



LEARNING THROUGH ADVENTURE 2017-2020

‘Outdoor learning can influence how young people behave and the lifestyle choices they make.’

Source: England Marketing (2009),
Report to Natural England on
childhood and nature



FOREWORD

As Executive member for Culture and Leisure, I am pleased to have the opportunity to introduce this strategy.

There currently exists a wealth of opportunities to participate in outdoor learning and adventurous activities in Manchester.

This strategy sets out how we will build on this to ensure all children and young people have access to a range of outdoor learning that enables them to have fun, stay healthy and improve their long-term outcomes.

Councillor Luthfur Rahman

Executive member for Culture and Leisure,
Manchester City Council



INTRODUCTION

The city of Manchester is a fantastic place in which to find adventure; it has a wealth of outdoor learning and adventurous activities for children, young people and their families. Facilities within the city boundary range from municipal parks (Heaton Park is the biggest in Europe) to dedicated centres for a host of activities, such as cycling, water sports, climbing and skateboarding.

Easily accessible from Manchester are four National Parks, which offer Manchester residents the opportunity to experience a host of outdoor activities, including hill walking and the more adventurous rock climbing, caving and mountain-biking.

The development of a strategy for outdoor adventure is central to the commitment of Manchester City Council and its partners to facilitate the participation of our children, young people and families in outdoor learning.



VISION

The Manchester Children and Young People's Plan describes the vision for all children and young people

‘Our Manchester – building a safe, happy, healthy and successful future for children and young people.’

This means all children and young people having access to and enjoying high-quality outdoor learning and adventure appropriate for their age, ability and experience.

ACHIEVING THE VISION

To achieve this vision will require:

- + Developing collaborative partnerships across all key stakeholders to strengthen, grow and co-ordinate the opportunities.
- + Raising standards and improving the quality of the outdoor learning offer.
- + Working with partners to increase the numbers of children and young people accessing outdoor learning.
- + Reducing the barriers to participation.
- + Marketing and communicating the outdoor learning offer and the benefits of outdoor learning for children and young people to our partners and the wider community.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the strategy is to maximise the accessibility and use of the range of facilities across the city and beyond. Working with partners from across the outdoor activity sector and business community we will aim to create a sustainable and accessible outdoor learning offer.

All local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure sufficiency of educational and recreational activities for young people. Manchester currently meets this duty through commissioning and direct provision.

It is widely recognised that participation and engagement in outdoor learning has many benefits for children, young people and their families. These include:

- + Physical and mental fitness
 - + Confidence and self-esteem
 - + Experience of managed risk
 - + Employability skills
 - + Understanding and appreciation of the natural environment
 - + Developing and sustaining friendships and relationships
 - + Supporting learning in the classroom
 - + Having fun
- (see Appendix 1).

The strategy aims to ensure that stakeholders champion the benefits of outdoor learning and support the implementation of the strategy.

WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

Our children and young people will benefit from the following outcomes through participation in outdoor learning:

- + A lifelong interest in outdoor learning and enjoyment of the countryside through recreational activities.
- + Personal confidence and self-esteem through taking on challenges and achieving success.
- + Self-awareness and social skills, and an appreciation of the contributions and achievements of themselves and others.
- + Awareness of the natural environment and an understanding of conservation and sustainability.
- + A range of skills in outdoor learning, including how to manage risk and stay safe.
- + Initiative, self-reliance, responsibility, perseverance and commitment.
- + Key employability skills of communication, problem-solving, leadership and teamwork.

DEFINITION

For the purposes of this document the term ‘Outdoor Learning and Adventurous Activity’ refers to physical activities and experiences that:

- + normally take place outdoors, including but not restricted to: mountaineering, kayaking, climbing, orienteering, skiing, sailing, Forest Schools, cycling, skateboarding, camp-craft skills, and learning about the natural environment outside the classroom
- + involve challenges that are managed safely and aim to build resilience and a sense of adventure among children and young people.



WHO WILL BENEFIT?

Ultimately, the strategy aims to benefit all residents of Manchester across its vibrant and diverse communities, especially children and young people aged eight to 19 years old (and those up to 25 years old if they have a disability or they are a care leaver).

The aim is to have a range of both universal and targeted outdoor learning opportunities, recognising that vulnerable children and young people will need additional support and resources to ensure full participation in outdoor learning.



CONTEXT

Manchester has a wide range of opportunities for children, young people and their families to participate in outdoor adventurous activities across the city (see Appendix 4). Several of these opportunities can be found in some of our poorer neighbourhoods. Activities are often free or low cost to attract children and young people who may not have the resources to travel or pay entrance fees, or have the equipment needed to fully engage in activities.

However, social and economic barriers still exist for vulnerable groups of children and young people, particularly disabled children and young people, looked after children, care leavers and those with caring responsibilities. These children and young people are at the heart of this strategy and the challenge is to break down any barriers to participation to ensure these opportunities are accessible to all children, young people and their families.

All too often, children's and young people's engagement in outdoor adventurous activities is limited to a one-off or occasional experience often accessed through a school residential or holiday outing. Although these experiences are often beneficial and memorable, they do not lead to children and young people developing skills or pursuing an interest in an activity. Therefore, there is a need to develop a comprehensive offer that allows children and young people to progress and gain qualifications and the expertise that will help them to reach their full potential and, for some, lead to a pathway into employment.

Employers often report that young people lack some of the 'softer' employability skills, such as resilience and teamwork, and it is widely recognised that outdoor learning is an ideal vehicle for the development of these skills. It is a top priority for Manchester to encourage and facilitate skills development so that young people can take up the job opportunities across the city.

The Manchester Outdoor Learning and Adventurous Activity Strategy will contribute and link to the delivery of a number of national and local strategies (see page 29):

- + Our Manchester Strategy 2016–2025
- + Manchester Children and Young People's Plan
- + Manchester City Council's physical education school and physical activity strategy.

There is the recognition that outdoor learning is also an important aspect of a school's national curriculum from key stage 2 to 4. The Department for Education's physical education programme of study states the following:

'Take part in outdoor and adventurous activities which present intellectual and physical challenges and be encouraged to work in a team, building on trust and developing skills to solve problems, either individually or as a group.'



LEARNING AWAY FROM HOME

The importance and benefits that an outdoor learning experience away from home can offer children and young people are widely recognised by schools and youth and play organisations. Many schools acknowledge how effective a residential experience can be in supporting the transition from primary to secondary school and helping to develop friendships and encourage teamwork. Youth and play organisations have traditionally used a residential stay at an outdoor centre to develop young people's confidence and personal skills.

Research conducted by Learning Away, an initiative set up by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, has established that residential experiences have a significant impact on children's and young people's personal, social and educational development.



THE CURRENT POSITION

Manchester is rich in high-quality outdoor resources that are accessed by thousands of children, young people and families every year. Some of the more adventurous activities include mountain biking at Clayton Vale, canoeing on the River Mersey, sailing at Manchester City Council's Debdale Sailing Centre, indoor climbing at Manchester Climbing Centre, and gorge walking at Ghyll Head - Manchester City Council's outdoor activities centre in the Lake District. Families, children and young people also take part in outdoor learning through their participation in Forest Schools, Duke of Edinburgh Scheme, National Citizenship service, local youth groups, Scouts, Guides and the Woodcraft Folk, to name but a few.

Although there is a wide variety of activities and facilities available across Manchester, there is very little evidence that the opportunities are co-ordinated or marketed as an outdoor learning city 'offer' to children and young people. Therefore, the majority of children may participate in one or a number of 'experiences' without being able to engage in a way that sustains their participation or encourages them to progress and develop their skills, confidence and expertise in an activity.

The current participation of children and young people in outdoor learning has to be seen in the context of a number of significant challenges, including reduced funding, competing demands on curriculum time in schools, and a risk-averse health and safety culture.

In particular, children and young people from more disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to be able to continue their participation beyond a 'taster' session due to a lack of resources or support in accessing provision. Despite these challenges, there is a real commitment from those working with and supporting children and young people to offer an all-round high-quality education and leisure offer.



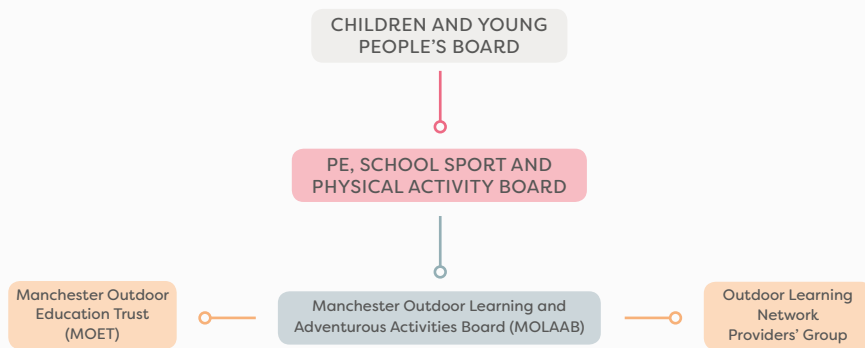
The strategy also recognises the importance of the work with children three to seven years old and their parents. Early years provision, parks and playgrounds create environments in which children can experience an appropriate level of safe adventure through play with their parents and carers. Research has shown that children develop quickly in the early years, and through play and adventurous activities children's physical and thinking abilities are advanced, and awareness of risk-taking and adventure is established. We aim to provide appropriate pathways and opportunities for children to be able to develop their abilities and enjoy outdoor learning into their childhood and teenage years.

The strategy also acknowledges the importance of carers, parents and other family members in supporting children's participation in outdoor learning, and aims to identify opportunities to encourage and facilitate joint participation. There will be a particular focus on those families with vulnerable children and young people, such as those with learning and physical disabilities or in the care system.



GOVERNANCE AND CO-ORDINATION

There is an established Manchester Outdoor Learning and Adventurous Activity Board (MOLAAB), which supports and advises on the development of outdoor learning in the city. The board has representation from Manchester Outdoor Education Trust, Manchester City Council, schools and outdoor learning providers. The MOLAAB will be accountable to the PE, School Sport and Physical Activity Board, which reports directly to the Children and Young People's Board.



Manchester Outdoor Education Trust (MOET) is an independent trust with charitable status. MOET membership is made up of individuals who have a love for the outdoors and who wish to promote the value and benefit of outdoor learning.

The Outdoor Learning Network Provider group consists of active individuals and organisations in the outdoor education field that provide a range of outdoor learning activities for Manchester residents. The group was established to share knowledge and expertise on outdoor education, and develop new and innovative ways of introducing the outdoors to as many young people across Manchester as possible. It welcomes new members who are working within the outdoor education field.



APPENDIX 1: THE RATIONALE AND BENEFITS OF OUTDOOR LEARNING

Outdoor learning provides challenge, adventure and enjoyment, a new or deeper understanding of the world, and the development of confidence and resilience, as well as many more benefits for children and young people. Outdoor adventure experiences are often remembered for a lifetime; they can take place in the immediate surroundings, in an activity centre or green spaces within the city, further afield, or through a residential experience.

Use of the outdoors makes a major contribution to physical and environmental education and enhances many other curriculum areas. It contributes to personal growth and social awareness, and develops skills for life. Qualities such as a sense of responsibility and a purpose in life are nurtured. There is also a great deal of intrinsic enjoyment and satisfaction to be experienced from participation in outdoor activities; they build self-confidence and self-esteem, which are fundamental to any young person's development.

Participating in exciting and enjoyable outdoor activities with teachers, youth workers and peers reinforces a positive attitude to education and contributes significantly to the general ethos of a school or youth group. Direct experience of the outdoors stimulates and reinforces learning across many areas of the curriculum, and the use of the outdoors encourages young people to take greater responsibility for their own learning. Experience in the outdoors provides rich opportunities for personal and social development through carefully structured group work in challenging situations.

Trust, care, tolerance and the willingness to give and accept support are all encouraged, and antisocial behaviour is challenged. Opportunities are presented to exhibit and develop effective interpersonal behaviour and to work co-operatively and effectively in teams.

Outdoor learning introduces young people to a range of sports and physical activities that will enrich their lives and develop the skills and knowledge essential for safe participation. Outdoor exercise contributes greatly to health and fitness, and continuing participation in outdoor pursuits encourages the maintenance of a healthy lifestyle into middle age and beyond. Active learning and adventure outdoors introduces young people to the environment in a way that develops an understanding and appreciation. It fosters sensitivity to the environment and helps young people to see themselves in a global context with an awareness of the need for sustainable use of the world's natural resources.

‘Depending on the approach, research has shown such activities can boost personal development, have a therapeutic effect on children suffering trauma, improve school attendance and educational attainment, and have a positive effect on health and fitness. In fact, outdoor learning touches on almost every hot-topic policy area affecting young people, whether it is closing the achievement gap, reducing obesity, or addressing challenging behaviour.’*

*Source: Children and young people article ‘Getting out and about’ July 2015

APPENDIX 2: RESEARCH

Evidence suggests that children's development is enhanced when they are exposed to safe, challenging, adventurous activities that involve their natural environment. Not only does adventurous education impact on their personal and social development – helping them to learn new skills, building their confidence and raising self-esteem – but it also creates opportunities for children to learn about their natural environment.

'Research has found that children are losing their connection with the natural environment and that children in urban environments are particularly disadvantaged. Research has also identified that today 10% of children play in the natural environment compared to 40% of adults when they were young.* Manchester has a wealth



of natural environments for young people to enjoy, plus its surrounding National Parks mean young people can take advantage of more wild and remote areas within a short journey. Outdoor learning can influence how young people behave and the lifestyle choices they make.

* Source: England Marketing (2009), Report to Natural England on childhood and nature: a survey on changing relationships with nature across generations. First published 10 May 2012

ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY

Provision for Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) varies for a range of historical, geographical and other reasons. Some local authorities have outstanding levels of provision of service, while others offer very little support. In the latter cases, private sector and voluntary sector organisations provide access to LOtC. A small number of local authorities have increased their support over years and have found that demand often exceeds supply. Again, children's access to LOtC depends far too much on where they live and often those children in the poorest parts of the country have the least access to LOtC. A recent survey reported that over 60 per cent of children polled felt they did not learn enough about the countryside at school.*

This disparity of opportunity is particularly tragic in that most disadvantaged pupils have potentially most to gain from the transformative impact that outdoor education has for many young people.

*Source: Natural England Commissioned Report NECR092 Learning in the Natural Environment: Review of social and economic benefits and barriers. First published 10 May 2012

APPENDIX 3: CURRENT OUTDOOR LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MANCHESTER RESIDENTS

The Duke of Edinburgh Award (DofE) in Manchester is one of the most successful schemes in the Northern region, with 45 organisations operating as a direct licence centre delivering the DofE Award. In 2015, the DofE Award in Manchester enabled 2,000 participants to be involved, and of this number 850 young people went on to achieve a Bronze, Silver or Gold Award.

Sailing and water-based activities can be accessed at a number of sites in Manchester: the reservoirs at Debdale Park, Chorlton Water Park, and various canal locations. These locations provide a range of courses, holiday schemes and clubs for young people and adults, enabling Manchester schools, youth groups and individuals to participate in a range of water-based activities.

Cycling and skating activities are well catered for in Manchester. Facilities include an Olympic-standard cycling track, an indoor BMX track, a mountain bike trail run, and a skatepark. Cyclists with disabilities can also access the sport, as adapted cycles are available at locations across the city.

Green spaces in the city include Wythenshawe Park, Heaton Park, Boggart Hole Clough and Platt Fields. These provide a base for a number of organisations to stage various low-level outdoor activities, including camping, horse-riding, orienteering and cycling.

Indoor climbing can be accessed at a number of sites in Manchester.

Forest Schools are a specialised learning approach that sit within and complement the wider context of outdoor and woodland education. It is an ethos that offers learners regular opportunities to achieve and develop confidence and self-esteem through hands-on learning experiences in a woodland or natural environment with trees. There are primary schools across Manchester that have adopted this ethos, and teachers are trained as accredited leaders to embed Forest Schools in the school curriculum.

Scout and Guide Associations have clubs established throughout Manchester; they provide opportunities for children and young people to experience adventurous activities, learn new skills and make friends.



The Woodcraft Folk have a number of groups in central and south Manchester. Their aim is to offer young people opportunities to grow in confidence, learn about the world, and start to understand how to value our planet and each other.

There are many outdoor activity centres across the country available for organisations to choose from. Since 1967, Manchester residents have been fortunate to have access to Manchester City Council-owned Ghyll Head Outdoor Education Centre, situated next to Windermere in Cumbria. The centre has a state-of-the-art waterside facility that enables individuals with severe disabilities to access a range of water-based activities. The centre provides a multi-activity residential experience and bespoke courses. In 2015, over 2,500 Manchester residents (including school and youth groups) attended courses at the centre.



‘Not only does adventurous education impact on their personal and social development, learning new skills, confidence-building and raised self-esteem, but it also creates opportunities for children to learn about their natural environment.’

Source: England Marketing (2009),
Report to Natural England on
childhood and nature



APPENDIX 4: MANCHESTER'S OUTDOOR LEARNING RESOURCES

Centres and activities (not an exhaustive list):

Clayton Vale Mountain Bike Trail and Pump Track

www.nationalcyclingcentre.com/mtb

Debdale Outdoor Centre (watersports and climbing)

www.manchester.gov.uk/debdale

Factory Youth Zone (climbing wall)

www.thefactoryyz.org

Forest Schools

www.forestschoolassociation.org

Greater Manchester Orienteering Activities

www.gmoa.org.uk

Manchester Climbing Centre

www.manchesterclimbingcentre.com

Manchester Young Lives Adventure Playgrounds

www.manchesteryounglives.org.uk

NACRO – Greater Manchester Outdoor Learning Team

www.nacro.org.uk/services/greater-manchester/manchester-duke-of-edinburghs-award/

NCC BMX Track

www.nationalcyclingcentre.com/bmx

Platt Fields BMX Track

www.nationalcyclingcentre.com/bmx

Projekts Skatepark

www.projektsmcr.com

Simply Cycling – Wythenshawe Park, Longford Park and Boggart Hole Clough

www.simply-cycling.org

Venture-Out

www.venture-out.co.uk

Water Adventure Centre – Droylsden, Ashton Canal, Chorlton Water Park and Newton Heath, Rochdale Canal

www.wateradventurecentre.org.uk

Wythenshawe Riding Stables

www.wythenshaweparkridingstables.co.uk

Residential centres:

Buxworth Base, Peak District

www.burnagesportscentre.co.uk

Ghyll Head Outdoor Education Centre, Cumbria

www.oneeducation-outdoors.co.uk

APPENDIX 5: NATIONAL GOVERNING BODIES OF SPORT, OUTDOOR EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER WEBSITES

Adventure Activities Licensing Authority

www.hse.gov.uk/aala

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award

www.theaward.org

Learning Away

www.learningaway.org.uk/case-studies

Learning Through Adventure

www.learningthroughadventure.co.uk

SnowSport GB

www.snowsportengland.org.uk

The British Canoe Union

www.britishcanoeing.org.uk

The British Caving Association

www.british-caving.org.uk

The British Mountaineering Council

www.thebmc.co.uk

The British Orienteering Federation

www.britishorienteering.org.uk

The Institute for Outdoor Learning

www.outdoor-learning.org

The Royal Yachting Association

www.rya.org.uk

Youth Sport Trust's 'Top Outdoors' programme

www.youthsporttrust.org

REFERENCES

Education and Recreational Activities Statutory Duty

www.education.gov.uk

Our Manchester Strategy

www.manchester.gov.uk/mcrstrategy

The Department of Education's Physical Education Programme of Study

www.gov.uk

The Manchester Children and Young People's Plan

www.manchester.gov.uk

GO
PLAY
OUTSIDE!



MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL