

EMPLOYABILITY AND THE JOHN MUIR AWARD



Building skills and confidence, recognising achievements and real-world tangible experiences are invaluable for moving towards employment and expanding horizons. The John Muir Award is used by organisations as a framework to build attributes such as problem solving, technical skills and leadership capacity, complementing employability courses and other award schemes, contributing to strategies such as [Developing the Young Workforce](#) in Scotland, and supporting individuals to prepare for and re-engage with the world of work. Expanding access to opportunities to build and demonstrate skills will continue to play a pivotal role post-Covid as part of a Green recovery.



Skills development

The John Muir Award can give structure and focus for enhancing a range of practical and vocational skills for young people and adults, as well as the chance to develop transferable attributes highly sought after by employers. Read on for five examples of employability skills developed through Award activities.

“Adult life requires a range of skills in order for people to flourish, both in the workplace and in their daily lives, from the confidence and motivation to seek challenges and complete tasks, to the interpersonal skills that aid teamwork and other social interactions. These essential life skills are crucial to people achieving their potential.”

Sir Peter Lampl, [The Sutton Trust](#) Founder & Chairman, Education Endowment Foundation Chairman

Recognising Achievement

Award Providers tell us that recognition of achievement with a John Muir Award certificate helps celebrate participants’ successes, building self-esteem and boosting confidence in their own abilities. The nationally-recognised certificate can help to demonstrate learning outcomes in [education settings](#), and can be included in pupil profiles, portfolios of work and Curriculum Vitae.

“The John Muir Award fits perfectly with our aims of getting people outside and active but also gave the guys something really useful for their CVs, showing commitment and newly acquired skills as they were actively seeking employment.”

Mike Dunn, Shropshire Outdoor Partnerships, working with Shropshire Probation Service

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JOHN
MUIR
AWARD

wild places:
DISCOVER
EXPLORE
CONSERVE
SHARE

Personal statements and interviews

Organisations tell us that John Muir Award experiences have been constructive reference points in personal statements, job applications and interviews. Activities and challenges undertaken provide positive examples to name and discuss, demonstrating learning and skills in real-life contexts.¹

“The Award provides amazing opportunities to challenge young people, encouraging the development of both soft and hard skills that are invaluable to potential employers. The qualities needed to pursue and complete the John Muir Award makes it very easy to identify conscientious young people, who have the commitment and motivation to develop themselves and further their career opportunities.”
Sion Lloyd, Urdd Gobaith Cymru, Outdoor Activity Service

What do we mean by ‘employability skills’?

Leadership

Belfast Hills Partnership delivered the John Muir Award with a girls group from St Gall’s G.A.C., challenging them to consider their own perspectives on wildlife in Belfast. Inspired to create a lasting legacy, the girls designed a wildflower-covered mural with help from a local street artist, aiming to foster appreciation of nature throughout their community.



Photo credit: Belfast Hills Partnership

“The primary aim of this youth empowerment project was to help young people gain new skills by learning about their local environment. The girls came up with the idea for the campaign themselves and were encouraged to develop their message through a number of workshops. I have been blown away by their commitment to the project.”

Jo Boylan, Youth Outreach Officer

Risk evaluation

Outdoor Adventure students at Kendal College, Cumbria, learn traditional skills such as walling, hedge laying and coppicing. Important employability skills are developed such as risk evaluation and how to keep themselves, and members of the public, safe. Working towards the John Muir Award gives students recognition for their achievements.

“The students are able to gain confidence through undertaking new activities and put into practice the health and safety learning in the classroom into a real working environment.”

Steve Randles, Course Lecturer

¹ Wordle showing frequency of key employability themes referenced in Award Provider documentation

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Teamwork

Students at St Maurice's High School, Cumbernauld, participated in the John Muir Award through a pilot wellbeing project, [Wild Ways Well](#), designed to help people connect with and benefit from local greenspaces. Increased time spent outdoors also increased opportunities for social interaction. Both students and the class teacher noted improvements in teamwork, with the group working better together to complete tasks, communicating more freely with each other and developing an enhanced awareness of others' needs.

"It was fantastic just to see them out there talking to one another. Face to face rather than at a screen or on their phones. These kids are forgetting how to just sit together and talk."

Class teacher, St Maurice's High School

Confidence

Education Futures Trust's Without Walls project aims to build resilience and self-confidence through connection with nature, helping participants into volunteering and work. Referrals are often from the Department of Work and Pensions, targeting local adults who have been out of work for over a year.

"I have loved seeing the positive impact I can make when working as part of a team on what, initially, seems an overwhelmingly large and impossible task but together we tackle them and achieve them relatively fast. This gives a great sense of achievement and satisfaction, knowing that I can make a difference and improve life for the nature that I love so much."

Without Walls participant



Photo credit: Education Futures Trust

Practical

Students on the NQ Personal Achievement course at Glasgow Kelvin College focus on skills-based learning, enabling learners to build up their achievements in small steps. By taking a hands-on approach to exploring biodiversity in urban greenspace and partnering with the city ranger service, students developed a variety of practical conservation skills in local parks and college grounds.

"This has been the perfect blend of activities with the young people becoming really motivated and learning a host of genuinely important life skills...and a great beginning to their 'independent' lives in the great outdoors."

Colin Scott, Lecturer

Visit our [Skills for Life](#) webpage for further examples, ideas and resources at www.johnmuiraward.org