

MOSAIC MATTERS

*“It’s like little bits of everything that has helped”*¹
External Evaluation of the Mosaic Project

Executive Summary

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MOSAIC HEADLINES: THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Campaign for National Parks leads the Mosaic project (2013-2016) which aims to build long-term youth skills, citizenship, health and confidence through engagement with National Parks. It is trying to make things fairer and better for young people aged 16 to 25 who don't have the best opportunities in life by encouraging them to volunteer and help other young people to enjoy National Parks. Criteria for taking part included being Not in Employment, Education or Training; limited access to public transport and services; not knowing what career path to follow; being the main carer in the home; needing to improve physical or mental health or suffering from stress. The recruited volunteers were called Young Champions. They were sometimes identified individually but also reached through partnership with other organisations.



The external evaluation by Plymouth Institute of Education included analysis of participation and costs and charted changes in young people's perception of their health, confidence and citizenship and nature connectedness. A case study in Exmoor National Park involved four Young Champions and Project Officers to explore the meaning of their participation through photographs and interviews. CNP also compiled illustrative case studies from the project showing the project methods and highlighting impacts Mosaic had on Young Champions. These are available on the Mosaic pages of the CNP website (cnp.org.uk).

KEY FACTS AND FINDINGS

1. 130 Young Champions were registered six months before the end of the project as participating across the five National Parks involved in the programme, taking part in a total of 459 activities. The target for recruitment was 150.

2. The number of Young Champions recruited, their gender mix and age profile differ considerably between the five National Parks: Exmoor, New Forest, Northumberland, Lake District and Yorkshire Dales.
3. On average, by mid-November 2015, the cost per Young Champion recruited was £3,478. Actual per capita cost differed quite substantially between National Parks, due to variations in recruitment numbers but even distribution of funds. Activities were often low cost but more time was needed for preparatory work to develop partnerships. Substantial in-kind contributions from the National Parks and partner organisations are not included in this calculation. However it also does not take account of the 1135 other young people that took part in visits. The reach of the project is greater than is represented by the number of Young Champions alone.
4. The majority of Young Champions are White British (70 of 88 for whom ethnicity is recorded). Nevertheless, Mosaic has recruited a higher proportion from other ethnic backgrounds than exist in the general population. At the time of entering the programme, 23% of Young Champions were not in employment, education or training (NEET).
5. Young Champions rated themselves fairly highly on scales that seek to measure connection to nature, self-confidence, relationships and health. There were significant increases in self-ratings on these line chart statements:
 - *I am confident in the outdoors.*
 - *I am good at leading activities.*
 - *I am confident at work, or about finding work.*
 - *I have good relationships with staff in the National Park².*
6. Those Young Champions completing the Nature Relatedness (NR6) scale twice rated themselves significantly higher on follow-up on the factor "*My relationship with nature is an important part of who I am*"³.
7. Young Champions express high satisfaction with the activities provided (average 5.4/6) and a high likelihood of returning to the Park as a result of attending (4.9/6).
8. Seven people, who knew individual Young Champions, responded to a survey and thought that participation in Mosaic had improved young people's physical and mental well-being, confidence, social networks, involvement in the community and employability skills.
9. The learning and development from the Mosaic project has helped to keep young people on the National Park Authorities' agendas. This has led to a number of projects being developed beyond the life of the present project. These include:
 - a. **New Forest NPA Youth Access Project (YAP)** - a coordinated system where providers of educational activities in the New Forest are linked up with colleges and youth organisations who are looking for activities to do.

² See also Heinsch (2012) Para 130 about the importance of feeling accepted for social wellbeing

³ Attachment to nature was also found to be a factor in increased civic participation by Theimer and Ernst (2012) Para 131

- b. **Northumberland NPA Youth Cabinet** – Made up of young people from within and outside the NP boundaries. They have already had influence on the NPA management plan.
- c. **Lake District NPA Rusland Horizons** - Mosaic facilitated involvement of young people from Barrow in the pilot 'Full Cycle' project. Landscape Partnership funding has now been secured and young people will continue to be involved. LDNPA is also working proactively to engage more young people become **volunteers** and have a Young Champion on their Volunteer Advisory Group
- d. **Exmoor and Northumberland NPAs** working together with CNP on future national events or young people involved in National Parks.
- e. **Yorkshire Dales NPA** has taken learning points, relating to outreach, youth-led approaches and lessons from running the Let's Do It fund from Mosaic to inform the new **Green Futures project**, working with all ages up to 25.
- f. **YHA Young Champions scheme** – this scheme uses the learning achieved through Mosaic to run a volunteer programme for 16 to 25 year olds. Learning focusses on the Let's Do It Fund, working on governance issues and activities.

PERCEPTIONS AND POSITIVE IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

While the Champion model focuses on individuals, Mosaic also included a large proportion of collaborative work in partnership with others. Interviews, photographs taken by Young Champion co-researchers and stakeholder focus groups revealed the perception that Mosaic:

- Required time to develop partnerships to support young people and that some young people would benefit from broadening the Champion model to value teamwork and collaboration as well as individualist leadership.
- Encouraged acceptance of self and others, improving social confidence through providing a safe space.
- Encouraged attachment and a sense of belonging to place through highlighting both the familiar and the novel, especially through residential gatherings.
- Encouraged attachment to significant others (often the project officer) through personal commitment and interest in the young people and the trust this engendered⁴.
- Addressed issues of social inequity and the invisibility of young people in the National Parks by surfacing barriers to access and addressing gaps in youth service provision.
- Supported positive wellbeing and physical health through purposeful activities⁵.

⁴ Liang et al (2013) Para 154 also highlight how partnership, role modelling and active listening enhance successful youth work

⁵ Cervinka et al (2012) Para 130 demonstrated similar wellbeing outcomes from nature; Nisbet et al (2009) Para 133 found nature connectedness linked to purpose in life and stress relief

- Supported positive outcomes for individuals at an organisational and personal level through social networks and partnerships.
- Increased employability through growing skills, developing influential networks and building confidence at work or in finding work.
- Motivated increased civic participation through nurturing interest in environmental action and volunteering⁶.
- Enhanced the perception of young people's capacities by creating higher levels of trust in their abilities within the wider community and various networks.
- Contributed to their connection to nature, according to the young people themselves⁷.

Young Champions' main concern was that accessing these benefits required money and that the end of the project signalled a loss of opportunity. The extent to which young people's involvement had been embedded in wider National Park policy and practice was also unclear, as some comments in focus groups suggested that it might not continue. However, steps are being taken to create lasting legacies from the project. The interest shown in young people's views and interest was much appreciated and the photography methodology and film opportunity appeared to have struck a chord in enabling young people to express their views in their own terms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: More Mosaic Youth activities should be supported through further projects or through National Park Authorities' prioritising work with 16-25 year olds from diverse backgrounds.

Recommendation 2: These activities should be mainstreamed with full time Youth Engagement officers appointed on a permanent basis. Where this is not possible, NPAs should put dedicated staff time into providing a clear and specific offer to young people about what they can get involved with in National Parks.

Recommendation 3: The Champion model will work most effectively within a partnership approach which encourages collaboration both between organisations and amongst young people. Time and resources should be allocated to support and grow partnerships with community-based and youth support organisations for long-term youth engagement.

Recommendation 4: Links with existing Young Champions should be sustained by CNP, YHA and NPAs via social media and appropriate communications. Support should be given to enable them to continue to be involved and to have a role in developing National Parks and these partnerships through a range of legacy initiatives.

⁶ RSPB (2013) Para 155 found environmental action helped young people become responsible citizens

⁷ Poinon (2013) Para 129 found the majority of young people saw nature as separate from themselves.