



Help us to bridge the gap

**OPPORTUNITY IS FAR FROM EQUAL.
HELP US TO GIVE THE IMPACT OF A
POWERFUL EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE
TO THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST.**

Personal benefits

Challenging adventurous activities are an enormously valuable experience for young people. They have a powerful positive impact on self-confidence and this in turn directly influences achievement. Many young people experience this through the very successful summer camps run by the private and charitable sectors, some through schools or youth groups, some through local authority provision (increasingly vulnerable to budget cuts) and many through voluntary sector provision. However, a substantial proportion of less well off young people never have the chance.

There is a huge and unfair gap in opportunity between those who can afford these experiences and those who cannot.

Benefits for society

Qualities that are developed through challenging outdoor activities are vital for the health of society - never more so than in today's rapidly changing environment. A recent report from the Better Regulation Commission states that the most important of its calls to our leaders involves:

“emphasising the importance of resilience, self-reliance, freedom,

innovation and a spirit of adventure in today's society”.

Not only do those who cannot afford to participate lose the opportunity to develop these qualities and consequently fail to contribute to a healthy society but they also so often slip into anti-social or criminal behaviour, which costs us so dearly.

The evidence is clear

Our paper “A Spirit of Adventure in Today's Society” spells out the detailed evidence that challenging adventurous activities, particularly in a residential context, make a direct contribution towards a number of societal aims.

Download it from

www.englishoutdoorcouncil.org

Government support

There is widespread acceptance within government of the value and contribution of challenging adventurous activities. A Manifesto for Learning Outside the Classroom has been published and DCSF are actively working to promote this and to produce resources that will help schools to deliver learning outside the classroom.

In July, the Treasury published a ten year strategy for positive activities for

young people. This sets out the government's vision that all young people should be able to take part in activities that develop their resilience and their social and emotional skills. It includes the commitment to invest in expanding the availability of residential opportunities, particularly for disadvantaged young people. As yet, it is unclear how this will be delivered to the 28% of young people who do not currently have such opportunities.



Lost in translation

There is no lack of government support, at least in principle. The reality however is that we are still a long way from seeing the provision of positive out of classroom learning opportunities for all young people. A contributory factor is that local authorities and schools, who have to deliver the opportunities in practice, have many conflicting priorities. Key decisions are made at local level and the government is seeking to achieve greater participation by persuasion rather than by declaring such provision an entitlement for all.

However, this is not working. The good intentions of central government, expressed in the Manifesto, are not being implemented consistently at local level. Even though adventurous out of classroom activities are a powerful way of achieving Every Child Matters outcomes, there are so many conflicting priorities on schools and Children's Services Departments that anything that is non-statutory is at risk of becoming squeezed out. In summary: despite the emphasis on learning outside the classroom, there is still no declared entitlement to this powerful form of personal development for our young people.

The human and social impact

Getting young people away from a couch potato lifestyle and actively involved in physical activity is vital if we are to reduce the future impact of obesity and lack of fitness. Experience of adventurous situations helps young people to develop their ability to manage risk. Growth in self-confidence has a direct correlation with classroom attainment and is a most important determinant for success in life.

A purposeful outdoor programme can also have a significant impact on societal problems such as anti-social behaviour and crime, emotional and mental health problems, alcohol and drug abuse and community cohesion. Working together in a residential environment helps young people to develop important social and communication skills.

The economic argument

Evidence has recently been published that contrasts the costly process of dealing with the effects of social exclusion with the costs of prevention. We argue that there are significant economic benefits in early intervention as a preventative measure in contrast with

the very high costs of picking up the pieces after it is too late. In summary: despite evidence for the cost-effectiveness of preventative measures, we are not spending enough money on pre-emptive work which can prevent young people from falling into a cycle of low achievement and anti-social behaviour.

How to help

If you are involved with government at national level, please lobby for an entitlement for all young people to experience learning outside the classroom, including at least one residential experience during their school years and for a ringfenced source of funding to support those young people who would not otherwise be able to afford the experience.

If you are involved at local authority level, please do everything you can to encourage your Children's Services Department and your schools to embrace the Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto. It is very much in their interests to use such a powerful and effective way of delivering Every Child Matters outcomes.



Where to find the evidence

The English Outdoor Council's briefing paper "A Spirit of Adventure in Today's Society" is available on line at www.englishoutdoorcouncil.org

The "Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto" can be ordered or downloaded at www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/resourcematerials/outsideclassroom/