

# The National *community forest* Partnership

## FOREST OF MERCIA EDUCATION PROJECT

Location	Staffordshire
Partners	Staffordshire County Council Local Authorities Local schools and Pupil Referral Units



Background	<p>The Forest of Mercia Education Project originated from the need to provide positive alternative activities for young people who are excluded from school.</p> <p>The project provides an alternative to classroom based learning, encouraging young people to gain forestry, carpentry and horticulture skills through site based work. Liaising closely with Staffordshire County Council's Children and Lifelong Learning team, the project ensures that the young people develop socially and emotionally. The project has been running successfully for three years, helping young people from around South Staffordshire to gain skills, develop as individuals and successfully move on into a variety of careers or further training opportunities.</p>
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Objectives	<p>To provide positive alternative activities, experiences and qualifications for excluded young people, or those at risk of exclusion.</p> <p>To encourage young people to take an interest in their local and global environment, with a view to exploring this further through training or employment on leaving the project.</p> <p>To positively contribute to the creation, development and management of the Forest of Mercia, through physical improvement projects and site based work.</p>
Actions	<p>A programme of site based training, leading to City &amp; Guilds NVQ Level 1 in Land Based Management and Youth Awards Scheme Qualifications.</p> <p>Practical development for individuals through skills in forestry, horticulture and carpentry, leading to the development of the Forest of Mercia area.</p> <p>Development of social and emotional behavioural attributes through team work, sports and games activities.</p>
Achievements	<p>In 2006/07, the project worked with up to 30 young people.</p> <p>25 young people gained qualifications including Youth Awards, COPE Awards, NVQs, or units towards NVQs.</p> <p>1000 trees were planted and 17ha of physical improvements undertaken, such as woodland management, coppicing and clearance work.</p> <p>Many of the young people moved on to a variety of jobs or further training opportunities, such as bricklaying apprenticeships, tree surgery positions, landscape gardening employment and carpentry courses.</p>
Lessons Learnt	<p>Working together with the young people and representatives from Children and Lifelong Learning, this project has evolved into a flexible and innovative project. Issues around suitability of individuals, numbers catered for and types of work undertaken have been or are being resolved, with the result being an effective, quality service which is integral to the development of those young people involved.</p>
Quotes	<p>“The Forest of Mercia Education Project continues to be a leading example of how working in and indeed just experiencing a wooded environment can provide long term benefits to well-being. The project’s focus on excluded pupils promotes marked behavioural improvements as well as providing self confidence and a sense of purpose to individuals, plus new skills which can lead to rewarding working lives.” Bill Heslegrave, Regional Director for the Forestry Commission.</p>

## Contact

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