

Research for **Lindley Educational Trust**

A small scale evaluation of existing practice, monitoring systems and outcomes for vulnerable children

From QA Research



Research

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Executive Summary

The aim of Lindley Educational Trust is 'to ensure that young people, regardless of background, race, sex, religion, ethnic origin, disadvantage or disability, are provided with the tools and the confidence to reach their full potential throughout life'.

The overall aim of this research was to build the organizational capacity of the Lindley Educational Trust and provide a baseline from which to judge progress. This comprised a small scale evaluation of the Hollowford Centre experience and the development of a new monitoring and evaluation tool.

The individual objectives were achieved through desk research; focus groups; telephone interviews and a self-completion survey of children and young people (CYP).

All Stakeholders recognised the importance of good monitoring and evaluation for reflection, development and the role it will play to secure future funding. Thus the development of an effective monitoring and evaluation tool is essential to both the LET and their clients.

The pilot tool was developed through discussion with CYP, group leaders and staff from the Hollowford Centre.

Key Findings

- Personal recommendations are a key factor in choosing Hollowford for the first time
- Flexibility of the programmes offered by LET is one of the main reasons why group Leaders chose to return to Hollowford
- Team building is central to what group leaders hope to achieve at Hollowford
- Experiencing new environs; facing challenges; building confidence and raising expectations are also important outcomes for Leaders
- The Hollowford experience regularly exceeds the expectations of both group Leaders and CYP alike
- The LET / Hollowford experience contributes to the five Every Child Matters outcomes. Most organisations are working within this framework
- Hollowford is providing 'high quality outdoor education' as defined by the English Outdoor Council; the Outdoor Industries Association and The Outdoor Education Advisors Panel

The Way Forward

On the whole this evaluation portrays a very positive picture of the LET and their work at the Hollowford Centre however it can only provide a 'snapshot' in time.

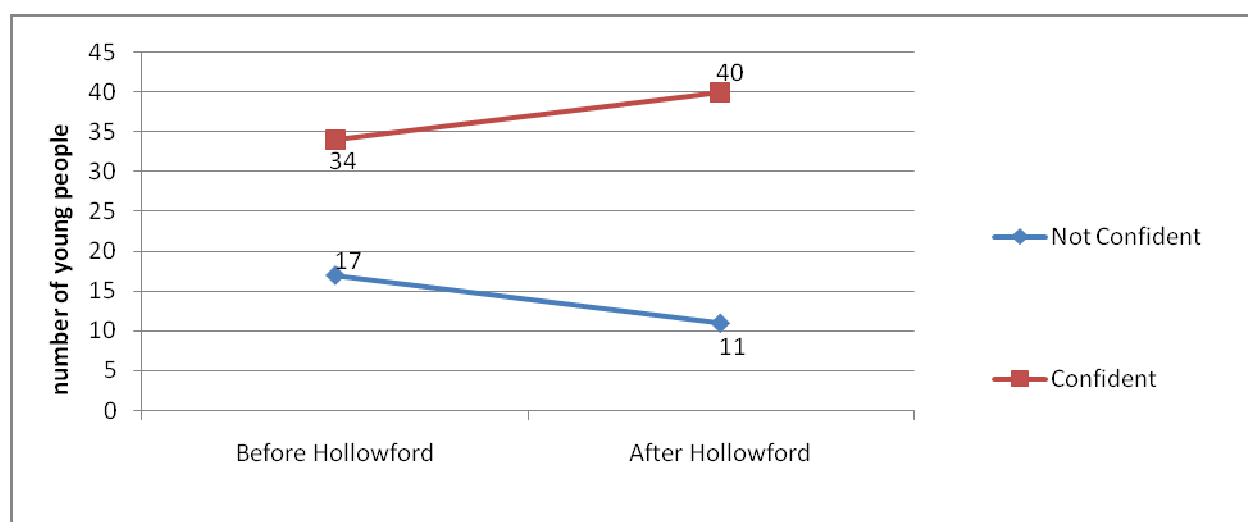
All of the Stakeholders recognised the value of measuring change over time. This applies not only to the young people themselves but the LET as an organisation. In order to build up a robust body of evidence and effectively monitor improvements it will be necessary for the LET to adopt and refine the newly developed tools for use in-house i.e. the Children and Young People Survey and Focus Group script; the Group Leader Telephone Interview script and the monitoring database.

The collection of longitudinal data will provide formative evidence for organisational development and summative evidence of growth. This evidence could also be shared with clients to support their funding applications in order for them to return to Hollowford.

The collection of data over time is also necessary to allow for seasonal variations in responses.

In addition, the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods will allow for a more meaningful exploration of the reported outcomes and enable the LET to better document the impact it has on the lives of children and young people. For example, young people were asked if they had been feeling confident in the two weeks prior to their visit to Hollowford. Two weeks after their visit to Hollowford they were asked the same question. It can be seen from the following Figure that more young people reported feeling 'confident' in the two weeks following their Hollowford experience than had prior to their visit. The increase represented 12% of the sample.

Figure: Reported Confidence Before and After the Hollowford Experience



Source: Hollowford Pilot Survey

Base: 51

Many of the young people's comments supported this finding.

"I think I could overcome difficulties now that I couldn't before... It's all about stepping out of your comfort zone" (University Student)

"It has made me confident in doing new things" (High School Student)

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1. Introduction

Lindley Educational Trust is a UK charity providing personal and team development programmes for young people. The programmes are designed to build confidence and self-esteem, particularly for those disadvantaged or at risk. The aim of Lindley Educational Trust is 'to ensure that young people, regardless of background, race, sex, religion, ethnic origin, disadvantage or disability, are provided with the tools and the confidence to reach their full potential throughout life'. The majority of the Trust's work takes place at the [Hollowford Centre](#), a residential and day centre situated in Derbyshire's Peak District National Park.

2. Aim

The overall aim of the research was to build the organizational capacity of the Lindley Educational Trust by and provide a baseline from which to judge progress.

Within this overall aim the specific objectives were to:

- Conduct a small scale evaluation of the existing monitoring and outcome measures
- Recommend necessary changes and develop new monitoring and evaluation tools for the Trust to use in the future
- Enthuse and empower staff to undertake future monitoring, evaluation, research and data analysis
- Examine children and young people's experience's of attending Lindley

3. Method

3.1. Desk Research

An initial period of desk research was used to examine existing feedback forms and monitoring data with reference to national policy frameworks such as the outcomes identified by Every Child Matters¹ and Youth Matters². In addition, reference was made to the Common Core skills/knowledge for the children's workforce.

The 'scope' and 'reach' of Lindley were also examined.

Desk research was also used to identify standardised tools for the measurement of health and well-being with a view to developing a questionnaire that can produce national comparable data.

3.2. Staff Feedback Sessions / Focus Groups

A Staff feedback session was facilitated to reflect on both the *use* and *usefulness* of the current monitoring tools. These reflections were used in the development of the new monitoring and evaluation tool. The group was held with representatives of instructors and management. The feedback sessions also provided an opportunity to begin to explore the value of robust monitoring and evaluation on which to build upon in training sessions.

¹ <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/files/64301A568B221580F3F449A098CB3CE9.pdf>

² <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/youth/docs/youthmatters.pdf>

3.3. Focus Groups with Young People

Using participatory methods, we engaged with five groups of CYP from a range of organizational types; University; generic Youth Service; Youth Inclusion Programme and a Junior School. A copy of the focus group schedule can be found in appendix 1.

Groups were recruited via the Lindley Educational Trust, who distributed information and 'non consent' forms which were returned by those organization *not* wishing to take part (appendix 2). It was important to engage with the young people soon after their time at Hollowford so that the experience was not 'lost' to them, with this in mind groups were contacted within two weeks of their visit. Participants were given verbal and written information about the evaluation and asked to sign an individual consent form (appendix 3).

The groups explored the expectations and experience that young people had at Hollowford and how, if at all, this experience could be improved. The focus groups also provided an opportunity for CYP to review and refine the questionnaire design.

In respect of their time we were able to offer the young people who participated in focus groups a £10 High Street gift voucher.

3.4. Interviews with Group Leaders

In addition to the focus groups, six short semi-structured interviews were conducted with the adult stakeholders e.g. Youth workers and Course Leaders associated with the groups. The majority of these were conducted via the telephone. The interviews were designed to elicit a range of both quantitative and qualitative information regarding the perceived quality of the Hollowford experience for both CYP and workers and aimed to gauge both expectation and experience. A copy of the group leader interview schedule can be found in appendix 4.

3.5. Development of an Evaluation Tool

A new monitoring and evaluation tool was developed based on the desk research findings, staff and CYP feedback. This questionnaire was designed to monitor the effectiveness of Lindley's work with CYP over a longitudinal period. The domains of the questionnaire cover areas such as confidence; increased self-esteem and enhanced well-being along with the CYPs perceived ability to problem solve and plan. It was envisaged that it would be possible to pilot the new tool with approximately 100 CYP over a one month period and carry out analysis of these data. A copy of the new tool can be found in appendix 5.

A total of 148 questionnaires were sent out to four groups during February 2008.

4. Key Findings

A total of 31 (24 male and 7 female) children and young people (CYP) aged 9 to 21 took part in five focus group discussions. Two further groups declined the invitation to participate in the evaluation. In addition, a total of six group leaders were interviewed – although one did not have an associated focus group.

A total of 54 (36.4%) questionnaires were returned. All returns were from one group. Key data is presented in appendix 6.

Using the ECM outcomes as a basis we have conducted a thematic analysis of the discussions and focused on key concepts such as understanding team work and communication. In addition, we

have compared expectations with experience and examined the in terms of a 'high quality outdoor education'³

4.1. Why Choose Hollowford?

All the Group Leaders had visited the Hollowford Centre previously, either with groups of young people or on adult training sessions. The majority of initial visits were instigated by personal recommendations from colleagues, but Leaders returned to the Centre because of their positive experiences.

My colleague had previously been to Hollowford and had a successful visit with about 60 pupils and recommended it...[they] recommended it as being a good experience for the young people a nice environment and good friendly staff. (Derbyshire Group Leader)

Also, the Hollowford 'package' was felt to be convenient i.e.

"You pay one price you've got your meals, you've got your instructors, you've got your accommodation, I've been to places in the past where you've got to take your own instructor and it's self-catering which is a bit of a nightmare with young people – so it was just all under one roof really" (Stockport Group Leader)

Crucially, all Leaders felt that the Lindley Educational Trust was able to offer a flexible programme to meet the specific needs of the young people and their organisations.

"in order for it to fit within a university environment its got to have some academic content, its got to be marked, these guys have got to be assessed and therefore just going on an outdoor management course doesn't really fit very well" (Loughborough Group Leader)

"I think in a sense what's good about the organisation is that they are flexible and they are able to work with you to develop your programme not just a stand alone programme that is set in stone." (Sheffield Group Leader)

It was clear from the Focus Group discussions with CYP that they had little or no input into the choice of residential venue.

4.2. Pre-briefings

All group Leaders held some form of briefing session with the young people before their visit to Hollowford. Typically the briefing explained the purpose of the visit, some of the practicalities and showed the young people examples of what to expect in terms of activity – some groups discussed their own 'ground rules' and chose itineraries. Most groups felt that sufficient briefing resources were provided by the LET, although one group did not have their own photo archive to draw upon. Briefing sessions lasted up to an hour and a half.

"I then had to find some time to go onto the internet and get some other pictures really – the booklets were ok but we did need something else – so maybe some pictures of other groups taking part in stuff" (Stockport Group Leader)

Focus Group discussions revealed that CYP had been involved to various degrees in the planning of their trips to Hollowford. Some had only received information whilst others (mentors) had been on been on training courses, chosen activities and devised 'ground rules'.

³ High Quality Outdoor Education: A guide to recognising and achieving High Quality Outdoor Education in Schools, Youth Services, Clubs and Centres, The English Outdoor Council; the Outdoor Industries Association and The Outdoor Education Advisors Panel

4.3. Expectations of Staff and Children and Young People

All group Leaders felt that 'team building' was central to what they hoped to achieve during their visit to Hollowford. This included 'bonding' with peers, mentors and leaders alike.

"We wanted to use it as a maturing experience really, to make them more self reliant and independent but also better able to work together as a team really"(Sheffield Group Leader)

"It is to do with them learning about themselves and their capacity and their skills within the broad skills of management and them learning about others and about the subjects. So they can become better team members and better managers themselves in the future" (Loughborough Group Leader)

"...and the team building I think, working with other young people and being able to behave in an appropriate way as well"(Stockport Group Leader)

"Getting to know us better and making them realise we're not just about work, we can have some fun"(Nottingham Group Leader)

The Children and Young People had also looked forward to bonding with their peers and 'hanging out' with friends.

Giving the young people an opportunity to explore other environs and mix with new people was also key for many of the Leaders and young people alike.

Part of the Hollowford experience was the fact that they were living away from home and mixing with others that they hadn't met before, that's why there was two schools together that didn't know each other...mixing with new people is very important (Derbyshire Group Leader)

"Definitely a different experience, because some of the young people I work with tend not to go out of their area tend not to have holidays abroad" (Stockport Group Leader)

"I thought 'oh it'll get us away from where we live so...."(Young Person North Manchester)

"Just getting away from Brinny really"(Young Person Stockport)

Generally, Leaders hoped that the young people would be able to 'stretch' themselves outside of their 'comfort zones', build their confidence and in some cases raise their expectations and aspirations in life.

"That it would show them they could achieve things they never expected to – that it would take them out of their comfort zone and raise their aspiration"(Derbyshire Group Leader)

"The individuals themselves will push themselves they will stretch themselves in certain areas outside their comfort zone and personal development will happen"(Loughborough Group Leader)

In order to test the suitability of the new tool design CYP were asked how they felt about their upcoming trip to Hollowford. Whilst the vast majority were 'excited', 'happy' and 'confident' a few reported feeling 'anxious'. The reasons for this included fear of heights, the being away from home and a dislike of others in the group.

"I went for excited as well, mainly because of the activities but I was also anxious because I'm not good with heights and there were quite a lot of heights so I was a little bit nervous about that" (Loughborough Student)

*'I was sh*t scared of climbing on the ropes'* (Young Person North Manchester)

"Because I didn't like some of the people that were going" (Young Person Sheffield)

"I was a little sad because I've not really been away from my mum for that long" (Young Person Stockport)

4.4. Organisational Drivers

The most prominent organisational driver for most of the group Leaders was the Every Child Matters (ECM) Framework and most organisations stated they were working towards the five ECM outcomes:

- Enjoy and Achieve
- Be Healthy
- Achieve Economic Wellbeing
- Stay Safe
- Make a Positive Contribution

"They would have been linked to the Every Child Matters agenda, because part of our agenda is Every Child Matters (Derbyshire Group Leader)"

"Everything we do really you've got that [ECM]" at the back of your mind and the youth service we have our own, so it's got to be participative, educative...equality of opportunity is another (Stockport Group Leader)

"We work to that [ECM] all the time...that's exactly what we're aiming for" (North Manchester Group Leader)

In addition it was noted that Youth Service guidance requires activities and projects to be "*participative*", "*educative*" and provide "*equality of opportunity*".

4.5. Outcomes

The table below shows how relevant external drivers i.e. the ECM and Youth Matters outcomes and Common Core skills/knowledge for the children's workforce, are for the organisations interviewed and to what extent Leaders felt that the Hollowford experience contributed to achieving these outcomes – 5= 'very relevant' and 'fully contributed'.

Table 1: How many groups found external drivers relevant and how much Hollowford contributed to the outcome

Outcome	Relevant?					Not sure	Produced?				
	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Enjoy and Achieve					5						5
Be Healthy			1		4				1	4	
Achieve Economic Wellbeing				2	3		2		2	1	
Stay Safe / Safeguarding and Promoting Welfare					5	1		1			3
Make a Positive Contribution				1	4	1			1	1	2
Supporting Transitions			1		4				1	3	1
Multi-Agency Working	1				4	1	2			2	
Sharing Information	1			1	3	1	3			1	
Child and Young Person Development					5					1	4
Effective Communication and Engagement with Young People				1	4					1	4
Targeted Support					5				1	1	3
Volunteering	1	1		1	2	1		1	2		1

One group Leader did not feel that any these external drivers were of relevance to their organisation, although they noted that some of the outcomes were achieved. However, it can be seen from the highlighted cells in Table 1 that the majority of group Leaders felt that the Hollowford experience had significantly contributed to the following outcomes: 'Enjoy and Achieve', 'Be Healthy', 'Child and Young Person Development' and 'Effective Communication with Young People' and that this was extremely relevant to their organisations.

Staying Safe

In addition, 'Staying Safe / Safeguarding and Promoting Welfare' was highlighted by several of the interviewees, particularly with regard to developing group responsibilities.

"The safety aspect was very strongly put over and the individual's well-being as well and about how the young people learnt to share and think about others". (Derbyshire Group Leader)

"That is something they develop over the course of the weekend, to look out for each other and help each other" (Sheffield Group Leader)

"Staying safe as regards the activities and stuff and the expectations of them there in the countryside being a different environment" (Stockport Group Leader)

Supporting Transitions

There was also evidence that the Hollowford experience had helped to support transitions in a number of different ways. Transitions are supported by Hollowford by giving CYP a positive experience and making them feel good about themselves, some of this happened through some of the pastoral care the instructors gave.

"... they [Instructors] didn't just deliver the activity there was other chats just about life really – the young people know us as their youth workers and it was good to get another perspective" (Stockport Group Leader)

One worker felt that the experience had helped with the transition to and from the Youth Inclusion Project, with younger members being welcomed by older ones who were leaving. At the time of the focus group the workers mentioned the importance of the Hollowford trip in 'bonding' the new group together. Another felt that the experience of being away from home and in shared accommodation, with strangers, was important in giving young people an example of University life.

Volunteering

Whilst 'volunteering' was not high on the agenda for many of the groups, it was felt that the Hollowford experience had instigated some interest amongst the young people. One Group Leader in particular noted how the Hollowford experience had enabled them to identify suitable candidates for an upcoming Youth Committee.

Multi-agency Working

Multi-agency working was an unexpected outcome but in some cases young people had the opportunity to mix with other CYP from groups in other areas.

"Our trip did [contribute to multi-agency working] because we met people from a different area from a different youth service" (Stockport Group Leader)

In one case two groups of very different ages had shared that Hollowford Centre and the group Leader from the younger group felt this had been a positive experience, and one of the groups had noted this as their 'favourite' thing.

"The young people enjoyed them being there. I think seeing how they are, because they are older, and how they interact with each other probably helped them. It keeps them calm – positive examples". (Nottingham Group Leader)

"There was people from different places and we kept on playing with them" (Child Nottingham)

Facing Challenges

Many of the CYP in the Focus Groups noted that they had taken on personal challenges in undertaking the activities and in doing so had definitely taken themselves out of their 'comfort zones'.

"I didn't think I was gonna get on it [zip wire]... I actually climbed up it and got on it... I felt confident that I could do it but I was worried that I might fall in the pond or just die" (Young Person Stockport)

*"I nearly sh*t meself but I still did it"* (Young Person North Manchester)

"I think I could overcome difficulties now that I couldn't before... It's all about stepping out of your comfort zone" (Loughborough Student)

Since leaving Hollowford many of the CYP also felt that the experience had made them more 'confident' and 'able to make decisions'.

Two thirds (67%, n=36) of the Survey respondents felt that the Hollowford experience had a positive impact on them. Most felt it had improved their confidence

"It has made me confident in doing new things"(Female respondent aged 15-19)

There was also evidence from the Survey that young people had enjoyed participating in outdoor activities and adopted 'a positive attitude to challenge and adventure'. This was apparent when the young people described 'why' they liked their 'favourite activity'.

"Because it was really scary at first but I overcome my fear. The scenery was great!"(Female respondent aged 10-14)

"Because it was something I'd never done before and even though it was scary I'm glad I did it"
(Female respondent aged 10-14)

Developing Teamwork

The CYP also gave examples of how their group had been strengthened by the experience.

"I just liked the fact that we don't really hang round much as a group and we really really got on well"...We all said that we thought it should have been in our first year rather than our third year so we would get to know each other already rather than leaving it til now" (Loughborough Student)

"One of the brilliant things was that no one really knew each other but at the end of it everyone was talking to each other. It brought everyone together"(Young Person Sheffield)

"We feel like we can talk to this lot [youth workers] more since being up there"(Young Person Stockport)

One worker noted how the activities had encouraged the Young People to develop communication skills and teamwork. This point was also made by young people from different groups.

"There was a lot of motivation that I've never seen in any of you guys before... there was a lot of people encouraging you and we had never really done that before. We normally just meet up for lectures... so it was quite nice to see"(Loughborough Student)

"I co-operate more. The amount of things we did at the centre we had to communicate and make sure you all work together to make sure you get things done and we have done that since we got back"(Young Person Stockport)

There was also evidence from the survey that young people were developing an awareness of the contributions and achievements of themselves and others. Comments included:

"I can understand how to work in teams"(Female respondent aged 10-14)

"I know how to deal with physical things and work in a team"(Female respondent aged 10-14)

"It has made me more confident in a group"(Male respondent aged 10-14)

Raising Aspirations / Long-term Benefits

There is evidence from the Focus Groups to suggest that the Hollowford experience has raised the aspirations and will have some long term benefits for CYP. Specifically, it was reported that half of the CYP in one group felt that being at Hollowford had 'definitely' helped them consider the option of higher education or university. In addition, it was noted that a couple of the young people from another group had begun to consider outward bound instructing as a career path – having been told they had potential by the Hollowford staff. Finally, University Students were very optimistic about potential usefulness of what they had experience at Hollowford in their future work placements.

"We go on placement now for six months... and there is so much you can take from it in terms of motivation, leadership and team work all of it on your actual placement because we all work as managers so it is the kind of stuff we needed to know"(Loughborough Student)

Just over a third (35%, n=19) of the Survey respondents reported that they had done or planned something new since their Hollowford experience. This included; signing up for the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme; taking up swimming as hobby and making new friends.

4.6. Experience

All reports from group Leaders were that the Hollowford experience had either matched 'very well' or exceeded their expectations.

"...there wasn't one [area] that I couldn't give '10' to, they all matched my expectations – there was no area of weakness at all"(Derbyshire Group Leader)

"Every single thing ticked the boxes!" "Some of the young people absolutely excelled in that environment"(North Manchester Group Leader)

"I think it was brilliant! It matched everything that we needed and I think we got so much more from it than what I expected."(Nottingham Group Leader)

"I think to a great extent – yes"(Loughborough Group Leader)

Almost two-thirds (63%, n=34) of the Survey respondents reported that the experience had been 'better' than expected. The main reasons given were; the challenge of the activities; access to the countryside and working together.

"I expected activities like indoor wall climbing but we went out to the countryside and climbed actual mountains and rocks"(Female respondent aged 10-14)

"I thought the activities would be easy, but they were challenging"(Female respondent aged 10-14)

"Because it was funny and everybody joined in and had a go"(Female respondent aged 10-14)

Throughout the Survey responses there was clear evidence that the young people were 'becoming alive to the natural environment'.

"It was extremely naturalistic and exhilarating!"(Female respondent aged 10-14)

"... it was really fun and the view was really good"(Male respondent aged 10-14)

"it was really good to climb up the mountains and also the rocks"(Female respondent aged 10-14)

The favourite activity of the Survey respondents was reported to be 'weasling' (44%, n=24) and the least favourite was reported to be 'rafting' (33%, n=17).

Staff

In the main Staff at Hollowford were responsible for these high levels of satisfaction, being able to reflect on and tailor programmes to best suit the needs of the client group. This was evident both over time, with long-standing clients, and more immediately as CYP and Instructors got to know each other.

"Very much so [expectations met] because that in a sense is the advantage of having used it before. although the programme has evolved over the four years it has not changed fundamentally because it does the job we want it to do"(Sheffield Group Leader)

"I've got to say it's the instructors for me – I just think they're amiable, they can change your activity to suit the group. ... they offered that [additional activity] to us because I think they realised that they group could cope with that and get a lot out of that. They throw in little added extras really and try to get to know your group as much as possible and the young people respond positively to that"(Stockport Group Leader)

In addition, it was felt that Staff at Hollowford were able to maintain the right balance of support for the CYP.

"I think the Hollowford experience is really worthwhile and it's very well organised and the people are very friendly and helpful, but they're not over friendly, which I think is really important for the young people. They're professional, very professional, they don't become the children's friends, but they do gain the children's respect and I think that's really important... They're kind and they're thoughtful towards the individuals needs"(Derbyshire Group Leader)

"You've got to have instructors that are flexible that like young people. I've been to some places where the instructors are just diabolical their attitude, whereas it's definitely not like that at the Hollowford centre"(Stockport Group Leader)

The CYP in the Focus Groups also felt that they had a good relationship with the Hollowford Staff. All had confidence in them as instructors. Some noted their encouragement whilst others appreciated their ability to relate theory to practice.

He were pretty 'safe' (Young Person North Manchester)

"They were encouraging,... They wanted you to have a go... I wouldn't have gone on the zip wire if it hadn't have been for them" (Young Person Stockport)

"If they were more chilled out we would have just messed about" (Young Person Sheffield)

"They were alright the people who were there because they made sure you were safe and that" (Child Nottingham)

"I was impressed at how knowledgeable they were in terms of what they could apply. We done our theories module last year based around leadership but they actually brought it to life" (Loughborough Student)

The high satisfaction rates with Staff were mirrored in the Survey responses where 70% (n=38) of the young people rated staff 'friendliness' as 'excellent' or 'good' and 74% (n=40) rated their 'helpfulness' as 'excellent' or 'good'.

Food and Accommodation

All of the group Leaders considered the food at Hollowford to be of a high standard and 'balanced' in terms of healthy options.

"It was well balanced and puddings, the young people loved that" (Stockport Group Leader)

"The food is always brilliant"(Loughborough Group Leader)

"A couple of them said it was like home cooking"(Nottingham Group Leader)

Because there is a freely available fruit bowl at the Centre some CYP reported that they were now 'eating more fruit'.

Almost half of the Survey respondents (45%, n=26) rated the 'healthy choice' of the food as 'excellent' or 'good'.

Although on the whole the food and accommodations were rated highly, some suggestions were made by Leaders. One group Leader noted the need to ask for larger portions – which were received immediately and another felt that the room security was lacking as the young people were able to climb through the Winnat block windows at night. One additional comment was that the accommodations were looking 'tired'.

The majority of the CYP in the Focus Groups had found the accommodation large, secure and comfortable. Although it was noted that it was easy to get locked out of a room.

"I really liked the out houses where we did our reviews and talked about it all. It was really nice open plan barn... You had like tea and coffee and whatever. It was really good" (Loughborough Student)

"The beds were well comfy"(Young Person Stockport)

"I thought they were alright... bigger than I expected" (Young Person Sheffield)

"The best thing about the bedrooms were that they kept you warm at night and the doors had locks on" "So no one can come into your room... made you feel safe"(Child Nottingham)

Likewise the majority of CYP had very positive comments about the range and amount of food at Hollowford. Approximately a third of Survey respondents rated the 'amount' and 'variety' of the food available as 'excellent' or 'good'. Cooked breakfast was a particular favourite with Focus Group participants.

"...we had a Sunday dinner and some pizza... you could have seconds or thirds... it was 'peng', delicious, it was really really tasty"(Child Nottingham)

"It [the food] was really nice"(Young Person Stockport)

"It [the food] was very good actually we had curry, fajita's, spag bol, garlic bread a real range of cooking... Towards the end they were just leaving it to you with the serving spoons just to come back and help yourself so..."(Loughborough Student)

4.7. Improvements

None of the group Leaders felt that there were any improvements that could be made in terms of the course content, however most would like to have spent longer at the Hollowford centre.

"Not very much really could be improved" "for us we would have stayed longer if we'd had more funds" (Stockport Group Leader)

Some of the CYP would also have liked to have spent longer at the Centre.

"When we left I thought it could have been a day longer... I reckon it could have been a day longer" (Loughborough Student)

"Cheaper prices, that's the only reason we couldn't stay longer because we didn't have enough money" (Young Person Stockport)

Other suggestions for improvements from the CYP were:

- Whole centre activities (with other groups)
- Less activities based on height
- More time to do activities so teams are less pressured / everyone has an opportunity to do everything
- Harder activities
- Proper introductions to the Staff
- Quad biking
- More to do in the evening
- More smoking facilities
- Locks on the inside of rooms
- Different types of food e.g. Chinese

The use of the new pilot tool allowed for cross-tabulations of the suggested improvements by age, sex and religion and revealed that more 'privacy' and 'vegetarian food' was requested specifically by young Hindu women.

The majority of group Leader were planning to use the Hollowford Centre again however one Leader noted that although Hollowford had met their expectations they would not be returning for two reasons:

- Financial - it was felt another venue (Lakeside) offered better value for money
- Logistical – the Manager did not think that Hollowford had the 'capacity' to cope with 30+ CYP. The Leader noted that this type of CYP need supervision at all times and felt that the spread out accommodation at Hollowford did not facilitate this without increase staff numbers – Lakeside offers large dormitories

5. Tool Development

5.1. Current Systems / Staff Feedback

The current monitoring and evaluation system at Hollowford is comprised four forms plus ad hoc review sessions completed by Instructors. Monitoring of demographics e.g. age, sex, ethnicity, special need, religion etc is separated from evaluation data relating to the course content, food, accommodation, staff etc. and data is not stored on an individual case basis.

The fact that LET have some monitoring and evaluation in place was viewed as a positive by all Staff, although limitations with the current systems were acknowledged. At present it is possible

for all departments and sponsors to receive some feedback. However, because of the way the data is collected, stored and analysed information is not easily accessible and analysis is restricted. In addition, there is no baseline data from which to measure 'distance travelled' by the CYP. As a consequence it is of limited use.

5.2. De-Briefs

All group Leaders reported that some kind of feedback was elicited from the CYP in their groups. Some described structured evaluations others were more 'ad hoc' comprised of informal discussions 'on the bus' or during subsequent activities. Three of the groups had undertaken some feedback session before they had left the Hollowford Centre. When asked group Leaders were willing to share this information with the LET for evaluation purposes and some of this has been included in appendix 6.

5.3. Key Features of a Good Evaluation Form

Both the group Leaders and CYP had views on what would constitute a 'good' evaluation form. Primarily, they all felt that any future tool should be 'short' and not take too much time to complete. The use of Likert⁴ scales were suggested by a group Leader as, *"that's easy and people are familiar with it"*. When shown the new tool CYP also felt that this type of scale was useful although it was noted that the scale needed to be of a reasonable length to be meaningful.

"You could be bothered to do it [new tool] because it's all ticks, except for this bit and this bit...you could do that, it's easy that...it's better than talking to you"(Young Person North Manchester)

"I think if there were like ten really key points but you have a bigger selection of choice of answer so you have to think more, whereas if its good, bad, ok its easy... but if there were more options you think about it more and its more truthful"(Loughborough Student)

There was also a strong feeling that the tool have a mixture of 'open' and 'closed' questions and included a 'visual' element.

"As long as it's not too much jargon – a lot of companies do too much jargon and if you've got someone with dyslexic... Images are always good."(Nottingham Group Leader)

"I think you need to avoid writing.. it needs to have pictures"(Loughborough Student)

"Visual rather than pen and paper – games, fun all those things, really informal and I think the way that [QA] did it – there was lots of laughing and giggling so it sounded like they'd really enjoyed it- obviously the £10 gift voucher helped them as well"(Stockport Group Leader)

One group Leader noted the importance of on-going communication in the conducting a successful evaluation.

"I think the thing is that its got to be communicated. I think the thing with Hollowford is that I know a lot of the staff there so while we are there is a kind of on going dialogue with the staff working with the kids, with the admin team who organise it prior to the visit because we have been there a while... so any issues we have got, from either end are brought up either face to face or over the telephone either before, during or after the visits really"(Sheffield Group Leader)

⁴ When responding to a Likert questionnaire item, respondents specify their level of agreement to a statement.

5.4. The Importance of Evaluation

All group Leaders felt there was value in conducting evaluations. The reasons for this was primarily to provide an evidence base for external funding bodies but also to provide the CYP with an opportunity to reflect on their experience.

"All of those really because the youth forum which was the group that we'd taken are externally funded to our core youth service, so they pay me to deliver that part of my job really" (Group Leader Stockport)

"We have to show the value of these activities. We have to evaluate all our activities with a view to show that we are raising the aspirations and attainment" (Derbyshire Group Leader)

All the Leaders were also willing to be more involved in the future evaluation of Hollowford either using a new tool or by feeding back their own data to the LET.

5.5. Timing

Group Leaders and CYP were asked about the 'ideal' time to complete an evaluation form. There was a general consensus that a 'before' and 'after' evaluation would provide useful information about the 'distance travelled' by CYP in terms of their personal development, however there was less certainty about whether an evaluation should be done 'on' or 'off' site at the end of the programme. Most Leaders acknowledge the need for reflective time, but this was balanced against the sometimes transitory nature of young people's thought processes.

"It's need to have a specific time allowed for it so's it's not a rushed thing ...so it's built into the programme, very much so and if you have the ability within the programme to do it 'pre' and 'post' is better." (Derbyshire Group Leader)

"I think [on site evaluation] because then they come home and I might not see them until the following Wednesday and lots of things are lost" (Stockport Group Leader)

"To do it before you leave would be really good because it's fresh in your mind then." (Nottingham Group Leader)

"I think you would get a more considered, reflective response if we said 'think about this and do it as part of your feedback'...I would argue that you would get better results from it afterwards as part of their reflective thing... but if its easier to do at the time that's easy as well" (Loughborough Group Leader)

"It would work even better if you went home for two days and then got it because I thought I appreciated it a lot more a couple of days after I'd been rather than the actual last day I was there because then you start reflecting and thinking about things and how it has affected you" (Student Loughborough)

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Although small, the evaluation was able to incorporate the views of a Children and Young People and Leaders from a range of client types. Overall the findings were extremely positive and consistent within and across the groups and from the Survey. This provides strong evidence that LET is meeting the objectives of increasing confidence and self-esteem. Also, that the Hollowford experience contributes to the five ECM outcomes and provides an ideal opportunity for 'high quality outdoor education' according to national standards.

It was evident that personal recommendation is an important factor in choosing the LET as a service provider.

Consideration should be given to the inclusion of more case studies and personal testimonials on the web-site for immediate access and impact

'Team building', 'raising aspirations' and experiencing new environs were all part of the expectations of group Leaders and CYP. There is clear evidence to suggest that the Hollowford experience met and exceeded these expectations.

In addition, national external drivers, in particular the Every Child Matters Framework, were important for the majority of clients. Again there was good evidence to suggest that the Hollowford experience had significantly contributed to many of these outcomes.

Where appropriate course leaders should specifically consider the contribution of programme activities to national outcomes

The relationship with Hollowford Staff was key to the high levels of satisfaction reported by both group Leaders and CYP. Staff were described as 'friendly', 'kind', 'thoughtful', 'professional' and 'flexible'. 'Flexibility' and the ability and willingness to tailor programmes the individual need of each group was very important. In addition, it was apparent that the CYP felt safe with; had confidence in and respected the Instructors.

Positive feedback should be disseminated to Instructors

On the whole the food and accommodations at Hollowford were rated highly. There was also evidence to suggest that the 'healthy eating' habits encouraged at Hollowford were being taken back into the community by young people.

Positive feedback should be disseminated to Housekeeping Staff

Apart from the extension of their visit, few improvements were suggested by the group Leaders however CYP did make some suggestions. Four of these related to the course content.

Consideration should be given to the suggestions made by CYP particularly those relating to the course content

At present monitoring and evaluation data are collected, collated and recorded separately via a number of different tools. This means that the data is not consistent and cannot be cross-tabulated in any meaningful way e.g. satisfaction cannot be related to sex or age or ethnicity.

In addition, some data is stored in an amalgamated format and not as individual cases. It is therefore impossible to identify a clear demographic for users of the Centre.

Monitoring *and* evaluation data needs to be collected on one form for *each* individual and stored on a case by case basis

Evaluation is important for all stakeholders in the Hollowford experience, LET, Staff, Leaders and CYP, yet no data sharing is currently in operation.

With regard to the Data Protection Act, LET should investigate the possibility of sharing data with long-term clients in evaluation partnerships

Assessing the 'distance traveled' by CYP is perhaps one of the most important features of any evaluation of an experience such as that offered at Hollowford, however, measurement of the impact of short term interventions is difficult given the number of potential influencing factors there may be in a young person's life. The use of a 'before' and 'after' tool would give some indication of what specific improvements to 'well-being' may be attributed to the Hollowford experience.

All clients included in this study were interested in the measurement of impact. In addition, all held some form of pre-briefing session and were willing to become more involved in the evaluation of LET. Any evaluation data pertaining to individual outcomes is likely to be of interest to clients who need to provide an evidence base to their own funding bodies. Indications from Focus Group participants and Survey respondents were that the tool was easily understood and easy to complete.

LET should refine and adopt the newly developed tool for use in-house

LET should begin the monitoring and evaluation process as early as possible. Consideration should be given to offering specific incentives for the return of forms e.g. a prize draw and information sharing, after the visit

Whilst most clients recognised the need for reflection, they also highlighted the practicalities of ensuring that CYP complete an evaluation. The consensus was that it would be appropriate to complete and evaluation form on site, before leaving Hollowford, but it was stressed that sufficient time had to be allowed to do this.

Consideration should be given to building sufficient evaluation time into the programme e.g. an extra 15mins during the last meal time to complete the forms and post in a collection box. Again consideration should be given to offering specific incentives e.g. prize draw⁵

External drivers, particularly the Every Child Matters Framework are important to most clients.

A new evaluation tool should be linked to external drivers particularly the ECM Framework

Qualitative assessments were already taking place with CYP and Leaders, but these did not have any formal structure that can be analysed across groups or over time. Qualitative data offers a unique perspective and gives added 'depth' to survey data. Without, this type of data it can be difficult to interpret quantitative results.

⁵ Since most CYP and Leaders would like more time at Hollowford the 'prize' could be a free activity day at the Centre for a small group once a year if funds permitted

LET should consider the regular use of standardised qualitative assessments at the end of each programme

It was clear that the responsibility for monitoring and evaluation was spread across the organization with little or no co-ordination.

Staff should take on specific responsibility regarding the collection, collation, analysis and reporting of data. Quarterly reports should be disseminated to all relevant departments