

# Let Nature Feed Your Senses



## Families on farms

In 2013 a group of families from inner-city Newcastle joined forces with a farmer and her family in Northumberland to plan a series of holiday activities based around nature, food and farming. The visits would be supported by the project, Let Nature Feed Your Senses, (LNFYS). The project team supports farmers to get together with groups who would not usually have the chance to experience the countryside, to give them first hand experiences of nature, farming and food production.

Helen Renner, from Bellshill farm had hosted the families from Monkchester family centre for a visit to her farm the previous year and had been impressed by their curiosity and their eagerness to ask questions. She was keen to have the families come again for a series of visits that would span Spring and Summer so they could experience how much change happens on a farm, and in nature in these two seasons.

Judi Earls, the group leader at the centre, was equally passionate about the potential for several visits to have a lasting impact on the parents and their small children, most of whom were under six years of age.

The following case study illustrates the impact of the visits and the ways in which Judy and Helen worked together to create a coherent experience of nature, food and farming for the families on the farm and in their time spent at the centre in school holidays.



## Visit creates bonds that last a lifetime

Judi Earl, project co-ordinator at Newcastle's Monkchester Family Centre, was full of praise for The Hedgerow's efforts when her charges visited the farm.

"The families that we have connected with in the centre come from a really deprived area of Newcastle," she said, "and they live on limited incomes. They have such little opportunity to see working farms, and to smell and hear what they have today.

"It's important for the parents to come along as well. The whole point of the trips is to go somewhere they never nor-



mally would, and help build bonds between the generations if we can."

Judi said that the eight families on this trip would remember the trip for the rest of their lives.

"And things like seeing two

lambs being born is just magical," she went on, "with Helen explaining everything."

The group will benefit from seeing the lambs grow over the course of the year as they make return visits.

"The children are going to be adopting two lambs - Penny and Alice - and they will see how they grow, as they themselves grow.

"Then when we return in the summertime, we will see the sheep being sheared, and we are actually being given one of the fleeces, to make something with, and hopefully do some feltmaking."

# Linking nature, food and farming

February - a session between the group leader, host farmer and LNFYS staff to develop the visits themes and activities

**April** →

Journals - drawing the farm

Lambing

Farm and fields

Exploring the woods and ponds

Making mini-farms

Cooking soup

■ At Centre activities  
■ On farm activities

**May** →

City soundscapes

Weighing children and lambs

Cows and calves changing fields

Smells and sounds, mapping the farm soundscape

Nature crafting, leaf crowns

Bugs, making ladybirds

**July** →

Bark rubbing

Bug hotel ingredients

Exploring ponds

Changing fields

Natural play

Bellshill fleece, carding and spinning

Bug hunt

**August** →

Journals - drawing the farm

Beetroot cake

Sensory hunt  
Games  
celebration lunch  
Journals  
Woods  
Feedback

Building Bug Hotel

Lifecycles of butterfly mobile

September - a reflection and evaluation session to share learning and understand the benefits of the visits

# Preparations, anticipations, expectations

## Beginning the Learning Journals

Prior to the first visit everybody (parents and children) was given a large blank book that would be their learning journals. They started by drawing what they thought would be on the farm, (prior to their last visit they would be asked to do this again and the differences would become a discussion point about what they had learnt). As Judi the group leader describes below this activity was most worthwhile. It also helped to build an excited anticipation for their first visit.



*"It was a really positive part of the project for parents as well as for children."*

"And the pictures that each individual drew to go in their learning journals about what they thought would be on the farm caused a huge amount of hilarity. None of us are fantastic artists and we were trying to draw sheep and pigs. It was lovely because I got the parents to do it separately to the children. Some of the children's pictures are just circles or, you know, squiggles, but we wrote underneath what they meant to each child, and stuck them in their book.

"And then their parents did their pictures as well. And it was lovely to see parents relaxing and being quite childlike which they don't get the opportunity to do. You know, a lot of these mothers became Mums at a very early age. And they don't do a lot of drawing. Their immediate thing is to be defensive and go, "I can't do it." But you just go, "It doesn't matter what it looks like, it's just your ideas." And the more they did it, the more they relaxed and the more they laughed about it."

*"I said to parents, don't draw the picture of the farm for them, let them do it... You write on 'that's the cow'. It might be like that but when they are older, they'll go, 'Oh, look at that, that's what I drew for a cow.' But it will be that warm feeling that you get from having been part of something that you have really, really enjoyed."*



# New beginnings

## Children treated to miracle of farm births

Lambing sheds usually ring with young ones calling on their mothers, but at Bellshill the humans are in on the act, too.

"Mam, mam, I want to keep it!" shouts young Ben Krohn, pointing at a lamb.

"Where would it stay?" asks his mother.

"It could stay with me in my room," says Ben, unruffled.

Meanwhile Robert Baldwin, only three years old, has become quite attached to Helen, following her around like a pet lamb - when he can be parted from the quad bikes or tractors dotted around.



Helen and John are determined that the farm experience is not sugarcoated.

This means that visiting kids are shown the whole 'miracle of life', whether that's a sheep birthing, prolapsing or undergoing a caesarian.

"We don't force them to watch anything," says John, "but it's part of being a farm."

Helen and their daughter Alice, 16, who helps out during her holidays, agree.

"Kids love that kind of stuff," says Helen, "they're much less squeamish than a lot of adults imagine."

Alice - together with some of the onlooking mothers - stresses that a caesarian performed by a vet who is "so good at it" is not as messy or traumatic as you might think.

She said: "A lot of humans would wish for births as neat and easy as that!"



"You can see animals and all that, in Newcastle it's city and there's no animals, there's only streets, here there's all the animals and the wildlife. My favourite things are the sheep, like the lambs being born." Child

"It was the first time that I have ever seen a lamb being born, actually in real life. I thought that I would be squeamish but I wasn't. I remember the smell in the lambing shed." Parent

# Making connections



"On the first trip we weighed the baby lambs and a couple of the children. And on the second trip we weighed the same sheep and the same children and saw the difference in weight. I think the children had only put on 1.5 kilos, whereas the sheep had put on about 30 from the first to the second visit!" Parent



*You can do anything if you put your mind to it!*

"During the summer we are going to have Stevie in to work with the fleece Helen has given us. My objective is to get children and parents to try things that they don't normally do. And by doing that, say - Look, you can do anything if you put your mind to it." Group Leader



# Marvellous mini farms

A time to reflect on our first visit to the farm

"We made our own little farm, which was great because it develops their language. We were talking about what you needed on a farm - if you had animals in a field, what would you need? You'd need hedges, and the hedges would need to be thick, or you would need fences. And what would you make the fences from? And if you had ducks then you would need ponds.

"We needed to make fences, so we did a little forage round outside and we got twigs and bits and pieces, and we talked about how you needed to have fences because otherwise the cows would go with the sheep and you didn't necessarily want that; you needed to keep everything separate.

"You needed to have pathways as well for people to be able to walk on. So we had little stones for pathways. And we had some corks that we used for the straw bales. I had a big box of farm animals so that they could choose what they took out of there and put in. So we did a whole 'our farm' just using twigs and bits and all sorts of things that we collected from outside in the school grounds.



"The parents didn't do it; it was just the children and I. The parents were doing something else. And we sat round the table and we just talked about all the different things that we had seen on the farm. And it was a really, really nice time just to be able to reflect. It was fascinating to see how much of the farm visit had registered, how much they had listened, and how much they had taken in." Group Leader

# Relax, run and restore

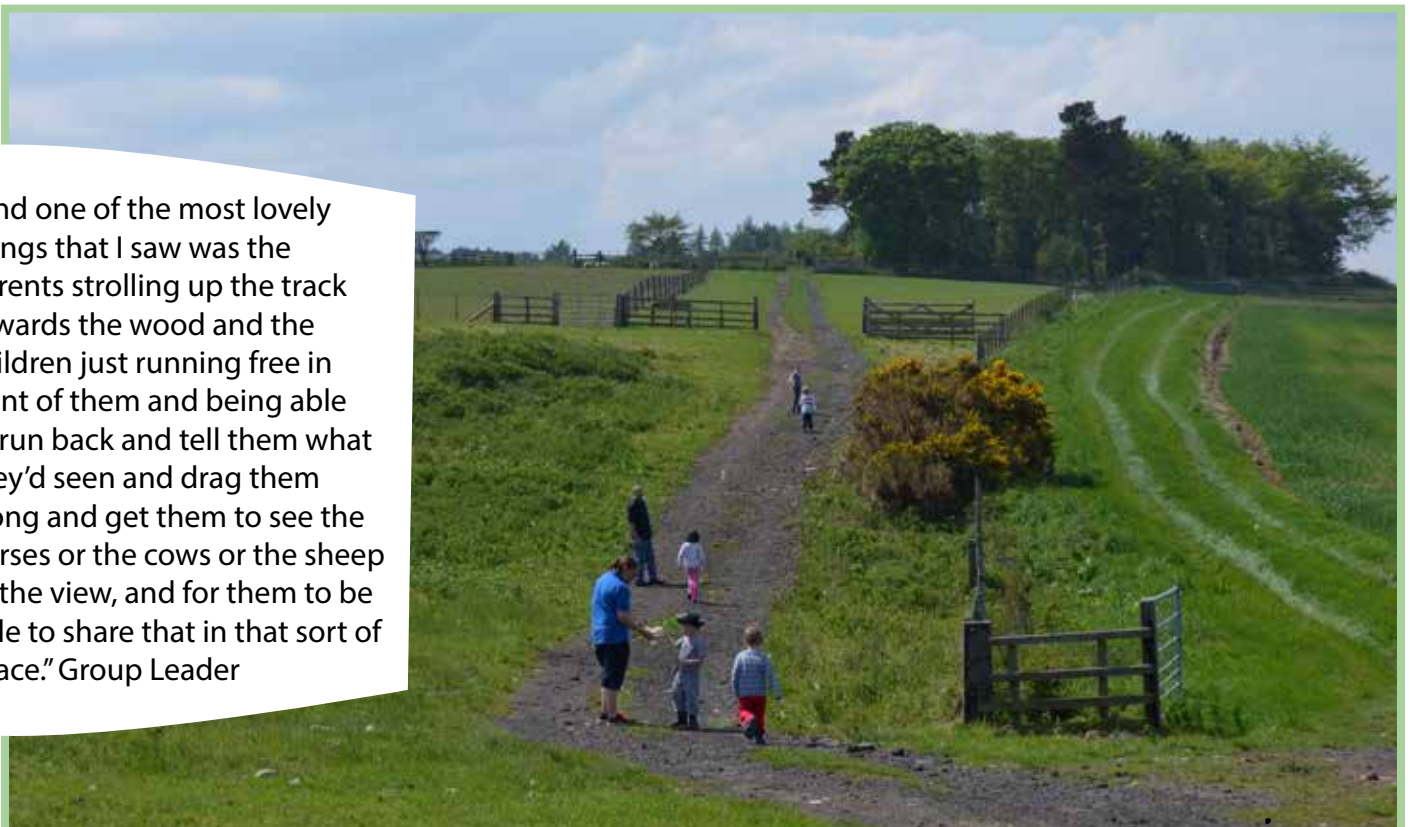
"One time we went up to the forest, and I think it was the day after it had been really misty, the sun was shining. It was beautiful. And all the children wanted to do was run and they wanted to run through the trees." Group Leader



*They can run and they are safe*

"It was nice for the parents just to be able to sit and relax and know that their children could not be taken by anybody, would not get run over. And actually, children are very good at not doing things that would harm them. And so they played beautifully in the forest without having to be supervised, without anybody saying, 'Get off that. Look what you have done to your clothes.' Which is a major thing, you know." Group Leader

"And one of the most lovely things that I saw was the parents strolling up the track towards the wood and the children just running free in front of them and being able to run back and tell them what they'd seen and drag them along and get them to see the horses or the cows or the sheep or the view, and for them to be able to share that in that sort of space." Group Leader



# Playing in the natural world

"The first time we took the families up to the wood: They didn't know what to do. The children would say, 'Well, what do we do?' You'd say, 'Go and play.' But progressively they did different things, they went further. They became much braver about what they could do. They could run all the way down to the bottom or within the wood, they could go to the den, and then they could go beyond the den. Whereas the first time, they stuck with the swing and the den. That was safe. They really got into learning how to explore their surroundings in an environment like a forest and to think how to amuse themselves rather than be told, 'Go on the swing.' They suddenly realised, 'Oh, I'm going to run down here because it's good fun running down here, and I'll pull the grass up and cover Charlie.' It's about enabling them to use their imagination, to think for themselves." Host farmer



Monkchester families were the catalyst for the design of a new widgit symbol! Widgits are a symbol based language used globally as a communication tool. The need for a symbol specifically for natural play arose out of the experiences of the families in the woods on Bellshill Farm . Sensory Trust worked with Widgit to design this new symbol.

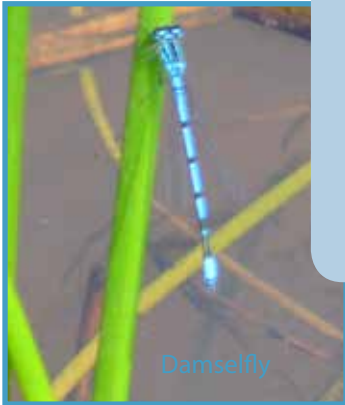
"One of the beauties is the fact that it's natural. Part of the beauty is just being able to run, to see things in your own time and to be able to, as we have said, to discover play. To make up your own mind how you want to do it rather than be – 'you walk along here and you go down there'. It is the fact that if you just want to spend your time wandering about and looking at the bushes because that's what you feel like today, that's what you can do. And you can look at the different colours and you can look at the different shapes." Group Leader



# Look, look, look!



"That was brilliant! That was lovely to have that damselfly land on me. That was amazing, that. Before, [coming to the farm] I wouldn't have let it land on me, I would have flicked it off!" Parent



Damselfly

Damselfly

"Ah they love it here because I mean, the spiders and things like that, the creepy crawlies, it's something you wouldn't do with them at home, they'd say errrr no I'm not picking that up, where now they're picking things up they wouldn't have picked up, they're curious like." Grandmother



# Bits for bugs

Loose ingredients: Hollow canes, cardboard tubes and buckets are good for bugs to nest into but also fun for small children to put one inside the other like Russian matryoshka dolls. Fill the gaps with collected leaves and dried grasses and you have a portable and modular bug home to relocate to inner city Newcastle!



"Insects! I hate bugs usually. Doesn't bother me now - having spiders crawl over my feet!" Parent



# Building an innercity Bughotel

"The bug hotel was a fantastic success. It was great because some of the children hadn't been to the farm but they could see what everybody had collected and they were part of making the bug hotel.

"And they were really proud about the fact that they had built this. And they were desperate to get to the farm so they could see your bug hotel, because it all tied in together. And all of this stuff had come from your farm to put into it.

"They were fascinated. 'Look, look, look, look, look, all these little tiny things, there are bugs, they've moved in already. What do you think has moved in there?'  
Group Leader

*"And they were desperate to get to the farm so they could see your bug hotel, because it all tied in together."*

**Bellshill Farm bug hotel**



**Monkchester bug hotel**



bugs



creepy crawlies



worm



**"The children are more interested in bugs - there is a change in attitude to insects, they are curious now, before they would go - Errrrgh!"**Parent

# Soundscapes

Let's map all the sounds we hear on the farm - what have we heard, what/who makes that sound and how do you feel when you hear it?

"Then we did the soundscapes. That was a really good comparison. Because here, in Walker when we did the sound maps, we had ice-cream vans, we had sirens, we had planes, we had motorbikes. The farm, you had birds, and sometimes you just had silence. And we'd very, very rarely have silence."  
Group Leader

"My favourite sound was the laughter of the kids and their chatter, how happy they were."  
Grandparent



Soundscape

funny

quiet

bleat

rumble

moo

bark

baa

swish

croak

twitter

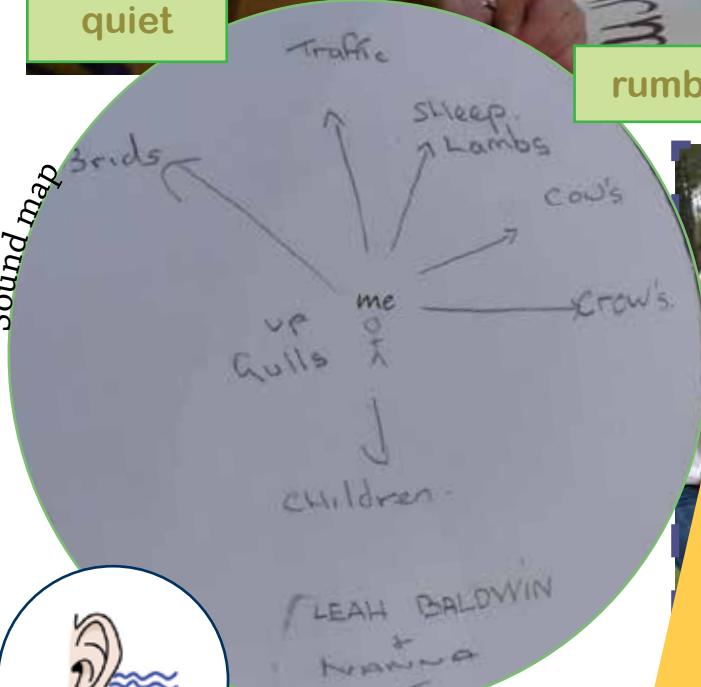
peaceful

laughter

buzz

chirp

Sound map



wind...  
crackling...  
birds

Soundmap



hear

'Close your eyes and listen, carefully, what can you hear? Where is it coming from?'

# Smell hunts

"At the farm you smelt the hay and the grass right away, very different to Walker, it smelt clean. It's good for the children." Parent



"Smells like cucumber."  
Child

"The smell of poo made me feel shivery." Child



The smell hunt focussed everyones attention on searching for specific smells, it was noticeable on following visits how much more interested everyone was in exploring what things smelt like.

# Views and vistas

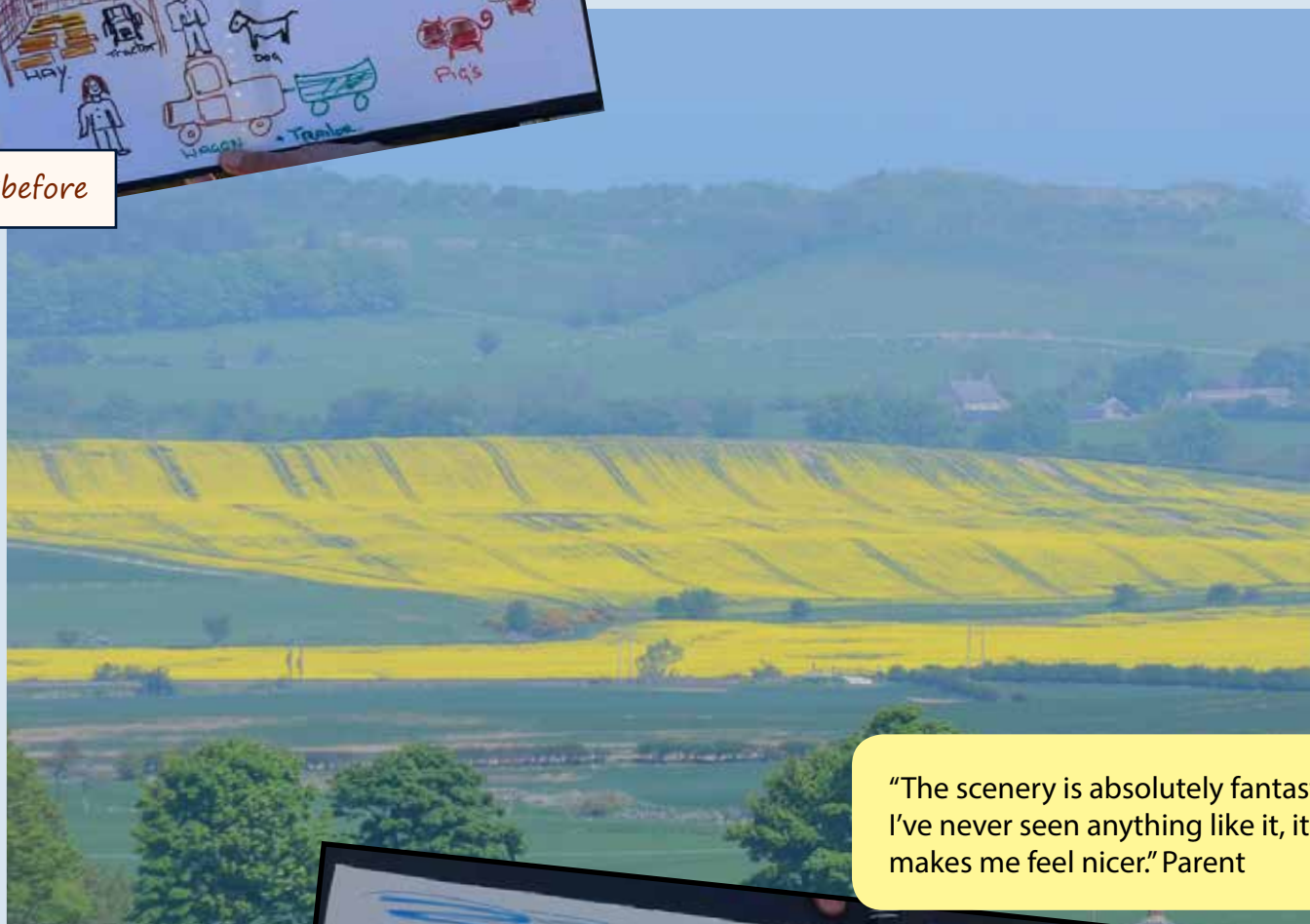
"When we are at the farm, the world just seems so big. In Walker it's like a grid of streets whereas here - the view!

And the sky is so huge. The fields are big. Everything is big. It isn't cluttered. It's a bit like entering fairyland. Because we arrive... you know, we've left Walker in a minibus, we have travelled on a road with lots of other cars and then we turn off and we drive up and everything is quiet and it's calm." Group Leader



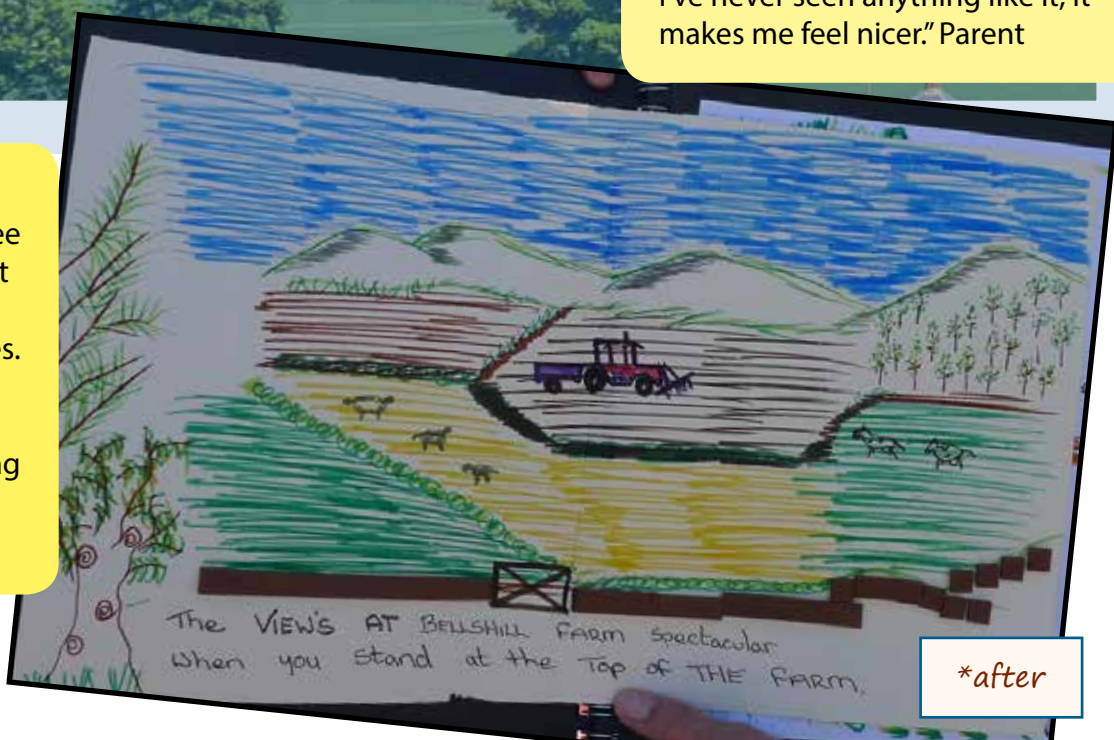
\*before

The world just seems so big



"The scenery is absolutely fantastic, I've never seen anything like it, it makes me feel nicer." Parent

"The view was excellent, you could see for miles. We don't get that here (in Walker) you could see for miles. It was so calm and quiet. I could have stood for hours looking at the view." Parent



\*after



\*'before' and 'after' drawings - a useful tool for capturing changes in perception

# Touch, tactile, textures



Favourite touch memory:

*"I'm frightened of animals but I thought if the kids can do it I can. I felt braver here. I hesitated, I put my hand out, it was shaky, then my hand stroked back and forward."* Parent



*"On the first visit we introduced the group to the farm and to the animals. We discussed points about the sheep such as their teeth. Then we went down to look at the cattle and a few held their hands out for the cattle to lick. They could feel the difference between the cattle's tongue and the sheep's."* Host farmer



Favourite touch memory:

*"Sheep's wool, fleece, I got lanolin on my hands doing the carding and it felt greasy."* Parent



# Climbing, clambering, balancing



**“Robert’s now more confident jumping on stones, walking and running on uneven surfaces.” Parent**



**The farm gates and hurdles provided an unexpected, fun opportunity to develop balance and coordination.**





# Giant tractors

*“It was a great way to tell the children about the dangers of tractors when they saw how small they were compared to the tractor.”*



‘I remember Robert sat in the big tractor on his first visit, then everyone else asked for a sit in the tractor, even Judi, (Group leader). They were all amazed by how big it was and how many buttons there were inside.

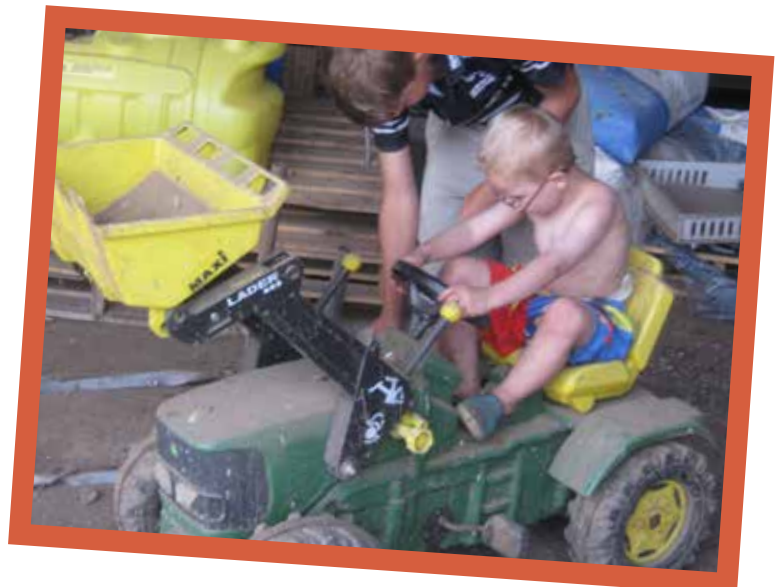


*“It was a great way to tell the children about the dangers of tractors when they saw how small they were compared to the tractor. They understood that if someone was driving the tractor, and a person was standing right by it, then they could be run over.*

“Every visit after, all the boys wanted to sit in the big red tractor, they were all amazed at how big it was. We talked about horse power and how the tractor is as strong as 190 horses!” Host farmer

**The tractor is as strong as 190 horses!**

*“I wanted to go on the tractor but I was scared, they are so big. The wheels were sooo big I was fascinated, am I daft? I never realised how big they were!”  
Auntie*



# "People don't feel silly asking her questions"

About Helen Renner, host farmer...



"You were, right from the word go, totally non-judgemental, you just accepted everybody for who they were, what they were, you accepted the children who have behavioural problems, and you didn't...judge. In fact, your whole family is like that, which means that they feel very comfortable and very relaxed. They want to do things so that they can say, 'Look, Helen, look what I've done.' You coerced. You encouraged. You explained why you didn't do certain things. You had the patient of a saint on occasions." Group Leader

"Helen is a fantastic host. She interacts with all the children. She tells us stuff about the farm in words that the children understand. She makes it interesting for them. Keep up the good work!" Parent



"I've got to say that I think the hosts are really, really good with the children. They are prepared to stand and talk and answer questions. I think that makes a lot of the visit, how friendly it all is. Helen makes the time to talk with every single parent, if there's any kind of questions, she's more than happy to put the time in. And she must answer the questions over and over again." Parent

"Some members of the group will come and tell me what has happened to them since the last visit, one lady has got engaged and another is giving up smoking. It is great when you have repeat visits you can see the development in people, one little boy with special needs had grown and was walking better, when I commented his Mum was delighted and started to tell me about his progress. There is one lady who came out last year and was frightened of bugs, she wore a yellow t-shirt and was covered! When she came out this year she still remembered the visit and wasn't wearing yellow but she mentioned that if we went up into the woods she would be wearing a different coloured t-shirt, but could she do the wildlife pizzas again." Host farmer



## A whole new vocabulary

"A whole new vocabulary, yes, because I'm sure Helen said to you, some of the parents were very keen to find out more about what was happening on the farm.

"The second group in particular asked loads of questions. So their development of their understanding about how farming works, about the whole environment, about how they put back into nature, they don't just take from nature, all of that was there. And they were hearing words that they wouldn't normally hear. And so for both the children and their parents that was something good.

"And if they ever go to farms normally, they go to commercially-themed farms. And the fact that this was completely different, I think had a really big impact on them, and because Helen was there as the font of all knowledge. She's got such a delightful, easy manner that it means that people don't feel silly asking her questions." Group Leader

## The countryside is constantly changing

"It's that walk up to the forest. Because every time we did it, it was completely different. You had the time when you went up and the fields had been ploughed, so everything was brown. And as you looked out towards Budle Bay, the countryside, and right the way down was completely different. The forest was different. And then you went up the next time and everything had started growing. The grass had all started growing. So you could see that change. And sometimes you had cows there, sometimes you had sheep there." Group Leader

# Belford farm proving to be an eye opener

### Education ethos builds connection with visitors

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**Many farmers can get tetchy around lambing time, but one couple from Belford are actively encouraging visitors onto their land.**

Helen and John Renner own and work North Bellshill Farm, and over the past 14 years have turned it into the area's primary environmentally aware farm.

As part of that process, the Renners regularly host parties of curious children, and show them the type of work done on a farm, and where their food comes from.

"I absolutely love getting groups out here," says Helen, escorting Newcastle children around her lambing barn. "They are so varied as well.

"It's not just school children. We've taken the WI out and about, and even a group of vicars. One of them, from the centre of Newcastle, kept telling me 'This is like nothing I ever see'!

"One of the most rewarding groups I've ever met was made up of Alzheimer's sufferers.

"A lot of them had only a brief experience of the countryside before, often when they were evacuated or worked on the land during the war. But they still connect to something out here, very deeply, and it's very moving to hear them gain access to some memories that might have been lost.

"Some of these children



**"We've taken the WI, children, even a group of vicars! They kept saying 'This is something I never usually get to see'"**

come from a very deprived area, but when they get here, and they're smiling, experiencing something new, that's fantastic.

"It feels like we're building a real connection with them, rather than just having a one-off visit."

Helen and John met while at Harper Adams Agricultural College in Shropshire. John's family have been farming in north Northumberland for generations.

Now they are exploring the many diverse options available to modern farmers. They have set up The Hedgerow, a rural education centre that also hosts conferences, aimed at offsetting group education costs.

The current myriad activities on North Bellshill farm are due to Big Lottery funding from Let Nature Feed Your Senses and their partners, LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) and the Sensory

Trust. "Funding is vital," Helen explains. "Schools and groups often just cannot afford the transport, for example."

John adds: "That's true. It's why, hopefully, the corporate side of our farm (The Hedgerow rents out a suite for business presentations and meetings) can help offset costs elsewhere."

Helen continues: "We managed to get funding for two groups to make eight visits this year. It means that they can see the changing of the seasons, and experience the different sounds at different times, things like that.

"Each group is adopting a lamb, so they can see how it grows, and by the summer they'll see the ewes that gave birth in the last few weeks get sheared."

Part of the ethos of The Hedgerow is showing how our food gets from fields to our plate.

Helen enjoys giving visitors a literal taste of something new, whether that be nettle soup, freshly foraged for on the farm, or venison, which always proves popular.

"Everybody does seem to like it," she says, "perhaps because it's not called 'deer', and people forget it's Bambi's mum!"

#### BRANCHING OUT

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# Seeing their children in a different way

*"The whole project has been fantastic at developing language. On the farm the parents do talk to their children about what they are seeing, what they are looking at, what they are smelling, what they are touching. They point things out to their children."*  
Group Leader

"I think the farm visits makes a huge difference on a couple of different levels: one is that the families are not within their normal home surroundings. If they are in their normal home surroundings, our families spend a lot of their time with their children in front of the television. And they have got gardens and some of them do use their gardens, and they have got garden equipment to play, but it's still quite restricted and their parents don't necessarily engage with the children with that.

*"When they come to the farm, they can do things all together, there aren't the restrictions placed upon them because there is space."*

"But when they come to the farm, they can do things all together, there aren't the restrictions placed upon them because there is space and there aren't things where they are going to injure themselves. They might fall over on the track, but that's just falling over. There aren't any roads. I think a lot of the parents see their children in a slightly different way because they are not having to say, 'Stay away from that road.'" Group Leader



Favourite sound:  
"The kids getting excited, hearing it in their tone of voice." Parent



"I hate nature, (I don't like things crawling on me), but I come to the visits 'cause my kids love coming here." Parent



# Having new kinds of conversations

*"The childlike qualities of the parents come out because it is new and stimulating for them in the same way it's stimulating for their children."* Group Leader

"It's the expression on their faces, you know when they saw like the sheep, and things like that you can see the excitement in their eyes, it's like the body language, it's really good, and you can hear them, 'Aww Nana look at that, aww Nana look at that, can I have a turn of that, can I touch that?'" Grandparent



"I liked exploring with my Dad." Child



"Oh we've learnt a lot...it's educational for her, she learns a lot, different plants, the different insects, then she can go home and tell her Mum and Dad and I think that's really good for her. At Easter she couldn't come because she had to go into hospital, and she was absolutely gutted." Auntie



"After the visit, they never shut up, literally they never shut up, they say, 'Didn't we see a horse ma, didn't we get to hold a sheep ma, didn't we do this didn't we do that.' They do get dead excited, especially Robert. Robert loves to feed the animals and touch them. They notice nature more, since they have been coming up here they had the magnifying glasses and they could see different animals, like creatures and that, where you wouldn't think anything lived. I wouldn't have dreamed of saying to the kids go look for an ant or a spider in the back garden. Back home there are a loads of ants and the kids don't like them crawling on them but here they seem to let them do that. They let the creepy crawlies crawl all over them. They have been covered in those black beetles all day and it's never bothered them." Parent

"They notice nature more, since they have been coming up here." Parent

"When Leah goes home she'll tell her Dad she picked the sheep up, she's seen this or she's done that on the farm, you know, excited." Grandparent



# Celebrating together

Rogues gallery!



Beetroot cake, party hats, a huge banner... the days leading up to the last visit were a hive of activity at the family centre. A cake was made from the beetroot grown by Auntie Dawn, everyone painted themselves on the huge thankyou banner to present to a delighted Helen.



Nature inspired gifts for Helen were a very thoughtful and genuine expression of appreciation. Butterflies leapt from the card, the wrapping was chosen for the wildflowers and the gifts were perfect for hosting future visitors. The families were presented with a wonderful book of photos of their visits to the farm, a very special momento.



# Understanding impact

A range of methods were used for understanding what impact the visits had on health and well being, relationships with nature and what aspects of the visits were valued. Some of the more creative ones were trialled for the first time. The host farmer, group leader and family members were interviewed throughout the series of visits. The parents and children kept journals and, in addition, four parents filled out questionnaires on their last visit to explore their experiences in greater detail. The content of this case study has drawn from the information they shared.

## Individual Journals

Journals provided a home for comments, thoughts, pictures, drawings - keeping everything together. It also enabled future reflection, exploration and reminiscence. Families were given disposable cameras to record their special 'moments and places'. These were printed and added to their journals.

## Confidence to engage with nature

Parents were asked to record if they felt more confident to engage with nature and if so to select from a range of activities things they do or will do as a result of the farm visits. They could add anything that wasn't listed.

Excerpt:



## Children's behaviour and emotions

Parents were asked to record what they saw their children doing and feeling 'more of or less of' choosing from a mix of 35 negative and positive Widgit stickers.



## Before and After - Parents' Wellbeing

We designed a wellbeing scale that used symbols to represent emotions to help determine what impact the visits had on parents' feelings of wellbeing.



before

after



In between hospital and mint - a leaf, in the forest.  
Cow dung - jifey whiffey!

## What was memorable?

This fun tool was trialled with one of the parents (auntie) to provide a prompt for elaborating on what was memorable about the visits. A series of cards related to the experiences from actual visits and included emotions as well as things. In a separate exercise we also asked parents to record their favourite senses memories.

# To sum up

## Laughter

The most valued experience of the parents was the sound of their children laughing and having fun.

## New conversations

Learning to relax and explore nature and the farm with their children engendered interactions (and vocabulary) based on curiosity and shared discovery. These positive experiences bonded families within and between each other.

## Natural play

Children learnt to play freely in the forest, running, building grassy dens, venturing further with each visit, exercising their imaginations, coordination and balance. They relaxed in the safe space with little intervention from their parents who were relaxing too.

## Focussed sensory activities

The farm is a wealth of tactile experience. Specifically paying attention to listening, seeing, touching, smelling as a fun activity helped to focus attention and give the families a way to interact with their natural environment and feel the pleasure of exploring.

## A sense of achievement

There were numerous opportunities to do new things and have fears dissolve. Many of the mothers were frightened of insects and over time this lessened and was replaced by curiosity. Children climbed gates and tractors, touched animals, lifted rocks, ran on uneven surfaces and balanced on logs. Everybody walked the half mile uphill to the forest each visit.

## Being outdoors

The environment at Bellshill farm is very beautiful and diverse. Many parents remarked on how the air smelt fresh, the views were fantastic and how happy and calm they felt after a visit. With each visit it was noticeable how much more relaxed and engaged the families were with their surroundings.

## A deep affection for the farmer

The children and their parents developed a deep respect and affection for Helen, the host farmer. They trusted her and appreciated her caring, non-judgemental approach

## A group leader that nurtured learning

The activities that the families participated in before and after their visits to the farm built on their new knowledge and made strong links between the farm and their everyday lives. Judi made them fun and educational. The family centre now has a brilliant bug hotel! The learning journals will be a lasting legacy.



A special thank you to the film crew!

Film maker, Paula Muldoon, (Fat Durg Films) donated her time and skills to make a film of the families time on the farm. Several film students and friends assisted. We thank them from our hearts. The film will always be there for the families to return to. We hope too that the film will promote the benefits of the farm visits to potential sponsors, and raise funding for transport to the farm for visits in 2014 and years to come.

Let Nature Feed Your Senses is a partnership between Sensory Trust and LEAF, supported by Natural England's Big Lottery funded Access to Nature programme. For more information [www.letnaturefeedyoursenses.org](http://www.letnaturefeedyoursenses.org)

