

1.1: How people participate

This guide focuses on the delivery of high quality outdoor learning – what it looks like and how to achieve it. It recognises that outdoor learning takes place, not only in the formal education sector and through outdoor providers, but equally in youth services and voluntary youth organisations, as well as in a wide range of outdoor activity clubs that cater for young people, health settings and in peer and family groups.

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While a great deal of outdoor learning provision exists to meet identified needs (e.g. through schools, youth projects, health, etc), many people access outdoor learning experiences for their own personal reasons. The degree of autonomy a person has, which increases for many people in adulthood, means that provision can reflect a wide variety of reasons for engagement with the outdoors, overlapping with recreation. They may wish to increase their activity skills, be supported to achieve a particular goal or improve their knowledge of the natural environment.



Schools

Schools have a central role to play in delivering high quality outdoor learning. They may provide outdoor and adventurous activities within the PE curriculum; fieldwork in science or geography; regular forest school sessions or curriculum linked lessons outdoors. Many schools offer out-of-school-hours learning opportunities through clubs and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, plus day and residential visits to field study centres and outdoor education/activity providers.



Further and higher education establishments

Further and higher education establishments offer courses that develop knowledge, skills and values relating to the field of outdoor learning and which lead to formal academic qualifications. University programmes include Degree, Masters, PhD and teacher education programmes. Students on non-outdoor related courses may also benefit from outdoor learning programmes focused on personal and social development.

Apprenticeships and trainee schemes

Apprenticeships and trainee schemes offer alternative training pathways to formal academic qualifications.

Youth programmes

Youth programmes, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, the National Citizen Service and similar awards, are being delivered through a range of agencies.



Youth services and groups

Youth services and groups in both the statutory and voluntary sectors provide significant outdoor learning opportunities as part of their curriculum and youth and play programmes, many of which have personal and social development as a prime focus. The voluntary youth organisations have a long tradition of work in this field (the terms 'youth services' and 'youth organisations' are used interchangeably in this document). Schools and youth services have in common the ability to measure the impact of outdoor learning in the context of a young person's whole development over an extended period.

Uniformed youth groups

Uniformed youth groups, for example, the Girlguides, Scouts and Cadets, offer opportunities to engage in outdoor learning experiences through badges, awards, expeditions and adventure training.

Outdoor education/activity providers

Outdoor education/activity providers include those managed by local authorities, schools or groups of schools, voluntary and charitable organisations and the commercial sector. All have the potential to make a substantial impact on the personal and social development of the young people they engage with; for many this is their primary purpose. Providers also engage with family and adult groups, often working in partnership with social, health, justice, faith-based and adult (lifelong) learning agencies. Outdoor learning approaches are also used with businesses to support the development of early-career apprentices, employees and managers.



Providers are well placed to bring their specialist expertise to the delivery of high quality outdoor learning, best realised when they work in close partnership with their participants. Many providers also offer activity courses, open to individual recruitment, for example in holiday periods, providing further opportunities for young people and families to benefit.

Outdoor activity clubs

Outdoor activity clubs, community projects and environmental groups, all offer valuable opportunities to access recreational, environmental and adventure activities, including in a competitive context. Clubs provide an environment that encourages belonging to an outdoor community and progress towards high levels of performance and skill, whilst also contributing significantly to broader learning, personal growth and life-long recreational experiences. Community projects and environmental groups enable participation in a wide range of activities that meet local needs and engage with the local area, often conserving and improving local nature spaces.



Overseas visits and expeditions

Overseas visits and expeditions, whether provided by a school, commercial or voluntary organisations, offer extended opportunities for adventurous activities, advanced scientific field skills, community work, and heightened cultural and environmental awareness. Additionally, participants learn about working as part of a team, including how to manage risk, and they develop a greater tolerance for, and understanding of, the strengths and weaknesses they and their peers have.

Family members or peers

Family members or peers have often been influential in initiating and supporting a young person's engagement in outdoor activities, and this should not be forgotten in any holistic planning linked to increasing participation.

Awarding Bodies (ABs) and National Governing Bodies of sport (NGBs)

Awarding Bodies (ABs) and National Governing Bodies of sport (NGBs) provide a range of coaching, leadership and personal skills awards that enable individuals to gain recognition for their personal experience. Awards overlap with high quality learning outcomes and enable progression into employment (either paid or voluntary).

Green social prescribing

Green social prescribing is increasingly being used to support people's mental and physical health through nature-based interventions and activities. It includes 'green' (i.e. nature-based) and 'blue' (i.e. water) activities, often delivered through community projects and organisations.



See also:

- 1.0 An overview of outdoor learning
- 1.2 The benefits of outdoor learning
- 1.3 The context for outdoor learning

