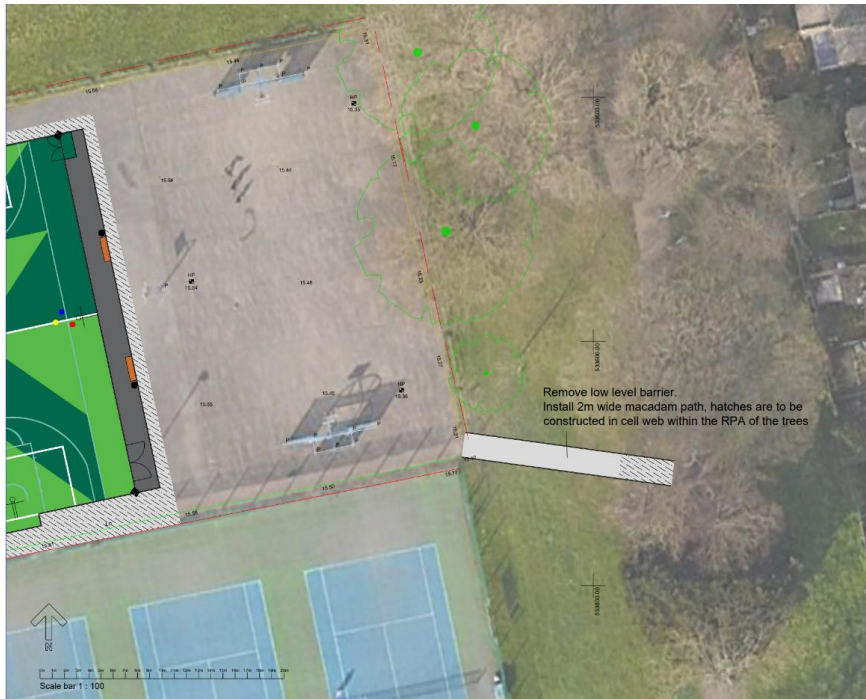
Following the award of funding for Bruce Castle PlayZone, we have taken the following approach to continued engagement in order to refine the design and programme:

- Posters at every entrance to the park, in the existing MUGA, notice board and café advertising Commonplace and in person engagement,
- In person engagement:
 - 20/05/2025- 2:30-4:30pm,
 - 27/05/2025- 10:30-12:30pm,
- Commonplace:
 - Survey open from 2nd May until 2nd July 2025,
 - Questions included feedback on calisthenics,
 - Website included a survey about the playground improvement project.
- Meeting with Friends of Bruce Castle Park and Ward Councillors,
- Door knocking/letter drop,
- Engagement with local stakeholders and sports organisations.

To capitalise on engagement, a suite of questions was included on Commonplace to gain feedback on calisthenics. These questions were coproduced with The Friends of Bruce Castle Park.

PlayZone designs shared during engagement sessions:





3. Engagement summaries: PlayZones

3a. Door knocking/letter dropping

Households on Bruce Castle Road received letters as neighbours closest to the proposed changes with potential to be most affected by the development. 35 households were visited which offered an opportunity to be informed about the proposed improvements and for in person or online feedback through Commonplace.

3b. In park engagement sessions

During two sessions, we spoke with 54 individuals outside the existing MUGA and across the park.

Key Insights:

The proposal received an overall positive reception with participants expressing happiness or strong approval of the proposal to:

- Uplift the area,
- Create safe spaces for children and young people,
- Include lighting in sports facilities,
- Focus on women and girls' safety and participation.

Sports

- The existing facility provides sufficient opportunity for a range of sports including football and basketball. The most popular sport observed in the facility is football,
- There have been suggestions for an artificial turf pitch to match the high usage for football as people want to play football on a good and safe court,
- Tottenham Hotspur Foundation expressed interest in contributing to the programme/activation, including running women and girls-only sessions.

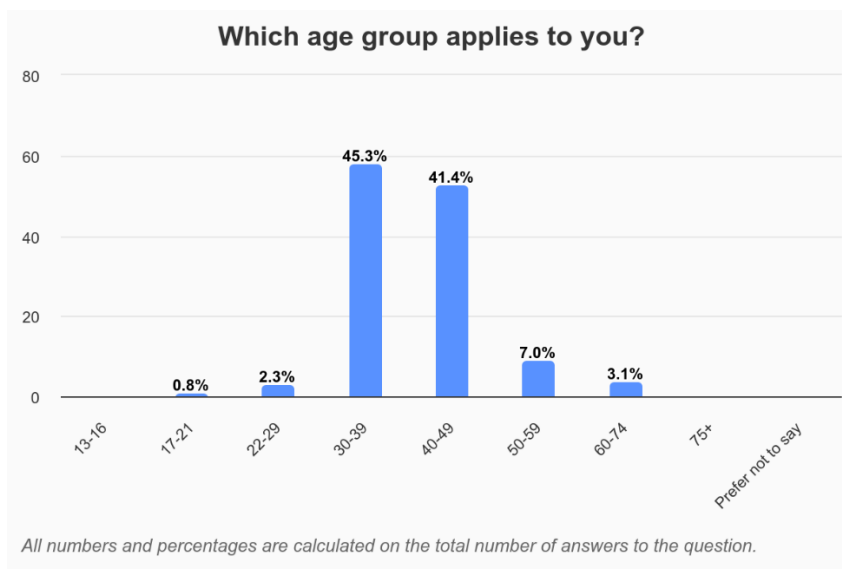
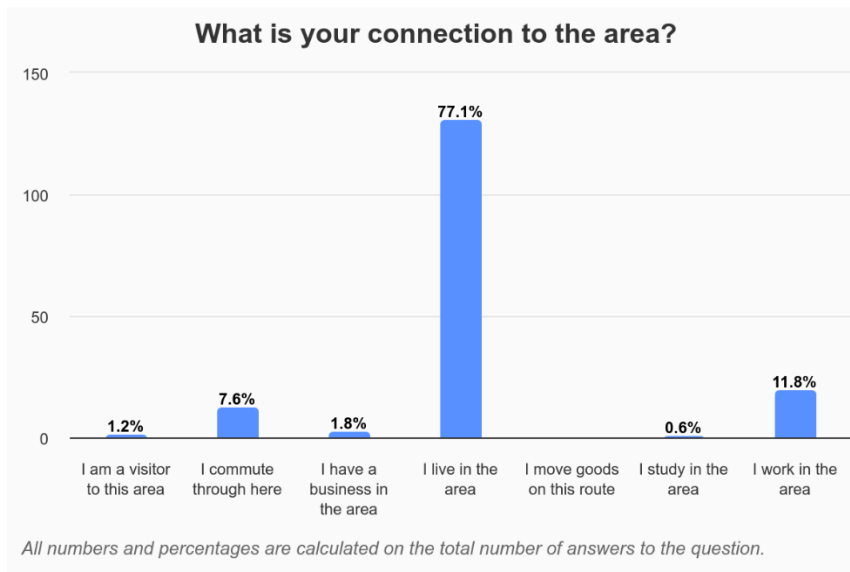
Booking system

- The booking system is favoured by some, for the purpose of playing organised games, however the vast majority of use is informal and spontaneous,
- There are concerns about fairness, payment and accessibility, especially for low-income families. Some question whether booking will be free,
- Residents would like free access without having to book on weekdays between 3-6 and weekend afternoons,
- Some have suggested using trial and error to find the right approach to booking,
- Would like communication on how to use the booking system through advertising and promotion at a launch.

Concerns and suggestions

- Concern table tennis will be removed – this provides free activity that keeps people out of trouble,
- Would like tarmac relayed on the court not being refurbished as it has lots of dips and holes and for the hoops and nets to be improved so they don't break easily,
- Need to clean more often as lots of broken glass is on the court.

3c. Commonplace engagement

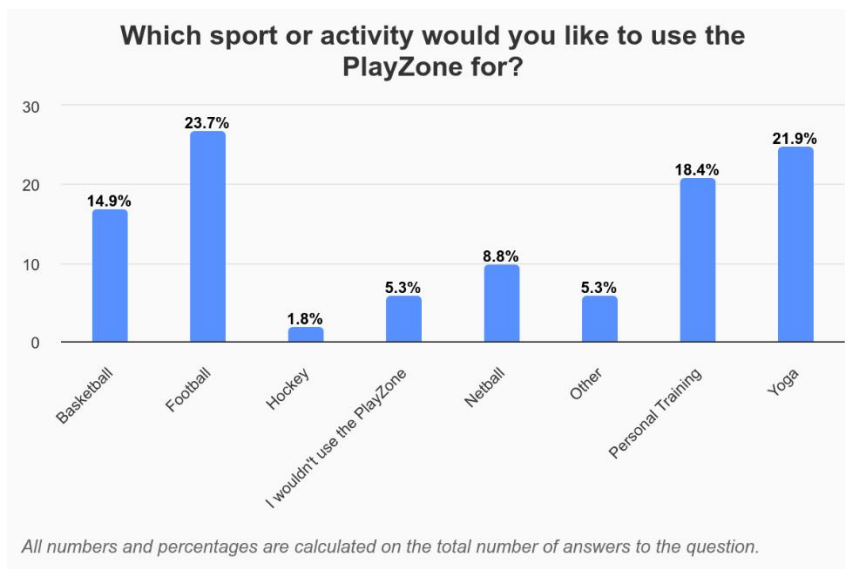
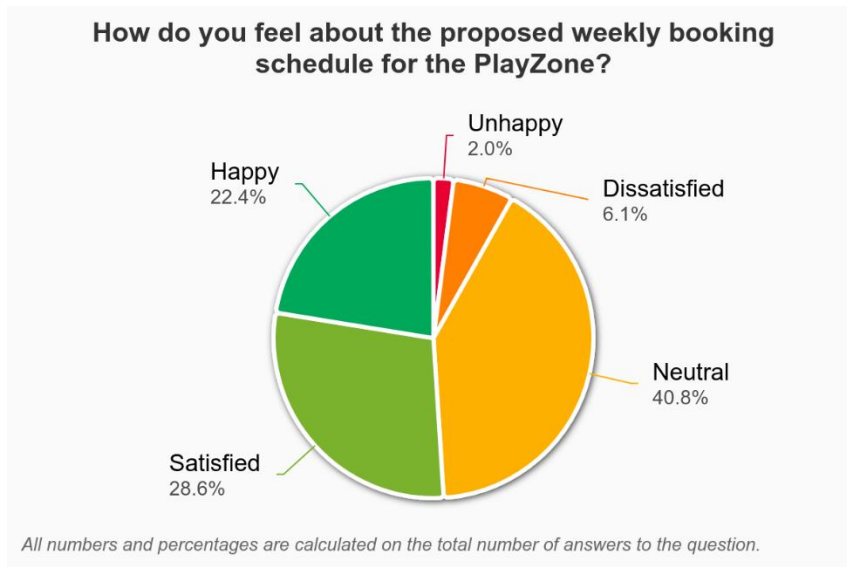


Community Priorities

- Community resource: The space is seen as a vital, shared asset that should remain open and accessible,
- Children's access: Strong emphasis on maintaining free access for local schoolchildren (e.g., Risley, Lancasterian, Dukes Academy). Areas for free use so that kids can just turn up and have fun,
- Unstructured play: Many respondents value spontaneous, non-booked use over structured sessions,
- Inclusivity: Suggestions for a mix of free use and structured sessions (e.g., girls-only, youth football). There is widespread concern that booking-only systems could exclude regular users. Women and girls football sessions are seen as important as otherwise it will be a space for only boys,
- Few positive and negative views on fencing,

- Avoid private hire as much as possible, instead focus on booking the space to local community/sport groups for affordable rates or free to ensure it is maximally accessible to local people.

Programme and Booking



Those stating 'other', mention dancing, touch rugby, fitness classes, padel, cricket and tai chi.

Preferred free use time slots

- Weekdays (Mon–Fri):
 - Early mornings (6am–9am) – especially useful for full-time workers in Summer,

- After school hours (3pm–6pm) – consistently highlighted as crucial for children and youth,
 - Evenings – suggested for adult football.
- Weekends (Sat–Sun):
 - Morning slots (9am–12pm) – recommended for school aged children,
 - Afternoon slots (3pm–6pm) – popular for general use.
- During the peak afterschool / early evening slot, residents would like a mixture of free use and structured sessions such as girls only and youth,
- Tottenham Hotspur Foundation interested in running Premier League Kicks youth football here.

3d. Friends of Bruce Castle Park and Ward Councillor engagement

- Concern over the division between the new facility with new surfacing, booking system and programming which may be inaccessible to young users, and the old informal facility with old surfacing and holes creating a ‘two tier’ system,
- The table tennis table becomes a hotspot for ASB and there is a concern that the PlayZone will fence this in on three sides, encouraging ASB. Asked for consideration for this to be relocated,
- Seating may not be ideal if it is too close to the gates. If it has a back to it, it will create further division between old and new. If we can have an open bench with no back, users can face both directions,
- Preferred new path will be routed to the north of the facility to connect a busier part of the path. Concern that machinery will destroy grass and that a diagonal path may be better,
- Concerns over equipment cage items being stolen and the council being liable to replace,
- Question whether current play equipment can be rehoused on a different site,
- Would not like to have an outdoor gym that replicates indoor equipment due to concerns over maintenance and aesthetics of equipment,
- Would not like Steel Warriors calisthenics gym on remaining MUGA space. This should be kept and resurfaced/updated when possible.
 - Suggested location below,
 - Both options are located close to existing sports facilities and the café, which provides access to toilets and refreshments,
 - Area A: Sunny, highly visible, and located beside a main footpath,
 - Area B: Shaded by trees, quieter, in a less active part of the park,
 - Neither location offers much room for future expansion. Any expansion should be carefully balanced against the need to preserve open green space and minimise impacts on trees and natural areas.



Suggested location for Steel Warriors calisthenics equipment

3e. Meetings with local stakeholders

- Disability Action Haringey state that a booking system is essential to meeting their users' needs.
- Local basketball coach
 - Need to cater for things other than football,
 - Broaden sporting options with markings for different sports,
 - Seating important for spectators,
 - Promotion is key for people to get involved. Need large signage in notice boards, libraries, sports centres and leafletting,
 - Free activities are essential especially during summer,
 - Need more facilities for all ages including outdoor gyms and sport that caters to older ages like chair exercise, boules.
- Tottenham Hotspurs Foundation (THF)
 - Target groups similar between PlayZone programme/THF,
 - Have held heritage walks in Bruce Castle and Downhills for carers and those in care,

- THF have specialist officers in accessible sport, health and youth and community,
- Outdoor access can be a barrier for Women and Girls groups so sessions are often run indoors but would like to work together on Women and Girls engagement. School age girls want to use space during non-term time,
- THF run festival fun day in Bruce Castle Park and programme for people to get into coaching,
- Can incorporate employment coaching within wider programme
- Currently delivering at New River, Somerford Grove and Tottenham Community Sports Centre but would like to utilise outdoor spaces more, particularly in Summer,
- Design of PlayZone meeting expectations for sports facility. Fencing essential, lighting matching peoples needs, locked space important for outdoor sessions,
- Coaching and facilitation in kind for facility use. Coaching could include:
 - Premier League Kicks programme – ask parents to sign up before with space for drops in,
 - Shape Up – Women’s and men’s only programme,
 - THF huddle which is similar to touch rugby.
- Flexibility is useful for community when booking.

3f. Adolescents in urban green spaces research project

Participants from two youth clubs within the Haringey borough: Bruce Grove Youth Space and 4th Wood Green Scout Group undertook a visit to Bruce Castle Park with their youth group leads, two researchers from University College London and two members of Haringey council.

Young people explored four distinct sections of the park: the playground, MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area), nature trail, and seating area, with participants being closely observed engaging with various park features. Afterwards, the groups convened indoors separately, for a discussion focused on reflecting on their park experience, sharing thoughts, and expressing emotions. Participants were reimbursed with a high street shopping voucher for their time and contributions.

Key recommendations:

1. Signage: Put clear signage to indicate how to use features and areas in green spaces,
2. Active play: Promote physical activity through use of play equipment,
3. Maintenance: Use softer material for play surfaces e.g. MUGA's to avoid injury and ensure comfortable use,

4. Safety: Reduce exposure to main roads to increase feelings of safety
5. Cleanliness: Encourage cleaner spaces by placing signage and sufficient bins to avoid littering,
6. Shared spaces: Older and younger generations show competing needs for green spaces.

3g. Youth Advisory Board

- Currently use MUGA's for basketball, football and hanging out
- Proper markings are important so games aren't interrupted
- Used facilities, but some have fallen into disrepair
- Would use PlayZone for netball, girls football, badminton, rugby, rollerskating
- Need signage to let people know what they can use space for
- Would like mixed and women's only sport
- Would like equipment cage to have compartments for different user groups
- Questions over how to book, concerns over management/people hogging space
- Give schools code for open access slots

4. Engagement Summaries: Calisthenics

In person comments during PlayZone engagement:

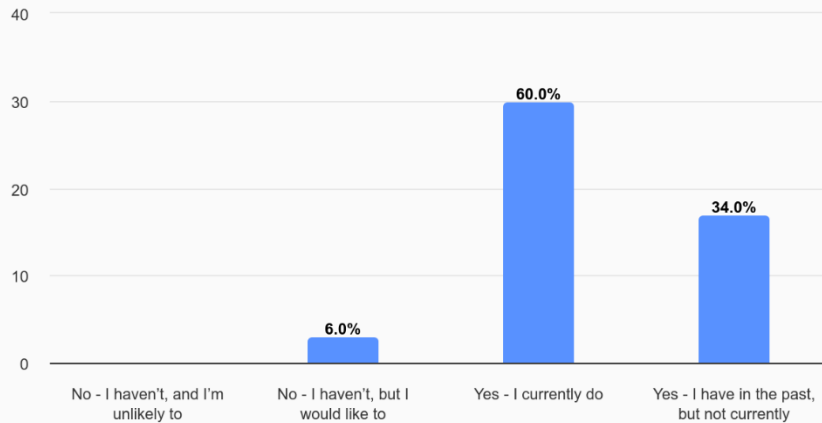
- A couple of respondents would like outdoor exercise equipment,
- A suggested location near the tennis court so women and girls feel safe as space has more visibility, quick access in and out and connection to tennis courts,
- Calisthenics gym better than nothing but would like something more inclusive.

Youth Advisory Board:

- Would like to move logs and boulders to playground and incorporate calisthenics in that space
- Keep open field for games like tag
- Concerns about falling trees/leaves
- Would like good visibility

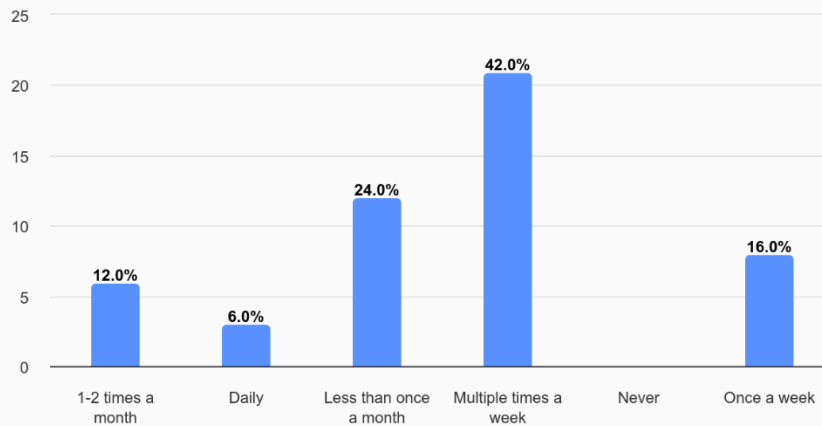
Commonplace response:

Have you ever done any sports or fitness activities in outdoor spaces like parks - and do you currently?



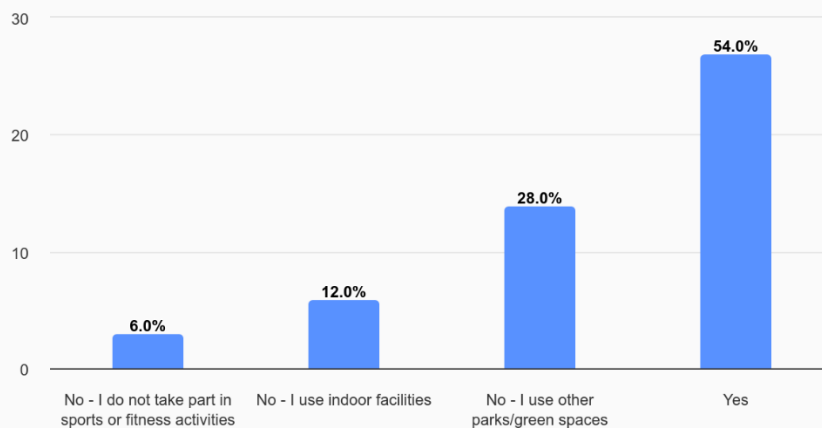
All numbers and percentages are calculated on the total number of answers to the question.

How often do you currently take part in sports or fitness activities in outdoor spaces, such as parks?



All numbers and percentages are calculated on the total number of answers to the question.

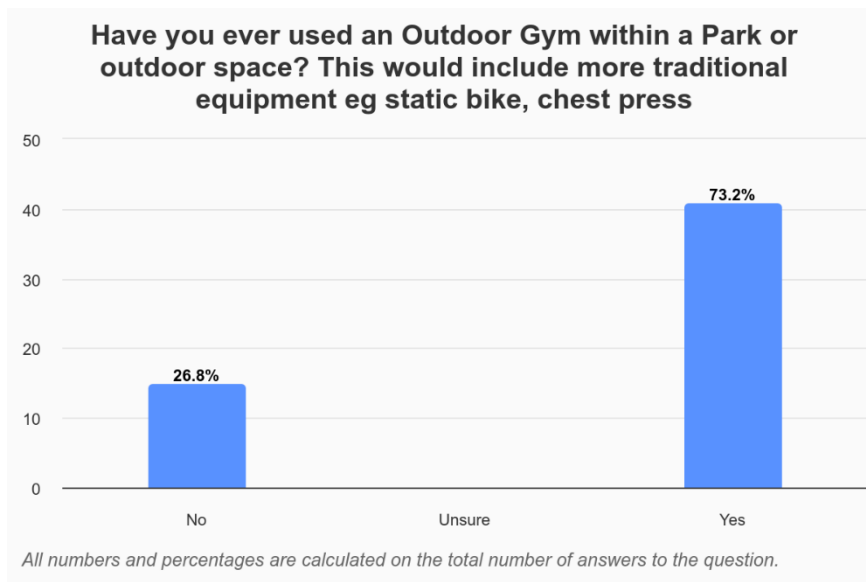
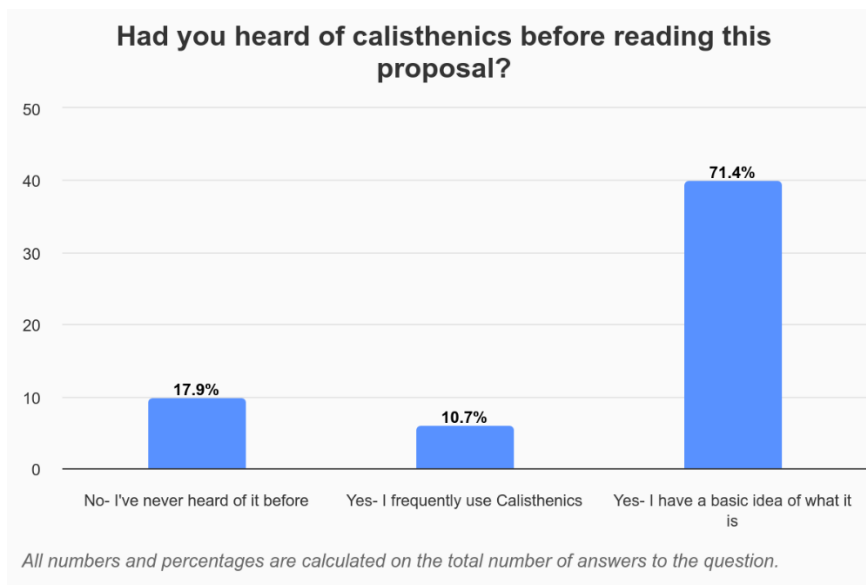
Do you currently use Bruce Castle Park for sports or fitness activities?



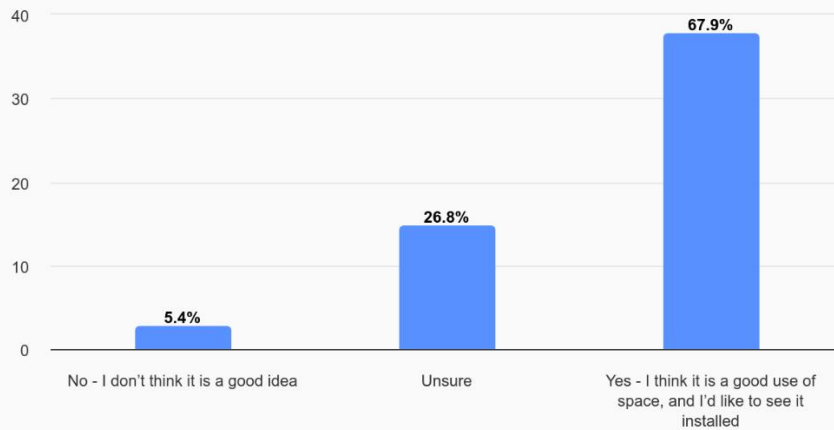
All numbers and percentages are calculated on the total number of answers to the question.

What would encourage people to get involved:

- Ease of access, proximity to home, ease of use,
- Better equipment, clean equipment,
- Local classes that are baby friendly, spaces where parents can bring children,
- Feeling safe.

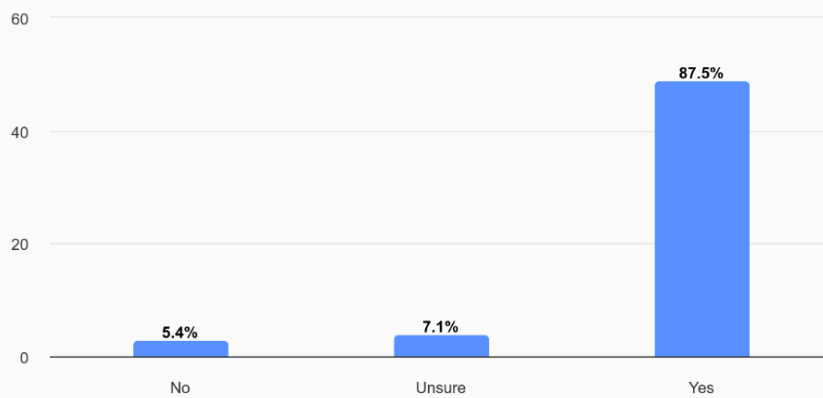


Would you like to see calisthenics equipment installed at Bruce Castle Park?



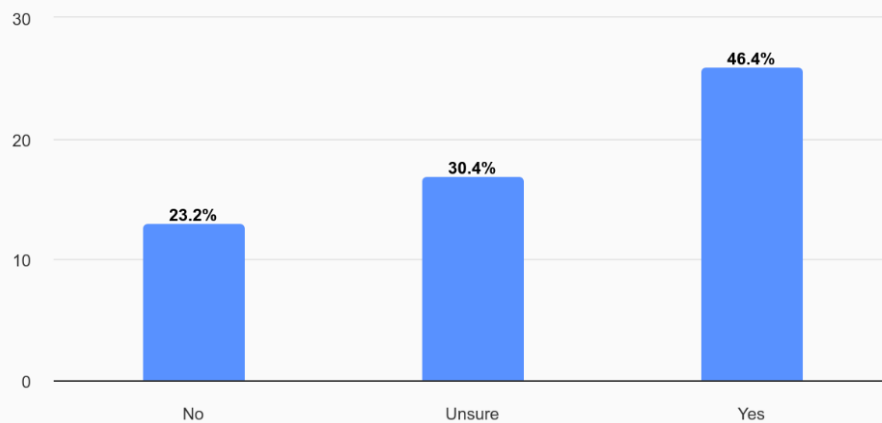
All numbers and percentages are calculated on the total number of answers to the question.

Would you like to see clear signage explaining how to use the calisthenics equipment and demonstrating different exercises?

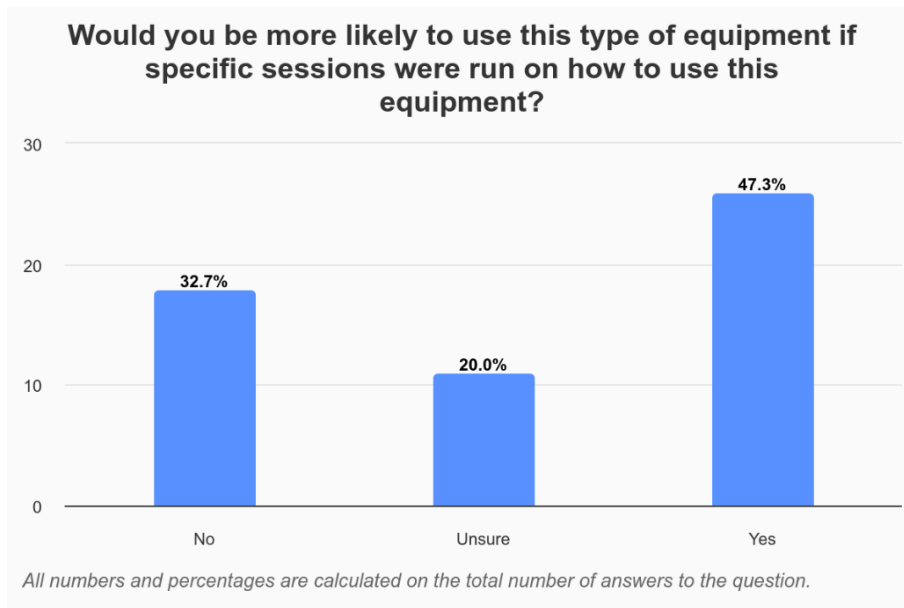


All numbers and percentages are calculated on the total number of answers to the question.

If this was installed within the park, would you like to see the Council run specific sessions on how to use this equipment?

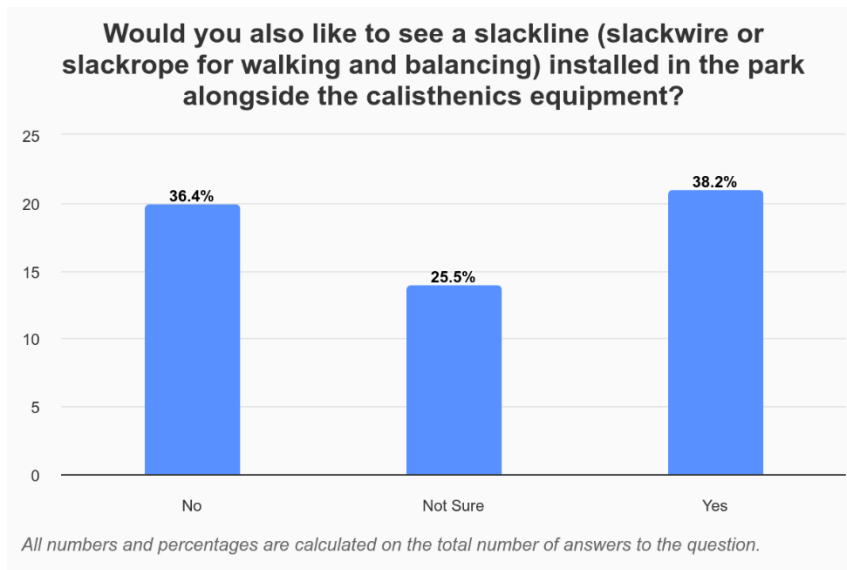


All numbers and percentages are calculated on the total number of answers to the question.



Type of sessions people would like to see:

- Majority would like to see women's only sessions and women led sessions,
- Different times/days focused on different groups, ages and ability levels,
- Beginner, basic and general use classes,
- Pregnancy, postpartum and postnatal classes,
- Family sessions,
- Tottenham Hotspur Foundation staff would be very interested in delivering adult fitness sessions,
- Sessions with calisthenics coach (e.g. Rahel of Cali with the Amazon),
- Youth training, boot camp.



Location preferences:

- Close to other sports areas: 27
- Near café/toilets: 15
- Shaded by trees: 15
- Space to expand: 11
- Visible/lively area: 9
- Quieter part of park: 6

Main concerns about installing calisthenics equipment:

- Facilities can often look tacky and stand out too much in a natural environment,
- If in a secluded area of the park they might also attract anti-social behaviour,
- How easily it could be taken over for another purpose (sitting, drinking, smoking, loitering, leaving rubbish),
- Increasing the maintenance cost of the park and being unsustainable,
- Calisthenics gives the impression that you must have a considerable level of fitness already. Would be exclusive and put novices off,
- Concerned of the people it will attract and if the local community will then be comfortable to use it. Concerned it will be dominated by men and gym goers,
- Already a large number of sports related areas in the park (tennis courts, basketball court, football pitch),
- Removal of green space and impact on tree roots,
- How much guidance would be needed,
- An outdoor gym might be easier to use.

Other suggestions:

- Would like to see cricket area in the park, balance equipment,
- Calisthenics trail, with space between the different equipment,
- Rat issue in park,
- Upgrade to the playground a priority,
- No impact on trees,
- Would like SWING box of weights like Finsbury Park exercise area,
- Callisthenics equipment like at Finsbury Park,
- Equipment scaled for smaller (women's) bodies and arm spans e.g. - multiple heights for pull up bars, and two dip stations - one for men's arm spans and a narrower one for women's arms. Most options in parks (e.g. Lordship rec) have one dip bar station, which is set way too wide for most women to use. Angled dip bars work well for multiple arm spans,
- Have different ranges of complexity or level/ have multiple of the same equipment in different areas,
- Paired with an outdoor gym, I think it would be way more popular,
- In person or a QR code which links to a video that can show you how to use the equipment,
- Great to add as many facilities as possible that get people active as long as they are placed carefully so as not to compromise other uses (e.g. biodiversity or more naturally planted areas).

5. Conclusions

PlayZone:

Community support:

- Widespread approval for upgrading the MUGA and creating safer, more inclusive spaces,
- Football is the most popular sport; artificial turf is preferred to support high usage.

Accessibility and Booking:

- Mixed views on booking systems: some support for structured use, but strong preference for free, spontaneous access—especially during after-school hours and weekends,
- Concerns about fairness, affordability, and exclusion of low-income families,
- Emphasis on women and girls' participation, with support from Tottenham Hotspur Foundation,
- Community groups prefer a mix of structured and unstructured sessions,
- Avoid private hire; prioritise community access and affordability.

Design:

- Lighting, maintenance and cleanliness are key priorities,
- Backless seating preferred for improved visibility and connection to two spaces.

Calisthenics:

Interest and Potential:

- Strong interest in outdoor gym and calisthenics equipment, especially if inclusive and well-designed,
- Preferred location near sports facilities like the tennis courts for visibility and safety.

Session Preferences:

- High demand for women-only and women-led sessions,
- Desire for beginner-friendly, family-oriented, and postnatal classes,
- Interest in QR code/video guides and coached sessions.

Design and Usability:

- Equipment should be scaled for different body types (e.g., women's arm spans),
- Suggestions for trails with spaced-out equipment and multiple difficulty levels.

Concerns:

- Risk of ASB, misuse, and impact on natural environment,
- Fear of exclusivity and domination by men and experienced gym-goers.

Recommendations:

- Ensure equipment is clean, safe, and easy to use,
- Avoid compromising biodiversity and green space,
- Consider community-led programming and inclusive design.

6. Amendments and next steps:

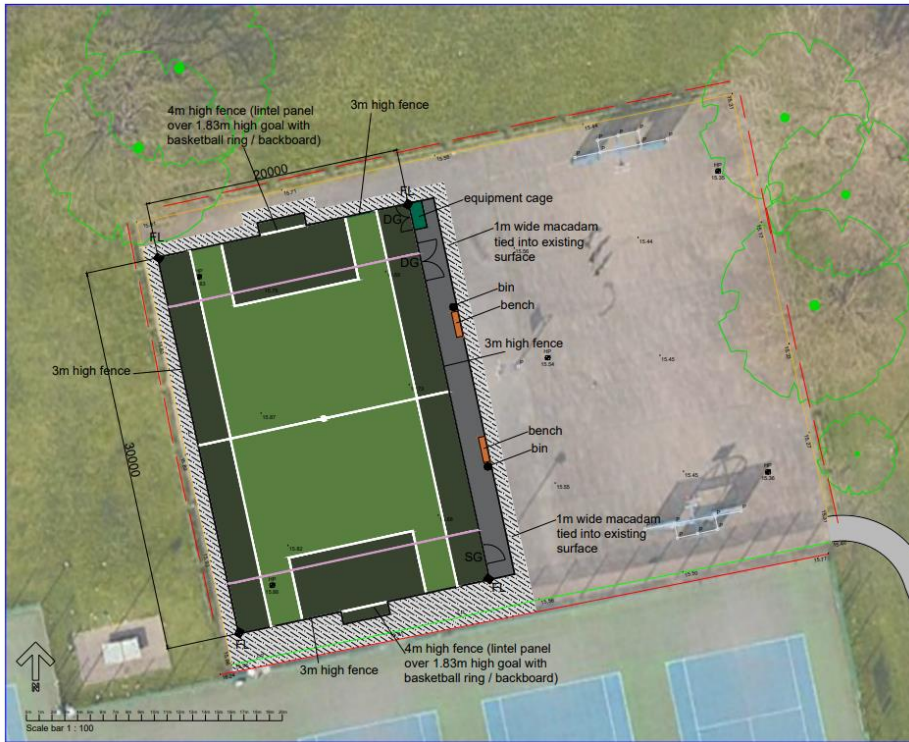
1. We intended to install an 4G infill artificial turf pitch as part of the portfolio of four PlayZones across the borough, to accommodate high demand for high quality football pitches. This was originally located in Downhills, but after comparing both consultation results, it is deemed more appropriate to have the artificial turf pitch at Bruce Castle. This is due to football and artificial turf

being more popular at Bruce Castle, the outside court being able to accommodate a range of uses and wanting to keep basketball provision in Downhills Park which would otherwise be removed.

2. We will be installing backless seating and bins between the new PlayZone and remaining court so 'spectators' are able to sit in both directions and create more flow between both spaces.
3. The new footpath that will be installed will curve with the natural contour of the landscape towards Lordship Lane.
4. The booking system and programme will respond to community desire for mixed open access and booked/coaching sessions. The recommendation is for open access 3-6pm on weekdays and 9-12pm and 3-6pm on weekends. This system will be managed by Haringey Council and can be further refined based on testing and feedback.
5. Signage and clear instructions on how to book will be provided.
6. Flood lighting will only be activated during booked sessions, and floodlighting will not extend beyond 9pm. Permission for the floodlighting will be considered as part of the planning application and conditions will be imposed restricting operational times to 9pm. This would be the same operational times as we have in other parks. It also allows us to maintain a balance between sports usage and biodiversity. Modern LED floodlights give direct lighting to a court with minimal spill to the surrounding area.
7. The remaining MUGA will only get an upgrade to its surface and markings, subject to funding becoming available.
8. The location of the table tennis will be monitored post-installation to determine whether moving this to a different location would ease concerns about anti-social behaviour.
9. Steel Warriors are currently seeking external funding to deliver the calisthenics gym in Bruce Castle. If successful, recommendations will be made for inclusive design and introductory, women's only and family programming. Location close to other sports facilities will be recommended. Concerns regarding ASB will be monitored by enforcement officers.
10. £300,000 has been allocated to Bruce Castle playground for an upgrade. A refined timeline will be provided post-procurement but initial estimates are a Spring installation.

11. Project updates and timelines will be shared on commonplace and to local stakeholders for all Bruce Castle Park developments.

The developed PlayZone design below highlights the change of surfacing to a 4G artificial turf pitch and a new curved footpath that compliments the topography of the park.



We would like to thank and acknowledge the importance of everyone that has contributed their thoughts, time and concerns in order to help refine the design and programme of the new PlayZone and proposal for calisthenics equipment. This has been hugely valuable to make meaningful amendments based on community need, aspiration and concern.