

Mosaic Legacy Materials

Case Study 1: Ollie Barnett, Young Champion with Exmoor National Park and the YHA

"I have made friends and connections, had new experiences and received training through YHA. And now I will be starting a job with them in March!"



Ollie Barnett, 18, lives in Tiverton, a town close to Exmoor National Park. He has a keen interest in trains and enjoys using them to visit different places and museums as well as seeing them out on the tracks. Although Ollie has mild Asperger syndrome he has never let that hold him back.

Ollie enrolled as a Young Champion with Mosaic when he was 16. He had left school and was looking for work. He came across Mosaic on a 'taster day' on Exmoor organised through the National Citizenship Scheme and 'really enjoyed it so decided to stay for more!'. Since then Ollie has volunteered in the National Park in many different ways, being always keen to try something new and push his own boundaries. He planned and led several events including seven conservation days doing drystone walling, balsam pulling, peat dam construction and activities at the Bogtastic community event. Ollie

kept going with it because he 'met loads of great people and had lots of fun taking part in and leading different activities'.

Ollie is keen on photographing trains, agricultural machinery and other vehicles. He volunteered to increase his repertoire by becoming a Photo Researcher as part of a project with the University of Plymouth, which looked at different perceptions of the Exmoor National Park through images. This involved three training and photo safari days, taking photos and discussing them with the other photo researchers. The results went on public display at different locations on Exmoor.

Ollie also used his experiences with public transport to present to National Park staff and provide feedback on using public transport to visit Exmoor which fed into public transport planning. He also took the opportunity of attending a YHA 'Base 25'¹ conference in York. He was so enthused by the weekend, that he went on to become a regular YHA volunteer and is now on a young people's steering group, has attended residential weekends and was behind the YHA setting up a Young Champions' group and a new young person's fund to enable young people to visit YHA's in National Parks and other locations. Recently he has just successfully applied for a job with the YHA and is due to start in a couple of months time!

Ollie's done many other things too such as helping to interview a new project officer for Campaign for National Parks and taking part in other activities on Exmoor. His personal highlights include attending the Mosaic national Annual Event held in Exmoor, local residentials with the other Exmoor Young Champions, planning the NPA Bogtastic events and taking part in the photo safari.

Over the past two years Ollie's self-confidence has improved a lot. He's met and worked with new people and experienced many new, sometimes challenging, situations. This has helped him to improve his social skills, build his interest in other volunteering opportunities and grow his interests in and understanding of the natural environment.

The Campaign for National Parks ran the Mosaic youth project from 2013-2016 in partnership with the YHA and five National Park Authorities (Exmoor, Lake District, New Forest, Northumberland and Yorkshire Dales). The project aimed to make positive changes in young people's lives through engaging with National Parks. www.cnp.org.uk

¹ Base 25, now called 'YHA Champions' is YHA initiative for 16 to 25 year olds to get involved in YHA volunteering and governance <https://jobs.yha.org.uk/volunteer/find-volunteering-opportunities/yha-young-champions/>