

## Brickfields Park Youth Consultation

Improving access, safety and usage for 11-19 year olds, especially girls.



**YOUR  
PARK**

## Introduction

Research has linked green space usage to a plethora of human benefits. However, there are many barriers to its access.

Understanding of these barriers was heightened as a result of recent lockdowns, which saw many thousands of people restricted to their homes. One in eight households have no access to a private or shared garden (Office of National Statistics, 2020).

Your Park Bristol & Bath consulted with young people to determine the barriers to accessing Brickfields Park in Bath and North East Somerset, the impact this has on their lives and the changes young people want to see.

## Make Space for Girls

Your Park Bristol and Bath recognised that teenage girls were not regular users of the park and reached out to Make Space for Girls to provide support in ensuring that teenage girls were represented through this consultation.

## Contributors

With thanks to:

- The teachers and pupils of Hayesfield Girls' School
- The teachers and pupils of Beechen Cliff School
- Bath Girls Brigade
- Stride Treglown

Special thanks to the Postcode Local Trust and Bath and North East Somerset Council for funding this consultation.

## Methodology

Observational surveys completed to determine current park use.

A qualitative study with a flexible approach to data collection, including both digital questionnaires and in-person.

An open-ended question schedule was devised, and the questions applied to both a primary and one for secondary aged participants.

Two workshops were facilitated with in partnership with Make Space for Girls. One with Hayesfield School and the local Girls Brigade.

## Participants

All participants lived in Bath and North East Somerset, were aged 11-18 and identified as male or female.

All participants were between 11-19yo.

## Brickfields Park

Brickfields Park is surrounded by three areas of multiple disadvantage: Whiteway, Twerton and Southdown. It is a large park but is underused due to its high antisocial behaviour rate. It is mainly used as a space for dog walking and as a pass-through for commuters. It contains the only free, full size basketball court in Bath (to which people travel from all over the city and its outskirts to use).

Within the locality:

- 23% of people live in purpose-built blocks of flats with extremely limited outdoor space.
- There are over twice the amount of Gypsy or Irish Travellers and people from mixed or BAME backgrounds compared to Bath & North East Somerset's (B&NES) average.
- 11% of residents' lives are limited a lot and over twice the amount of people are in very bad health.
- Over double the amount of people compared to B&NES as a whole are in very bad health, are long term unemployed, have never been employed, are carers, long-term sick or disabled.
- 32% have no qualifications and of those who are employed, only 50% work full time.
- 16% of residents are single parents, again, over twice the B&NES average.

When talking to people in the area, they tell us they feel excluded. Only 42% own a car and the most popular form of transport is taxi which people use to do a weekly shop and return home.

## Current facilities and use

Currently Brickfields Park has the following facilities:

- A play area for younger children;
- Youth shelter that is in disrepair;
- A zip wire;
- A full-size, free to use, basketball court;
- Two football pitches – one with full size goals, the other with smaller goals.

We worked with volunteers from the University of Bath and work experience students to complete observational surveys of park use on 13 days in November and December 2021 and July 2022.

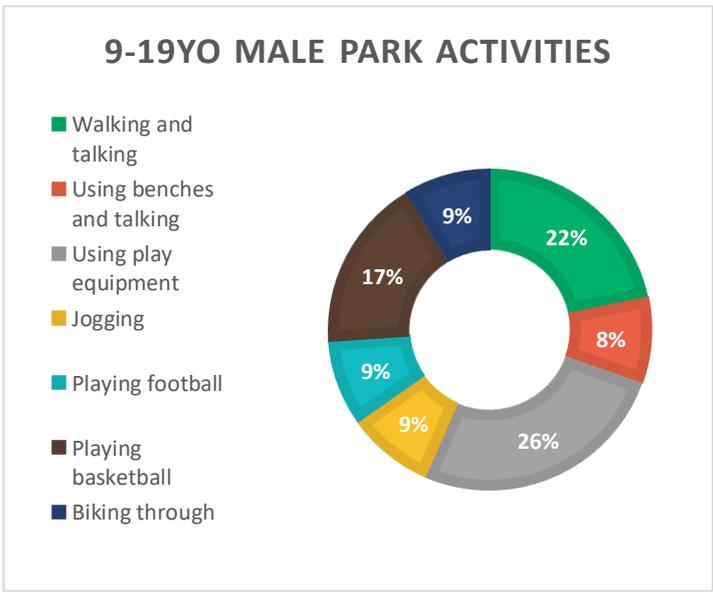
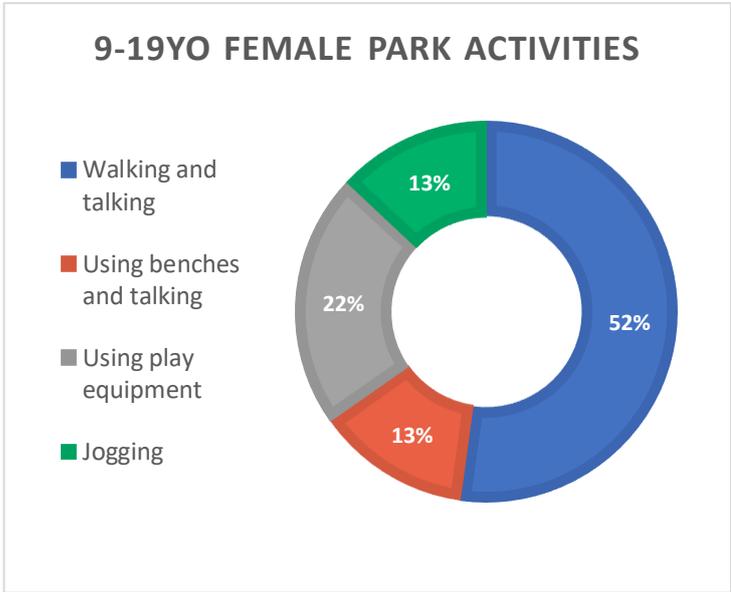
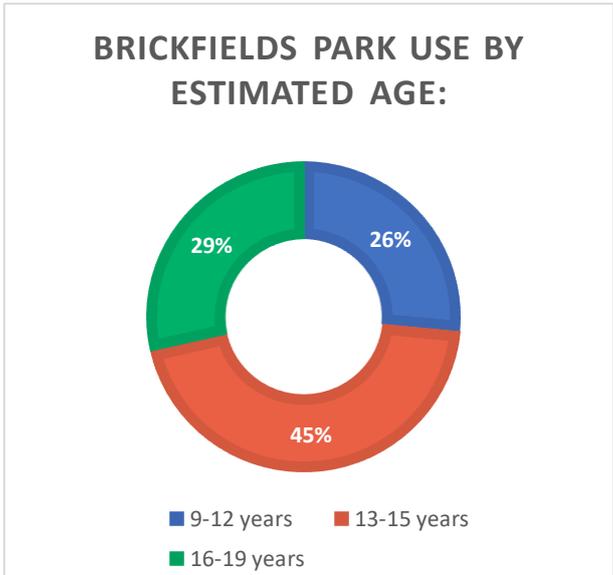
Surveys were completed on dry days. Age range and gender are estimated to avoid safeguarding issues associated with approaching unaccompanied young people in a public space.

November & December 2021

7 of the observational surveys were taken between 2.55-3.50pm to try to capture park use after school hours. Due to the time of year, park use is likely to be low and primarily as a cut through for journeys.

Key observations:

- 20% of users estimated between the ages of 9-19yo were accompanied by an adult (5 female, 4 male);
- Young people were only observed in the park without peers when accompanied by an adult;
- Males using the park engaged in a much wider range of activities including using the sports facilities;
- Females didn't use the basketball court or football pitches and primarily engaged in social activities (talking and using phones) while cutting through the park



## July 2022

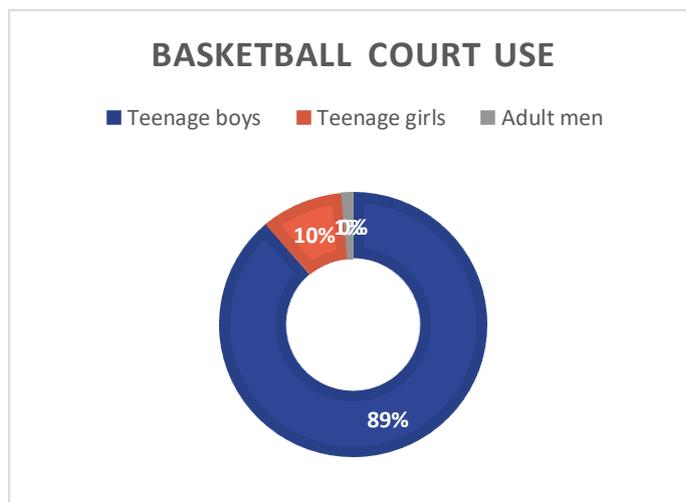
Two work experience students placed with Make Space for Girls repeated the exercise in July 2022 with a focus on determining the current use of sporting facilities in Brickfields Park. The weather was dry and warm for all surveys so park use can be expected to be at its highest for mid-week.

They surveyed the users of the basketball court and football pitches between the hours of 3pm-5.30pm at 15-minute intervals.

### Basketball court use

The basketball court was surveyed on three afternoons and was relatively well used with 142 users recorded over the course of the three afternoons. The court is primarily used by teenagers. Children did not use the court and adults rarely.

89% of users of the basketball courts were teenage boys with only 10% of users being teenage girls.



### Football pitch use

The football pitch was surveyed on two afternoons and was poorly used across these periods with only 10 users recorded over the same period that 51 were recorded on the basketball court. 6 were male children and 4 were teenage boys.

No females of any age used the football pitches.

### Other observations

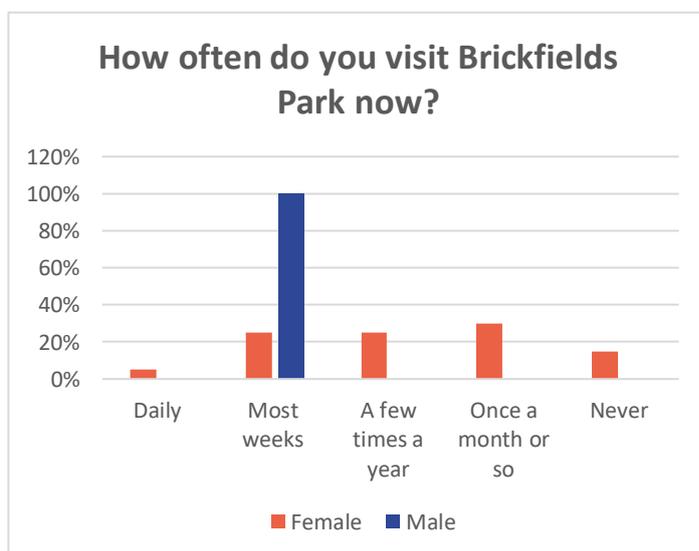
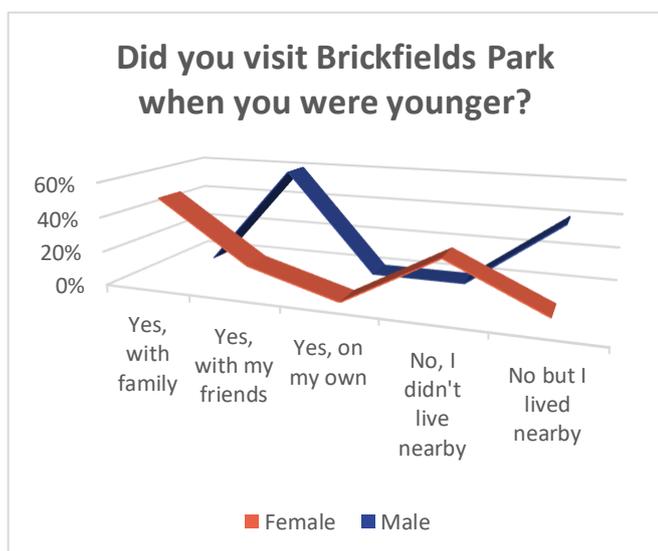
- Saw teenagers using the zipwire outside of the children's play area.
- Girls walking through from Hayesfield School mostly used benches or the grass to sit and chat.

## Survey Results

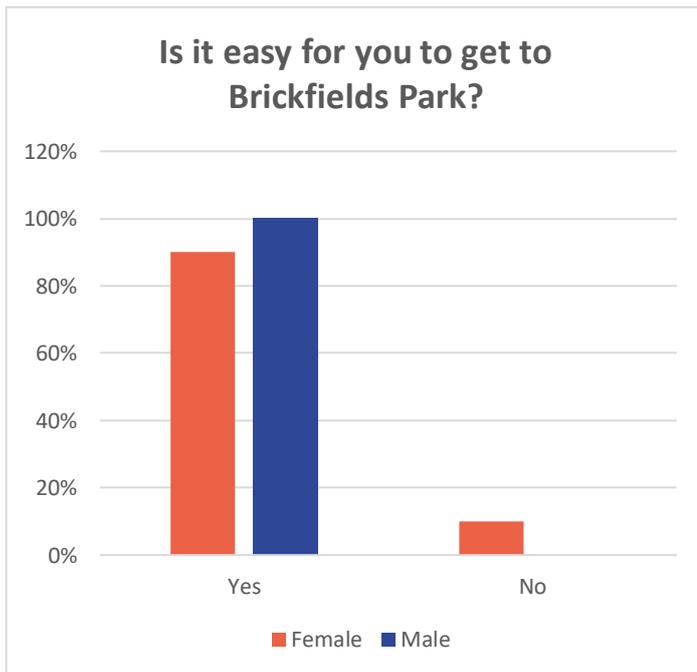
We put out a survey asking teenage girls for their thoughts, which was publicised through posters and social media, as well as on local radio. Despite this we only got a small number of responses. Make Space for Girls' experience suggests that this is in part because teenage girls don't see the park as being 'for them' and so don't engage with consultations. However the responses we did get, from 20 girls, very much backed up the feedback from the workshops.

Five boys also completed the survey, although this may have been some kind of organised effort as all five mentioned the need for full size goals with nets, and four identical responses were received within a 24 hour period.

Males visited with their friends when they were younger whereas the majority of females visited with family when they were younger.

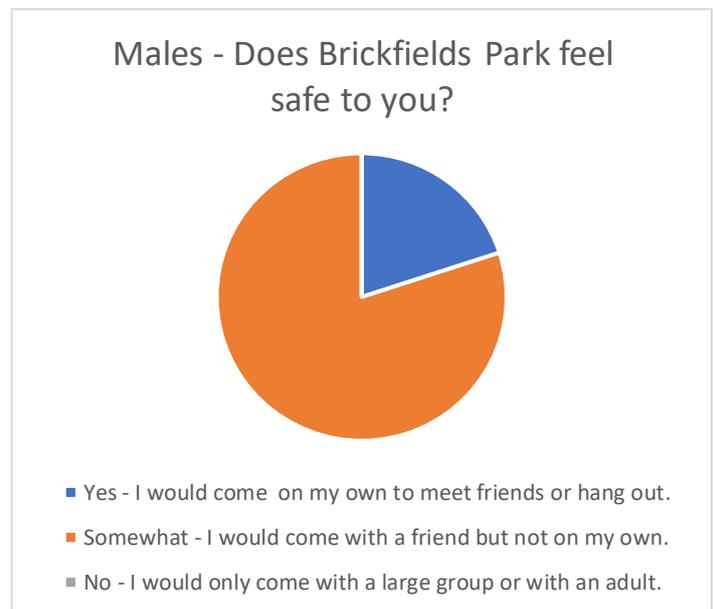
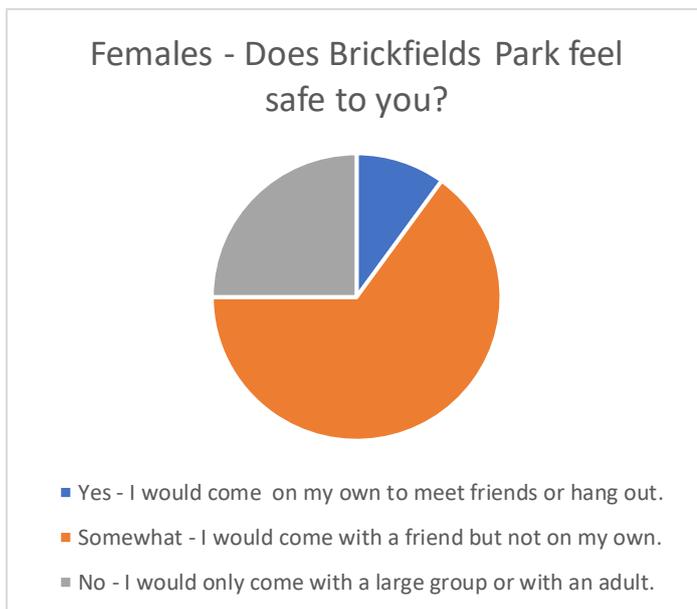


Males now visit most weeks and females visit less often (70% of girls were infrequent users of the park, visiting less than a few times a year).



The vast majority of both males and females say it is easy to get to Brickfields Park.

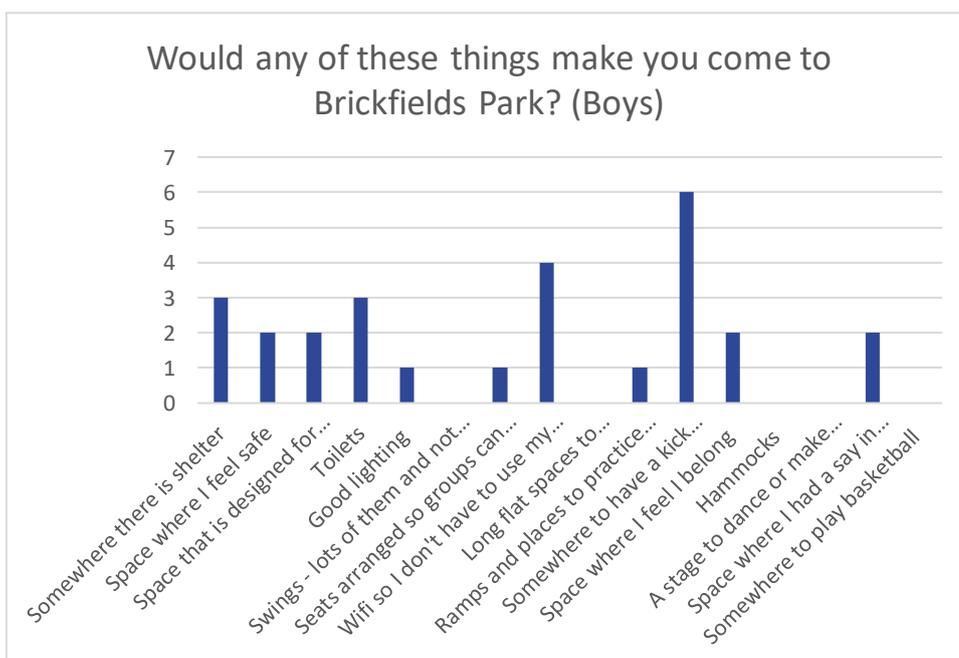
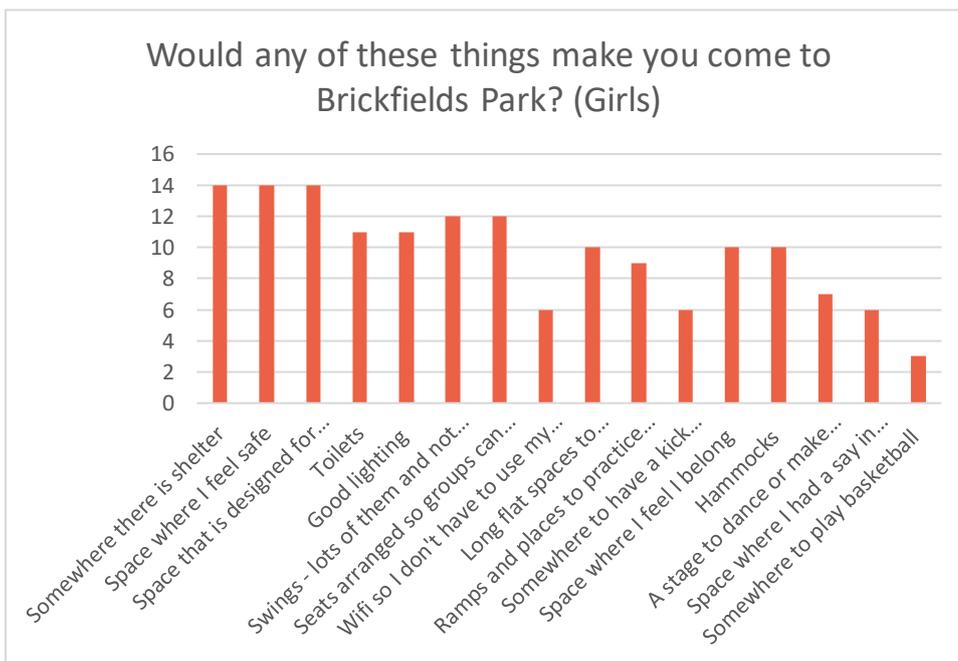
But more females feel Brickfields is not safe.



### What would make teenagers come to Brickfields Park?

The majority of males would come to Brickfields to play football with friends, use Wi-Fi, shelter or toilets.

The majority of females would come if there was shelter, if the park felt safer, if there was space designed specifically for them, if there were swings not for little kids, or seats arranged socially.



## What else would you like to see at Brickfields Park?

For females, twin themes of lighting and equipment such as swings and social seating came up in the comments:

*“a play park for a range of ages”*

*“a nice place to sit on the hill and look over Bath”*

*“more seating so we can see the park and talk to our friends”*

*“regular walk throughs by local PCSOs”*

*“cctv”*

Three comments mentioned an outdoor gym, which wasn't one of the survey options.

Five males completed the survey, although this may have been some kind of organised effort as all five mentioned the need for full size goals with nets, and four identical responses were received within a 24 hour period.

Females said:



## Workshops



Make Space for Girls were asked to work with Your Park Bristol and Bath as part of the consultation process for improved facilities in Brickfields Park, Bath.

Your Park Bristol and Bath had identified that teenage girls were not currently using the park facilities that much, and that some work was needed to discover what the barriers were and what facilities would attract them to the park. Make Space for Girls assisted in setting up workshops which would give the girls the opportunity to express their feelings about the park and generate ideas for what they would like to see. Covid restrictions meant that the process was somewhat delayed, and the number of sessions was limited.



Two workshops were held. One was at Hayesfield School, with 18 Year 9 students of Design and Technology. The second was more informal and held with five girls who attended the local Girls Brigade.

In each case the feedback was obtained through qualitative questioning and listening to the girls' own conversations about parks and their experiences.

## Workshop Results

The girls identified a number of barriers to using the park including:

- Poor lighting at the entrances
- No bins
- Benches in the wrong places
- Zip line always broken
- The hedge makes some areas feel unsafe
- Not many things to do for their age group

That last complaint, that there was no equipment specifically for them, was expressed in a number of different ways.

*“we can't use the play equipment because it's filled with little kids and the parents judge us”*

*“there's nowhere to sit and hang out”*

*“there's nothing to do but walk round in circles”*

A specific version of this came up in the Girls Brigade workshop where the girls, who also attended Hayesfield School, said that they were told by school not to use the park, which surprised us. But what was

happening was that after school, the girls would go to the park, and because there were no facilities for them would

use the younger children's play area. Mothers of primary age children didn't like this and would complain to the school. As a result, the girls were getting the message that they should not use public spaces.

One group of girls also mentioned that if they tried to play sport, they felt that boys would mock them so they didn't ever try.

In terms of what equipment they would like to see in the park, their ideas included:

- Swings (probably the most popular option)
- Roller skating paths
- Outdoor gym (which could charge your phone)
- Shelter
- More natural features – plants and flowers and water.

## Make Space for Girls Recommendations

Brickfields is a very typical park in that it does not have many facilities or features which attract teenage girls and young women, and so this group do not see it as a place which is 'for them'.

By installing some facilities which are clearly aimed at teenage girls, for example a bank of adult sized swings, or social seating in several locations across the park, or a range of shelters, Brickfields would signal to girls that they were welcome, which would address this issue.

In addition, we would also recommend that the park uses a lighting consultant to improve the safety of the park from dusk onwards, and opens up the entrances to the park so that they feel safer to all women users of the park.

There is now considerable interest in providing for girls and young women in public spaces, particularly because of the potential positive impacts that this can have on their physical and mental health. As a result, we anticipate that finding funding for any facilities aimed specifically at girls would not be difficult.

## Consultation Recommendations

There are some clear priorities to further explore to improve the park for both genders.

The majority of boys wanted to have space to have a kick around which is already provided through the existing football pitches.

We know that the existing facilities in Brickfields Park are significantly underused by females and we propose prioritising introducing new features and facilities that are targeted at girls to address this.

Features to explore in design work:

1. Shelter – a priority for both genders
2. Social seating
3. Swings
4. Lighting
5. Wide paths
6. Outdoor gym

While we would like to see features for girls prioritised, all features have been identified as beneficial by both genders.

Other opportunities:

7. Football nets for existing goals\*
8. Toilets – unlikely to be achievable through this project

## Next steps

Once the priority features for development are agreed with Bath and North East Somerset Council (BANES) officers, Your Park Bristol and Bath and Make Space for Girls will work with Stride Treglown, Bath-based architecture and design practice who have volunteered to support the project, to develop designs for the park including the agreed features.

We have applied for funding to introduce new social seating areas and swings to the park.

All designs will need to be developed within the scope for the project as defined by BANES.

*\*It is worth noting that the observational surveys found that the football pitches are infrequently used outside of organised tournaments. We saw high male usage of the sporting facilities in the park through our observational surveys compared with very low female use.*