

Mucky Hands and Muddy Boots – Top Tips

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Ever wanted to set up a group to enable young people to get involved, but not really known where to start? This workshop will cover all aspects of planning, organising and running your very own young volunteers group, with helpful tips on health and safety as well as how to embed ownership and inspire a future generation of environmental guardians.

Why?

- Core purpose of your organisation
- e.g. “Growing the nations love of special places”
- Further interest, learning and passion for place/wildlife
- Develop ownership, reduce anti-social behaviour on site
- Encourage future generations to care for environment
- To get additional conservation work done
- Increase members and visitors

Where to start?

It's a good idea to set up a working group so you are not working alone in isolation. It's always great to have a small group of people to throw ideas around at the start. This could be a focus group set up involving a couple of families or young people who have expressed interest in the group. They can also be involved in marketing the group etc.

Identify the need through consultation with local young people/families to identify the need for such a group, and ensure it meets their needs too (would people attend? When is the best day/time?) This could be informal discussions with regular park users or families/young people you already have contact with through schools.

Good to do some research as to what else is happening locally. Talk to other group leaders to find out what has worked for them. This will also help you to decide what type of group would be right for you – families, teenagers, after school, weekend, volunteer group or charged event?

Getting the basics right:

Budget:

You/your team need to make some decisions around where any money is coming from Internally or externally funded? Do you need to seek grant funding?

What might you need money for?

Tools, equipment, materials, branded clothing, PPE, refreshments...

Before you can get onto the exciting stuff there is some admin that it's really important to get right. If you get this right then it will result in an enjoyable experience for all involved.

Health and Safety:

- Leaders CRB checked
- Always more than 1 leader present so not on own with children
- Risk Assessments completed and circulated to all leaders
- Trained First Aider
- Kit – First Aid kit, throw line, PPE

Paperwork:

- Registration form
- Parental consent
- Photo Consent
- Information for parents
- Group details spreadsheets
- Registers for attendance
- Programme
- Session plans

How to get people involved?

- A taster session/Open Day event is a great idea to get people involved and get families/young people signed up.
- Advertising/marketing - important to get marketing right.
- Targeting schools with posters, post cards, directly sent to D of E co-ordinators, press releases, posters on site etc.

Making important decisions

- Coming up with a name
- What kind of clothing
- Designing the programme

Let them choose! Give your group as much ownership as possible and that will ensure that they really feel it is their group and they will continue to feel a part of it and keep coming.

Designing the programme:

Involve the groups in designing the programme as much as possible. Obviously there will be things you want to get done with them such as practical conservation tasks, but throw those in to the mix so you set out a number of options and they choose which ones they will do when, as well as adding in some of their own.

Again, this develops ownership and if it's something they chose to do they will be more likely to come along.

Activities/tasks need to be really worthwhile activities that are contributing to the future of the property e.g. tree planting, woodland management, developing their own wildlife area etc, rather than 'made up' tasks.

Variety = important to keep interest.

Important to balance the needs of the place (e.g. jobs that need doing) with the needs of the group (e.g. their learning outcomes, developing skills etc)

A great programme has a mix of fun, inspiring learning and practical – doing something to help nature either on your place or at home.