

'I'm going to hug the tree'

Insights from a youth led intervention designed to facilitate a connection to nature with young people in a low SES area

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**Canal &
River Trust**
Making life better by water

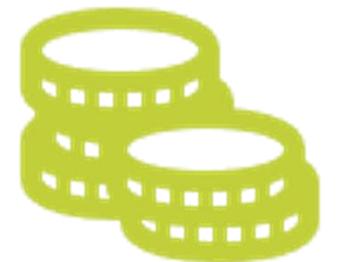


Barriers to nature

Parental concerns relating to personal and physical safety (Hilman, Adams & Whitelegg, 1990).

Families in low SES areas have limited access to the resources needed to attend wild places (Harvey & Holland, 2017).

Children who grow up in low SES areas are particularly vulnerable to emotional disturbance which can result in poor mental health in their adult life (Caspi, Taylor, Moffitt,. & Plomin, 2000).



Feral Spaces

A child centred place making project which aims to connect young people to locally based wild, green space

Organise free of charge activities designed to give young people from a low SES area a safe place to go and an opportunity to develop a local disused space into an area that can be used positively by local communities



The Intervention

7 young people (11-12 years old) took part in an intervention funded by the Canal and River Trust

The intervention ran for two hours every morning on the 20th June, 27th June and 4th July 2018

A range of naturalistic data was collected from each session and analysed using an inductive thematic analysis



Engaging with the environment

Indigo: Guess who is up? Me! How do I get off?

Mia: Put that leg there. No, no, no. Which one is your strongest leg? Then put your foot there

Indigo: Teacher! I'm tree climbing

Mia: And then you put your strongest leg there. Up, up. Go one up, up and then you hold onto the tree

Indigo: Miss. I'm going to hug the tree

Feral Spaces facilitator 1: Arr how does it feel being up there?

Indigo: Nice. I couldn't climb the tree. I can't climb trees

Feral Spaces facilitator 1: Well you look like you can from where I am standing



Feeling positive

Mia: I'm going to push you

Shared laughter from Mia and Indigo

Mia: This is so fun. It's a fun swing.

Feral Spaces facilitator 1: It's so pretty though with the dabbled light

Feral Spaces facilitator 2: How did you describe this tree last week?

Indigo: Nice and puffy

Feral Space facilitator 3: Puffy. Yeah. So you find a puffy tree and it has got all kinds of possibilities hasn't it?



Respect for the space

Feral Spaces facilitator 1: They (the branches) are really well attached

Carbide: I swear it's a bird's nest. It's some kind of nest. Leave it. We don't want to spoil the habitat

Fortex warrior: Are you liking this?

Carbide: You've already asked me like a million times

Fortex Warrior: Yeah cause I want you to come next week

Carbide: I will because if we don't tidy this up where are people going to play?

Fortex warrior: Exactly

Carbide: It's a good place



A sense of belonging

Mia: I don't wanna go. I'm staying this is my home now. This is my permanent home. See ya. One last swing. Oh yeah, oh gosh, don't hit my head. Have you seen the spray paints I've done?

Feral Spaces Facilitator: Yeah, it's great

Mia: Bye bye favourite tree





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FUN



NEW FRIENDSHIP BONDS
ESTABLISHED AND EXISTING
FRIENDSHIP BONDS
STRENGTHENED



INCREASED LEVELS OF CONFIDENCE
AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT



FAMILY CONNECTIONS WERE
EXPLORED

Outcomes for the young people



Hallam, Gallagher, Harvey (in press) 'We've been exploring and adventuring.' An investigation into young people's engagement with a semi-wild, disused space. *The Humanistic Psychologist*



<https://blog.derby.ac.uk/2018/09/exploring-wild-spaces-wellbeing-young-people>



<https://blog.derby.ac.uk/2018/12/connecting-nature-urban-way>



<https://blog.derby.ac.uk/2019/08/using-art-to-reconnect-children-to-nature/>



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