

Life Church 11-13.11.16 Glenfeshie Evaluation Report

Aims and Objectives

This year I started a walking group at Life Church which evolved into monthly low level walks after Church suitable for young children and a fortnightly climb up Arthurs Seat. While people enjoyed the sightseeing, they particularly enjoyed the benefits of improving their health.

The aim of the residential was to introduce the group participants to an opportunity to explore further afield other than the urban setting of Edinburgh, to the Cairngorms National Park developing their appreciation of the great outdoors and our natural heritage.

Outcomes

All participants agreed that they enjoyed getting out in the natural environment and were encouraged to become involved in more nature excursions, having developed their knowledge and appreciation of the outdoors. Some participants are in the process of planning their own residential trips to visit natural areas and heritage sites.

The above was only possible because of Backbone's financial support with the accommodation and training provided to assist the organization of the trip. Life Church management, has been impressed by the standard of organization and has considered the importance and management of liability issues which has assisted them to develop confidence in my leadership skills.

What your group learnt about nature

The group learned about the river and environmental changes e.g. the small beach made due to a change in the river. They were also advised about fauna and lichen. The group learned about wildlife in the forest and how evidence is collected about animals that live there, but man may not see. The group appreciated being introduced to beautiful surroundings.



It was made clear to the participants that the forest rangers are very willing to offer walks and welcomed people to contact them for this.

Any other key learnings/awareness

From the participant feedback, the average score was very high at 9 out of 10. People seemed to enjoy the beautiful scenery outdoors the most and were very happy with the quality of the hostel. They all said that they would come back if the opportunity was open to them. The children particularly liked the input from the ranger and some advised they would like to spend more time with rangers.

What people appeared to enjoy least were more organizational issues regarding the accommodation, such as for some a preference that people didn't consume alcohol in the evenings, better instructions for finding the accommodation in the dark, sleeping arrangements, etc. All these issues could be addressed by reflecting on the experience and anticipating such difficulties next time, for example, making a clear statement about whether alcohol consumption would be welcomed or not. I had made a mistake when reading the accommodation description and thought there were four single bed rooms, rather than a four single-bed room. This



impacted on late room changes that weren't anticipated. Regarding the difficulties to find the accommodation in the dark, the participants had left much later than initially planned and then not driven further enough in the dark to find the hostel. Fortunately, other participants returning from shopping saw them and led them back. However, it may have been helpful to notice mileage from the main road and other land marks to the hostel. However, I was also prepared to drive to them to then show them the way.

Another learning point was to get the grid reference of the meeting place from the forest ranger as this would have saved time from a misunderstanding of direction using left/right instructions.

The group was diverse, e.g. families, single young people, an adult with a learning disability, mixed ethnicities, a range of ages, etc. The group appeared to generally gel well together and reflected on how the church hasn't had residential trips before and it was good to have a time to get to know one another better and enjoy the natural environment together. The young adult with the learning disability expressed how amazed he felt about how the whole weekend was put together.

The cost of transport is a barrier for some participants, however they advised me that they would return if future group excursions were arranged as this would reduce the cost of petrol. It was also agreed children wouldn't pay for food (covered instead by all the adults taking an equal share with costs), this made the trip affordable for parents, especially single parents.

One of my biggest problems was to get paperwork book forms filled out by participants and evaluation feedback. This resulted in me having to contact people up to the last minute for much needed personal, medical and next of kin information in case of an emergency. In the future I would anticipate how much effort this involves and be more insistent that people give me a booking form if they want to be considered for the trip. Given the positive feedback from this trip this may be more of an incentive for others to ensure they secure a place. In the future I would take evaluation forms with me on the trip and ask participants to fill them out at the end of the trip before we departed.

Conclusion

Despite some of my own organizational difficulties, the weekend was a success at meeting its aims and objectives. Everyone's highlight was the opportunity to be out in the natural environment offered by the Cairngorms, all enthusiastic to return.

This opportunity for participants would not have been possible without Backbone's training in leadership, organizational and risk assessment skills to arrange a safe walking and residential experience for 10 adults and 4 children.

Report compiled by

Theresa Mc Murtry
Qualified Day Walker Leader
Life Church, Edinburgh









