



Community Toolkit to Success Planning Outdoor Activities

Toolkit to assist leaders and volunteers from community groups
to plan successful outdoor activities and events



Introduction

This toolkit has been compiled by Venture Outdoors in partnership with Craig McCullough of Outdoor Concepts (NI) Ltd.

Although the Venture Outdoors project is focused on people with disabilities, minority ethnic groups and those from disadvantaged communities, this toolkit has been designed to assist leaders and volunteers from community groups from all sectors of the community to:

- Organise and deliver enjoyable and safe activities in the outdoors
- Feel confident in delivering outdoor activities
- Discover how easy it can be to take your groups into your local outdoor area

Outdoor activity programmes or events can be anything from a simple day activity to part of a wider programme you are completing with your group. All these types of activities are an important way to enjoy the amazing and varied landscape of our country, build a strong community spirit and most importantly have lots of fun!

Benefits of taking your group into the outdoors

Getting active in the outdoors can benefit both physical and mental well-being in children and adults alike. Outdoor activities can provide opportunities for personal development in overcoming challenges and working as a team. Outdoor activity is good for the:

- Body
- Mind
- Community
- Economy

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore, Dream, Discover." Mark Twain, Writer

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Type of Activities/Events



This toolkit focuses on how to organise outdoor activities for 4 main types of programmes provided by community groups.

Day Activities - e.g. a local 'hard of hearing' ladies group participating in a walking event in their local park learning about trees, plants and shrubs.

Weekly Activities - e.g. a youth group participating in a weekly treasure hunt in their local park or forest learning how to map read and use orienteering skills.

Monthly Activities - e.g. a group of adults with physical disabilities participating in teambuilding activities with their support workers in their local park.

Event - e.g. a community group organising a sponsored cycle to raise money for a local community centre.

Types of Outdoor Activities

A definitive list of what activities you can do and where you can do them is available on www.outdoorni.com

For more specific information on the most popular activities check out these websites:

- www.walkni.com
- www.canoeni.com
- www.cycleni.com

Action Planning - The Activity Development Team

The first step in organising an outdoor activity experience is bringing together an Activity Development Team, a group of skilled people to plan the activity. This allows a dedicated group to plan the activity, programme or event whilst allowing the continuation of normal community activity.

Top Tip: Be inclusive, not exclusive when forming the Activity Development Team.

Get a good:

- Balance between men and women
- Age range
- Balance of skills and abilities for the activity.

Try not to have too many on the team - you could be discussing ideas for a long time!

Having set up the Activity Development Team, it is important to appoint a Project Leader. This person will be the driving force behind the idea, ensuring that each point on the agenda is not only discussed but is also put into practice. Ultimately the Project Leader is responsible for the success of the activity or event.

It is good practice to keep records of each meeting to give clear structure to your plans and help remember who has agreed to complete the different tasks.

Use the Outdoor Activity Planning Checklist to look at all the steps the team will need to think about when planning activities for a group. (See Appendix 1).



Action Planning - The Ideas Phase

Start with a simple table like the one below to help you focus on the precise activity, programme or event you wish to plan.

At this early stage you may have a number of ideas - this is fine, list all those ideas down on the table. As you may involve other people or organisations over the coming weeks and months the table will change - ideas may get cast aside or objectives sharpened - this is all part of the process.

Table 1 - Activity / Event Ideas

Target Client	Activity idea	Aims & Objectives	Location	Numbers
Who is this activity for?	What do you want to do?	Why do you want to do it?	Where do you want to do it?	Overall size of activity?

Top Tip: At this early stage, all ideas are good ideas. Use the table above to encourage ideas to flow. Some ideas will be dismissed quickly as they are not feasible whilst others will show up as being more suitable.



Action Planning - The Practicalities

Case Study - Belfast Islamic Centre



The Belfast Islamic Centre was established in 1978 by a group of Muslims from the local community to provide a focus for all Muslims living in Northern Ireland.

Although well organised in other areas the group had not made use of the many outdoor recreation opportunities available in Northern Ireland. This changed when a selection of adults and young members of the group took part in a series of outdoor activity taster sessions in partnership with Venture Outdoors in 2010. The group enjoyed caving, climbing, hill walking, team games, orienteering and a high ropes course at Belfast Activity Centre.

This positive experience inspired the group leaders to arrange further outdoor recreation activities and events for their younger members.

Several members of the group began working towards their Duke of Edinburgh's Award which involved overnight camping and walking expeditions.

To date 3 have achieved their Bronze Award and 4 have achieved their Silver Award. A further 18 young people are due to complete their Bronze and Silver Duke of Edinburgh's Awards in March 2012.

The group has also taken part in a cross community relations project with a local group from Belfast. Meeting once a week, they have used a mixture of outdoor teambuilding activities alongside arts and crafts to learn more about each others cultures.

The Belfast Islamic Centre also organised a residential for 22 people from different cultures at the Share Holiday Village on the shores of Upper Lough Erne in County Fermanagh. The multi-activity residential saw the group enjoy a range of activities on the Lough and ashore.

This case study highlights how a small start can inspire both group leaders and group members to greater things. From a series of simple activity sessions the Belfast Islamic Centre has now incorporated outdoor recreation into its annual programmes.

Action Planning - The Practicalities

With your Activity Development Team formed, your ideas discussed and activity/event chosen, what do you need to consider next?

Permission to use the Land

Most day activities, for small groups, taking place in local parks, forests and other public spaces, do not require permission, but it is courteous to phone the landowner and let them know:

- That you intend to use their land
- Start/finish time
- Numbers involved
- Activities taking place.

If you are planning a larger activity or event, you should enquire if you need permission from the landowner before taking your idea any further. Some might require permission in the form of an Activity Permit.

Insurance and Risk Assessments

Many voluntary, community and charitable organisations have their own public liability insurance. As you plan your outdoor activity you should consult your insurance providers to ensure your policy covers staff, volunteers and participants and that they are fully aware of what your outdoor activity entails.

A risk assessment needs to be carried out to make sure you are prepared for all eventualities when planning your activity.

At this stage you may want to discuss within your Activity Development Team if you would like to employ a professional outdoor activity provider. These providers will have first hand knowledge of how to organise all types of outdoor activity programmes and events as well as comprehensive insurance and risk management plans. See Appendix 2 - Main Contacts.

For all other relevant information, pro-formas and advice on how to complete a risk assessment form please see - www.hse.gov.uk

Action Planning - The Practicalities

Staff / Volunteers

Whether you use your own staff for your activity or bring in the staff of a professional activity provider, it is absolutely vital that all staff are aware of their responsibilities on the day.

It is important early in the process to make a list of how many staff/volunteers you will need and their roles and responsibilities.

Important questions you will need to ask:

- Do they need a specific qualification for the job they have been assigned?
- If they do, can you see evidence of this qualification?
- If there are young people involved in the event have the staff been Access NI checked?
Again, you should ask to see evidence of this.

All major outdoor activity providers should be able to provide you with this information if you ask for it. See Appendix 3 for how to plan an activity day.

Medical Declaration Forms / Permission Forms/ Disclaimer Form

Medical - Everyone taking part in the event should complete a medical form stating that they are fit and well and can take part in all the activities. If they have any pre-existing medical conditions this should be declared on the form.

Permission - Anyone under the age of 18 should have their permission form signed by a parent or legal guardian. (Permission is also required to take photographs at the event and to use for marketing purposes).

Disclaimer - Disclaimer forms may also be required to be completed by participants.



Action Planning - The Practicalities



Case Study - Royal National Institute of Blind People

The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) in Belfast has taken several simple steps in 2011 to improve their enjoyment of Northern Ireland's outdoors. The group was keen to improve its ability to take members walking so some of the staff and volunteers attended Venture Outdoors training courses with great success.

Staff member Olive Rodgers attended a one day Venture Outdoors Tree and Shrub Interactive Walk training course held in Crawfordsburn Country Park near Bangor. Olive learnt facts and informative anecdotes about trees and shrubs in order to provide a more enjoyable sensory experience for RNIB group members during future walks within their own local area.

Another volunteer from the group took part in a one day Walking Group Leader Training course organised by the Public Health Agency. Designed to give volunteers the skills and knowledge to plan, organise and lead walks in their local area to encourage community groups to become more active.

These additional skills and knowledge improved the RNIB's staff and volunteers independence and motivation to take their members out on walks. This has been reflected in the increasing popularity of the walks which now happen every two weeks throughout the year.

This case study highlights, how by planning ahead and investing a small amount of time in staff and volunteer's training, this can empower group leaders to independently offer an improved outdoor recreation experience for their members.

Action Planning - The Practicalities

Equipment

You may need equipment depending on the type of activity or event. If you have your own equipment check it and make sure it is safe for use. If you do not have your own equipment you can apply to an appropriate funding programme in good time before the event, borrow it or hire it. Any reputable specialist outdoor activity provider should be able to provide all necessary equipment.

Create an action plan for the day and include equipment needed, see example below.

Table 2 - Sample Action Plan

What	Action	Responsibility
Venue	Check if permission is required and opening times	Project Leader
Activity	Teambuilding in the park	Project Leader
Staff	Lead instructor Support staff	Project Leader
Participants	List of all members attending, medical forms and permission slips	Project Leader
Marketing	Camera for the day, upload activity details to the website, send press release to media	Project Leader
Equipment	Football, Hula hoops, Jigsaw challenge equipment, Ropes, Crates	Staff
Running Order	Timeline of the day: 9.00am - Meet at park gate; 9.30am - 1st Activity; 11.00am - Break; 11.30am - 2nd Activity	Staff
Evaluation	Decide on a method of evaluating the day	Project Leader

Top Tip: Create partnerships with other existing community groups, to help deliver activities and share resources.

Action Planning - The Practicalities

On the Day

Transport

Consider how people are going to get to the activity, do you need to provide transport?
Also remember the impact your activity or event is going to have on the roads close to the event location. Is there ample parking at the venue?

Signage

Will you need clear signage to help people find the start of the activity or have an agreed meeting point for participants?

Catering

Consider whether you need to provide food at the activity or is this something participants can bring themselves?

First Aid

A specific member of staff must have a recognised first aid qualification, for example Red Cross Emergency First Aid at Work. Some larger events will require the presence of a first aid area with services like St John's Ambulance.

Toilets

Access to toilet facilities is an important aspect for any activity or event. Ensure they are available for participants, particularly at the start and end of the activity.

Waste Management

The activity or event location should be left as it was found, therefore volunteers and staff should be ready at the end of an activity to clean up all rubbish. Remember to follow the principles of, Leave No Trace. (See Appendix 5).

Evaluation

Plan how you will evaluate the activity and note any learning points participants got from the day or event. Complete a separate evaluation with all staff and volunteers to discuss what could be improved or changed for future activities and events.

Top Tips: Advertise for volunteers to help on the activity day.
Always have a plan B for everything.

Action Planning - The Practicalities

Other Considerations

Financial

Will there be a cost on the day for participants and who will look after this money? Draw up a set of terms and conditions to explain refunds, cancellation policy, age restrictions etc.

Press

Local press are very interested in community activities and events and may send a photographer to cover the story, in turn, creating good publicity for your group. Contact your local press a few weeks before your activity/event so they are aware that it is happening - then follow up with a press release.

Weather

Do not underestimate the difference weather makes to an activity or event. Consider this when planning your outdoor event (do you have a bad-weather alternative?). Do participants need a list of "Things to bring" that would include good waterproofs, hats, gloves, sunglasses and much more.

Marketing

How are people going to know about your activity, programme or event? Promoting an activity or event in various ways needs to be considered. You will need to start planning your marketing strategy early. Use methods like:

- Posters
- Social networkss such as Facebook or Twitter
- Flyers
- Newspapers
- Listings sites like communityni.org
- Outdoor activity websites such as OutdoorNI.com
- Asking local countryside officers to help promote the event

Online is by far the most cost effective channel for event promotion, so you should use all platforms available, including listings sites, social media, your own website and your own email contacts. For a checklist of how to plan a large event please see Appendix 4.

Top Tip: Free listings - publicise your activity in local libraries, schools, community newsletters and free papers

Appendix 1 - The Outdoor Activity Planning Checklist

- Form an Activity Development team, make sure there is a Project Leader, if required.
- List ideas into the Ideas Phase table
- Seek permission to use the land if needed
- Make sure the appropriate insurance is in place
- Complete a risk assessment
- Secure staff/volunteers and assign their roles
- Make sure the medical declaration, photographs and disclaimer forms are signed
- Prior to activity organise:
 - Equipment
 - Transport
 - Meeting Point
 - First Aid
 - Toilets
 - Catering
 - Rubbish removal
- Consider:
 - Financial aspects
 - Local press
 - Weather and have a bad weather plan
 - How you will market your event
- Evaluate the activity with participants, staff and volunteers at the end of the activity



Appendix 2 - Main Contacts

Local Councils

For a comprehensive list of local councils in Northern Ireland, including city, borough and district councils visit www.direct.gov.uk

Access NI

Tel: 030 0200 7888
www.dojni.gov.uk/accessni

Outdoor Adventure Providers

For a complete up to date list of outdoor activity providers throughout Northern Ireland go to www.outdoorni.com
Tel: 028 9030 3930
Email: info@outdoorni.com

For more specific information on the most popular activities check out these websites:

www.walkni.com
www.canoeni.com
www.cycleni.com

Health and Safety Executive

Advice on relevant publications and copies may be available from: www.hse.gov.uk



Appendix 3 - Planning an Outdoor Activity Day

Table 3 - Sample Timescale of Planning an Outdoor Activity Day

Time	Job	Whose Job?
2 - 3 Months	Start to organise: appoint Activity Development Team. Informal chat with insurance company.	Development Team Project Leader
2 Months	Form activity or event ideas	Development Team
2 Months	Organise and secure insurance, staff, permission, transport, equipment needed, plan any marketing for the activity	Development Team
1 Month	Complete risk assessment	Development Team
1 Month	Finalise participant numbers	Project Leader
3 Weeks	Confirm staff/transport	Project Leader
1 Week	Finalise logistics and transport. Brief staff, check weather forecast and have a wet weather alternative	Development Team
On the day	Co-ordinate staff and deliver activity. Manage any press and evaluate activity at the end	Development Team
1 Week After	Review activity with participants and staff to develop any further learning	Development Team



Appendix 4 - Planning an Outdoor Event

Table 4 - Sample Timescale of Planning an Outdoor Event

Time	Job	Whose Job?
6 Months Ahead	Start to organise: appoint an Activity Development Team and Project Leader. Informal chat with insurance company	Activity Development Team
5 Months	Decide on event and check availability of site and date. Gain permission if required	Activity Development Team
3-4 Months	Organise marketing plan, secure staff, transport, equipment, catering	Activity Development Team
3 Months	Risk assessment, promote event	Project Leader
1 Month	Finalise participants, confirm staff, transport	Activity Development Team
1 Week	Finalise logistics, check weather forecast, organise press	Project Leader
On the day	Co-ordinate staff and deliver event. Manage any press and evaluate event at end of day	Activity Development Team
1 Week After	Review activity with participants and staff to develop any further learning	Activity Development Team



Appendix 5 - Leave No Trace

Promoting responsible use of our environment

Leave No Trace is an Outdoor Ethics Programme designed to promote and inspire responsible outdoor recreation through education, research, and partnerships. Organisers should endeavour to minimise the impact of their activity or event on the environment. To help you do this, please follow the principles of Leave No Trace. Techniques designed to minimise the social and environmental impacts to the environment are incorporated into the Leave No Trace Outdoor Ethics Education Programme as seven principles.

The Seven Principles of Leave No Trace

- Plan Ahead and Prepare
- Be Considerate of Others
- Respect Farm Animals and Wildlife
- Travel and Camp on Durable Ground
- Leave What You Find
- Dispose of Waste Properly
- Minimise the Effects of Fire

For more information please visit: www.leavenotraceireland.org





For more information contact the Venture Outdoors - Creating Healthy Communities team:

Countryside Access and Activities Network
The Stableyard, Barnett's Demesne, Malone Road, Belfast BT9 5PB
Tel: +44 (0)28 9030 3930 Fax: +44 (0)28 9062 6248
Email: c.overend@countrysiderecreation.com

This guide is available on request in alternative formats

