

Case study: Kids Plant Trees

Name of project or group

Kids Plant Trees. Case study by Anna Parkin, September 2022

Introduction

Kids Plant Trees was set up by a group of (tired!) mums of young children in January 2020. We wanted something tactical and practical to do with our little ones that made us feel like we were taking proactive action to help climate, nature and wildlife. We also wanted to do something that inspired our kids to love and care for their local environment.

Despite the pandemic slowing our plans, we've organised the planting of more than 6,000 trees. We've now established as a social enterprise and our aim is to plant 15,000 trees over the next three years, and get 15,000 kids involved in our activities. Our plans include involving kids and teachers at schools across South Yorkshire to transform their playgrounds, as well as inviting families who might not have easy access to nature to our fun and informative Go Wild events.

What actions for nature did your group want to take and why?

Our group set out to plant trees with our children. But it's about more than just the planting of a tree, it's about getting our kids involved at a young age, helping them find the joy in nature and the desire to love and care for it.

We teamed up with Sheffield City Council's Parks and Countryside department to put on family planting events. We've held around 10 events so far and have been amazed at the turnouts - more than 120 people attended our largest planting at Bole Hills, Crookes. It galvanised us as a group and showed us families really want to take action for nature in their communities - they just need the means and opportunities to do so. We've also carried out plantings at a number of schools in South Yorkshire and plan to work with many more in the coming years.



Photo credit: Kids Plant Trees



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What resources or support did you use?

We have a great team of volunteers - mainly mums - who help us put on the free planting events alongside Tim Shortland, a tree expert with more than 30 years in community forestry. We access free whips through schemes by The Woodland Trust and OVO Energy/The Conservation Volunteers. We work closely with the council to find suitable sites to plant them and get lots of families along to our planting events. We've received public donations to help our work so far and we're now looking for business donations, funding and grants to achieve our aims.

How did you empower or involve others?

Our volunteers meet on a monthly basis to plan our actions and events. We use our social media channels to share news and updates and to get more families along to events. We empower families including kids at our events by showing them how to plant a tree, and how to care for it. We are planning to launch a Kid's Council to give kids a say in the running of the organisation and to help volunteer at events.

How did it make you feel?

It's hard to run a voluntary initiative when you're a tired mum with limited time and energy. But as a group, we always inspire each other to do as little or as much as we can, when we can, to get more kids and families involved in planting trees and taking action for nature.

The response to the family planting events made us believe Kids Plant Trees could make a big difference to more local communities, and by setting up as a social enterprise, it has meant two of the mums, Anna Parkin and Steph Mullens, are now employed to take the work forward.

"Amidst the doom and gloom of climate anxiety, our work makes us feel positive. And there's nothing more inspiring or exciting to us, as parents, than seeing the pride on the face of our kids when they've planted a tree and done something great for nature."

What changes have there been as a result of your actions?

We've managed to improve many green spaces, including school grounds and local parks, to make them better for nature and wildlife. We've had families return again and again to local planting and mulching events. We hope we've inspired them to do more for nature and the environment. We now want to make sure we give more families, schools and teachers the chance to enjoy nature, improve their local green spaces and feel empowered to look after them for years to come.

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Have you had any memorable nature encounters while doing this?

We had a mum come to an event with her 16-month-old daughter. She said she remembered planting a tree in the same park with her mum when she was a girl and she wanted to give her daughter the same opportunity. So when her daughter is older, she will be able to come down to see the tree she planted and watch it grow.



Photo credit: Kids Plant Trees

How have your actions been shared or inspired others?

Parent Helen Beard, brought her son Sam, age 8, to one of our events. She said: “Kids Plant Trees are making a huge impact on the children lucky enough to attend one of their events. Being able to physically participate helped my son and his friends understand the importance of caring for nature and feel a real pride and connection with what they can achieve.

“The tree planting event at the Bolehills is still the most hotly talked about topic amongst the children, it brought together so many people from the local community and taught even the adults how much fun it can be to make a lasting difference. “My son visits his trees every few weeks to check on their progress and can’t wait for the next event.”

While teacher Hannah Casey, from Rawmarsh St. Joseph’s Catholic Primary, Rotherham, said: “Kids Plant Trees have been an incredible support to our school and outdoor environment. They have visited multiple times to work with many of our children to plant trees to improve the condition of our school field.

“On every visit, they have been passionate and enthusiastic about their work, something which our children share too as they look after the young trees that have been planted.



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“Our outdoor environment has also benefited from their hard work through the enhancement of our forest school clearing to have a new hedgerow planted. Their work has been so valuable and we can't wait to welcome them back again.”

What's next?

We are working with kids and teachers at a number of schools in South Yorkshire to improve their outdoor space, both for nature and the people who use it. We're also developing an events programme for families who might not have easy access to wild nature. We need support from individuals and businesses across South Yorkshire to reach our goal to plant 15,000 trees in the next 3 years and for 15,000 kids to benefit from our activities.

Contact details:

We are looking for more support from volunteers who can give time to help organise and deliver our planting events, to get involved with school projects or fundraising. Please email us at admin@kidsplanttrees.org



Photo credit: Kids Plant Trees