

## Impact and monitoring report for Q1-Q2: March - August 2022

### 1. Introduction

We have moved to biannual reporting since we shared our last quarterly report for December 2021 - Feb 2022. This is our first biannual monitoring and impact report for the period March - August 2022. For details of our evaluation strategy, see [Evaluation flow chart](#). Our delivery team continues to put their time and effort into implementing this strategy, with the support of the Lead Team.

This report will document the recommendations actioned since we last reported in March 2022 and reflect on some of our key achievements in the last two quarters; we will 'focus on':

- Holiday club provision
- Young Volunteers programme
- Gibside Family Festival

#### 1.1. Actioned recommendations during Q1 (Mar-May '22)

Recommendations made in 'Impact and monitoring report for Q4: December 2021 - February 2022' were actioned in Q1 and Q2 (Mar-Aug 2022). See section 7.1 for a detailed breakdown of the recommendations to action in Q1-Q2. Notable actions for Q1 included delivering school setting CPD and completing our Staff EDI survey.

##### 1.1.1. School setting CPD

One of the most significant recommendations implemented for Q1 (Mar-May '22) was a bespoke CPD opportunity for practitioners delivering our schools setting provision. 7 staff attended a 3 hour session to share good practice, discuss challenges, and identify areas for development; this resulted in our core model of forest school delivery in school settings, which will ensure this provision is consistent across all our sessions [\[to share with staff only\]](#) [\[In School Forest School Provision\]](#). Our evaluation strategy for school provision was shared with practitioners at this session and informs our approach for all forest school delivery in school settings [\[to share with staff only\]](#) [\[Evaluation of forest school provision in school settings\]](#).

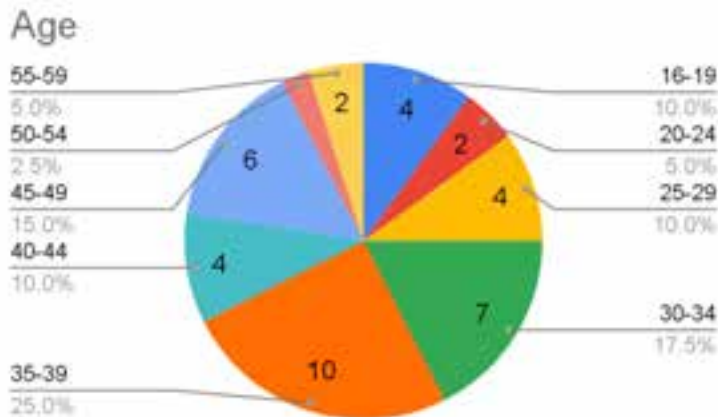
##### 1.1.2. Staff EDI survey

Following a recommendation in Q3 in 2021, we asked our staff team to complete a survey during Q4 (Dec-Feb '22) to collect data on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion from our staff team. This information is collated to enable reflection on our current team composition,

consider where our staff team would benefit from increased diversity and develop actions to achieve this. 42 members of our staff team responded to this survey. The results are presented below:

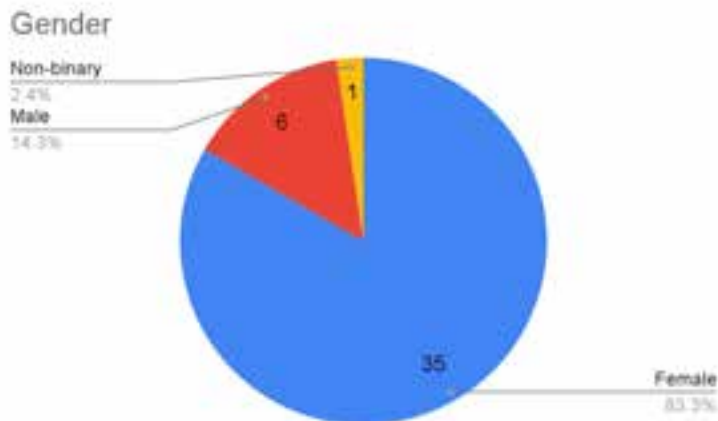
### Age

Of 42 responses, 40 recorded their age range. Our team ages range from 16-19 to 54-59, with the largest cohort aged 35-39.



### Gender

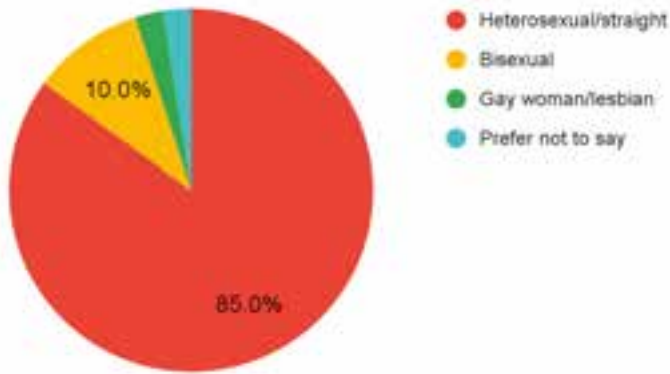
All 42 respondents recorded their gender. The majority of our staff team (34) identify as female.



### Sexual orientation

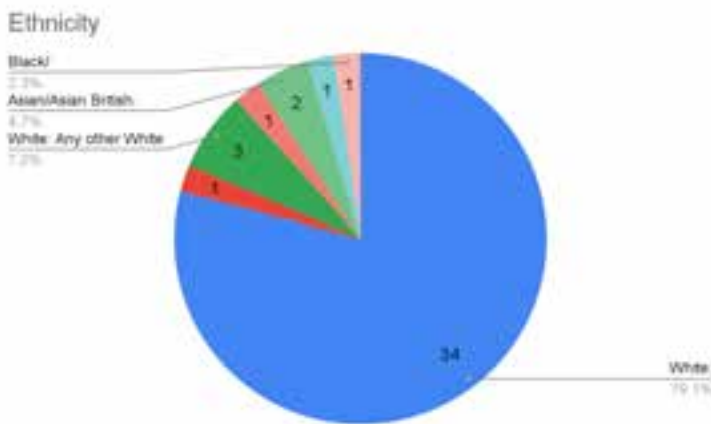
40 respondents recorded their sexual orientation. 85% of our staff identify as heterosexual/straight, compared with 93.6% of the UK population aged 16 and over in 2020. An estimated 3.1% of the UK population aged 16 years and over identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB) in 2020; 12.5% of our staff team identify as gay woman/lesbian or bisexual.

## Sexual orientation



## Ethnicity

All 42 respondents recorded their ethnic group. The majority of our staff team (79.1%) are White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British. In the North East region, 6.4% of our population are from minoritised ethnic groups ([Regional ethnic diversity - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures](#)); 20.9% of our staff team are from minoritised ethnic groups.



There are a range of ethnic groups from which we have no representation within our staff team, including:

White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller

Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean

Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African

Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian

Asian/Asian British: Indian

Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi

Asian/Asian British: Any other Asian background

Black/ African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean

Any other Black/African/Caribbean background

Other ethnic group: Arab

We have observed an increase in participation of children and young people from minoritised ethnic groups in the last 12 months, which is partly attributed to our

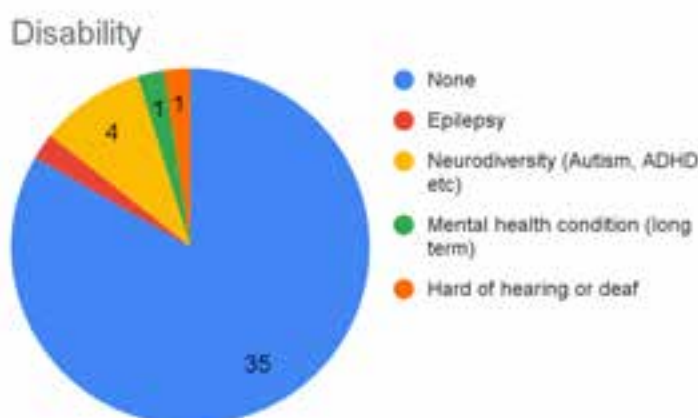
employment of a Community Link Worker who represents the local communities from which we are recruiting. We will continue to develop our Community Link Worker programme to ensure we are representing the communities which we serve; we will achieve this by following the actions outlined in our recently developed 'Equality, Diversity and Inclusion' policy

(<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1L1OFjp1S0BIYCfiyJz11HazxpTKrkbTeL18Ns2on4nM/edit?usp=sharing>), specifically but not limited to:

- Using symbols of solidarity with minoritised groups, both on our person and on our website/social media presence.
- Make hiring of people from diverse backgrounds a priority, so marginalised people are not overlooked for opportunities, by proactively targeting under-represented groups that may not feel comfortable applying and by ensuring our offer is culturally appropriate and shared by key organisations and influencers within the community.
- Increase representation of diverse groups on social media in order to show the public and potential customers that SG actively pursues EDI with its service users and employees, providing a mirror into the world of the outdoors for historically excluded groups.
- Ensure communications methods are appropriate and flexible to meet a range of needs, such as disabled audiences, those with English as a second language and those with low literacy levels.

### Disability

Of our 42 respondents, 35 (83.3%) did not consider themselves to be disabled. 4 (9.5%) of our staff team are neurodivergent; 1 is epileptic; 1 is hard of hearing or deaf; 1 has a long term mental health condition.



It has been difficult to locate statistics on disability in the North East of England in order to provide context about where our staff team sits in terms of representation. Statistics on disability nationally are available, but our sample size is small which makes comparison difficult. This will be given further consideration during the next quarter. Given the context of our provision and our growing offer for neurodivergent children and young people, we can suggest that representation of neurodiversity in our staff team is significant to our

knowledge and understanding of the lived experiences of neurodivergent participants at our provision.

### 1.2. Actioned recommendations during Q2 (Jun-Aug '22)

Notable actions for Q2 included recruiting a full time Holiday Activity and Operations Manager. This is Stomping Grounds' first full time contracted post and responded to our expanding holiday club provision. This post began part way through our summer holiday club provision, with full responsibility handed over for the October holiday clubs (included in the next biannual report). Our Holiday Activity and Operations Manager is playing a crucial role in ensuring our funded holiday club offer continues, identifying opportunities to expand into different sites across the North East to offer forest school to children who cannot travel to our main sites, and organising timetabling/rotas for our delivery team.

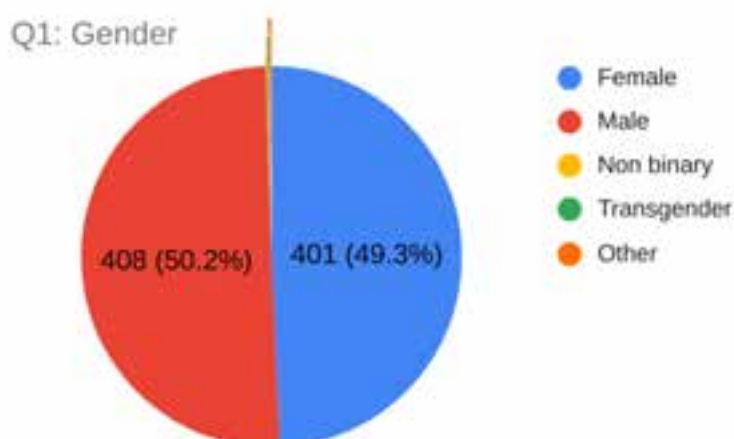
## 2. Who is accessing our provision?

During Q1 (Mar-May 2022), we delivered **306** sessions of forest school at **13** sites across the region, reaching **877** people.

During Q2 (Jun-Aug 2022), we delivered **348** sessions of forest school at **11** sites across the region, reaching **1193** people.

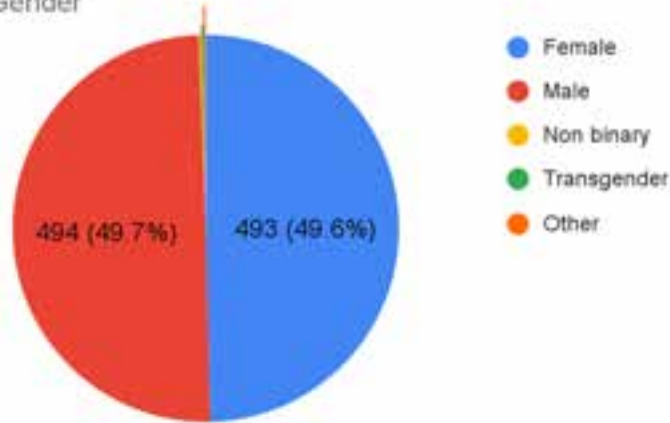
### 2.1. Gender

In Q1, of the 23 groups (877 participants) where data on gender was collected, there were 811 responses to gender.



In Q2, of the 21 groups (1005 participants) where data on gender was collected, there were 987 responses to gender.

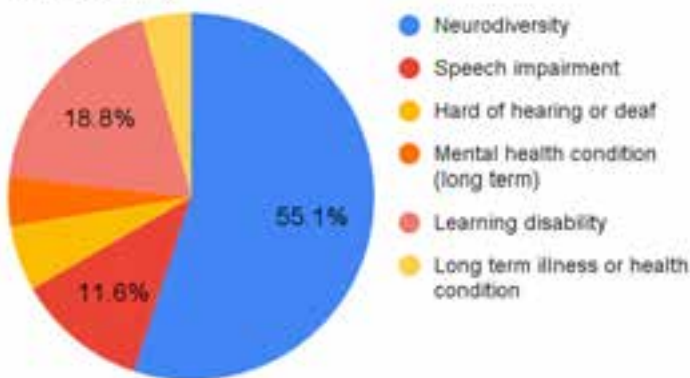
Q2: Gender



## 2.2. Disability

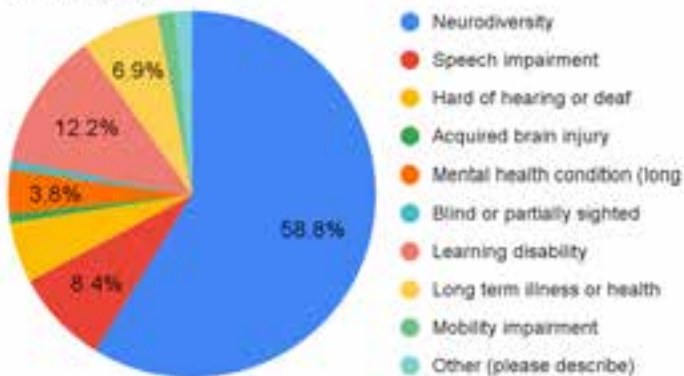
In Q1, of the 19 groups (550 participants) where data was collected, 12.5% of this cohort (69 responses) recorded a disability. Of those recording a disability:

Q1: Disability



In Q2, of the 20 groups (986 participants) where data was collected, 13.3% of this cohort (131 responses) recorded a disability. Of those recording a disability:

Q2: Disability



From Q1 to Q2, there is an increase in participants reporting neurodiversity and a decrease in participants reporting a learning disability. We anticipate the representation of neurodivergent children and young people will continue to increase as we offer a targeted provision for families with autistic children in Q3 2022.

### 2.3. Ethnicity

In Q1, of the 19 groups (559 participants) where data was collected, 538 respondents recorded their ethnicity - the majority (**89.2%**) of our forest school participants are White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British. **10.8%** of our participants were from minoritised ethnic groups.

Q1: Ethnicity	
White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	480
White: Irish	4
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0
White: any other background	7
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	0
White and Black African	1
Mixed: White and Asian	8
Mixed: any other background	4
Asian/Asian British: Indian	0
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	10
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	4
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	7
Asian/Asian British: any other background	2
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African	1
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	0
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: any other background	0
Other ethnic group: Arab	8
Other ethnic group	2

In Q2, of the 21 groups (958 participants) where data was collected, 934 respondents recorded their ethnicity - the majority (**85%**) of our forest school participants are White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British. **15%** of our participants were from minoritised ethnic groups in Q2.

Q2: Ethnicity	
White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	796
White: Irish	12
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0
White: any other background	24
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	1
White and Black African	6
Mixed: White and Asian	9
Mixed: any other background	13
Asian/Asian British: Indian	12
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	11
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	0
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	14
Asian/Asian British: any other background	12
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African	6
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	0
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: any other background	3
Other ethnic group: Arab	11
Other ethnic group	4

During Q4 (Dec-Feb '21-'22), **16.2%** of our participants were from minoritised ethnic groups. In Q1 (Mar-May '22) they comprised **10.8%** of our participants; in Q2 (Jun-Aug '22) **15%** of our participants were from minoritised ethnic groups. It is difficult to comment on the variation in representation of ethnic diversity with the data set as it stands. However, when compared with the population of minoritised ethnic groups in the North East (6.4%), representation of these groups within our provision is high ([Regional ethnic diversity - GOV.UK Ethnicity facts and figures](#)). Our continued forest school delivery in Benwell, Newcastle, along with Community Link Workers, and our commitment to supporting and training community members to deliver forest school within their locality, will support future participation of minoritised ethnic groups at our provision.

#### 2.4. Positive Action

Our vision at Stomping Grounds is to encourage people from underrepresented groups to access rural spaces via our forest school provision. We set up a positive action programme to work towards this, ensuring our trading profits benefit the community directly by offering free and subsidised spaces to children and young people who are historically excluded from outdoor provision. During Q1 and Q2, we offered **20 positive action spaces** respectively to



children and young people, compared with 15 the previous quarter - **an increase of 5 spaces.**

### 3. Focus on: Holiday clubs

During Q1 and Q2, we delivered Easter, May half term and Summer holiday clubs. This provision is largely funded, with some spaces funded for employees of Egger and some spaces self-funded. Our funders for Q1 and Q2 included: Newcastle Holiday Activity Fund (HAF), Northumberland HAF, Karbon Homes, Prudhoe Town Council, and Durham Food and Fun. This funding ensured we could offer free spaces to those children and young people who would most benefit from forest school provision across the North East.

	<i>No. weeks</i>	<i>No. sessions</i>	<i>No. participants</i>	<i>No. free spaces</i>	<i>% cohort disabled</i>	<i>% cohort minoritised ethnic</i>
<i>Q1</i>	3	50	243	<b>195</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>1.6</b>
<i>Q2</i>	6	128	327	<b>268</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>17.8</b>

During Q1, **195** children/young people took up a free place at our holiday clubs; during Q2, **268** children/young people took up a free space.



There was a **significant increase in representation of minoritised ethnic groups at holiday clubs in Q2 compared with Q1.** Due to staffing and funding issues, we were unable to deliver a holiday club at our Benwell site during Q1; during Q2, we had the staff and funding secured to deliver 4 weeks of holiday club in Benwell. This is likely what contributed to the increased diversity in representation of minoritised ethnic group, alongside our developing profile as an employer of Community Link Workers from local communities in which we deliver forest school.

Data on disability demonstrated a significant increase in representation of children/young people who are neurodivergent - **in Q1, 43.5% of those recording a disability were neurodiverse; in Q2, 63.5% of those recording a disability were neurodiverse.** This increase in representation is linked to: our new funded programme, Reframing Autism, expanding our reach via social media; our recent introduction of badges for all practitioners to demonstrate our allyship, including the infinity symbol for neurodiversity; ongoing and growing support

by word of mouth by local families with SEND children; our recent attendance at training from the PDA Society, positioning us as a PDA positive setting.

### **Feedback from parents/carers and children**

Following each holiday provision, parents/carers received online surveys to complete; in Q1, there were 47 respondents; in Q2, there were 44 respondents. We also collected audio recorded data from children and young people during their time at holiday club.

The following discussion includes data from all 3 holiday clubs within Q1 and Q2 - May half term, Easter and Summer holiday clubs. There were consistent themes across all holiday provision:

- Increased confidence: developing social skills with children and adults
- Impact on mental health for children and for family
- Time out doors, trying new experiences, away from technology
- Child feeling nurtured, supported, safe and valued
- Opportunities for child-led activity, free play and self-regulation
- Opportunities for funded activities otherwise not accessible
- Logistics

The following discussion will focus on each theme in turn, including survey data from parent/carers and audio recorded data from children attending.

#### *3.1. Increased confidence - developing social skills with children and adults*

For parents/carers, one of the most commonly reported impacts of forest school was increased confidence of their child. Often this was reported in relation to time with new children and adults, providing opportunities to make new friendships and connecting with our practitioners.

[Child] seemed really confident after each session that he did attend, and we noticed a change in the way he could express himself - probably as a result of mixing with older children. (Parent/carer)

All we've heard since Wednesday is about the hammock, making a wand, how lovely the leaders were and how they helped her, how nice the sandwiches were etc. It's been lovely to see how much 4 hours has managed to increase her confidence and enjoyment of the outdoors. (Parent/carer)



Built confidence in interacting with other children and meeting new adults.  
(Parent/carer)



[Child] was very happy to be socialising with children of different ages. (Parent/carer)

[Child] met new friends and developed new skills and ideas. (Parent/carer)

My daughter made some new friends and wants to meet up with them again. (Parent/carer)

The majority of the 20 children who shared feedback stated that making new friends was their favourite part of forest school.

The best part about this forest school is meeting all my friends and making new ones.  
(Child Northumberland HAF)

I liked building a den, being with my friends in a forest, learned how to build a proper den - we used moss for cushions and stuff! (Child Newcastle HAF)

I've gotten like nearly everyone's friend. (Child Newcastle HAF)

There was other groups coming here, and I didnt expect to see other people. And now I've made friends with them all. (Child Newcastle HAF)

I loved it. I love to play with everyone who was here. (Child Northumberland HAF)

### 3.2. *Impact on mental health for children and for family*

Closely linked to opportunities to socialise and make new friends is the positive impact of forest school upon participants' mental health. Many parents/carers reported a connection between forest school and their child's wellbeing, specifically as a result of making friends, spending time outdoors in nature, being physically active and reducing anxiety.

Had lots of time socialising with other children whilst spending time outdoors, resulting in more engaging activities and working in a group - this has helped to reduce anxiety during and after a stomping grounds session. (Parent/carer)

Forest school really helps [Child] - he feels calm and well tired out when he gets back (in a positive healthy way). (Parent/carer)

Opportunity to spend time in the forest has been beneficial for physical and emotional wellbeing; [Child] is not someone who naturally chooses to be outdoors but enjoys these sessions. (Parent/carer)

[Child] learnt lots of new skills and was extremely calm when I picked her up. Usually holidays can cause a lot of anxiety and upset due to change of routine. (Parent/carer)

It is helping [Child] with his mental health and helping with his anxiety. (Parent/carer)



Children reported feelings of happiness and enjoyment of specific activities, like playing games, doing crafts, swinging in hammocks and den building.

I feel really happy when I was here. (Child Northumberland HAF)

A number of children shared feelings of sadness as their time at forest school holiday club came to an end. Practitioners should be aware and ensure validation of this feeling, in addition to those of happiness to participate.



I've liked forest school and I'm sad its ending. (Child Northumberland HAF)

I liked the food and the games. I'm feeling sad that it's ended. (Child Northumberland HAF)

Some parents/carers commented on the wider impact of forest school holiday club, which helped their families as a whole:

As a mother I was super grateful and knew the boys were in safe hands and having fun. Not only did it impact their mental health it also helped mine. (Parent/carer)

Loved the family day on the last session, enjoyed the time spent in the woods with my family. (Parent/carer)

As a self employed, work from home mam, this was a huge help. Knowing my boys were in safe hands, having fun in the woods. The kids came home happy, full of stories and tales, dirty and exhausted. (Parent/carer)



Sharing their joy for outside with their friends and us. They will tell me games and ideas to do when we go outside. Also when we go for a walk we find a space and let the boys play without hurrying along. What food to cook when we go camping. (Parent/carer)

One parent/carer felt the impact of forest school holiday club was particularly significant for their child, highlighting the opportunities it offered for their personal development; this could be related to our low child:adult ratios and individualised approach to engaging with children in our care:

[Child] started talking about maple syrup- sap from trees, how to balance on a tree trunk, how to tie a knot; we were all mesmerised! [...] I'm not sure we, as a family/his parents, had appreciated at all, or really valued Forest school as such a learning experience before, but [his] newfound knowledge was just so interesting, he captivated an audience, he confidently relayed the information- this was a huge moment of personal development for him thanks to this Forest school experience. (Parent/carer)

### 3.3. *Time outdoors, trying new experiences, away from technology*

Children and parents/carers alike discussed the value of trying new activities, something they have not done before, thus developing new skills.

I found forest school fun because I like all the crafts, because it's always different and you're never doing the same thing. You have fun because it's something to do. (Child Northumberland HAF)

I can honestly say [Child] has loved every minute. She has relished the opportunity to try new things and increase her confidence. (Parent/carer)

She has certainly developed new skills and tried things she hasn't really done before. (Parent/carer)

They were outside for nearly 6 hours and came home happy and dirty, full of stories and mysteries as I had no idea what happened. (Parent/carer)



We've played loads of games - we're still playing one now. (Child Newcastle HAF)

It's fun how you get to do whittling with all the knives (Child Newcastle HAF)

Other positive outcomes of attendance at forest school included time away from technology/ screens and time being active outdoors during school holidays.

Got the kids off screens, made new friends and spent time outdoors having fun. (Parent/carer)

Time spent being active and reflective in nature is immeasurable. (Parent/carer)

It was great for them to socialise with other children, benefitting their mental health by being outdoors and not having screen time for a day. (Parent/carer)

#### 3.4. *Child feeling nurtured, supported, safe and valued*

Much of the feedback from parents/carers focused on their children feeling safe, happy, cared for and part of a community. The findings discussed above - increased confidence, making new friendships, positive mental health, benefit of time outdoors - are interlinked with how children experience the space created and held by our practitioners, in which they are shown care and support, within an enabling and nurturing environment.

They just feel happy, relaxed and safe when they are there. They get to try different skills but also have control over what they choose to do when, which I think a certain amount of is extremely important in the school holidays. (Parent/carer)

[Child] came home really happy and tired after busy days that she loved and it was nice seeing how smiley she was when she was going and coming back. The leaders are lovely too so she felt happy with them. (Parent/carer)

Really appreciate the time and effort the team put it in to make my child feel at ease and want to attend the sessions. She goes straight to staff without a second thought and even tells me what she's been up to when we get home! I always feel at ease that she is safe in their care and have no doubt my daughter considers them family! (Parent/carer)



The staff are amazing, [Child] told me he spent the whole week playing and talking to Alice and enjoyed her company. I want my children to have the confidence to speak to different adults and discuss different ideas in a group they don't know. Apparently one day [Child] had a conflict with another child "[Child] was telling on him" and the adult said "[Child] was just telling me his feelings". He loved that and said he felt supported. (Parent/carer)

The leaders are wonderful and really spend time listening to the children and tailoring the sessions to their needs. (Parent/carer)

The leaders have got a wonderful energy and enthusiasm for what they do and it rubs off on the children. (Parent/carer)

What I think has been impressive about this experience you offer, is that you guys really do seem to allow the kids an immersive experience, and from that experiential learning, [Child] himself has developed and understood the need for caution, and respect for the fire. [Child] felt proud of his achievements I think after the week, rather than there being a focus on what he's not good at. (Parent/carer)

I liked the teachers, how they help you. (Child Newcastle HAF)

All the people here, because they're really fun and people really care about us. (Child Northumberland HAF)

### 3.5. *Opportunities for child-led activity, free play and self-regulation*

Practitioners create and hold space for children to participate in play and exploration driven by their own interests and needs. Parents/carers described this as being particularly relevant to their children's enjoyment of forest school:

It is always such a refreshing pleasure to pick my child up (after an unusually long day) and for her to really be excited and willing to share her day/experiences. And the evening that follows is definitely easier for the whole family. After school pickups usually results in a complete meltdown before we have even reached the car from the school gate. She is almost what I can only describe as being present and showing signs of regulating her emotions, almost independently which is a huge break through, considering that all regular routines have ended. (Parent/carer)

The freedom the children had throughout their day, being allowed to play and build relationships with each other. (Parent/carer)

The kids had an amazing experience. Trying new foods, learning new skills and making new friends. They played as children should. Making up new games and using their imagination. (Parent/carer)

Being encouraged to try new things at her own pace. (Parent/carer)

Her processing skills are developing and she is able to think about her next task. It has been a relief she can do this without feeling rushed or the need to keep up with a classroom which has given her the most enjoyable experience! (Parent/carer)



### 3.6. *Opportunities for funded activities otherwise not accessible*

A number of parents/carers described the importance of having a fully funded holiday club, which they would otherwise not have been able to send their children to.

Having this funded childcare club in the holidays has been amazing and I hope [Child] can come back again. (Parent/carer)



We really appreciated this subsidised holiday club, we couldn't have afforded it otherwise and [Child] especially really benefited from it. (Parent/carer)

Got to socialise a lot during the holiday. Without forest school she would have just been stuck in the house more. (Parent/carer)

### 3.7. *Logistics*

The majority of feedback on logistics was positive. The systems we have in place for sharing holiday club availability were highlighted as particularly important, as was the new opportunity offered over summer of wraparound care hours.



Communication from Stomping Grounds was excellent. (Parent/carer)

I am so grateful for receiving the email early to advise the bookings were going live, as I have no social media and have missed out previously due to that- so again very grateful for the opportunity. (Parent/carer)

The wait list worked extremely well!  
(Parent/carer)

Thank you so much for extending hours almost wrap around care style, so that she could actually attend sessions and that it did not comprise our work commitments!  
Everyone wins. (Parent/carer)



The club was so well organised and ran. (Parent/carer)

### 3.8. *Areas for improvement*

There were very low numbers of parents/carers offering negative feedback. The suggestions made will shape our development of holiday clubs moving forward. Areas for improvement as suggested by parents/carers included:

- Offering a visit into the woods for parents/carers “...to understand what sort of activities had been planned for the kids.”
- Potential to communicate details of lunch menus with parents/carers: “...our kids didn't eat much and I think it might impacted their behaviour and ability to observe.”
- The financial impact of self-funded holiday club opportunities: “...they are expensive (especially compared to other holiday kids clubs) so feel limited in how often I send them.”
- Making the booking system easier to use.

### 3.9. *Conclusion*

Our funded holiday club provision has grown exponentially in the last 12 months, which enables a greater number of children and young people to access forest school with us who would not otherwise be able to afford to. Due to our rapid growth in this area, Stomping Grounds has recently employed a Holiday Activity and Operations Manager to oversee all holiday club provision. We hope this will address the areas of improvement outlined above and ensure our funded holiday provision continues to offer quality forest school to all children.

## 4. **Focus on: Young Volunteers**

Our Young Volunteers programme began in April 2021, funded by Active Youth (NE Youth), Scholefield Trust and Leading Link. Young Volunteers are aged 10-25 and undertake half

termly training with our lead practitioners, focusing on developing knowledge and skills to support their role as volunteer forest school assistants during holiday club provision. The benefits for young people participating in our Young Volunteer programme include skills development, building confidence, developing resilience, opportunity for team work, and work experience.

**16** young people joined our Young Leaders programme and volunteered at holiday clubs in 2022, beginning with our Easter holiday clubs in Q1 2022.

	<b>Easter - 2 weeks</b>	<b>May -1 week</b>	<b>Summer - 5 weeks</b>
<i>Number of Young Leaders volunteering</i>	7	6	13
<i>Age range (years)</i>	13-19	14-16	10-19
<i>Ethnicity</i>	White British	White British	White British
<i>Gender</i>	3 female, 4 male	3 female, 3 male	4 female, 9 male
<i>Disability</i>	Learning disability: 2 Neurodiversity: 2	Learning disability: 2 Neurodiversity: 1	Learning disability: 3 Neurodiversity: 4 Mobility impairment: 1
<i>Hours volunteered</i>	33	27	227

Young leaders have collectively contributed **287 hours** of volunteering in Q1 and Q2 combined over 8 weeks of provision.

#### *4.1. Experience of Young Volunteers*

We interviewed 4 of our Young Volunteers who had participated in holiday club provision in Q1 and Q2 this year. We asked them why they signed up as a Young Volunteer, how they had benefited from participating so far and what they enjoyed about the role.

Some young people participated to gain experience and skills that would support their future prospects:

I wanted to help out and become a young leader at SG because I wanted to get more experience out in the forest. Eventually I'd like to be doing more stuff at forest school, so it was good for me to come here and get new skills (YV 1)

...my Mam said 'ah, that'll give you some qualifications', so I decided to do that. When I was at forest school, I liked doing tools, so when they said do young leaders, I decided to get more tools out of it, plus the qualifications - that was the main plus. (YV 2)

Other young people described participating as an opportunity for personal development, space to make new friends, spending time outdoors:

I'm a bit less shy, you know, it helps me get out of my shell a bit, get out of my comfort zone. (YV 1)

I just wanted to get some new friends because I have no friends at school. (YV 3)

Being outdoors and meeting new people, instead of being inside. (YV 2)

Young Volunteers explained their participation also benefitted their mood and wellbeing:

I enjoy being a young leader because in many ways it gives me more independence and it makes me feel good knowing that I'm helping other people. (YV 1)

Just helping out. It's fun, I guess. Makes me feel good, happy. (YV 4)

I just want to be free of all the issues i'm going through, so I want to be away from all of the issues [...] I like looking at the trees, and it's more relaxing. (YV 3)



We asked if there were any barriers to their participation in the Young Volunteers programme. Some young people needed reliable, free transport to sites to volunteer; we were able to fund this, thus removing this barrier.

Some of the places, sometimes it was a bit difficult to get to and from here. If it weren't for the help I got with transport and stuff, but the taxi helped (*otherwise they wouldn't have been able to come*). (YV 1)

We received positive feedback from Young Volunteers about their experience at holiday clubs; specifically, our team communications before volunteering took place ensured that any relevant information about each Young Volunteers' profile was shared and actioned:

I found that if I needed a break at points, then I could just say which was a good thing. (YV 1)

#### 4.2. Areas for improvement

Following their participation in holiday clubs, Young Volunteers identified areas for their own skills development as a result, including *how* they could share their own forest school knowledge and skills with children at holiday clubs and querying what they should do if they feel out of their depth. In response to this feedback, our Youth Lead is in the process of following this up with more training for Young Volunteers.

...like sometimes it's hard to know "what can I do in this situation?", where they wanna do something but it might be a bit dangerous? Do you just completely say no to them or do you come up with an idea? It's sometimes hard to know. [...] Yeah, I think it would be good, helpful to have training on how to deal with a kid who wants to do something potentially a bit dangerous. (YV 1)



#### 4.3. Conclusion

As our statistics on volunteer hours demonstrate, this year our Young Volunteers have become valuable additions to our delivery team for holiday club provision. Their participation is of mutual benefit, with Young Volunteers developing skills and improving wellbeing, and our delivery teams gaining extra support in sessions. Our Young Volunteer programme will continue into Q3 and beyond, using a variety of small funding pots to ensure it is sustainable. Our Youth Lead and Holiday Activity Manager are working collaboratively to offer a suite of opportunities and training to our Young Volunteer cohort, including:



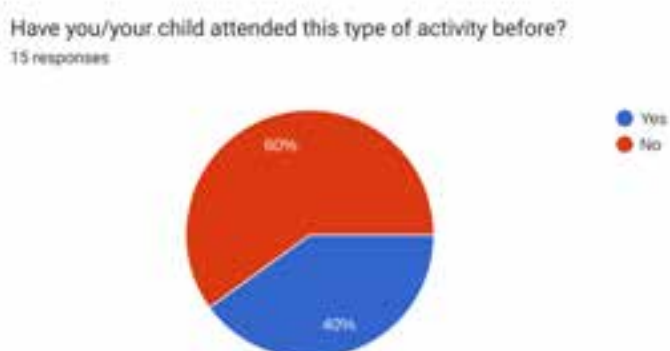
- Offering outdoor first aid training
- Ongoing Woodland management training
- Awarding vouchers for the time Young Volunteers contribute to holiday clubs
- Applying for the New to Nature scheme to offer a work placement for 18-25 year olds
- Potential opportunity to fund Level 1 forest school for Young Volunteers aged 14+

### 5. Focus on: Gibside Family Festival

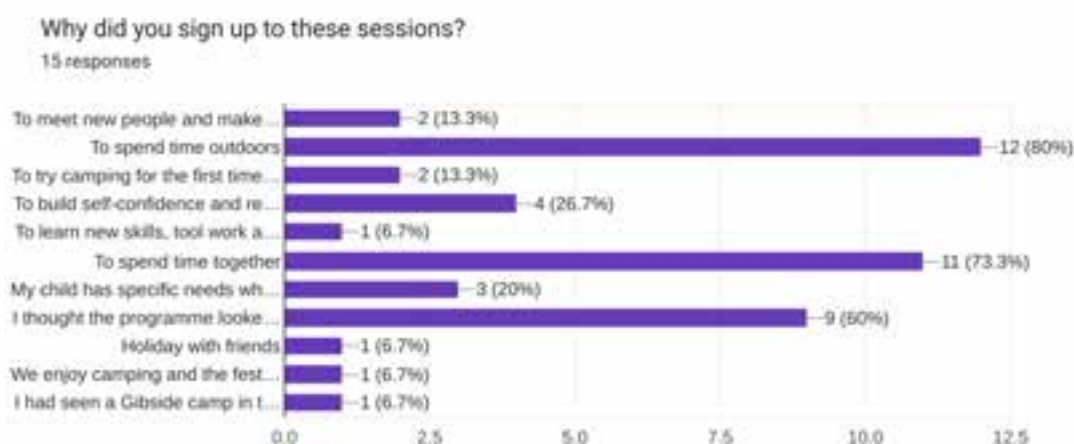
Working with our friends at Birkheads Wild Community Interest Company, we offered a family camping festival at National Trust's Gibside from 26-28 August. Packed full of forest

school inspired activities, workshops and on-site entertainment, with access to catering vans and pubs, this festival aimed to offer families an opportunity to connect with nature and each other. Workshops and activities included: leathercraft, spoon carving, storytelling, arts and crafts, bat walks, falconry, holistic therapies and massage, live performances, and childcare at our kindergarten site. Some of our programme was included in the price of the camping ticket (performances, arts and crafts, falconry, bat walks), whilst others were charged separately (spoon carving, leathercraft, holistic therapies, childcare). As part of our drive for inclusivity, 10% of the tickets were saved for those interested in accessing free or subsidised spaces - **10** of these family tickets were taken.

Following this event, we distributed an online survey to attendees to request their feedback. Of 253 individuals booked at the event, 15 responded to our survey. We asked if they had attended this type of activity before - 60% had not.



Most participants attended this event to spend time outdoors, to spend time together with family and friends, and because the programme of events appealed to them.

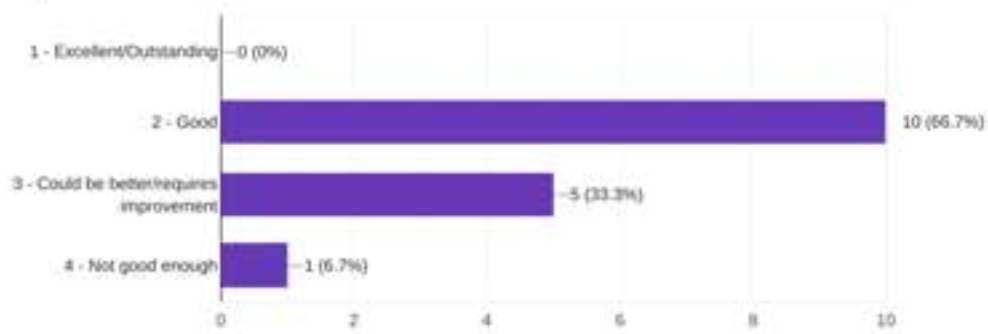


**What did they think of the campsite facilities?**

Whilst most participants felt the facilities were good, 6 considered they could be better/required improvement or they were not good enough.

Please rate the campsite facilities on a scale of 1-4

15 responses



Specific feedback on the facilities focused on a safe space for families, the variety of food vans on offer, the condition of the portaloos, lack of water on site and appreciation for accessibility.

It was lovely that there was a restricted amount of people- there was still plenty space and a great atmosphere. The children felt safe to explore and join in.

If there could have been a vendor selling proper food and not just crepes and cakes that would have made the stay much better.

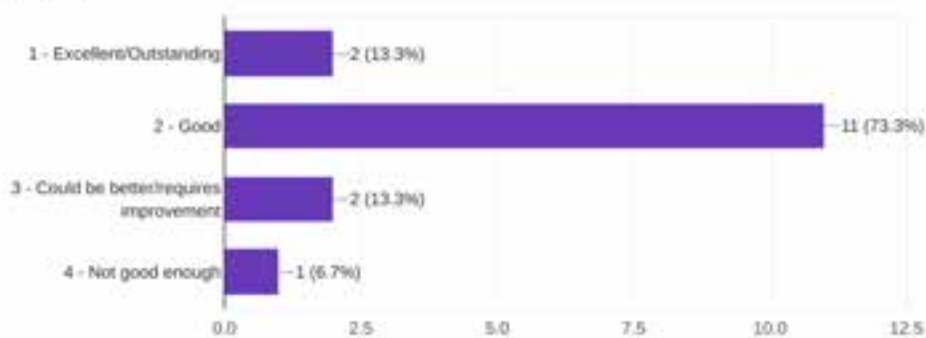
The toilets ran out of paper quite quickly! It would be good if there could be showers/sinks to wash at, but it was totally manageable as it was for the weekend.

I liked that we could park around the edge of the field. It made it more accessible but also kept the cars out the way! I thought the number of tents/families was perfect for the space. It had a great vibe.

**What did you think of the catering options?**

Please rate the catering facilities on a scale of 1-4

15 responses



Feedback on catering facilities was largely positive, appreciating the offer addressed specific allergies. Specific feedback focused on opportunities to buy food on site when usually they

are restricted due to allergies; the cost of food being prohibitive; limited food options; and having access to other food outlets as part of Gibside.

We felt there was enough choice available - this is usually an issue for us as we have allergies & were really relieved to have the free from and vegan options, so thank you! I was also pleased to have coffee in near supply!!

I'd prefer just a cheap van with cold cans of water and pop and a few cheap snacks. The vans were very expensive and all we wanted was an icy cold drink.

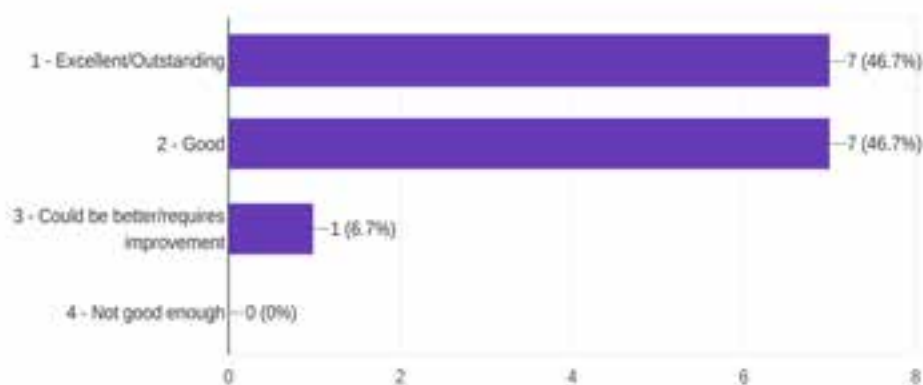
Ideal as Gibside has lots of cafes, a bar, lots of open space, etc.

### ***What did you think of the workshops on offer?***

During the festival, the programme offered a range of workshops, including: campfire stories and crafts, bat walks, leathercraft, spoon carving, breakfast stories and crafts, nature crafts, kids bushcraft club, and falconry. The majority of respondents rated our workshops as excellent or good.

Please rate the workshops on a scale of 1-4

15 responses



Specific feedback focused on the suitability and range of workshops on offer, and the benefit of having bushcraft club on site.

Fantastic - they were brilliant.

It was lovely to have a good amount of things to do while we were there although some of the activities clashed with each other.

We loved the crafts & bat walks.

We (adults) did the leather craft workshop and we loved it. The kids did the bushcraft workshop and they loved it! That was perfect for us to be able to book them onto it on Sunday morning so we could pack the tent up in peace.

Bushcraft was really good the kids absolutely loved it, would highly recommend.

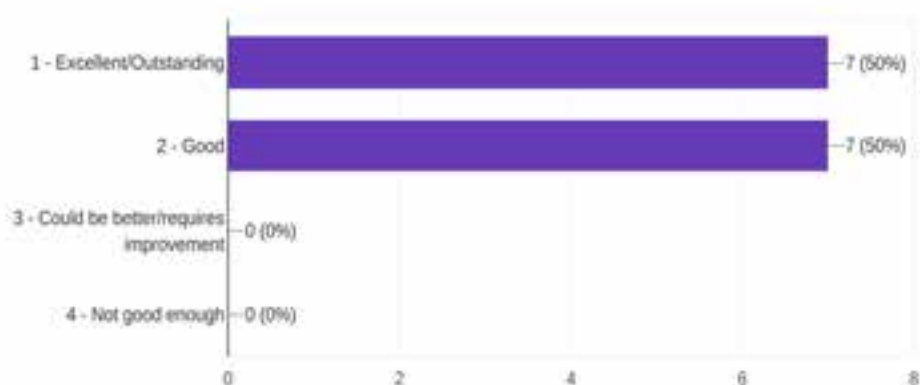
Falconry was really the only one we went to and that was the absolute highlight for my son

***What did you think of the performances on offer?***

There were two organisations offering performances during the weekend at Gibside - Curious Arts' Wildflower and The Forest Dream.

Please rate the performances on a scale of 1-4

14 responses



Specific feedback suggested Curious Arts on the campsite was well received, The Forest Dream would have been better received at the campsite, and a preference for some live music.

Loved the wildflowers dancers Sunday! Very emotive and thought provoking.

Performances were great. The dancer and seed bombs on Saturday was great, maybe would have worked better in the walled garden or on the campsite, as it was a bit tricky to hear.

A little more music on the site would have been nice, maybe a local music group etc on the evening.

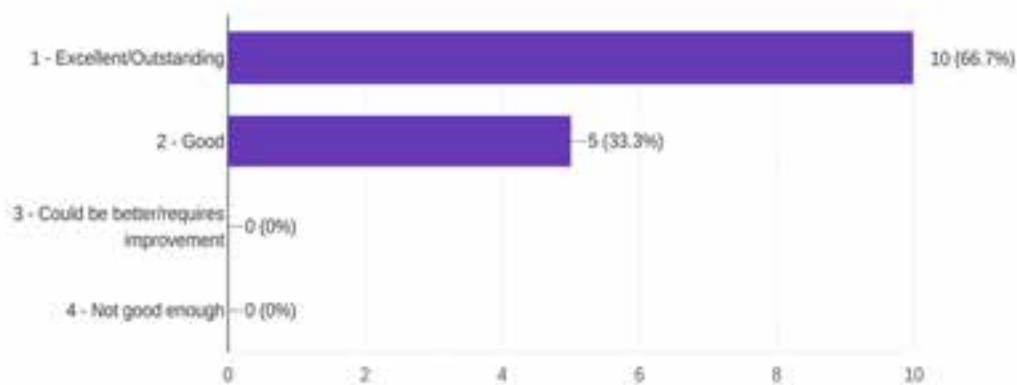
***What did you feel about your overall experience at our family festival?***

All respondents rated the overall experience at Gibside Family Festival as Excellent/Outstanding or Good.



Please rate your overall experience on a scale of 1-4

15 responses



When we asked what they enjoyed, feedback highlighted: relaxation, safe space for children to explore, access to Gibside, options to get involved in activities if wanted,

Lovely atmosphere, not overcrowded, clean facilities & a gorgeous place to camp!  
We also loved the story and craft time & spending quality time as a family outdoors.

Freedom for kids and plenty to do even without taking part in activities provided.

Being in Gibside felt really special, loved the community feel.

When we asked what hadn't worked particularly well, respondents highlighted some issues which were not within our control, including the timeframes to get on and off site for the weekend, birds being tethered, not being allowed to BBQ, and the lack of running water/toilets on site.

Check in, think if that was speeded up it would be much better - maybe have names in alphabetical order and just check the booking on their phone.

Being walked off was ridiculous - I have camped previously when National trust ran the camping trip and this did not happen! We were allowed to leave when we wanted to.

Flight displays by the birds of prey were tethered which was a massive disappointment

We asked what they would change for next year if we run the festival again; these recommendations included:

Showers/ wash facilities if possible and a nearer drinking water tap.

A couple more toilets would have been good.

More free things would be nice.

Cheaper catering option in the field.

More performances at the site itself.

Have an ice block exchange or area to freeze blocks so people can keep cool boxes cold for milk etc.

Have a Camp badge that can be bought so we could buy one and sew onto camp blanket, Birkheads at Gibside or something similar.

Overall survey respondents felt the festival was a success, with many suggesting they would return if we host another one next year:

Great event overall, much better than the previous one with more to do.

Well done to all the young leaders for all their work this weekend, they were fantastic and you must be so proud of them!

Please sign us up for next year!

Overall was a great chilled weekend and a big thank you to all involved in organising. Felt we had Gibside all to ourselves.

We loved it. You did so well to get such a good vibe with so many people. We felt really safe, thank you.

We will use the data presented here to inform the design and delivery of any future events of a similar nature.

## **6. Conclusion**

It is clear Stomping Grounds Forest School has enjoyed another period of growth since we last reported - recruiting new contracted staff, growing our holiday club provision, developing our Young Volunteer programme to enable young people to support our delivery, partnership working to deliver a new festival venture, and building our specialist provision. Behind the scenes, our staff team undertakes vital CPD for skills development, we support one another through skills shares and regular communications, we research and source funding to deliver provision, we advocate for parents/carers and children, and we make

connections with partners to expand our reach to deliver forest school to those who most need it. The quarter ahead will be shaped by our analysis in this report.

## 7. Considerations for Q3-Q4 (Sep '22-Feb '23) and the year ahead

### 7.1. Actions taken following recommendations made in Q4 (Dec '21 -Feb '22)

Recommendations made last quarter are listed below; those that are highlighted we have delivered/in the process of delivering during Q1-Q2. The remaining recommendations will be carried forward to next quarter.

<i>Improvements to evaluation</i>	<i>Improvements to our provision, delivery, administration and organisation</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Plan and deliver evaluation training with 2 lead practitioners who have successfully used evaluation tools in their provision, with the aim in mind for those practitioners to share with the wider team about how to effectively collect quality data from participants.</li> <li>● Support practitioners to use Blobs as a tool to gather richer, qualitative data (to be audio recorded) for a more detailed understanding of why participants are choosing specific Blobs and what they represent for that person.</li> <li>● Offer the Mood Meter for use with our participants, giving practitioners the freedom to use the tool most appropriate for their group (see appendix 1).</li> <li>● Revisit the use of digital storytelling to support children and young people to share their own forest school stories from their own perspectives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continuing to develop and deliver CPD in the form of skills shares for specific provision e.g. youth provision, school provision. This will be an invitation to attend a 3 hour session with fellow practitioners to share good practice, discuss challenges, and identify areas for development, with the purpose of delivering a core model of forest school delivery which is consistent across all of our provision.</li> <li>● Ensure our provision is clearly divided into categories to ensure staff are appropriately deployed, marketing can be targeted and participants can better find the provision that suits them.</li> <li>● Further increasing the uptake of positive action spaces.</li> <li>● Employing a full time member of staff to manage our growing timetable of holiday clubs (delivery and personnel), further develop our partnership working with key stakeholders and oversee</li> <li>● Develop and deliver a survey to collect the views of Head Teachers, teachers and community partners that we work with - what do we do well, what can we improve, what next?</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Move to bi-annual reporting (cumulative - so returning customers March-Aug aren't 'double counted' in the annual numbers). Set deadlines for the bi-annual report and quarterly mini reports.</li> <li>● Continue to produce internal quarterly reports including data on attendance, gender, disability, ethnicity and positive action spaces, and brief qualitative data.</li> <li>● Develop a short digest of each bi-annual report to share on social media and with funders.</li> <li>● Develop case studies (campaigns highlighting our successes) to support funding bids and contracts - focus on cases where we have had a significant impact e.g. specialist provision, Benwell Families. These anonymised case studies would share their successes via digital storytelling, illustrating how we use our resources to have the greatest impact - to share on social media platforms, with existing stakeholders and to support new partnership working.</li> <li>● Find and report regional disability data, include our data for comparison.</li> <li>● Add results of staff survey on EDI and include recommendations for improving staff diversity.</li> </ul>
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*7.2. Recommendations to improve evaluation, provision, delivery, administration and organisation for Q3-Q4*

Reflecting on our key achievements as reported here, in addition to lessons learned as we continue to design and deliver forest school provision, we present our recommendations for the next quarter and beyond below:

<i>Improvements to evaluation</i>	<i>Improvements to our provision, delivery, administration and organisation</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Plan and deliver evaluation training with 2 lead practitioners who have successfully used evaluation tools in their provision, with the aim in mind for those practitioners to share with the wider team about how to effectively collect quality data from participants.</li> <li>● Revisit the use of digital storytelling to support children and young people to share their own forest school stories from their own perspectives.</li> <li>● Include a list of collaborators in each report: funders and awarded funds; partners e.g. schools, community organisations, charities etc.</li> <li>● Design and deliver distinct evaluation packages for: Gibside Kindergarten, specialist provision, and School setting forest school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop and deliver a survey to collect the views of all partners we work with - what do we do well, what can we improve, what next?</li> <li>● Develop a short digest of each bi-annual report to share on social media and with funders.</li> <li>● Develop case studies (campaigns highlighting our successes) to support funding bids and contracts - focus on cases where we have had a significant impact e.g. specialist provision, Benwell Families. These anonymised case studies would share their successes via digital storytelling, illustrating how we use our resources to have the greatest impact - to share on social media platforms, with existing stakeholders and to support new partnership working.</li> <li>● Find and report regional disability data, then reference it as a comparison for our data on disability.  <a href="#">10012022disabilityandemplo...</a></li> <li>● Our next biannual report will 'Focus On': Gateshead Riverside Park pilot; Gibside Kindergarten; Reframing Autism; specialist provision (Wellness Wednesday and 1:1)</li> </ul>