



Green Gym volunteers keep fit and mentally healthy outdoors, while helping the environment.

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LANGUAGE LEVEL: B1 INTERMEDIATE

THE BIG OUTDOORS GREEN GYMS

Una propuesta gratuita para ponerse en forma al aire libre, cuidar el medio ambiente y aprender inglés. Es el proyecto *Green Gym*, al que cualquiera puede apuntarse. Chris Speirs es uno de sus responsables.

We all know what a gym is: every month you pay money, you exercise indoors with machines, usually on your own? You become fitter? maybe... but then often, especially by this time of the year, you abandon the whole thing! A Green Gym is different: it

spaces, in schools and in prisons. In London, residents and visitors can participate in Green Gym activities most days of the week. For tourists, this is a great way to meet real Londoners and to discover the city in a different way.

THANK YOU, DR BIRD

The Green Gym was the idea of an English doctor, William Bird. About 12 years ago, Dr Bird realised the benefits of working outdoors for his patients. It helped combat excess weight*, diabetes and depression, for example. Every gardener knows that working outside is stimulating and is good for stress levels. The colour green has a calming effect. Activity in nature reduces stress and diminishes blood pressure. Working with other people, growing and creating things is also good for people's confidence*.

When he had the Green Gym idea, Dr Bird was a volunteer with the conservation charity British Trust for Conservation Volunteers

(BTCV), who developed it into the successful programme it is today.

THE WAR ON OBESITY

The Green Gym idea certainly came at the right time. Physical inactivity costs the UK economy billions of pounds a year. Obesity figures are the highest in the European Union: nearly a quarter of British adults are officially obese. Mental health problems affect one in four people at some point in their lives.

A Green Gym group consists of a variety of individuals who come for different reasons: to lose weight, to learn new skills*, to meet new people and to make a difference. Last year the Green Gym founder, Dr Bird, was made an MBE* by the Queen. Green Gyms are forming all over the country, and the concept is being exported to other countries, like Australia. And so, as obesity increases everywhere, a Green Gym might be coming near you... or why don't you start one up yourself?!

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If you are interested

Green Gyms are run by the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers. www.btcv.org has all the information: what happens in a Green Gym, listings for Green Gyms across the country, a list of FAQs.

For our interview, *Speak Up* went to a Green Gym in Camden (www.btcv.org/camden) with team leader Chris Speirs. They usually start at 10.45 at different locations

GLOSSARY

- 1 **INDOORS**: dentro, en un local
- 2 **ON YOUR OWN**: solo
- 3 **FIT**: en forma
- 4 **OUTDOORS**: fuera, al aire libre
- 5 **HEBEE**: seto
- 6 **WEIGHT**: peso
- 7 **CONFIDENCE**: confianza
- 8 **SKILL**: habilidad
- 9 **MBE**: miembro de la Orden del Imperio Británico