



The Climate Action Fund Learning Signposts #8

Inspiring action through education and training

Produced by Emma Jones on behalf of
The National Lottery Community Fund



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Who is this for?

This learning signpost is primarily intended for people involved in Climate Action Fund projects or other groups and projects working on climate action and which involve education and/or training as part of their work. It shares some of the early learning from Climate Action Fund projects that involve elements of training and education.

Introduction

The transition to a net zero requires a workforce with the right skills. This includes not only skills in the low carbon and environmental goods and services sector, but also those needed to help all businesses and organisations use natural resources efficiently and sustainably and to be resilient to climate change.

Many of the Climate Action Fund projects include an element of education and/or more formal training. This ranges from short workshops offering tips and advice on climate action right through to a full-time six-month course. There is a wealth of learning from these projects regarding what works well when designing and delivering engaging sessions. In this output, we've captured learning from four projects which have quite different approaches to education and training.



Figure 1 - Students of the Climate Challenge College at Tod College



Some lessons emerging from the projects we highlight in this resource are:



Do:



- **Go out to your audience and tag onto existing events where possible.** This is particularly helpful in terms of engaging people who might otherwise not get involved in projects related to climate action.
- **Tailor training to the interests and needs of the audience** wherever possible. This includes the subject matter but also the location, format and length.
- **Offer a variety of times to suit different people.**
- **Offer some refreshments or an incentive to take part.**
- **Consider offering accredited training** which might support participants in terms of their future employment prospects.
- **Offer a next step**, such as the opportunity for participants to take part in further training, get involved in a project, or sign up to become a climate change community champion.
- **Make training materials highly visual** with simple language so that they are widely accessible.
- **Capture good data** so you can track the impact of your training.



Don't:

- **Make training sessions too long.** For the general public, generic sessions on climate or energy are probably best kept at 45 minutes or less. Even 15 minutes can be effective.
- **Start to offer the training** before you have something concrete you can offer as a next step.
- **Have rigid ideas about the format of the training.** It's a good idea to pilot sessions and then tailor based on feedback before rolling them out.

Project 1: Green Meadows

The **Green Meadows** project is working with people who live in the Meadows, Nottingham, to enable climate action. The project takes a people-centred approach and is providing practical learning, training and advice. The objective is to build a community that can tackle the climate crisis together. The project is run by two organisations based in the heart of the Meadows – Nottingham Energy Partnership and Meadows Ozone Energy Services.

The Green Meadows project is undertaking a range of initiatives involving people who live in The Meadows, Nottingham. This includes running a range of workshops and training sessions which are open to any of the 5,000 households in the Meadows (Nottingham). These have included:

- Workshops on climate change and saving energy at home, held in the local library and advertised through posters and social media.
- Sessions tacked on to existing events such as a local sewing club.
- Practical DIY training sessions on topics such as how to install insulation. These will be offered at a range of levels; for example, an initial session on how to use various tools, and then a session on how to insulate a loft, and a more advanced session on how to

insulate solid walls. These sessions are being developed with the Centre for Alternative Technology, who will run the initial sessions and are also training up the in-house team to deliver future sessions. Two pilot sessions are being run, one online and one in person.

- With separate funding (from the energy redress scheme), they are also developing a higher-level course to introduce tradespeople to the retrofit of traditionally constructed buildings.
- Workshops are being run with pupils at the three local primary schools, introducing them to concepts of climate change and sustainability in an engaging and positive way. Climate change is not covered by the national curriculum, so the schools workshop programme offers a way for children and their families to engage with the topic and the wider Green Meadows project.



Learning so far



Encouraging participation

- Getting sign-ups to stand-alone sessions has been challenging; at 90 minutes, they think the sessions were a bit too long.
- They tried running sessions at different times of day. The evening sessions were the most popular, but they were still only attended by a few people.
- Tagging onto existing groups is effective. For example, they attended a sewing group, where some people initially seemed reluctant to engage with the session and said they would just continue to sew. But after a while, they became very engaged and have subsequently been involved in other project activities. *“It’s unlikely these individuals would ever have come to a stand-alone session.”*
- Running sessions for adults at the same time as a local kids’ club was running provide to be a good way of engaging with parents. It was also a successful way of engaging with people who would never have come to one of the stand-alone sessions; people who had never talked about climate change before.
- Children’s activities were very popular. The team found that offering any activities aimed at children attracted a far greater and wider audience than activities aimed at adults. The sessions they have in schools have engaged families who have consequently been involved with other events and parts of the project.

Format of sessions

Practical sessions were very popular. It’s difficult to pitch it at one level when marketing it to the general public – there is a huge range of levels of understanding on technical issues. Preferences also vary; some participants preferred the classroom activity whereas others preferred the practical demonstrations. Participants were keen on having more handouts.

It was difficult to get the balance right in terms of the level of detail. There was a broad range of existing knowledge and also some participants whose first language was not English. They found that making the materials as simple as possible and very visual was the best approach for maximising engagement.

Broadening the conversation

Giving people who attended a session a token for a bunch of vegetables from the community gardens was popular and a great way to initiate a conversation about the importance of buying local.

Accreditation

Some people were keen to have some kind of qualification or recognition linked to the training. Green Meadows are currently looking into how they might be able to get the training accredited.

Link

To find out more see: [Green Meadows](#)

Project 2: A Green and Healthy Future For Frome



A Green and Health Future for Frome is exploring how to help local people live lives which are good for their health and the planet. The project is delivered by three local organisations: Edventure Frome, Frome Medical Practice and Frome Town Council. The organisations are working together to ensure there are many ways for local people to live greener and healthier.

Green and Healthy Future Frome aims to increase awareness of and involvement in a range of local initiatives that are good for people and for the planet. This includes establishing a network of Green Community Connectors. The Connectors can refer people through to the project partners for signposting to all sorts of local initiatives that support the health of the individual and of the planet. As part of the project, an online directory of all these initiatives has been produced which the Green Community Connectors can refer to.

People become a Green Community Connector by attending a short training session. Sessions are held monthly and are free to anyone living in Frome. They are designed to help people feel more confident talking about climate and health win-wins and build knowledge on the support available in Frome. Training is offered in different ways:

- There is a monthly online session that anyone can sign up to. Typically has six to eight participants (who just attend once).
- An in-person session is also held every two to three months. These will be at church groups, the council, rotary groups, the police, library, the local college, here at the practice, the social prescribing team.



Figure 2 - A Green and Healthy future For Frome, training up members of Broadway Community Gardens to become Green Community Connectors

- The team also arrange sessions for particular groups or organisations, including clinicians and others who are in trusted positions, trusted messengers.

So far, 45 sessions have been delivered involving nearly 180 Green Community Connectors.

Learning so far

Session length and format

- The monthly sessions were initially designed to be a fixed one hour session. However, they have evolved to be more bespoke and flexible to the needs of each group. Now the idea is that the trainer will establish the knowledge of the group at the start of the session and build on that, rather than delivering a one size fits all session.
- They feel that 45 minutes should be the maximum length for these sessions and have found that even 15 mins can be effective. “When you haven’t got much time, the key thing is to focus on the lightbulb moment and the interconnectedness of health and climate.”
- Go to where people are rather than expecting them to come to you.

Session content

- Feedback showed that participants of the first few sessions felt that it contained too much on the science of climate change. They’ve now adjusted the training based on this feedback to include more information that is focused on Frome, and with fewer statistics. “It’s designed so that people can take away key messages and individual learning points.”
- Wherever possible, making the training bespoke to the needs of the audience will increase engagement levels.

“We had to adjust the training so it was a conversation, making it very responsive to the needs of the audience. We start with where their knowledge is and go from there.”

- It’s important to make the sessions accessible to all.
 - They are also in conversation with Open Story Tellers, an organisation that supports people with learning difficulties, and plan to design a session that is suitable for this audience in the future.
 - There are small Polish and Spanish populations in Frome with whom the project is looking to link up with.
 - They are also doing sessions for families with school holiday sessions. This involves running activities for the children such as nature treasure hunts and a climate ‘super-hero’ beach poster. A plant-based lunch was provided by the organising group, which gave a great opportunity to initiate climate conversations.

Follow up

- It’s important to have something in place to refer people to before you start. Map out what’s available.
- They have a directory of initiatives and services, which is kept up to date by Health Connections Mendip. It’s constantly being updated.



Where to start

- Build on what's already there. Every GP practice will have someone working on social prescribing; funding is allocated to each practice for additional roles and they can choose how to spend it (e.g. on a dietician, a physio); social prescribing link workers are part of that. Their capacity may be very limited but that's where funding from The National Lottery Community Fund can help.

Understanding impact

- It's important to capture good data to understand how effective the training is and whether any improvements can be made.
- They ask all participants to complete a very short pre and post training survey, asking about their participants' knowledge and confidence. This enables them to track the effectiveness of the training and also to tailor it based on participants' existing knowledge.



Links

The Directory can be viewed here: healthconnections.mendip.org/mendip-directory/ while the project website is here: greenhealthyfuturefrome.org/

Project 3: Climate Challenge College

The Climate College offers the Green Futures course – a sustainability taster course for people aged over 16. The course is designed to develop practical skills in environmental land management, natural building, sustainable lifestyle skills and renewable energy. It is based at Tod College, a learning centre and community hub based in Todmorden, a town in the Calder Valley in West Yorkshire. The College is run by Todmorden Learning Centre and Community Hub.

Todmorden Learning Centre and Community Hub received Climate Action Fund funding to develop and deliver the Green Futures Course. They delivered two pilot rounds and then adapted the training based on feedback to produce the final version.

The course is intended as a taster to give people a set of practical, adaptable skills for a sustainable future.

The long-term plan is to develop those specialist pathways, many of which will be done in partnership with specialist local training providers. The course they've run so far covers a wide range of skills. The primarily promoted it to young people but have had a cross section of ages of people doing the course. Their intention was to make the course very accessible to people with a wide range of learning styles. They weren't aiming to attract middle class career changers, but rather young people in the valley who had not left to go to university.

This course is provided free of charge and there are no educational requirements; admission is via a group and one-to-one interview. They have had about 10 people in each cohort, with a completion rate of around 70%.

There are four modules, each one taking half a term to complete:

- Understanding the climate challenge
- Energy including energy efficiency and renewable energy
- Food and land, which includes food production and natural flood management
- Natural building, including straw bale building



Figure 3 - Climate Challenge College students on Green Futures course

Learning so far



Recruitment

- Ideally you would have at least six to eight months to recruit students. They received the funding in April and wanted to start in September. They could only start to recruit once they'd developed a course, which meant recruitment commenced in July. *"Ideally, for a September course you should start recruitment in January."*
- Word of mouth is the most effective means of promotion. They did a lot of local advertising and promotion. By the third cohort, the majority of students found out about the course from family and friends. *"Once you've established a reputation, people will come to you."*

Admission criteria and interviews

- Conducting interviews in a fairly informal, group setting, has proved popular. Since the numbers on each course are quite small, and students have to work well together, it also enables them to look at how well people work together. There is also a one-to-one chat as part of the interview process. *"People can find interviews stressful; we wanted to put them at ease and a group setting works well for this."*
- With the more recent one; more established, so had lot more interest – so could be more selective. About 50% accepted. Initially 80% .

- Interviewing is very time consuming. Initially, they felt they should interview everyone, but it took a lot of time. Now if it's clear from an application that the individual will need a lot of extra support, which they won't be able to provide, they don't waste time on an interview but instead look to signpost that individual to other relevant initiatives, where possible.
- In future they would like to include a full day of practical activity as part of the interview process. The course is quite physically demanding and students require a degree of fitness. Some students have underestimated the demands of the course. While they are happy to support students wherever possible, there are limits to the support they can provide.

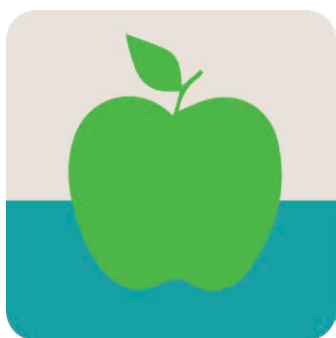
Pastoral care

- On a good course like this, it is very important to offer good pastoral care to the students. Sustainability values are core to Tod College and that involves the sustainability of people as well as of the planet. *"If you're doing it properly you need to care about the people you're engaging with. (We) go the extra mile with every student, offering an excellent level of pastoral care – way beyond what most courses offer"*.



Course objectives, content and format

- It's important to be clear about the learning intentions at the start; set out what it is that students should expect to get out of the course.
- It's also important to be flexible and respond to student feedback. *"We constantly ask for feedback. As a result of feedback, we've changed the structure of the days, with afternoons focussed on practical work with minimal theory."*
- Concentrating on one topic at a time can make it easier for students to absorb the information. There are four modules on the course and, in the pilot, they included some content on each module every week. However, students said that they found this was too much to take in. So for the latest course, they are delivering each module in a half term block.



Accessibility

- Their intention was to make the course very accessible to people with a wide range of learning styles. This includes:
 - Presenting information in different formats to meet the different needs of our learners; for example, using coloured text in the workbooks as some dyslexic students struggle to access black text on a white background. Printed copies of materials are provided for students who find it difficult to work from a screen.
 - Supporting students in relation to their mental health, childcare and other needs. This has included having a later start-time to enable parents to drop their children off at school. Reduced hours allow people to maintain part time work alongside studying.
- That has also influenced the way that learning is delivered with lots of hands-on activities. The weeks and days are structured with student experience in mind – there is never more than an hour in the classroom before there is a practical task to keep engagement high.

Link

To find out more see the Climate College evaluation report [here](#).

Project 4: Growing Resilience

The Growing Resilience project, which is running for four years, involves two strands. Lead partner Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council is running a community citizen science programme to grow sphagnum moss (which has significant carbon capture potential) in a nursery and plant it on local council-owned blanket bog areas. Alongside this, partner Calder Rivers Trust is running a rural engagement project aimed at raising awareness among local landowners and land managers of opportunities to improve their business through environmental approaches.

Education and training forms part of both strands of the Growing Resilience project.

- Engaging landowners is done in two ways, through group meetings held once a month and through one-to-one on site advice.
 - The group meetings are held once a month. Around 85 farmers are part of this network with 20-40 attending each session. Each meeting involves a guest speaker talking about a topic that the farmers are interested in, with information related to the environment tacked on to this. For example, one session focused on soil health. This included demonstration of an aerator and looking at the health of the soil and the carbon content before and after aeration.

- In parallel, free and confidential one-to-one advice is available to local farmers. This involves visiting the farm and gathering information to compile a report for the farmer that sets out suggested interventions that could have financial and/or environmental benefit.
- The sphagnum moss project has involved the team seeking out information to increase their own knowledge about effective means of growing the moss.



Figure 4 - Growing Resilience, growing sphagnum moss

Learning so far

Understand your audience

- Advisors need to have a really good understanding of farming and of how farmers operate. This could be through having a background in that sector or this understanding could be acquired through training. *“Our first farm advisor had a farming background, which really helped in terms of connecting with farmers and understanding their needs. When she went on maternity leave, her replacement didn’t have a farming background. But they were given training to bring them up to speed and the feedback for the new advisor has been really positive.”*
- Be led by your audience and what they need. Farmers do not want to be told what they should do with their land. *“We switched from ‘what can we get landowners to do’ to ‘how can we support landowners in how they run their business’”*
- Understand your audience’s priorities. Like any business, financial impact is a key driver in decision making. This is particularly important for this audience where many farms are not profitable; farmers often have a second job to make ends meet. *“What they want are things to help them make cost savings or efficiencies on the hours they have to put in, for example by changing their grazing patterns.”*

Promotion and engagement

- The monthly sessions are designed to be informative, engaging and convenient. They are held in a local golf club, with lunch provided. Topics are selected based on what the participants want to hear about.
- Advice visits need to be arranged at the farmer’s convenience. *“You need to line up with their time and be open & honest. And then they’ll be happy for you to come and have a cup of tea and chat about what you can offer, particularly if it’s free.”*
- They have done some specific promotion targeting particular areas (where they know that funding is available), but many of their visits now are in response to landowners hearing about the project through word-of-mouth.

Confidentiality

- It’s really important not to share any of the information gathered. The report that is produced is sent just to the farmer (who is then free to share it with their land agent if they wish to). *“That integrity, the farmer first approach, is really important in getting farmers on board.”*

What they want are things to help them make cost savings or efficiencies on the hours they have to put in...

Building up the team's knowledge

On the Sphagnum Moss project, the team have had to educate themselves about successful ways to cultivate the moss. Commercial producers of moss are reportedly highly secretive about successful propagation making it challenging to find this information. Key learning in relation to this includes:

- Don't rely on one source of information. On this project, the team sought out advice from a number of sources including other groups trying to do something similar, with varying degrees of success.
- On a project like this where the team are learning as they go, it's important to have someone supervising the work to ensure consistency and also to ensure information is gathered in a systematic way.
- Linked to the above point, set up systems to capture data and learning as you go along.

Links

More information on the farm surveys and advice can be found [here](#)

For further information on the sphagnum moss projects can be found [here](#)

Other useful information

The National Lottery Community Fund has funded a programme called [Our Bright Future](#) which is about creating opportunities for young people in green jobs. Full details of the impact learning can be found [here](#). Key learning, they have identified about the best ways of supporting skills development, which is shown below.

Elements of project approaches that supported skills development were:



Flexible, bespoke provision, tailored to the needs and aspirations of the young people



A high staff to participant ratio, to provide adequate support for those with low confidence / complex needs



A wide range of options to appeal to a range of interests and baseline skill-levels



Experienced, appropriately skilled staff to enthuse, involve and support young people



For some young people, a longer duration of support (e.g., open-ended provision) to enable time for outcomes to be realised



Actively removing engagement barriers e.g., through grants and removing logistical barriers (particularly for disadvantaged young people who would otherwise be unable to engage)



Intensive support with confidence-building to enable greater skills attainment (particularly for those from disadvantaged backgrounds)



Open-ended provision in a different learning environment to aid skills attainment for (particularly for school-aged participants)

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About the Climate Action Fund

The Climate Action Fund is a ten-year £100 million fund supporting communities across the UK to take action on climate change.

About The National Lottery Community Fund

We are the largest non-statutory community funder in the UK – community is at the heart of our purpose, vision and name. We support activities that create resilient communities that are more inclusive and environmentally sustainable and that will strengthen society and improve lives across the UK. We're proud to award money raised by National Lottery players to communities across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and to work closely with government to distribute vital grants and funding from key Government programmes and initiatives. As well as responding to what communities tell us is important to them, our funding is focused on four key missions, supporting communities to:

1. **Come together**
2. **Be environmentally sustainable**
3. **Help children and young people thrive**
4. **Enable people to live healthier lives.**

Thanks to the support of National Lottery players, we distribute around £500 million a year through 10,000+ grants and plan to invest over £4 billion of funding into communities by 2030. We're privileged to be able to work with the smallest of local groups right up to UK-wide charities, enabling people and communities to bring their ambitions to life.

National Lottery players raise over £30 million each week for good causes throughout the UK. Since The National Lottery began in 1994, £47 billion has been raised and more than 670,000 individual grants have been made across the UK – the equivalent of around 240 National Lottery grants in every UK postcode district.

www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk

