



THE FRIENDS OF
Rowntree Park

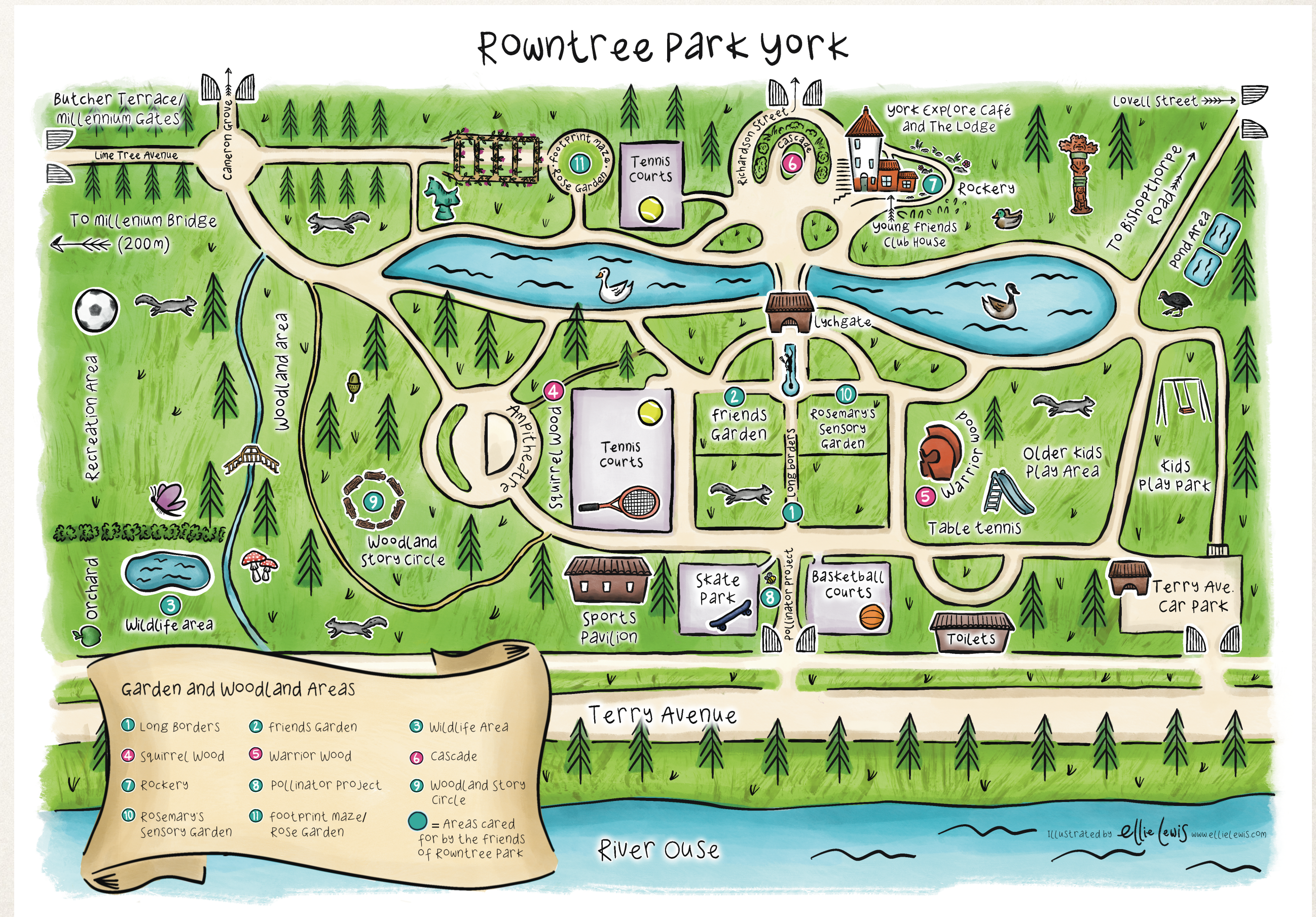
Older Girls and Rowntree Park - York

Abigail Gaines

Older Girls and Rowntree Park

Context - Rowntree Park, York

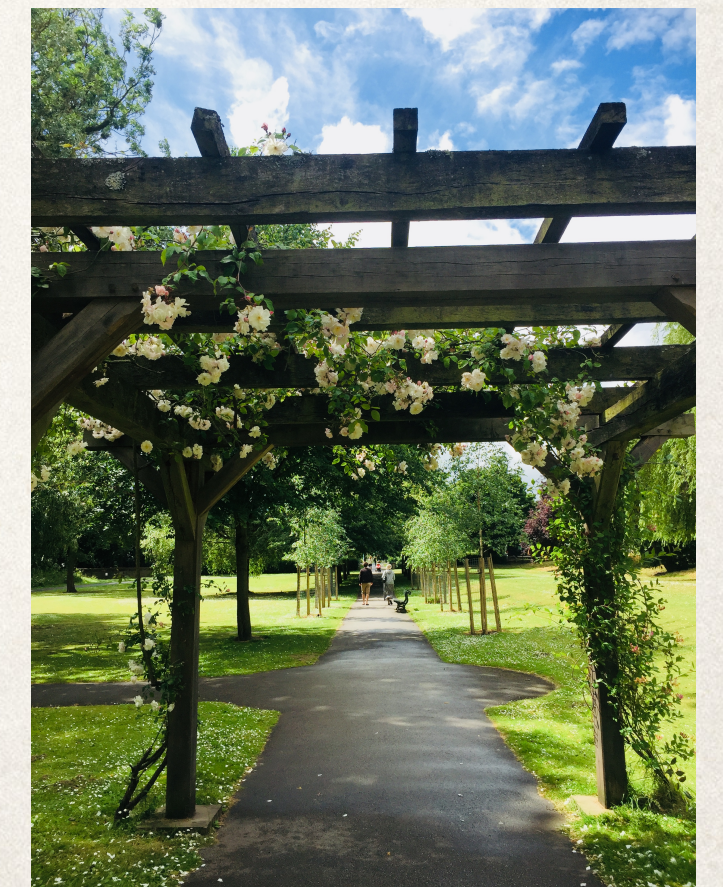
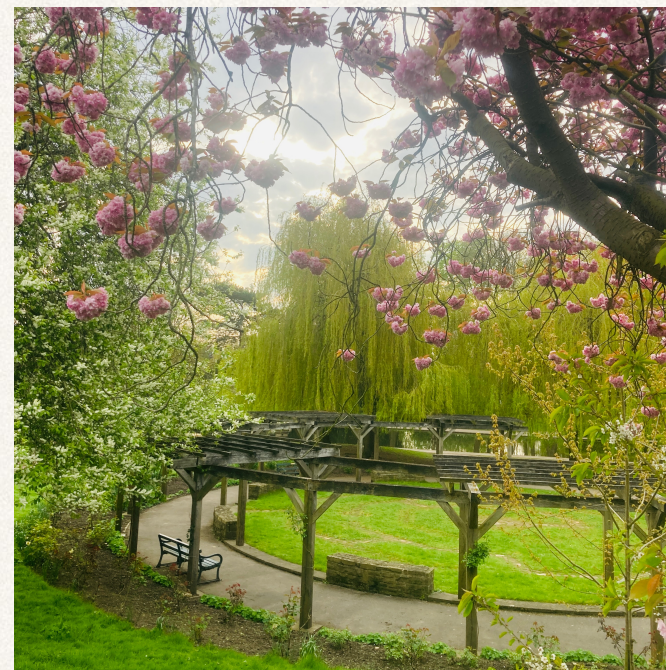
- ❖ 24 acre park - 15 mins from the city centre, along a riverside loop to town.
- ❖ Managed by City of York Council.
- ❖ FRP a charity who help maintain and improve the park.
- ❖ FRP - Garden and fund areas, run community events and activities, run an education programme and MHWB projects...and more!



Older Girls and Rowntree Park

Aims:

- ❖ Share our research methods and results
- ❖ Actions based on findings
- ❖ Next steps...



Safety?

Older Girls and Rowntree Park

Project started Autumn 2021 - ongoing...

Initial focus - girls views on the park (+ and -), and ideas to improve.

- ❖ Blogs/ articles on line to raise awareness of issue
- ❖ On-line and in person surveys
- ❖ Focus group sessions
- ❖ Observations of use of areas
- ❖ **Raising awareness** - membership of over 1000 people (newsletters), posters in the park, social media presence, school newsletters, local radio/press, met with local MP.
- ❖ Work with University of York for Festival of Social Sciences (Autumn 2022)



Older Girls and Rowntree Park

Key Findings: Negatives

- ❖ Don't feel welcome in the play area - too old.
- ❖ 90% felt uncomfortable in the skatepark.
- ❖ Basketball court and skatepark dominated by males - they avoid walking near.
- ❖ Toilets can be unclean / vandalised.
- ❖ Feel less safe in the evenings.
(Less adults about, cafe closed, basketball court/skatepark full of males).

**WE WANT TO SIT
ON SWINGS BUT
FEEL BAD WHEN
SMALL KIDS
WANT THEM.**

FRIENDS OF ROWNTREE PARK RESEARCH 2021

**I ONLY GO TO
THE SKATE PARK
WHEN I KNOW IT
WILL BE QUIET**

FRIENDS OF ROWNTREE PARK RESEARCH 2021

Similar theme to research taking place all over the UK (and elsewhere).

Older Girls and Rowntree Park

Key Findings: Positives

- ❖ Open plan park - wide paths and lots of gates (s)
- ❖ Round picnic benches in cared for areas
- ❖ Facilities - toilets and cafe (s)
- ❖ Play equipment - like swings / climbing frames
- ❖ Natural areas for exploration and interest
- ❖ Open spaces such as the amphitheatre / stage and railed gardens (*rollerblade/cycle/perform/or just sit*).
- ❖ Community events & activities (s)
- ❖ Projects / things to look at - eg: Art in the Park, Tree Trails etc
- ❖ Range of ages in the park (s)



(S) - Linked to safety

Older Girls and Rowntree Park

Ideal park - boys & girls (survey)

- ❖ 75 % Swings
- ❖ 68% Climbing/agility equipment
- ❖ 64% Social benches
- ❖ 50% Outdoor gym
- ❖ 48% Natural areas
- ❖ 40% large grass areas
- ❖ 38% large concrete areas
- ❖ 32% Stage
- ❖ 18% BMX track
- ❖ 14% Skatepark
- ❖ 8% Basketball courts
- ❖ 7% Tennis

Both boys and girls asked favoured similar facilities.

These aren't specifically the sort of equipment councils install for 'older children'.



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Summary - Safety in Rowntree Park

Issues we face:

- ❖ No site staff since 2017.
- ❖ 'Managed decline' of the park. No council gardeners or planting. Basic maintenance only.
- ❖ Lack of community police presence.
- ❖ Park open until 10pm - antisocial issues after dark (no lighting).
- ❖ Skatepark enclosed- attracts some drug / drinking issues.
- ❖ Toilets often vandalised / not very clean.

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Summary - Safety in Rowntree Park

What we are doing to help:

- ❖ Creating community space - lots of activities / projects for all ages.
- ❖ Making the park feel loved / cared for (avoiding 'broken windows' effect).
- ❖ Volunteers present - gardeners, litter pickers, event leaders etc.
- ❖ School visits / education programme (primary) and family events from a young age.
- ❖ Establishing links with PCSOs - communicating issues.
- ❖ Council liaison - report issues (maintenance).
- ❖ Skatepark - Tall hedge around cut back to open up the space & making sure both gates to the skate park are open.
- ❖ *Trying to make girls feel welcome - New equipment/targeted events...*



Older Girls and Rowntree Park

Based on research....

Two aims of our girls project:

- ❖ New equipment for older girls
- ❖ More events / activities for older girls

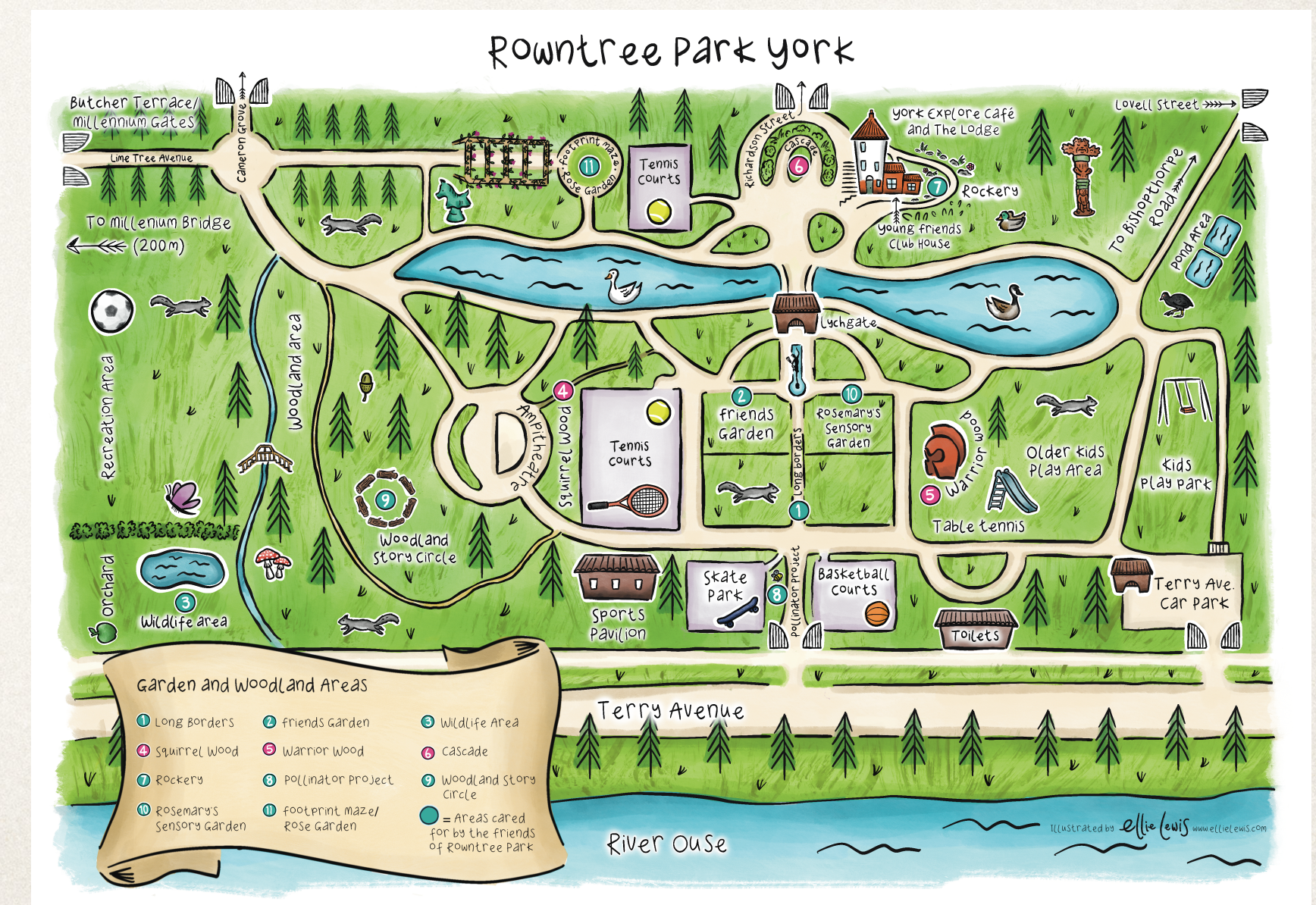
Focus - getting girls to feel welcome in Rowntree Park
This also links to safety.



Older Girls and Rowntree Park

New Equipment

- ❖ Most wanted - swings, climbing / agility, and benches.
- ❖ To be located in the 'big kids play area'.
- ❖ Need to fund raise - no council funds.
- ❖ Even one piece is a start and helps raise awareness.

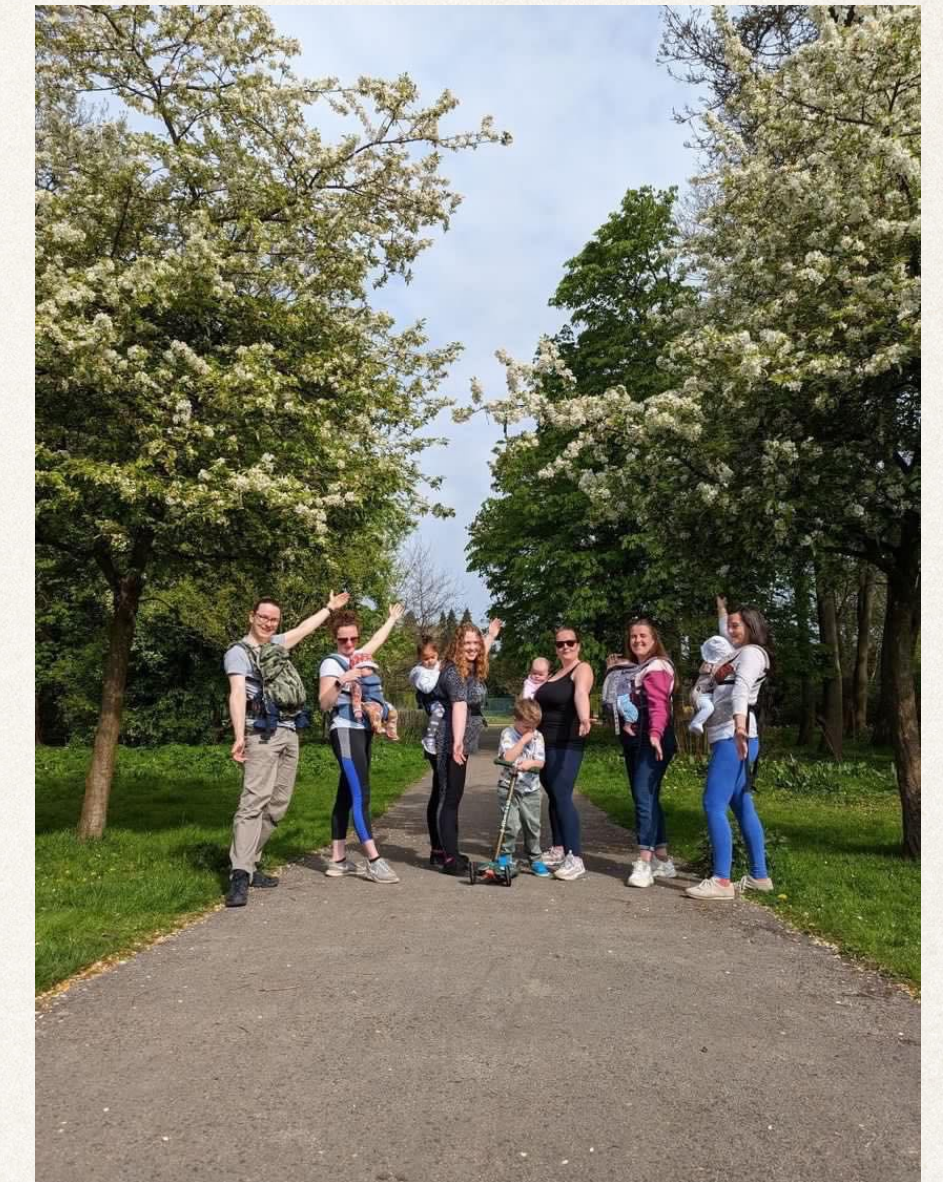


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Events and activities

Feedback showed girls liked seeing women's activities in the park

- ❖ Pilates & Yoga
- ❖ Salsa
- ❖ Baby wearing dance classes for mums



Over 50% of girls surveyed had been involved in events run by the Friends of Rowntree Park when they were younger (eg: Forest School, craft sessions, nature activities, school visits)

Older Girls and Rowntree Park

Events and activities for older girls

Wild Ones - weekly evening group for girls

Activities include hanging in hammocks, foraging, campfire cooking, whittling, nature crafts etc.

Running since spring 2022.

15 girls ages 10-16 for a block of 6 weeks.

MHWB funding 2022 - places subsidised. Looking for further funding.



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Events and activities for older girls

June programme of events in Rowntree Park

Focus on:

- Getting girls/women into the public space
- Trying new things/connecting with others
- Inspiring role models
- Exercise/sports in public
- Raising awareness of project in general



No funding!

Older Girls and Rowntree Park

Events and activities for older girls - Rowntree Park

June programme of events

- ❖ Sports & Exercise - basketball, yoga, pilates, fitness, cheerleading, football, Tik Tok dance, orienteering, canoeing etc.
- ❖ Arts and Crafts - nature crafts, art sessions, singing, theatre, photography, DJ takeover...
- ❖ Local police drop in session/ safe space van.



Older Girls and Rowntree Park

Conclusion

- ❖ Small groups, or an individual, CAN make a difference!
- ❖ Local research, raise awareness, connect with like-minded individuals / groups / organisations / council / police / funders..... do things!



www.rowntreepark.org.uk

*Abigail Gaines -
hello@rowntreepark.org.uk*

