

Lindley Educational Trust **Evaluating our work with young people**

Background

Lindley Educational Trust is a well-established and successful charity, working with young people from across the UK. We provide inspiring personal and team development programmes to build confidence and self-esteem particularly for those who are disadvantaged or at risk.

Our Mission

Is to release and empower people to develop individual strengths, create positive relationships and construct effective work systems and cultures, which add to the well being of society.

Evaluating the work of Lindley Educational Trust

As part of a programme of work to build organisational capacity, Lindley Educational Trust, with funding from Future Builders, commissioned an independent evaluation of existing practice, monitoring systems and outcomes for children and young people. As part of the evaluation, just over 50 children and young people completed a questionnaire and five focus groups were conducted to explore their views and experiences. A small number of telephone interviews were also undertaken with group leaders to examine their expectations and perspectives on the quality of the programmes provided and their impact on children and young people.

Key findings

The 'Hollowford experience':

- Gives children and young people the opportunity to face challenges and undertake activities 'outside their comfort zone';
- Delivers flexible programmes and this is one reason why group leaders choose to return;
- Regularly exceeds the expectations of children and young people and group leaders;
- Provides 'high quality outdoor education' as defined by the English Outdoor Council, the Outdoor Industries Association and the Outdoor Education Advisors Panel.

The majority of group leaders felt that the programme contributed to the five Every Child Matters outcomes, especially 'enjoy and achieve' and 'be healthy'.

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 (Group Leader).

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

Children & young people's experiences

Two thirds of the children and young people who completed a questionnaire felt that their time at the Hollowford Centre had had a positive impact upon them. Quotes revealed specific areas of development, including improved self-confidence, team work and communication.

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

"It has made me confident in doing new things."

"It was really scary at first but I overcame my fear."

"I can understand how to work in teams."

"There was a lot of motivation that I've never seen in any of you guys before...there were a lot of people encouraging you and we had never really done that before."

"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."

Raising aspirations/long-term benefits

There is evidence from the focus groups to suggest that the 'Hollowford experience' has raised aspirations and will have some long-term benefits for the children and young people concerned. Half of one group that attended 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 outdoor instructing as a career path – having been told they had potential by Centre staff. Finally, University Students were very optimistic about applying some of the skills they had learnt 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."

Overall the findings were extremely positive and consistent within and across the groups and from the Survey. This provides strong evidence that Lindley Educational Trust is meeting the objectives of increasing confidence and self-esteem. The 'Hollowford experience' contributes to the five ECM outcomes and provides an ideal opportunity for 'high quality outdoor education' according to national standards (Heaven and Browne, 2008).

The full report and further information on the work of Lindley Education Trust can be downloaded from the website:

http://www.lindleyeducationaltrust.org/hollowford/downloads/Evaluation_Full.pdf