

**catch
22**

Social Action Toolkit

Top tips from the Community Space Challenge Project



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Introduction

Transforming green spaces, transforming people's lives

When Catch22 launched Community Space Challenge (CSC) in 2007, it was a new and innovative approach. In 70 of England's most deprived neighbourhoods, youth workers set out to persuade young people to care enough about their local environment to want to go out with spades and paint brushes to transform their unloved and neglected spaces. Since then, the programme has seen initiatives to replace offensive graffiti with new community murals; it has transformed neglected planters outside of libraries and communities centres, has built new raised beds on bare concrete and restored overgrown allotments; it has seen work to improve habitats on nature reserves, at fishing ponds and in community woodlands; and has seen young people organise community events and set up 'pop-up' shops. It's fair to say that expectations for the programme have been exceeded in a number of ways. In the six years of the programme, over 14,500 young people gave over 150,000 hours of their time to improve over 1,500 community spaces; and along the way, young people have learned new skills, have made new friends in their communities and have helped restore community pride.

Community Space Challenge is a great example of social action – activities organised and delivered by volunteers across the country to tackle local challenges or help improve community spirit. Social Action might involve organising a fundraising campaign for a local charity, running activities to improve the lives of residents in an elderly care home or helping to run a community library or shop. There is nothing new about social action, and nothing new about communities working together to improve their local public spaces. Indeed, Catch22 has a rich history of delivering social action programmes. These include the Community Youth Volunteering and Youth Design Against Crime projects, and more recently the National Citizen Service (NCS); but over the past six years, Community

In the six years of the programme, over 14,500 young people gave over 150,000 hours of their time to improve over 1500 community spaces.



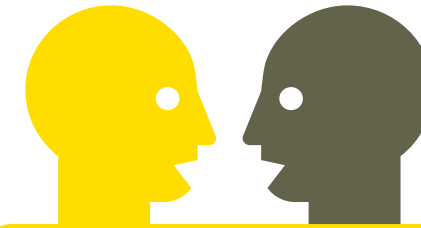
Space Challenge has pioneered a model for engaging young people in *environmental* social action initiatives across England, and this toolkit is designed to share some of the lessons learnt by Catch22 during that time.

Environmental social action initiatives do more than improve local spaces or teach people more about wildlife, horticulture or recycling. They require volunteers to turn up on time, to work safely with their peers, to learn new skills and to communicate effectively with others in their community – and our external evaluation has proved that the approach has a significant and lasting impact on those involved. The CSC model is a flexible, dynamic and engaging addition to any existing portfolio and has proven effective in attracting young people at risk of exclusion; at changing perceptions (and challenging stereotypes) within the community and providing good value for money. From the smallest litter-

picks to the biggest building projects; CSC can be run as a single one-off initiative by a member of the public or as a series of year-round events to engage whole families.

The programme has also shown how improving community spaces can generate income. One CSC project in Birmingham has converted an abandoned allotment into a market garden which now supplies the restaurant at Aston Villa Football Club. Meanwhile Halton Borough Council is using its experience of graffiti removal to deliver street cleaning services through contracts managed, in part, by young people.

More recently, the formula has also been tested with adults through an investment from the Cabinet Office's Social Action Fund through a 'CSC All Ages programme': an intergenerational social action programme where young people work directly alongside adults in the community to improve their local public spaces.



Development is ultimately not a matter of money or physical capital, or foreign exchange, but of the capacity of a society to tap the root of popular creativity, to free up and empower people to exercise their intelligence and collective wisdom.

– Kari Polanyi Levitt

Not surprisingly Catch22 has been asked, on a number of occasions, by organisations across the country, ‘how to do’ practical social action initiatives along the lines of the CSC model. This toolkit draws on the experiences of the last six years to answer this question: with instructions, advice, information, and top tips on how to run a project with volunteers young and old to improve community spaces in your area.

We are also delighted to include a number of thinkpieces in this toolkit. These are reflections from staff who helped deliver Community Space Challenge and give a valuable insight into some of the journeys that our projects have been on; not to mention providing some great tips for your own project.

What can the CSC approach do for you?

CSC has demonstrated that environmental social action can provide an inclusive participation model that attracts people of all ages, backgrounds and interests to get involved in a myriad of ways that best match their interests. From the physical activity of turning over soil that offers a break to the monotony experienced by the office worker; to the sharing of horticultural expertise acquired over a lifetime of allotment maintenance; to the in-kind giving from local companies and residents in the form of gardening tools, lunches and refreshments. CSC has demonstrated to us that people like to participate in many different ways

What can environmental social action do for my organisation?

- **Environmental social action projects provide two sets of benefits for the price of one: training NEETS, and keeping young people out of trouble, keeping young people in school at the same time as improving, and managing, public spaces.**
- **They provide a wide range of different activities for new volunteers to engage with.**
- **They engage new people and strengthen communities.**
- **They improve confidence and safety in urban spaces.**
- **They can help to create a link between residents and their local authority.**
- **They can provide access to new funders and opportunities for new sources of income.**
- **Improve employability skills for young people.**

throughout their volunteering life. Offering this choice has allowed us to create a diverse mix of volunteers that all bring their own contribution, big or small.

We have seen CSC acting as a catalyst for citizens and communities to begin taking difficult decisions, balancing competing demands, and solving complex local problems themselves. CSC puts local decision-making in the hands of local people, it gives them a voice for their opinions and a means by which they can take ownership of their local area.

Increased contact with neighbours, bringing people together from different backgrounds, and familiarity with local institutions can change the way we think about each other and dissolve stereotypes. CSC allows local people a forum in which they can prioritise projects that they feel will improve their community, giving them the satisfaction of seeing their ambition realised.

It's over to you

Whether you are a youth services manager considering developing a new programme to expand your portfolio of work, or you are a community worker interested in trying something new – this toolkit is designed to help you.

We have created sections on the key topics that we recommend you consider in order to give you the best chance of success in delivering environmental social action projects. We have

seen CSC change places, lives, opinions and behaviours. We have tested different approaches and styles, delivery partners and staffing regimes, budgets and monitoring tools. Thank you to all that have contributed their time, effort, muscle-power and money to make CSC happen, **the baton is now yours.**

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit is divided into three sections:

Section One provides a summary of some of the different activities which might fall under the category of environmental social action. It is designed to help you decide what might be right for your project, what the benefits and challenges are, and what you might need to get started.

Section Two gives more detail on how to run all types of environmental social action and includes info and advice on planning and organising your project. It also has advice on recruiting and retaining staff and volunteers, on monitoring the impact of your work, on understanding your health and safety and child protection responsibilities and on ensuring the sustainability of your work.

Section Three summarises the costs of running social action initiatives and is designed to give you a better idea of what resources you'll need to make your project a success.

Thinkpiece:

Can we gamify social action?

The short answer is 'yes', and the longer answer is 'we must'. To embed social action in the lives of young people we must make it fun and relevant to the way they interact with the world. This is at the heart of Catch22's latest digital project, **Plan.Do, The Social Action App**.

The gamification of Plan.Do is what makes it so absolutely unique. Plan.Do has been consciously built with 'game dynamics' at its heart, in an attempt to revolutionise the way that we, the practitioner engage with our client or learner. Plan.Do has been constructed to make social action projects more fun through game-like characteristics. In the same way that game dynamics have long been used in the electronic gaming world to 'hook' players into a story, ensuring that they keep coming back after they go out to play football or eat their lunch. They are used in marketing to manipulate our purchasing behaviour, for example:

- we are rewarded with different coloured credit cards depending on our use of credit (appealing to our search for status and identity),
- we are directed to certain places at certain times through happy hour at the bar (appealing at the appointment dynamic).
- They are used online to encourage the ideal behaviour, for example:
 - game dynamics are employed by Wikipedia, to harness our deep desire to contribute and learn more (communal learning),
 - game dynamics even manipulate our unstoppable itch to complete a task, as reflected in our 'profile completion' bar on LinkedIn (progression dynamic).

Plan.Do uses a mobile app as a project planning tool. Plan.Do helps young people to plan and share their progress on a social action project with others more easily and at a time and place that suits them. Taking part in social action projects can help participants to develop their employability skills, pursue interests, and mix



with friends and other social groups. The handheld nature of Plan.Do promotes independence in pursuing social action projects in the real world. Plan.Do has been designed alongside and for young people seeking to enter or sustain in Education, Employment or Training (EET). Through reporting on the social action each participant has been involved in, Plan.Do is developing a database of opportunities and challenges that others can replicate in the future. Plan.Do automatically prompts young people to plan ahead, choosing from a range of existing social action opportunities, or to design and pursue their own. Plan.Do provides a youth-friendly, gamified interface that is designed to make planning and participating in social action fun, easy and social.

– **Adrian Taylor, Catch22**

Catch22 launches the first ever youth social action app

Gaining skills and making a difference

Plan.Do (The Social Action App) gives young people the power to be involved in social action on their terms. It puts social action tools into their palms and asks, 'how can you make a difference'?

What does the app do?

Plan.Do will encourage more young people into the world of social action by guiding them through how they can make a project happen, right from setting goals and milestones through to having something to show and talk about to employers at the end.

With the app, young people can:

- make a difference in their community
- take ownership of their social action initiatives
- involve and recruit their peers through leader boards and scores share their achievements on social media channels
- be rewarded and recognised
- develop recognised employability skills

Plan.Do is valuable to young people, employers and programme delivery partners alike. To discuss how your organisation can get involved, please email sarah.sinnott@catch-22.org.uk or visit catch-22.org.uk/The-Social-Action-App.

Young person logs on

Plan.Do



Plan.Do guides a young person through social action projects

1 Identify a problem in the community

2 Set smart goals

3 Determine the resources needed

4 Plan and schedule tasks

5 Collaborate with peers

6 Evaluate and reflect on achievements





SECTION 1

Environmental social action initiatives explained

This section is designed to give you a basic introduction to some of the main types of environmental social action activities with which you might be involved. The types of skills and resources you might need for an allotment project may be quite different to those required for running a Big Lunch event; and this section is designed to give you a quick overview of each of these activities – so that you can decide what's right for you.

- 1.1 Community gardening and landscaping**
- 1.2 Allotments and vegetable growing**
- 1.3 Arts and crafts for community spaces**
- 1.4 Litter picks and community clean-ups**
- 1.5 Public events**
- 1.6 Practical conservation work**
- 1.7 Interior renovations and pop-up shops**



Community gardening and landscaping

Restoring neglected flower beds; building and planting new raised beds; tidying front gardens; and planting trees and bulbs in public parks are great ways in which to make a strong, visible, improvement to public spaces. Young people learn new skills: from horticulture to construction, and the work provides plenty of opportunities for feedback, and involvement, from local residents.

The time required to complete this sort of work varies widely. With enough experience, groups of young people can clear and renovate a small garden belonging to an older person in a couple of hours. On the other hand, major work to clear, plant and construct seats and planters on an estate could take up to six months, working one or two sessions per week.

Good tools are essential for this sort of work, and participants should wear appropriate Personal Protecting Equipment (PPE) (including boots and gloves) when digging or undertaking construction tasks. Remember, work with other local groups as much as possible, think about potential risks in advance of the event, and always bring a first aid kit!

Who is this suitable for?

This sort of work is suitable for children and young people of all ages, although close supervision is needed when working with sharp tools, especially with younger children. It can often be easier to engage under-14s in this sort of work – but, by building in a chance to contribute to the design process and providing opportunities for construction activities, such activities can also be popular with older teenagers.

The benefits

Community gardening activities are a great way for young people to learn new skills, to get active and to achieve the satisfaction of making a strong visual improvement to where they live. More widely, the community benefits from new improved spaces which can be a source of civic pride and somewhere to hold community activities such as barbecues/picnics. Some may even feel that an improved neighbourhood is safer and less

prone to vandalism and crime. During Community Space Challenge, community members often commented that seeing them involved improved their respect for young people and relationships with them.

Key challenges

The key challenges are how to keep the young people motivated during bad weather, and the winter (see section two for more advice on this issue). Most young people find the environmental work satisfying in itself, especially when they are able to see the results of their efforts. Some enjoy hard physical work, while others prefer more delicate tasks. Keeping the gender balance can be a challenge, and if only a few girls are involved, it can be difficult to attract more.



Helpful skills

- **Practical skills in horticulture, gardening, plants or wildlife management;**
- **Youth work or other work with young people at risk;**
- **Woodwork & construction;**
- **Or a willingness to learn all of the above.**

Setting an example: What the CSC projects did...

Young people from Catch22 in Wolverhampton helped clear and plant a neglected garden area belonging to an older people's housing complex. From this, young people went on to clear and plant the gardens of older residents unable to garden themselves.

In South London, young people built and planted wooden raised beds on areas of bare concrete in housing estates. These were in public locations and became really popular with local residents.

In Portsmouth, youngsters cleared an abandoned outdoor space belonging to a church and then built and planted a new garden. This was used by local groups such as mother and toddlers, cub scouts and Sunday schools.

1.2

Allotments and vegetable growing

Allotments or garden areas within youth and community centres can provide an ideal venue in which to practice gardening and construction skills before putting them to the test in more public places. Access to a greenhouse or polytunnel can also provide a dry space in which to work in bad weather and somewhere to produce plants cheaply.

Creating and then managing an allotment plot can be a time-consuming practice; and then once established it will need tending at least twice a week during the summer period. The amount of time it takes to develop the plot can vary depending on the condition – as some may not have been managed for years and consequently will be covered in weeds and scrub; and you may want to construct new features such as a shed, greenhouse, pond and raised beds. On a large, productive allotment, it can be an almost full-time activity if a wide range of vegetables are grown from seed, planted out, cared for and harvested.

However, many young people enjoy using sharp tools to clear weeds and scrub and the physical results can often be striking, giving those involved a real sense of pride. Engaging young people in the ongoing management can often be more challenging – as weeding and watering can be unpopular tasks – and those new to gardening may be put-off by set-backs caused by pests, weeds, and inclement weather. That said, other allotment holders will normally offer their advice freely and may also help with watering and other small tasks during the summer.

Good tools are essential for this sort of work, and participants should wear appropriate PPE (including boots and gloves) when digging or undertaking construction tasks.

Who is this suitable for?

As in the case of Community Gardening and Landscaping, managing an allotment is an ideal activity for children and young people of all ages, although close supervision is needed when working with sharp tools, especially with younger children. It can often be easier to engage under

14s in this sort of work – but building in a chance to feed into the design process and providing opportunities for construction activities can help to engage older teenagers.

The benefits

The benefits include learning new skills and understanding more about how plants grow and where our food comes from, as well as broadening attitudes to food and the environment. Working on an allotment can also help to improve the dietary habits of young people and their families. There are benefits in health, life skills and general education as well as specific learning about plants and food.

The challenges

The key challenges are how to keep the young people motivated during the winter months and rainy days (see section two for more advice on this issue). Most young people find the work satisfying in itself, especially when they are able to see the results of their efforts. Some projects give individual young people their own plants to put in the ground and look after, whilst others manage spaces communally. Some young people enjoy the hard physical work of digging and moving compost, while others prefer more delicate tasks such as sowing seeds and transplanting.

One Community Space Challenge project succeeded in keeping some older girls interested for an extended period when there were livestock such as chickens to look after. It can be helpful to give individuals as much responsibility as possible, as this can be motivating for them and can help them to learn to take responsibility.

Setting an example: What the CSC projects did...

Catch22 in Bristol cleared a neglected allotment plot, and created a centre for their project activities. Some vegetables were cooked on site with the group and some given to the young people to take home. Art projects added information boards and a willow frame. The young people constructed a pond, a shed, cold frames, a scarecrow and various raised beds and the project won a number of local and national awards.

In Birmingham, St Georges CSC created an extensive allotment and greenhouse. One scheme brought in the families of the young people, who took it in turns to cook the vegetables produced, using recipes from their countries of origin, such as the Caribbean and Africa. Some of this featured on the 'Hairy Bikers' TV cookery programme.

Helpful skills

- Practical skills in horticulture, gardening, plants or wildlife management;
- Youth work or other work with young people at risk;
- Woodwork & construction;
- Or a willingness to learn all of the above.



1.3

Arts and crafts for community spaces

(Community murals, light-box projects, mosaics and other ‘street art’)

Community art projects are a great way to engage young people for whom gardening might not be an attractive option: providing the chance for creativity to be unleashed. Graffiti projects are often popular with teenagers and when these become community murals local residents can contribute ideas for the work, such as themes and characters. Community art initiatives can also be used to reflect seasonal or celebratory themes: from Christmas wreaths and other street decorations to mosaics and bunting; to celebrate, and interpret, important events.

Large graffiti murals can take one or two weeks, working most days during a half term or holiday period. Smaller projects can be spread out over a longer period. Construction of mosaics and light boxes can largely be done indoors before they are placed outside, so are suitable for winter months and rainy days.

Key challenges

Art projects can often require new skills, such as graffiti art, which have to be brought in. Staff may also have to learn some specific new skills – such as how to make light boxes or mosaics – but there’s always the option to start with simple projects and then become more adventurous as skills develop.

Who is this suitable for?

Different activities can be found to suit any age. Work on graffiti murals, with spray paint, under the supervision of an expert graffiti artist can often appeal to older boys who are reluctant to engage in other work. They are often happy to work for long hours on their ‘own’ section of a particular wall.

The benefits

Art work such as graffiti murals is usually highly visible to the local community. Community Space Challenge found that residents often commented on how these had brightened up the area, added interest and made it look cared for. Some have said that they became topics of conversation between local people. The work can foster creativity, as young people often have plenty of ideas about things to make and do.



Helpful skills

- Youth work or other work with young people at risk;
- Arts & crafts;
- Woodwork & construction;
- Video & photography.

Some of these skills can be brought in to support the main project staff, either through specialist sessional workers or by commissioning artists to help.

Setting an example: What the CSC projects did...

Young people in Bermondsey, South London, painted a number of community murals around the borough with the help of Positive Arts, a local graffiti project. Themes were chosen by the community and included characters from the neighbourhood. One was in a market area and featured stalls and individuals that were known locally. They were outlined and finished by professional artists, with the young people spray painting the colours. Solar-powered ‘light boxes’ were also built and decorated by young people to add colour and lighting to some areas of the estates.



1.4

Litter picks and community clean-ups

Community litter picks can be a great introduction to environmental social action, requiring no specialist skills and only small amounts of money. They can make a strong visual impact, can help challenge negative perceptions of young people very quickly and can be a great tool for generating discussions about perceptions of place and the local environment, as a first step towards improving an area in a more permanent way.

There are no specialist staff skills needed for this work, except youth work or other work with young people at risk and an appreciation of the value of improving the local environment.

The benefits

Litter picks are suitable activities for a one-off session – and possibly even a half day – if the group has to travel to a special area to be cleared. Young people of any age may be involved and can gain satisfaction from improving the look of an area and a feeling that they have contributed to improving it. They often change their attitude to litter and discourage their friends from dropping it.

Key challenges

Unfortunately, litter picking can be demotivating if done too often, and workers may have to challenge the perception that ‘this is someone else’s job’ or is a punishment for those on community service – so it is important to mix this with other kinds of activity.

Setting an example: What the CSC projects did...

Young people in Derby organised large community clean-up days across the city, advertising the events to local residents and posting skips at key locations in public spaces for local people to use.

In North Washington, young people from Catch22 turned their attention to local beaches: removing rubbish through clean-up days.

1.5

Public events

Organising public events can be a great way to tell everyone about your project, to reach out to new volunteers in your community, and provide an opportunity for everyone to ‘muck in’ and have a go. Using food grown by your project is a great way to use excess produce and to show off your great work!

One-off ‘Big Lunches’ (a concept developed by the Eden Project) and community barbecues or open days for a new garden can raise awareness about the work of the project, can help those involved learn a wide range of new skills and can help generate community pride.

The benefits

Even where ‘improving community cohesion’ is not a specific aim of the project, it can be very satisfying for young and old alike to meet and chat with different members of the community at such events. It can make the young people feel that they are making a positive contribution. Community members have sometimes commented that their respect for the young people had grown and their relationships had improved. In some cases, bringing groups of different young people together for an event can help to reduce tensions and conflicts between them.

Key challenges

The actual event involving the public will probably last a few hours at a weekend or holiday, but the planning and preparation will take several weeks or months beforehand and preparations for a large event can become quite complicated. Nevertheless, planning an event creates a wide range of different jobs and a chance for volunteers and young people to learn new skills. Don’t be afraid to ask mums and dads for help with events and don’t forget that delivering a successful event will be a source of pride for those involved for years to come.

Young people of all ages can make a contribution to the preparation and planning, as well as enjoying the day.



Event checklist

- If yours is a big event, contact your local food standards department well in advance and tell them what you’ve got planned (see page 48).
- Be prepared to spend up to £2,000 on catering, equipment and entertainment (see page 57).
- Don’t forget to invite a community dignitary and the local press – a great opportunity for free publicity (see page 50).
- Why not build an awards ceremony into your event – a great way to publicise the achievements of your volunteers and you’ll probably have a local dignitary available to hand out the awards (page 39).

Setting an example: What the CSC projects did...

The Sobriety Project in Goole held an annual ‘Big Lunch’ event attended by 500 people, in which the young people helped prepare the menu, the publicity and the activities; and then manned stalls on the day.

In Wolverhampton, work on a communal garden for older people led to new friendships between older residents and young people. Sharing cups of tea and biscuits became a regular feature of the work and at the end of the project, the group held a community barbecue.

1.6

Practical conservation work

Wildlife conservation groups such as the RSPB, The Wildlife Trusts, The National Trust and TCV are always looking for opportunities to engage new people in their work. Many also have nature reserves in urban areas where trees need planting or cutting down, hedges need laying, paths and fences need repairing and new habitats (such as ponds) need creating; and offers of help are likely to be welcomed.



Helpful skills

- **Practical skills in horticulture, gardening, plants or wildlife management;**
- **Youth work or other work with young people at risk;**
- **Woodwork & construction.**

The benefits

Working on a nature reserve not only provides easy access to a space in which to work; but partner organisations are also likely to provide skilled members of staff (to help run sessions) and access to tools and other equipment. Nature reserves can be great spaces in which to do environmental education, and provide opportunities to learn practical skills such as construction and land management. 'Bushcraft' and 'green-woodworking' activities led by qualified instructors can often engage those most 'hard-to reach', overcoming barriers and igniting interest – which can then make participants more willing to get their hands dirty.

Unlike some of the other project activities described above, practical conservation work also tends to run year round – with the winter often being the busiest time- particularly for activities such as tree-felling, coppicing and scrub-bashing.

Who is this suitable for?

This work is suitable for all ages, although initially at least, is likely to be most attractive to younger children. However, the opportunity to use sharp tools, enjoy a fire and build things can often attract older young people too.

Key challenges

The challenges include the difficulty of continuing through the worst weather especially in winter, when most practical habitat management needs to be done (although woodland management activities will invariably involve having a fire and tea and biscuits). However some construction work and planning could sometimes be done indoors.

Setting an example: What the CSC projects did...

With support from CSC, The YMCA in Brighton has pioneered bushcraft and practical conservation work with 'at-risk' young people. The project is based at a community garden with an adjacent woodland, and Patrick, a qualified bushcraft instructor, helps young people learn how to start fires using bow-sticks, how to make shelters and how to create rope using nettles. Once engaged, the young people then get involved in managing the garden and helping with other projects off site.

Thinkpiece:

Why is urban wildlife conservation so important?



Public green spaces are places where the community, collectively, relaxes; where people with different lives and backgrounds sit, chat, play and stroll, within sight of each other; and where, in consequence, socio-economic and age divisions are abolished.

Shopping malls and private leisure facilities provide, by contrast, an experience that is functional and economic – it is about paying, getting, spending, eating and buying. If civilisation renews itself in play – that is, play for play's sake – urban green spaces provide the only genuinely “free” territory where this can take place.

Although it is widely recognised that green spaces are essential to urban quality of life, the management of green spaces can still be improved in order to promote biodiversity – one of the biggest assets a green space can provide to the local community.

As the proportion of urban residents increases every year, urban ecosystems play a bigger role in shaping people's perceptions about natural ecosystems and the importance of wildlife conservation.

Increasingly, scientists are beginning to understand that wildlife cannot be protected in small isolated reserves, but instead need networks and corridors of good habitat throughout the landscape which they can use. When a rare species is isolated, in a small nature reserve, if that population dies out because of

disease or bad weather: then it's gone forever; but if that nature reserve is connected to another – say by a railway line, woodland, grass verges or natural river – then there is every chance that new ‘recruits’ will help to recolonize the spaces in which they have been lost.

In cities, gardens and green spaces can act as important wildlife corridors. Flowering plants provide food for a travelling bee or butterfly, long grass and a native hedge in parks and gardens provide shelter for a wandering hedgehog, and so on.

In London, for instance, around 60% of the city is parks and gardens and if only a fraction of that space had areas which were good for wildlife – it would add up to a rather large urban nature reserve.

On top of the advantages to wildlife, an ecological approach to managing green spaces can also be cheaper than conventional approaches.

A wildflower meadow does not need such an intense cutting regime as traditional lawns, native species can be less demanding (and better for wildlife) than exotic flowers and a well-managed wildlife pond will need less maintenance than a heavily stocked goldfish pond.

– **Francisco Carmo**
London Wildlife Trust

How to promote wildlife in your local area

There are several simple actions that an individual can take in his or her local area to promote wildlife:



- By planting native trees and shrubs you will be providing food and shelter for hundreds of species of insects and dozens of species of birds.
- By building bird nesting boxes and bat boxes you will be providing them with shelter that might not be available in your local area.
- By creating a wildflower meadow you will be supporting bees, hoverflies, butterflies and other wildlife, and will spend less time mowing the lawn.



- Insects and amphibians will benefit from log piles and ‘habitat walls’.
- Creating a pond is one of the best things you can do to encourage wildlife into an area. Besides attracting aquatic plants and animals, ponds also provide a source of fresh water for birds and small mammals. If there are concerns about the risks to safety from open water, a ‘bog garden’ can be constructed instead.
- By growing your own food you will be reducing your own ecological footprint and therefore alleviate the pressure on natural ecosystems, as you will also increase the knowledge of the ecosystems that surround you.

1.7

Interior renovations and pop-up shops

Repainting or renovating the inside of a community centre or youth club makes an ideal winter activity for young people keen to learn practical skills and improve a space which they are going to use. Taking this one step further, communities across the country have responded to the negative impacts of having empty shops on the high street by converting them into temporary art galleries, information centres or retail outlets for local crafts – and ‘pop-up shops’ make an ideal venue in which to sell garden furniture, arts and produce grown and made by young people involved in your project.



Helpful skills

- Some experience of painting and decorating;
- Woodwork or construction;
- Youth work or other work with young people at risk.

for young people to learn retail, and other ‘hard’ employment skills. Opening a shop requires research and preparation, and once open, staff or volunteers need to arrive ‘for work’ on time and staff need to interact with customers – all experiences which can help foster an ‘entrepreneurial spirit’ and provide skills which will be useful later in life.

Who is this suitable for?

This work is likely to be most suitable for older youngsters and those interested in learning a trade.

Key challenges

Besides painting and very basic construction activities, much of this work (electrics, plumbing, plastering, fitting and bricklaying) will need to be done by professional tradespeople. This is not to say that keen young people and volunteers cannot support some of this work, but that in such cases, health and safety considerations will need to be paramount. Furthermore, some professionals may be reluctant to work with unskilled volunteers or challenging young people and support from extra staff will be required to manage these concerns.

The benefits

Interior decorating is an ideal winter, and wet weather, activity and basic skills (such as painting) can be picked up relatively quickly – giving a real sense of learning a new, and useful, skill. Helping to design and then redecorate a space which they will use can also give a real sense of ownership to young people – helping to ensure that it continues to be well-looked after once the work has stopped.

Pop-up shops provide a great opportunity

Setting an example: What the CSC projects did...

The Motiv8 Project in Southampton took on an empty shop near the ferry terminal in Gosport. Working with young people, they re-designed the space, gave it a lick of paint, and created an advertising mural on the outside wall. Next to a popular cycle path, the project created a bicycle repair business, training up and employing local young people to help run the shop.





SECTION 2

Making it work

Having read section one, you hopefully now know what sort of activity you want to get involved with and this section is designed to give you more detail to help plan and deliver your work effectively from beginning to end. As much of the advice on running your project applies regardless of the sort of activity you have in mind, this section is organised into broad themes: project planning, staffing; finding volunteers, evaluation and health and safety; and you can read the whole thing or skip to the section that is most relevant to your work.

2.1 Planning your project

2.2 Finding a community space for your project

2.3 Staffing

2.4 Recruiting, retaining and developing your service users

2.5 Measuring the impact of your project

2.6 Working safely

2.7 Making your work last

2.1 Planning your project

Effective project planning can be a real skill, and specialist project management training can give your staff the confidence and tools to help develop and manage projects effectively. Like all projects, practical environmental initiatives need to have a *beginning*, a *middle* and an *end*, and it is extremely important that you identify clearly from the outset what it is that you're trying to achieve with your social action initiative from the outset. You then need to decide on a clear set of aims, outputs or outcomes and design your project to deliver these, deciding how you are going to record your progress in achieving these. You may want to keep records of attendance, or of hours completed (with a register), or you may need to monitor 'softer outcomes' such as changes in attitude, feelings of safety and community, or new skills learnt (through questionnaires, testimonials, case studies and films). Regardless of the outcome, you will need to put resources into collecting this information at the *beginning*, the *middle* and at the *end* of your project – so that you can report back to your current and future funders that the project has been a success.

At the beginning of the project, designing activities in partnership with your 'service users' and members of the community who will benefit



from the work will also help ensure its long term success. Provided that your audience are well informed about the aims of the project, they are likely to contribute good ideas; will identify any potential pitfalls; will develop a stronger sense of ownership; and will have a greater stake in looking after the space once work is completed.

Conducting a community consultation at the outset will help to identify where your efforts are needed and can also help generate support for, and recruit volunteers to, your project.

Timetabling

Some practical environmental activities are best practiced at certain times of the year. Gardens, allotments and wildflower meadows are generally best planted in the spring or early autumn when plants are most easily transplanted and settled in and will provide sufficient time for seeds to break a dormancy period, to grow and to flower or fruit. Practical habitat conservation activities (coppicing, hedge-laying and scrub-bashing) tend to be practiced in the autumn and winter months to avoid disturbing wildlife.

However, in both areas, there are always things to do year-round. Building planters, preparing

compost or improving the soil with mulch or manure on an allotment is best done during the winter – as there will always be plenty of work to do with weeding, watering and harvesting once the summer comes.

Other environmental social action initiatives can be undertaken year round, but the longer days and warmer weather in the summer months will make the task of coaxing people outside easier; and should – in theory – mean less disruption from rain or cold weather.

However, there is still plenty to do in the winter months. Winter and spring are a great time in which to plan your activities, design your garden space, build bird boxes or garden sculptures, benches and raised beds, plant seeds, write your funding applications and prepare for the warmer months when there never seems to be quite enough time to get everything done.

As in most work, ensuring that you have regular, timetabled activities will help with recruiting and retaining volunteers. For adults, weekly evening, or weekend sessions ensure that people know when they need to attend and how they can contribute. The more active and engaging you can make the discussion around your project, the more likely people will be to respond to emails, calls, social media and newsletters. If you're working with young people – particularly with younger children, running week-long sessions in the school holidays can make it clearer to them about when they need to attend.



Plan.Do – The Social Action App includes a calendar for you to schedule and prioritise all tasks needed for your social action project. For more information, see page 7.

What can we do when it rains?

Nobody likes to work in the rain, so keep an eye on the weather forecast and make sure you always have plenty of indoor jobs to do.

- If you have a greenhouse, there will always be something to do – pricking out seedlings, planting seeds, weeding, or cleaning tools or pots. If you have indoor space for construction: use the rain to make planters, benches, bird boxes, scarecrows, sculptures and other items for outdoors.

- Tidy your indoor spaces – workshop, tool storage room, classroom or other communal spaces.

- Plan the next part of the work, build a 3D model of your local area, make seed bombs, assemble photos and video material about the project, or put together log books, wall posters, your website, or press releases for your local newspapers and councillors.

- Cook some of the produce from your allotment or make jams or chutneys.

- Catch up with paperwork for accreditation and qualifications.

See page 41 for our Thinkpiece: *What to do Throughout the Year*

In general, it is always good to go with ideas that your young people or service-users come up with.

Extended, week-long sessions in the school holidays can also be a great way to maintain interest, to get lots of work done and to enable participants to see their work completed. This may be particularly beneficial for younger children who may lose interest if the project takes a protracted length of time to be completed.

Working in this way can also prevent vandalism to, or the loss of materials from, half-finished projects and if you're buying in the services of an external contractor (for instance, a graffiti artist), they may prefer to work in this way.

If you're working with young people, keep sessions short or ensure that you have a mixture of activities they can get involved in, and be prepared to move people around if they look as though their attentions are waning. That said, some of your volunteers or young people may want to do the same piece of work for extended periods of time or to work alone on their own project. Creative and artistic pieces of work can often engage attention for long periods of time – and on Community Space Challenge's graffiti projects, we often found that some teenage boys would work on the same piece of wall for several hours at a time.

Regardless of your timetabling, ensure that sessions are long enough for your volunteers to fully engage with the work – for instance, a minimum of two hours – and if you can, mix up the more menial jobs with something challenging – perhaps the chance to learn a new skill or try a hand at something creative. Finally, don't forget



Increasingly electronic media is helping provide new tools for planning, evaluating and evidencing the work of community projects. **Plan.Do** is the new Catch22 social action planning tool: a mobile phone application designed

by young people. It allows users to link to social action projects through social media, to plan and schedule activities, and to collect evidence of progress – sharing this online with peers and creating a record of their achievements that they can present to potential employers.

To find out more about how **Plan.Do** can help your project, see page 7 or check out:

www.catch-22.org.uk/the-social-action-app

to build in time to take a register at the start; and then to tidy up and put tools away; and say thank you to everyone, at the end.

How long you run sessions for is up to you, and may depend on the work you're doing and the ages of your young people or volunteers. Under-tens will normally lose interest within an hour, but for older groups, 2-3 hours (with breaks) is a good length of time in which to maintain interest and get the job done. Providing a meal or snacks is a great way to maintain morale during the sessions and can help extend the time spent on the work – if there's lots to do. Don't forget that it can often take time to get the session started, and finished, properly (particularly if travelling times are long).

A typical session will include the following themes for which you will need to provide plenty of time:

- Collecting tools and putting on the correct personal protective equipment (PPE) – boots, gloves, overalls,
- An introduction to the work; and why the group are doing it.
- A 'tool talk' to discuss health and safety considerations, what to do, and who to contact

in the event of an accident.

- Time to actually *do* the work.
- A tea, or snack, break.
- A de-brief of the session at the end: what went well and what didn't, and what will happen next time.
- Time to clean and put tools away safely and to change back into 'everyday' clothes.

So, as you can see, an hour (or less) to work on the project is not really sufficient.

Don't forget about getting there

Bear in mind that you may need to provide transport to get your young people or volunteers to the site. This will be less of a problem if working in a communal space on a housing estate; but more a problem when working on a nature reserve or distant allotment. While this may help with attendance, especially in the winter, it can lead to delays in getting each session started- as well as an early finish – leaving only a short time available to undertake the main project work.



Thinkpiece:

Lessons learnt on how to run a good community consultation



Definition: 'Consultation: an action or process that gathers information related to a subject'.

In our CSC work, we have always undertaken a 'community-oriented approach': aimed at organising and highlighting positive contributions that young people can make to their local communities. In most cases, finding the spaces to work in was the easy bit – as they were provided to us by different agencies and organisations across the borough.

Once we had identified the spaces, we had to undertake consultations to understand the issues affecting them and to decide what to do with them next. We realised that it was not enough to go out into the community armed with questionnaires; we also had to show them visual materials and offer them opportunities to reflect on these (like maps, 'before' photos, scale models of the space, etc.). Working through a combination of written and visual forms of communication made a real difference to the success of all of our initiatives.

After finding the spaces, we needed to understand the people who would be using them and we discovered that your local agencies can give you valuable information about the socio-economic and cultural background of the community; and about meeting spots and possible tensions; or about other organisations working towards similar aims. We then used this information to create visual displays on the walls of our office showing new connections, networks and key data relating to upcoming initiatives.

Building on strong local partnerships was a core part of our approach for our consultations in Barking. Links with community members helped our consultations to include hundreds of opinions, allowing a broad spectrum of the public to be involved.

Based in a multicultural area like the Gascoigne Estate, the local Children's Centre (whose garden we were restoring) wanted easy-to-complete questionnaires with pictures and boxes to tick – suitable for non-English speakers and those with low literacy levels. Through this, we learnt that the language and presentation of written communication are very valuable points to consider before starting any consultation and should be adapted to meet the needs of the participants.

Conducting consultations also helped raise awareness about our initiatives and helped explain the projects to supporters and funders. For example, a community consultation in Thames View helped publicise plans to create a community garden, but it also made sure that local people's needs and aspirations were taken into consideration and to develop a clear set of objectives for the volunteers involved.

The first thing to consider when starting to design a project is to develop effective ways of engaging young people in the consultation. When I started, it took me time to find out what young people really thought of CSC, and what life was really like for them. At the same

time, I also had to organise and deliver the project, so I launched a voting box system to choose the projects they would like to see taken forward. The final responses demonstrated many issues affecting their everyday life, like the lack of lighting, neglected play courts and litter in the area. Later, several of the young people who had submitted their opinions took on their own projects to create a wildflower meadow and paint the lamp posts in their local park.

Another approach I have found really helpful is to provide creative and hands-on activities to help people to understand what you are trying to achieve. When I started work in the Marks Gate area, I was very confused about which projects would be of most interest to local people. I had many ideas from partners in the borough, but these did not actually come directly from the 'service users'. Our early marketing of the CSC programme led to an invitation to an event at the local primary school and so I printed a huge map of the area so that people were able to use different coloured stickers to highlight the spaces where they really wanted to see improvements. At the same time, I used community survey questionnaires as a tool to capture basic information about these improvements such as whether they wanted clean ups, growing, arts projects or other solutions; and I offered participants a potted flower as a thank you for their contribution.

Maps, voting boxes, photos, videos, pledge cards, drawings, even some tea, coffee or cake can be important details in delivering creative consultation that brings hope, fun and a sense of expectation to the communities. Ensuring that you not only collect opinions and ideas, but also offer chances for people to get involved practically or contribute through other means is key to the success of a complete consultation.

Do keep in mind that the results from your consultation should be reported back to the community, and we are going to share the results of our Marks Gate consultation with local people to show everyone that their ideas and opinions fed into the final design and action plan. We will be able to link specific pieces of finished work to requests made on the primary school map and to explain what happened with photos and case studies.

It often happens that you get unexpected or even surprising results through consultations and reviews. I remember an older man who explained to us that he would like to see one of our spaces developed into a mosque, when most people were dreaming of food-growing allotments in the area; and I realised that every opinion counts and reported his request to partners at the council.

But most of the time, you will get positive outcomes like highlighting new spaces that you haven't thought about, and most importantly, you will also help find new volunteers for your next initiatives.

**- Ioannis Athanasiou,
Catch22 Barking and Dagenham**

Finding a community space for your project



Essential to the success of your project will be to find the right place in which to work. You may already have somewhere in mind, but if not, there are a range of options for public spaces which may benefit from some improvement:

- A council-run allotment;
- Council-owned land such as public parks, playgrounds, roadside verges; and flowerbeds outside shops, libraries and community centres;
- An outdoor space owned by a church;
- The garden of an elderly care home;
- Small 'pocket parks', playgrounds, and open spaces within housing estates;
- Land attached to a youth or community centre;
- Walls or public subways with permission to paint graffiti art;
- A nature trail, woodland or nature reserve;
- A railway or bus station;
- A shopping precinct;
- A community garden or city farm;
- School grounds.

Getting permission to work in public spaces can often take time and it is very important to undertake negotiation with the landowner well in advance of attempting to start the project. Normally the landowner will be the local council or a housing provider, and some councils can take a year or so to make decisions. Even those that move more quickly may have to take the decision to a committee meeting that meets only every two or three months, so significant delays should be anticipated.

If you have a space in mind, you can find out who owns it by asking around or by contacting the Land Registry who will often be able to tell you who owns it for a small fee. If you are working with a very neglected space, it is important to first find out what the future plans for it are. Investing lots of time, energy and resources into renovating a space, only for it to be bulldozed and turned into flats can have an extremely damaging effect upon your relationship with those who've put all the hard work into improving it.

That said, there can be a value in undertaking temporary measures to improve an abandoned space with the knowledge that it will be re-developed in the future. Removing litter from a rubbish-strewn demolition site and sowing a temporary wildflower meadow will brighten the space and improve the surrounding area and you may find that the landowner is willing to make a small investment towards your project. In all cases, when working with young people and vulnerable adults, it is extremely important that you get the support of the landowner before starting work.



Plan.Do – The Social Action App asks a user to identify the problem they are looking to address with their social action and analyse the root cause of the problem. For more information, see page 7.



How can I persuade my local council to give permission to start work in an area?

It can take time for local authorities to make a decision about giving you access to land that they own – so keep on talking to them!

Many local authority officers will be wary of the costs associated with maintaining a site once you have improved it. Wildflower meadows, flower beds and vegetable gardens are generally more complicated (and sometimes more expensive) to maintain than closely mown grass verges – so think about how the site will be maintained in the longer term before you start work, and be prepared to offer a longer term role in helping with the maintenance.

Many councils develop 'service level agreements' with community groups wishing to take on the management of public spaces. These are legal contracts which outline what you will be expected to do to maintain the space (a specification); and some local authorities may be willing to make an annual financial contribution for your work. In some cases, showing your interest in the long term management of the site may make local authorities more willing to support

your plans to improve them.

A minor delay should not present serious problems as your group can plan, start to build some equipment and begin to plant seeds indoors. If permission has not been granted to work in your chosen site, it may be possible to practice your skills at an existing community garden or allotment to get your volunteers trained in horticulture and construction skills.

Having an existing relationship with someone in the council or other responsible body is essential to getting access to sites and making your project a success. Getting support for your work from local councillors and even the MP can help to open doors – which is why it is so important to share successes with them – by inviting them to celebration events.

If you're still having problems, try and contact your local 'Friend of Parks' forum. Most areas have an umbrella organisation which represent parks support groups and they may know who to talk to in the council to get the ball rolling.

2.3 Staffing

The right staff will be key to the success of your project. Their enthusiasm for the work, as well as their skills and knowledge, make all the difference. If the main members of the staff team do not have all the skills needed, especially at the outset, sessional workers can be brought in who have special expertise; or part-time specialists can be employed.

The University of York research finding

Managers and staff rated the enthusiasm of project staff as one of the most significant drivers of projects' successes.

Only 14% of Community Space Challenge project staff had a previous background in horticulture, gardening, plants or wildlife; the rest were able to learn about it 'on-the-job'. Almost three quarters had a previous background in youth work or youth justice.

Skills that are useful in all types of environmental social action include:

- Project management (project planning, delivery and evaluation) and reporting;
- Partnership working and relationship building;
- Experience of engaging young people;
- Publicity and marketing;
- Enterprise and income generation;
- Administration and record keeping, including use of data from agencies such as school and Youth Offending Teams;
- Practical construction/painting and decorating skills;
- Horticultural/practical wildlife conservation experience;
- Film-making and photography;
- Cookery and food hygiene,

Putting together the right team

Most staff members are likely to be working only part-time on the project, in addition to working on other schemes. Ideally, key staff could be shared between several similar projects in

nearby locations. Employing part-time staff can work satisfactorily, provided that the core skills are present in the staff team and others are available. Sessional workers are likely to be employed for specific activities and sessions and can bring in a wide range of skills and experience. Sessional staff may also be happy to work on some weekend days and evenings, as well as occasional multi-day blocks, such as during half-term, or for special weekend events such as residential.

From time-to-time you will most likely need to buy in specialist skills – either to help run initiatives or as a means of engaging people in your project. Employing an expert in bushcraft for a day's activities can be a great way to inspire hard-to-reach young people; or for skilled pieces of work you might need to contract the services of qualified graffiti artists or tradespeople.

It is also worth advertising for volunteers or student placements at a local college or university. Many courses require students to undertake practical work as part of their qualification and many other young people are willing to volunteer to improve their employability on graduation. Social and youth work students are always looking for practical experience and those studying horticulture, environmental sciences or the arts may also be interested in using their skills in an urban, community, setting.

Volunteers can also be important players in the project. Besides being an 'extra pair of hands', they can also bring new skills and provide a valuable link with the local community. Working with residents associations can be a great way to identify and attract volunteers from the community, and if you're working with young people, it may also be possible to get parents involved. In the longer term, creating a pool of trained volunteers may also go some way towards ensuring that your good work continues – once your project has finished.



Plan.Do – The Social Action App enables a project leader to manage their team by assigning project tasks to individual team members. For more information, see page 7.



Continuity of staff

A major challenge in projects with short-term funding is job insecurity, which often leads to high staff turnover. This can be disruptive not only for maintaining activities (given the loss of skills) but also for developing good relationships with, and motivation amongst, the young people. Projects with a high turnover of staff run the risk that attendance by young people may drop – and activities become difficult to maintain.

The University of York research finding

The only projects in which the young people expressed negative views were those where key staff had recently left.

If at all possible, project managers should aim to minimise the disruption caused by staff leaving or moving on by having more than one key member of staff confident in delivering the main activities. As in all aspects of youth and community work, good relationships between worker and service user are extremely important and will play a key role in engaging young people in new, and potentially challenging, activities.

Given that Youth Work is so much about relationships, how can I reduce others' dependence on a charismatic leader?

If you're the charismatic leader, give other staff members the opportunity to build good relationships with young people and community members; and invest in their training and development. Give as much responsibility and training to the young people as possible, especially if there are key individuals who have been involved for some time.

Try not to lead all sessions, but give responsibility to staff and experienced service users – starting them on small, manageable pieces of work and supporting them where necessary. Over time, this will build resilience in the organisation, will help share the workload, and will enable your organisation to work more effectively – reaching a wider audience.

Don't forget that the lead-in time for recruiting staff: from posting the advertisement to having staff in post can be up to 3 or 4 months, so this has to be taken into account when planning activities.



2.4

Recruiting, retaining and developing your service users

For youth workers new to delivering environmental projects, the prospect of having to persuade ‘hard-to-reach’ teenagers to get their hands dirty or to get involved in a ‘nature project’, can at first, seem a daunting prospect. Alternatively you may be a site manager – and keen to involve more of the community in its management and development – or you might want to engage a specific group as a response to issues with vandalism or anti-social behaviour.

How you recruit your pool of volunteers will differ according to the requirements of your funder, the location of your new ‘service users’, their existing involvement with your organisation or a partner agency and their demographics. But whoever you choose to work with, the Community Space Challenge programme found that there were a number of factors which helped with the initial engagement; and then later helped ‘service users’ stay involved and interested – so that after five years, young people recruited in year one were leading sessions and mentoring a new generation of environmental social action ‘champions’.

Recruitment

When the project is set up, a decision has to be made about whether to target a specific demographic and this may well depend on the requirements of the funder. Typically, funders want to target ‘hard-to-reach’ groups or those ‘at risk’ of social exclusion or deprivation. Young people from these groups are often well known to social services, youth offending teams, youth services, schools, housing associations and the police – and they may be looking for additional opportunities or support for their service users.

Recruiting from these sources can also help you to understand the needs of your new ‘volunteers’ better (for instance: whether or not they have a history of challenging behaviour), and it is also worth asking the referral agency to provide additional resources to support your work. For instance, youth offending teams should be able to supply members of staff to

accompany young people undertaking their community service/reparation work – and you should see these as extra members of staff there to help support your work. Referral agencies will often have their own requirements from the activities that their referrals engage in, and these can range from being very basic (completing a register of attendance) to completing elements of a school curriculum or basic qualification (for young people from a school pupil referral unit). In all cases, it is important to be clear with your partner what you both want to achieve from the outset, and to ensure that you will be able to collect the information required by your funder.

It is also important to note that it can take several months before a regular flow of referrals begins accessing your project.

Once you have established your referral system, it is also important to meet regularly with your referral partners as staff turnover can often interrupt existing relationships.

There can be clear advantages in recruiting your group of young from partner referral agencies. Having a clearly established cohort (or group) of young people who are expected to attend for a set period of time will enable you to plan your sessions more effectively and to build in opportunities for them to gain accreditations and time to support them to progress into training, other volunteering opportunities or further education.

On the other hand, you may be unconstrained by the requirements of funders and willing to open your project to anyone wishing to come.

Recruiting Young People

You may want to target young people in a specific area – such as an identified anti-social behaviour hotspot or an area of a site that you manage. Delivering this sort of ‘outreach’ work can often be more challenging than working from a well-resourced base. You will have to get to know the young people from scratch, will have to persuade them to engage in your activities, you may have to develop your own strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour and you will have no control

Top tip

Working closely with a youth club or centre can be a great way to find interested young people – particularly if you can base some of the activities on their premises. Besides providing you with a willing audience, this will give you somewhere warm and dry to host activities with somewhere to store your resources, and a clear venue and times for young people to attend. Working with an established team who know the young people can also help with managing challenging behaviour.



Many youth work services have teams of outreach officers with training and experience in this approach and where possible work with them to engage your target audience. Good relationships with the young people are the key to success in this approach and if you can partner with youth work staff or community members who know the young people, this can make your task of engaging them substantially easier.

How you phrase the offer to them is also likely to influence their willingness to engage. Be prepared to find out what it is that they want from the space, and try to understand what their perceptions of it are before explaining what it is that you are trying to achieve. At the same time, don’t forget to be realistic about the constraints of funding and the needs of other users.

Top tip

The opportunity to get involved in doing a ‘nature project’ is unlikely to appeal to older teenage boys, but using power tools to build benches (and, at the same time, raised beds with bee-friendly plants) in a space that they, and their younger brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews can use is likely to be a more attractive prospect. Then, once you have engaged them, build in the environmental education as you work.



Learning new skills is a strong motivator and it is extremely important to explain to the group how their individual activities contribute to the larger

project. How you sell your project to young people will also make a big difference.

Don’t forget, the best recruiting tool for your project will also be the young people themselves. If young people enjoy the work, they will go home and tell their friends and family, and then the following week you may find yourself with more volunteers than you know what to do with!



Plan.Do – The Social Action App enables young people to recruit their peers online. For more information, see page 7.

Top tips for using an ‘outreach approach’

- Offer short sessions into which young people can ‘dip in and out’ (for instance a week-long community mural activity where young people can do as much or as little art-work as they like)
- Be prepared to offer incentives as you work (such as food and refreshments) and longer term rewards too – such as shopping vouchers – for attendance and the completion of work.
- Be prepared to be flexible with the activities that you’re offering, build in lots of opportunities for creativity and the chance to learn a new skill.
- Don’t necessarily expect to get lots of work done early on.
- Try and have as many staff and volunteers on hand as you can afford – particularly if they have existing relationships with young people in the area.
- If you have experienced and trained young people, get them to come along and act as mentors to your new group.

Regardless of whether you use a targeted or outreach approach it is extremely important that you keep a register of attendance (and a record of any other information that your funder requires) – and ensure that everyone involved is accounted for.

In the vast majority of cases, young people want to be thought well of by their peers and community, and everybody wants to learn, to participate and to be rewarded. Most young people are likely to find the environmental work satisfying in itself once they begin to see the results but be prepared for the relationships to take time to develop, and to lose the interest of some of your participants along the way.

Setting an example: What the CSC projects did...

Many CSC projects also found it useful to offer incentives (such as high street vouchers or the opportunity to join a free trip) to young people to get involved. Others operated a points system, where young people earned 'points' as they participated (or did extra work) which counted towards rewards, and found that this encouraged good behaviour. Bluedotworld.com provides an online tool for rewarding volunteering.

Despite this, 65% of participants said that they would do it without rewards, and a further 26% were undecided. Only 9% said that they would not.



Extra considerations for outreach work

Regardless of at what point they arrive to a session, make sure that you get all new arrivals to sign the register, tell a member of staff about any health issues they may have; and ensure that they know who the first aider is in the event of an accident. It is then your responsibility to make sure that they know how to use tools correctly and to supervise them where appropriate.

Getting parental consent before featuring young people in photographs and films is now accepted practice and you may need to exclude one-off, or new, visitors from any filming or photography work until consent forms have been completed.

Retaining young people

Where possible, engaging your young people or volunteers in the design of a project will help to promote ownership and keep them involved; and remember to be honest with them about what will happen once their work finishes. Likewise, assigning young people their own planters, vegetable plot (or even plants) can also help encourage them to maintain and care for them. Or if you're doing a graffiti mural, giving young people specific parts to paint (that they can later identify and point out to others) will help generate a sense of ownership and a willingness to get the work completed.

However, different things appeal to different people. Younger children, and some teenage boys (for instance), enjoy the hard physical work

of digging and building, while others prefer more delicate, artistic tasks – so having a range of jobs to do, and the chance to swap during sessions can be important. It's also important to assess the mood of your team when they arrive. Some may want a quiet session and will be happy to go and work on something physical on their own, whilst others may want to work closely with other members of the team.

Keeping the gender balance can sometimes be challenging. Many practical environmental projects tend to target boys, and if only a few girls are involved, it can be difficult to attract more, but keeping livestock, offering mentoring opportunities for other young people or offering artistic activities can often attract girls (and isolated boys).

Organising public celebration events at the end of your project, or once the work is finished, can also be a powerful motivator. Such events can provide a space in which to deliver awards or qualifications and it can help to invite local dignitaries and the media to promote and publicise the work.

The reward activities can be a learning experience too. Camping weekends can provide a strong motivation for young people, but others may choose to do more 'ordinary' reward activities such as going to the cinema, ice skating and meals out. It is a good idea to give the young people a choice of reward activities, so they can do something they particularly like.

Try and build the opportunity for volunteers

to gain an accreditation or qualification into your project plan. Although such achievements are rarely powerful motivators at the beginning of a project, receiving an award from a local dignitary or celebrity can have a powerful impact upon a young person's willingness to participate again. Once they've achieved an award it can often be easier to get them involved in an accreditation or qualification a second time and can be used as a 'hook' with which to keep them motivated.



Plan.Do – The Social Action App awards young people 'badges' as recognition of the employability skills gained through the app. For more information, see page 7.

Besides always offering the chance to try new things, it is also extremely important to finish projects properly – and then to ensure that the work is maintained once you have finished. Otherwise, a half-finished job (plants that die from lack of watering or a space which is later abandoned and neglected) can have a negative impact on people's desires to volunteer again in the future. This can be done by establishing an agreement with the local council or a local residents association to take over the maintenance once your initiative is finished.

Tips for Keeping young people motivated

- Share your experiences and achievements online.
- Create a scrap-book of your achievements.
- Run celebration events.
- Publicise your work in the local media.
- For Public Events make a timeline which leads up to your event and tick off preparations as they get done: that way participants can see what they've done and can see the big day looming.
- Give team members specific responsibilities and titles.
- Offer employability training where young people relate their skills and experiences in interviews.
- For practical conservation work have a fire. Most practical conservation initiatives take place in winter and produce lots of material which will need to be burnt. Everyone loves a fire!

Over time, try to give as much responsibility to individuals as possible, and then encourage

them to mentor new members as they come through. Show an interest in them, try to find out their interests as you work, then support them to access new opportunities such as training, volunteering or work experience with your own, or other partner organisations.



Plan.Do – The Social Action App identifies the employability skills being developed throughout a social action project, with the aim of helping a young person to talk about their social action as a form of work experience in interviews.

It is also important to be able to answer the question 'what happens next' towards the end of your project. If you are no longer planning to work in the area – refer young people to similar activities elsewhere, try and persuade youth groups to take on your work or be prepared to explain to your young people that 'all good things must come to an end'. Don't just 'cut and run' when the funding ends.

Engaging adults in environmental social action initiatives

Although the opportunities for referring adults to your environmental initiative are likely to be different to those for working with young people, the general advice on engaging, motivating and supporting them is likely to be similar. Many of the adults that you might work with will find their own way to your project, and are unlikely to come with support staff or additional resources; but there are opportunities for referrals from agencies supporting adults – such as those with learning disabilities, those with long term issues with mental or physical health, substance misuse or unemployment; or adults involved with the probation service or undertaking community service orders.

Given the range of referrals, individual's motivations for getting involved will differ substantially, and as such it is important – as with young people – to try and understand their reasons for getting involved, to build their ideas into the project, to recognise their achievements and signpost them to opportunities for progression once the project has ended.



What should we do if the project's work gets vandalised?

Occasionally, community space initiatives may be vandalised, but do not despair. If resources allow, go back and tidy it up, re-plant where necessary and demonstrate that the group cares about the area by making it good again. This often deters people from doing it again, but if not – keep going back again, use your local intelligence to tell the culprits about the impact of the work and show them that you are determined to keep it looking good.

Websites and organisations which can help you find volunteers:

- **Project Dirt** an online social media portal for environmental projects – advertise for volunteers or promote your events alongside other projects across the UK
- **Volunteering England** represents the national network of local volunteer centres – all of whom will be able to advertise your project to potential volunteers in your local area
- **Do-it.org.uk** can list your volunteering on their national website – which, it says, attracts 130,000 visitors each month
- **Vinspired.com** join 1,900 other organisations in advertising volunteering opportunities online and on a mobile phone app for young people aged 16 and 25.
- **Sparked.com** An online “micro-volunteering” network, offering the chance to advertise your volunteering opportunities to an international network of experts in fundraising, data-entry, blogging, research, social media and more.

Schools

Secondary schools may be interested to hear from you if you can offer alternative opportunities for their young people who are at risk of exclusion and primary schools are always looking for enrichment activities. Schools will be especially keen to collaborate if the young people are able to gain qualifications through the work.

Housing associations

Housing associations can provide access and permission to work in areas of the estate that need improvement. Housing providers may also be able to identify older people, or groups of older people who would benefit from having their gardens improved.

Police and community safety partnerships

Local police, Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and community safety groups can be useful links. They can identify young people who may benefit from the project and can sometimes suggest spaces which need improving or outreach work.

Residents associations

Residents associations can be very important for making links with local people, where these exist and for accessing new volunteers. They might also be interested in managing the site in the event that your funding ends too.

Setting an example: What the CSC projects did...

When the garden furniture in the Goole project was vandalised repeatedly, they purchased equipment for making moulded concrete furniture that was more resilient. This has been highly successful in many different locations, and the project has found a market for its unique products –taking commissions from across Yorkshire.



Thinkpiece: what to do throughout the year

January

- Tidy, and weed herbaceous borders and vegetable beds.
- Add mulch – to keep down weeds – and manure to help improve the soil.
- Clean your greenhouse or polytunnel, dig over beds, prepare seed trays.
- Broad beans into pots.
- Order your seeds, and onion and potato sets.
- Start sowing some seeds on a window sill indoors – broad beans, tomatoes, chillis and peppers.
- Invite local people to a community meal, such as Chinese New Year.
- Do your paperwork: if you have young people doing accreditations – this is an ideal time to write it up and create photo logs.
- Start planning your garden: researching designs and plants.
- Make bird boxes, furniture and other indoor art.

February

- Start sowing flower seeds if you have a greenhouse.
- Plant garlic in mid-February.
- More writing up and research.
- Add manure and mulch to your beds if you haven't already.
- Make bird boxes, furniture and other indoor art.
- Put up your bird boxes ready for nesting towards the end of the month.

March

- Start digging in your manure if you haven't already (and it's not too wet) and get your beds ready for planting.
- When the weather gets warmer towards the end of the month and the soil feels warm enough to sit on, you can plant early potatoes, carrots, beetroot, lettuce, parsnips, peas, broad beans.
- Transplant any seedlings (tomatoes, chillis or small flowers) if you have a greenhouse.
- Order very small bedding plants (if you have a greenhouse to keep them warm) and once they come plant them into larger pots so that they have space to grow.

April

- Plant onions (wood ash helps them).
- Plant tomatoes, aubergines, chillies, cucumbers in the greenhouse.
- Sow salad plants and other vegetables (such as leeks).
- If the weather is good, start planting courgettes, squashes, beans, sweetcorn and sunflowers (indoors).

May

- Plant main crop potatoes, plant salad plants.
- If the weather is warm and dry and there's no risk of frost: plant out courgettes, squashes, beans, sweetcorn and sunflowers.
- Sell your bedding plants that were brought on, including in hanging baskets.

June

- Plant out beans and courgettes, more salad plants.
- Make sure your plants are well watered if there's a dry patch.
- Care for crops (weeding, watering, tidying).

July

- Continue to sow salads and other crops.
- Caring for crops, cropping.
- Cut flowers to sell.

August

- Cropping, including soft fruits. Lift onions and potatoes to dry, pick tomatoes and chillies for chutney.
- Care for crops.
- Cut flowers to sell.

September

- Hold a harvest festival event or Big Lunch with your produce.
- Clear the land/previous crops, prepare for the main planting season, digging, compost.
- Make pickles and jams – plums, tomatoes. Not wasting anything.
- Save seeds from plants grown.

October

- Clear the land/previous crops, prepare for the main planting season, digging, composting, turn out compost onto beds for winter.
- Plant autumn onions for cropping in May.
- Make pickles and jams.
- Save seeds from plants grown.
- Coppice willows and replant or make fences and screens.

- Bob Tyler and Judy Renshaw

Planning of future initiatives can also be done in winter, including:

- New garden areas
- A Big Lunch in summer: what to prepare, where to get ingredients, design of posters & advertisements.

2.5 Measuring the impact of your project

Demonstrating impact

Funding bodies and other potential future funders want to see what their money has delivered, so collecting evidence about the project's achievements is essential. Environmental projects can produce significant benefits for young people and for the communities in which they live. The diagram below shows the range of outcomes that can be achieved and the kinds of evidence that can be used to demonstrate them.

Demonstrating how projects achieve their goals

Beneficiaries	Activities and services provided by project	Outcomes	Source of evidence
Young people "at risk"	Participation in activities using new skills and knowledge	Improvements in education and skills and new qualifications	– School attendance figures – School performance figures – Qualifications gained
	Supported by project in progression to employment or further education	Improved chances of future employment	– Records of what happened after they left the project
	Participation in environmental activities and growing food	Knowledge about the environment and healthy living, possibly leading to health gains	– Reports from young people and families involved (recorded in an interview); case studies
	Participation in constructive outdoor activities with visible results	Gains in self-confidence and satisfaction	– Reports from young people and families (recorded in an interview); case studies
	Constructive use of time, positive role models, rewards for good behaviour	Improved behaviour and reduced offending	– Information from referral agencies such as Youth Offending Teams – Reports from young people and families (recorded in an interview); case studies
	Participation in work to improve the local environment	Feelings of ownership and pride in their local environment	– Reports from young people and families (recorded in an interview); case studies
Members of local community	Young people work to improve their local spaces	Experience of improvements in their local environment and amenities	– Surveys and interviews – Informal feedback from neighbours
	Young people being seen doing constructive work in their local area	Young people are perceived in a more positive way than previously	– Surveys and interviews – Informal feedback from neighbours
	Meet and work together with young people undertaking constructive activities	Improved relationships with young people	– Surveys and interviews – Informal feedback from neighbours and participants

What information will you need to collect?

Your project should also keep records of those involved, and depending on the nature of the funding, you may be required to keep records of the following information:

- Basic information about demographics: such as age, sex, ethnicity,
- Referral routes (if appropriate),
- Details of any prior and subsequent offending, records of school attendance before and during involvement with the project,
- Project attendance,
- Hours of work contributed,
- Qualifications gained,
- Progression to training, education, work, volunteering.

Before the project starts, managers need to identify all of the different kinds of information that will have to be collected and then set up a framework for doing so. Ideally, this information should be collected and reviewed quarterly, in order to keep an eye on progress and to identify any problems as they arise. Budget details should also be reviewed quarterly in order to identify any problems.

Keeping a record of the project's activity is also essential, as this demonstrates what has been done. It is extremely important to keep photographs, and where possible video evidence, providing 'before and after' images of the project's achievements - as these provide strong visual evidence of what has been achieved.



Plan.Do – The Social Action App will record and report on all data collected. This will enable young people and programme deliverers to evidence the impact of their social action projects. For more information, see page 7.

Top tip



Taking photos and videos can also be an important part of the learning experience, and for young people, it will also be important for them to have visual records for some other qualifications, such as Duke of Edinburgh's Awards.

Using records from other agencies

Some other outcomes from your work, such as reduced offending and improved school attendance in young people will be recorded by other agencies, including youth offending teams and schools. If you want access to this information, it is important to negotiate with these agencies at an early stage and it can be useful to have written agreements – to share information – in place, as staff change over time and a reliance on good relationships may prove unreliable in the long term.

Tips for a good feedback interview

Records of participant's achievements and attendance can be supplemented by interviews with young people, parents, representatives from partner agencies, volunteers and local community members. Interviews will add richness to your evaluation process: helping to provide a more compelling narrative about the impact of the work and more details on the nature of activities undertaken: e.g. what worked and what didn't. Personal stories can also be used to help 'tug the heart strings', and 'sell' the project to potential funders and decision-makers.

It is important to work out beforehand a list of questions or topics to cover in interviews, but whereas questionnaires are designed to capture a large number of short questions quickly, a good interview should be able to draw out more information and help tell a 'story'. For this reason, it is important to build a good rapport with your interviewee, by offering them the chance to elaborate where they have something interesting to say; by being prepared to pose new questions; and by asking them questions in an



order in which they ‘flow’, and not necessarily in the order in which they are written. In short, try and develop a conversation with your interviewee.

Try and ask open questions (avoid ‘yes’ and ‘no’ answers) and try to get interviewees to justify their responses – for example by requesting examples where they express a like or dislike for something they have done. You can also pose scenario questions: such as what would you do if you were in charge? Or would you recommend this to a brother or sister?

It can be useful to have someone external to the organisation conducting the interview. For interviews of young people, this can avoid them giving answers that would be most likely to please the staff or assistants. For an objective evaluation of a major project, it is better to commission an independent evaluation.

When interviewing young people, it can be effective to speak with them in pairs or threes. This can give them the confidence to speak to an unknown adult, at the same time as avoiding the pressures of large group dynamics – where young people may feel shy or might otherwise ‘show-off’ in front of peers. Such focus groups can also be useful for participants to spark ideas from each other, but they can get out of hand, especially if the young people attempt to impress each other with either negative or positive views.

You can also train participants to interview one another – and this may help those involved to relax enough to give truly honest answers – but make sure that they are adequately trained to do so, as this will enable a better learning experience for them and a high quality evaluation.

Besides interviews and questionnaires, other techniques can also be used to add depth to your evaluation of the impact of your project. Ranking exercises can be used to record references (e.g. comparing a list of options for different activities); participants can be asked to record their feelings on a sliding scale (e.g. from ‘I enjoyed the activity very much’ to ‘not at all’), young people can be posed questions through games; or you can even use role play to help a group to relax, making discussion more likely (e.g. by issuing paper money to your new ‘budget holders’ and asking them to spend it on those activities which they thought were most worthwhile). There are some excellent resources for ‘participatory’ evaluation techniques in books, and on the internet.

Cost benefit analysis

Attempting to place a financial value on the achievements and benefits of a project (so-called ‘Cost benefit analysis’) is becoming increasingly popular as a tool for demonstrating the impact of a project’s work. Some of the potential outcomes from environmental social action projects are shown in the table on p.42, and many of these (such as reductions in offending rates or improved school attendance) have a financial value attached to them. Calculating these costs and benefits can be a complex process but some guidance on how to assess the financial benefits is available through the SROI (Social Return on Investment) network at www.thesroinetwork.org. However, great care must be taken to avoid double counting or multiple counting of the benefits; and calculations need to be rigorous to avoid the

sorts of errors which can potentially discredit findings.

If there is good evidence that the project has had an effect on reducing offending, a financial benefit can be calculated from Home Office research. For example, Duborg *et al* (2005)¹ provide an average cost for each of the most common types of crime committed. If the approximate number of crimes prevented can be estimated (as well as the categories, such as domestic burglary), the savings can be worked out.

If there is good evidence that the project has had a positive effect on school attendance and attainment, so as to reduce the number of young people who will become NEET (Not in education, employment or training) by the age 16–18, the financial benefits can be worked out on the basis of previous research by Coles *et al* (2010) and others².

If there is good evidence that the project has had a positive effect on the local environment, such that people living in the area value the improvements significantly, it may be possible to work out some estimate of the financial benefit. However, this area of research is considerably less developed than for crime or education, so less confidence can be placed in the estimates. Some early attempts have been made to place a financial value on improvements but these should be considered illustrative rather than accurate; and often the situations in which they worked are likely to be quite different from those of a small local environmental project.

One technique that has been used in a limited way is to ask local residents to rank the value to them of improvements in comparison with a number of other benefits³ (such as a ticket to the cinema, a regular Zumba exercise class, a bunch of flowers, a ticket to a football match, magazine of their choice, large bag of potatoes etc.). Since the value of these items is known,

an estimate can be made of the value of the improvements to the individual or household. This value can then be multiplied by the number of households or individuals affected – and an illustrative figure calculated.

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Promoting your Success

As in business, having a high profile and a good reputation goes a long way towards ensuring the future sustainability of your project. Being well known in your community through positive media will give you better access to volunteers, supporters, new partners, decision makers and potential funders. Businesses interested in corporate social responsibility will be more willing to invest in a project which will help them to generate good PR; local commissioners will generally want to support projects which they know about, and which have a good track record; and evidence of positive media stories and awards are a great way to convince charitable trusts and other funders about the impact of your work.

So, as the project manager you should also be looking for media opportunities for your work. Unfortunately, the media are often looking for sensational, negative stories – but if you’ve done something new or novel, and if you have a good story to tell about the people you work with, and an opportunity to film or photograph smiling young people doing environmental work – then you may be able to interest them.

Increasingly social media and the internet are the best tools for publicising your work and for getting access to new audiences – so use them as much as possible.

‘Before and after’ photos of community areas and project work are a clear and simple way to demonstrate the impact of your work. Having a

good photographic record of your work is a critical part of selling it to future funders – so take photos at every available opportunity – or, given all of your other responsibilities, you might want to designate young people or volunteers to take photos of the work as it happens.

Local councillors are good people to make contact with. They can often find small pockets of funding to help projects and always attract media attention. MPs are also very useful for attracting the media, and can provide useful support.

Organising ‘showcase’ and other public events can help to make the project visible to the local community and show off its achievements. They also provide opportunities to make contact with local councillors, commissioners and other decision-makers who can enable access to resources and open doors.

It is a good idea to enter the project for awards – as the epithet ‘an award-winning project’ will make yours stand out in a pile of funding applications. Most areas run ‘In Bloom’ competitions – which are great way to recognise your horticultural achievement; local authorities often have discretionary mayor’s or councillor’s awards and countless networks and funders (such as the Big Lottery) have their own awards competitions. Besides helping raise the profile of your work (winning an award can often spark the interest of local media) – such awards are a great way to motivate, and thank those who’ve participated too.

2.6 Working safely

Concern about health and safety is one of the most often-cited excuses for avoiding risky or challenging activities – in particular when working with young people. There is no doubt that awareness of health and safety and the responsibilities from legislation have increased in recent years, but provided your organisation has the necessary procedures in place and that you plan activities sufficiently in advance, the majority of activities that you undertake in environmental projects should not be obstructed by concerns about ‘health and safety’.

Risk Assessments

Your organisation will probably be familiar with the process of conducting risk assessments and you should have your own processes for completing them.

If your organisation has five or more employees, you have a legal responsibility to have a written policy – which outlines how you will go about minimising risk in the workplace, and this will include making sure that you risk-assess the work that you do.

If you don’t already have risk assessment forms, you can download sample forms from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE)’s website. The website also contains sample risk assessments for a range of occupational tasks.

Although the law does not specify which activities should be risk assessed, it generally makes sense to complete one for every new activity that you undertake. If in doubt, take advice from your organisation’s health and safety officer.

It’s also important to remember that if you contract someone to do work for you, although they may be treated as self-employed for tax and national insurance purposes, they may nevertheless be treated as your employee for health and safety purposes.

Using Tools safely

Practical environmental projects can often require a bewildering array of potentially dangerous tools, but learning to use new tools skilfully and properly can be an educational and empowering experience.

It is important that the person leading the task is experienced in using the tools for the task, and able to adequately supervise those new to the project or with additional needs (such as language, disability or limited physical fitness). If you belong to a large organisation, there is likely to be guidance on what tools can be used by whom – but if not, use your common sense and take advice. The HSE website can alert you to some of the potential hazards associated with using certain tools.

Remember also that you have a legal responsibility for the safety of your volunteers or young people, so if you’re going to be using potentially dangerous power tools (such as brush-cutters or hedge trimmers) you should ensure that they receive specialist training before using them. For some tools (such as chainsaws) there is a legal requirement for operators to undergo professional training before use; and the law may also set a minimum age for the use of specific tools (for instance chainsaws cannot be operated by anyone under the age of 16 in the UK).

The law also requires you to maintain such equipment safely, and to ensure that it is properly stored when not in use.

PPE (Personal Protective Equipment)



The Personal Protective Equipment At Work Regulations 1992 states that personal protective equipment is to be supplied and used at work wherever there are risks to health and safety

that cannot be adequately controlled in other ways. This makes it your responsibility to identify what PPE will be needed when you conduct risk assessments for your activities. The regulations also require employers to train staff adequately in how to use the PPE supplied to them (e.g. explain why they're wearing it) and to make sure it is clean and adequately maintained.

The PPE required will depend on the task, but in most practical environmental projects, volunteers and service users should be issued with appropriate footwear (ideally steel toe-capped boots for digging and construction activities); gloves; and protective clothing (boiler suits or similar). It is also worth noting that waterproof clothing is considered to be PPE – and that you have a responsibility to ensure that your workers are protected against the elements. Some activities will also require other forms of PPE (dust masks, eye protection, high visibility vests), and you can find out what is required by examining the labels on the materials and products that you're using.

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002

When conducting your risk assessment, it is important to think about the potential dangers involved with some of the materials and chemicals which you might be using (e.g. paints, glues, cement). The COSHH Regulations require all potentially dangerous products to carry a hazard label with symbols explaining what the risk is. Most products now come with safety information shown on the label (or a safety data sheet) – which explains how to limit the risks associated with using them – and these instructions should be followed, and your volunteers or service users adequately supervised, when using them.

Food safety

Unfortunately, legislation around serving food to members of the public or volunteers is a little unclear. In general if you are running a food business – and making money from the food you produce – you have a responsibility to ensure that those handling food are properly trained and that your business is registered with the local environmental health department.

If you are not a business, but sell, or ask for donations for, food at events you do not have to register with your local authority's food standards department unless food is provided for five or more days in five consecutive weeks.

If you are not catering as a business, you still have a responsibility to ensure a high standard

of food hygiene – keeping chilled food cold, and providing hand-washing facilities – and you must ensure that the food you supply is safe to eat. If you're not sure about the risks associated with the food you're preparing, there's plenty of advice about food preparation on the internet.

Even if you're not going to be making money from it, if you plan to serve home cooked, or high risk food (meat, dairy and other perishable produce), on a regular basis, then it is a good idea to ensure that the cook and server undertake formal food hygiene training.

Don't forget that some food can cause severe allergic reactions (nuts, shellfish, soya, sesame seeds, gluten) – so it is important that the server knows the ingredients of the dishes that they are responsible for.

Finally, although it's not a legal requirement, if you are organising an event at which you plan to serve food to the public, it's a good idea to contact the environmental health department at your local authority and find out which regulations apply to your situation.

First Aid

By law, for all activities that you undertake with members of the public, volunteers or young people, you must have:

- A suitably stocked first-aid box;
- An appointed person to take charge of first-aid arrangements;
- Information for employees giving details of first-aid arrangements.

For any activities with young people or members of the public, it is considered good practice, and is strongly advisable that, you have a trained, and up-to-date first aider on site for all activities.

Insurance

Your organisation should have employers liability insurance – which is designed to cover the costs of any employees claiming compensation for accidents suffered whilst at work – but if you are working with members of the public/volunteers/young people you will also need to have public liability insurance which covers you against members of the public claiming from your organisation.

In both cases, the insurance company will expect you to take precautions to minimise the risk of accidents happening – again making it necessary to properly risk assess the work that you're doing.





Ensuring that young people are safe

Environmental social action initiatives often involve adults and young people working alongside each other – and this intergenerational approach can be important for sharing skills and ideas and breaking down some of the barriers and misunderstandings which can often blight communities.

However, if your organisation is planning to regularly work with young people for the first time, or if you are engaging members of the public to help with your initiatives – then you will need to carefully consider how to ensure that the young people are adequately protected at all times.

If yours is a large organisation, or one with a history of working with young people, it is likely to have a child protection policy in place which will set out how employees should manage relationships and contact between young people and adults. It will also stipulate who is eligible for DBS (formerly CRB) checks based on their level of contact with young people.

However, there is no legal requirement for adult volunteers working with young people to undergo DBS checks, nor for organisations to

have a child protection policy – but if you apply for funding to work with young people, you will almost inevitably need a policy and in this you will need to set out who will, and won't, be eligible for checks.

Conducting DBS checks for staff costs money (£26–£44), but for volunteers the process is free.

In general, it is advisable that you require adult volunteers to undergo a DBS check if they have frequent, intensive, overnight or regular contact with young people to whom they are not related. If your volunteers are one-off visitors, dropping into a public volunteering event then a DBS check is unlikely to be appropriate – particularly given the length of time to complete the check (2–6 weeks) – but if this is the case, then you will need to ensure that young people are sufficiently supervised at all times. Even if volunteers have undergone such a check, you should still ensure that they are not left alone with a young person for extended periods of time.

You can find out more about DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) on the home office website (www.homeoffice.gov.uk).

Top tip

Conducting DBS checks for staff costs money (£26–£44), but for volunteers the process is free.



Photography

Taking photographs of your work can be one of the best ways to record the impact of what you're doing and to help publicise it to funders and decision makers. However in recent years, a number of reports in the media about the banning of photography of children at school plays has caused controversy, leading to some confusion about how and when it's OK to take photographs of other people's children.

Taking photographs of young people in public is certainly not illegal, but, as best practice, you should ideally seek consent from the parents and the young people themselves before taking images and then using these in a public domain.

The NSPCC's website has some advice on this issue: stressing the importance of explaining your organisation's position on the use of photographs of children in a child protection policy – and asking parents to sign their consent for using the images publicly. Best practice indicates

that you should not identify young people in photographs (although this is often done in press articles), and that you should issue professional photographers – invited along to record your event – with identification. Needless to say, children should be fully clothed in all photos and images should not be stored on personal computers.

It is also perfectly legal to take photos of adults at public events – even if asked not to do so – but once again, common sense dictates that consent should be sought and the potential future uses of the image explained to the subject before snapping away.

Data Protection

Keeping a record of your participants is an important piece of your work – and an essential part of understanding the impact, and recording the value, of what you do. At the end of your project you will probably need to report to the funder on the numbers of people involved, their ages, genders and ethnicities and you might also want to collect their contact details (to keep them informed about future work) and their feedback, and reflections on, the project.

Under the Data Protection Act (1998), your organisation has a number of responsibilities relating to the information that is collected about individuals; and failure to follow the guidelines set out in the legislation can make you liable to prosecution.

The Data Protection Act sets out a series of guidelines which your organisation should follow when collecting information about individuals:

- Individuals should be made aware of the reason why the information is being collected and how you plan to store, and use it;
- The personal data should be relevant to the purposes for which you collect it, and the amount you collect should not be excessive;
- Personal data should be accurate, up to date and should not be kept for longer than is necessary;
- You must have appropriate technical and organisational measures in place to protect the data – preventing it from getting into the wrong hands;
- Individuals have the right to see the information that you have collected about them; within 40 days of requesting it;
- You must provide 'opt-in' tick boxes for marketing communications and ensure this is accurately captured in your systems for processing the data.

For many organisations collecting data, the Act also requires them to register with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). Registration costs £35 per year: but, most not-for-profit organisations are exempt from registering provided the information collected is only used for purposes identified in your organisations constitution – for instance fund-raising, keeping records, maintaining membership, promoting your work. If you need to transfer the data to another party – for instance providing records of individual's details (which have not been anonymised) to a local authority, your organisation will need to register with the ICO. If you're unclear about the need for registration – do have a look at the ICO website.

2.7 Making your work last

From the start of your project it is critical to think about the long term sustainability of the work.

At the very least, you will need to think about who will maintain the space that you've improved or created once your work is finished.

Who will ensure that the newly renovated flower beds are weeded and watered and who will clean any graffiti from the new community mural are important questions to ask at the outset of your initiative. Importantly, these questions also provide real opportunities for engaging your service-users in project planning and development, and with your group, you might want to try and answer the following questions:

- What resources will people need to maintain the improvements (money, tools, manpower)?
- Where will these resources come from?
- What skills will be needed to manage the space properly?
- Is it clear how the space should be managed (does it need a written set of instructions, or a specification)?
- Is there an opportunity to make changes to the management if needed? Will there be an opportunity for local stakeholders to have their say?
- Who will have responsibility for ensuring that the space is maintained/managed?

You will also need to think about whether or not you want your organisation or project to be involved in the long term maintenance or management of the space. If not, you may need to find a local group willing to take on the responsibility, you may be able to persuade your local council to take it on, or you may need to set up a new group, for this purpose, from scratch. It is important to ask these questions at the beginning as you may need to train people in the skills needed to manage your space, or you might need to persuade another body to take on the management; and starting this early on will give you more time to do so effectively.

A word of Caution

One danger with renovating spaces is that the opportunities for practical improvements can

sometimes become seemingly endless – with individual sites or projects becoming a labour of love – and this can focus all of one's energies and efforts. Instead, it can often be better to focus on the activity – training your team in horticultural, art or construction skills, developing a series of activities for engaging the community, investing time and effort into your volunteers or service users so that you can retain them and ensuring that your work generates the maximum amount of good publicity – rather than investing huge sums of time and money on changing a space. That way, you will have a 'portable service' which you can market to, and adapt for, new audiences and which can follow the funding and investment opportunities.

Project managers are often surprised by the success of environmental social action projects and success in your project can often stimulate calls to do more of the same in the future. Young people will often ask 'what's next?' or you may find that reports of your success spread and community groups or the local council try to persuade you to repeat your work elsewhere.

Alternatively, you may want to retain responsibility for the space, and in this case you will need to find a way to fund your activities.

If you need to persuade funders or the local authority to support your work in the future, you may need to amass an array of supporters and partners that are able to speak out for your work and demonstrate that it's a community asset that needs to be maintained.

Grant Funding

There are a number of opportunities for grant funding for community space projects. The Big Lottery is supportive of projects with a strong environmental focus and the Heritage Lottery Fund invests in projects which improve people's relationships with their natural heritage. There are a number of charitable trusts with environmental grant streams; and the Landfill Communities Fund providers are an ideal source of funding for community space improvement projects where there is a significant capital cost to the initiative.

Setting an example: What the CSC projects did...

Some Community Space Challenge projects naturally found a market for their work. In Halton, Cheshire, the Youth Offending Team began to attract offers of small contracts for graffiti removal following the success of their clean-up work around the town and in Birmingham, the St Georges In The Community project were invited to grow vegetables for a local restaurant on an abandoned allotment site.

The Halton Project started, in 2011, with an initial grant of £15,000 from Community Space

Challenge for the costs of staffing and cleaning and equipment. Within a year, the project had generated £70,000 in local contracts, grants and sponsorship.

The St Georges Community Hub 'Econome' project launched in 2011 with a grant of £20,000 towards the costs of staffing and materials. By 2012, the project was generating around £7,000 a year in sales and a further £14,000 in grants and sponsorship.

If you're looking for grant funding to continue your project, you can get advice from your local Council for Voluntary Services network and sign up to their free online Funding Central newsletter.

It is also worth:

- Getting to know your local Community Foundation (who are often chosen to distribute local grants);
- Finding out whether or not the council have small pots of money to give away;
- Signing up to the newsletters of grant distributors and charitable trusts to get alerts when new funds become available.

Top tip

Discussion with funders found that they appreciate when environmental NGOs communicate their proposals in plain language, pay attention to governance, fulfil formal reporting requirements and keep in touch.



Publicising your successes is important to securing future funding and you will need to make the case that your work is important and develop an argument for its continued action. Your work will already be delivering a range of benefits: not just improving and managing spaces; but delivering training and employability skills; keeping young people in school and out of

trouble; improving physical and mental health; enhancing biodiversity; creating opportunities for art and learning; improving community relations; and having evidence for these range of benefits (see section 2.5) will all help you to make the case for ongoing support or investment.

So, whilst funding specifically for the *environmental* element of your work might not be forthcoming it is worth considering the other benefits which your work delivers. Local authorities, central government and schools will always need to invest in: keeping young people and families out of trouble, in training those *not in education, employment and training*; in managing green spaces; and in keeping young people in school – and these are all areas where environmental social action projects can deliver positive outcomes.

As funders and commissioners change their priorities over time it is impossible to give an exhaustive list of grant funding opportunities which might be suitable for your project, but do think about what are the opportunities in your area. What issues are your local councillors talking about? Where are the gaps in the market for a new enterprise? Which local businesses are doing well and why?

Ideally, if your project works then you will find a way to fund it, but if you do need to close the project, don't forget to acknowledge its successes, do say thank you to those who have contributed; and do make sure to record all the lessons learnt throughout the lifetime of the project. That way you can help ensure that others will be able to build on your work in the future.



SECTION 3

How much does it cost?

Having read Section Two, you now know how to run your environmental social action initiative, but you probably want to know how much it's going to cost. Infact, probably the most commonly asked question, after 'how do you persuade teenagers to get their trainers dirty?' is 'how much does it cost to run community space projects?' and this section is designed to answer that.

There are details about the types of tools and other resources that you'll need and some suggestions for how to save money along the way. Where appropriate, rough figures for costs are given, but we have tried to avoid including too many financial figures given that costs change over time and will sometimes vary depending on where you are in the country.

We hope you find it useful.

Finance and Resources

Regardless of where your project is based, there are going to be some universal upfront costs. Basic upfront costs will probably include office rent, a venue for activities (and its associated overheads); and staff and management time. However, working in partnership with other organisations, and helping to share resources, will certainly help to keep costs down – for example, by using a greenhouse which belongs to a community garden or allotment, rather than buying your own, or by sharing skilled staff for activities. It is always worth looking for ‘in-kind’ donations to your project too. Indeed many funders will want to see evidence of match funding, and providing opportunities for businesses, other organisations and individuals to support your project (besides the practical hands on stuff) will help you gather more friends in the community; and will help raise the profile of your project.

In the Community Space Challenge programme, the average grant per project was £19,000 per year, but this alone was rarely enough to cover all the costs of running initiatives, and most projects needed to subsidise some of their activities with funding from other sources.

The greatest outlay for social action projects is staffing. Expenditure on equipment and clothing for activities will vary, depending on what is available from elsewhere. If you’re starting from scratch, the costs of materials can also be high, although making the case that your project is a good cause may help in getting things at a reduced rate. Some funds will also need to be put aside for rewards and celebration activities for the young people and volunteers – as incentives for being involved in the work.

Project costs are likely to vary according to the nature of the activity, so – as before – information on costs is organised against project activities.



Plan.Do – The Social Action App includes a budgeting element with the ability to assign costs to each task and track the project budget over time. For more information, see page 7.

Community gardening and Allotment activities (pp.10–13) will benefit from having project staff or sessional workers with specific expertise in horticulture. Horticulture skills training is available for the amateur, but it can be expensive

(between £300 and £1200 for a year-long Royal Horticultural Society course). However, one-day workshops (in subjects such as organic gardening) are often held by community gardening groups and are well worth investigating. Good gardening tools and equipment can be expensive, but if properly cared for, can last for years. All gardening tasks are likely to require digging forks, spades, loppers, secateurs, watering cans or a hose and wheelbarrows; and smaller items such as trowels and hand forks. Gloves should be provided and if using heavy digging equipment, your young people or volunteers should be equipped with steel toe-capped boots. Don’t forget to provide water-proofed clothing too.

Plants

Buying plants in pots can be expensive – particularly from a garden centre or plant nursery. Plant sales at fetes can be a great way to get cheap plants – particularly if you’re not too choosy about the varieties that you want. Alternatively, make friends with local gardeners who may be in a position to give away excess bulbs or divided plant material from their own gardens.

The cheapest way to grow plants is either by planting *annual* seed, by buying small ‘plug plants’ from nurseries online or by buying ‘bare-root’ plants (if you can find them). Planting ‘annual’ flowers from seed in the spring is a great way to create a colourful display relatively cheaply, but the garden will take a while to grow and normally you will have to sow seeds again the following year. *Perennial* plants are more expensive at the outset, but provided they don’t die, will come back year after year and may spread themselves around the garden.

Top tip



Provided you’re happy to wait for several years before maturity, the cheapest way to buy many trees is as bare root plants – ready for planting in the autumn. This is also the best way to get trees established properly too as you can often avoid the staking and watering requirements which can be needed when large trees are planted.

Spring-flowering bulbs are also relatively inexpensive and most varieties will come back year after year, and may even spread themselves around the garden.

Vegetables

Vegetables are generally best grown from seed, as some varieties (like beetroot and carrots) hate to be dug up and moved once they’ve started growing. Some vegetables (such as courgettes, beans and pumpkins) should, however, be started indoors so you’ll need access to a windowsill or greenhouse. Once again, it is worth asking other gardeners if they can donate spare plants to your project. Keen gardeners generally sow more seeds than they need – so by April/May are likely to have plants to give away. You can also often pick up tomato and courgette plants very cheaply at fetes and community events too.

Many DIY stores now sell vegetable plants, but check that the plants are healthy and still small before buying them. Vegetable plants which have sat in pots for too long do not grow well once in the ground.

Tools

If planters are to be constructed, woodworking tools, such as saws, drills, hammers, nails or screws, wood and possibly a workbench or two will also be needed. Wood can be surprisingly expensive, but many towns and cities now have wood recycling projects, and if not, you might be able to get recycled scaffold boards (which are often the best material for building raised beds) from scaffolding companies – as they need replacing on a regular basis.

Cordless drills are invaluable for most construction projects and it is worth investing in one or two if you plan to use them regularly; although you may be able to borrow one from a friendly DIY enthusiast.

Most tools (including even small items such as spades and gloves) can be hired from plant hire firms and some DIY stores. Although it is unlikely to make economic sense for small items, Tool hire is ideal if you only want to use large expensive pieces of equipment (such as rotavators and brush-cutters) for ‘one-off’ projects.

You might also need to invest in maintenance equipment. Lawns will need to be mown and hedges trimmed but when investing in machinery, be sure to read the instructions about maintenance (and in particular about the correct types of fuel) carefully and be prepared to get them serviced regularly. Otherwise repairing them can be costly.

And finally, don’t forget that before starting a gardening initiative and investing in all the equipment, it is worth looking around to see if there are already existing gardening projects in

your neighbourhood. They will have experienced staff and volunteers, the right equipment; and will no doubt be looking for some extra help with their work.

If you use an allotment on a regular basis, access to a greenhouse or polytunnel will provide somewhere dry to work in poor weather and a space for starting off small plants (saving you money)

Buying a new greenhouse can cost you up to £1000, but they are often advertised cheaply or free for collection in local free newspapers. Polytunnels are generally much cheaper (up to £600), but the plastic covering will need replacing every couple of years. If you just want somewhere to start small plants, you might be able to get away with a ‘cold-frame’, and plastic versions of these can be bought cheaply.

Having somewhere to store equipment is important. Large tool storage boxes that can be padlocked provide a safe and convenient place for storage that can be kept dry – and will be cheaper than a shed, but bear in mind that a shed with windows can also double up as a greenhouse.

Top tip



Equipment needs to be maintained properly. Secateurs and gardening shears will quickly become blunt and rusty if not cleaned, oiled and stored properly; and without regular servicing and the correct use of fuels, more expensive items such as brush and hedge cutters will break – leaving you with an expensive repair bill. Involving young people in the proper use and maintenance of such tools can sometimes be challenging but will provide an important educational opportunity in its own right.

Arts and crafts activities (p.14) costs will vary considerably depending upon the nature of the project.

If you’re buying in the services of a professional graffiti artist of their team, they will normally provide the resources, but be aware that the costs for their services can be high: up to £2000 for a week-long graffiti project.

Many arts and crafts activities can be done using recycled materials (which, in itself, will provide an opportunity for some environmental education). Mosaics can be made with broken tiles, models with plastic bottles, cardboard boxes and other household recycling; and sculptures can be made using abandoned bicycle

parts collected with the police from railings and bike stands.

Top tip

Many towns and cities have a ‘scrap store’ where- for a small regular membership fee you can get access to a wide range of cheap, recycled art materials and textiles. In some places, there are also paint recycling projects which take tins of left-over paint from tradesmen and then offer it free or for a small charge to good causes.



Metalwork projects can be expensive – given the cost of the tools needed and the skilled staff required to lead sessions. A skilled metal worker, with the necessary equipment and willing to work with young people is likely to cost at least £75/day.

Litter picks and community clean-ups (p.16) will require ‘litter pickers’ and gloves for your volunteers, suitable strong bags for collecting rubbish and somewhere appropriate to take it. Sometimes the local council will lend you the equipment.

Public events (p.18) will need a budget for food and drink and its transport; the hire of plates, cups and furniture; publicity through leaflets and fliers, entertainment for guests and equipment (such as a P.A. system). Organising an event for several hundred people is therefore not cheap and is likely to cost upward of £1500 – as outlined in an example budget for a ‘Big Lunch’ event organised by a Community Space Challenge project for around 300 people in North London in 2012:

Promotion/flyer printing	£250
Food/drinks 100 people + meeting refreshments	£1000
Young people's incentives	£150
Activities at event	£600
PA hire + performers' expenses	£370
Decorations, prizes, t shirts	£250
Gardner costs (to run activity)	£150
Total	£2770

With such events, there may be opportunities to benefit from ‘in-kind’ donations (local bands and singers willing to perform for free, and equipment loaned by community groups) and to

use social media to advertise the big day for free. **Practical conservation work (p.20)** will require many of the tools described in the community gardening section above; but with the need for more heavy tools such as mattocks and loppers – which may not be available to buy in your local garden centre. If you are working with a partner organisation (such as TCV, your local Wildlife Trust, RSPB, National Trust or Groundwork) they will generally provide these, but you may want to bring gloves, overalls/wet weather gear and appropriate boots.

Interior Renovations and Pop-Up Shop (p.24) projects can be expensive to set up from scratch. Besides paying for materials, stock and furnishings (tables, chairs, counters, display stands, lights, doors etc.) you will also need to consider additional costs such as insurance and rent – although your local council may be willing to offer empty shops on a lower (‘peppercorn’) rent. If you are a charity, you will be exempt from business rates, but the facility will still attract utility bills.

In contrast, renovating a youth or community centre can be far cheaper. You may be able to access recycled paints (as described in section 1.3); or DIY stores may be willing to donate decorating materials to good causes.

Don’t forget that regardless of the activity you choose to undertake, project managers need to ensure that the staff budget will not only cover direct work with the young people but also the ‘indirect’ tasks of administration, record keeping, reporting, publicity, recruitment and staff training. It may also be necessary to pay for additional staff time to cover looking after allotments at weekends (watering, weeding etc.); or it may be possible to recruit volunteers for this role, or even other allotment holders – who may be willing to ‘keep an eye’ on the plot during holidays and other times.

Through the Community Space Challenge programme, projects received an average grant of approximately £17,000 per year, examples of how this investment was allocated are shown in the table on the following page below. Please note that these figures represent expenditure between 2007–2011

Finally, in addition to the main activity costs of equipment, it is helpful to include some funds for rewards and incentives, food and special activities. It may also be necessary to provide some transport, at least for some activities.

Example running costs Through the Community Space Challenge programme, projects received an average grant of approximately £19,000 per year, examples of how this investment was allocated are shown in the table below. Please note that these figures represent expenditure between 2007–2011.

Project	Average annual grant from the Community Space Challenge (CSC) programme	Staffing	Contributions to overheads	Activities and running costs	Additional funds
North London	£19,000	Project manager for 2 days/week, two sessional workers, a gardener for 2 days per week.	Low (approximately £300 per year).	A minor contribution to activity costs (£1900 per year).	No
Yorkshire	£19,000	Project manager 25 hours per week, assistant manager, workshop manager, cookery and allotment officer.	No	Considerable activity costs (£8,000 year).	Other Lottery grants, contributions from schools (for alternative education provision, contributions from the Youth Offending Team.
Birmingham	£19,000	10% of project manager's salary, professional sessional workers.	No	Activity costs (£2 – 3,000 per year); incentives for young people (£1 – 3,000 per year).	Various charitable trusts and come income generation from the project's social enterprise.
Bristol	£19,000	30% of project worker's salary, sessional staff, gardener, artist.	Included a contribution to office costs of approximately £1,300 per year.	Minibus hire, volunteer expenses, equipment. Approximately £3,000 per year.	Administration and venue costs covered by the local authority.
Portsmouth	£19,000	20% of project manager, 10% of other worker, sessional staff at 25 hrs per week, 10% of student placement costs.	Office costs of around £2,000 per year.	Activities £3,500. Incentives £2,000 per year.	Extra funding from charitable trusts, the Youth Offending Team and the local council.
South London	£52,500 (ran three CSC projects across the borough)	Three projects delivered by one full-time coordinator, one part-time worker and two sessional staff.	Low (approximately £800 per year).	Activity costs £15 – 20,000 per year.	Additional funding for an Intergenerational pilot project.

Thinkpiece:

There is such a thing as a free lunch



At the start of your project, talk to your group and make a list of what you need to complete it.

Then, set up interviews with the press and local radio stations to advertise your project and drop some hints about the sorts of materials that you're going to need for the work. The local press and radio stations are always looking for good news stories so don't be afraid to contact them.

Companies are willing to donate to good causes but keep your requests reasonable, don't ask for thousands of pounds from one company – spread it over lots of companies; and bear in mind that you need to involve local businesses if you need things delivered – to cut down on transport costs. Always try to collect if possible, too, as it helps to get to know the person who has donated and they might be able to help further.

The next thing to look at is your mind set. You have to believe in what you are doing – if you don't, you won't get anywhere. Enthusiasm is contagious and it comes out in your voice when you are talking to people. If they see you full of enthusiasm they will become enthusiastic too. The same principles apply when you are looking to recruit your volunteers; sell it to them, don't just go through the questionnaire – do it enthusiastically and they will volunteer.

So, back to your wish list. Put aside a day and make a start. Look at your list and look on the internet for manufacturers of the items in the local area. Once you have exhausted manufacturers move on to retailers. Don't be afraid of the phone as it can be your best selling tool and they will hear the enthusiasm in your voice. Only use email as a last resort or if they specifically request one. Firstly tell them who you are, what you are doing and the fact you are on a tight budget. Then ask for what you need.

You still have an ace up your sleeve – remember the radio and the press. All companies like publicity and you can tell them that in return for their donation you will mention what they have done. The best form of publicity is free publicity! Invite them to visit your project and let them see how much of a difference their contribution is going to make. If you can't get them to visit the project: take the project to them. Use your laptop to show them pictures and videos of what you are doing. Have members of the local community on your film saying how important this project is and what a difference it will make to the community. Not everyone will donate but don't get disheartened. It's a numbers game – keep plugging away.

Next consider doing a quarterly newsletter telling people about your different projects and acknowledging the donations. Show it when asking for donations as this is another free publicity opportunity. The newsletter need not cost anything because if you find a local printer this can be their donation. Let them advertise on the back page and sell them on the idea that by doing this it could bring more business for them.

Does all this work? Yes it does! Let me talk you through a project I ran at Fagley in West Yorkshire:

Fagleys Wish List

- Two bee hives
- Bog plants for bog garden
- Enough stone for a dry stone wall 20 feet by 3 feet and the same again to teach dry stone walling
- Weed killer to tidy up existing areas; and new trees
- Use of a JCB for a day

Here is how I approached the task...

Bee hives – what did I know about bees? Answer: nothing apart

from the fact that they fly and sting. Trawling through the internet I found a number for the local bee keepers association. Talking to local associations made me realise how passionate people are about things they like doing; and boy can they talk! Next, I found a person local to where I live. I rang him and he was more than happy to talk. He invited me to his house one evening and three hours later I left with a lot more knowledge than I ever thought I would get and the details of a free three-day bee keeping course. Later, I found someone willing to donate two bee hives – both of which only needed a little bit of repair work to get them up-and-running again.

Bog Plants – where to start? Again, the internet pointed me to the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and again, they gave me the details of somebody local so I rang them and explained what I was trying to do,

"I just need some advice," I said.

Next I went to meet them and 2 hours later I knew a lot more than I did the previous day.

"So how many plants do you have for this garden?"

I was asked.

"None", I said,

"So how many do you need?" they asked,

"How many can you spare?" I replied. He told me to come back tomorrow and "we'll see what we can do".

The next day I went back and left with over 30 plants!

Dry Stone Walling materials – first job on the internet was to find a quarry and once again go direct to the source. I found one literally round the corner. I rang them, explained the work and then took the quarry manager to see the project to show him how we intended to use the stone. He sent me photos later that day of some stone he would donate and we then arranged delivery later that week. Having got the stone we needed, my next job was to find the tools to work with it. I paid a quick visit to my local DIY store and left with the ones we needed free of charge.

Trees and weed killer – again the trusty internet came up trumps and directed me to the Bradford Environmental Action Trust. I took them to see the project and they kindly donated some trees and liquid weed killer. They also let us use their sprayers to apply the weed killer.

JCB – I did manage to get a JCB for free, provided we had the correct insurance, and once we got this sorted, a friend of a friend of a friend was happy to spend a few hours preparing a bog garden with his mini-digger.

The final step in your quest for freebies is to say thank you to all the people who donated to your project. Take them back to see what you have done with their donation and send them copies of your press releases as this shows that you have kept your word and mentioned them. Send them copies of your news-letter, but most of all write a letter of thanks and enclose a few photos of the end result; and remember, don't be afraid to ask for their help on future projects.

– Chris Ward, from Joint Activities and Motor Education Service (J.A.M.E.S), Bradford

NOW, IT'S OVER TO YOU!

Thanks for reading and we hope this toolkit proves useful in helping to make your project a real success.

If you still want to know more, Catch22 has plenty more about Community Space Challenge on its website. Not only are there case studies; a toolkit for taking CSC into schools; and the full University of York evaluation; you can also access our short 'How to Do CSC' films. These films – on our *How To Do CSC* webpage – were made by members of the Community Space Challenge Youth Advisory Board and are designed to complement this toolkit with some of its key information in a short, fun format; there is advice on engaging young people in environmental social action initiatives.

As you can see from using this document there's lots to think about when running environmental social action projects, but don't expect to get it all right first time. It's taken six years of CSC to develop some really successful projects, and what's clear is that there's no one-size-fits all formula out there. There are also likely to be some bits which we've missed and no doubt this document might have raised even more questions than we answered. If so: Catch 22, our delivery partners and others running community space projects would love to hear from you. You can get in touch with Catch22 using the contact details on the website or check out CSC's cluster page on the Project Dirt website:

www.catch-22.org.uk/expertise/social-action

www.catch-22.org.uk/Community-Space-Challenge

www.projectdirt.com/cluster/cscknowledgehub

Good luck!

If you wish to use some of the information in this toolkit, please do get in touch first. We want it to be useful, but do please ask us if want to you copy anything and use it elsewhere. Check out www.catch-22.org.uk/contact-us to get in touch.

Acknowledgements

Catch22 would like to thank a number of organisations and individuals for their support for the Community Space Challenge programme over six, very successful years; and for their help providing the advice, guidance and resources which have found their way into this document.

Firstly, we would like thank all of our delivery partners, the staff, young people and community members who helped make Community Space Challenge such a success in more than 70 locations across England. Their work has been a constant inspiration, has won numerous awards (including the award for best Lottery funded environment project in 2012); and has demonstrated what can be achieved when communities take an active role in tackling problems locally and challenging the way people feel about where they live.

Catch22 also wishes to thank the Big Lottery and the Cabinet Office for funding the CSC programme over the past six years. This investment has supported 22,000 volunteers to work on practical projects across England to improve their local community spaces and, in many instances, to improve their own lives: through new skills and qualifications gained; new friendships made; and a whole host of new lessons learnt.

Our programme training partners have made a massive contribution to the success of CSC over its six successful years. We would like to thank Keep Britain Tidy for training and supporting project staff with the tools and confidence to run environmental social action initiatives, in many instances, for the first time. Thanks also to the Princes Trust for their valuable contribution to widening the impact of the programme through support for Community Cash and Development Awards and thanks to Groundwork for supporting our All Ages project partners to ensure sustainability for their work. Catch22 would also like to thank The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), Plantlife and the numerous other providers who have helped train and inspire our project staff over the years. Thanks finally to Changemakers and Young Advisors for supporting and developing our Youth Advisory Board to evaluate, communicate, and ultimately enhance, the work of the programme over the past six years.

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Thanks to project staff who have contributed some of the ‘thinkpieces’ which give this document a direct insight into the experiences of those delivering the programme across the country; and thank you to Dr Judy Renshaw for producing the excellent first draft of this toolkit. We would also like to thank all of those whose photographs we have used here. There are too many of you to credit everyone (but we still want to say thank you anyway), but in particular we would like to thank Simon Apps and his associates for skilfully creating beautiful images which capture the impact of this work on the faces of people across the country.

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