

GREEN SPACES:

IMPROVING ACCESS

– AND HEALTH BENEFITS

– AT A GLANCE



530,000 – residents in Bradford

5th – largest district in England



12,500 – mothers in our cohort



13,500 – children in our cohort

16,000 – primary school children in survey

40+ – focus group interviews



40+ green spaces audited

31% – children without local park



13% – children with no garden

40+ – green spaces improved by Better Start Bradford Better Place team



EVIDENCE BRIEFING

GREEN SPACE AND HEALTH: EVIDENCE AND INTERVENTIONS



KEY CONTACT

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WHAT IS THE PROBLEM

Bradford is the **fifth largest** metropolitan district in England, and home to over **530,000 residents**.

Bradford is a **city of parks and urban green spaces** which offer city residents vital spaces to **relax and unwind**. The links between **green space and health** are well-established, but unfortunately provision of the green spaces within our population is **not equal**.

Families living in **more deprived** areas have **less access** to high quality green spaces and the **health benefits** they confer.

WHAT HAVE WE FOUND?

Born in Bradford has conducted **extensive research** into the links between green spaces and health.

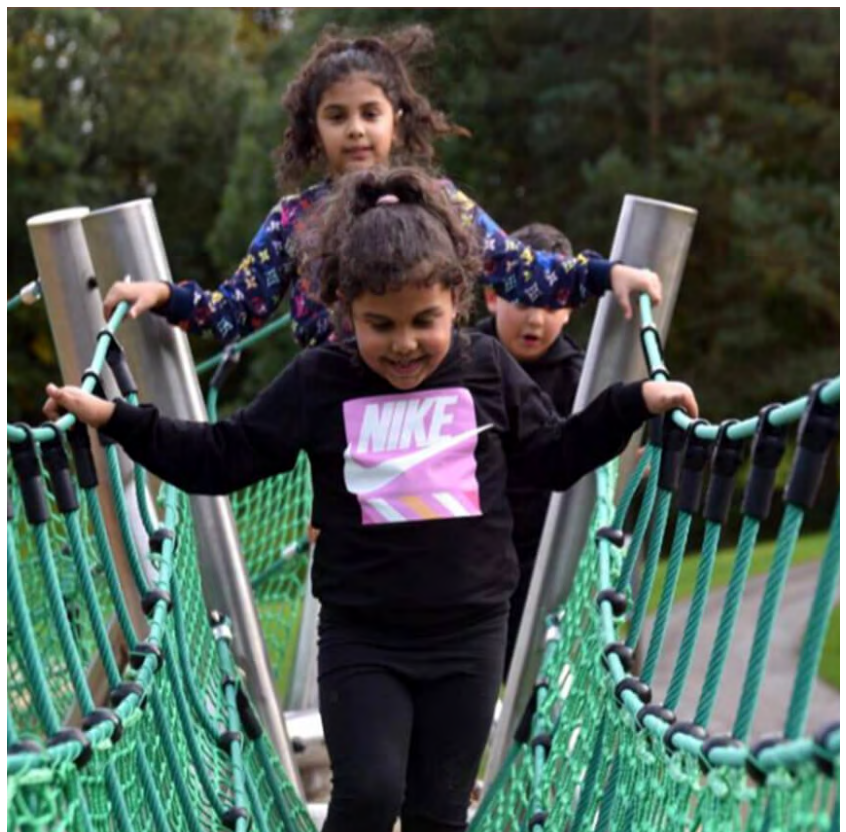
Our studies have included **large scale population surveys** using the Born in Bradford cohort (a total of **12,500 mothers**, and **13,500 children**), children aged 7-11 in primary school settings (**~16,000**), bespoke **qualitative data collection** with families living within multi-ethnic areas across

Bradford (**over 40 interviews and focus groups**), and quality assessments of green space using the standardised **Natural Environment Scoring** tool (**over 40 local green spaces audited**).

We have mapped provision of healthy environments, including green space across the **entire city**.

We have found that green space is linked to health and wellbeing of adults and children

Families living in **greener areas**, measured by a satellite-derived measure of green space called NDVI, have children born with **healthier births weights**,^[1] have **reduced risks of depression** in pregnant women,^[2] and have **better mental wellbeing** in children aged 4.^[3]





The impact of green space on health tends to be **stronger** within **more deprived groups**,^[1,2] indicating that **interventions** which aim to improve quality and / or use of green space in more deprived areas may **reduce health inequalities**.

We have found that green space provision and use in Bradford is not equal

- Deprived parts of our city have poorer environments than less deprived areas, with **more pollution, less access to green space**, and **greater noise** ^[4].
- South Asian families tend to have **fewer green spaces** in their local environment,^[1,2] and what there is tends to be of **poorer quality**.^[5]
- South Asian families are **less satisfied** with their local green spaces than White British Families.^[3]
- South Asian children spend **less time** playing in green spaces than White British children.^[3]
- Access to green space is **limited** – in a survey of **16,000 primary school children in Bradford** recruited between 2016-2019; **31% reported not having a park** near their home where they could play, and **13% don't have a garden** at home.^[6]

We have found that it's quality not quantity that matters

Satisfaction with local green spaces is important for explaining **positive health outcomes**:

- In Bradford we found that four-year-old children had greater levels of **mental wellbeing** when their parents **were satisfied with their local green spaces**.^[3]
- Satisfaction with local green spaces is dependent on both **structural features**^[7] of the park and the **wider social context**^[8], including the **behaviour of other groups** who are using the park.

Park characteristics with the **greatest impact on satisfaction** were:

- **High levels of amenities within the park** (e.g. seating, litter bins, shelters, picnic tables, drinking fountains and public toilets)
- **Low evidence of anti-social behaviour** (e.g. vandalism, littering, dog mess).^[7]

There are many barriers which stop families using green spaces

Individual (e.g. skills and confident), **interpersonal** (e.g. community influences) and **structural factors** (e.g. park amenities) influence whether families with young children use local green spaces.^[8]

Different factors influence whether green spaces are used everyday (where proximity to home is important) or for special trips and outings. **Key barriers** and enablers of green space are outlined in Figure 1.

We have found that improving green spaces may encourage greater use^[9]

There is evidence to suggest that **improving the quality** of local green spaces can **increase use** of these spaces.

Successful interventions tend to include multiple components including **making changes to physical environments** (e.g. refurbishment), **introducing prompts or cues to encourage use of the refurbished areas** (e.g. signage, walking trails) combined with **group activities to encourage their use**.

Successful interventions also tend to include **local communities in co-designing local spaces**.

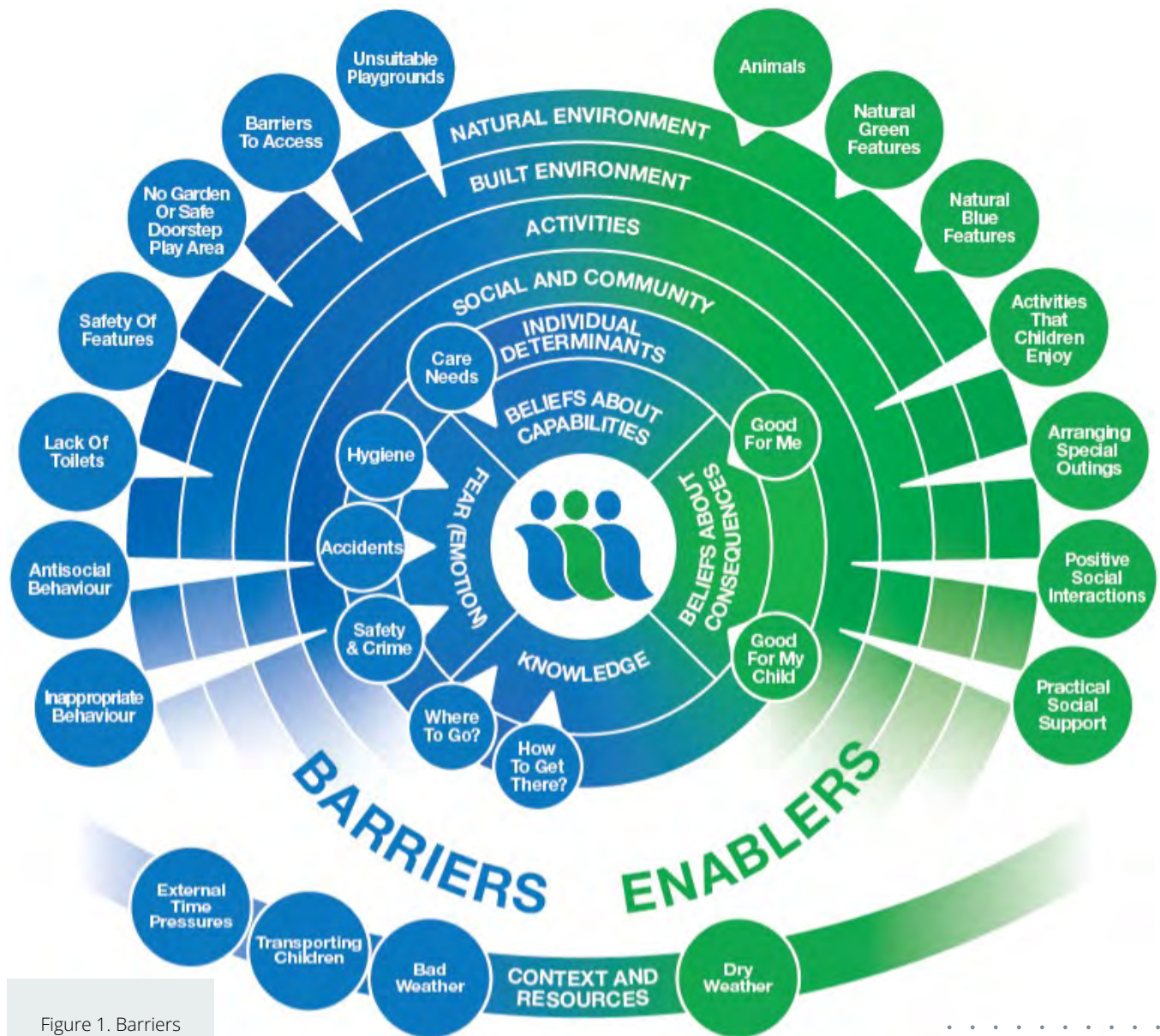


Figure 1. Barriers and enabler to green space use amongst low income, multi-ethnic families



WHAT HAS CHANGED AS A RESULT

Our findings have helped make the case for **millions of pounds of investment** into improve urban green spaces across the city.

This includes the **Better Start Bradford Better Place** project, which has made improvements to **over 40 green spaces** in **three deprived wards** of Bradford in the south of the city, and the **Join Us: Move Play** project working in deprived wards in the north of the City.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS BASED ON OUR EVIDENCE

- That **structural interventions** to improve local green spaces focus on making spaces **safe and attractive** for families with young children to visit
- That a sustained set of **targeted communications and activities** is implemented which aims to **encourage families** to use their local green spaces. These should focus on addressing the key barriers identified above, and should also include:
 - Providing families with information on **where local green space are, how to get to them**, and **what relevant activities can be engaged in** with young children in these spaces
 - Leading and / or facilitating **community events** in local green spaces to **encourage social support** and **increase community ownership** of local green spaces
- That consideration is given as to how all interventions will impact on, or be impacted by, **crime** and **anti-social behaviour** and how interventions will impact on **the needs of our different park user groups**, including young people (adolescents and young adults).
- That interventions and activities are **co-produced with members of the local community** in order to **ensure acceptability** and that **key barriers** as identified above are addressed.



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