

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Report

Committee/Panel:	Corporate Parenting Board
Date:	16 October 2020
Report Title:	The Big Activity Week 2020
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Corporate Parenting Board on the outcome of The Big Activity Week 2020 in response to COVID-19.

Recommendation

2. For the Corporate Parenting Board notes the content of the report and is supportive of promoting The Big Activity Week 2021 with a thorough programme of activities throughout the year for children and carers to get outdoors, engaged in exciting and accessible activities

3. Context

On 5 August 2019, children in Local Authority foster care from across Hampshire arrived at four residential centres to begin a week of fun, friendship, and activities. The Big Activity Week 2019 was a new initiative run by Hampshire Outdoors, which aimed to provide the opportunity for looked after children to meet others in the same situation and to have some fun!

In total 76 young people in aged 8-14 benefited from the Big Activity Week. As well as outdoor and adventurous activities, the young people took part in a variety of workshops offered by outside agencies including Hampshire Constabulary and CAMHS.

Each group of young people was accompanied by a teacher, a social worker and a registered foster carer. It was a real benefit to the project to pull resources and expertise from across the Hampshire County Council departments.

Funding for the venture was provided in part by the National Lottery and Public Health England.

After such a successful week, plans soon began for a bigger and better Big Activity Week 2020.

The week was extended to accommodate a larger age range across six residential centres. The young people in the eldest age range were even venturing to our Hampshire County Council-run Mountain Centre in Wales! Funding was again secured from the National Lottery and Public Health England. After the launch in February 2020, 101 young people were nominated and given a place on the residential week and eagerly awaited their adventures.

And then COVID-19 happened. Initially, it was hoped that the week would still go ahead but as time went on, it became apparent that this wouldn't be possible. Rather than take away a much-needed opportunity from these young people, plans were changed to provide free, adventure days at some of the centres. The young people would be able to take part in some of the activities they would have experienced on their residential but in a COVID-19 secure way.

4. Why is The Big Activity Week so important?

Prior to The Big Activity Week 2019, evidence of the benefits of outdoor and adventurous activities was well documented. Our aim had been to support looked after children to build resilience, confidence and skills and enable them to form relationships with children in similar circumstances. It was felt that starting this at an early age would help these young people to overcome some of the barriers in education and socially that they faced.

After the residential in 2019, we sought feedback from carers and young people, to see what the experience had meant to them. Carers reported that the week had helped hugely with confidence, that mixing with children 'in the same boat' had normalised the situation for the young people. Friendships were made and a sense of achievement and pride was felt as the young people took part in activities they were not accustomed to.

The young people were asked to sum up their week using 3 words. The most popular choices were fun, amazing, exciting, challenging and awesome. This sense of enjoyment was very apparent at the celebration event we held with children, carers, social workers and senior staff.

With the added disruption of COVID-19 and the impact it has had on the mental well-being of all young people, The Big Activity Week 2020 was needed in whatever form it could take.

5. The Big Activity Week 2020 – COVID-19 style

When the decision was made to cancel the plans for the residential week, thoughts turned to how we could give the young people the chance to experience some activities during the summer.

The National Lottery were happy for us to use the funds that they had given us for this alternative option and some of the centres we were visiting were able to accommodate us for day visits. Most of the centres were offering day visits to the public and were happy to provide places alongside this. All centres were certified COVID-19 secure.

We were able to offer the young people places at:

- Calshot Activities Centre
- Runways End Outdoor Centre
- Stubbington Study Centre
- The Peter Ashley Centre
- Tile Barn Outdoor Centre

Activities included:

- Sports – volleyball, petanque, lacrosse, netball,
- Nature – trees, minibeasts, mammals, pond dipping, woodland walks
- Survival – firelighting, shelter building, mapping, orienteering
- Challenge – raft building, problem solving,
- Art – clay, natural art, willow sculptures, leaf printing
- Archery
- Snowsports – Ringos, skiing
- Climbing, abseiling, crate stacking
- Watersports – kayaking, sailing, canoeing
- High ropes
- Low ropes
- Rifle shooting
- Caving

The activity days were advertised to the families of all the young people who had booked on the original week and were also circulated through various fostering networks.

In total across the **5** centres, **276** activity days were attended by **106** young people, with some young people attending more than one day. Some of the activity days were open to adults as well, giving the young people the chance to participate in activities with their carers, improving relationships and trying new activities as a family.

6. Did it work?

Obviously, the benefits are not as far-reaching as they would have been in different circumstances but feedback from carers and young people has been very positive.

A number of the young people attending had been a part of The Big Activity Week 2019 which was great to see.

A selection of feedback is below.

I just wanted to thank you and say what a fantastic time my young lad had at the Peter Ashley centre in the summer holidays. He was quite unsure about going and needed a bit of persuasion, but once there he had a brilliant time. He made friends with some other lads and thoroughly enjoyed all the activities he took part in.

For me, after months with 4 children home schooling, it was a bit of a break and very much appreciated.

A massive thank you for getting my boy out of his room!!

He came back very, very tired but full of positivity for his future, his mental health was really fragile and the outdoor activities gave him the boost he needed to be more positive about his future!

I had two looked after children taking part, both went to Stubbington study centre. One didn't make it passed day one, the YP is autistic and it was a gamble, but hopefully he will be a little more confident next year. The other had a fabulous week, and really help him with his self-worth, and that was lovely to see.

I have 4 children looked after who utilised Fort Purbrook activity centre and Calshot.

The children really enjoyed their time at both places. Fort Purbrook was more suited to slightly younger children. Attending this activity has helped build confidence and resilience for our young people and also enabled them the opportunities to do something constructive with their time and feel a sense of achievement.

Calshot was an amazing experience, perfect for the older children. It gave the opportunity for the children and adults to support and encourage one another on tasks they found challenging and to share the sense of achievement once accomplished. They undertook activities that they'd never have got to try otherwise. Showing them that if they believe in themselves and trust others then they can overcome hurdles. A very transferable skill.

The sense of pride and accomplishment experienced when completing these activities has stayed with them and they are keen to share their achievements with others, at things like their CLA's and family contact etc

7. What's next?

Our aim is to ensure that there is a thorough programme of activities throughout the year for children and carers to get outdoors, engaged in exciting and accessible activities.

The Big Activity Week 2021 is booked and venues secured. We just have our fingers crossed that it will be able to go ahead in August as a residential experience.

Children in Year 4 will be attending Minstead Study Centre
Children in Year 5 will be attending Stubbington Study Centre
Children in Year 6 will be attending Avon Tyrell Activity Centre
Children in Year 7 will be attending Peter Ashley Activity Centre
Children in Year 8 will be attending Calshot Activity Centre
Children in Year 9 will be attending Hampshire Mountain Centre

The Big Hike 2021 – another event that was cancelled due to Covid-19 was our planned climb of Snowdon for 28 looked after children. We are looking to run this again in May half term next year for any looked after child in secondary education.

There are also plans in place to take a group of children in Key stage 4 overseas, although the planning has been delayed until we are sure this is a viable option.

Other family events are planned throughout the year such as carer meetups at Queen Elizabeth Country Park, utilising their adventure play area and pizza oven. We have primary adventure days for the younger ones and their families when we will explore a different story each time, starting with 'Stick Man' at Minstead Study Centre.

Contact

For more information about the Big Activity Week please contact the Outdoor Participation team via outdoor.education@hants.gov.uk

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	yes
OR	
<p>This proposal does not link to the Strategic Plan but, nevertheless, requires a decision because:</p> <p><i>NB: Only complete this section if you have not completed any of the Strategic Plan tick boxes above. Whichever section is not applicable, please delete.</i></p>	

NB: If the 'Other significant links' section below is not applicable, please delete it.

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents	
<p>The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)</p>	
<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. Equality Duty

The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act with regard to the protected characteristics as set out in section 4 of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation);
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic within section 149(7) of the Act (see above) and persons who do not share it.

Due regard in this context involves having due regard in particular to:

- The need to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- Take steps to meet the needs of persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;
- Encourage persons sharing a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

2. Equalities Impact Assessment:

See guidance at <https://hants.sharepoint.com/sites/ID/SitePages/Equality-Impact-Assessments.aspx>

Insert in full your **Equality Statement** which will either state:

- why you consider that the project/proposal will have a low or no impact on groups with protected characteristics or*
- will give details of the identified impacts and potential mitigating actions*