



Collation of Evidence Educational Rationale

CLOSER TO THE
EDGE

Closer to the Edge – Provision for Schools and Youth Organisations

Collation of Evidence

Introduction

Closer to the Edge (CTTE) delivers active outdoor learning programmes to schools and youth organisations as well as to the corporate and public sector. The Company actively promotes personal development, outdoor learning and team growth. Our highly qualified, committed and experienced team use an extensive military training, corporate and educational background to make a positive difference to individual and team behaviours by engaging participants in active outdoor learning that has far-reaching emotional, physical and social benefits. Closer to the Edge provides affordable programmes at a variety of engaging outdoor settings, all within the West Midlands region and further afield.

The purpose of this document is to provide a collation of feedback provided by our customers from schools and youth organisations over the last 4 years. We want to show that, throughout the production and delivery of Team Toolbox, CTTE has and will continue to support and deliver engaging programmes that focus on positive development of personal qualities and team core values 'outside of the classroom'. Furthermore, it is our intention to provide evidence that the CTTE learning style has far-reaching benefits for the social, emotional and physical development of young people.

All of CTTE programmes are based on the following underpinning principles:

- In order to facilitate positive learning and development, CTTE presents opportunities for participants to operate beyond their individual and collective 'comfort zones' in a very secure environment.
- Participants must be empowered to recognise that they have the ability and confidence to take that important step; furthermore, CTTE activities must help them to recognise that engaging on our programmes will help them to positively change behaviour and can be liberating and enlivening.
- CTTE promotes an emotionally intelligent and sensitive culture where all can learn and achieve together. Understanding and practice of an effective teamwork approach towards a common goal is deemed essential.

Evidence

Since 2006 CTTE has worked with many establishments across the West Midlands and further afield. Our programmes have had far-reaching benefits for emotional, social and physical wellbeing. In 2010 alone we have delivered a total of 230 programmes to 110 different schools and youth organisations across the West

Midlands region. From several evaluations of our customers we have collated the following evidence. Our evaluations posed the following questions:

- What were the desired outcomes of the programme?
- What were the planned activities?
- How did these activities aim to meet the outcomes?
- How was success measured?
- Is there any evidence that the activities had a lasting impact on the target group?

Throughout the following paragraphs we have chosen some generic titles for the activities that we deliver and populated each section with a sample of different courses together with the outcomes and feedback. We have also provided some quotes from the different evaluation documents received.

CTTE Provision

Our programmes for young people include the following:

High Ropes Course Enrichment programmes at Baggeridge Country Park.

High Ropes Courses can be used as recreational facilities or as a powerful tool to promote team and personal development. Our developmental programmes at this location are delivered to a diverse range of students. We encourage learners to operate beyond their individual and collective comfort zone, once there we believe heightened awareness and focus allows for greater learning.

Residential Courses at National Trust Dudmaston Estate and Kinver Scout Camp.

We offer residential facilities hired from the National Trust and the Scout Association to engage learners on multi-activity programmes where they develop further understanding of themselves and others in an engaging setting by completing a wide range of problem-solving tasks and adventurous activities, facilitated by our qualified teachers and former military instructors.

Mobile Climbing Wall and Problem Solving Tasks. For the past 3 years CTTE has been able to reach out to communities with its climbing wall and mobile problem-solving equipment so that positive personal and team development can take place without the need for transport costs. We have been able to use green-space in parks, community areas and school sports fields to deliver enrichment days and sessions with targeted outcomes. A typical programme will comprise the mobile wall to offer an event which challenges and engages and up to 8 problem-solving tasks that develop trust, unity, cooperation, team spirit etc. Costs are further driven down by using teachers to deliver the problem-solving tasks.

Programme Examples

Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties. We promote the use of positive language and heightened trust, communication and support with these groups. Programmes have assisted with anti-bullying campaigns, racial tension, Positive Activity for Young People (PAYP), youth inclusion projects, pastoral and low self-esteem projects. A team-leader from Connexions on a PAYP programme summed up the process ‘ *CTTE has provided a safe and supportive environment to engage learners so that they can be challenged by choice*’.

Aim Higher Programmes. Sandwell and Dudley have now undertaken several Aim Higher programmes at the CTTE High Ropes Course. These programmes are designed to raise achievement, aspirations and attainment among young people from under-represented groups as part of the Black Country Aim Higher initiative. This programme is designed to engage and motivate learners who have the potential to enter Higher Education but may be under-achieving or lacking in confidence. Desired outcomes are as follows:

- Raise confidence of disaffected and disengaged young people
- Encourage team work and communication
- Challenge personal ‘barriers’ to achievement
- Raise awareness of importance of peer support in school and personal lives
- Encourage participation and engagement with peer activities
- Mix team and personal challenges, so learners engage with both peer support and reliance on their own confidence.

Learners participated in a series of four activities across one day. They took part in two individual challenges and two team activities, designed to push their boundaries. All activities involved height. Learners reflected on their experiences in a short evaluation, the common theme throughout the evaluations was the sense of fun and achievement, teamwork, challenge and ‘feel good factor’. On one visit students were asked to score various questions from 1 to 6. The percentage of those who scored above average (over 3) was as follows: I feel more confident than before (86.5%), I think I helped someone else(73%) I felt I was part of a team (86.5%), I challenged myself at the event (95.5%), I would recommend this event to others (95.5%).

One evaluation stated that these courses equip learners with needed confidence and higher levels of self esteem so that they can move on to the next level of their learning development. ‘*Closer to the Edge have supported our learners to re-engage, grow in confidence and have enhanced learner skills to help them become assertive*’

Weight Management Programme for Yr 8 Boys. A partnership programme with PCT to heighten the awareness of nutrition and healthy eating as well as having the experience of a positive male role model. The programme comprised workshops on

cooking and nutrition as well as team development tasks to develop understanding and experience of the core values of effective teamwork. Success of this programme was only measured by weight loss but post-course evaluation suggests that one individual changed his attitude to life completely. He went from *'feeling like he was useless to joining the football team, he consequently lost weight, felt better about himself and is aiming much higher..'*. The programme and school children who participated on the course received a Dudley School Sports partnership 'High Impact Award' for the project

Bushcraft and Survival. The objectives of these courses are wide-ranging. They can be exceptional vehicles for developing team spirit, confidence and leadership in a 'real' scenario as well as promoting a fantastic sense of wellbeing and achievement in a safe and supportive environment. Throughout the past 3 years CTTE has delivered to a diverse range of students including

- Students with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) from Wightwick Hall School and Old Park School.
- 'Hard to Reach' students from Wolverhampton Youth Inclusion Programme, Black Country Connexions and Sandwell Youth Service.
- Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties(SEBD) students from Sycamore and Abberley Street PRU and many others (total of 39 courses delivered).
- Extended Services from Thornes Community College attended a course with the stated outcomes of developing team values and personal qualities for a selection of children having some 'difficulties, at home. These children attended with a 'significant other' and undertook all tasks together for 24hrs.

Evaluations highlight the fact that the activities challenged the young people both emotionally and physically and that CTTE staff were very capable of relating the experience back to aspects of the *'life, habits and activities of the young people'*, ensuring that skills learnt were transferrable. For the PRU students this programme *'had a big impact and made a big difference...it certainly played a part in preparing the students and equipping them with the right skills to re-enter mainstream education'*. Post-course evaluation of the 'Thornes Project' reported a significant increase in the happiness and wellbeing of the young people in school and enhanced relationships at home

Public Services and Higher Education(HE). Since formation we have now delivered in excess of 40 residential courses for the 14-25 yr-old cohort. Our courses have included tailor-made programmes for those not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) such as 'Access' and 'Elev8' providing skills such as effective communication and teamwork so that young people can further prepare themselves for future employment. Furthermore we have used our extensive military experience within the CTTE team to provide a service for Public Service courses at 3 different

HE colleges. The purpose of these courses is to develop leadership qualities and improve communication skills and teamwork so that students may further prepare themselves for future employment. The following points have been collated from the evaluations (sample from Bournville College, Birmingham Metropolitan College, Solihull College and South Worcestershire College):

- Students commented on how much they learnt about themselves and how it will help them in the future.
- Feedback from college staff stated that students are more focussed and committed in the classroom.
- Since the CTTE Programme, members of the course are fully supportive of each other, and react quickly and professionally as a unit when required. All students have found a new voice and take part in the classroom with enthusiasm. The CTTE team have had a significant impact.
- During the end-of course presentation it is always said that the CTTE residential was the highlight of the 12-week programme. The young people take the skills that they have learnt when they progress onto further training, education.
- Immediate and notable evidence is an increase of confidence, personal responsibility, leadership qualities, shared goal setting and working towards team strengths.

Mobile Provision of Team Toolbox Activities.

- Hadley Learning Community – Multi-activity day on location as part of a team development day for students with lower ability at HLC. CTTE used the mobile wall and several activities from ‘Team Toolbox’ to give students an opportunity to work together and increase their confidence. *‘Since the activity several students have moved on to get involved in many other extra-curricular activities in and out of school that they had previously shown no interest in’.*
- Reginald Mitchell County Primary School - CTTE used the Team Toolbox equipment at this large Stoke-on-Trent primary school, the days were extremely successful and gave both teachers and staff opportunities to develop core team skills. The head teacher reported that the activities were *‘Challenging, engaging and fun - learning opportunities were maximised by the uncomplicated format, equipment and facilitation. Assessment for learning was both evident and recordable using the activity review sheets’.* He later states that if the ‘Toolkit’ was mass produced for schools then it would provide a powerful medium for learning across the whole curriculum.

Young People with a Disability.

- The SMILE event in Dudley offered young people with a disability the opportunity to try a range of sports with a real focus on those that could be offered by local providers to ensure that there was a 'participation pathway' available. *'60 pupils were, that is 5 groups of 12 were able to experience rock climbing through the fantastic support provided by the CTTE staff'.*
- With regard to the Me 2 (panel of young people who promote inclusion at various organisations), we have completed 6 of these events over the last 3 years. Courses are designed to promote team development, overcome personal challenges, gain confidence, engage and take part in problem-solving activities. Success is measured by their staff *'young people left the course feeling more confident and looking forward to telling their friends and families about their achievements'.*
- Wombourne Special Needs Group (WINGS) recently undertook a team-development weekend, the group included young people with disabilities and their parents. The evaluation highlights the fact that CTTE staff went out of their way to include everyone in every activity and all of the WINGS members finished the weekend with a profound feeling of achievement. *'Our young people were engaged, encouraged and made to feel secure in environments very different to their everyday activities'.*

Other strong statements made in our evaluation sample include the following:

- The children were absolutely wowed by the experience and could not wait for us to get the photos printed so that they could relive the thrill and show off their prowess – Chernobyl Lifeline (for children suffering from the after effects of the Chernobyl disaster).
- Everything from a smiling face to improved attitudes in lessons. Renewed self belief has been a major success for our youngsters. Everyone who has worked with CTTE wants to go back. Prefects have developed into skilled leaders, SEN youngsters have achieved success working in teams...the list is endless – Windsor High School (after over 25 courses completed).

Primary School Provision. Closer to the Edge has worked with numerous Primary Schools across the West Midlands region, pupils from Yr 3 upwards from 18 different Primary Schools have undertaken bushcraft courses, residential courses, sessions at our High Ropes Challenge Course, team development activities, mobile wall sessions and orienteering. Objectives have included raising self-esteem for a small cohort, project based work in a woodland environment, enrichment and reward for a year group, team friendship-forming as part of a secondary school induction

programme. *'A wonderful experience. It was great to see the children working together using lots of positive language. I found it scary but the children spurred me on!'* – Rebecca Jones

CTTE also delivers an annual residential programme for Hob Green Primary School year 6s in September. Teachers at the school refer to excellent 'learning anchors' or reference points from the residential helping to develop and support positive learning cultures throughout the final year. Teaching staff also believe that this culture has consequently helped the children to improve performance and achieve higher results for SATs throughout the past 3 years

Below is a sample of comments from different primary school children who have attended a CTTE Course:

- I felt like I was going to faint on the totem poles but I managed to climb halfway. I loved the whole trip and the assault course was the best! – Kearney
- I didn't want to do the assault course at first, but you all helped me and it was actually the best activity!– Adam
- Thank you for an amazing experience – Chris
- Many of us have managed to overcome our fears with your guidance, reassurance and experience. It was the most amazing trip I have ever been on – Rowan
- I love climbing but I was afraid of descending. You have really helped me with my fear. You do a great job. Please keep on helping others – Peter
- I was happy and relieved when the instructors helped to lower me down as I'd managed to climb to the top of the platform and totem pole – Cameron
- I climbed higher than I ever have before. I never thought I'd be able to climb to the top but I did it – Joe
- Thank you for believing in us and telling us that we could do it – Adam
- My friend Aimee and me were on the wobbly platform together. We jumped off laughing and feeling scared at the same time – Olivia
- It was the best day ever and great for team work – Abby
- I couldn't believe how high the course was! You gave us an amazing day – Gemma
- I had a fear of heights but I'm so glad I went round the assault course and climbed the platform. Thank you for a wonderful day – Leah
- I was overwhelmed and upset at first, but I did it and was so pleased. It was an amazing release to do the zip wire at the end – Sophie
- I have got over my fears – Jessy
- It was scary to think we were so high up but it was the best school trip ever – Jack
- I wish I could come again, even though it was so scary – Aimee

- I think I achieved more at Closer to the Edge than I would during a day in school – Jasmine

Emotional Wellbeing. On many occasions CTTE has been asked to deliver learning packages for groups who need a ‘smile put back on their faces’. CTTE have recently delivered High Ropes Challenge programmes for ‘Roundoak Robins’, a bereavement charity based in Kidderminster; a woodland residential for the Children’s Liver Disease Foundation, and a team toolbox session for a Staffordshire intergenerational programme. All of these courses are designed to develop and enhance understanding of those positive personal attributes and team support required to improve emotional wellbeing. CTTE focuses on teamwork, engagement and happiness, and how the support of others can help individuals approach challenge. CTTE also promotes friendship and family unity through provision of public ‘adventure parties’ and ‘bushcraft and survival’ experiences at our various sites. Below is a sample of feedback received:

- I have pushed myself more than I have done in the past and have learnt quite a bit about myself and my friends - Julie.
- They found the whole experience challenging their own self belief giving them confidence in what they can do - Ian.
- The children loved it, Sophie says it’s the best thing that she’s ever done. I’m sure we could only do it because we were in the hands of pros and were completely safe at all times - Gary
- What a great time our party had. There was some apprehension along the way but the CTTE them were fabulous and all of the kids left smiling - Axine

Team Toolbox - Educational Rationale

The learning culture central to any organisation, group or team is grounded by the values held, or deemed to be important to them. If the groups are armed with the knowledge, emotional literacy and intelligence to work towards and uphold these positive values, then they will be able to become happier, healthier and more productive. Therefore, if a shift towards such a positive learning culture is desired the appropriate tools and facilitation is required. '*Schools should provide opportunities to understand and explore feelings using appropriate learning and teaching styles.*' (Department for Children Schools and Families – Targeted Mental Health in Schools 2008).

Emotional Wellbeing. The challenge for educational institutions is to develop a clear rationale and an effective whole school framework for improving and promoting emotional health and wellbeing; 'There is clear evidence that children who are emotionally or mentally healthy achieve more at school and are able to participate more fully with their peers in school communities and in life' (Department for Children Schools and Families 2007). If leaders of learning establishments wish for this vision to be realised in their school, appropriate teaching and learning approaches and tools are required.

Accordance with Educational Practice. The National Curriculum at all Key Stages has identified that if young people are able to develop confidence, effective communication, creative thinking, effective participation in a group, they will become more successful learners. This is the desired outcome for a number of current initiatives: Every Child Matters, Healthy Schools, Targeted Mental Health Services, National Curriculum – Personal Learning and thinking Skills (PLTS) / Cross Curricular Dimensions, Extended Services, to name a few.

Cost Effective and Sustainable. 'Team Toolbox' is a sustainable resource. CTTE will train staff nominated by an establishment to be facilitators. These facilitators will be enabled to train groups across their own establishment, thus creating opportunities to develop a healthy, positive learning culture from which future learning opportunities will be embraced. Effective facilitation of the tasks and activities in 'Team Toolbox' will develop knowledge and understanding of the behaviours and actions that define teamwork. Armed with this information teams are then empowered to improve performance, often by huge margins.

Improving Performance. Team development is often presented as unnecessarily over-complicated. However, in the case of 'Team Toolbox', effective facilitation of the activities makes improved performance so explicit that once learning groups understand how they achieved this they can use their knowledge as a reference point for improved performance in other areas of their lives. Transference of these skills to different learning environments will produce more successful learners and ultimately, healthier more productive members of society.