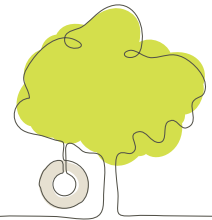


Resilience, Engagement Future Employment



Top tips for using sustainable development to improve outcomes for young people



Young people have a greater stake in our future than the rest of us. They are the ones who will be most affected by future challenges, such as climate change, the rise of obesity, or global poverty. Through supporting young people to achieve their goals and improve their lives, you can contribute to sustainable development, whilst empowering and educating them for life in a sustainable world.



The top tips included in this leaflet provide ideas and practical information for using sustainable development. Incorporating a range of these tips within the services you provide could help improve a young person's physical and mental wellbeing, educational attainment, social and life skills, employment prospects, and their ability to respond and adapt to development approaches to enhance the delivery of positive outcomes for young people. change, as well as improving the local environment and place in which they live.



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Eight Top Tips for achieving positive outcomes for young people by incorporating sustainable development into services



All the following approaches contribute to the development of young people's:

resilience – developing the social and developmental skills that contribute to young people's wellbeing and enable them to deal with unknown challenges as they arise

engagement – providing opportunities that engage young people in their own learning and enable them to feel a valued, active member of their community

employability – developing the skills and knowledge young people need for employment

2 Explore local issues to engage young people in meaningful actions that have a global impact

Build on young people's interest in issues that affect their day to day lives. Explore these issues with them to encourage a critical understanding of the links between their personal, local and global environment to enable them to take real, meaningful actions that improve their lives and influence wider positive change. This can improve self-esteem and develop their communication, decision-making and leadership skills, for example:

- A group of young people with special needs met for six months to explore the links between their rural county and a group of African countries, considering food, trade and cultures. It led to them taking local action to increase awareness of fair trade.

1 Promote active lifestyles as part of working with young people

Accessibility of local facilities, a sense of safety and perception of the local environment all impact on young people's physical activity levels. Active travel, such as walking and cycling, offer both health and social benefits. Encourage young people to be more active in the way they access services through working with local transport planners to improve access routes, and promoting walking or cycling through structured activities, for example:

- Action for Children and the Ramblers developed a short-term walks programme for whole families that improved health, developed social interactions and increased the confidence of participants to explore their local environment.

3 Engage young people in improving their local environment

Through involving young people in the design, development and improvement of their local environment you can enable them to develop social responsibility and feel a valued part of their community. Structured projects such as these can increase their confidence, motivation, empathy, respect and a sense of responsibility, especially when working together as part of a team. Through bringing together different community groups, such as those isolated by age, language or culture, you can integrate young people in their wider community and contribute to community cohesion. For example:

- Young people who were at risk of getting into trouble took part in a community gardening programme through a councils' Youth Inclusion Support Panel that was highly visible, and led to them building positive relationships with local residents.



4 Use the natural environment as part of outdoor activity and learning programmes

Experience of the natural world can enhance young people's development and provide a route to reengagement for some young people. There are many ways you can include activities and opportunities to learn in the outdoors, either structured or unstructured; such as through play, observing and valuing nature, tailored therapy programmes, and adventure activities. These can be supported locally by project staff or by working with partner organisations who can offer experienced facilitation, for example:

- The 'Forest Schools' approach of guided sessions within locally accessible woodland has been used successfully with a range of young people, including young offenders and those at risk of exclusion. The focus is on the place and the activities on offer, and through allowing the young people the space to self-manage and build relationships they are able to develop personal and social skills that support their progression.

5 Include accreditation and awards linked to the environment as stepping stones to jobs and training

You can tailor schemes targeting young people not in employment, education or training that provide stepping stones to employment, to provide training with an environmental focus, such as gardening, woodland skills and bicycle mechanics, and develop young people's practical and transferable skills through qualifications, accreditation and short courses.

For example:

- Employability programmes for young people run by organisations such as Groundwork, BTCV and v offer short-term opportunities to gain skills and qualifications.
- The John Muir Award offers a flexible award scheme for young people to 'Discover, Explore, Conserve and Share' a wild place and their experience of nature.

6 Empower young people to be active citizens and lead the programmes you deliver

Citizenship and development can be enhanced through active community participation when you explain the purpose of what is being achieved by involvement and you give young people a clear sense of agency. Provide meaningful participation and engagement opportunities in real, local environmental issues through your services and enable the young people to lead them, for example:

- Supported by two agencies, a group of dispersed young people in a rural county established a steering group of peers to design and find funding for a self-managed environmental assessment tool which was offered to a wide range of youth groups.

7 Build partnerships that share learning and success

There are many experienced environmental organisations that can support you in developing sustainable development approaches within your services. Through building partnerships with these organisations you can apply for joint funding, provide the young people accessing your services with a broader range of opportunities, and develop wider community links, including with private sector organisations. It is important though to evaluate your progress to enable you to learn from and improve your work, to recognise achievement, and understand the longer term impact on the young people you work with by actively involving them in this process.

8 Show your commitment to sustainable development

Through reconsidering how your organisation operates its services and by delivering changes in a demonstrable way, you can both save money and provide further learning opportunities for young people. Simple steps to improve efficiency of operations, such as by reducing energy, water and resource use, can help you reduce costs. Through considering where you locate services, accessibility by active transport and how they use the local environment, can engage young people in reconsidering their own personal actions.



as long as it takes

Further information

These Top Tips have been produced as part of a wider project commissioned by the Sustainable Development Commission and funded by the Department for Education

We hope using these tips will help your organisation start your own journey to becoming more sustainable and contributing to sustainable development within your community.

They are written for anyone working with young people to enable you to consider:

- How to incorporate sustainable development approaches within your existing support programmes and services for young people
- The degree to which you build on young people's own vision of sustainable living
- The sustainability of your own operations and how you manage them

Alongside the Top Tips, the other outputs of the project are:

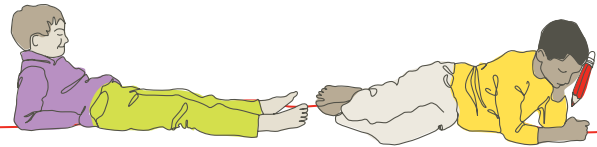
- a literature review exploring the evidence base for achieving outcomes with young people through sustainable development approaches
- a set of 11 case studies which illustrate current practice by a range of organisations working with young people 14-19 (particularly with those who are hard to reach)

Further details can be found at:

www.actionforchildren.org.uk

www.sd-commission.org.uk

The findings from this project have contributed to the Sustainable Development Commission's recommendations to both government and the wider youth sector.



Other useful resources

Breakthroughs for the 21st Century: www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=972

Duke of Edinburgh Award: www.dofe.org

Envision: www.envision.org.uk

Every Child's Future Matters: www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=578

National Children's Bureau's (NCB's) national network for sustainable living practice and policy for the youth sector. To join, email: climateconnections@ncb.org.uk

NCB's One Step One World website for young people: www.ncb.org.uk/osow

NCVO's 'Get Ready for Climate Change' Guide: www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/advice-support/climate-change/get-ready

SEEd: www.se-ed.org.uk

Sustainable Schools (see 'Sustainable Schools in Action' section for details of the DfE's Young Activists programme): www.teachernet.gov.uk/sustainable-schools

The Youth of Today: www.theyouthoftoday.org

We Are What We Do: www.wearewhatwedo.org

Young Pioneers: www.youngpioneers.org

Featured examples and organisations:

- **BTCV:** www2.btcv.org.uk
- **Forest Schools:** There are many regional providers of forest school approaches. For example: www.greenlighttrust.org/forest-schools/
- **Global Youth Action:** www.globalyouthaction.org.uk
- **Groundwork:** www.groundwork.org.uk
- **John Muir Award:** www.jmt.org/jmaward-home.asp
- **Ramblers:** www.ramblers.org.uk
- **V:** www.vinspired.com

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