



wild places:
DISCOVER
EXPLORE
CONSERVE
SHARE

**Shelter Families Project
John Muir Award
Case Study**



Summer 2009

Sara Greig of the Shelter Families Project based in Scotland, outlines how the John Muir Award has worked for them.

Leading the John Muir Award this summer has been a brilliant and valuable experience for our clients. As part of a Child Support team at Shelter Families Project, we support homeless children and families across Glasgow with the aim of minimising the trauma of homelessness through emotional and practical support.

Background

Many of our children, young people and families are impacted on by multiple traumas including: domestic abuse, external violence, alcohol and drug use, chronic mental and physical ill health as well as homelessness.

Very often our families struggle with poor self-esteem and are not confident in themselves and their abilities. As such our families' experience of the outdoors can be very limited.

What did we do?

The John Muir Award enabled us to work with ten children to plan a series of activities to meet the Discover, Explore, Conserve and Share challenges. We undertook the Award in the children's local areas, Tollcross Park and Kelvingrove Park, with the aim that the children would learn more about local resources and be able to sustain this interest beyond the Award programme.



*Glasgow Council Countryside Ranger Service
www.glasgow.gov.uk*

What worked well?

As the children are all homeless we focused on the theme of birds and nests as a way to structure our activities and also as a narrative to explore the children's own experiences and needs. We were also able to foster links with Glasgow Countryside Ranger Service as well as with Kabloom, who led a fantastic Seed Bom making workshop for our group (for more information on the 'Seed Bom' and Kabloom visit www.kabloom.co.uk).

Our John Muir Award culminated in an exhibition, to which the children invited everyone who had been involved in our John Muir Award as well as their parents. The exhibition was attended with at least one family member for each child; a massive achievement for our vulnerable clients. The children were able to take ownership of their Award, and their sense of achievement and excitement was clear.

The John Muir Award has also created a 'buzz' for each of the workers at our project. Workers who were involved were able to harness their existing skills and interests in a positive and productive activity. The John Muir Award has been of such value to our project that we hope to sustain and build on this in both group and family work in the future.

Here are some stories and quotes from our clients and workers demonstrating the benefit and value of the John Muir Award in work at Shelter Families Project:



Paige's Story

"My name is Paige Murphy and here is what we done in the John Muir Award group. We went to Tollcross Park and learned about a man called John Muir. He was all different things, he was an explorer, a writer, and a mountaineer, and lots more but he also discovered plants. On our first day at the John Muir Group we met two of the park rangers, John and Sandy they where very helpful. We went down in to the forest part of the park and looked at plants and leaves, we learned about nettles and how you knew if it was a boy or a girl. And we also had picnics every day too. Yummmm!!!

The following week we came to the park again and went to the forest again and made homes for puppet animals. We done more exploring for the following weeks it was so much fun."

By Paige Murphy, age 13

A staff point of view

"As a child support worker, I found the John Muir Award a very rewarding experience as it not only allowed a platform to explore and learn about wild places and wild life, but also allowed the children to explore their own definitions of home and their local environments. The open brief meant that we could tailor the Award to the children's individual needs and abilities which maximised focus and potential. The Award gave a great focus on which to build good interrelations with peers and team building skills as well as providing a sense of achievement at the end with a fantastic exhibition."

By a Child Support Worker

An Organisational perspective

"I can see real potential for the Award to become a more integrated and regular part of the work that we undertake. There is potential for it to be used, not just with groups of children, but also with family groups. It could provide a wonderful opportunity for families to undertake together an enjoyable learning experience that they can take with them and replicate – a 'free' experience that helps them to understand and value their new environments, as they endeavour to resettle and rebuild their lives after homelessness."

By Jane O'Neill, Service Manager Shelter Support Service, Glasgow



Key Case Study links...

Shelter believes everyone needs a home in a place where they can thrive. Visit www.shelter.org.uk to join the campaign, or to find out more.

John Muir Award encourages people to connect, enjoy and care for wild places - www.johnmuiraward.org - it is the main educational initiative of the John Muir Trust.