

Engagement Gateway – Building Skills

Mid way report November 2013



Executive Summary

Down to Earth has been providing an Engagement Gateway funded 'Building Skills' Project since April 2013 based on building and construction skills. So far we have worked with 9 different 'hard to reach' groups totalling 67 participants registered on the project. Each programme duration ranges from 4 to 8 sessions and works with participants to gain knowledge and experience on working in a construction environment. Participants have engaged in sustainable building methods using wood and earthen walling (Cob) and have used a range of power tools and hand tools. As a result of participating on the programme the participants gained some understanding of alternative building methods and have shown a genuine interest in construction work.

Participants have gained an Agored Cymru certificate related to construction work, such as cob building and green woodwork. Also the participants have engaged in a relevant volunteering experience. Some have volunteered with local primary schools in developing outdoor sensory garden spaces and some working with Natural Resource Wales in woodland management. These volunteering placements have made use of the knowledge and experience gained during the programme at Down to Earth.

The project has worked with 67 Participants so far, of which 94% have gained an Agored Cymru Certificate, 94 % have gained a positive outcome and 90% have engaged with volunteering.



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Sample Programme Outline

Session	Where	Workshop
1	D2E	Welcomes, Introductions, games and base line assessments and enrolment.
2	D2E	Intro to sustainable building methods, and construction work. Agored Cymru Registration
3	D2E	Sustainable building and Agored Cymru work
4	D2E	Sustainable building and Agored Cymru work
5	Volunteer Placement	Volunteer placement
6	D2E	Sustainable building and completion of Agored Cymru workbooks
7	TBC	Adventure Activity day
8	D2E	Celebration day – end assessment

The Groups

The eligibility criteria for the programme were set by WCVA.

The Building Skills project has worked with 67 participants since the start in April 2013. The groups have been referred and supported by these referral agencies;

- Communities First Swansea
- Keeping In Touch, Neath Port Talbot Youth Service
- Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Health Board (ISIS ward)
- Carmarthenshire Youth Service
- Swansea Youth Service
- Hafan Cymru



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Outcomes

The Building Skills project outcomes		Achieved outcomes Nov 2013
• Participants engaged	128	67 (54%)
• Those gaining a positive outcome	104	63 (61%)
• Those gaining part or module accreditation	104	63 (61%)
• Those progressing into Volunteering	84	60 (71%)

Down to Earth are engaging hard to reach young people and adults in developing building and construction skills. So far the 67 Participants engaged have gained Agored Cymru Accreditation certificates and have progressed into volunteering. The Building Skills project has worked alongside these participants to gain an understanding of some of the skills needed in the construction of sustainable developments and has supported them to gain the confidence in working with hand tools and power tools.

Many of the soft outcomes recorded through the soft skills questionnaire have been highlighted to be centred on personal development and confidence, with many participants feeling more able to work with others and try out new experiences related to construction work and outdoor activity

Construction work

The participants on the Engagement Gateway Building Skills project have been involved in the construction work at Down to Earth Project site at Murton. This has involved the refurbishment of the 'Main Barn', a timber frame building, and the construction of a new build in Cob and Timber.

These are the main tasks within the construction project that the groups have been involved in;

- Timber stud frame construction
- Installation of internal and external insulation
- Timber cladding
- Cob wall construction
- Building up flooring layers in aggregates and compacting
- Health and Safety



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This construction project started in April 2013 and is now nearing its completion. The group's involvement with the construction programme has had a positive benefit in combining live construction work with development of new skills and knowledge in sustainable building.



Accreditation

The building skills project has been complemented with providing Agored Cymru accreditation. This has been primarily in 'Green Wood work' and 'Building with Earth' incorporating traditional building methods and tools use. The level of accreditation gained is Level 1 credit value 3.

94% of participants attended have gained an Agored Cymru Certificate.



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Volunteering

Down to Earth project has supported participants in their volunteer placements which have made use of their new skills and confidence. Placements have so been a Sensory Garden development at a local primary school and special educational needs school and a woodland management programme developed by Natural Resource Wales. Participants have also gone on to volunteer with other organisation such as the AONB Team on Gower.

90% of participants attended have been involved in volunteering activity.



Future work for the Engagement Gateway project

The project funding runs until April 2014, and the 'Building Skills' project will be continuing the final stages of the construction project at the Down to Earth site. Although the main construction and refurbishment work will have been completed there is still much to do in the landscaping and finishing woodwork to do. This will involve tasks such as

- Construction of shelving and racking systems for the storage of tools and equipment
- Landscaping
- Cleft Oak Fencing



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- Dry stone Walling
- Kitchen fitting

Volunteering placements will become available on other sustainable building construction sites around the local area early 2014.