



Actif Woods Wales Programme

2019-2020 Evaluation Report

(Healthy and Active and Natural Resources Wales funded programmes)



Report prepared by Dr N C Simons, April 2020 (natashasimons@smallwoods.org.uk
coedlleol@smallwoods.org.uk)

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Actif Woods Wales
Coed Actif Cymru

Getting healthy the woodland way
Ffordd y goedwig o gadw'n iach

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Introduction

Coed Lleol/Small Woods Wales is part of the National Charity, Small Woods (established 1988). Small Woods is a National Organisation for Small Wood Owners and has a significant track record in Social Forestry. Coed Lleol/Small Woods Wales, established in 2002, develops and delivers community and social forestry events throughout Wales. Coed Lleol/Small Woods Wales's Actif Woods Wales Programme began in 2010 to connect people with their local woodlands for their health and wellbeing, whilst also helping to maintain and promote healthy woodlands. Since then, the programme has expanded to nine areas across Wales and now engages over 700 people per year.

The Actif Woods Wales programme engages adults who predominantly live in areas that have high health needs, low employment rates and often poor access to services (areas 1-5 on the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation). Additionally, Actif Woods encourage and support social prescribing by working in partnership with health services and GPs who can refer people to the Actif Woods Wales Programme. This year, Actif Woods Wales have started working with family groups, in socially deprived areas, for the first time.

The Actif Woods sessions consist of a combination of woodland skills and knowledge-building, healthy eating and woodland-exercise. Activities are delivered by expert leaders and range from bushcraft and fire lighting skills to charcoal making, coppicing, green woodworking, whittling, willow-weaving, green gym and foraging, tree and wildlife identification walks. Some sessions include campfire cooking with a focus on healthy eating. Participants also take responsibility for clearing rubbish and light woodland management whilst engaged in the Actif Woods Programme.

Actif Woods Wales run a varied programme of¹:

- 🌿 Weekly Woodland Sessions for Adults (4-6 weeks, 3 hours a week) – all areas
- 🌿 Weekly Woodland Sessions for Families (4-6 weeks, 2-3 hours a week) – all areas
- 🌿 Weekly Drop-in sessions for Adults with additional needs – Anglesey only
- 🌿 Monthly Drop-in sessions (3 hours per month) – Gwynedd, Ceredigion, Merthyr Tydfil, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea.
- 🌿 Weekly Walking Groups – Wrexham, Ceredigion and Merthyr Tydfil

These programmes have been funded by The Healthy and Active Fund (HAF), a collaboration of Sport Wales and Public Health Wales. HAF funds programmes designed to promote physical and mental wellbeing delivered by a range of providers throughout Wales. These providers target children and young people, people with a disability or long-term illness, people who are economically inactive or who live in areas of high multiple deprivations and older people around retirement age or beyond.

Additionally, we have match funding from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) who have funded us in 2019-20 through their Partnership Fund. This funding is provided in order to help us fulfil NRW outcomes which include connecting people with nature and environmental issues; and improving community and ecosystem resilience.

¹ This list documents only the Healthy and Active Funded Projects

Actif Woods Wales Aims and Objectives

The Actif Woods Wales Programme aims to protect and develop woodlands for current and future generations by encouraging the use of woodland resources for the long-term health and wellbeing of people and the environment. The key objectives for participants are:

- 🌿 Increase the mental wellbeing of participants
- 🌿 Increase the amount of physical activity participants undertake
- 🌿 Increase the time spent outdoors and with others (social wellbeing – reducing social isolation)
- 🌿 Increase the knowledge and understanding of woodland skills and heritage crafts that utilise the natural resources of UK woodlands
- 🌿 Increase knowledge of healthy food choices (with a focus on outdoor nutrition)
- 🌿 Encourage progression to volunteering or Drop-in woodland groups (supporting longer-term health and wellbeing) leading to community involvement in the maintenance of woodland sites



Actif Woods Group Swansea: Whittling Session

The Actif Woods Wales programme also aims to increase its referral routes and strengthen its social prescribing pathway by:

- 🌿 Increasing active referral routes from health services, GPs and family support services
- 🌿 Develop strong training pathways for woodland leaders for career professional development (developing a clear set of minimum standards for woodland health activities)
- 🌿 Promote stronger networks between outdoor activity provision and health services

The Actif Woods Wales Theory of Change for participants is presented below,

THEORY OF CHANGE STATEMENT

Actif Woods Wales Programme (HAF)

Protecting and developing woodlands for current and future generations by encouraging the use of woodland resources for the long-term health and wellbeing of people and the environment



Healthy and Active Fund Targets and Outputs for Year One

Table 1 shows the project targets and Coed Lleol/Small Woods Wales's outputs in year 1 of the Healthy and Active Funded Project.

	Year One Target	Year One Output	Target Reached
Number of sessions delivered	240 sessions	259 sessions	+19 sessions
Number of participants reached	678 participants	628 participants	-50 participants
Referral partners gained	36 (4 per area per year)	49 (27 new referral partners and 22 existing referral partners)	+13 referrals (-9 if counting new only)

Table 1: HAF Targets and Outputs

The sessions undertaken from April 2019 – April 2020 are presented in the following table (note: due to funding delays and recruiting new staff members the sessions only started from July 2019, and Covid-19 halted all sessions in March 2020):

	Group	Number of sessions	Dates	Referral partners	Number of Participants
Anglesey	<i>Flying Start Family Group Holyhead (4 weeks)</i>	4	17/06/2019 - 15/07/2019	<i>Flying Start</i>	16
	<i>Flying Start Family Group Llangefni (4 weeks)</i>	4	18/06/2019 - 16/07/2019	<i>Flying Start</i>	12
	<i>Home farm, Adult learning disability group</i>	6	11/09/2019 - 16/10/2019	<i>Blaen Y Coed, Gerddi Haelfre, Byron Centre,</i>	14
	<i>Coleg Menai Pontio group (2-week course?)</i>	2	18/10/2019 - 24/10/2019	<i>Coleg Menai/Llandrillo</i>	18
	<i>Home farm, Dementia group</i>	7	13/11/19 - 19/02/2020	<i>YMCC Dementia team</i>	18
	<i>Weekly Drop-in Group</i>	45	<i>June 2019 - ongoing weekly</i>	<i>Various (see referral tab)</i>	89
Ceredigion	<i>Family Summer Group</i>	4	23.7.19 - 3.9.19	<i>Flying Start</i>	48
	<i>Newquay Substance Misuse Group (six weeks)</i>	6	5.11.2019- 17.11.2019	<i>Cyfle Cymru, Barod and Social Services</i>	8
	<i>Mixed referral group (6 week)</i>	6	28.03.2020 - 10.03.2020	<i>Mixed (social services, MIND, Outdoor health)</i>	12
	<i>Wednesday Walkers</i>	1	04/12/19 - ongoing weekly	<i>Mixed open group</i>	6
	<i>Adult Drop-in Monthly</i>	6	July 2019 – Ongoing monthly	<i>Mixed referral/MIND, Glesni communities for work, CYFLE Cymru, CDAT peer mentoring, GP referral</i>	8
Gwynedd	<i>Bangor Weekly Adult Group</i>	7	10/10/2019 - 21/11/2019	<i>NRWC recovery housing group</i>	12
	<i>Tremadog Drop in</i>	8	07/06/2019 - ongoing monthly	<i>Self, Hafal and Dementia Referrals</i>	22

	<i>Dolgellau Drop in</i>	6	28/06/2019 - ongoing monthly	DCWP	16
	<i>Tywyn Drop-in</i>	6	14/08/2019 - ongoing monthly	Self, TDWC, Opus	11
	<i>Glynllifon ILS Students</i>	6	19/12/2020 -	Coleg Glynllifon, NWRC	15
	<i>Henbant, home school Family sessions (6 weeks)</i>	7	23/01/2020 - 05/03/2020	Home school network	49
Merthyr	<i>Little Rascals Family Group</i>	6	22/10/19 - 03/12/19	Flying Start	21
	<i>Royal Crescent Allotment Adults</i>	3	27/02/20 - coronavirus	Open Mixed /Adref homelessness Charity, GP referrals and MIND	16
	<i>Monthly Adult Drop-in</i>	8	03/09/19 - ongoing	Mixed Open and referral group	25
Rhondda Cynon Taf	<i>Woodland Skills 6-week group (mixed group) Abercynon</i>	6	8/11/19- 13/12/19	Cynon Valley Organic Adventures	12
	<i>Woodland skills monthly session Abercynon</i>	4	25/10/19 - ongoing monthly	Communities for work, The Feel Good factor, Aberdare Jobcentre	14
	<i>Family Group Abercynon</i>	2	09/03/20 - coronavirus	Flying Start	6
Swansea	<i>Willow weaving for Wellbeing Group</i>	6	25/11/2019 - 20/01/2020	Open group	15
	<i>Kilvey Monthly Group</i>	4	30/10/2019 - ongoing monthly	Open group	19
Wrexham	<i>Walking Group</i>	49	April 2019 - ongoing weekly	Open group (some GP referrals)	33
	<i>Wrexham Family Group 1 (school)</i>	4	16/01/2020 - 6/02/2020	School referral	14
	<i>Wrexham Healthy and Active Walking Group</i>	5	20/09/2019 - 18/10/2019	Communities for work, MIND, AVOW.	6
	<i>Wrexham Family Group 2 (school)</i>	2	5/3/2020 - Coronavirus	School referral	12
Flintshire and Denbighshire	<i>Flintshire Coppice Products (8 weeks)</i>	8	21/01/2020 - 18/02/2020	New Mind	11
	<i>Denbighshire Family Course 1 (five weeks)</i>	5	31/01/2020 - 21/02/2020	Flying Start	17
	<i>Denbighshire Walking for Wellbeing (Five weeks)</i>	5	13/01/2020 - 17/02/2020	Open Mixed/Working Denbighshire	5
	<i>Denbighshire Coppice Products (8 Weeks)</i>	8	17/01/2020 - 06/03/2020	ADTRAC, Working Denbighshire	7
	<i>Denbighshire Family Course 2 (five weeks)</i>	3	28/02/2020 - coronavirus	Flying Start	16

Table 2 and Table 3 show the activities undertaken during the groups in year one of the project. All activities have been linked to the NHS 5-ways to Wellbeing as a guide to best practice,


























































ALL ACTIF WOODS WALES ADULT ACTIVITIES 2019-2020		'Learn' skills and education	Take Notice' Being in nature and mindfulness	Connect' increased social contact, reducing social isolation	Be Active' exercise through activity	Give' benefiting biodiversity and the environment
Arts and Crafts	Green woodworking (making utensils, wooden mushrooms, gnomes, love spoons, rings, pegs, wand making, star-making,					
	Creative with nature (Pinecone decoration, wreath making, Christmas trees from branches, wooden flowers, wooden mobile making)					
	Pyrography and Leatherworking (Keyrings)					
	Willow weaving (hearts, stars, baskets, bird feeders, flowers)					
	Woodwork (making reindeers, mallets, keyrings, birdhouses, Swedish Dala horses, Shrink pots)					
	Shave horse crafts (Gypsy flower,					
	Pole lathe/woodturning (Wands, Walking sticks, woodturning products)					
	Art (drawing from nature, making/using charcoal					
	Practical woodwork (Broom making, whisk making, stool making, table making, Bench making, Hazel pot stand)					
Physical Health	Green Gym (using woodland resources for physical health)					
	Woodland Walks					
	Nature Walks (Tree and plant ID)					
	Woodland sports activities					
	Foraging walks					
	Orienteering					

Table 2: Adult Weekly Group Activities

ALL ACTIF WOODS WALES ADULT ACTIVITIES 2019-2020		'Learn' skills and education	Take Notice' Being in nature and mindfulness	Connect' increased social contact, reducing social isolation	Be Active' exercise through activity	Give' benefiting biodiversity and the environment
Knowledge and Understanding	Bushcraft Skills (fire lighting: Bow drill, fire steel, Flint, Sunlight. Using Kelly Kettle, shelter building)					
	Identification in the woodlands (Bird, Tree, Plant, seasoned timber ID, winter bud ID)					
	Tool use and safety (saw, knife and tool usage)					
	Foraging Knowledge					
	Woodland Conservation (coppicing, woodland restoration, woodland management)					
	Woodland products (Charcoal making, Char-cloth making, cutting seasoned timber, Cleaving wood)					
	Shelter Building (roundhouse building/restoration)					
Nutrition	Campfire cooking (including Calzones, Pizzas, Bread, Soups, baked bananas, Cheese biscuits, popcorn over the fire, Chai and Herbal teas, healthy snacks - fruit and vegetables, Celebration BBQ)					
	Foraged Food Cooking (Including Meadowsweet pancakes, Wild garlic soup, Nettle soup, Nettle mashed potatoes, herbal teas and tinctures, Nettle pesto, Berry Jams (various), Rosehip syrup, Nettle and apple smoothies, Gorse Flower pancakes)					
	Knowledge and support (nutritional advice and healthy recipes to try at home)					
Woodland Improvements	Clearing Litter (litter picking, clearing fly-tipped rubbish)					
	Removing Invasive species (Clearing Sycamore, Rhododendron, bramble bashing,					
	Woodland Management & Coppicing (Hazel, clearing brash, moving/removing logs, hedge laying,					
	Improving Access (clearing pathways, making hazel hurdles, making benches, making raised beds, living willow fence,					
	Encouraging Biodiversity (making bat boxes, squirrel feeders, bird feeders, planting pinecones,					
























ALL ACTIF WOODS WALES FAMILY ACTIVITIES 2019-2020		'Learn' skills and education	Take Notice' Being in nature and mindfulness	Connect' increased social contact, reducing social isolation	Be Active' exercise through activity	Give' benefiting biodiversity and the environment
Woodland Arts and Crafts	Traditional skills (Broom making, Dreamcatchers), Willow work (willow and tissue sculptures, willow hearts), Art (Clay tree art, leaf and berry art, box decorations, wood and string art), woodcraft (name badges, cookies, foxes, wands, gypsy flowers, making natural mobiles), Building skills (Elf/Fairy Houses, Bird feeders, Twig towers)					
Woodland physical health	Themed Walks (Nature connection walks, ID walks, Animal hunt, teddy walk/teddy run, fairy hunt, treasure hunt, elf hunt, sensory walk, egg hunt, Stories and walk, Music and walk, Independent walk in pairs, family walk) Den building (fairy/elf houses, dragon houses), Games and Skills (circus skills, parachute game, free play and exploration, Cardboard box play, balancing with logs, swings, soft toy play, mud kitchen, team games, spider web game,)					
Knowledge and Understanding	Plant, tree and animal ID, foraging for youngsters, Exploring and learning about molehills, Fire safety talk.					
Nutrition	Campfire cooking (apple roasting, bread on a stick, Welsh cakes, pizza making, tortilla pizzas, healthy soups, flatbreads); Foraged foods (mulled apple juice, gorse flower pancakes, nettle soups); Advice (nutritional advice, healthy food recipes); Healthy snacks					
Woodland Improvements	Litter clearance, removing dangerous tree/overhanging branches, encouraging connection with local woodlands, bramble clearance.					
Social Play	Campfire (stories and eating), Storytelling, Games (as above and: mud kitchen, role-play, puppet shows), encouraging interaction between family members and participants.					

Table 3: Family group activities

Impact Evaluation – Year one

The year one evaluation of the Actif Woods Wales sessions focused on establishing the overall impact on participants. It utilised Pre-activity and Post-activity questionnaires to measure overall impact and change over time in the participants' mental wellbeing, physical activity, knowledge and understanding of woodlands, and whether they showed increased use of the woodlands over time (nature connection). The post-activity questionnaires also established the participants' views about the programme and gathered participant ideas on what improvements could be made. Participant wellbeing was measured using the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)¹. This utilises a two-week recall, self-report, wellbeing indication using a 5-point scale on fourteen set wellbeing indicators². Physical health was measured using the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ) short version. This is a self-report, 7-day recall, of the amount and duration of vigorous, moderate and walking exercise that a participant recalls from the previous week. The scores are converted into an overall MET score that provides an indicator of weekly physical activity. A high MET score of over 1500 indicates a high level of physical activity, a MET score of between 600-1500 indicates a moderate level of physical activity and a MET score of under 600 indicates a low level of physical activity. Coed Lleol/Small Woods Wales staff distributed the questionnaire on session one and session six of the weekly programmes and session one and month six of the monthly programmes (Note: due to COVID-19 monthly groups and walking groups were halted and therefore did not reach the six-month date for follow-up evaluation). This report, therefore, documents the evaluation of the 4-6-week Adult sessions and the 4-6-week family sessions.

A total of 628 participants experienced an Actif Woods Wales session across the eight delivery areas. Table 4 gives a breakdown of the programmes and the number of participants,

Programme	Number of Participants	Pre-Evaluation Forms Collected	Post-Evaluation Forms Collected
4-6 week Adult Woodland Courses	164	133	64
4-6 week Family Woodland Courses	211	186	98
Monthly/Weekly Drop-in Woodland Sessions	205	Not included in the evaluation	*not collected (COVID-19)
Woodland Walking Groups	48	Not included in the evaluation	*not collected (COVID-19)
Total	628	319	162

Table 4: Breakdown of Actif Woods Groups and Sample Size

It was anticipated that all participants would complete both pre- and post-evaluation forms, however consistent wet weather (Winter 2019-2020), extensive flooding in Wales (Jan/Feb 2020) and the outbreak of Coronavirus (Feb/March 2020) together with the difficulties already faced with collecting data in an outdoor woodland environment, often with vulnerable adults, posed significant issues for collecting a census sample of data. However, the data collected, based on a population of 375 (total participants from Adult and Family 4-6-week group) represents a confidence interval of 5 and a confidence level of 92, presenting a broadly representative sample group on which to base conclusions.

² The 14 WEMWBS indicators are:

I have been feeling optimistic about the future, I've been feeling useful, I've been feeling relaxed, I've been interested in other people, I've had energy to spare, I've been dealing with problems well, I've been thinking clearly, I've been feeling good about myself, I've been feeling close to other people, I've been feeling confident, I've been able to make up my own mind about things, I've been feeling loved, I've been interested in new things and I've been feeling cheerful.

PART 1: Evaluation of the Adult Weekly Sessions

164 adults attended 4-6-week woodland sessions with Actif Woods Wales groups across the seven HAF-funded areas. The demographic profile of this group is presented in the following tables,

Gender	Percentage of Participants
Male	57%
Female	41%
Prefer not to say	1%
I identify another way	1%

Age Band	%
Under 29	28%
30 to 44	21%
45 to 64	28%
65+	4%
No Answer	19%

WIMD	%
1-5 most deprived	48%
6-10 least deprived	33%
No Answer	19%

Referred Participants	%
Yes, referred	58%
Not referred/self-referred	26%
Unknown/no answer	16%

Ethnicity of participants	Percent
White	77%
Black/African/Black British	1%
Mixed ethnic origin	1%
Prefer not to say	3%
No Answer	19%

Attendance data	%
1-2 sessions	42%
3-4 sessions	28%
5+ sessions	29%
No data	1%

Health Condition	%
No answer/No health issues	52
Mental health/anxiety and depression	12
Mental health/long term diagnosis	4
Physical health/mobility/asthma	2
Physical health/disease/long term illness	7
Physical health/diabetes/blood pressure	3
Additional learning/behavioural needs	12
Multiple physical and mental health issues	7
Sight/hearing or speech	1

Self-declared disability	Percent
No Answer	17%
Limited a lot	12%
Limited a little	25%
No	40%
Prefer not to say	6%



What motivated the participants to join?

Table 5 presents the motivations to join Actif Woods as given by the adult participants (open-ended question). A range of different motivations for joining the woodland groups was presented, these were grouped into eight main themes. Many of the participants gave multiple reasons for joining; these include mental and physical wellbeing aims as well as educational aims. The principal motivations for the adults who attend the weekly groups were to learn new skills and knowledge and to reduce social isolation or to increase their social contact.

Motivation to join	Percent
No Answer	31%
Multiple reasons are given	18%
Educational Reasons	16%
Social Reasons	15%
To be outdoors in nature	8%
Physical Health Reasons	7%
Mental Wellbeing Reasons	2%
New Experience	2%
Environmental Reasons	1%

Table 5: Adult Participants Motivations to join 4-6 week sessions

Some of the motivations are presented below,

"I wanted to join to get me out of the house and with people, isolation is a major issue for me" (Female participant, Ceredigion, multiple physical and mental health issues)

"I wanted to join to be more confident and to help with my depression" (Female participant, Ceredigion, Depression and Anxiety)

"My motivation was to meet new people, try something new, get out in the fresh air and community and learn new skills" (Male participant, Anglesey, multiple physical and mental health issues)

"To learn more about the outdoors, for physical and mental wellbeing and because it is local" (Female participant, Merthyr Tydfil, No health issues)

"Having a nature-based activity to look forward to during my S.A.D season" (Female participant, Swansea, Seasonal defective disorder)

"Learn new skills, Spend time outside, socialising, reduce isolation and anxiety" (Male participant, RCT, Mobility and Balance Issues and Anxiety)

What impacts did the weekly sessions have on the adult participants?

Wellbeing

"My mental health is a lot better. I am less stressed and more patient. If I am feeling stressed I just go for a walk in the woods!"

(Male participant, Gwynedd Actif Woods, NWRC group)

The Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) was used to calculate overall wellbeing scores for all the participants. Wider research across the UK using this method has found that the average wellbeing score for adults is 51 points (out of a possible 70 points). A point score change of 3 or above is considered a 'meaningful change' in wellbeing. The Participants completed a WEMWBS test before starting the programme and then completed the same test once the programme had finished. The adult participants who completed the pre-test had an average start score of 45 points (6 points below the UK average), with a range of 16 points to 70 points. The analysis showed that 70% of participants who responded to the pre-test survey scored below the national average for wellbeing when starting the programme, using the WEMWBS method.



42 of the adult participants who had Actif Woods Wales weekly sessions completed both the WEMWBS pre-test and WEMWBS post-test³. Only these participants were used to calculate the difference in wellbeing over time. The results from these participants show a rise in overall average wellbeing from a start mean score of 45 (SD 13.0) to an end mean score of 52.8 (SD 11.6). A paired sample T-test was undertaken to compare the pre and post WEMWBS test results. The results show that there was a significant difference between the pre-test WEMWBS score (M=45, SD 13.0) and the post-test WEMWBS score (M=52.8, SD 11.6) conditions; $t(42) = 4.67, p 0.001$. The results suggest that the Actif Woods Programme was able to contribute to a rise in wellbeing across these participants.

³ A total of 64 participants completed a post score, however surveys were removed where no pre-test was completed, no post-test was completed or where tests were partially completed.



On an individual level, the results show:

- 71% of the participants showed increased wellbeing of 3 or more points⁴
- 5% had an increased wellbeing score of 1-2 points
- 7% of the participant's wellbeing stayed the same
- 19% of the participant's wellbeing decreased

These results indicate that wellbeing can be positively impacted, at least in the short term, for most participants even with short interventions of 6 or fewer weeks. Figure 1 shows that the more weeks a participant attended, the greater the number who showed increased wellbeing,

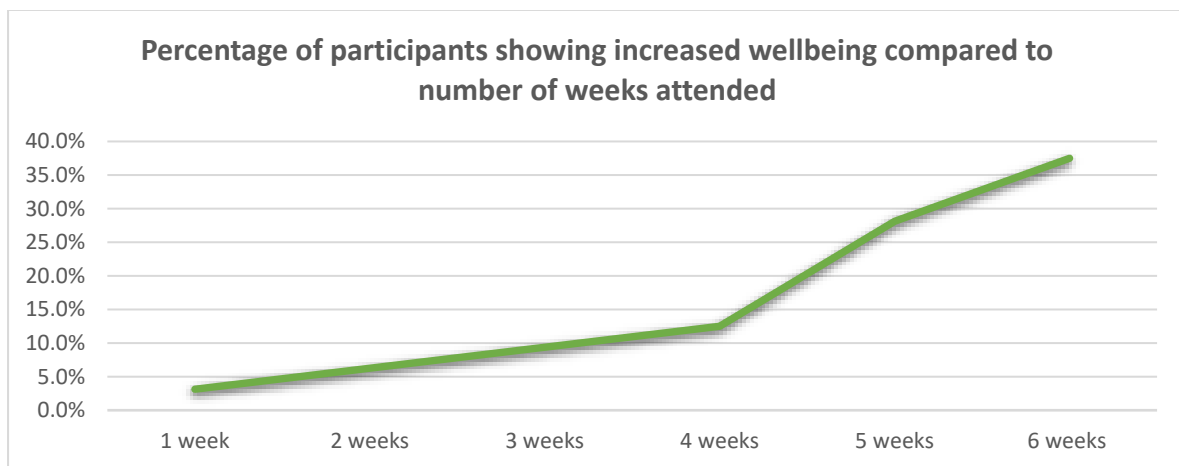


Figure 1: Participants wellbeing compared with number of weeks attended



Foraging in the woodlands (nettles and hawthorn berries)

⁴ 73% of those participants had an increased wellbeing score of over 6 points.

Physical Health

“Actif woods has helped me to get fitter, eat healthier and learn more”
(Male Participant, Rhondda Cynon Taf Actif Woods open group)

Physical health changes were measured using the short version of the International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ)⁵. 42 adult participants completed both the pre- and the post- IPAQ question, two of the surveys were removed due to misunderstanding the measures. Only the remaining 40 participants results have been used to calculate any changes in physical activity throughout taking part in the woodland activities. To calculate change, individual scores are converted into a single MET score that provides an indicator of weekly physical activity. A high MET score of over 1500 indicates a high level of physical activity, a MET score of between 600-1500 indicates a moderate level of physical activity and a MET score of under 600 indicates a low level of physical activity. The participants who responded to the pre- and post-survey showed a high overall average level of physical activity, with a start score average of 2117 and an end score average of 3316. A paired sample T-test showed a difference between the start IPAQ MET score (M=2117, SD 2042) and the end IPAQ MET scores (M=3316, SD 2939) conditions; $t(37) = -2.9, p 0.005$. This indicates some positive changes in physical activity throughout the programme.



On an individual level the results showed:

- 🍃 56% of the participants showed an increase in their physical activity
- 🍃 5% showed no change in their physical activity
- 🍃 39% evidenced a decrease in their physical activity

These results indicate that physical health can be positively impacted, at least in the short term, for most participants even with short interventions of 6 or fewer weeks.

Exercise in the woodlands

⁵ Note: Participants with learning difficulties were not asked to complete this section of the questionnaire, instead they were asked to rate whether they thought that they had done more physical exercise as a result of the activities than they had done before. It was also noted that many participants had difficulties in completing this section of the questionnaire and this indicates that increased support from the mentors for this section of the questionnaire may be necessary.

Woodland contact

49% of the participants had never taken part in any woodland activity before, indicating that Actif Woods Wales was able to introduce new participants to woodland activities.

Participants were asked a closed question about their contact with local woodlands before and after the programme. Only the participants who completed both the pre- and post- forms for this question have been included in the following results ($n=62$).

The results have been grouped into categories for frequent, moderate, and infrequent use,

Categories	Use of woodlands
Frequent use of woodlands	Daily, 2-3 times a week or once a week
Moderate use of woodlands	Once a fortnight, 2-3 times a month, Once a month
Infrequent use of woodlands	2-3 times a year, once a year or never

The results show that just under half of the participants were frequent woodland users before starting the programme, indicating appeal to those already interested in woodlands. 21% of participants used woodlands moderately throughout the year and 30% were infrequent users (with 14% never using woodlands before). Figure 2 shows an immediate increase in frequent woodland use of 24%-points across the participants.

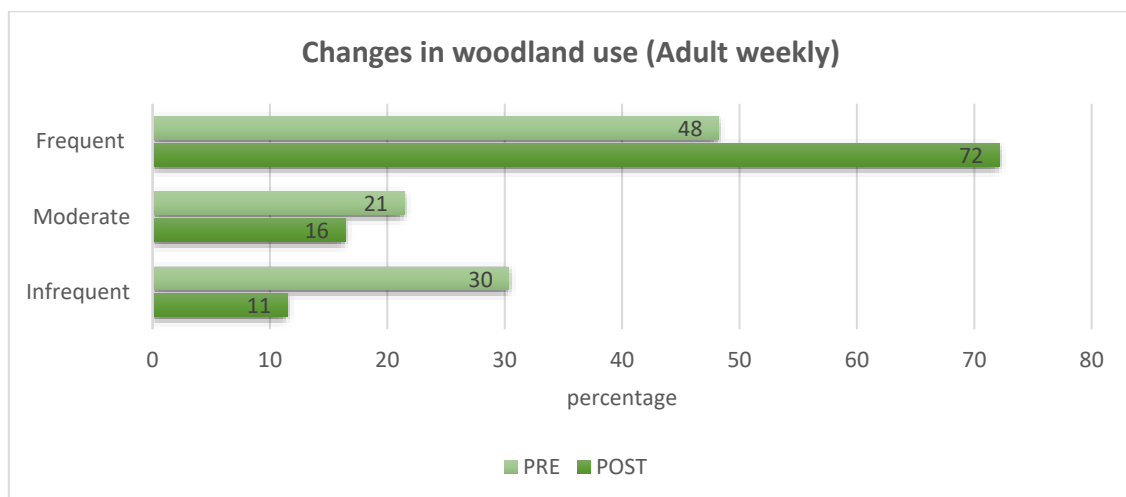


Figure 2: Chart showing changes in woodland use (adults' weekly groups)

The results indicate that the programme appeals to a wide range of woodland users and infrequent users and helps to encourage short-term increases in woodland use over time.

Skills and Knowledge Changes

The participants were asked to rate their woodland skills and knowledge at the start and the end of the programme. The results show that participants perceived their skills and knowledge to be significantly improved across all the indicators by the end of the programme as shown in the following Figure 3 and Figure 4⁶. A 41% increase in woodland skills, a 34% increase in woodland knowledge, 30% increase in woodland conservation knowledge and 14% increase in knowledge of healthy eating and nutrition was evidenced.

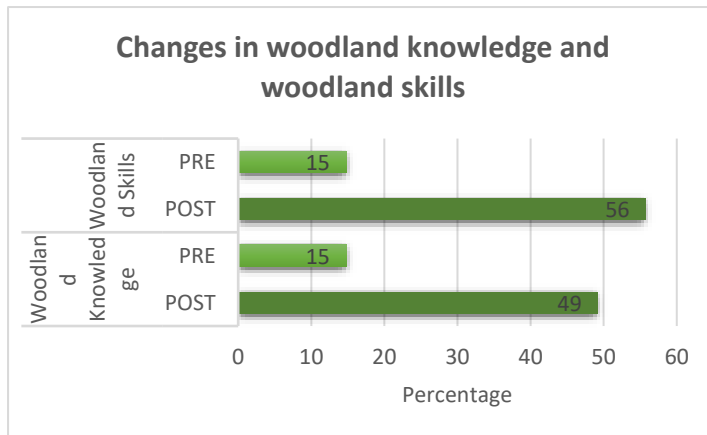


Figure 3: Changes in woodland knowledge and skills (adult weekly groups)

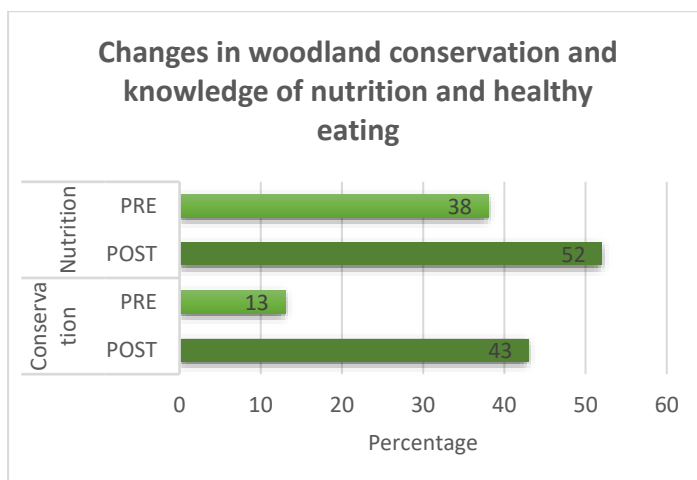


Figure 4: Changes in woodland conservation and nutrition (adult weekly groups)

⁶ Charts show the percentage scores for 'good' and very good' for pre-activity and post-activity.

Behavioural Changes and Impacts: Adult Groups

The participants were asked an open-ended question about how the Actif Woods Programme may have inspired any changes in themselves (physical or mental wellbeing or environmental change) through the course of the programme. 46 out of the 64 respondents answered this question (some participants with learning difficulties were not able to present an answer). The responses were themed and coded into the following themes, mental wellbeing benefit, physical health benefit, social wellbeing benefit, learning new skills and knowledge, and being in nature benefits and environmental benefit (satisfaction/helping others). Some participants gave more than one response, in these instances each response was coded individually. The analysis on the coded responses shows that the participants perceived the greatest changes to their mental wellbeing (26%), followed by changes to their knowledge and skills (24%) and benefits to social wellbeing (21%). Lesser mentions were given to physical health gains and environmental benefit. These are shown in Figure 5 below,

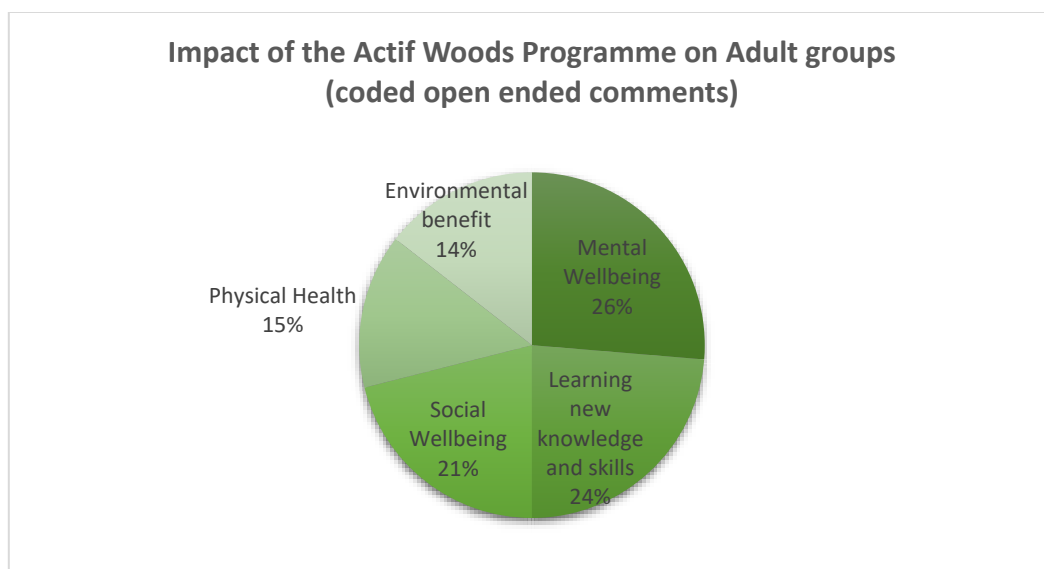


Figure 5: Themed Impacts of Actif Woods on Adult Groups

The themes are illustrated in the following comments,

Mental Wellbeing

“Actif Woods has helped me gain confidence in working in a group setting. It was a good distraction from my thoughts and while it was on it gave me more of a sense of purpose” (Male participant, Flintshire Actif Woods Group, New MIND referral)

“I feel a lot happier overall. I get out and walk a lot more and I don’t get depressed about things; I just get up and do stuff now. Would highly recommend, I don’t want the course to end” (Male participant, Denbighshire Actif Woods Group, Working Denbighshire Group)

“After each session, I have felt more positive when I get home” (Male participant, Actif Woods Rhondda Cynon Taf, Open Group)

“It has opened me up to trying new things and being more open-minded into new experiences I may have thought about before in a negative way.

Given me something to look forward to each week, gotten me out of the flat - which is a big thing for me definitely. Just put a smile on my face” (Male participant, Ceredigion Actif Woods, Social services referral)

“It has really helped with my S.A.D this year in that I came to a regular activity, learned new skills and met new people. All of which are really important to my mental health and being positive” (Female participant, Actif Woods Swansea, Open-group)

“I feel generally happier and a bit more confident. I think this group has been more beneficial to my mental health than exercise referral scheme or other things I am doing to manage my mental health. I just wish it was offered on a regular basis!” (Female Participant, Ceredigion Actif Woods, Open-referral group)

Learning new knowledge and skills

“The experience was a very good one and I have learnt lots of useful skills and knowledge. Good for fitness and health. I would like to volunteer at weekends - I have met new people and enjoyed the surroundings” (Male participant, Anglesey Actif Woods Group, Additional needs group)

“Learning has given me more confidence! Maybe to even try something at home!” (Female participant, Actif Woods Swansea, Open-group)

“It has taught me new skills which I will try to go on and use at home. It has made me feel more confident and accepted” (Male participant, Actif Woods Denbighshire, Working Denbighshire referral)

Physical Health

“Actif Woods has given me new ideas on exercise. I have met new friends and learnt new skills” (Male Participant, Actif Woods Anglesey, Gerddi Haelfre referral)

“Actif Woods has heled me to become more confident, it’s helped with reducing my blood pressure and feeling good. I have learnt new subjects, activities and new skills. I have enjoyed meeting new people, working with my hands” (Male Participant, Anglesey Actif Woods, YMCC Dementia group)

“Actif Woods sessions helped me to feel connected again. I am making more effort to use my walks to improve my fitness and the new skills I have, have made me feel more engaged with the outdoors” (Female participant, Rhondda Cynon Taf Actif Woods Open Group)

Social Benefit

“Being part of the Actif Woods programme has left me feeling supported. I enjoyed doing something different and I will try to remember this feeling and seek ways to re-experience it as often as possible” (Female participant, Actif Woods Gwynedd, NWRC group)

“Helped me to get out and connect with other people instead of vegetating at home and letting negative thoughts go around in my head gaining

credence that they don't deserve" (Female participant, Actif Woods Ceredigion, Open referral group)

Environmental benefit/being in nature/Giving back

"it is peaceful in the wooded areas and I enjoyed taking part in making the wooded area more accessible and it was great meeting new people" (Male participant, Actif Woods Ceredigion, Substance misuse referral)

"it has made me more helpful and I think it has improved my health" (Female participant, Actif Woods Anglesey, Additional learning needs group)

"Being out in the open in a group setting. Everyone friendly and relaxed. Calm environment which made me calm for the rest of the day. I also visit local woodlands more often" (Male participant, Actif Woods Anglesey, Dementia Group)



PART 2: Evaluation of the Family Groups

Introduction to Family Groups

Actif Woods Wales hosted 10 family groups (4-6-week courses) across seven areas from August 2019 – March 2020⁷. A total of 211 participants attended the Actif Woods Family session (August 2019 – March 2020⁸). Of these, 92 were adults and were 119 children. Pre-evaluation forms were collected from 82 adults and 104 children and post-evaluation forms were gathered from 38 adults and 60 children (49 for 0-7-year-olds, 11 for 7-14-year-olds⁹).



Picking blackberries and story walk and talk time.

⁷ Some of the family groups were halted mid-programme due to the outbreak of Coronavirus. Therefore, post-evaluation forms were not collected from these participants.

⁸ Some of the family groups were halted mid-programme due to the outbreak of Coronavirus. Therefore, post-evaluation forms were not collected from these participants.

⁹ Due to the small sample group of 7–14-year-olds the evaluation has not been included in this report, but will be reported in Coed LLoel's annual report 2019-2020 that collates evaluation across all funded groups.

Who engaged with the family sessions?

The demographic profile of the family groups is presented in the following tables,

Gender	Adults	Children
Male	16%	52%
Female	84%	49%

Age Band of adults from the family group	Adults	Children
0-4 years old		71%
5-9 years old		23%
10-14 years old		6%
Under 29	41%	
30 to 44	51%	
45 to 64	6%	
65+	2%	
No Answer		

WIMD of adults from family groups	%
1-5 most deprived	70%
6-10 least deprived	18%
No Answer	12%

Urban-Rural Decile	%
C1: Urban city and town	20%
C2: Urban City and Town in a sparse setting	25%
D1: Rural town and fringe	26%
D2: Rural town and fringe in a sparse setting	2%
E1: Rural Village	8%
E2: Rural Village in a sparse setting	8%

Referred Participants	%
Yes, referred	53%
	referred from Flying Start or via Child's School
Not referred/self-referred	47%

The ethnicity of adults from family groups	Per cent
White	95%
Asian or another ethnic origin	3%
Prefer not to say	2%

Attendance data of adults from family groups	%
1-2 sessions	31%
3-4 sessions	51%
5+ sessions	15%
No data	3%

(Note: Groups that were halted due to Coronavirus have been excluded from this analysis)

Health Condition of Adults from the family group	Adults	Children
No answer/No health issues	78%	82%
Mental health/anxiety and depression	15%	1%
Mental health/long term diagnosis	0%	0%
Physical health/mobility/asthma	2%	5%
Physical health/disease/long term illness	1%	3%
Physical health/diabetes/blood pressure/allergies	4%	3%
Additional learning/behavioural needs	0%	3%
Multiple physical and mental health issues	0%	0%
Sight/hearing or speech	0%	3%

Self-declared disability of adults from the family group	Percent
No Answer	11%
Limited a lot	7%
Limited a little	3%
No	75%
Prefer not to say	4%



Positive associations: making trying new foods in the woodlands

What motivated the participants to join the family group?

Table 6 shows that the adults from the family groups were motivated to join an Actif Woods Programme for a new experience for themselves and their children (or to learn something together with their children), however social, mental wellbeing and physical health motivations were also a reason to attend for many of the adults. 12% were specifically attracted by having activities outdoors.

Motivations	Percent
No Answer	23
New Experiences/Experience for children	22
Social Reasons	18
Multiple reasons are given	12
To be outdoors in nature	12
Mental Wellbeing Reasons	4
Educational Reasons	4
Physical Health Reasons	3
Environmental Reasons	1

Table 6: Motivations of Family Group Adults

Some of the adult's motivations to join the family groups with their children are presented below,

"I never go out and I am hoping that this can help with my anxiety" (Female participant, Denbighshire, referred by Homestart)

"We struggle to find activities to suit a 5, 4, 3 and 2-year-old boys at the same time, it is too easy just to stay home most of the time!" (Female participant, Ceredigion, Referred by Flying Start)

"To enjoy new outdoor activities with the whole family" (Female participant, Ceredigion, Referred by Flying Start)

"Something for me and my daughter to do together" (Female participant, Anglesey, Referred by Flying Start)

"Spend time doing things outside of school with my son and his friends" (Female participant, Wrexham, Referred by school)

"I have social, educational and environmental aims for me and my child – and I want to be less isolated. It's fun for child too!" (Female participant, Denbighshire, referred by Flying Start)

What are the impacts of the Actif Woods programme on the family groups?

Wellbeing Adults

“It has been very helpful in destressing and relaxing me, it has shown me what a difference just being outside can have on mental wellbeing”
(Female Participant, Ceredigion Flying start family group).

Wellbeing was measured using the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). The adults from the family group received the same pre- and post-evaluation forms as the adults who attended the 6-week sessions. It was anticipated that wellbeing scores would be higher across this group however start scores showed a mean score of 48 points (SD 9.9) with a range of 23 to 70 WEMWBS score. This is a 3-point score below the national average wellbeing using the WEMWBS method. 23 adults completed both the pre- and post- wellbeing survey. This group had a mean score after the Actif Woods group of 50 points (SD 11), with a range of 31 to 70 points. A paired T-test did not show any significant difference in the two mean scores.

Taken on an individual level,

- 🌱 52% of adults from the family groups demonstrated increases of 3 or more points
- 🌱 4% of the adults from the family groups demonstrated increases of 1-2 wellbeing points
- 🌱 13% showed no change in their pre and post wellbeing scores
- 🌱 35% of the adults from the family groups showed a decrease in their wellbeing points

There was a difference of 19%-point in increased wellbeing over 3 points from the adults who took part in the adult weekly groups. This variation could be explained by the difference in sample sizes or that the family groups are focused on both child and parent rather than just on the adults' wellbeing, with core activities focused on child-centred skills building, games and crafts.

Wellbeing Children

The children's wellbeing was measured using indicators that linked to willingness to try new activities, making new friends, exercise (see below) and healthy eating (note: a Likert scale was used for these measures, therefore, modal scores have been calculated) Table 7 an increase in modal score for 'willingness to try new food' from 'sometimes' to 'often' in the children under seven. The children's start scores for making new friends and willingness to join in activities was already high and did not change,

	Start modal score	End modal score
Willingness to try new foods	3 (sometimes)	4 (often)
Willingness to make new friends	5 (all the time)	5 (all the time)
Willingness to join in activities that they have not done before	5 (all of the time)	5 (all of the time)

Table 7: Children's Wellbeing Indicators

On an individual basis, the comparative results show,

- 🌿 36% of the children were more willing to try new foods
- 🌿 20% of the children were more willing to make friends
- 🌿 34% of the children were willing to join in with activities that they had not done before

Healthy eating was measured using a parental estimate of their child's fruit and vegetable daily intake. The results showed a mean fruit and vegetable intake of 3.5 portions before the programme (modal score of 4) and an intake of 3.4 portions after the programme (modal score of 5). On an individual basis, 26% of the children increased their fruit and vegetable intake after completing the programme.

Physical Health

"Actif woods is encouraging me to do more outside with my family" (Female Participant, Ceredigion, Flying Start Family Group)

As before, the physical health of the adults was measured using a pre- and post-test method using the short International Physical Activity Questionnaire (IPAQ).¹⁰ 23 adult participants completed both the pre- and the post- IPAQ question only these results have been used to calculate any changes in physical activity throughout taking part in the woodland activities. To calculate change, individual scores are converted into one MET score that provides an indicator of weekly physical activity. A high MET score of over 1500 indicates a high level of physical activity, a MET score of between 600-1500 indicates a moderate level of physical activity and a MET score of under 600 indicates a low level of physical activity. The participants who responded to the pre- and post-survey showed a high overall average level of physical activity, with a start score average of 2314 and an end score average of 2531 (with a large range from inactive 16 MET to highly active at 6822 MET). A paired sample T-test was unable to show any significant difference between the means.

On an individual level, the results showed,

- 🌿 53% of participants showed an increase in their physical activity
- 🌿 45% of participants showed no increase or a decrease in their physical activity

A larger sample size is needed to gather conclusive results.

¹⁰ Note: Participants with learning difficulties were not asked to complete this section of the questionnaire, instead they were asked to rate whether they thought that they had done more physical exercise as a result of the activities than they had done before. It was also noted that many participants had difficulties in completing this section of the questionnaire and this indicates that increased support from the mentors for this section of the questionnaire may be necessary.

Children's Physical health

The parents of the children under seven completed pre- and post-activity forms on behalf of their children. 49 complete pre- and post- forms were collected. Parents were asked to estimate the number of hours of light physical activity, energetic physical activity and sedentary activity (screen time) that their children undertook in an average day. Table 8 shows the results. This indicates a slight decrease in the children's light exercise but no significant increase in their amount of energetic exercise. However, children's screen time was reduced by 36 minutes on the weeks that the children under seven were part of the active woods programme.

Children under 7	Start Mean Hours	End Mean Hours	Difference
Light physical exercise	3.9 hours	3.3 hours	0.6 of an hour (36 minutes less)
Energetic physical exercise	2.3 hours	2.1 hours	0.2 of an hour (12 minutes less)
Hours spent on screen time	1.8 hours	1.2 hours	0.6 hours (36 minutes less)

Table 8: Changes in Children's Physical Activity

On an individual basis,

- 30% of the children gained in hours of energetic physical exercise a week
- 70% remained at the same level of energetic physical activity or evidenced a decrease

Although the pre- and post- measures showed a moderate change, 87% of the parents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that their children had done a lot of physical exercise during the Actif Woods Wales programmes.



Building confidence and getting fit climbing trees

Woodland Contact

“I started to make more use of the woodlands in the area and it has helped me and my sons to be more active and they enjoy it!” (Male participant, Ceredigion Flying Start Family Group)

78% of the adults who attended the family Actif woods programme had never undertaken any woodland activities before, therefore Actif Woods presented these people with their first experience of woodland activities, skills and knowledge building.

Participants were asked a closed question about their contact with local woodlands before and after the programme. Only the participants who completed both the pre- and post- forms for this question have been included in the following results (adults $n=35$, Children $n = 49$)

As before, the results have been categorized into frequent, moderate and infrequent woodland user. Figure 6 shows that the adults from the family groups were less likely to be frequent visitors to woodlands than the adult participants who take part in the weekly groups. The children were more likely to be frequent visitors than their parents who attended these sessions. This perhaps indicates visitation with other family members (specifically fathers who were underrepresented in the family adult sample group). 43% of adults and 47% of children were infrequent users or never used woodlands before the programme.

Figure 6 shows a 45% increase in adult family members using woodlands frequently since the Actif Woods Programme (in the short term). Figure 7 shows that child participants increased their frequent use of woodlands by 39%

These figures suggest that by engaging family groups in a positive experience early on could be a significant factor in increasing the use of woodlands for physical activity and recreation in the future, especially for adult women.

“I have been Inspired to go out in woodlands more often and in all weathers” (Female Denbighshire Flying start family group)

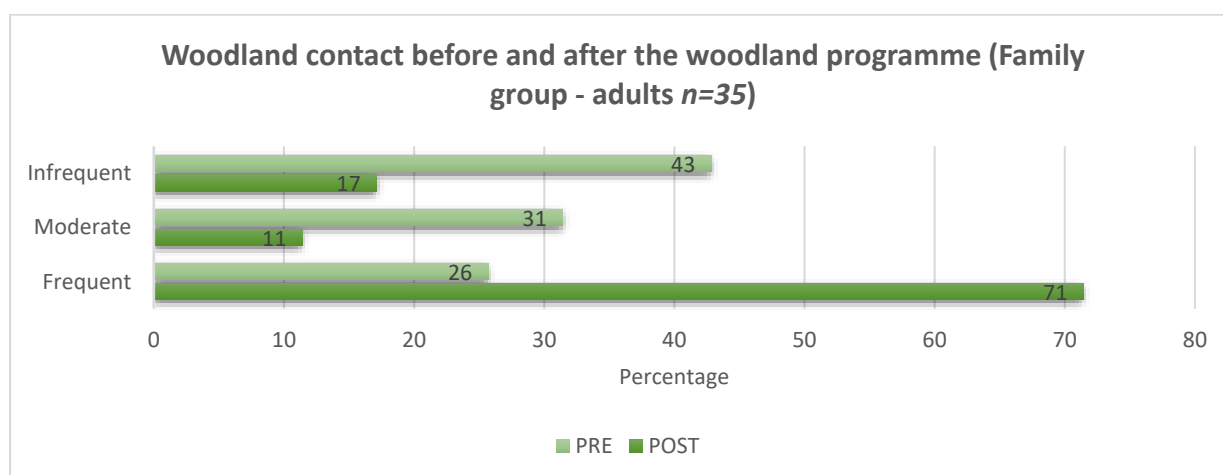


Figure 6: Changes in woodland use (adults family group)

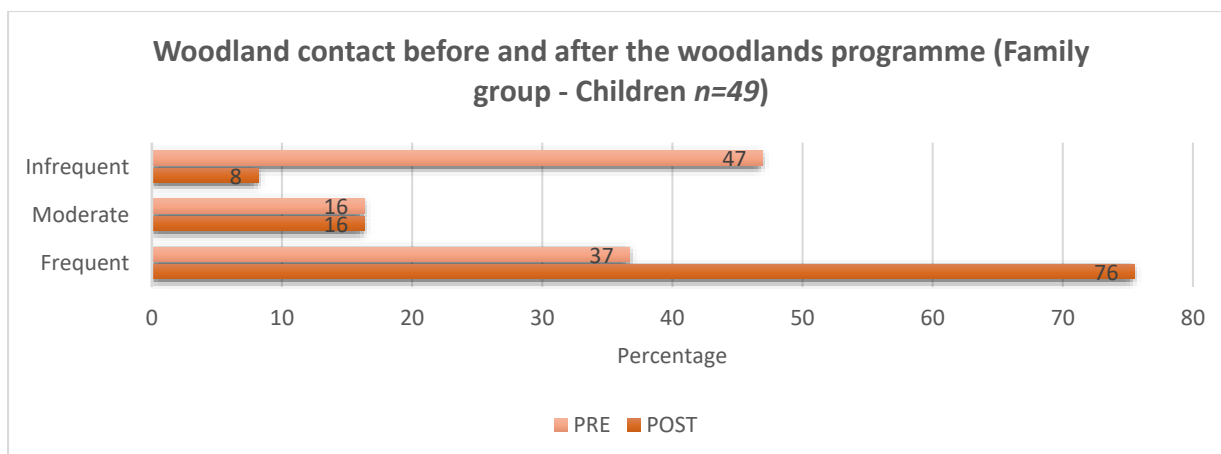


Figure 7: Changes in woodland use (children)

Woodland Skills and Knowledge

The adults from the family groups were given pre- and post-test questions relating to their baseline woodland knowledge, skills, understanding of conservation and knowledge of nutrition and healthy eating. Figure 8 and Figure 9 show significant changes in the adult's perception of their knowledge gain (+37%), skills gains (+43%), knowledge of woodland conservation (+49%) and Healthy eating knowledge (+34%).

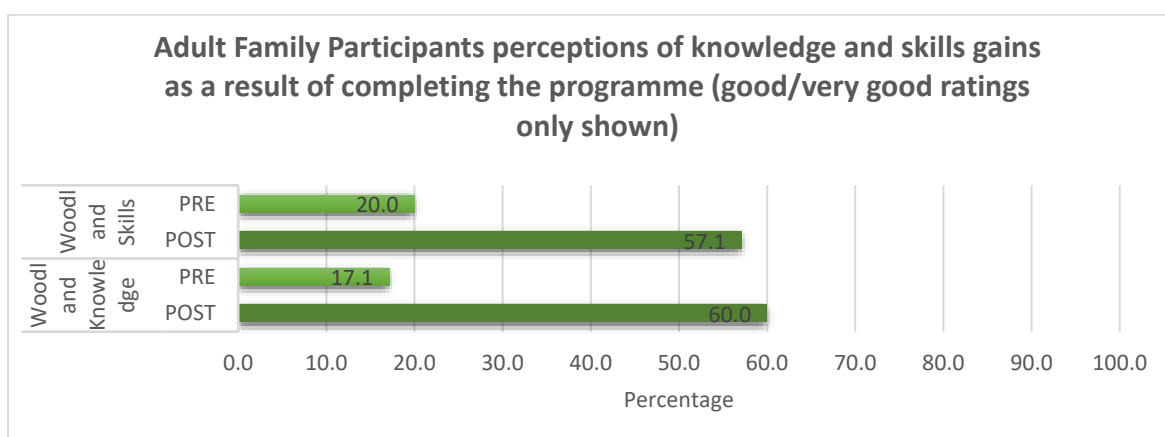


Figure 8: Changes in woodland knowledge and skills (adults family group)

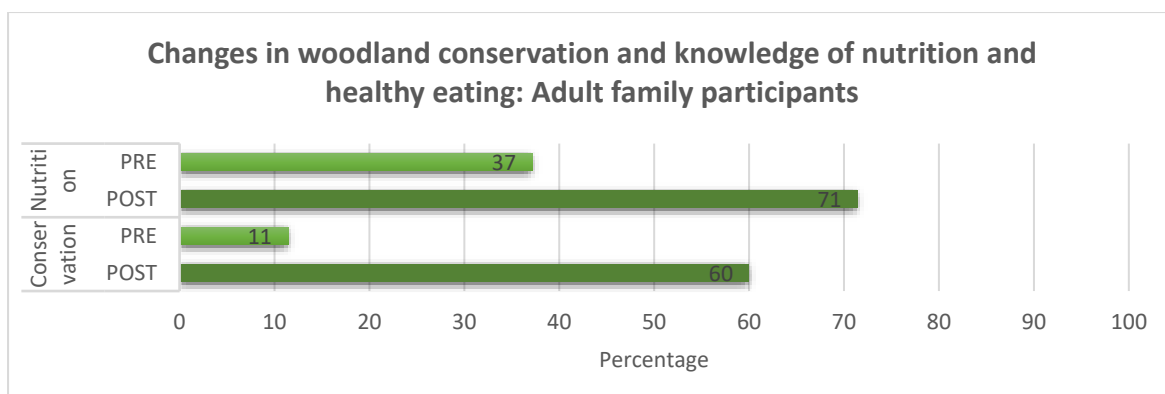


Figure 9: Changes in knowledge of nutrition and conservation

88% of adults felt that their children had learnt new knowledge as a result of being part of Actif Woods Wales

Behavioural Changes and Impact on Adults from family Groups

The adults were asked to list any changes in their behaviour or any impacts that they felt that being part of Actif Woods may have had. 29 responses for adults were gathered. The responses have been themed and coded and present the following findings seen in Figure 10 many participants presented more than one impact; in this case, these have been coded individually. The principal impacts most mentioned by the adults was the benefit of being outside in nature with their children and a motivation to spend more time outdoors. 15% of the comments related to confidence-building and having the confidence to try new things.

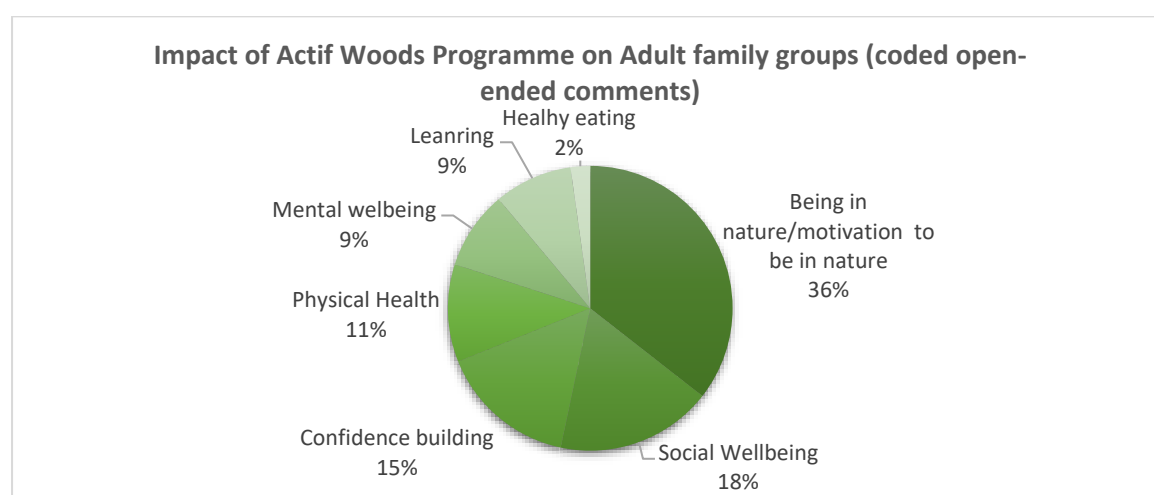


Figure 10: Impacts of the Actif Woods Programme on Family group Adults

Some of the comments for each theme are listed below,

Mental wellbeing

"I would say that being part of the Actif woods group has decreased my anxiety. I feel more comfortable being out and it has given me more energy. It has made me more confident within myself" (Female participant, Anglesey Flying Start Family Group)

"Being part of Actif Woods has made me more patient with myself and with my children. Helped me to be calmer and enjoy the woodlands more. It has made me be more open to new people" (Female participant, Wrexham School referral family group)

Confidence Building

"It has given me the confidence and motivation to join groups that may be a bit out of my comfort zone" (Female participant, Ceredigion Family Group)

"It's encouraged me to get out more, beforehand I would rather stay in and only go out when I had others with me" (Female participant, Denbighshire Flying Start Family Group)

Motivation to be in nature

"I'll make an effort to take my daughter to the woods more" (Female participant, Merthyr Family Group)

"It has motivated me to take care of our environment to keep local areas clean for people to use" (Male participant, Ceredigion Family Group)

Behavioural Changes and Impact on Children from family Groups

The adults were asked to list any changes in behaviour or impacts that the Actif Woods Programme might have had on their children. 33 out of the 49 responses presented an impact. These have been themed and coded. Figure 11 illustrates the central impacts on child participants. 28% of the comments related to their children wanting to take part in, and actively choosing, outdoor play as a leisure activity. 25% said that being part of the group stretched their children social circle and 15% of the comments related to improved confidence in the children: to be independent; try new activities and make new friends. 17% of the comments suggested that the children's behaviour and sleep had improved because of the Actif Woods programme.

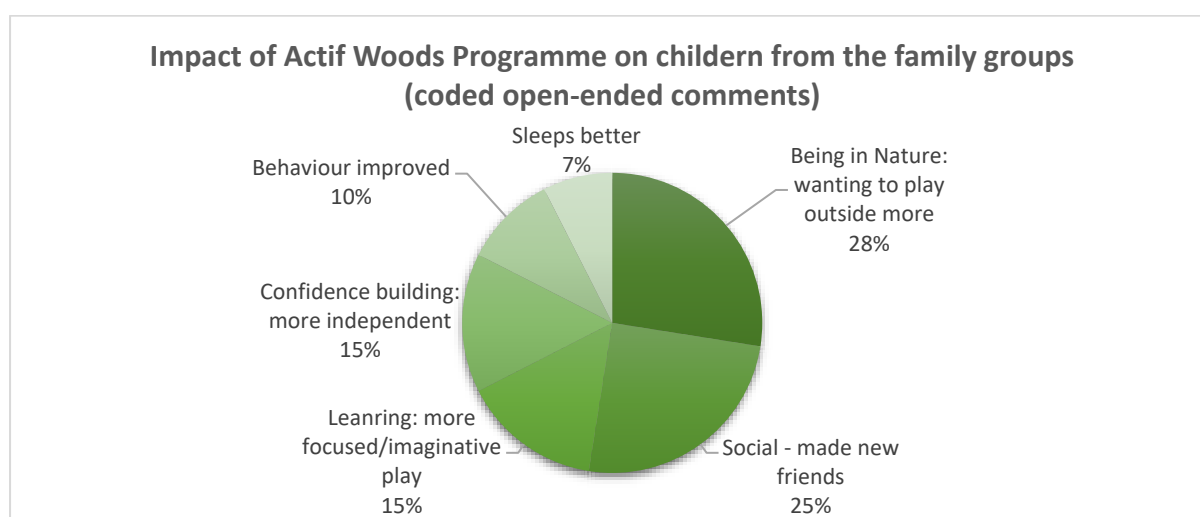


Figure 11: Impact of Actif Woods Programme on Children under 7

Some of the comments are presented below for the themes,

Being in nature: wanting to be outside more

"He seems more willing to be outdoors instead of making a fuss about it and constantly asking to go home!" (Male child, aged 5-9, Ceredigion Flying Start Family Group)

Social – making new friends

"She is more sociable now and more willing to join in" (Female Child, aged 0-4, Denbighshire Flying Start Family Group).

Learning: More focused/imaginative play

"His outdoor play is much more imaginative now. Since they had 'Room on a broom' read to them then making broomsticks, they have all 4 played 'witches' ever since" (Male child, aged 0-4, Ceredigion Flying Start Family Group)

"We are all more creative now, being together as a family outdoors" (Male child, aged 0-4, Anglesey Flying Start Family Group)

Confidence Building/more independent

"My child has become a lot more confident, especially in talking to others" (Female child, aged 0-4, Anglesey Flying Start Family Group)

"She is willing to join in and she has settled in quicker than she usually does. She is not as shy" (Female child, aged 0-4, Denbighshire Flying Start Group)

Sleeps better

"My child is more tired after a day with Actif Woods and sleeps better. He is sharing more with other children and more adventurous" (Male child, ages 0-4, Denbighshire Flying Start Family Group)

Behaviour Improved

"Listening more to instructions and stopping talking when told to. Learning to take turns and sharing" (Male participant, aged 5-9, Wrexham School referral family group)



Learning Bush craft skills at the family sessions

Overall Ratings

The data collected across the Adult 4-6-week session and the Adult Family Groups were collated for the following questions ($n=102$) and for the children forms ($n = 49$).

At the end of the programme, participants were asked to rate how far they felt the programme reached its key aims of Enjoyment, Making new friends, Teaching new skills, Teaching new knowledge, Helping participants feel more connected to local greenspace/woodlands, Helping participants feel more part of the community, Making participants feel happier (benefited their mental wellbeing), Helping participants do more physical exercise than they did before, Contributed to making green space better/more accessible, Motivated participants to want to take part in further environmental activities and programmes.

The results from adult participants who took part in adult or family groups showed:



90% ENJOYED THE ACTIF WOODS SESSIONS



91% SAID THAT ACTIF WOODS HELPED THEM TO MAKE NEW FRIENDS



90% WERE CONFIDENT THAT THEY HAD LEARNT NEW SKILLS



86% FELT THAT THEY HAD LEARNT NEW KNOWLEDGE



81% SAID THAT BEING PART OF ACTIF WOODS MADE THEM FEEL HAPPIER



75% FELT ACTIF WOODS HELPED THEM FEEL MORE CONNECTED TO GREEN SPACES



79% FELT MORE PART OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITY



82% FELT MOTIVATED TO GET MORE INVOLVED IN WOODLAND ACTIVITIES

The ratings for the children under 7 showed,



100% OF CHILDREN ENJOYED
ACTIF WOODS



88% OF PARENTS THOUGHT THEIR
CHILDREN HAD LEARNT NEW
KNOWLEDGE



78% FELT THAT THEIR CHILDREN
HAD MADE NEW FRIENDS

Suggestions for improvements

All adult participants who completed the post-activity forms from both the 6-week sessions and the family sessions were asked how the Actif Woods Programme could be improved. Most of the participants did not leave an answer or stated that no improvement was needed, 30% of the respondents provided suggestions for improvements. These are presented in Table 9 below,

Suggestion for improvement	Adult 4–6-week sessions number of comments	Adults Family Sessions number of comments
More courses/longer duration	5	3
Weather/mud	4	2
Food choices/disliked the healthy options	5	4
Better Toilet facilities	5	0
More craft choices	1	1
Bigger groups of participants (better attendance)	2	0
Smaller groups	0	1
Better communication/Health and safety checks	2	1
Music/decoration for children	0	2
Handouts / continued learning at home	2	0
More activities for toddlers	0	3
More team building activities for children	0	1
Shorter programme for the under 4's	0	1

Table 9: Improvements suggested by all participants

The main comments concerned the facilities and the duration of the course (4-6 weeks). 8 adults suggested that the courses could run for a longer period to fully embed learning and social ties. One participant suggested, *“I think the programmes are too short, there is often a feeling that externally funded provision comes and disappears but I think it takes longer than six weeks to build meaningful relationships with either the other participants or with the woods”* (Female participant, Actif Woods Rhondda Cynon Taf, Open-group). Weather and facilities were mentioned 11 times with toilets being an issue only for one group (Anglesey Additional needs group) and weather and mud being issues across several groups. Interestingly, the provision of healthy food choices was an issue for some of the participants under the age of 20 who were unsure about new healthy foods that were being introduced (Gwynedd College Group and Ceredigion Family Group). This indicates that a long time to

embed new tastes and healthy foods may be needed when engaging younger groups who may be more conservative in their food tastes.

Conclusions

The following section examines Actif Woods Objectives against their outputs and outcomes

Attracting new participants and referral partners

The Actif Woods programme was successful in attracting 628 new participants in 2019-2020. This figure is slightly below the target figure of 678. The difference is explained by the late start of the groups (due to funding delays) and the recruitment and subsequent training needed for the South Wales team. Attention is needed on maintaining attendance throughout the 4–6-week adults sessions and family groups. Although much of the drop in attendance can be explained by wet and cold weather over the winter months and the outbreak of COVID-19, attendance often varied at other times of the year too.

Actif woods were successful in attracting 27 new referral partners and retaining 22 existing referral agencies (see Appendix A). The distribution of referral partners varies from area to area depending on the length of time Actif Woods has been established in each area.

Increase the mental wellbeing of participants

The Actif Woods Programmes were successful in increasing the mental wellbeing of 76% of the adults who attended the Adult 4-6-week family groups; 71% of those demonstrated 'meaningful change' of over 3 WEMWBS points. The wellbeing of the adults who took part in the family groups was less conclusive, however, 56% of the adults demonstrated a positive change in their wellbeing scores with 52% showing 'meaningful change' over 3 points. The difference in the wellbeing outcomes is thought to reflect the mixed activities of the family groups, with a focus on 'family' and 'child' activities rather than solely on the adults. When analysing the post-form ratings, 81% of all adults (from both groups) felt that the Actif Woods Programme had made them happier, 86% felt that they had learnt new knowledge, 91% stated that they had made new friends and 82% were more motivated to get involved on other woodland activities, indicating raised levels of wellbeing.

The programme was also able to demonstrate some changes in children's behaviour as a result of taking part in the programme. Enjoying and wanting to play outdoors, improvement in confidence, more focused play and learning and better sleep as evidenced by some of the parents which can contribute to improved wellbeing in children. There was also evidence that 36% of the children were more willing to try new foods as a result of the programme.

Increase the amount of physical activity participants undertake

The programme was able to demonstrate increased physical activity in some participants, especially those that took part in the 4-6-week adult sessions; however, this was not as consistent throughout the participants of the family group. Increases in physical activity were evidenced across 56% of the weekly adult participants (showing a significant difference in the means between pre and post-test) and 53% of the family group adults (no significant difference between the means pre and post-test). Although 87% of the parents felt that their children had done lots of physical exercise during their time at Actif Woods, the pre- and post-test results were inconclusive, perhaps because the test groups already evidenced high levels of physical activity before the programme. However, a reduction of 36 minutes of the children's 'screen-time' was evidenced – indicating less sedentary activity as a result of the Actif Woods programme.

Actif Woods Sessions focus mainly on walking activities, with more vigorous physical activities happening sporadically and often with different activities happening in different groups. Although the family groups included more physical games, it was unclear whether these included both adults and children and to what extent these were vigorous physical activities.

Increase the time spent outdoors and with others (social wellbeing – reducing social isolation)

The programmes were instrumental in connecting people within a community, encouraging friendships and for some, reducing social isolation. A significant outcome for many participants was the connection to new friends, increasing their confidence around others and motivation to get out of the house. 91% of the adult participants felt that they had made new friends through Actif Woods and 79% felt more part of the local community. 78% of the adults also thought that their children had made new friends.

Increases in woodland use and increasing the motivation to spend time outdoors was evidenced across both adult and family groups with a 24% infrequent use by adults (4-6 week sessions) and a 45% and 39% increase in frequent use respectively for adult and children who attended the family sessions.

Increase the knowledge and understanding of woodland skills and heritage crafts that utilise the natural resources of UK woodlands

Actif woods were able to impact new knowledge and heritage skills to participants. Knowledge and skills gain, and conservation knowledge gains were evidenced in both the adult and adult family participants. In addition to the pre-test and post-test results, 86% of the participants felt that they had learnt new knowledge and 90% that they had learnt new skills.

Increase knowledge of healthy food choices (with a focus on outdoor nutrition)

Although the programmes were able to use healthy food choices and demonstrate new ways of using fruit, vegetables, and foraged food, it was unclear, at this point, whether this had a lasting impact on the participants. However, within the family groups evidence presented an increase in children's willingness to try new foods and this can be important in encouraging healthy eating among children longer-term. Some of the teenage participant and younger members of the family groups struggled with unfamiliar or healthy options that perhaps stretched them too far out of their comfort zone.

Encourage progression to volunteering or Drop-in woodland groups (supporting longer-term health and wellbeing) leading to community involvement in the maintenance of woodland sites

20% of the participants who attended 4–6-week sessions have joined the monthly Adult drop-in groups. Actif Woods currently has 20 active volunteers who facilitate weekly or monthly groups. The number varies across the areas of delivery with some areas having no volunteers.

Appendix A – Referral Partners

Group	Name of the Referral Partner Organisation	Are they a new or an existing referral partner
Ceredigion	MIND	Existing
	Social Services	Existing
	Flying Start	New
	Substance Misuse Team	New
Anglesey	Blean Y Coed, Cyngor Sir Ynys Mon	EXISTING
	Gors Felin, Cyngor Sir Ynys Mon	EXISTING
	Morswyn, Cyngor Sir Ynys Mon	EXISTING
	Cyfle Ni	EXISTING
	Flying Start	NEW
	Tyddyn Mon	EXISTING
	Cwlwm Seiriol	New
	Lynvor house	EXISTING
	Bwywd Llawn	EXISTING
	Gerddi Haulfre, Cyngor Sir Ynys Mon	EXISTING
	YMCC Dementia care team	NEW
	Byron Centre, Cyngor Sir Ynys Mon	NEW
	AONB	EXISTING
	Coleg Menai Llandryllo	NEW
	Anglesey Woods	NEW
	BCUHB Mental Health families team	NEW
Gwynedd	Hafal	Existing
	Gorwel	Existing
	Dementia Go	Existing
	Comm. Well being projects	Existing
	N. Wales Recovery Communities (NWRC)	Existing
	Gwynedd Council	New
	Antur Waunfawr	New
	North Wales Housing	New
	Coleg Glynllifon	New
	Flying Start Gwynedd	New
	Tywyn Health Centre	New
	Dolgellau Health Centre	New
	Dref Werdd	New
	BCUHB primary care mental health and Psychology	New
Merthyr	Jobcentre Plus	Existing
	Flying start	New
	Adref Addressing Homelessness	New

Swansea	Cefn Coed hospital	Existing
	community mental health team	Existing
	Hafal	new
	Swansea Jobcentre	Existing
	Brynmill Local Area Coordinator	New
	Swansea Careers centre (men's group)	New
RCT	Cynon Valley Organic Adventures	New
	Communities 4 Work	New
	Aberdare Job Centre	Existing
	The feel good factory	New
Flint/Denbighshire	ADTRAC	New
	Working Denbighshire	new

ⁱ <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs>

Report prepared by Natasha Simons at natashasimons@smallwoods.org.uk
coedlleol@smallwoods.org.uk

