

# DHL Logistics UK Graduate Programme

How charity has been teaming up with DHL Graduates to give inner city schoolchildren experiential learning



As part of the DHL Logistics UK Graduate Programme, the Lindley Educational Trust, based at The Hollowford Centre in Castleton, is helping newly employed Graduates from DHL to hone their management skills.

An element of this training was a community project, which tasked the graduates with the responsibility for the design and delivery of a two-day, outdoor education event for groups of Year 5 pupils from three local schools.

The graduates worked closely with the school to identify the desired learning outcomes for the children and came up with a fun-packed programme of outdoor and evening activities to be delivered over two days at The Hollowford Centre.



# Wybourn School

## A level of satisfaction and pride

When I was told what we would be doing I certainly felt nervous and visiting the school reinforced this as I stuck my head in to the classroom with 30 children staring at me.

With none of us having done anything like this before, we boldly went about planning the event, making sure communication channels were kept simple between ourselves, the school and Hollowford, and with the aim that the activities would be challenging, fun and educational for the children (and for us). The planning certainly taught me that it helps to work in smaller groups to get decisions made, which is just one of many things I will take away with me and be able to use in the business world.

With respect to the actual event, I was still feeling nervous at the start, but the children were fantastic and by the end of day one the group and myself began to feel at ease. The second day was our most challenging and encouragement was the word of the day as I found myself desperately trying to get some children to have the courage to do the rock climb and canoeing.

The effort was worth it when I saw their smiles at the top of the climb and as they splashed around in the water, clearly bonding as a group, as had we.

Come the final day I couldn't believe we had only known the children for just two days and I felt a tinge of sadness as we wrapped up the event, particularly as the children said they "wanted to stay for longer" and "I'll miss you." It was then I knew we had done a good job.

It is only now as I reflect on the whole experience that I feel the immense level of satisfaction and pride that I know everyone else in the group feels as well.

*Neil Gildove*



## A lesson in human interactions

Working on the community project was more than a learning experience; it was a valuable lesson about the complexity of human interactions.

The planning itself was relatively tricky, given the geographical spread of our 14-member team, which extended from Swindon to Belfast. This was possibly further complicated, both by the multi-cultural aspect of the group (covering eight different nationalities and seven languages), and by the variety of roles that we were all performing on our placements, which meant our schedules were very different.

These early planning stages mainly highlighted the challenge of communicating effectively in virtual teams. I found it difficult to send the right message across, in the right tone, using e-mails. It also took me some time to figure out that some of us did not have frequent access to e-mails, and even longer to realise that not everyone was on a 9 - 5 work schedule. These differences created an uneven workload and tensions that we had to deal with on the couple of occasions where we did meet face to face.

When we arrived at the Hollowford centre the night before, we all had expectations,



## Planning project preparation and implementation

The community project was a great experience for us, not only because we had a lot of fun with the children, but also because the event brought all of us an experience in project preparation and implementation.

It is important to know how to effectively and efficiently prepare a project within a group, made of people with different backgrounds and horizons who are not necessarily getting along with each other, but have to work together.

An effective communication plan and equal distribution of the workload were the two main points that we felt we could have dramatically improved upon during the planning stages, now that we have looked back on how we performed.

We learnt how much can be achieved with motivation, appraisal and encouragement. When we went canoeing, one of the girls started to cry. She wanted to go back and she did not want to paddle. But the instructor showed her how secure the canoe was, and at the end of the day the girl stood up in the canoe, jumped to another one and had a great time.

Overall, it has been very interesting to be in an intermediary position between the children and their teachers, to have the maturity to look after them and to gain the respect of the teachers, but also to be more accessible to the children, as friends rather than as teachers.

*Monica Salas*

apprehensions even, but I don't think any of us had truly realised how much these children needed the break we had been organising for them.

The wonderful thing about working with children is that you get immediate feedback on your performance, which means that you are able to evaluate the success of the project right away. If certain aspects are not satisfactory, there is an opportunity to redesign, even on such a short project. For example, at the end of the first day, we all shared our experiences. This was so beneficial to us that we have now decided to issue a 'lessons learnt' document to

pass on our experience to future graduates.

I was delighted to see that the children were incredibly encouraging and supportive with each other. They were praising and spontaneously applauding efforts of others without pointing out that they did better than somebody else. During activities, such as high ropes, they were shouting out suggestions to help each other. They are eight years old, and already most of them have people skills that I would like to see in managers more often, like praising and encouraging or constructive feedback."

*Chloe Missante*

### Taking part...

Dan Lu	Claudio Richardson
Nazli Guzeltas	Mick Pinto
Robin Prentice	Ria Bishop
Chloe Missante	Monica Salas
Timothy Evans	Masiye Msanide
Julien Martinot	Neil Gildove
Tom Ballingall	Laura Collins

# St. Oswalds School

## Importance of effective time management

When I initially heard that we were going to be involved in the community project, I was extremely excited and really looking forward to the unknown. Little did I realise how far into the unknown I would be taken.

It soon became evident that we, as a group, would be solely responsible for ensuring 26 ten-year-olds had a fun and fulfilling weekend.

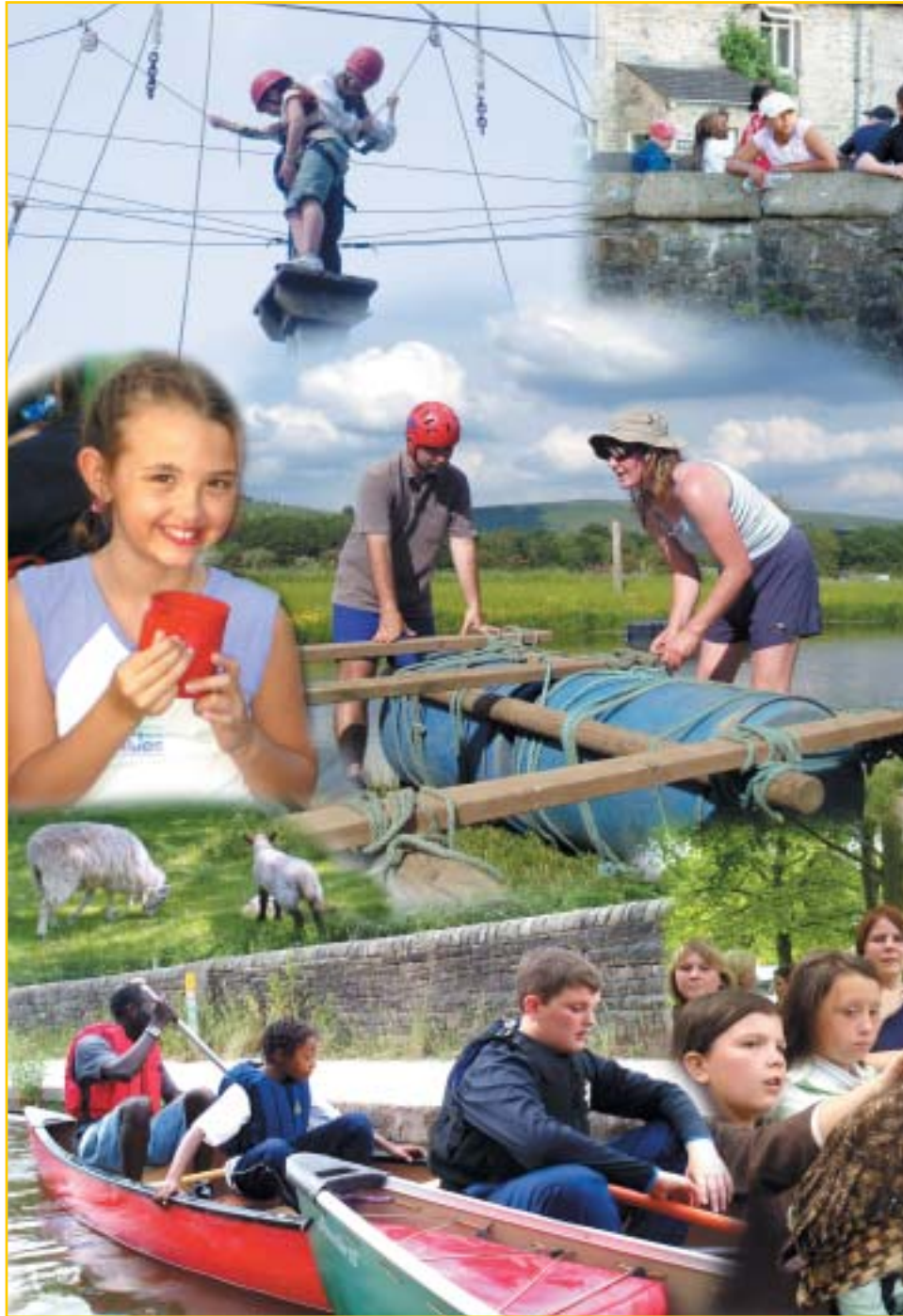
After many emails and conference calls and various ups and downs we got a plan together that met the customer's (school's) requirements and managed to pull off a successful weekend for all involved.

It has taught me the importance of effective time management, initially juggling work and project planning beforehand and also during the weekend. There were certain children who required special/extra attention, so it was necessary to ensure they were adequately looked after without neglecting the rest of the group.

I have also come to realise the benefits of understanding team dynamics. Everyone is different and has a very different approach to handling situations.

Finally, it has reaffirmed my belief in effective communication at all levels. During the project planning phase the communication between team members, and indeed lack of it in some cases, was pivotal in ensuring we were all on the same page and to the progression of the project. I found myself constantly having to adapt my style of communication between children, teachers and team members while ultimately striving to deliver the same message.

*Nicola Lightfoot*



## The customer sometimes has to b

The experience was great. I think everyone enjoyed it and we have all developed from it, some more than others. The group reached their stage of planning due to the hard work of some members, as the weekend demonstrated the way some people took over, assisted by others who sat back. I was guilty of taking over and tried sitting back the second and third day as much as allowable.

The experience was great, we improved 26 people's lives and they will always look

back and remember us and how challenging and fun their time was. The frustrating part of the weekend is knowing that the work done to raise self esteem and convince the children they are not to blame for problems at home will start to go, their leaps forward will start crawling backwards.

Here are some of the things we learnt:-

- We put a structure with clearly defined roles in place. This helped us with bound-

# Management and organisational abilities under test

## Taking part...

Leo Fotiou  
Emmanuel Opoku  
Nicola Lightfoot  
Stephen Harding  
Vinayak Agarwal  
Alan Hagues  
Michael Connolly  
Alex Morris  
Ajitpal Gill



## Planning the Project

The planning phase of the community project provided ample learning opportunities and a means of testing one's own management and organisational abilities, helping to highlight areas of strengths and weaknesses.

### ● Communication

Initially communication between the group appeared quite laborious, accountable to the lack of internet access and infrequent checking of emails, making it very difficult to hold effective discussions for the purpose of decision making.

However as time progressed, the use of email improved in parallel with the use of conference calls, which served an invaluable tool to bring the group together for discussions and updates.

In retrospect, clear communication within the group helped to achieve a coherent understanding of the plan, allowing effective organisation.

### ● Decision Making

Although the project leader had the overall responsibility of finalising decisions, it was the process of arriving at the possible options that interested me greatly. This required some level of debate with fellow team members and enabled us to get to know one another through a process of interaction that I feel helped create a bond between the team. Through this experience I learnt that the backing of the team in reaching a unanimous decision helped boost motivation and pull the group together.

### ● Scheduling and Allocation of Tasks/Activities

A schedule of tasks helped to provide structure to the plan and gave the team an account of who is responsible for what and when. Within the group tasks and roles were allocated on the basis of development needs, with regards to supporting our learning objectives as outlined in our personal development plans.

Helping to produce the schedule of events and involvement in the planning phase of the project helped to highlight the need for attention to detail and continuous consideration of resources and time required for success.

Building flexibility and contingencies into the plan helped to keep the children engaged when we were running ahead or behind schedule.

## Project Execution

The execution of the community project plan provided an entirely different set of learning experiences but also echoed many of the lessons learnt from the planning phase.

### ● Team working and Group Co-ordination

As the weekend's activities progressed as did our team working and co-operation with each other. Our great team spirit and collective desire to give the children a great weekend helped to motivate us, which in itself was a winning factor toward the success of the project.

### ● Child Management

Managing the children was a great experience, not only from the perspective of getting to know them, but also from a people management view.

### ● Review Meetings

Each evening the group held a review meeting. This provided us with an opportunity to share our experiences and tips for other members who would perform a similar activity with a different set of children. The review meeting also gave us the opportunity to modify our plans and schedules for the following day.

### ● Initiative and Resourcefulness

Although every effort had been made to cover as many eventualities as possible within our plan, there were inevitably times when the contingencies failed given certain circumstances. In these situations we often had to fall back on our initiative.

*Ajitpal Gill*

## be led rather than followed

aries and broke the workload down into manageable sections.

● Communication is difficult but integral to planning an event. The conference calls helped a great deal more than communication via e-mail.

● The customer sometimes has to be led rather than followed to meet deadlines.

● Availability for a whole group to meet at the same time can be very difficult.

● Despite a detailed plan, micro-management is required when carrying out a plan, constant reviewing during the event results in greater potential for identifying problems.

● Accountability/responsibility and trust - working as a team to manage the group and relying on someone else to be responsible for the group.



*Stephen Harding*

# St. John's School

## Project planning and learning from mistakes

Through this challenge, we learned from our own mistakes, gained personal experience about planning and executing a real project, communication, teamwork, leadership and with the children as our judges, the task was even tougher.

The main weaknesses through the project were communication, too much focus on planning, and on the first day lack of leadership and poor implementation of the plans. My opinion is that the last two issues were caused by the fact that the group underestimated the difficulty and complexity of this task. We had a good plan, but nobody actually knew how the activities were going to go in reality.

On the first day we were warned that our performance was unacceptable. The 'customer' (Huw) wasn't happy, nobody knew exactly what his or her role was in the team, including the team leaders. We went through the next day's plan again, step by step, in a very detailed way. For each activity we defined the exact roles, allocated each role and decided to use mobile phones for communication. Lastly, we changed the team leaders.

Fortunately, all these changes proved to be good. Our second day performance was far better than the first one. Also, we had a very positive feedback from Huw as well as Jo on our improvement. However, the first day's disappointment made us extremely careful and we sat down again to finalise planning for the last day.

From my own personal point of view, it was a great learning experience. It was extremely hard too, but through this project I've learned that there are no 'lost games', you should never give up when there are difficulties.

*Keith Mannix*



## How we all rose to the challenge ●●●

As a team we were very eager to generate ideas from the outset. Our aim was to form a fun-packed weekend for the children and to include activities they had not previously experienced.

Throughout the event, instant feedback was received from children and staff, and we endeavoured to be responsive to their needs. However during the first day, gaps in our planning were quickly highlighted. We all had to learn promptly not only how to operate as a more effective team, but to plan in much more detail the events for the next day and remain flexible.

I can say that we rose to the challenge and developed as a team from this experience, we understood what was expected from us and

maintained a focus on the children.

There were numerous occasions when the children took part and completed activities they were feeling apprehensive about and at times scared. When they were first informed about the raft building task the children did not wish to get wet, worrying about their clothes. However, after the task they did not want to come out of the water. When they went rock climbing they became frightened and froze half way up the rock. This was a scary experience for them and they had to overcome their fears and learn to trust the people to help them down very quickly. Again they proved how resilient they were by all wanting to have another climb.



## Overcoming obstacles and learning about leadership

Looking back at how far our group has come makes me proud of all the team members. There were many obstacles to overcome, even in the initial phases.

As with the other groups, we had many difficulties in getting ourselves together for meetings to start on the preparation work. The nature of our placements meant that some people were on shift, and people were based throughout the country. We also had cultural and linguistic hurdles to overcome in our group.

We decided that those who wanted to improve their leadership skills as part of the graduate training should take on the roles of team leaders. The louder members of the team should take a back seat in the actual running of the weekend, and be there to support and encourage others.

When we arrived, we went over the last of the planning that evening, and then we presented to Jo, Mark and Bill. At this point we felt secure in what we were doing; everyone knew their roles, and we knew what we were going to be doing when the children arrived the following morning.

On the Saturday morning, I felt incredibly nervous. Although we had briefly met the children some months earlier, none of us knew entirely what to expect.

The raft building on the Saturday afternoon went well; some of the children were a little cautious about getting into the water and onto the rafts, as some of them looked very unstable. In fact, our group made it half way across the pond before it began to collapse! I looked around and everyone was cheering those on the rafts, and all the children were smiling and laughing, and I thought that if we were measuring it on cheers, then the raft building was a success.

After dinner, we got some feedback from Huw, Mark and Jo, which was pretty demoralising. I think the words that hit home the most were: "I felt unsafe", and "I couldn't hear any of you". We stayed up rather late that night in

order to ensure that the Sunday went smoothly. I felt uncomfortable about telling the children what they could and could not do until what Huw had said the previous night had sunk in. We agreed the louder members of the team should take a more active role.

The Sunday went much more smoothly, and being the scaredy-cat that I am, I stayed outside whilst everyone went caving. We also went abseiling that morning, whilst the other two groups went climbing at Burbage and Stanage. That evening we had a barbecue, and watched the football. The children that did not want to watch the football made thank you cards for the staff at Hollowford, or had their faces painted.

On the last morning, we split the children into their three groups again and they rotated between the high ropes, zip wire and archery. Again, everyone was cheering each other on and the encouragement coming from the children to their classmates was quite staggering.

After lunch we settled the children into a room to do an Awards Ceremony. Frantz and Jon had managed to get goodie bags paid for by their contracts, and Keith had managed to organise some medals for each child. We also gave goodie bags to the teachers and staff at Hollowford as a thank you for all their help throughout the weekend and in the months running up to it. Finally the children gave us posters that they had made for each graduate.

As the children got into the minibuses they were all waving and smiling, and I felt really proud of my team for what they had achieved.

*Elizabeth Platt*

Not only did they defeat their fears but also they really worked as a team. Along with us they motivated and encouraged each other to complete the tasks. If they were having difficulty climbing the rocks, they were offering words of encouragement and telling each other that they could complete the task. One of the girls did not enjoy the zip wire and when she came down the other girls gave her a cuddle making sure she was ok.

My personal learning curve from this whole experience is that clear communication is the key but words of encouragement and support go a long way.

*Susie Bains*

### Taking part...

Frantz Cann  
Elizabeth Platt  
Wayne Turner  
Michael Law  
Jonathan Day  
Susie Bains

Chenjie Bi  
Yifan Guan  
Attila Kerekes  
Keith Mannix  
Patrick Latorre  
Luya Zhang

Many children from inner city backgrounds have very little opportunity to experience open countryside, let alone take part in activities such as canoeing, rock climbing, orienteering and so on. This Community Project presents a real life challenge for the graduates and will certainly test their planning and organisational skills. The project is also a fantastic opportunity for disadvantaged children to have a taste of outdoor activities in beautiful rural surroundings under the sponsorship of DHL. The activities build confidence and promote teamwork as well as raising awareness of environmental issues, both with the graduates and the children.

- Mark Williams,  
Centre Manager, The Hollowford  
Centre

At DHL we are committed to goals that generate benefits for the communities where we work. As a result we are keen to ensure that our graduate training has both an element of reality and corporate social responsibility. Through our partnership with Lindley Educational Trust we have been able to achieve that. We wanted to challenge our graduates to fast track their development but also to give something back to one of the many local communities in which we operate. For our graduates to take responsibility for a group of schoolchildren for two days, both in terms of enjoyment and learning, is a fantastic experience which we feel sure will greatly benefit all concerned.

- Joanne Highe,  
HR Manager,  
DHL Exel Supply Chain



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