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Plantlife - we're all in the wild: An inclusive guide to supporting
young people with SEN/D to discover their local outdoor spaces.
Wild About Plants.

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We're All

in the

Wild



**An inclusive guide to supporting young people
with SEN/D to discover their local outdoor spaces**

This
guide
has been
created as a
practical aid
to **assist**

- 1. Practitioners who work with SEN/D young people to support them to discover their local outdoor spaces.**
- 2. Practitioners who work in outdoor spaces to support them to work with young people with SEN/D.**

It is important to understand both of these perspectives.

The guide contains short stories – *Magic Moments*¹ – used to highlight the key learning points from the ‘We’re in the Wild’ project. It also includes tips for developing and managing a similar project – taking you from the first steps of having a good idea for an activity, to the final steps of assessing its effectiveness.

“ Our children have increased confidence in their personal abilities through completing tasks and activities. They have been able to transfer skills learnt in a classroom to other areas and activities

Teacher at SEN/D school

Foreword

'We're in the Wild' was a three-year project run by Plantlife and funded by the National Lottery through the Big Lottery Fund. It was designed to increase opportunities to connect children and young people with their local outdoor spaces. Some of the key project outcomes are listed below:

- ☀ Children and young people report improved confidence and self-esteem as a result of accessing social, interactive, learning opportunities in local green spaces.
- ☀ Through accessing and contributing to various local outdoor opportunities, children and young people report feeling more involved in their community and less isolated.
- ☀ Children and young people will have improved academic skills, motivation, and psychological and physical well-being through increased access, enjoyment and learning in the local environment.

As the project progressed, it became clear that SEN/D schools and groups in particular have limited opportunity to access local green spaces. Through consultation, relationships were developed with SEN/D schools and youth groups and new programmes of activity evolved. These built confidence and trust – opportunities being offered in school grounds initially, then moving into local parks. This approach enabled young people to discover new skills and then build on them – for some, this included using tools for the first time.

“ The enthusiasm and expertise of the project officer sets the project apart from others that I have been involved with in the past. All the activities were relevant and moved the children's learning forward at an appropriate pace

University lecturer



1. Introduction

Using this guide

The guide outlines simple steps to take when planning activities for SEN/D outdoors. These are presented in a diagram on page 6 and each step explained in turn. It is important to think about the process and to consider all steps. However, this is not a linear or one-way process, it is cyclical and ongoing and each step is of equal importance.

To be effective, we are looking to provide experiences that are meaningful, relevant and inspiring. Most of all they should be enjoyable and fun! We want young people to feel comfortable and be safe whilst exploring outdoors, so that they will want to continue going out. This guide provides a starting point – at the end, you will find suggestions for further supportive information.

“ Although there were more specialist resources available to us, staying within the school grounds limited what we could do with the young people. The trees available were mostly small/young and had been purposely planted. The grass area was small, muddy in places and the participants’ footwear/clothes unsuitable. This meant that we had to restrict our activities to ensure their safety

Who is this booklet relevant to?

Young people defined as having SEN/D This includes young people who have been assessed as having severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). They almost always have a statement of special educational needs (pre-2014) or an education, health and care (EHC) plan (post-2014). SEN/D may impact on a young person’s ability to learn, affecting their behaviour or ability to socialise; reading and writing; ability to understand things; concentration levels and/or physical ability.

The term SEN/D covers a wide range of individual needs, and some young people may have their needs accommodated within a mainstream school or college. Within a specialist school, all the children and young people will have been assessed as having severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties and may have other learning needs in addition, such as:

- ✿ Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- ✿ Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- ✿ Visual and/or Auditory Impairment
- ✿ Medical or Health Difficulties
- ✿ Behavioural or Social Difficulties

Meeting this level of often conflicting needs within a group can be a challenge and requires an open and honest approach to your own learning and support needs (we all have them).

When thinking about people, with or without identified SEN/D, it is important to remember that we all have different ways of seeing, interpreting and understanding the world around us – our ‘world view’ may not be the same as someone else’s. We need to show that we respect this difference through the language we use, and the way we refer to people around us.

People who work with SEN/D This represents a diverse group of people: teachers, teaching assistants, nurses, carers, students, volunteers, parents, grandparents – plus all the other staff involved in running specialist provisions. Schools can adapt to meet the needs of the individual student as far as is practicable. Due to the often complex nature of the needs of the students, teachers and learning support staff work very much in partnership with parents and professionals to provide the best learning environment possible for each student. This is useful to know, as it is a source of support and guidance for you.

People who work in the outdoors This diverse group includes rangers, education officers, volunteers (including Friend of Groups) and conservation workers. They have knowledge and understanding of the needs of local outdoor spaces. This is useful to know, as this is another source of support and information for you.



What kinds of places and spaces is this booklet relevant to?

What is a 'local outdoor space'? This is not a guide to visiting residential places, or to outdoor spaces that are purposely designed to meet the needs of young people with SEN/D. This is a guide to exploring spaces that are local to where we live, work or study – that are generally open to the general public and are on our doorstep. Because of this, we need to consider the space carefully to ensure we meet the needs of the wildlife – flora and fauna – that live there, as well as the people who also use the space.

What do we mean by inclusion?

There are many potential barriers to participation – it is about more than the ability of the young person. Some barriers are political, some social, some cultural. Sometimes we are so busy doing things, learning new skills and following a curriculum that we do not allow enough time for just being there. One of the key learning points from the 'We're in the Wild' project is that young people with SEN/D particularly relish opportunities to be playful outdoors, and to try new things that they perceive to be risky. These activities need to be adapted to meet each individual's specific needs.

2. Starting with you

Before planning a new project outdoors with young people identified as having SEN/D, it is important to consider:

What is your motivation for starting the project?

- ☀️ Why are you doing it?
- ☀️ What are you hoping to achieve?

What skills, knowledge and experience do you have?

- ☀️ If you are a SEN/D practitioner, how confident are you about using outdoor spaces? Identify your strengths and weaknesses – do you need any extra training?
- ☀️ If you are an outdoor practitioner, how confident are you in working with young people with SEN/D? Again, identify if you need any specific training.

Who do you know that may be able to work with you?

- ☀️ What skills, knowledge and experience can they share with you?
- ☀️ What skills, knowledge and experience can you share with them?

3. Effectively exploring outdoors with SEN/D

Before going outdoors Apply each step to this phase of the process.

Establish

Make contact with local schools and with groups responsible for local parks to find out who you need to meet with. Local volunteering and conservation groups are a good source of information. The 'We're in the Wild' project found that the best method for reaching people, adults and young people, was through direct communication, attending staff meetings, youth club sessions – meeting people and letting them get to know the project, and more importantly, who was running it and why. It allowed them to put a face to the project and helped them to appreciate how accommodating and adaptable the project could be to fit the needs of the groups, therefore breaking down barriers or concerns they may have had.

For many young people identified as SEN/D, local outdoor spaces may prove a challenge, particularly for those who attend specialist provision (non-mainstream schools). Our research has indicated that pupils are regularly transported significant distances from home to school, and that once there, they have a tendency to stay within the school grounds. As a result, most schools have well-designed outdoor spaces, fully accessible to their students with a wide range of specialist resources. In contrast, most local outdoor spaces are designed for more general public use, may be difficult to access and rely on you to have the right resources.

Conversations with teaching staff, parents and young people revealed that for many of the students, school represented more than a formal education, it was also the main space for their social education. Most of the young people (and their parents/carers) we met were reluctant to explore outdoors alone, fearing misunderstanding and intimidation from other, unknown people. This makes it even more important to think carefully about the process of getting young people involved with their local park and community. We are aiming to provide each young person with a positive experience and to challenge the negative images that some people may have about SEN/D.

The model (Hayes, 2016) (right) can be used at three key stages of the process of effectively exploring outdoors with SEN/D:

- 1) Before going outdoors
- 2) Being outdoors
- 3) After coming in from outdoors

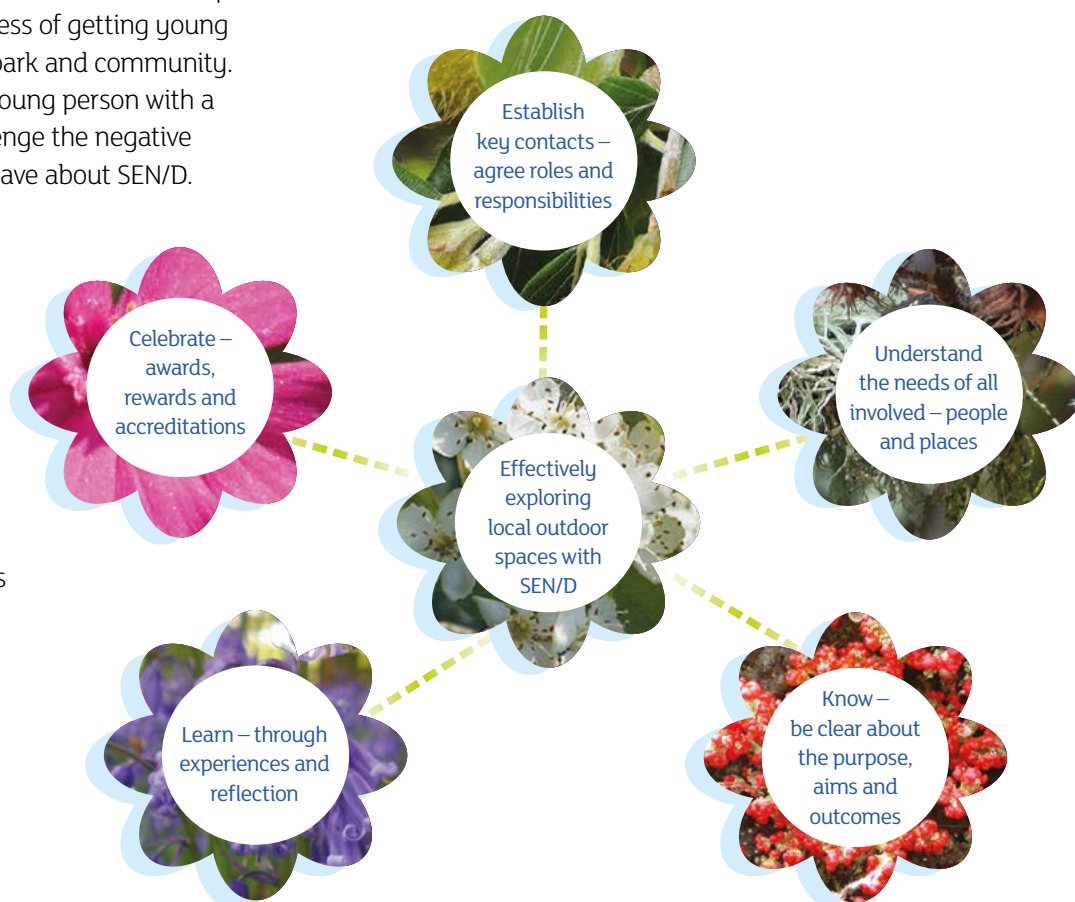


Figure 1: A model to guide the process of Effectively Exploring local outdoor spaces with young people who have SEN/D (Hayes, 2016)

Understand

It is important to understand the needs of all those who are involved – the people, animals, plants and places.

- ☀ Your local green space will be owned/managed by someone, so you need to understand who this is, what they do and how you may work with them. Walking round the green space with the manager can help you understand the site; areas that may be quieter or more appropriate for activities, the opportunities for activities – for example, coppicing, managing invasive plants.
- ☀ Face-to-face contact enabled us to establish a relationship with adult leaders and young people, identify expectations and agree roles and responsibilities. It enabled us to understand the needs of all those we were working with and check through ideas. It is important to “...establish and maintain a culture of high expectations” (DfE and DoH, 2015) by enabling young people with SEN/D to experience opportunities that are available to other young people².
- ☀ Spending time observing young people in their school or youth group setting allows you to develop relationships with young people (become a familiar face), understand individual needs and interests and gain an idea of appropriate level of language. It is important to think carefully about the language we use, and to remember that although young people may have been identified as having SEN/D, they are first and foremost young people. As explained by Audre Lorde (1984) “...the important point is that one aspect of ourselves should not be used to define the whole of us”. Being understanding involves recognising and being receptive to others’ needs, their feelings/emotional needs, as well as their more obvious physical/mobility needs. One of the teachers we worked with explained why the project was so effective, praising the Plantlife project officer: “She was sensitive to their (varying) needs and spoke to them at their level whilst encouraging them to both share their knowledge and extend it.”
- ☀ To help you at this stage of the process, before you step outside with your group, talk to other people, read about other projects and learn from them. You will find that most projects are keen to share their learning.

“ The teacher walked with me and explained to me about some of the challenges of working with PMLD (profound and multiple learning difficulties) – the endless forms to enable them to leave the classroom/school; how to play games such as I-spy, adapting to meet their needs

Know

Before you step outside, you need to be clear about the purpose for doing so, as well as the aims and outcomes you are looking for. You must consider the skills and knowledge of all involved, before you can offer specific opportunities and activities. For example, you may need someone to help with willow weaving, bird box making and arts/crafts. Then you will have to complete the health and safety and risk assessment forms. We found that working with schools involved a lot of paperwork; make sure you allow enough time to do this so that you are not left waiting in reception for someone’s permission to allow you to take the young people outside. Know what is needed, and when you need to do it.

“ When we arrived at the school, the teacher in charge informed us that they had decided it would not be appropriate to take the young people to the park, due to the adverse weather conditions. It was clear that neither teachers nor pupils had outdoor footwear/clothes, only their usual attire (including soft, fabric shoes). We spoke with the staff and emphasised the importance of preparing for sessions by reminding students and their parents to dress appropriately. On subsequent visits to the school, we found that the staff had put together a bag of additional clothing – just in case it was needed

Learn

When planning your activities, you need to think about how you are going to capture the learning, in a meaningful way. The 'We're in the Wild' project used a number of methods, including:

- ☀ Online surveys – such as Survey Monkey
- ☀ Hard copy surveys – on paper
- ☀ Project diary
- ☀ Photographic evidence – photos, videos, voice recordings
- ☀ Notes from meetings
- ☀ E-mails
- ☀ Direct communication and feedback
- ☀ Thank you cards and letters

This enabled us to think about our experiences, identify what we had done, how we had done it and to consider if we could have done anything differently. This is all part of the process of reflection, and there are three questions that may be used to guide this process:

- 1. What?** Think about how you are going to keep records of what you are doing.
- 2. So what?** Consider how you are going to identify the learning, and how you will know that your activities have made a difference.
- 3. Now what?** Use this information to help you plan your next activities – what do you need to do more of/less of/ do differently?

“ *Excellent organised lessons, individualised to the need of our pupils, lessons are very informative and interesting, excellent relationship with pupils* ”

Youth club leader

Celebrate

This is a very important aspect, and it involves planning for how you are going to recognise young people's achievements. This may include awards schemes such as Plantlife's Young Wardens, John Muir Award (three different levels), rewards, certificates and accreditations. Some young people may want a reference, something they can add to their CV that may help them when looking for work or further study. Some schools may invite you to their school assemblies – a great opportunity for presenting certificates. Open days and events are a good way to celebrate, especially if you invite others along to join in. However, you need to carefully consider the needs of your group, and establish what is their preferred way to celebrate. Don't forget to recognise and celebrate your own achievements.

“ *The teacher explained that many young people with PMLD and SEN/D have low self-esteem and self-confidence, having been damaged by their earlier experiences. Two in his class had been refused admission by every other school, and had been described as 'Devil children'. Since coming to this school much work has been undertaken to help them recover from this* ”



Being outdoors As before, the model can be used to support you to plan this phase of the process. However, the most important thing about this phase is to enjoy BEING outside, the model is only a prompt – don't let it get in the way of what you are doing.

Establish

Agree a way of working together by establishing 'ground rules' – what you are allowed to do, how far you are allowed to go, and what you are going to do if someone challenges this agreement. We found that this approach had a very positive impact on young people, helping them to develop risk perception, social, motivational and leadership skills. It is important to keep a healthy balance between enabling freedom and managing risk. For example, the guidance for schools provided by RoSPA³ is that we should endeavour to make activities as safe as necessary, not as safe as possible. By being 'risk aware, but not risk averse' we can establish an effective way to safely enjoy being outdoors.

“It was great we used real tools,” the words of a 14-year-old student identified as having special educational needs, when asked if he had enjoyed a bird box making activity. With the correct supervision, most people can gain an understanding of tool technique, and in the process develop skills around risk perception and the benefits of using personal protective equipment

Understand

We found that some young people are reluctant to try new things or visit unknown spaces. Allow sufficient time for them to become more comfortable and to find things that they enjoy doing. Talking through activities in advance, rehearsing the route that will be taken and showing pictures of the space you will be using are all methods for developing familiarity and comfort before you leave the school grounds.

Some of the young people may not fully engage with the planned activities, and may become bored quite quickly, especially if they are not used to being outside. A box/bag of extra resources can come in very handy – a 'distraction box' of items that they can choose from will enable them to follow their own interests. We have found it useful to include things like string, sticky tape, paper, wax crayons (good for bark rubbings), disposable cameras, straws, magnifiers, toys (that are okay to get muddy), egg boxes for treasure hunts, simple identification guides. And understand the space you are exploring – there may be lots of natural things available to use (sticks, leaves, trees/bushes for hide-and-seek).

“It's not all playing games, young people like to 'keep it real'. “I didn't want to go outdoors at first but it was actually good fun. I enjoyed doing heather management and cutting back shrubbery.” But it is still fun

³ The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents – www.rospa.com/rospaweb/docs/advice-services/school-college-safety/managing-safety-schools-colleges.pdf



Know

If you have followed the steps earlier, you will have a clear idea of what activities you are allowed to do within the space, and what the school will allow you to do with the young people. This will be evidenced within your risk assessment forms. A prompt card for lead and support staff (those who work with the young people on a day-to-day basis) can be useful to help empower them in the session, know the activities and take leadership. This is particularly important when working with young people with SEN/D, as many of them will have individual support.

Remember that in public spaces, there is the potential for unplanned things to occur, so you need to remain vigilant. For example, we discovered that dogs (and their owners) hold a special appeal for some young people, and as a result we had to teach the young people how to approach dogs safely by first checking with the owner that it was safe to do so. You need to know how long you have available for activities, and what time the young people need to be back at the school. Many young people who attend SEN/D schools travel a considerable distance in buses and taxis and therefore punctuality is important.

“ On our approach to the park, we noticed that the pedestrian crossing (adapted for wheelchairs) over the main road was full of rotting leaves. The Plantlife project officer subsequently made a call to the local council to make them aware of this, and the leaves were cleared away. On subsequent visits, the crossing was noticeably clear – a benefit to the community as a whole, not just the SEN/D school

Learn

We found that we learned a lot from the young people, some of whom are very knowledgeable about different plants and animals and were keen to share this with us. They were very good at spotting things and finding interesting things to look at. Our tip for you is to look for the learning opportunities, be responsive to:

- ☀ What else is happening in the park – and how this may complement what you are doing. For example, seeing someone feeding ducks can spark conversations about ducks, food, care – so many options.
- ☀ How young people are responding to what is on offer – and be prepared to change the activity if it is not working.
- ☀ The weather, in particular young people with limited mobility, can get cold very quickly. Learning to recognise how the weather impacts on them can spark conversations about weather, clothing, things to do to keep warm.

Celebrate

Share and celebrate whilst you are outside – for example, when someone overcomes their fear of spiders to take a look at a spider's web. Look for the signs of the changing seasons, and think about how this can be celebrated – song, dance, games, rhymes, poetry, stories.

“ A class from a SEN/D school undertook a willow weaving activity whilst working towards a John Muir Award. A 15-year-old student with severe ADHD became particularly engrossed in the activity. The teacher was amazed at his dedication, as the student found it very difficult to focus during classroom lessons. This made a lasting impression on the young person, who asked to go back and do some more weaving





“ I enjoyed learning about wildlife through fun and games

After coming in from outdoors Apply each step to this phase of the process to bring the activity/project to an effective close.

Establish

Reflect on the experience with all those who participated and find out:

- ☀️ What they thought of it, what it meant to them.
- ☀️ What they found most interesting.
- ☀️ What they found most challenging.
- ☀️ What they would like to do again.

This can be used to plan future activities and encourage groups, to see how they could continue doing activities like this without you guiding them. In conversations with them, explore how they can do similar activities with their families, carers, friends or in the school. In doing this, the work becomes more sustainable.

Many people, of all ages, struggle to concentrate in an indoor environment, and find academic work challenging. However, they may excel when it comes to practical, outdoor activities. In the words of one young person: "I enjoyed going outside, I don't do very well stuck in the classroom, I begin to get agitated and claustrophobic." A group of students who were visually impaired went out to discover their local outdoors. Afterwards they were asked what they gained from the activities. One 13-year-old student said: "It was a good experience. It allowed us to use our other senses." Another student responded: "It allowed us to do things independently."

“ The project officer was incredibly knowledgeable and enthusiastic... This enthused the children very much. She was sensitive to their (varying) needs and spoke to them at their level, whilst encouraging them to share their knowledge and extend it

Understand

Some young people may not be able to use verbal communication to show what they have enjoyed or how much, so it is important to consider other methods for evaluating what the experience meant to them. Talk to those who normally care for them, observe their body language, particularly how they respond to the activities offered. Try to capture this while outside so that it can be added to the post-activity reflection and evaluation. If possible, include feedback from the people who manage the outdoor space – has your project/activity had an impact on the space or on the local community?

Know

Look back at your planning and assess if you have met your aims and outcomes; did you do what you planned to do? If not, why not? Look for other, unplanned outcomes that have resulted from your project. Know what was good about your project and what could be improved.

Learn

This is integral to the previous three aspects (establish, understand and know), so considering these together helps you to gain a holistic overview and identify what are the key learning points, the 'Magic Moments' from your project.





Celebrate

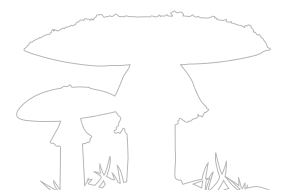
Once you have identified your Magic Moments, the successes of the project and the individual achievements of each young person, use the most appropriate methods to share this. This may encourage other people/groups to do something similar and to discover for themselves what their local outdoor spaces are really like – and how they can make effective use of them.

Help spread the word that we can ALL be wild in outdoor spaces – in ways that are relevant and appropriate to meet our own individual needs and interests. One of the visually impaired students wrote a letter to us about the project which we would like to share. It has been translated from Braille.

“ It gave my class of children a great opportunity to take their learning outdoors which has been a priority for our school. The activities were relevant, informative and fun. The project officer also took time to get to know the children, who are all on the Autistic Spectrum, so this is so very important

To whom it may concern,

The John Muir Award consists of outdoor exploring. I really enjoyed it because I like anything to do with nature. Due to my visual impairment I like to do tactile activities and use my other senses, including: my listening skills, touch, smell and taste. I was able to make my own perfume with leaves, plants and petals, which I really enjoyed. It was totally inspiring and it's good that people take the time and enjoy helping visually impaired young people to achieve new tasks.



4. Activity suggestions

There are lots of books suggesting outdoor activities for young people, including:

- ☀ Sharing Nature with Children (1999) by Joseph Cornell
- ☀ Go Wild!: 101 Things to do Outdoors before you Grow Up (2009) by Fiona Danks and Jo Schofield
- ☀ 101 Things for Kids to do Outside (2014) by Dawn Isaac
- ☀ Learning with Nature: A How-to Guide to Inspiring Children through Outdoor Games and Activities (2015) by Marina Robb, Victoria Mew and Anna Richardson
- ☀ Celebrating Nature (2003) by Gordon MacLellan
- ☀ Under the Sky: Playing, Working and Enjoying Adventures in the Open Air – A Handbook for Parents, Carers and Teachers (Bringing Spirit to Life) (2009) by Sally Schweizer
- ☀ Outdoors with Young People: A Leader's Guide to Outdoor Activities, the Environment and Sustainability (1998) by Geoff Cooper
- ☀ Earth Education: A New Beginning (1990) by Steve Van Matre
- ☀ I Love my World (2009/12) by Chris Holland

Plantlife's 'Exploring the Nature on your Doorstep: A Guide for Teachers' provides lots of ideas for activities, all of which have been used within the 'We're in the Wild' project and can be easily adapted to accommodate a range of needs.

Adapting activities

We have developed a simple checklist for adapting activities, with an example based on an activity from Chris Holland's book (2012, page 25) 'Blobsters' – although we prefer to call them 'Boggarts'.

Summary of the activity: Each participant is given a small lump of clay and asked to turn it into a 'somebody' by adding sticks, leaves, stones, berries – whatever can be found in the nearby area. Whilst the group is exploring the area, finding things to add to their clay, there is time for conversations around what you can see, hear, feel, smell – making this a multi-sensory experience. We found that it is useful to provide enough resources for everyone to join in – teachers, carers, parents and us, as this enabled adults to model the activities for the young people and reinforced that this was an activity for all ages. It also made it more fun for everyone.





“ Initially I didn't want to go outside but when I went out, I found it was cool

Checklist of things to consider⁴

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT	OUR RESPONSE TO THIS	HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND?
<p>ESTABLISH How is the task developmentally appropriate for the young people?</p>	<p>We need to avoid being seen as patronising by offering activities that are perceived as too childish by some young people – remember that there will be a range of developmental abilities. For example, whilst some young people may be happy ‘taking teddy for a walk’, others may react to this suggestion by swearing loudly and throwing teddy in the nearest lake!</p>	
<p>UNDERSTAND How does the activity appropriately challenge the participants?</p>	<p>Boggarts is an activity suitable for all ages – and encourages use of the imagination. It can be linked to favourite books, TV programmes or films. One of the young people who participated in the ‘We’re in the Wild’ project called every bird she spotted ‘Kevin’ – a reference to the film ‘Up’. This connection was more important to her than attempting to learn the proper names of the birds we saw.</p>	
<p>KNOW How does the activity support collaborative and co-operative learning?</p>	<p>We want to encourage young people to explore their local spaces and see what they can find – however this won’t work if there is nothing for them to find. The place needs to be checked prior to the activity and, if needed, some resources strategically placed for them to find. Remember that this is a public space so don’t leave things too early (they may go missing) and clear up when you’re finished.</p> <p>Young people with physical disabilities/limited mobility may need nature bringing to them – we found that trays on wheelchairs provided a useful place for making things.</p> <p>We found that the more active young people tended to help out the less physically active, running backwards and forwards, bringing things to their friends, particularly those in wheelchairs. Boggarts is an activity that really does encourage conversation: “Look what I’ve made...can I see yours?” “That looks good, how did you do that/find that/where can I find that?”</p>	

⁴ Checklist adapted from Jones, P (2005) Inclusion in the Early Years: stories of good practice. London: David Fulton Publishers Ltd



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT	OUR RESPONSE TO THIS	HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND?
<p>LEARN How does your evaluation strategy help you to identify the learning, to reflect on the process of learning as well as the product of the learning?</p>	<p>Learning is a dynamic process, involving lots of little steps along the way. When making something like a Boggart, it is not just about the final product (although Boggarts are very photogenic) – it is about the skills involved. These include: team-working; communication and language; numeracy (counting Boggarts); creativity and imagination; social skills and health and wellbeing⁵.</p>	
<p>CELEBRATE How does the activity allow you to recognise progress and achievement?</p>	<p>We found that young people with emotional and/or behavioural support needs got frustrated if they found things too difficult, and were tempted to give up. So we ensured we were on hand to observe, support and encourage, and to recognise (celebrate) during the process – not leaving it to the end. This helped to build confidence and self-esteem – and also makes it more fun because you can chat whilst making the Boggart.</p>	
<p>WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER?</p>	<p>We identified these as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ The skill and confidence of the facilitator – which take time to develop, so be gentle with yourself at the beginning and be open to learning from others. ☀ The language that is used – they are young people with SEND, not SEN/D young people – they are first and foremost young people, their ‘needs’ are but a part of them⁶. ☀ Being responsive to the individuals in the group – some, particularly the less active, may become cold very quickly; others may find it hard to focus for very long. We found that simple games like ‘I-spy’ and camouflage hide-and-seek were helpful in these situations. And Boggarts can become part of the game! 	

⁵ The health and wellbeing benefits of being outside are well reported.

⁶ See Audre Lorde on page 7, also page 16 of Jones (2005).





“ We got to do everything we planned and did a bit more than we thought

Further information

Support with SEN/D

- ☀ Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs

Support with finding outdoor spaces, ideas for activities and sources for practitioner training and development

- ☀ Plantlife
www.plantlife.org.uk
- ☀ Local Wildlife Trusts
www.wildlifetrusts.org/your-local-trust
- ☀ Woodland Trust: Discover the World on your Doorstep
www.woodlandtrust.org.uk
- ☀ National Trust: 50 Things to do before you're 11¾
www.50things.org.uk/find-a-place.aspx
- ☀ Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL) provides lots of opportunities for training and development
www.outdoor-learning.org
- ☀ John Muir Award is an environmental award scheme for people of all backgrounds – groups, families, individuals. It's non-competitive, inclusive and accessible
www.johnmuirtrust.org/john-muir-award
- ☀ Forest School Association (FSA) is the professional body and dedicated voice for Forest School within the UK. They are devoted to promoting quality Forest School for all, and a source for ongoing CPD
www.forestschoollassociation.org/what-is-forest-school
- ☀ If you're feeling more adventurous, Calvert Trust: Challenging Disability Through Outdoor Adventure
www.calvert-trust.org.uk

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Plantlife

Patron: HRH The Prince of Wales

Plantlife

14 Rolleston Street
Salisbury, Wiltshire SP1 1DX
01722 342730

Plantlife Scotland, Stirling

01786 478509

Plantlife Cymru, Cardiff

02920 376193

www.plantlife.org.uk

Email: Felicity.Harris@plantlife.org.uk

www.wildaboutplants.org.uk

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We are Plantlife

Wild flowers, plants and fungi play a fundamental role for wildlife, and their colour and character light up our landscapes. But without our help, this priceless natural heritage is in danger of being lost. Plantlife is the organisation that speaks up for our wild plants, lichens and fungi. From the open spaces of our nature reserves to the corridors of government, we're here to raise their profile, celebrate their beauty and to protect their future.

Join us in enjoying the very best that nature has to offer.

Britain's countryside. Save it with flowers

This guide is designed to connect children and young people with their local outdoor spaces, resulting in improved confidence and self-esteem; academic skills and motivation; and psychological and physical wellbeing through increased access, enjoyment and learning in the local environment. The project has been supported with funding from:

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