



# Creating Natural Connections Health and Wellbeing



# CUMBERNAULD LIVING LANDSCAPE

Cumbernauld is incredibly green - over 50% of the town is open space, which includes parks, nature reserves and much more.

The Cumbernauld Living Landscape team are improving these outdoor spaces for people and wildlife and helping everyone in the community connect with nature on their doorstep.

Cumbernauld Living Landscape is a partnership between the Scottish Wildlife Trust, North Lanarkshire Council, Sanctuary Scotland, James Hutton Institute and TCV – The Conservation Volunteers.

In January 2019, we were awarded a £1.37 million National Lottery Heritage Fund grant, along with generous support from North Lanarkshire Council and other donors, amounting to a £2.1 million investment in a four-year programme putting wildlife and people at the heart of Cumbernauld's future.

This funding allows the Cumbernauld Living Landscape team to deliver transformational improvements to Cumbernauld's environment with a long-term change in the way the town's people connect with nature. Our collaboration with the community and local schools, countryside rangers, landscape architects, and landowners is key to our success.

We have a long history of working closely with the local community. Since 2013, we've been working together to improve Cumbernauld's outdoor spaces including improving accessibility to parks, restoring peat bogs to reduce flooding, creating wildflower meadows to support insects, connecting young people to nature through outdoor education sessions, improving woodlands by planting native tree species, and supporting health and wellbeing through our Wild Ways Well programme.

We continue to work in partnership to ensure our activities remains responsive to the needs of the community and instils long-term community ownership.

PROJECT  
PARTNERS



FUNDERS





Contents	
A Trusting guide .....	3
Meet a tree .....	4
Sound mapping .....	5
Story stones .....	7
Grounding .....	8
Curriculum links for all activities .....	9

## Introduction

Welcome to the Curriculum for Excellence outdoor learning methods for mental health and wellbeing. The following activities can be used by education practitioners as a tool to give your students the tools they need to help understand and manage their health and wellbeing.

As an educator you know your children, where they are and the learning path they are on. You also know the Curriculum for Excellence and how best to deliver that. As such the following activities have not been broken down to early years, first, second etc. These are simple exercises that can be adapted for all ages and school years as you see fit. However, it will still have the same impact across all ages.

## What drives our desire to provide CPD for educators?

There is a growing mental health issue occurring in the UK affecting 1 in 10 young people. This is often due to factors in their lives including but not limited to worries about body image, poverty, bullying, physical or mental abuse, parental breakups and bereavement. Incredibly 70% of young people are living through this without interventions at the appropriate time or age (Mental Health Foundation 2020).

**“Children are aware of the hierarchy in lessons. Peter is the best at Maths or Amy at English but that boils down to the other children feeling that they are not good at this subject or that one, they feel silly or fear that they may be ridiculed if they ask a question.”** Natalie White, Education Scotland.

These invisible children are all around us. When you put them into the outdoor learning environment, that hierarchy is gone, they all have equality and have the opportunity to improve their skills together.

As a conservation charity you may wonder why we care about outdoor learning? The simple fact of the matter is that when people, regardless of age, are healthy, enjoy the outdoors and understand the benefits that nature and the environment give to them, they appreciate their experiences, nature and the environment more. We believe that this appreciation builds to respect for that environment and a level of stewardship, enabling the individual to care more, take action and promote our valuable greenspaces. Together people and nature can thrive.

Thank you.

Tracy Lambert  
 Project Manager – Creating Natural Connections  
 Funded through National Lottery Heritage Fund

# Continuing Professional Development

## A trusting guide

### Session in depth:

This activity looks at building trust and communication. It does this by demonstrating how a buddy can help a blindfolded student navigate around a low-key obstacle course. The low-key obstacle course could simply be chalked route with instructions located on the school grounds, such as turn to the right, wiggle your bottom, hop three times etc.

### Materials required:

Chalk

Blindfold/scarf

### Location:

Playground

### Instructions:

Educator instructs the group to create a small, low-key obstacle course – this is half the fun!

In a playground setting – chalk out a route with arrows indicating direction of travel and station points that students do a task on eg do the twist; bunny hop on the spot; shout hello; wave their arms.

The group is then arranged into pairs with one person being the guide and the other the blindfoldee.

Educator explains that the guide **must** ask for permission to support the blindfoldee and guide them around the course. The guide will learn how to ask permissions before placing a hand to guide the blindfoldee. With the intention that the person blindfolded oversees what is happening to them. Switch the partners over and repeat.

### Questions:

The questions are to be considered very carefully. The blindfoldee should always feel confident and in charge of their own situation. At no time should a guide take hold of a blindfoldee without seeking permissions first. Consent is key, here is an example of a few questions/statements.

#### Acceptable questions/statements

How can I support you, to guide you around the course? - blindfoldee is in control of the situation.

#### Unsuitable questions/statements

Can I take your hand? I am going to guide you – guide is taking charge of situation.

### Reflections:

Educator asks the participants how each role felt, did they have confidence in moving around the course whether they were blindfolded or not. Do they understand what they were trying to achieve? How can it be different next time?

# Continuing Professional Development

## Meet a tree

### Session in depth:

The group is split into smaller groups with a guide, a blindfolded and distractors. The object is to find a tree while blindfolded, and by using the remaining senses **focus** and identify a tree and then return to the same tree once the blindfold is removed. The other members of the group (the distractors) will act as distraction, but also as encouragement, creating a friendly and fun environment working together.

### Materials required:

Blindfolds

### Location:

local greenspace with trees! Very important 😊

### Instruction:

Educator instructs the group to break into groups of four. One person within each group is blindfolded, turned three times and guided to a tree. Following the rules of asking permission to guide the person blindfolded (see A trusting guide exercise), the guide will lead their partner to a tree, gently twisting and turning on their walking route to help disorientate the blindfolded. The other members of the group will call out to create a noise buffer. Encourage each person in the group to participate by being the blindfolded.

### Questions:

Once at the tree the guide will instruct their blindfolded partner to then:

**Feel** the tree's bark. Is it rough? Smooth? What is the size of it? wide, narrow, tall, short? Is there moss or another plant on it – be gentle! Can they feel leaves underfoot?

**Smell** the tree, does it smell earthy? Is it damp? Is there a smell at all?

**Taste** – seriously **don't** taste the tree however, can they taste anything on the air?

**Hear** the tree. Are there branches swaying? Are leaves rustling? Are there birds singing (this is a red herring as birds will flit from tree to tree but see if the participants can spot that.)

The guide and blindfolded then walk away from their tree again gently twisting and turning on their walking route to help reduce the orientation of the blindfolded. With the other members of the group calling out to create a noise buffer. After a short distance the guide stops, asks the person to remove their blindfold and then to find their tree. Do they get it right?

### Reflections:

How did participants know they had found their tree? Are there any common denominators e.g., bark texture, moss etc? Did they enjoy the session?

# Continuing Professional Development

## Sound mapping

### Session in depth:

Sound mapping is a self-help technique that helps to reduce stress and anxiety while promoting grounding and good wellbeing. It is a time to be calm and let nature in. Start off with two minutes of calm, building up to a time that participants are comfortable with. This exercise enables the participant to become aware of their surroundings and build awareness of nature.

### Materials required:

Paper, pencil and clipboard

### Location:

local greenspace (woodland is better)

### Instructions:

Educator explains that being in nature helps to reduce stress and anxiety, and that by simply listening and acknowledging time spent in nature they can learn to manage their wellbeing better. Each participant has a sheet of paper, pencil and clipboard or book to lean on. Draw a small circle about the size of a 2p piece in the middle of the page. From this circle draw four lines which go from the middle of the page to each corner (a template is supplied on the next page).

Sit in a quiet location within sight of the educator and listen to the noises around you. As you begin to hear these noises draw or write on the paper the direction you hear it and what it is you hear. Add all the sounds you can hear to build a map of sound and awareness. Begin by completing two mins of this activity, gradually building up to 15 minutes if participants are comfortable with the task. End task with a gentle comment to each participant.

### Questions:

What do you hear?

When did you stop hearing background traffic noise?

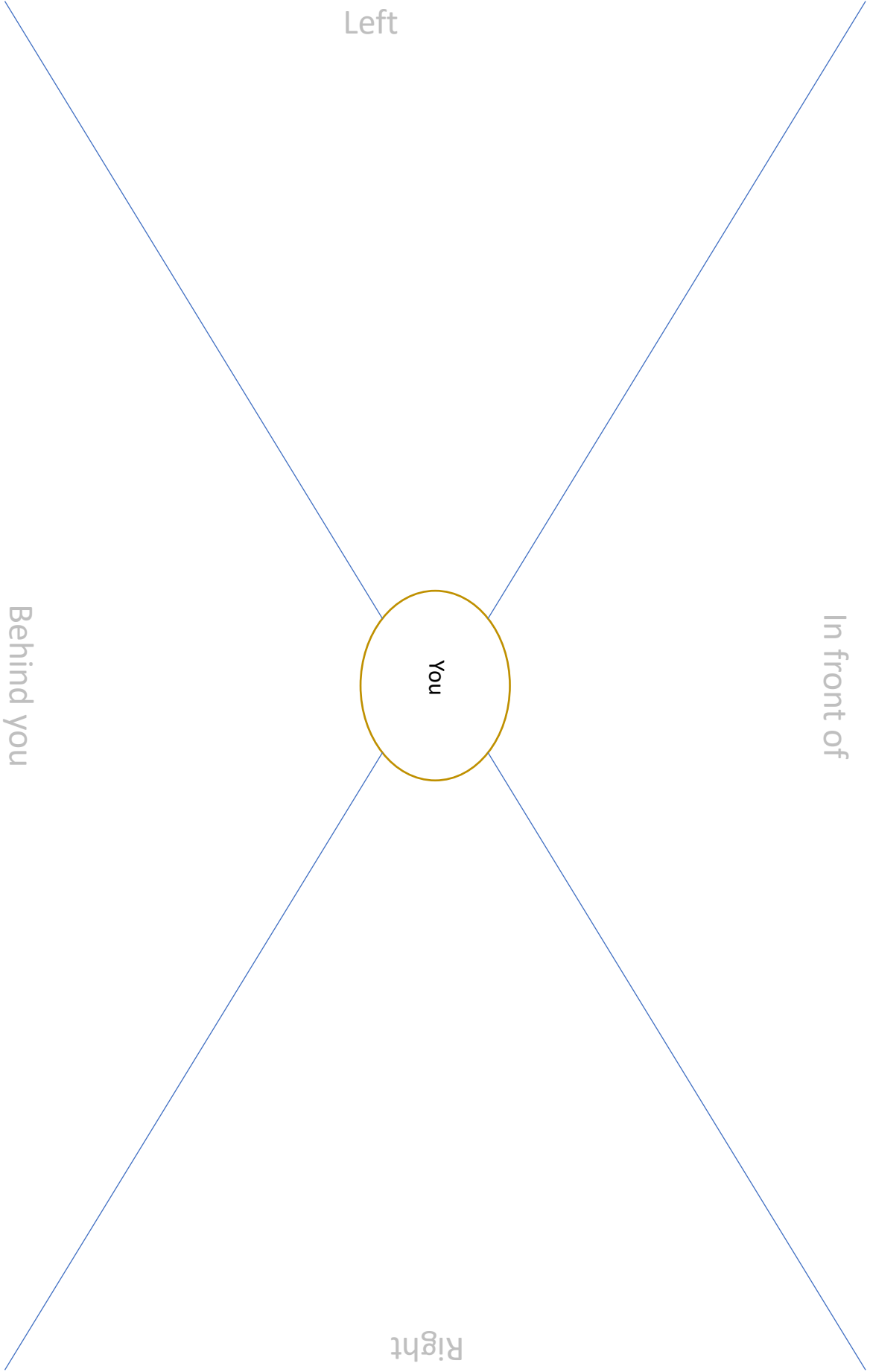
Did you record more sounds of nature as the session became longer?

### Reflections:

Examine what changes over time. What are the participants feeling – fed up, calmer, happier? Could they do this activity for a longer period? If so, what do they think will happen?

**Ask the participant how they feel at the start and end of the session to track this.**

Tip! They will hear more and more. The longer they sit quietly in nature the more nature will come to them. They will also hear more as they relax into the session.



# Continuing Professional Development

## Story stones

### Session in depth:

Story stones are a great way to spark imagination. Young people today often have difficulty having social interactions, with many selectively muting. The artwork on the stones is not important but rather the stories that they can help draw out. The art could be a matchstick figure, a cloud, musical note, anything that pops into their heads within reason. It could even be a simple word, but better if it is a drawing of some sort. Once the art is on the stones, they are sealed and left to dry. The stones can then be placed in a bag (pillowcase is fine). Each participant takes out a stone and makes up a simple sentence about the picture on their stone. This continues around the group with the story following on from the person before. The accumulation of sentences can be noted down to create the full story.

### Materials required:

Flat stones

Pens for stone art

PVA glue to seal

### Location:

Indoors/outdoors

### Instructions:

Take a stone and unleash the imagination. Both sides of the stone can be used to add depth or choice to each tale. Have someone recording the story either in written word or using technology – but remember to write it out later. Put the story together and see how everyone contributed to the bigger picture.

Each story can have an associated comic strip drawn by a participant and these could even become a booklet for the group, school funds or just a community project. The choice is in the hands of the participants.

### Questions:

Ideas for stones - What inspires you in nature? What is your favourite plant or wildlife animal? What's the weather like today? Can you draw a sound, action, or emotion?

### Reflections:

Did the group make a continuous story? Did they enjoy the experience. Do they think they could use that to connect with the wider community?



# Continuing Professional Development

## Grounding

### Session in depth:

A useful tool for individuals in the event of a panic or anxiety attack. It has also been used by Natural Connections students, who feel it helped them during exam time. This activity can be completed by a person on their own or for safeguarding within the school premises with another person (following safeguarding procedures).

### Materials required:

None

### Location:

Any outdoor space

### Instruction:

Take a walk into a greenspace area where the individual feel safe. Sit calmly with the individual and speak gently. This can be done as a group or individually. The aim of the grounding exercise is to connect with the 5 senses, spending time in their surroundings for the person to focus on:

- 5 things you can **see**
- 4 things you **feel**
- 3 things you **hear**
- 2 things you **smell**
- 1 thing you **taste**

### Questions:

#### **For the class in general:**

Create a list of all the things that their senses picked up. Were there common themes?

Can the class create a story from these – spark the imagination.

#### **In the event of an anxiety attack**

Do you feel ready to go back to.....?

How do you feel?

Would you like further support?

### Reflections:

Did this method work for that individual? Did they have to do the activity a few times before they felt better? Do they know of anyone that this technique would benefit?

## Curriculum links for all activities

Activity	Equipment required	Key links to curriculum
A trusting guide	Blindfolds – enough for half the class	<p><b>Mental health and wellbeing</b>            HWB 0-06a/ HWB 1-06a/ HWB 2-06a/ HWB 3-06a/ HWB 4-06a            HWB 0-07a/ HWB 1-07a/ HWB 2-07a/ HWB 3-07a/ HWB 4-07a            HWB 0-08a/ HWB 1-08a/ HWB 2-08a/ HWB 3-08a/ HWB 4-08a</p> <p><b>Social Wellbeing</b>            HWB 0-09a / HWB 1-09a / HWB 2-09a / HWB 3-09a / HWB 4-09a            HWB 0-10a / HWB 1-10a / HWB 2-10a / HWB 3-10a / HWB 4-10a            HWB 0-11a / HWB 1-11a / HWB 2-11a / HWB 3-11a / HWB 4-11a            HWB 0-12a / HWB 1-12a / HWB 2-12a / HWB 3-12a / HWB 4-12a            HWB 0-13a / HWB 1-13a / HWB 2-13a / HWB 3-13a / HWB 4-13a            HWB 0-14a / HWB 1-14a / HWB 2-14a / HWB 3-14a / HWB 4-14a</p>
Meet a tree	Blindfolds – enough for half the class	<p><b>Physical wellbeing</b>            HWB 0-15a / HWB 1-15a / HWB 2-15a / HWB 3-15a / HWB 4-15a            HWB 0-16a / HWB 1-16a / HWB 2-16a / HWB 3-16a / HWB 4-16a            HWB 0-17a / HWB 1-17a / HWB 2-17a / HWB 3-17a / HWB 4-17a            HWB 0-18a / HWB 1-18a / HWB 2-18a / HWB 3-18a / HWB 4-18a</p> <p><b>Planning for choices and changes</b>            HWB 0-19a / HWB 1-19a / HWB 2-19a / HWB 3-19a / HWB 4-19a</p>
Sound mapping	Sheet of A4 paper for each young person Pencil Clipboard or something for the young person to lean on	<p><b>Relationships</b>            HWB 0-44a / HWB 1-44b / HWB 2-44b / HWB 3-44b / HWB 4-44b            HWB 0-45a / HWB 1-45b / HWB 2-45b / HWB 3-45b / HWB 4-45b</p>
Story stones	Flat pebbles/stones – can be found on a walk? Pens suitable for drawing on the pebble PVA glue to seal the artwork	
Grounding	None	

## References

Mental Health Foundation, 2020, Children and young people, Mental health for all, <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/c/children-and-young-people>

Piccininni C., Michaelson V., Janssen I. and Pickett W., 2018, Outdoor play and nature connectedness as potential correlates of internalised mental health symptoms among Canadian adolescents, *Preventative Medicine* 112 (2018) 168 – 175.

McCurdy, L.E., Winterbottom, K.E., Mehta, S.S., Roberts, J.R., 2010. Using nature and outdoor activity to improve children's health. *Curr. Probl. Pediatr. Adolesc. Health Care.* 40, 102–117. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cppeds.2010.02.003>.

Notes:



**Cumbernauld Living Landscape** is a partnership between the Scottish Wildlife Trust, North Lanarkshire Council, Sanctuary Scotland, the James Hutton Institute and TCV – The Conservation Volunteers.

[cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk](http://cumbernauldlivinglandscape.org.uk)

5-7 Napier Way, Wardpark North,  
Cumbernauld, G68 0EH

**T** 01236 617113

**E** [cumbernauldl@scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk](mailto:cumbernauldl@scottishwildlifetrust.org.uk)

**f** CumbernauldLivingLandscape

**t** @WildCumbernauld

Partners



Funders



Cumbernauld Living Landscape is led by the Scottish Wildlife Trust, a Scottish registered charity (charity no. SC005792) and a company limited by guarantee and registered in Scotland (registered no. SC040247). Wild Ways Well is provided by TCV, registered as a charity in Scotland (SCO39302).