

# PATH CAMP PROJECT REPORT 2009



## The Background

The PATH camping project began in 2006 in response to a lack of camping opportunities for children and young people in Tower Hamlets. It aims to give children a high quality outdoor experience in countryside close to London as well as training playworkers in leading camping projects.

The success of the project has meant that many of the groups that attend have returned in subsequent years. This year we opted for 2 weeks camp as we predicted a drop in groups able to attend, due to finance and staffing issues.

As in previous years we offered a 3 night option (Monday – Thursday) and a 2 night weekend option (Friday – Sunday).

This year we employed 4 camping staff (working in 2 teams of 2) and 1 senior camp worker to coordinate the team and oversee handovers and ensure continuity.

Leaders from all the groups attending the camp attended a half day briefing session in June. This included handing out the necessary paperwork, introducing the groups to their camping partners, transport arrangements, planning for the programme and menus. We also brought a couple of tents to the session and these were erected by the group so they could see what they would be sleeping in this year. Child Protection and the code of conduct (Camp Promise) were also included. There was also time for questions and answers about the project. One of the camping staff team also attended the session.



The camp senior worker coordinated the physical set up of the camp in the days prior to the arrival of the groups. We spent 2 days, buying food and preparing activities for the children, setting up the kitchen, and erecting the storage tent for all art materials, play equipment and camping materials such as spare tents and sleeping bags. On rainy days the marquee could also be used for activities and arts and crafts sessions. In the next 24 hours the remainder of the camp staff team participated in team building and skill sharing exercises; including tracing and marking routes for the night walks, how to supervise children when using knives for Forest Skills and cooking, and camp fire cooking. They were also briefed on working practice, attendees and special requirements of individuals and groups.

## Home in a field

The site of the PATH camp feels wonderfully remote, surrounded by the Hainault forest and fields full of cattle and sheep. In a bid to try out new sleeping arrangements we camped in 2 person dome tents, donated by Mile End Children's Park, and now available for loan to PATH members. People who like a little more space camped in the larger PATH Vango Force Tens, and a few people brought their own tents. We were happily surprised with the success of the 2 person tents, the children could put them up and down and treated them with much more respect than has been given to the larger tents used in previous years.

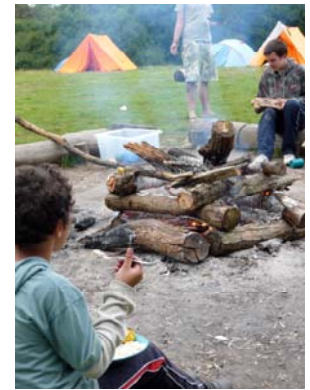
*"I really enjoyed camping. I don't want to leave, I want to stay here with my new friends"* 11 year old boy: Glamis Adventure Playground





## Children's Learning

The simple design of the dome tents meant that on arrival the children set up camp themselves. Pairing up to share tents, working out who would sleep with whom and in what format the tents should be pitched was an unforeseen team building activity. This gave the children a great sense of achievement and felt the camp was theirs as they had been a part of making it their home for a few days (this year our feedback book is full of drawings of tents). Each child that attended was also involved (along with their project leaders) in learning how to look after tents; opening and sealing the doors, loosening/tightening guy ropes, un-bagging, bagging and cleanliness of sleeping bags with consideration for others groups who will use them afterwards.



Because we had two children only sharing the blue dome tents provided by PATH, this led to a harmonious and calm atmosphere in camp at bed time, with everyone falling asleep promptly on entering their tents for a good night sleep.

The children learned about behaviour and procedures for residential trips: the importance of keeping the site tidy; picking up rubbish and clearing away materials and equipment that had been used during activities, as well as codes of conduct for staying in the countryside such as closing gates, not feeding animals and respecting wildlife.

Children and leaders who had attended the project for some years are now familiar with the landscape and were invaluable in helping the rest of the group settle in to a place that for some is scary and even hostile.

Each year new activities are introduced by PATH leaders, sleeping out under the stars provided a novel experience for the groups. Only the most adventurous dared sleep outside of a tent.

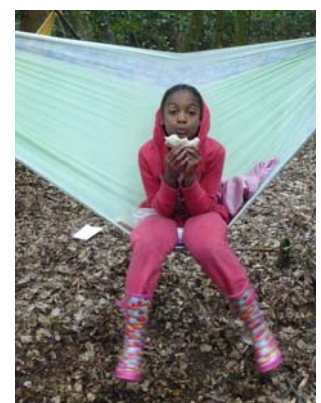
The PATH camp team remarked on how smoothly the programme runs now and noted that is due to the project leaders feeling more confident in their abilities to lead a group on an outdoors residential thanks to at least one visit to the camping project. The whole project is lead with a sense of practicality and efficiency with an overriding sense of calmness as everybody is by now experienced at getting children to bed, organising activities and preparing food in the kitchen and on the camp fire for large numbers.



## Healthy Eating

*"I have never seen pop corn cooked on a fire, I like how it jumps and the sound it makes"* 10 year old boy: All Hallows

For the second year running PATH emphasised healthy eating, fruit and vegetables were bought fresh and in bulk from New Spitalfields Market. The children and leaders were involved in all preparation of food, suggestions of menus and recipes; it was wonderful that everybody had the opportunity to try recipes



originating from a varied range of cultures, the appreciation showed by the sudden peace when all sat down to eat a meal.

Cooking on the fire was a great success. Corn on the cob, baked on embers, was eagerly unpeeled and devoured, some turning the husk into a hat and wearing it on their heads. The children and adults spent time chatting informally about what the fruit or vegetable is, its country of origin and how different people prefer to cook and eat it.

This year we had several farm visits, as well as getting a chance to see a wide range of fruit and vegetables growing the children also had the opportunity to see and hold newly born animals. The link between these cute and fluffy creatures and their end purpose as someone's dinner was occasionally remarked upon! One young girl held a chick for the first time, she was tickled by how soft, yellow and fluffy it was.



**"It's the first time I hold a baby chicken, I pulled my jumper over my hand because it tickles"** 12 year old girl: Lambeth Family Link

## The Activities

*"Thank u, I had the best time eva, the ropes were cool I did not fall in"* 13 year old girl: Weavers Adventure Playground

The activities provided by Lambourne End Outdoor Centre as well as the activities organised by PATH staff gave children a chance to stretch their abilities and to work in teams, meeting new people and coordinating responsibilities. For example, the treasure hunt and quest included cryptic clues, lateral thinking puzzles and physical challenges to overcome as a team, so the abilities of many different children were essential. The ropes challenge, raft building, swimming, night walk, forest skills, whittling, den building, pond dipping, farm visit, mystery trail also required children to apply themselves and stretch their imagination and physical abilities all while enjoying themselves greatly. Being blindfolded while following a rope trail during the night gave them a whole new sensory experience, where they relied on their sense of touch and team effort to guide them along an unfamiliar trail in the woods.



*"I loved the quest p.s we were the best cos we worked well as a team and we didn't let the Troll get us, ha ha"* child: Weavers Adventure playground

One of our camp staff is also a Forest School instructor; his fire making skills brought bushcraft away from Bear Grylls and Ray Mears and into real life for the children.

*"The children gathered a variety of tinder - wood shavings, dried grass, lint, and even small twigs; they balled the tinder up loosely to allow plenty of air flow, and shaped it into a birds nest, the PATH leader struck the fire flint, creating sparks and finally a fire emerged."* Sioned Huws. Inspired the children went on to experiment with other

ways of creating fire, using the fire bow proved only slightly less time consuming than rubbing two stones together and did result in smoke, heat and embers.

The children and project leaders are encouraged to use knives whilst on camp. The use of them is risk assessed and we have a set of specialist knives for whittling. For inner city children it is important to learn that a knife is a wonderful tool in the right hands not an ugly weapon. Even simple projects like creating a pointy stick to toast marshmallows and bread takes concentration, skill and a responsible approach.



Arts and crafts activities used resources close to hand, such as lanterns made from sticks and tissue paper. As well as brightening up the camp they inspired project leaders for future activities away from camp.

A highlight for the children is having the time and space to create their own dens in the woods with the aim of sleeping in them overnight. Sleeping out under the stars was a totally new experience, the next day they were so proud that they had slept outside all through the night; one boy told us about all the birds he heard and saw very early in the morning.

The children were fascinated by pond dipping, particularly as they caught rare great crested newts. Walks and forays in to the surrounding countryside offered chances to identify the local flora and fauna and discuss what was poisonous! Posters and identification charts were displayed in the cabin and used. *"I caught a great crested newt with my net, it was exciting it swim very fast in the pot and looked like a dinosaur from Jurassic Park"* 10 year old boy: Dream Team



### **Inclusive Integration**

The camp encourages the attendance of children of all abilities, although none of the Tower Hamlets specialist special needs groups attend it was the second year of attendance from Lambeth Family Link who joined up with Al Huda and All Hallows. A common love of football, song and dance united these three diverse groups, children with disabilities, Somali Muslims and Christians. Other projects also brought children with emotional social and behavioural difficulties. Some activities were slightly modified for children with additional needs, the treasure hunt was adapted to a smaller area within their village of dens and they looked for hidden treasures but without the clues.

In the future we would like even more children with disabilities to attend the camping project and will continue to seek a partner within the borough to achieve this.



## Statistics

TOTAL NUMBER OF CHILDREN ATTENDING CAMP	<b>80</b>	
GENDER	MALE	FEMALE
	<b>39</b>	<b>41</b>



AGE	8 to 9	10 to 11	12 to 13	14 to 15	16+
	<b>10</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>
ETHNICITY	White British	Black British	Asian	Somali	Mixed background
	<b>40</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
SPECIAL NEEDS	Autistic	Down Syndrome	Eye sight and hearing	ADSD	Other
	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>2</b>

### Projects attending:

Glamis Adventure Playground – 9 children + 3 Leaders

All Hallows – 7 children + 2 Leaders + 2 Volunteer

Weavers Adventure Playground – 12 children + 2 Leader+1 Volunteer

Al Huda Boys – 12 Children + 2 Leaders

Dream Team – 11 Children + 3 Leaders

Lambeth Family Link- 4 Children +3 Leaders + 1 Volunteer

Cubitt Town Youth Project 13 Children + 3 Leaders + 1 Volunteer

Spitafields City Farm 12 Children + 3 Leaders + 1 Volunteer

**21 leaders attended and a further 7 volunteers.**

**16 leaders and volunteers attended the pre camp briefing and training**

*“I liked sleeping out the best”* 8 year old girl: Weavers Adventure Playground

*“Elephants ride bikes in the attic and a penguins came to tea, these are new songs I learnt around the camp fire”*

<b>CAMPING PROJECT INCOME AND EXPENDITURE-2009</b>			
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>BUDGET</b>	<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>INCOME</b>
Primary Care Trust	5000		5000
Early Years camp	2290		2290
PATH	3000		3000
Fees to projects	4050		4050
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14340</b>		
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
SALARIES AND WAGES		6987.66	
VOLUNTEER EXPENSE		0	
VENUE HIRE		150	
cleaning sleeping bags		250	
CAMP FOOD		1343.54	
EQUIPMENT		457.5	
staff and travel expenses		384.67	
PUBLICITY AND POSTAGE		40	
MANAGEMENT FEES/admin		360	
replacement tools		76.59	
ACTIVITIES and camp fees		4290	
<b>TOTAL INCOME/EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>£14,340</b>	<b>£14,340</b>
<b>GAINS OR LOSS</b>			<b>£0</b>

#### **PATH Staff:**

Weekday Team – Kunhi Salam and Jack Walker  
 Weekend Team – Jacquie Reid and Jake Hally-Milne  
 Coordinator – Sioned Huws  
 Volunteer – Mikaela Reid  
 Project Manager – Suzannah Walker

#### **After the camp**

The tents were checked over and damaged ones recycled to make into dens for next summer. The camping equipment is now stored and available for projects to borrow for their own camping trips.

#### **In Conclusion**

We hope to continue offering camping experiences for Tower Hamlets young people; in 2010 we aim to increase the number of disabled children attending.

We would like to thank all our funders who made this camping project possible: Tower Hamlets Early Years and NHS Tower Hamlets.

Sioned Huws and Suzannah Walker 2009

