

Kingswood Park Nature Play Project

September- November 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.

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 the 6 South Gloucestershire priority neighbourhood Sure Start Children's Centres. The first Wild4Life Nature Play project was delivered in Cadbury Heath in spring 2013 and an evaluation report and short film can be downloaded from www.southglos.gov.uk/wild4life The Kingswood Park Nature Play project was delivered in autumn 2013 and is reviewed in this report.

Kingswood Park Nature Play Project Summary

The Wild4Life project and Kingswood Sure Start Children's Centre ran a programme of 7 Nature Play sessions for local families attending the children's centre and 1 training day for staff and volunteers between September - November 2013. The sessions were organised through a partnership between the Wild4Life Project and staff and families from the Children's Centre. Sessions were held in the nature area of Kingswood Park (in all weathers!). The project aimed to support families living within the priority neighbourhood and Children's Centre staff and volunteers to use the park and other 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 7 sessions led by the Wild4Life project, a training day was held for volunteers and Sure Start staff to support continuation of the use of the nature area and park for local families. Total numbers of participants have been 20 individual children and 15 adults with 60 child and 35 parent/carer attendances over the 7 sessions. Staff and volunteers from the children's centre supported each session and 8 staff and volunteers participated in the follow

up training session. The following review summarises project delivery, the key outcomes of the project and subsequent identified needs and opportunities.

Project Location

Following assessment of local open spaces in Kingswood, the nature area within Kingswood Park on Park Road was identified as the most suitable for Nature Play sessions with preschool families as it is a fenced area within the park, dogs are not permitted, it is close to the children's centre and the environment provides rich natural play and learning opportunities. Kingswood Park is owned and managed by South Gloucestershire Council.

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

Kingswood Park nature area - a secure, dog free wildlife area with mature trees and grassland ideal for exploration and play



Session delivery

Using early years story books as starting points and inspiration for exploring nature, creative projects, imaginative play and learning



**Making leaf creatures and leaf men
(inspired by 'Leaf Man', Lois Ehlert)**



**Stick people (inspired by 'Stick Man',
Julia Donaldson)**

Supporting the Early Years Foundation Stage 3 prime areas of learning: 'Personal, Social and Emotional Development', 'Communication and Language' and 'Physical Development'.



Supporting positive relationships between children, between children and their parents/carers and between parents.

Creativity and language development

Artwork and creativity inspired by nature and using natural materials



Imaginative play... 'tigers...'



The 'stag...'



'Hunting...'



Supporting increased confidence and resilience – through new experiences, challenges and mastering new skills:





Participant feedback

Questionnaires were given to parents/carers after sessions to review the project and inform future delivery. A selection of written feedback comments from these questionnaires are outlined below:

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

'Being outdoors and doing something practical. It's so different to all our other groups'

'Giving my children the chance to explore bugs and the outdoors in a safe environment. Brilliant atmosphere and leader very enthusiastic and willing to help'

'Being outdoors, learning about nature, making things with natural objects'

- **Any other comments or suggestions?**

'This is the best activity group my children have been to!'

'We would love more sessions and please let us know about anything else you are doing.'

'Safe and friendly environment to play and get messy.'

'Well organised in a safe environment'

'Fantastic sessions that we have enjoyed tremendously.'

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

'more sessions please!'

100% questionnaire respondents stated that attending sessions had enabled improvements in the following:

- 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



Training day feedback

Questionnaires were given to staff/volunteers following the training session to identify outcome, further training needs and ideas for project development. A selection of written feedback comments from these questionnaires are outlined below:

- What have you most enjoyed about the training session today?

'Practice ideas in relevant setting'

'Hearing new ideas and resources for outdoor play'

- Please list any information or skills which you have learnt from participating in this session today?

'Being outside and getting lots of ideas for outdoor play'

'All the creative ideas shared, willow crowns and angels, how to put up shelters, books linked to activity'

'Willow sculpting, shelter building and listening exercises'

'Making a shelter and hammock, using charcoal, story books and linking to activities'

'Using the environment as a resource'

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

100% no

'Would like to repeat in future for even more ideas'

- Has this training helped to improve your skills and confidence to play outdoors and access local green spaces with the children and families you support?

100% yes

'Yes definitely inspired me to get out there!'

Yes – to use spaces and allow free play – using story books as beginning inspiration'

- Any other comments or suggestions?

'Really enjoyed it and found it very interesting and inspirational. Thank you'

'R very enthusiastic which makes others interested.'

'R very passionate about outdoor play and her enthusiasm is very motivating.'

'Very good training, thank you'

Children's Centre manager written feedback

In addition to evaluation questionnaires for parents/carers, children centre staff and managers completed a partner evaluation feedback form re their feedback about the project. Pre event planning, delivery, knowledge and helpfulness of staff, response to group needs and overall service were all rated as excellent and the following comments received:

'All of the staff involved in both the training and activity sessions reported an increase in confidence to initiate ideas and sessions into their activity planning. This impact is shown through the planning of an outdoor activity session in January for the local toddler group and also through the staff in Kingswood's wish to spend our resource budget on equipment to enhance the future nature play sessions in the wildlife area of the park.'

'The staff training day was well planned with lots of practical ideas to try out. This was the best way for staff to remember and gain confidence to try new things.'

'The project was very popular with lots of positive feedback from families about the impact it had on their attitudes to accessing the outdoors. We have been really lucky to have been part of this project, especially as it has given us so many opportunities for future activities and events. The activities with families showed them a different way of playing in outside areas which is especially valuable within a built up area like Kingswood. This will help to develop the children's learning dispositions such as curiosity and resilience, skills which will help them become 'school ready'.'

Denise Stevenson, Kingswood Children's Centre Manager



Future opportunities

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

Staff and volunteers from the children's centre have stated that they have acquired new skills and feel more confident and enthused following the training and mentoring sessions to

continue to utilise the park for sessions. However, due to recent changes in the work of Sure Start Children's Centres (which are now required to work with referred families), Kingswood Children's Centre is less able to provide open universal play sessions for local families (both on and off site) so staff are exploring ways to work together with the wider community, local pre schools and partners to enable open sessions for Nature Play in local open spaces to continue and be developed.

The Wild4Life project officer is working with colleagues within the council Community Spaces team and partners to reinvigorate a 'friends group' for the park in order to develop community involvement and improve the park for people and wildlife. The partnership work developed between the Community Spaces team and Children's Centre through the Nature Play project will support this process and help inform the management and improvement of this important and historic urban park for the Kingswood community.

'Kingswood Park Nature Play project has given a completely new perspective to the park, particularly in the project's use of an area previously considered 'out of bounds'. The project has helped me see that far from being a wasted part of the park, this area is of huge value to local children and offers a fantastic dog-free nature playground for young children. At a time when a new Friends of Kingswood Park group is being set up, the project has opened up possibilities for a new set of people to get involved and enthusiastic about using the park. I look forward to continuing to work with Wild4Life and the Nature Play group to explore new uses, new activities and a whole new audience for Kingswood Park in 2014, its 80th year.'

Katherine Kearns, Community Spaces Partnerships and Delivery Project Officer

'The nature area in Kingswood Park is a fantastic haven for wildlife and a rich play and learning resource for young children and families. It has been wonderful to explore the potential of this area with local families and Children's Centre staff. 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 to enjoy this beautiful park in the heart of the community.'

Rowena Kenny, Wild4Life Project Officer



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