

Forest Frontiers CIC Forest Camp Delivered as part of the 2021 Holiday Activity Fund

Impact Evaluation





The headlines

- Forest Frontiers CIC are one of a number of social enterprises delivering great outcomes at the Woodland Trust's Smithills Estate in Bolton.
- The Summer Camp scheme delivered by Forest Frontiers was made possible by CVS' Holiday Activity Fund, providing lunches and wrap around activities for children in the holiday period
- 20 places were offered to children from schools local to Smithills and to children from St Catherine's in Brightmet
- 18 places were filled with 12 children attending each day on average
- Support from the Bolton Family meant that transport could be offered to and from Smithills for 12 St Catherine's children
- The programme was supported by local business A Small Good Thing who provided the food education sessions
- HAF activities ran alongside the 'paid for' Summer Camp

The activities

Activities offered were free flowing and child led but included:

- Nature ID
- Cooking
- Making campfire
- Den building
- Hammock Swinging
- Games – i.e. Woodland Olympics
- Arts and crafts
- Climbing trees
- Archery

Growing Good Food Habitats delivered by A Small Good Thing

Aimed to engage the young people in discussion about how we eat. Sessions took place once a week

Three themes:

- ‘SOW’ – children worked in teams to cultivate a small garden area and then plant a variety of herbs and salad greens
- ‘BALANCE’ – a healthy cooking session
- ‘ASSEMBLE’ – a session exploring why ‘how’ we eat is as important as ‘what’ we eat

Children enjoy the SGT sessions



The skills gained

- Tree identification
- Fire lighting
- Survival skills
- Use of tools
- Art techniques
- How to be safe in the woods
- Plant id
- Mindfulness
- Planting and growing food
- Kitchen hygiene
- Knife skills
- Knowledge about cooking ingredients
- Knowledge about the importance of food in culture
- Understanding of the value of sharing food and eating together

Case Study

One of the children who attended the sessions had recently suffered a bereavement and at the start of the 4 weeks it was evident that the child was struggling emotionally, resulting in some behavioural challenges.

The child attended all but one of the sessions and towards the end of the four weeks, staff noticed a big difference in behaviour, positivity and mindset. When they did experience moments of conflict or frustration, they learnt to find a quiet space, relaxing in a hammock watching the sky and the trees. They particularly enjoyed completing challenge activities, and going off site to complete pond dipping or sports day at the hall.

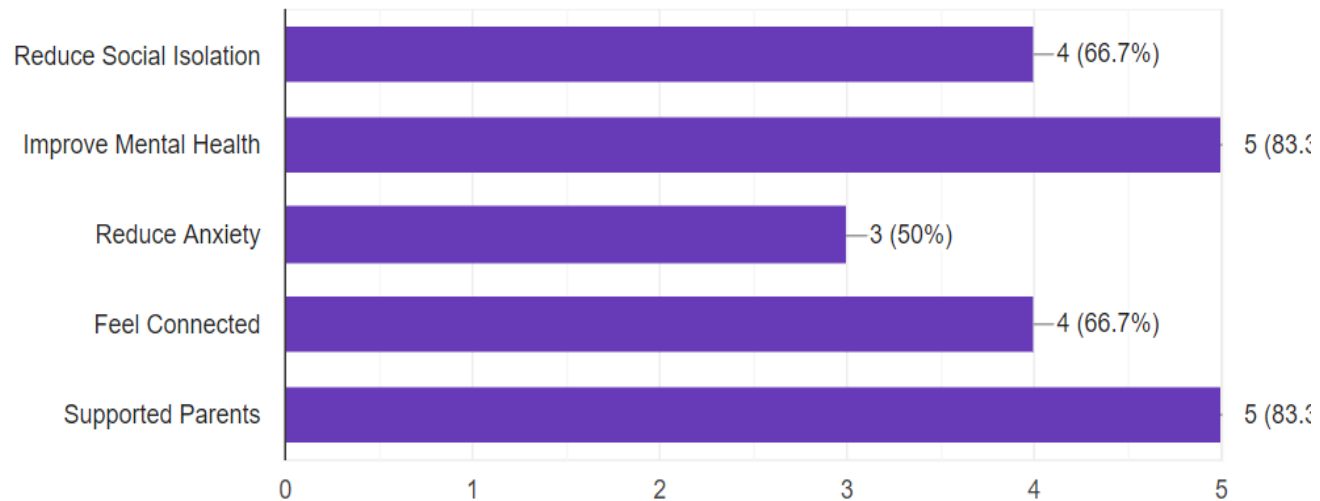
The child formed a new close friendship with another participant and they plan to keep in touch after Forest Camp. When they completed their evaluation and on conversations with the child about their experience they stated they had loved every minute, it wasn't what they had expected as they thought it would be like school!

By the end of the four weeks the child became much more accepting of change and less involved in argument as they learnt to negotiate and resolve conflict without using mean words or being physical. They settled in amazingly and at the end of every session they had to squeeze the last bit of nature connection by climbing the same tree on the way back to the mini bus.

How the programme supported Covid Recovery

How has our Summer Fun programme supported the recovery of COVID? (Choose as many as applicable).

6 responses



Feedback from parents

Please provide any constructive feedback about our sessions. (Did you enjoy them? How has it supported your family? Why was it good? Any improvements?)

6 responses

It helped my children to have much fun

Nothing else to add, Alicia has had an absolute blast as always and will hopefully be back during the next half term

The free place helped massively as I was still able to work and not worry about childcare, it also helped my daughter build on her social skills as she can be very anxious.

Amy has found it a great way to make friends and connect with nature. It gives her another interest away from computer screens. It's been a great way for her to be able to play when there were restrictions on meeting up. This summer was more about fun!

Sessions were a good learning experience and gets children out of the house, making new friends and doing things they would not normally do.

Kaleb had a fantastic time, and has given him more confidence and brought him back out of his shell slightly.

Feedback from the children

Ask your child two things they really enjoyed about our session and one thing they would love to do next time. Add their answer below

6 responses

The hammock and fire camping

Making the whistles, playing in the hammocks
Making whistles and other crafts

My daughter loved the hammocks and swings and marshmallow toasting.

I enjoyed making food and going on the hammock and swings. There isn't anything I want to do in the future but I love to have the freedom to do whatever I want

Making dens and learning to build a fire.

The hammocks and being in the water

Observed and reported outcomes in participants

- Increase confidence
- Increased resilience
- New friendships
- Increased sense of freedom and independence
- Increased awareness of strategies to manage wellbeing
- Increased connection to nature
- Increased sense of adventure and willingness to try new things

What worked well:

- The transport from St Catherine's supported by Bolton Council and Seddons – very reliable and enabled children to access the site from Brightmet
- The lunches – although the fruit wasn't always popular, it was used to make tasty dishes on the campfire such as apple stew
- The referral process from St Catherine's and other local schools
- No concerns around managing behaviour and keeping boundaries

Learning for next time

- The ability to offer a more flexible session where families could book on to one day or week rather than the full four weeks
- Numbers tailed off towards the end as the full four weeks was a big commitment
- More time available to establish a referral process and get the families signed up
- It would be useful to have supply of outdoor clothing and equipment as the children weren't always adequately clothed