



Improving fitness, minds and local wildlife for all to enjoy

Participation and referral guidelines

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Nature's Gym. We have created these participation and referral guidelines to ensure you/your client has the best experience while volunteering and so we can provide a positive and welcoming environment for all.

Firstly, please be aware that Nature's Gym is primarily a nature conservation group and tasks can be complicated, involve the use of tools and require volunteers to work on their own without support. While we understand that being and working outdoors can have several benefits for all volunteers, staff are not specifically trained to provide support for individuals experiencing mental ill health. Due to the nature of the work, and the size of the group the staff are unable to offer one to one guidance.

Please take a moment to review our current programme and learn more about what we do. This will help you decide whether Nature's Gym is the right project for you and/or your client before filling in the registration or referral form.

Volunteers should have a level of independence that allows them to take part in activities either independently or with minimal supervision. If you or your client require more hands-on support to work safely and comfortably, this project may not be the best fit without additional assistance.

For volunteers who need more support, the referring organisation is asked to provide appropriate assistance at every session the volunteer attends. If a volunteer requires this support and it cannot be provided, we may not be able to accept the referral to ensure the safety and wellbeing of everyone involved.

Please ensure the registration form is completed in full, as we cannot accept individuals without this information. If you would like to discuss either the form or learn more about our work, please **contact us** at 020 8314 2119 or email naturesgym@lewisham.gov.uk.

All volunteers joining Nature's Gym must attend a 'taster session' where we will assess their suitability for the project and the projects' suitability for them. We will then discuss this with them and/or the referring agency. After 12 weeks, all volunteers may be invited to a feedback session where we can discuss this further.

Specific Referral Guidelines

- **Confirm interest and understanding:** Ensure your client is genuinely interested in nature conservation volunteering, and that both of you have a clear understanding of the work Nature's Gym undertakes, as well as the abilities required for the tasks involved.
- **Assess needs and abilities:** Conduct a thorough assessment to understand your client's needs and capabilities, paying particular attention to any implications their condition may have on carrying out the activities at Nature's Gym sessions.
- **Provide accurate information:** Make sure you give Nature's Gym leaders all the correct information about your client, as referrals cannot be accepted without this. The Memorandum of Understanding outlines the reassessment process should it become necessary.
- Please make sure you read the task for each session and assess its suitability for your client. If the work isn't suitable please either call the organisers to discuss further or give that session a miss. This is important as we are limited to the number of people we have, and, if someone turns up and doesn't work because they do not like/are unable to do the task, it means another individual has lost the opportunity to take part.