



Creative Camping provided three weekend residentials with a total of 24 disabled places for young people and 25 non-disabled young people over the three camps. The camps took place at Thistledown Farm, Stroud; Cymcynwyn Farm, Brecon and at Pwlldu, Gower. Because many of the young people had taken part in Creative Camping in previous years it was lovely to return to the familiar places, but also great to introduce a new venue by the sea in the Gower. We also had six new volunteers

take part in the camps, four of whom were young people aged 17-19 interested in careers in caring, psychology and paediatrics. Two further volunteers work with young people with disability already. Adult volunteers and leaders supported the young people to engage and communicate with their peers and to take part in all activities together. All participants went to at least two camps, and many came to all three.

The aims of Creative Camping are to:

- Develop and strengthen links and friendships between disabled and non-disabled young people;
- Provide opportunities for disabled and non-disabled young people to engage with and respond to the natural environment through creativity;
- Provide opportunities for volunteers, including professional educators, to take part in inclusive activities;
- Raise awareness and understanding of the principle of Inclusion in order to make pioneering steps towards a more inclusive society.

We have no difficulty recruiting participants now that Creative Camping has established itself as a trusted provider. We were over-subscribed this year. We feel it is essential to keep the group size between 20- 25 people altogether, as any larger than this creates a different dynamic among the young people which is less conducive to a totally integrated group.





Our non-disabled group comes mostly from the Venturers group of the Stroud Valleys Woodcraft group. Other non-disabled young people come through friends and family. Disabled participants come through various schools in the area including The Shrubberies, Milestones and Alderman Knight Schools, the Of Course We Can brochure and from publicity we have undertaken through the year - we have taken part in a number of promotional events as part of the Of Course We Can providers' network.

The level of need of disabled participants ranges from very low level - perhaps needing attention around mealtimes to ensure healthy choices are made - to those who need all day 1:1 attention to ensure that they safe and happy. We enrol staff accordingly and are able to recruit for one to one Disabilities include Down's Syndrome, low and high level Autism, global learning delay and deafness. We also have a number of young people join us who have behavioural difficulties, sometimes in addition to a disability.

	<i>Thistledown</i>	<i>Brecon</i>	<i>Gower</i>
<i>Staff</i>	4	3	4
<i>Volunteers</i>	2	3	3
<i>Campers</i>	17	15	17
<i>Level of need 0/low</i>	10	8	9
<i>Level of need medium</i>	5	5	6
<i>Level of need high</i>	2	2	2



Because of the nature of our camps we talk to families and carers before enrolment to ensure that the settings and activities are appropriate for the young person. We ask families/carers to use our 'All About Me' forms to give us an idea of the level and specifics of need required by an individual so that we are prepared. We will visit a new family in their home setting to ensure that we have all the information we need and so does the family. This is about quality of experience - we plan our staffing carefully

to ensure that all needs can be met without compromising the quality of care for any of the participants.

We believe our camps are unique. We take great pride in the level of attention we give to each and every individual, whether it is helping them to brush their hair because that is important, or sitting in a tree to keep them company, because that's



where they have chosen to be. It can be hard in a field, with a field toilet and cooking for 25 on a fire, but there is so much laughter and always interesting conversation. We love to encourage positive risk, cooperation, mutual support and love of nature. All this and more happens on every camp for everyone there. We hope the pictures speak for themselves.

### Young People's Feedback

"The leaders treated us like adults. They knew how to have fun and communicated with us properly"

"All the leaders on the camp were fantastic! Always up for trying something new, and they did so much work to make these camps fantastic! Thank you!"

"I would like some more of these!"

"I had a lovely time participating in the cabaret and daily activities. It felt good to begin to understand how disabilities can affect people lives, it was a real eye-opener."

"I think it is a lot better mixing with other people while doing activities and it's changed my view of disabled people."

"Cooking food together made it feel like a family thing. I felt safe and relaxed."

"I'd really love to do it again; it was a fantastic and unique experience."

"Please can I come next time?"

"Creative Camping has changed my life – for the better!"

"It feels like coming home"

## Parents Feedback

This has been great for her confidence and independence. She's doing things I never thought she could. The team are incredibly supportive and she has asked when she can go to Creative Camping again.

Thoroughly enjoyed it. Time to chill out, gets anxious normally, this was away from the norm, he was able to relax, notice he's more relaxed when he gets back (behaviour)

Just brilliant to be away from family, Mum, Dad, sisters and brothers. Friendships don't come naturally - good for her confidence to go away on her own like her siblings. Confidence - is being able to leave the family and have independence, increased social skills. Being away from family, with strangers, was really good for her.

Loved it, very comfortable with them, loves the activities they offer, was overjoyed when he heard there was an extra one. Has made friends which is unusual, struggles with peer relationships so this is great for him.

Starting now to talk about the others in the group, gaining awareness of others and their needs - even talking about some who didn't want to do the walk and he understood why, even mentioning this is a step forward. This camping has made him so much more of a social being

C is 'looked after' with very high needs . This has been great for her independence and confidence and she's been doing things I never thought possible. The team are incredibly supportive and she has asked when she can go to Creative Camping again.

"He is totally up for doing it again - you have to understand how amazing this is – he very often refuses to engage with anything.





### Volunteers' Feedback

"There was a great team spirit. I felt I was taking part in something really good – for me and everyone else there."

"I loved the way everyone found their 'thing'. By the end of the first day there were groups of people all doing something that fascinated them. It made me wonder about what teenagers normally do, and how we stop believing they want to do anything other than sit about in front of a screen."

"The best camping experience I've ever had, and I've had a few!"

"I found it hard the first day – it was crazy sometimes, really challenging- but I coped, and knew I could do anything after that! I learnt a lot about myself."

"It's probably the most important thing I've ever done, I can't think of anything that has made me feel so fulfilled."

"How other people's lives are outside my immediate world – I understand more about them, I feel after that experience my views on people's lives in the world are expanded. My horizons are broader."

