

Cadbury Heath Nature Play Project

10 July 2013

Wild4Life Project

Wild4Life is a four year project in South Gloucestershire providing opportunities for people to enjoy and get involved in their local green spaces to improve health and well being. The Wild4Life project launched in autumn 2012 and will run until September 2016, primarily working with children, young people and families in Filton, Patchway, West Yate, Cadbury Heath, Staple Hill and Kingswood. www.southglos.gov.uk/Wild4Life

Wild4Life is being managed by the South Gloucestershire Council Community Spaces team and has been funded by a grant from the Reaching Communities Fund of the Big Lottery Fund in addition to funding from South Gloucestershire Council and NHS South Gloucestershire. A key project for Wild4Life is running Nature Play projects for families with preschool children attending all 6 South Gloucestershire priority neighbourhood Sure Start Children's Centres. The first Nature Play project was delivered in Cadbury Heath in spring 2013 and is reviewed in this report.

Cadbury Heath Nature Play Project Summary

The Wild4Life project and Cadbury Heath Sure Start Children's Centre ran a programme of 10 Nature Play sessions for local families attending the children's centre between February – May 2013 in local open spaces. The sessions were organised through a partnership between the Wild4Life Project and staff and families from the Children's Centre. The project aimed to support families living within the priority neighbourhood and Children's Centre staff and volunteers to use local open spaces for outdoor play, learning and recreation in relation to the following aims:

- Increased emotional well being and physical activity levels of parents/carers and children.
- Parents/carers, volunteers and children's centre staff increased knowledge of and confidence to use local open spaces for play, learning and recreation.
- Parents/carers, volunteers and children's centre staff increased knowledge of activities to support outdoor nature play and learning with young children.
- Increase confidence of staff and volunteers to provide and support outdoor play and learning in open spaces with young children.

Following the 10 sessions led by the Wild4Life project, a training day was held for parents/carers, volunteers and Sure Start staff to support continuation of the sessions for local families. Since completion of the Wild4Life project input in May 2013, sessions have continued to be run on a weekly basis in term time attracting new local families. **In total 32 children and 23 adults have been involved and total numbers of participants have been 135 children and 89 adult attendances.** In order to explore the possibility and options of

sustaining the work into the future, the following review summarises the key outcomes of the project so far and identified needs and opportunities.

Project Location

Following assessment of local open spaces in Cadbury Heath, Tarzan Park on Coronation Road was identified as most suitable for Nature Play sessions with preschool families as it is a fenced park, dogs are not permitted and the environment provides rich natural play and learning opportunities. Tarzan Park is owned and managed by South Gloucestershire Council.

The South Gloucestershire youth offending team involved local young people in clearing out rubbish disposed on the site as part of their payback programme to create a safer and cleaner environment for the Nature Play sessions. Tree officers assessed and implemented tree works on site and the dog warden has put up notices re dog waste.

Participant feedback

Questionnaires were given to parents/carers after sessions 5 and 10 to review the project and inform future delivery. Written feedback comments from these questionnaires are outlined below:

- **What have you and your child most enjoyed about the sessions?**

'The ideas gained to use at home, outdoors, creativity, freedom'

'Getting involved in everything. Learning.'

'Interaction with other children'

'Making and using resources from out and about'

'Learning new skills'

'Creating things'

'Improving confidence'

'Outside fun. Ideas of making that we can do at home. Fire – marshmallows!'

'My child has enjoyed every bit of the sessions and always looks forward to coming.'

'Being outdoors with different activities that are all weather, learning new things to pass on!'

'Different ages of people. Different languages and races. Enjoying meeting new people and learning new things.'

'Everything really, being outdoors, learning different activities to do outdoors'

'The variety of activities using natural materials like branches and dried grass/wild flowers'

- Is there anything you/your child have not enjoyed about the sessions or we could improve in the future?

'More sessions. More outdoor explore!'

'to make sure it is maintained after the Big Lottery has gone'

'Nothing'

'No. We have enjoyed every session'

- Have nature play sessions helped to improve your confidence to play outdoors and access local green spaces with your children? Yes/no

100% respondents yes

- Does coming to sessions improve your feeling of well being? Yes/no

100% respondents yes

- Do you feel that coming to sessions improves your child's feeling of well being? Yes/no

100% respondents yes

- Has coming to sessions helped to increase the amount of physical outdoor activity you do on a weekly basis with your family? Eg walking, outdoor play etc. Yes/no

100% respondents yes

- Any other comments or suggestions?

'Fantastic sessions for all ages. Really important for children to explore the outdoors and understand the world we live in!'

'The groups are lovely and my children love them. They are run by lovely people who really care and help get the children 'stuck in' – we love the Wild4Life groups!'

'We have really enjoyed these sessions and look forward to more sessions. My child enjoyed making things too.'

'Thank you we have really enjoyed all sessions'

'The sessions have been inspiring and confidence building. Rowena is fantastic and has enthused parents and children throughout every session to enjoy nature and appreciate being out in it... in all weather! Thank you!'

Verbal feedback

'X doesn't normally sleep very well and slept really well after the last session' parent

'This is the first time I have done something creative in over 15 years!' parent

'Wonderful to see the park being used constructively' resident from Coronation Road

'Really great what you are doing here' resident from Coronation Road

Training day feedback

'Really should have more outside groups and training for families who like this type of stuff. Weekend access courses 😊'

'I just wanted to put down how grateful I am for everything I've learnt from you over the last few months. The training today was fab and I feel much more confident now to take on leading sessions and I'm not at all concerned about running out of ideas for activities!'

Evaluation video

A short video evaluation of the project was filmed on 29 May 2013 by the South Gloucestershire Council Communications team. The film includes interviews with families and staff involved in the project and is available on 'You Tube' at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fJnrULYbFcM>

Comments transcribed from the evaluation film include:

'We've been outside and we've had lots of fun. We've made lots of different things. We've met lots of different people and we've been learning about different types of plants.'

'It's nice for the community to have spaces like this and areas that are open so people can come and appreciate the simple things in life. It's lovely, we've really enjoyed it.'

'My son really enjoys the nature play sessions. He gets a lot from it. Last week they were sawing willow. His face was unbelievable, he was laughing and smiling, really enjoying himself... He loves being outdoors and it's so good for the kids. I would love to do work like this'

'I think it's nice to be outdoors because children spend a lot of time indoors now. It's nice to be outdoors and to do natural things.'

'It's good for children to understand about nature. We've just done some colouring in with grass and flowers and I'd never thought of that before. We get some good ideas from here.'

'They love it. It's nice when the sun's out and they can run around on the grass. They love being outdoors.'

Children's Centre staff feedback transcribed from the video:

'We have done some wonderful things which have really inspired parents and they have inspired me. I love being outside. I love being part of nature. It has been wonderful to see the parents and the children getting together, interacting with one another and enjoying some really wild play'

'It's just been so much fun. I really hope these parents are inspired to continue this project and that the children and parents here can go on and enjoy nature.'

Images (used with full signed image consent from parents/carers)





Future needs and opportunities

As identified from the feedback in this report, parents and carers have stated that they would like Nature Play sessions to continue in Cadbury Heath to support play, learning, health and well being outcomes for their children and themselves.

Due to recent changes in the work of Sure Start Children's Centres (which are now required to be more targeted in focus), Cadbury Heath Children's Centre is unable to provide open play sessions for local families (both on and off site) and staff are keen to explore potential ways to work together with the wider community and partners to enable open sessions for Nature Play in local open spaces to continue. The partner organisations and parents/carers involved in the project are aware that the status of Tarzan park as designated potential housing land, means that potential future use of the site can only be on a temporary basis and as such any continuing activities may need to be moved to neighbouring sites in the future.

Planning and review meetings for the project have been held approximately monthly since March 2013 between the Children's Centre manager, Wild4Life project officer, parents, representatives from Oldland Parish Council, South Gloucestershire Council and JUICE community project to explore potential ways of working together to take the project forward. Following a meeting on July 2nd the parents with support from Oldland Parish Council are in the process of establishing a constituted group to continue to run and develop parent led Nature Play sessions in Cadbury Heath and apply for funding for training and resources to sustain the work of the project into the future.

'It is fantastic to see local families enjoying the Nature Play sessions. Parents have gained the confidence and enthusiasm to want to run the sessions themselves and the children benefit from playing with natural materials outside in the fresh air. This type of activity really supports parents to provide a healthy lifestyle for their children.'

Kerry Pugsley, Children's Centre Development Leader

'The enthusiasm and support of families and staff from the Children's Centre to develop local Nature Play opportunities in Cadbury Heath has been absolutely fantastic. I am delighted that the families involved in this project are carrying this work forward with support from the Children's Centre and Parish Council. Making the most of local open spaces for outdoor play is a fantastic way to improve health, well being and learning and it is wonderful to see the enthusiasm of all involved in the project to carry it forward. Exciting times.....'

Rowena Kenny, Wild4Life Project Officer



Contact

The Wild4Life Project:
rowena.kenny@southglos.gov.uk

Tel 01454 863556

www.southglos.gov.uk/Wild4Life