

The Value of Activities



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-“If the gentlemen of Virginia will send us a dozen of their sons, we will take great care of their education”

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Fig. 1

UNNAMED (Iroquois)

“If the gentlemen of Virginia will send us a dozen of their sons, we will take great care of their education” (1744)

Benjamin Franklin tells the story of the speech that follows, how at a council between them and the government of Virginia, the Iroquois were offered a college education for some of their young men.

"We know that you highly esteem the kind of learning taught in those colleges, and that the maintenance of our young men, while with you, would be very expensive to you. We are convinced, therefore, that you mean to do us good by your proposal, and we thank you heartily. But you who are wise must know that different nations have different conceptions of things; and you will therefore not take it amiss if our ideas of this kind of education happen not to be the same with yours. We have had some experience of it: several of our young people were formerly brought up at the colleges of the northern provinces; they were instructed in all your sciences; but when they came back to us, they were bad runners; ignorant of every means of living in the woods; unable to bear either cold or hunger; knew neither how to build a cabin, take a deer, or kill an enemy; spoke our language imperfectly; were therefore neither fit for hunters, warriors, or counsellors; they were totally good for nothing. We are, however, not the less obliged by your kind offer, though we decline in accepting it: and to show our grateful sense of it, if the gentlemen of Virginia will send us a dozen of their sons, we will take great care of their education, instruct them in all we know, and make men of them."

Introduction

As corporate parents, it is our duty to help our young people develop and be prepared for the world in which they will become young adults. Fig 1 is perhaps my favourite speech ever made, by an Indian chief debating the way two opposing cultures prepare their adolescents for adult life. The speech made all those years ago demonstrates that they had similar issues to ourselves today and in fact the debate goes on.

You only have to watch the news to see politicians regularly debating the quality of the National Curriculum and what we should do with it. Whilst the competent, academic young people are always well catered for, there are times when the debate has focused on the less academic.

The great debate in the sixties and seventies was about the value of the 11+ and even then, whilst the value of grammar schools was never questioned, the issue was what to do with the less academic.

As a left handed dyslexic with buck teeth, flat feet, poor eye sight, and the fact that I was pigeon holed as having learning difficulties as a child myself, has understandably given me great empathy for these young people today, who have had difficulty with education and struggle with academic tasks.

Whilst we often think about activities in either an educational or leisure context and as a good way of keeping young people occupied, happy and out of trouble. The other most important element is spending time with suitable adult role models. Parents often teach their children how to be parents themselves through care and practical tasks such as housekeeping and gardening. In this, the opportunity to spend time with a young person, to interact and influence is so important.

Recent research, as seen in the national press, has questioned the value of, or the absence of young men in particular and spending time with suitable adult male role models. As it is often men that are missing from the equation.

In a Pear Tree situation, we have a unique opportunity to not only help young people recover from abuse, but to do many things as part of a wide and varied structured curriculum. This looks at the young person as a whole human being and provides them with the skills that are to become so important in later life and in many cases lead to employment.

In fact, the most significant thing that we can do to reduce the likely hood of the cycle of abuse continuing, is helping young people develop skills, so that when they do leave us they are able to function in a meaningful day time activity. Whether this is education, voluntary work or hopefully employment.

Preparing young people for a lifetime of being dependent on the welfare state, when they have the ability to do more than that, is unacceptable.

My hope is that, in this document, you will see how as educationalists and parents it is possible to break activities down into key elements and recognise their value. By doing so, you can see how some activities bring more to young people than you might think, and some bring very little. With this information, it is possible to use it to plan your day better and to understand the value of your work as well as your colleagues.

The other issue is to help you to manage your time and input. It is my belief that the young people who come to Pear Tree, have been so badly damaged by their experiences, that we have so much to do with so little time to do it in. The clock is ticking from day one, and we don't have time to hang around and waste time on less worthwhile activities.

The overriding issue here is 'balance,' and this document is designed to help you with that. Having an overview of the big picture is so important for everyone working in this environment.

David Bartlett,
Managing Director/Head Teacher, July 2013.
Reviewed January 2015.

Evaluating Activities

As a teacher, we are familiar with breaking tasks down into smaller parts, helping children to learn each part in order, and then putting these tasks together to help children to understand the concept and become competent at the task. This is called sequential learning.

In a care environment, many people will do this without realising and in fact, I regularly see people doing this. I have seen many people present as the most natural of teachers. I have also come across teachers with very little natural ability, but who know what they've been taught and can go through a process.

This seems to be a good time to quote a very experienced and respected forensic psychologist, now retired, who once said to me "*there is no correlation between qualifications and competencies*".

In a similar way, I have seen carers at their best, when they draw on their skills as parents, as opposed to just going through a process, remembering protocols and procedures.

This is when nurturing can be experienced, as you decide on a strategy to set young people up to succeed and not to fail.

The following are examples of certain activities that demonstrate how they can be broken down into component parts.

It is important to remember at this point, that we are talking about activities within the context of the Pear Tree curriculum and not in general and so it is looking at how things are done here.

The following are the examples of chosen activities.

1. Mountain biking
2. Going to the cinema /theatre
3. Going out for a meal at a restaurant/takeaway
4. Fishing
5. Playing football
6. Swimming
7. Ice skating, on real ice and artificial ice
8. Horse Riding
9. Working on the Farms/Gardening
10. Holiday in France
11. Arts and Crafts

To look at these activities, it is clear that they have many attributes to them. These include what we hope that the pupil involved feels or how they can benefit from the activity and by what proportion.

The common themes/attributes that are reoccurring fall into the following categories:

- Broaden Horizons
- Educational
- Therapeutic
- Improve Skills
- Leisure
- Physical Fitness

If we are to measure these, how can we break these down and what elements define the categories, for example, broadening horizons? In my view, and it's not scientific, but I hope credible, these attributes can be broken down into the following elements by assessing the activity against the following.

Broadening Horizons

- **Outside familiar environment**, our young people have missed out on so much of what life has to offer, and their life experiences have had such a negative impact, that we hope to show them an alternative to their previous experiences.
- **Experiential**; that they will benefit from the experience and learn through the process.
- **New Culture**. The culture that has been familiar has often been negative and as a result, restricting their opportunities.
- **New Language**. What can be more relevant to broadening the horizons than exposure to a new language.

Vocabulary

We have discussed in this section the relevance of experiencing a different language. This is only evident when going to a foreign country on holiday, France in particular. There is another factor which is relevant to most activities that Broaden Horizons and that is the use of and development of a child's vocabulary.

When we were successful in recruiting a special needs teacher, who had been awarded Special Needs Teacher of the Year Award in a national competition, (being nominated by a parent of one of his students) he was amazed at the level of vocabulary used by our children as a direct result of the length and breadth of the activities they are involved in. Far and beyond what he was familiar with in mainstream school.

Obviously, how would you know what a Kerry Hill or a White Park is if you hadn't

worked on the farm? How would you know your Rainbow from your Brown trout if you hadn't been fishing? Or your courgette from your cucumbers if you hadn't worked in the gardens? Not to mention making sure you get your lynch pin in the right hole! It's a tractor thing.

With every activity there is a wealth of new language skills the children are exposed to and learn without realising on a daily basis.

New Language.

Therefore to take this into account the following formula is needed for this particular element.

- 5 = Exposure to a Foreign Language.
- 4 = Exposure to a Complex Discussion with many new words.
- 3 = Exposure to a Good Discussion including new words.
- 2 = Exposure to a Discussion with a few new words.
- 1 = Limited communication no new words.
- 0 = No worthwhile communication.

Educational

- **Communication and listening skills.** If an activity is to be considered in an educational context, clear instruction and receiving and understanding instruction have to be present. The ability for the pupils to give feedback, ask questions need to be evident in the process.
- **Cross Curriculum Content.** An educational activity outside of the classroom should show evidence of encompassing a number of different subjects.
- **Inspiring.** The activity should demonstrate its ability to inspire pupils to want to learn more .
- **Encourage creativity.** NB I was once in a meeting of directors from a number of organisations. At one point, we discussed our backgrounds. Whilst our jobs were nothing to do with the Arts, we all had artistic backgrounds and had studied Art. Therefore, being creative can develop into a variety of roles and

positions. I understand that the same is representative of heads of all kinds of organisations, so never underestimate the importance of the Arts and being creative.

Therapeutic

The definition of 'therapy' is 'to help a person heal'. Therefore, a therapeutic activity, (as opposed to a therapy session with a therapist) can be broken down to the following:

- **Enjoyable.** Let's not underestimate the value of having fun, and the value of laughter in the healing process.
- **Stimulating senses.** A therapeutic activity would be higher in value, if it was able to demonstrate how it was able to stimulate the pupils senses.
- **Interaction.** The process of interacting with an instructor or other pupils.
- **Promoting empathy.** This is one of the most important aspects of a pupils personality to develop, and arguably the most valuable skill to have. Therefore, activities that promote empathy in a therapeutic context, should be recognised and valued. This can also promote moral awareness.

Improving Skills

- **Dexterity.** (Fine motor skills)
- **Hand eye/Foot co-ordination.** (Gross Motor Skills)
- **Focus.** The ability to maintain concentration on the task in hand
- **Confidence.** The expectation that an activity will allow the pupil to build on success and increase in confidence.

Social Skills

The client group which we look after have come from abusive backgrounds, where they have been raised by negative role models. Often, as a result of anxiety by the abusers, or later, carers are unsure of how to look after and deal with the kinds of behaviour that develops, and as a result they end up isolating children.

Anyone who works with young people who display sexually harmful behaviour, knows that the worst thing that we can do is to continue to keep these young people isolated where they are unable to move forward. This often results in young people presenting as being socially inept, often presenting as a little odd to the outside world.

Therefore, working on young people's social skills is a significant step in the right direction towards that normal developmental pathway and helps them to be able to interact with the outside world better, therefore, opening up other opportunities.

When looking at activities within a Pear Tree perspective, to evaluate them, we can break them down into the following component parts.

- **Communication.** How the activity will involve talking and listening.
- **Confidence.** Will the activity allow young people to build on success.
- **Interaction,** with outside people. i.e. people from outside the organisation.
- **Presentation.** How young people would need to be dressed, what kind of uniform, clothes may be needed. The kind of interaction required.

Leisure

Let's not forget the importance of having fun. Again, back to the recovery and intervention plan, helping young people to learn how to utilise local leisure facilities and develop hobbies and interests, increase the chance of that young adult leaving our service, being able to develop some structure in their lives and maintaining that 'meaningful daytime activity'.

From a Pear Tree perspective, these activities can be broken down into the following elements to be evaluated.

- **Enjoyable**
- **Stimulating**
- **Relaxing**
- **Structured**

Physical Fitness

One of the most common themes on the news at the moment, appears to be how the nation is dealing with obesity, and in particular childhood obesity.

As a child, I was never very sporty. Throughout my life, my Mother was ill, and my Father worked abroad most of the time so I was unable to be involved in sport in any way. There were no sporty role models in my life, other than horse sports from 11 years onwards. Through operations on my eyes and teeth early on, I missed out on the importance of sport.

It was a surprise to me to learn not that long ago, that in the same way in which we talk about developing the brain, the heart and lungs also depend on that early activity to be fully activated. This explains why I can't run fifty yards without a stitch, but I can shear sheep all day long, as a result of good stamina. I missed out on expanding my cardiovascular range and having done so, its lost forever.

Therefore, the importance of encouraging children to be physically active from a young age is so important and what better way of doing that than through the fun of sport.

From a Pear Tree perspective, having our sporty members of staff being excellent adult role models, is a great way of covering all angles.

From an evaluation perspective, we can break these activities down to cover the following:

- **Cardiovascular.** Getting the heart and lungs working
- **Stamina.** Keeping it sustained.
- **Fresh air.** An activity would be higher in value if it was being active outside in the fresh air. Due to increased levels of dopamine and vitamin D brought about by exposure to daylight.
- **Team Work.** An activity which encompasses a level of team work, would be higher in value than one that didn't because of what the element brings to a young person's development.

We have the ability to consider an activity, look at its attributes, and break these attributes down into elements. We can then evaluate the elements to enable us to consider how we build up a picture of the attributes to be able to measure/assess the overall value of the activity.

Educational activities

Please remember that visiting somewhere of educational interest isn't an educational activity until you put something more into it such as:

1. Preparation before you go
2. Learn a bit about where you're going before you go yourself. If not, then never pretend to know, they'll see straight through it. Explain that you know nothing about the subject and you're going to learn together!
3. A good briefing about where you're going and what you hope to see and learn

4. Ensure that there is good communication and listening skills going on
5. Collect material to use afterwards in the classroom
6. Afterwards, there should be a good debriefing involving the visit being written up and there should be a discussion and record of what they've learned. This is often done by our teachers in the classroom, but could be any member of staff. If it is to be done by different people to the one on the visit, make sure you help them by providing them with plenty of material to work with.

Measuring Elements

Let me demonstrate by using the graphs. What graphs? We have to design them first!

Let's take our activity, as I am writing this from the patio at Bilberry Barn, having just waved the boys off on the last leg of the Coast to Coast Cycle Challenge, let's look at mountain biking.

Lets consider the attributes, but to do that we need to measure the elements.

To consider broadening horizons, we are going to look at the elements listed above under that section and give each element a value from 1 - 5. 1 being not a lot of that element being involved to 5 meaning a lot of that element is involved.

Whilst we may have different people debating the question; is it a 4 or a 5? or even a 3 or a 4, it is unlikely that you would be in dispute over a 1 or 5. Therefore, the small areas of discussion are balanced out, to give an overall picture and it's the overall picture that counts.

The graphs below demonstrate the process.

By adding the values together you arrive at a total, which to conclude the value of the attributes, fits into a range as follows.

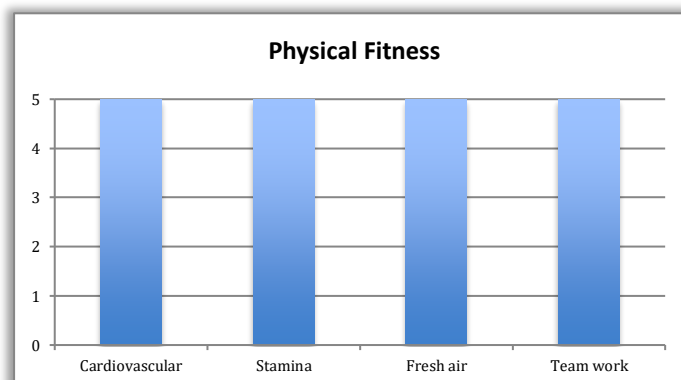
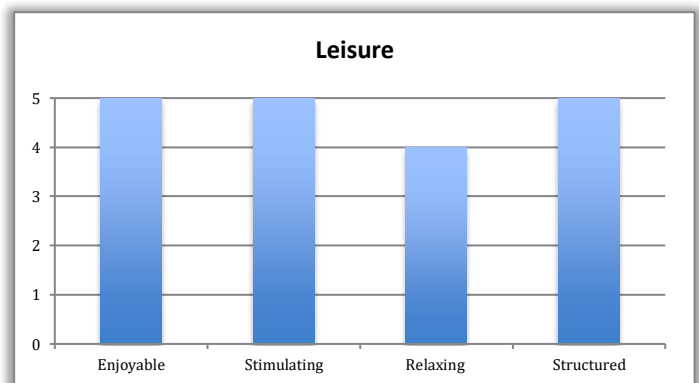
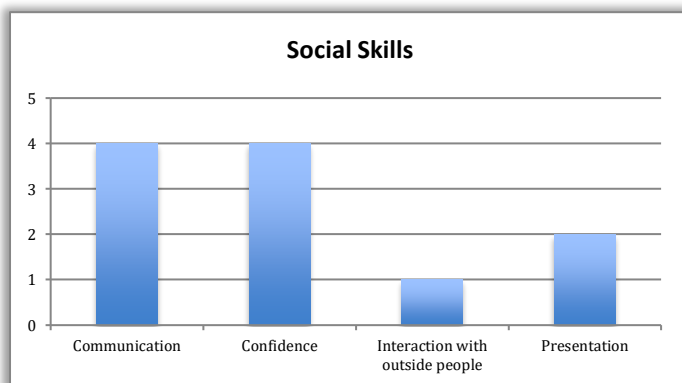
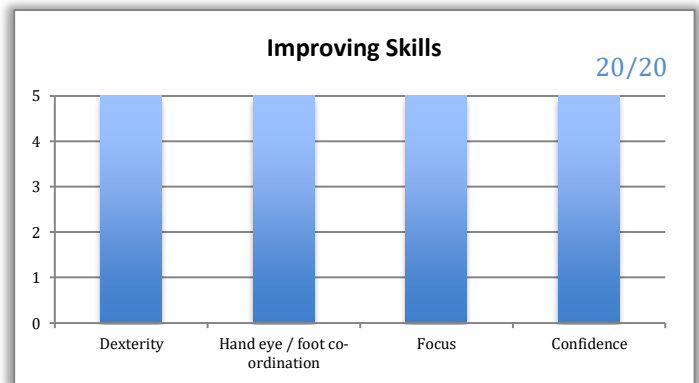
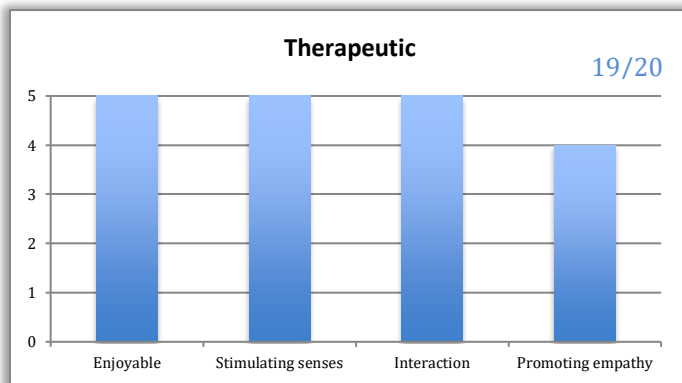
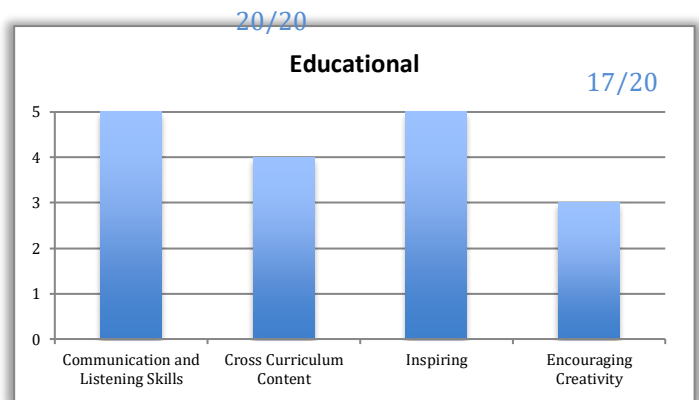
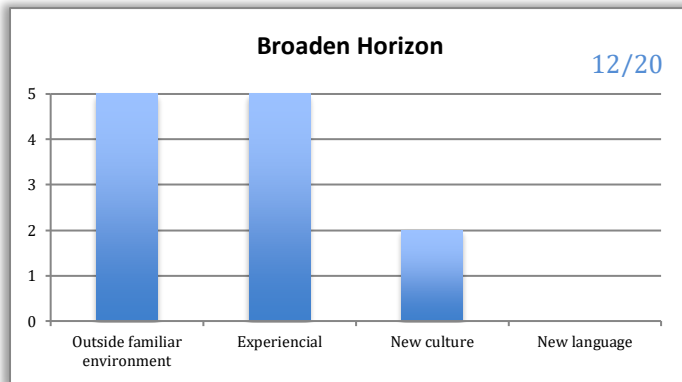
$$\begin{array}{r} 0 - 4 = 1 \\ 5 - 9 = 2 \\ 10 - 14 = 3 \\ 15 - 19 = 4 \\ 20 = 5 \end{array}$$

On the final graph, which measures the attributes, you can see that mountain biking is one of those activities that literally ticks all of the right boxes, with a high value in all attributes.

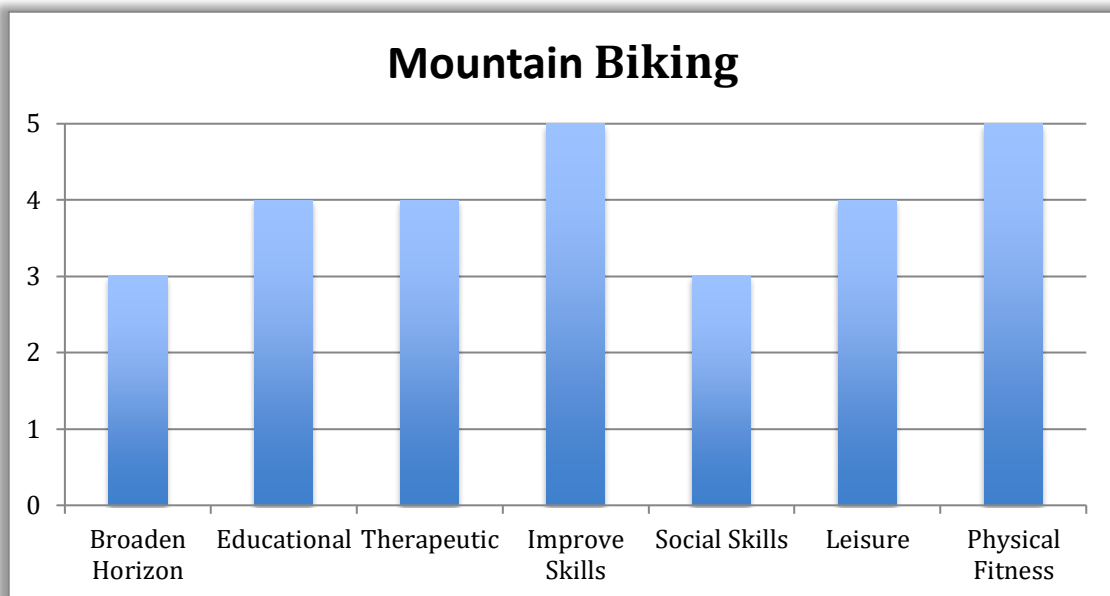


Looking at the range of activities

Mountain Biking Graph showing assessment of elements



Graph showing assessment and summary of attributes



It continues to be my aspiration that all young people at Pear Tree, providing it's appropriate, experience the following at some point during their time with us:

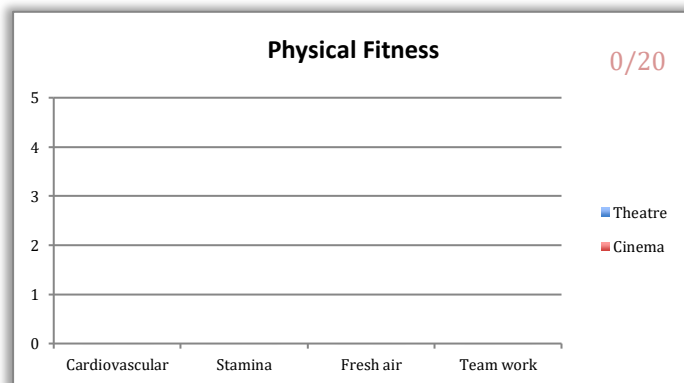
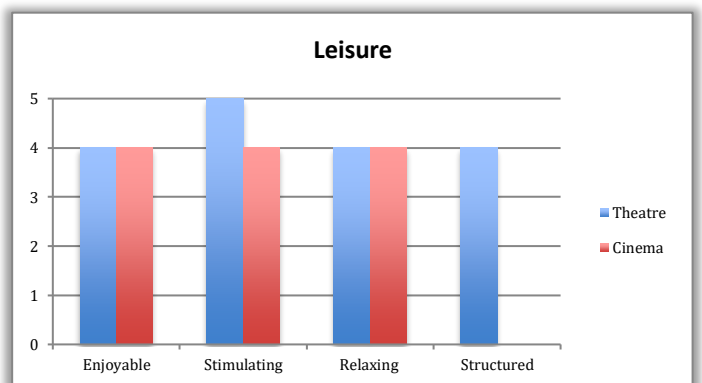
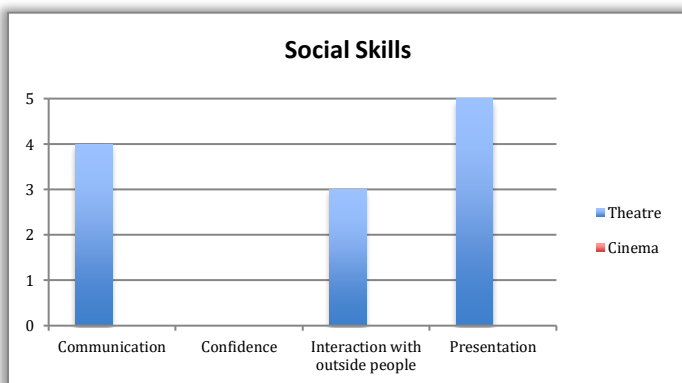
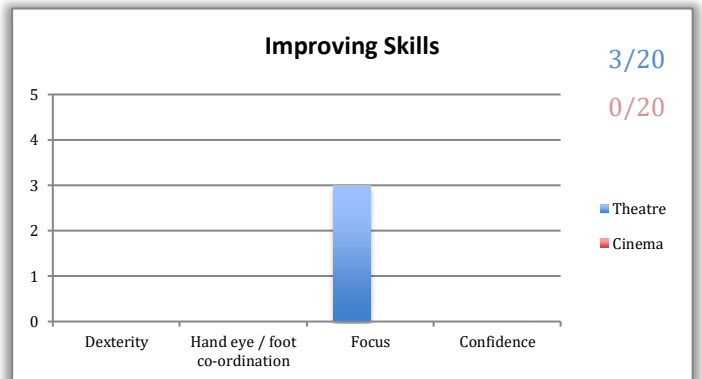
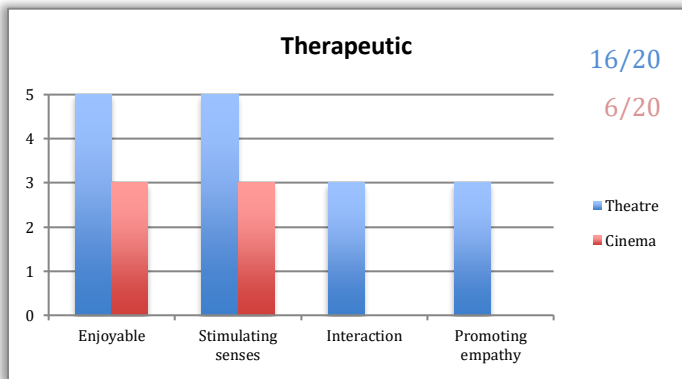
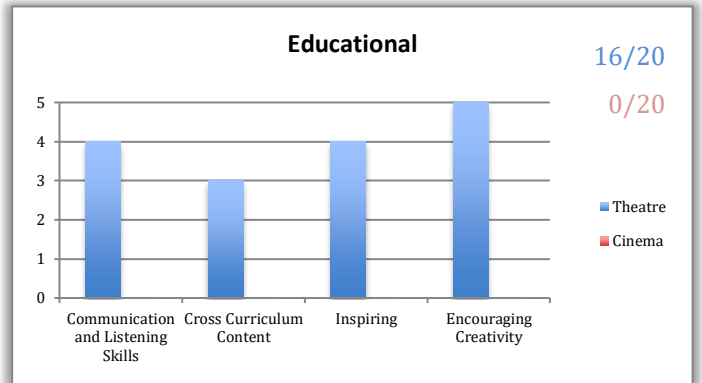
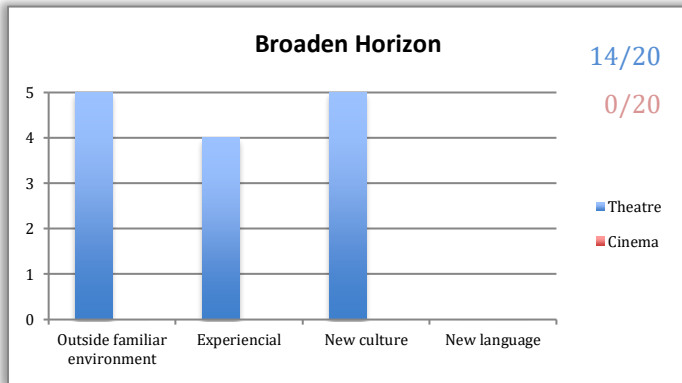
- a) Receive a new bike for Christmas
- b) Receive education and training on how to use and maintain their bike
- c) Take their bike with them on discharge



The Cinema and Theatre

Graph showing assessment of elements

0/20



Cinema

Here, it is clear that there are no broadening of horizons, it cannot be called educational, and there are elements of therapeutic activity. It is not an activity that will improve skills, or social skills, or anything to do with physical fitness. It is however, a good leisure activity to do for the right reasons, at the right time! Such as a treat or to see the latest must see blockbuster. Personally, I would keep this for the films that are at their best on the big screen and never during the day! The end result is children full of energy, looking for something else to do on an evening.

Going to the theatre

This, you may feel is the same as going to the cinema, however, it demonstrates an important point in that this is a different kind of experience. It incorporates many more elements and different values due to the nature of the performance.

For example, it broadens horizons due to the environment and expectations of the theatre.

There is an strong educational attribute due to the elements listed. There is interaction with the performers, and it encompasses the arts, singing stage scenery etc in a way that could be argued for the cinema, but it is however, real and literally in front of you not lost in the Hollywood bling.

This is without question often inspiring as the show often incorporates young people of a similar age, they again are not distant Hollywood figures but real people in front of you. All this has to help to encourage creativity!

Therapy also scores higher due to the infrequency of the attendance, it is altogether a more stimulating experience, and there is interaction with people and performers.

I would also argue that it incorporates an element of promoting empathy due to the nature of the story being shown. This is not exclusive to the stage against the film industry which as a strong supporter of the arts covers many in depth thought provoking stories also . However, these are often the ones missed and the nature of the stories which our children visit, which are more superficial in the film industry. However, even pantomimes have morals and hidden meanings which are much more evident.

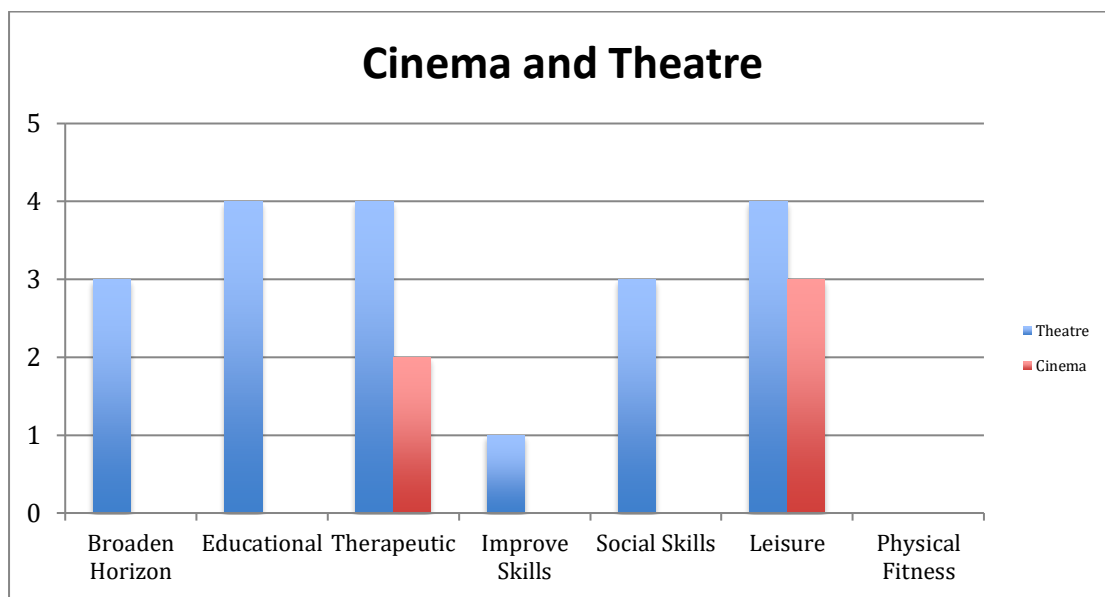
I was once in discussion with one of the most resilient people I know (really tough) showing off our empathy skills by talking about the films that have made us cry. At this point she said, "I cried at Wreck it Ralph! " Game over she'd won again. So it is worthy of debate!

There is also evidence of improving skills due to the need to focus and concentrate. It incorporates social skills due to the need to dress smart (or should be, if not it is a missed opportunity). Along with interaction and direct communication from the actor on stage.

Finally, the leisure aspect is stronger, due to higher values and the element of structure in terms of the expectations and protocols of the theatre, once evident at the cinema also but lost now, as our anything goes culture takes over. This is no surprise but physical fitness is not featured.

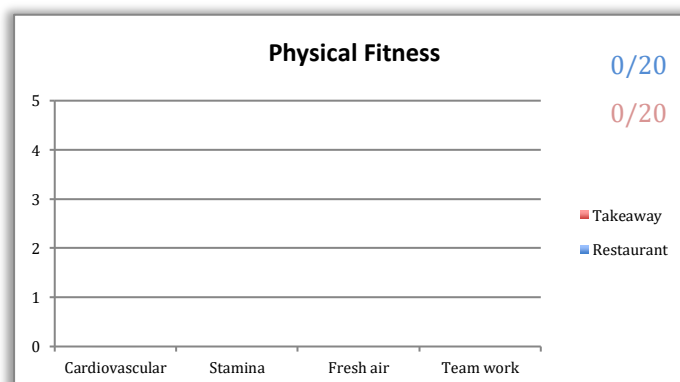
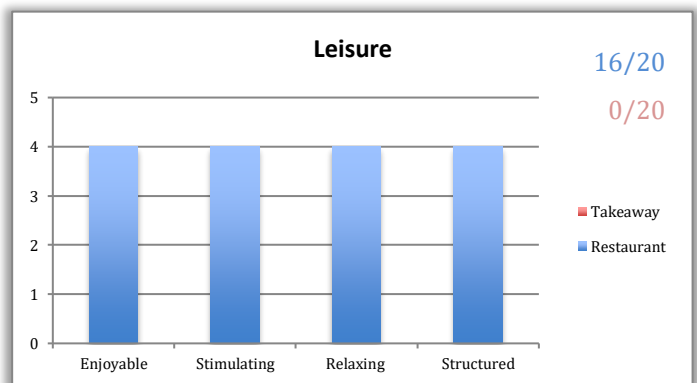
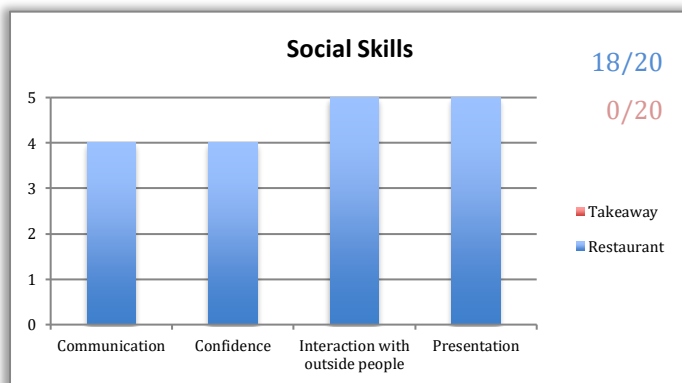
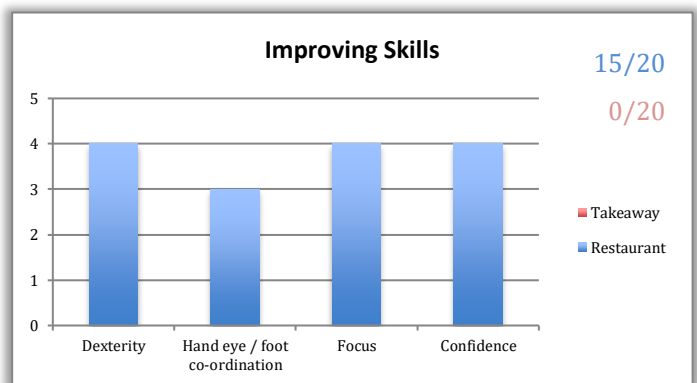
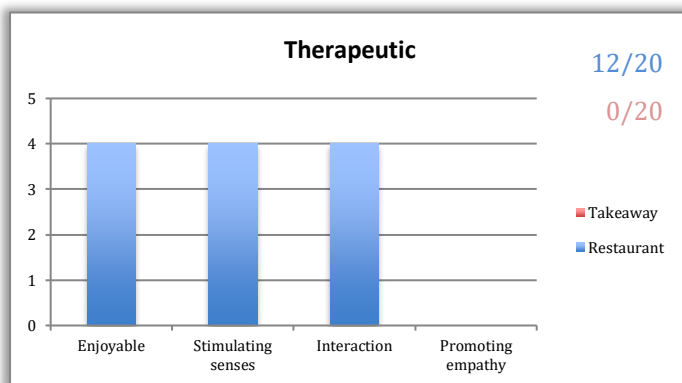
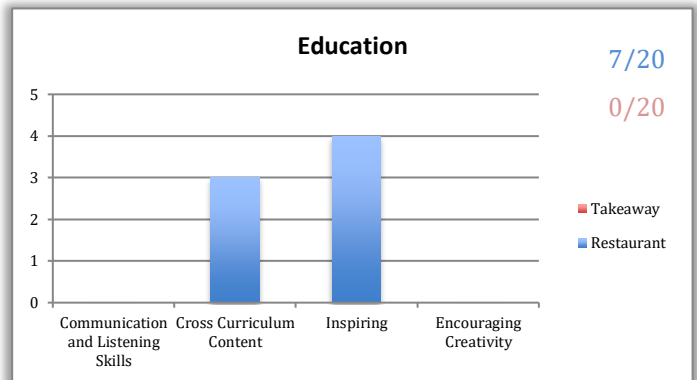
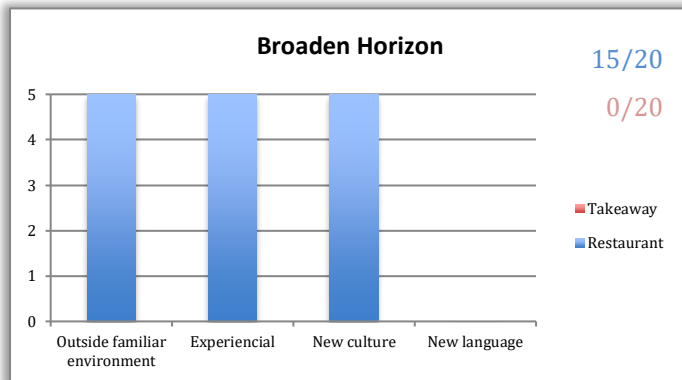
All of these reasons are why going to the theatre is listed as a requirement in the Pear Tree "curriculum check list".

Graph showing assessment and summary of attributes



Meals out at a restaurant/Meals out at a takeaway

Graph showing assessment of elements



When I say takeaway, perhaps I mean junk food at a restaurant that also serves takeaway!

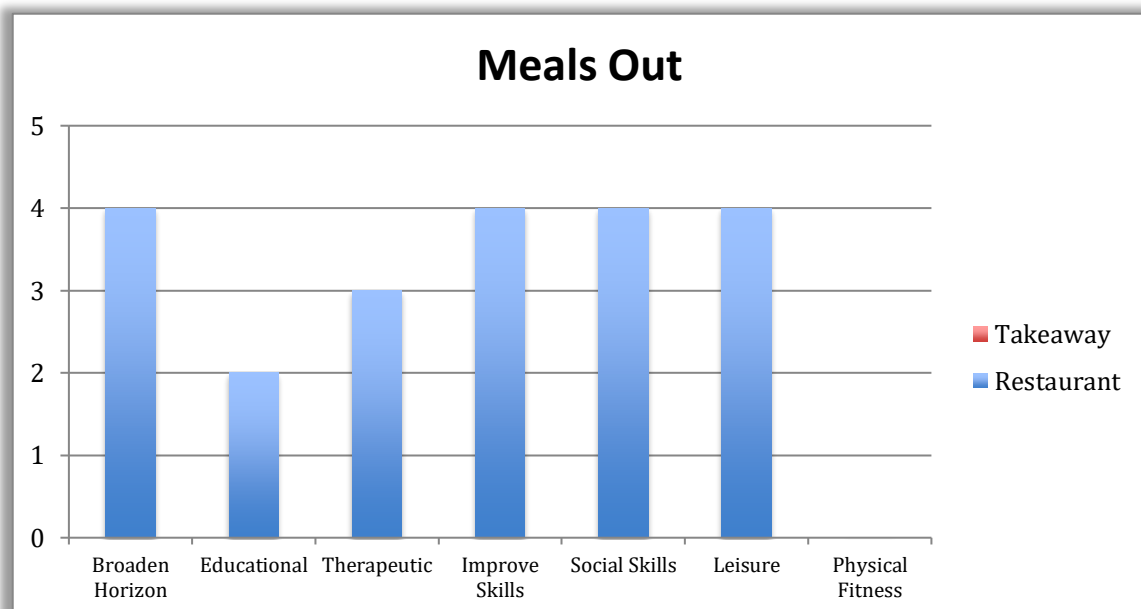
Years ago, I can recall two members of staff debating the correct place to go during a visit to Barnard Castle. One person said we should only visit the cafe. The other opted for the tearooms. The first suggestion because it was more appropriate and the second because it was a different environment. There was no difference in cost.

The answer of course, is they are both right depending on what's going on at the time and what kind of experience that you want at that time. It certainly raised discussion about being able to take our young people anywhere at any time and expect good behaviour and it also demonstrated the fact that the second person wanted to give them a more special experience and "broaden their horizons".

If you use our system to measure the experience, you'll see that in a restaurant there is broadening of horizons, and all the other attributes add to the nature of the experience. Even skills is improved, due to learning about the correct cutlery and focusing on the process. Promoting good social skills is very evident.

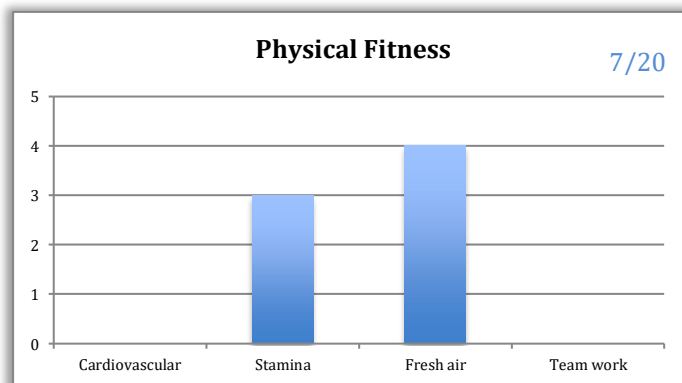
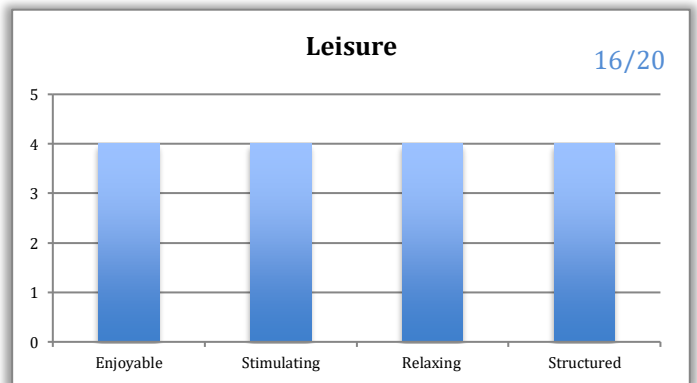
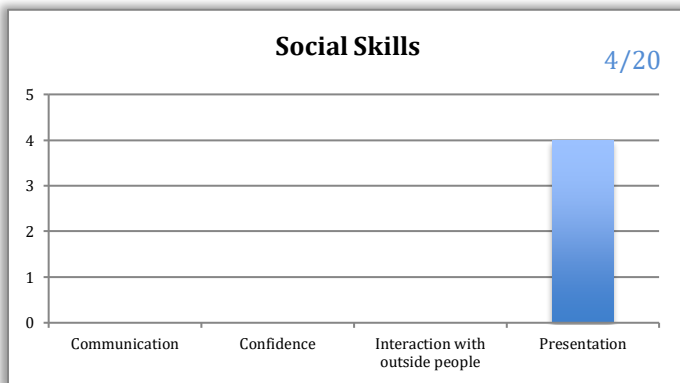
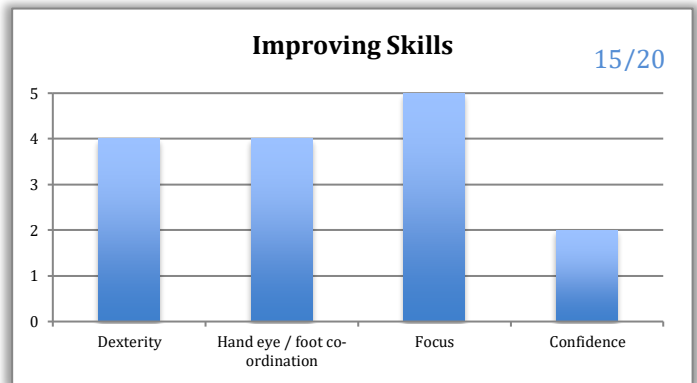
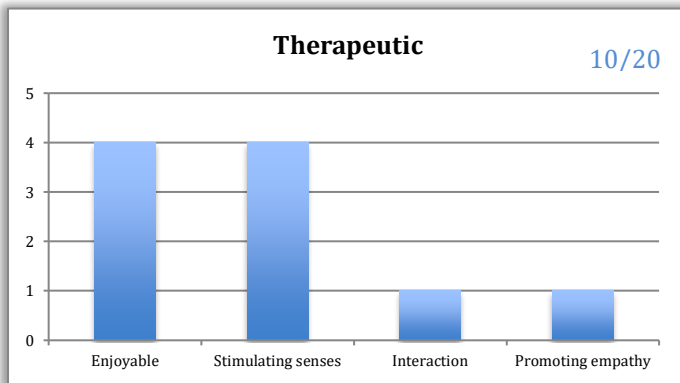
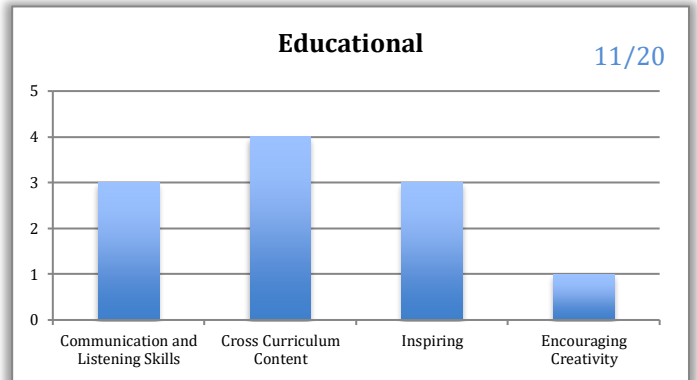
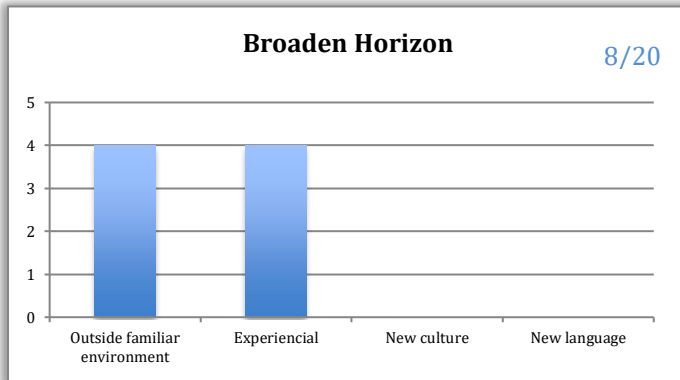
However, if you go to a junk food takeaway chain, it literally brings nothing to the table other than being fed and not very well at that!

Graph showing assessment and summary of attributes



Fishing

Graph showing assessment of elements

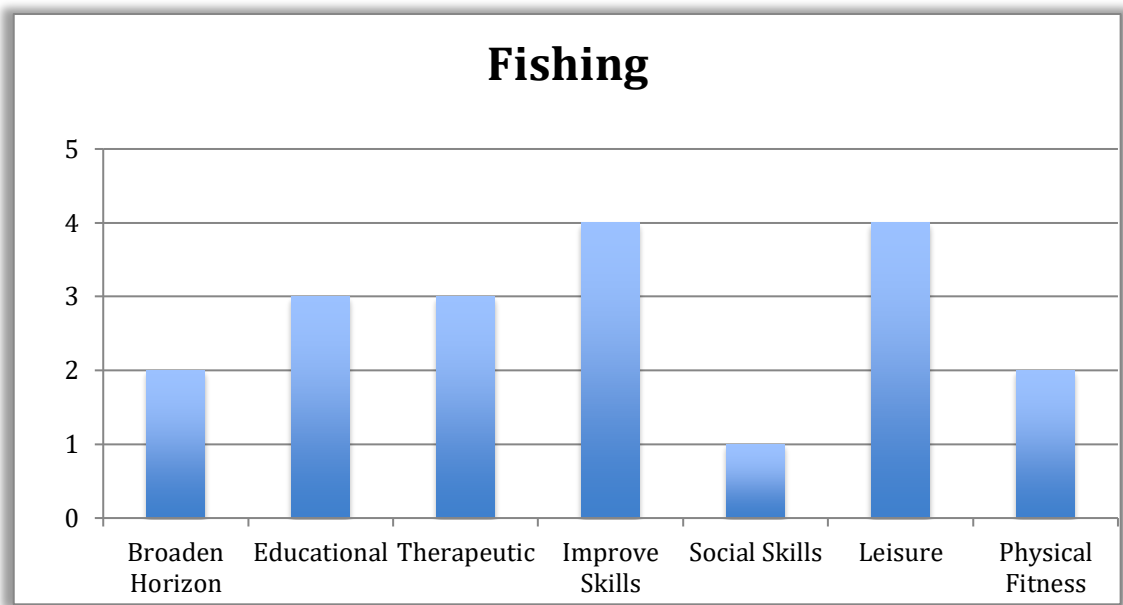


Many people love fishing. After football, it is the nation's second favourite sport.

Looking at our system, it is clear to see that it has many benefits for young people, many elements resulting in each attribute being registered. The development of the fisheries project at the Manor, means that it has been able to develop strongly as a cross curricular activity, involving geography, science and environmental studies and rural science. Also, learning to tie flies is very creative.

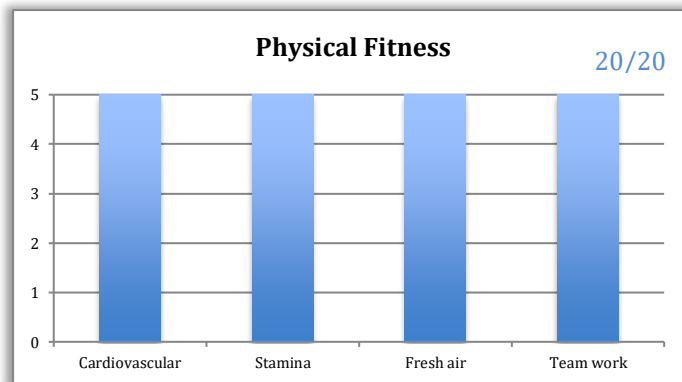
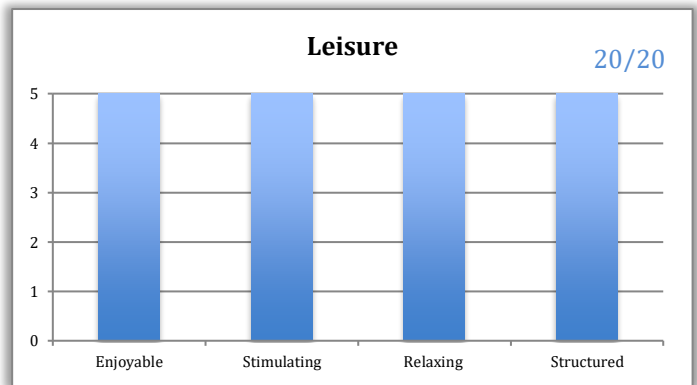
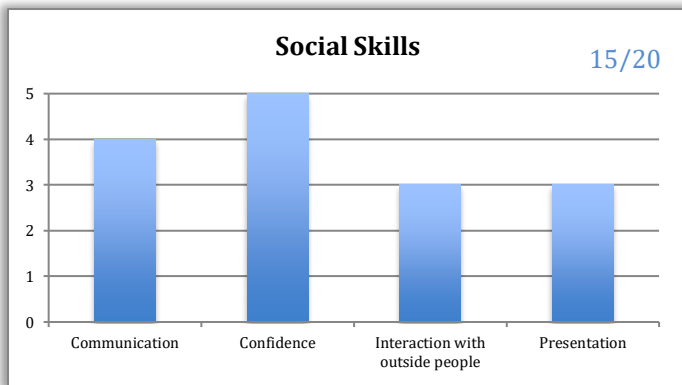
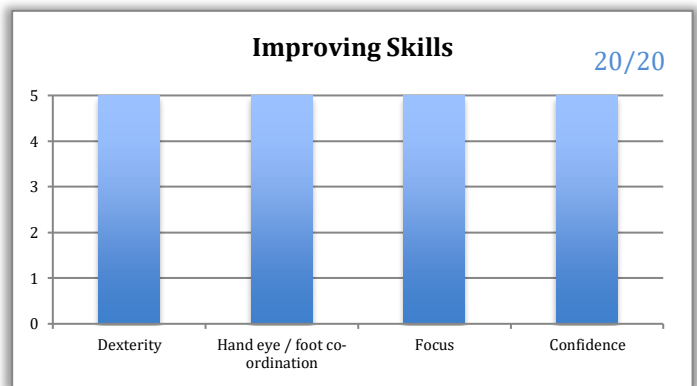
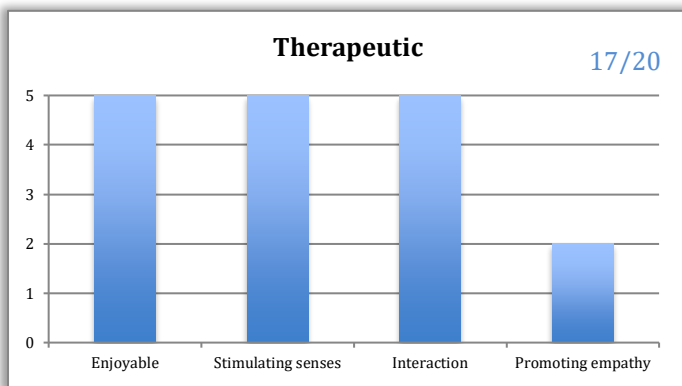
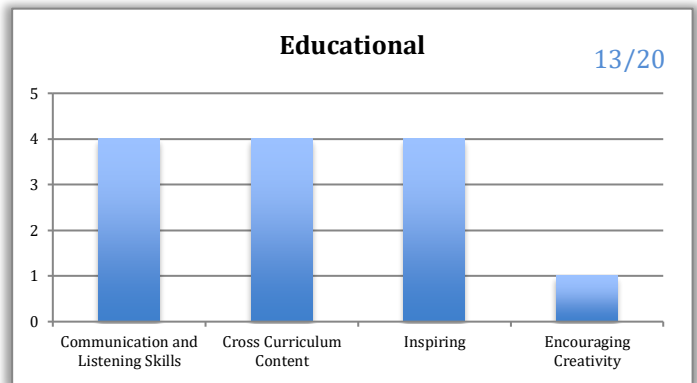
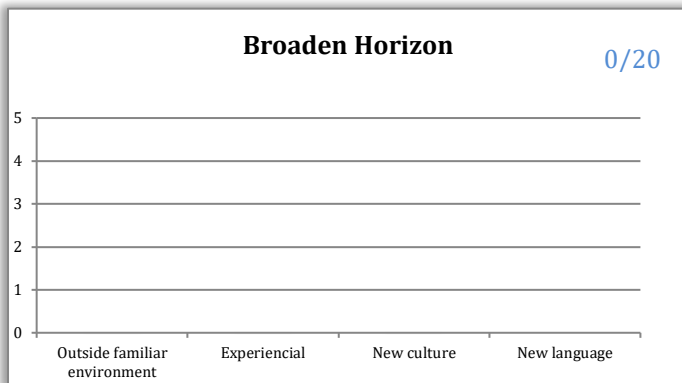
Contrary to first impressions, even when dispatching fish, there is the promotion of empathy as you are considering the event from the fish’s perspective and how to do it as humanely as possible.

Graph showing assessment and summary of attributes



Football

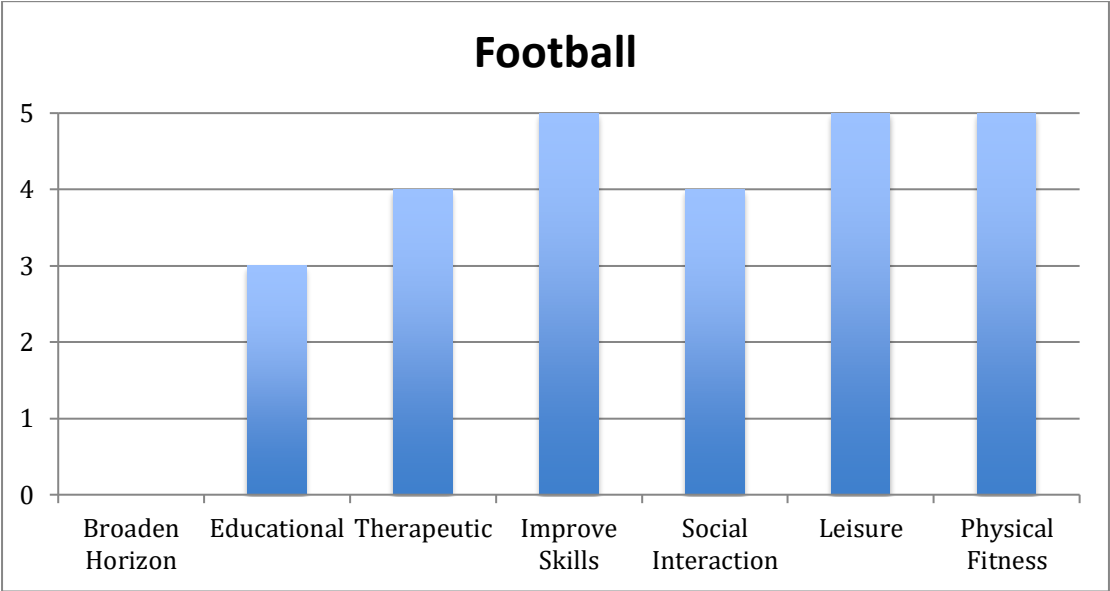
Graph showing assessment of elements



Whilst there are many ways of having a game of footy, even a casual game in the park brings many strong attributes and even more when it has been developed into the Pear Tree league, which is currently very popular.

The element worth talking about here is 'team work!' A good game, depends on good team work, and anyone who doesn't understand it, is soon taught it by their team mates. The camaraderie that is forthcoming, is so important and as a result, many other elements begin to thrive.

Rugby has similar attributes, and when a you join a rugby club, the social skills elements begin to rise further. Regretfully, due to the need to ensure that there is no physical contact of any sort amongst young people as part of the culture, it is not a sport to be played in house. Managing a scrum would not be easy, at least in football a hand ball is against the rules!

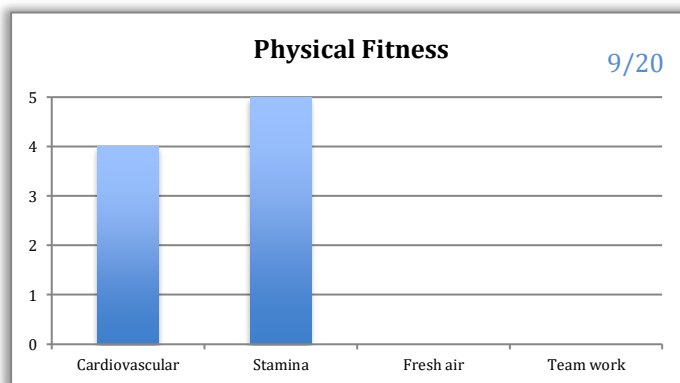
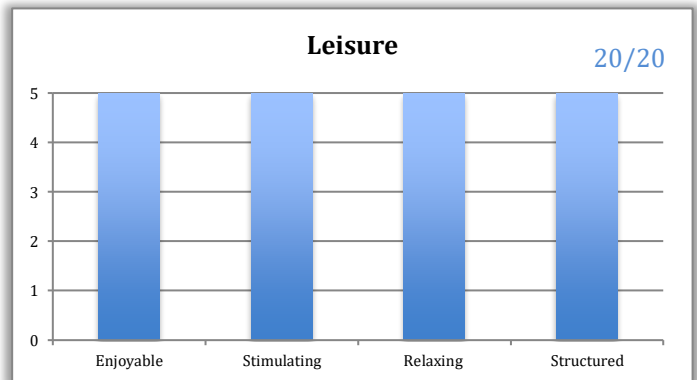
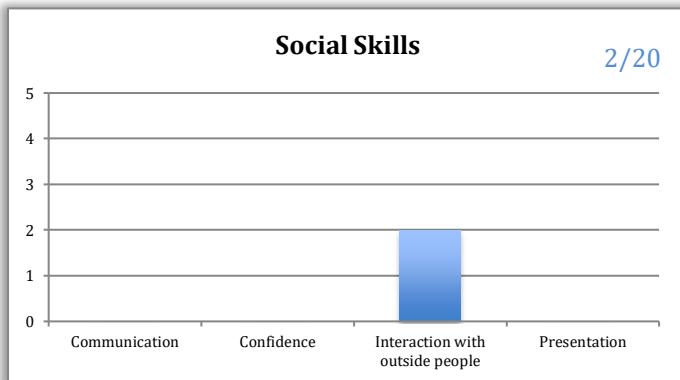
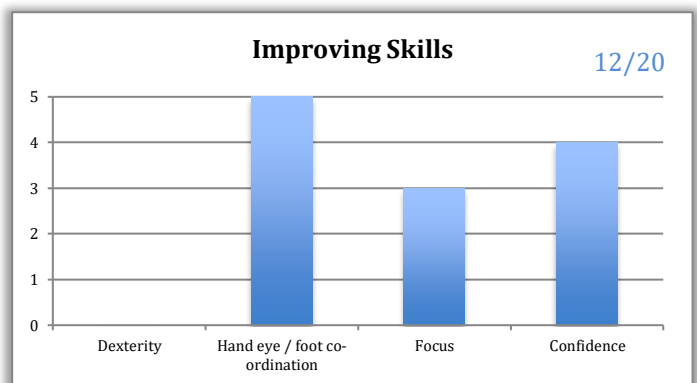
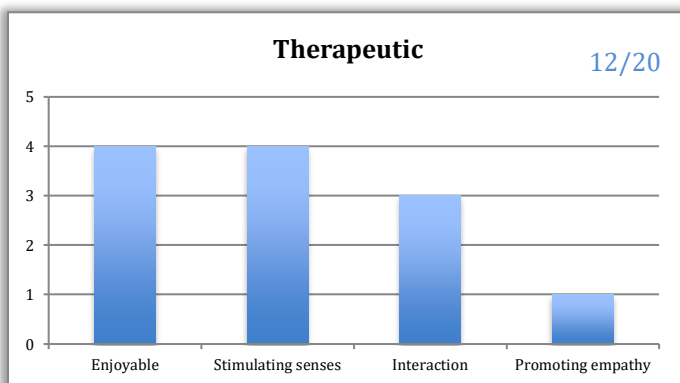
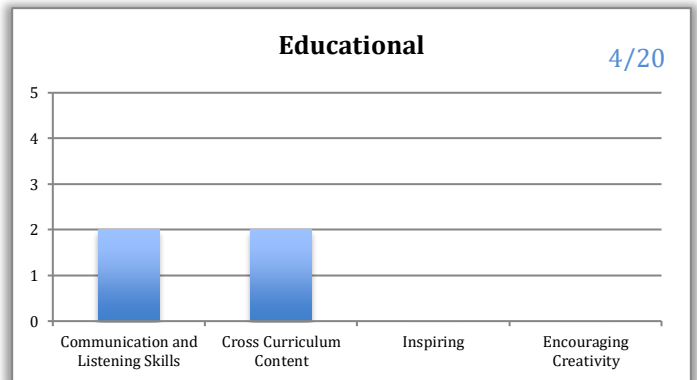
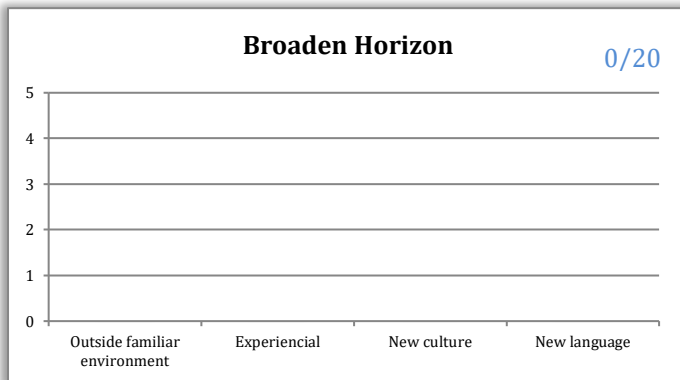


It may surprise you to know that I was brought up on a rough Council estate and know the fun of playing in the street with your mates. I was usually in goal and quite good. I filled the gap and didn't have to move far.



Swimming

Graph showing assessment of elements

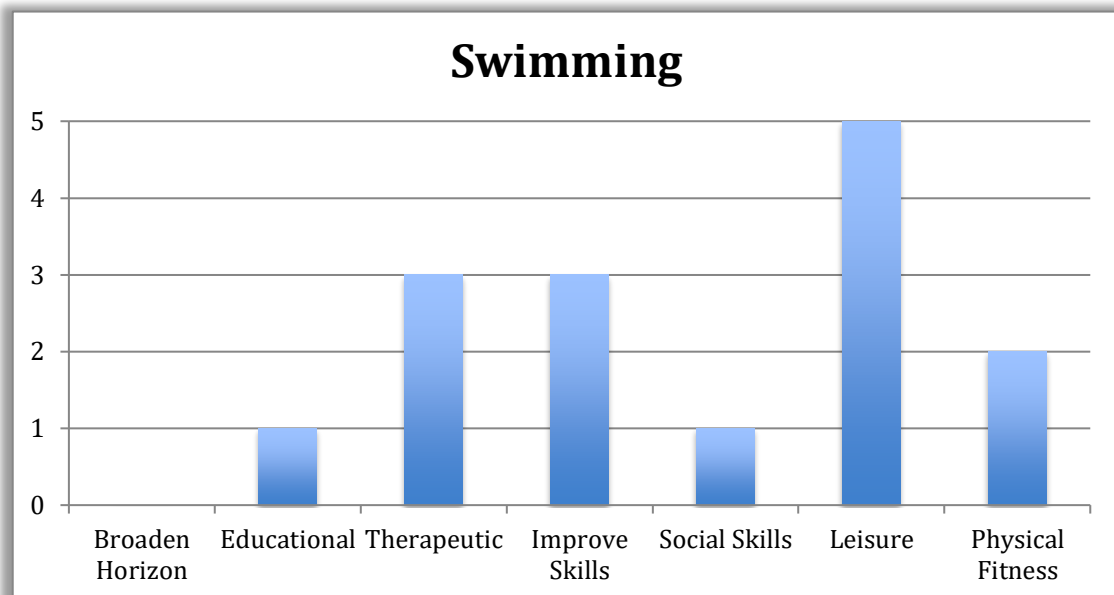


This is one of those activities that can be of good value or just a play about depending on how it is delivered. Outside of Pear Tree, in the context of a swimming club its value increases, due to the elements of structure, teamwork, interaction etc. Generally speaking, in the context of an evening's activity, it becomes a worthwhile leisure activity.

My preference is, that whenever our young people are taken swimming, by adding some structure and instruction, you make the most out of it and increase its value.

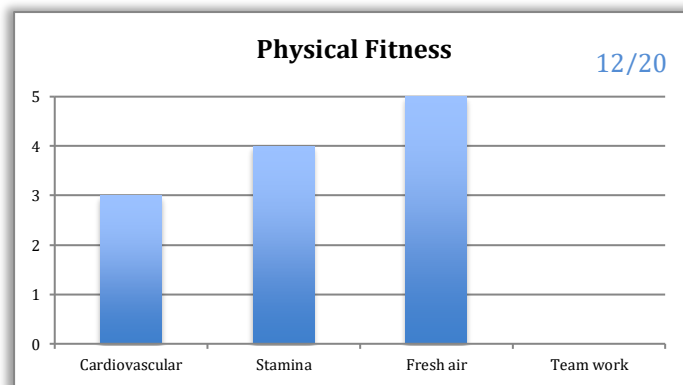
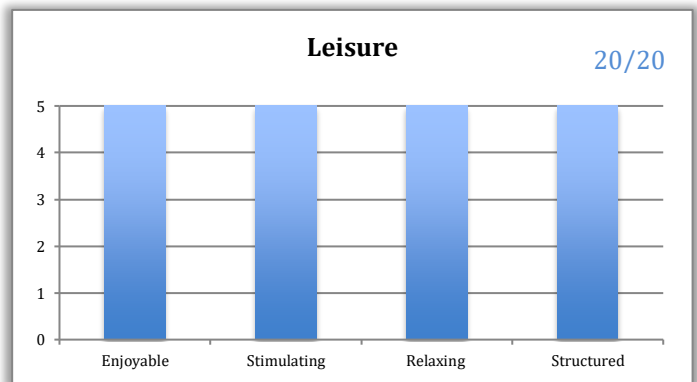
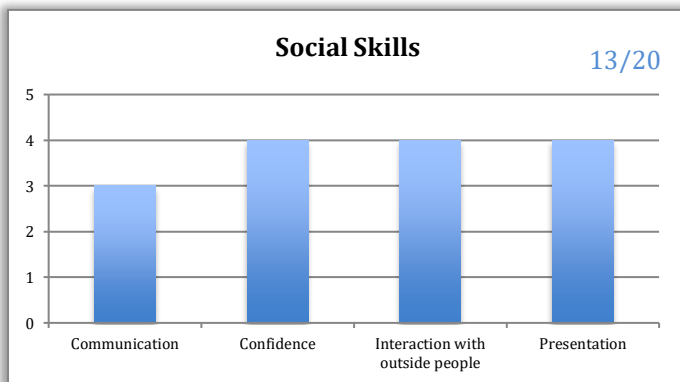
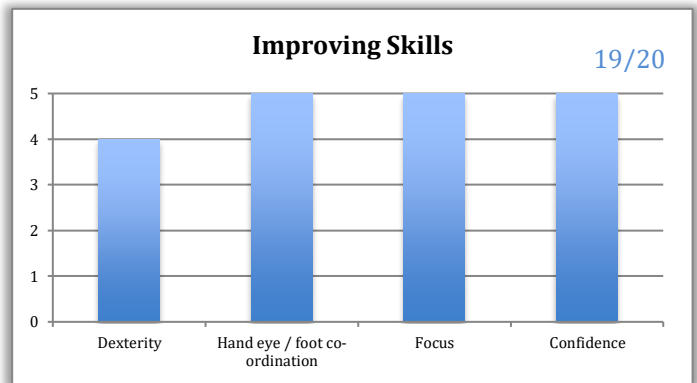
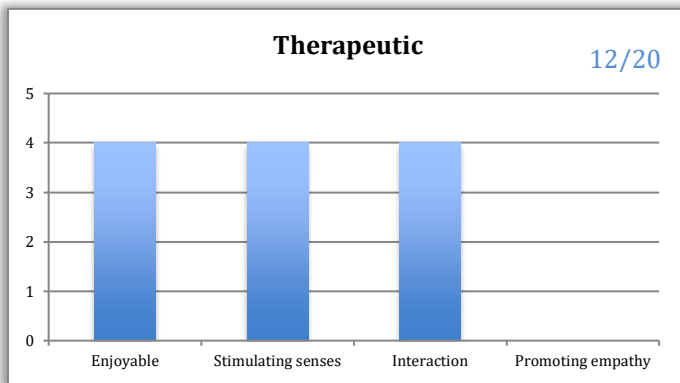
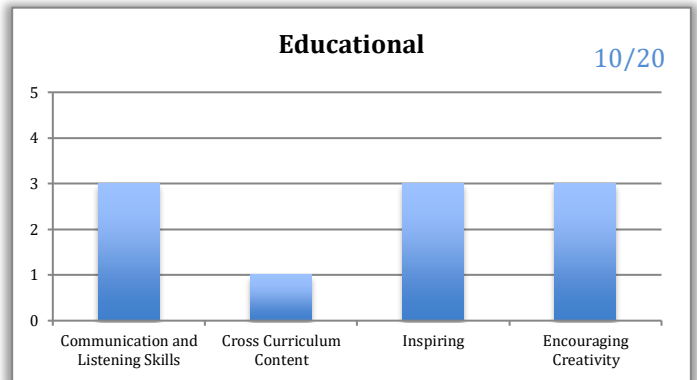
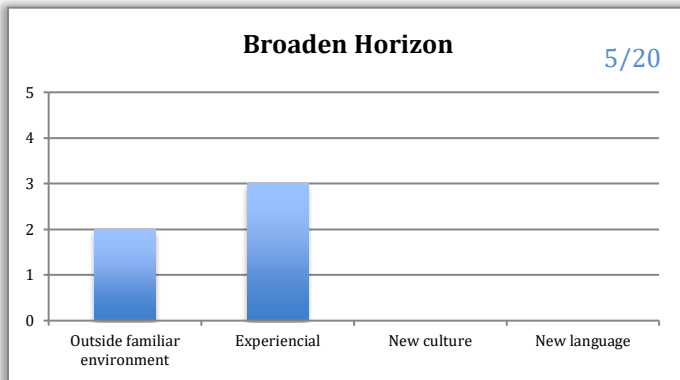
It is also worth remembering that due to the nature of our young people, it is a high risk activity of inappropriate behaviour.

Graph showing assessment and summary of attributes



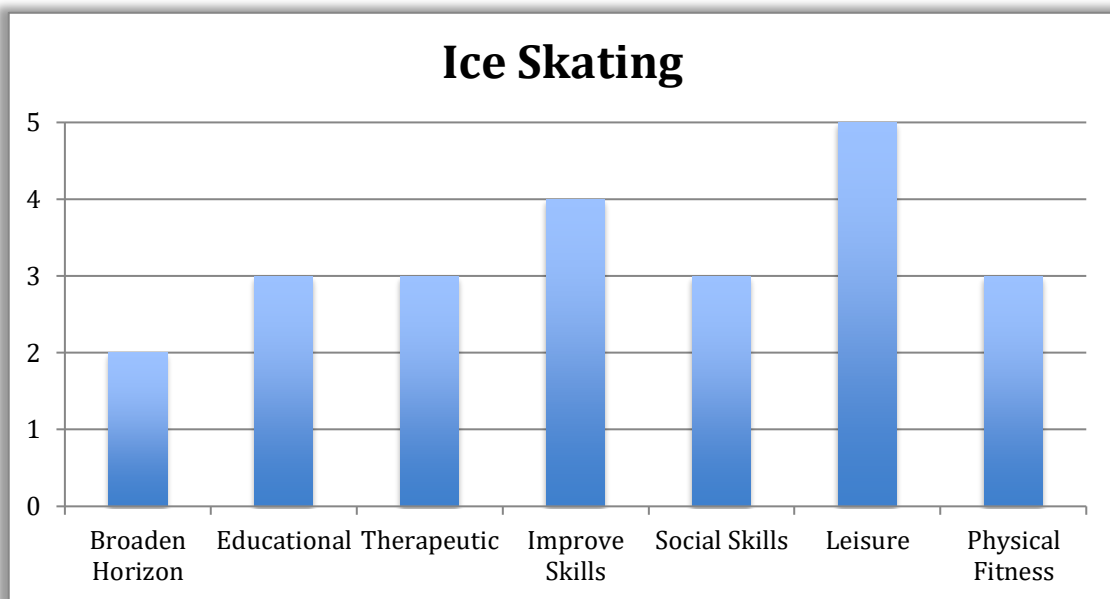
Ice Skating

Graph showing assessment and summary of attributes



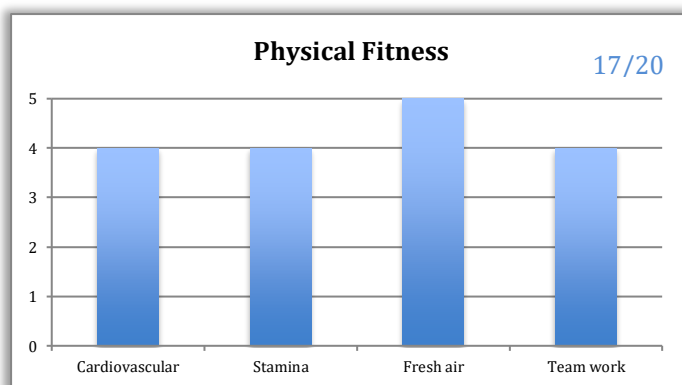
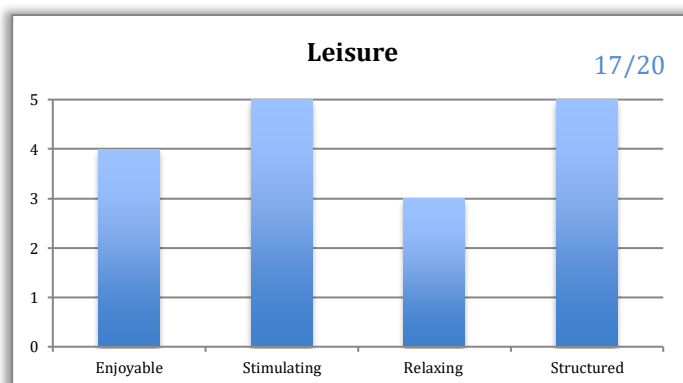
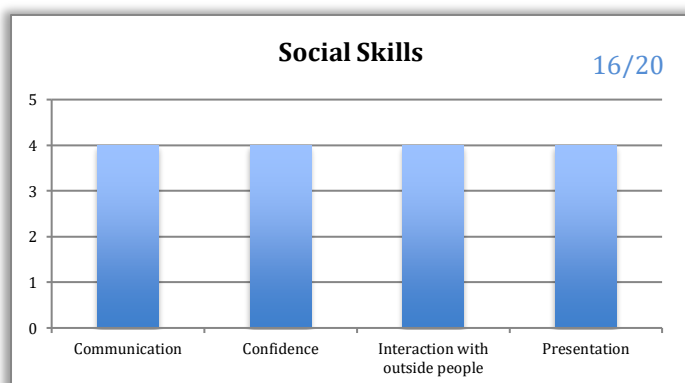
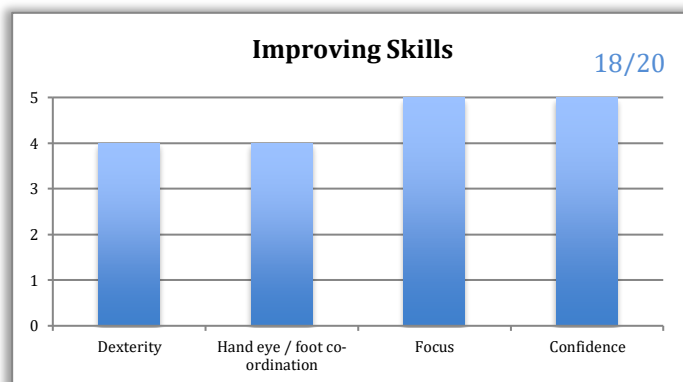
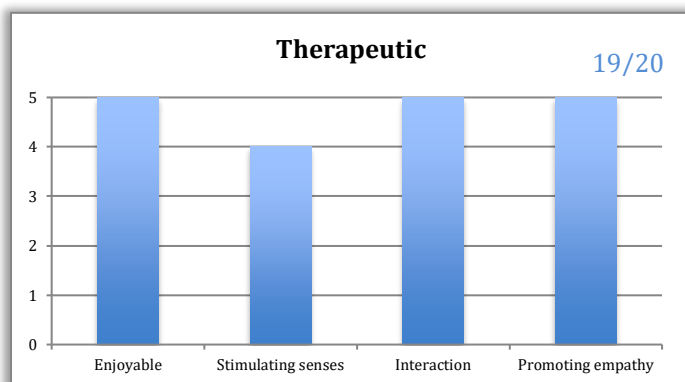
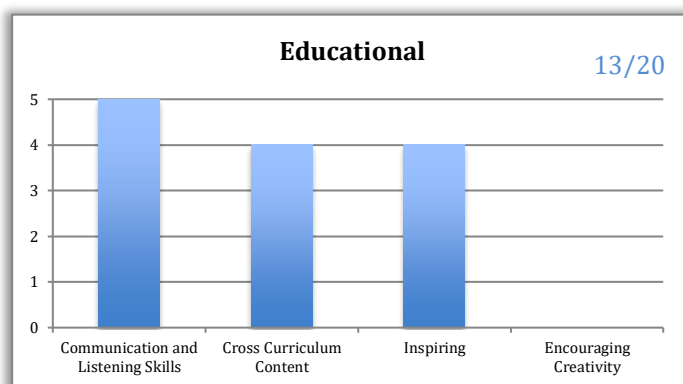
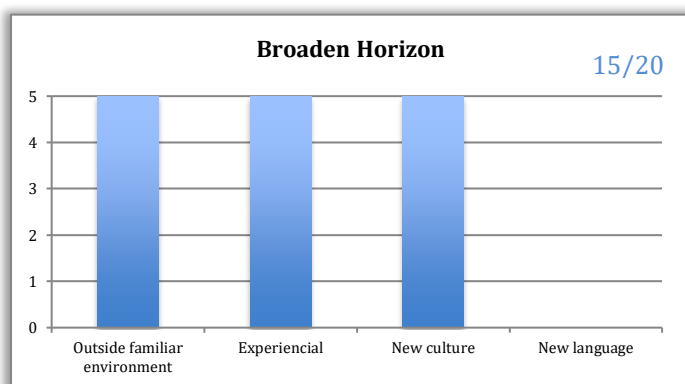
This is also a good fun thing to do! Whilst it broadening horizons and is educational, it is strong on improving skills, physical fitness and leisure. It is worth noting here, that the skills value would reduce if the activity was on artificial ice and so it is worth the journey to Billingham for the real thing. Likewise, often at some holiday parks, you would often find plastic ice, other than killing time, move on!

Graph showing assessment and summary of attributes



Horse Riding

Graph showing assessment of elements



As equine assisted therapy plays such an important part of the Pear Tree timetable, I feel that it is only right that I offer some explanation as to why.

It is also worth mentioning at this point, that two of our pupils as a result of learning to ride, have gone on and been paid to ride for other people.

I've always said that the actual process of riding is only 20% of the activity, the remaining 80% is in the looking after and bonding with an animal that needs the right kind of care to get results. Without the 80% you might as well ride a bike!

Therefore, when looking at this activity, it must also include stable management and working on the yard.

From our graphs, you can see that it has a high value of attributes, as a result of many strong elements.

The ones which I think are worth highlighting are the educational value, as there has to be clear direction using communication and listening skills for safety reasons and this is always acknowledged early in a young person's time on the farm.

Indeed, Ofsted identified the way in which working with the horses gave pupils responsibility and the way in which they dealt with it was remarkable.

There is cross curriculum content in terms of different types of feed, and materials from an agricultural source, rural science, English in reading instructions and feed labels and putting the right horse into the correct stable. It involves an element of mathematics, at feed round time. Indeed some of our young men have been inspired enough to go and work elsewhere, as a result of learning to ride and have even been paid to do so.

From a therapeutic perspective, it is enjoyable and stimulating. There is good interaction as whenever working with animals, you are constantly considering things from their point of view, which involves ample amounts of promoting empathy.

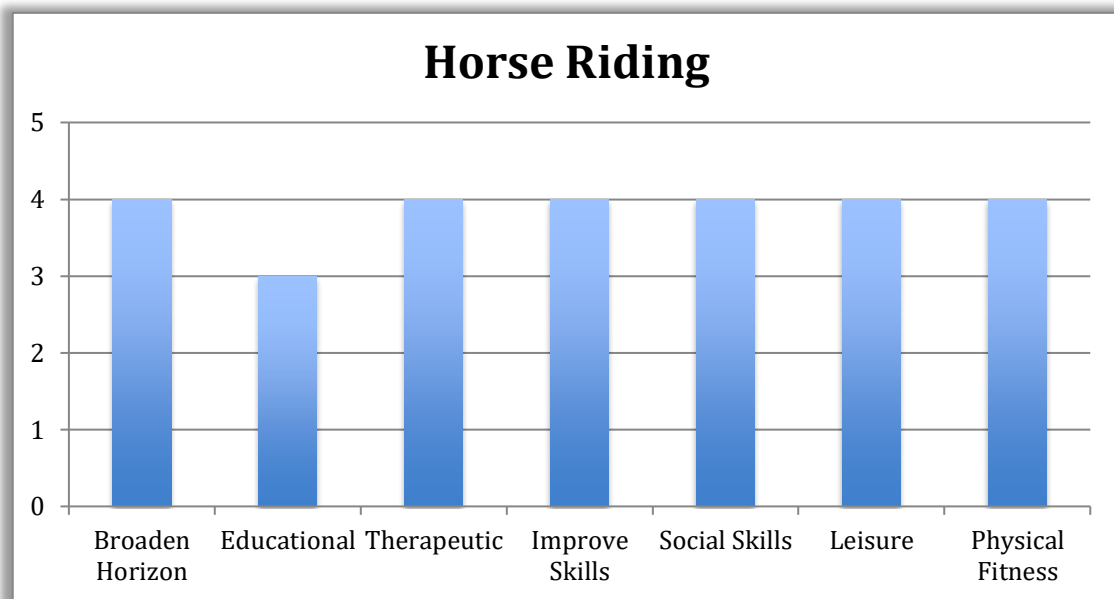
Improving skills comes out highly in all areas, but is particularly important for building confidence. Here, it is worth talking about Desmond Morris' observations made in the sixties, regarding the fact that many children enjoy riding until adolescence when the boys begin to lose interest. He links it with the positioning of the body and thrusting movements adding to sexual awareness. If we link that to our young people's experience and recognising that they are often anxious over many things in life regardless, then helping young people overcome anxiety and build confidence mustn't be under estimated. Personally, I think that boys lose interest because it is too much like hard work for easier rewards and they get sick of having crushed nuts!

Social skills comes out high here as well as leisure. In physical fitness, the one to

consider from the yards perspective is team work. The values of how the yard is run is important. How many times have you heard me say we are not finished until we are all finished.

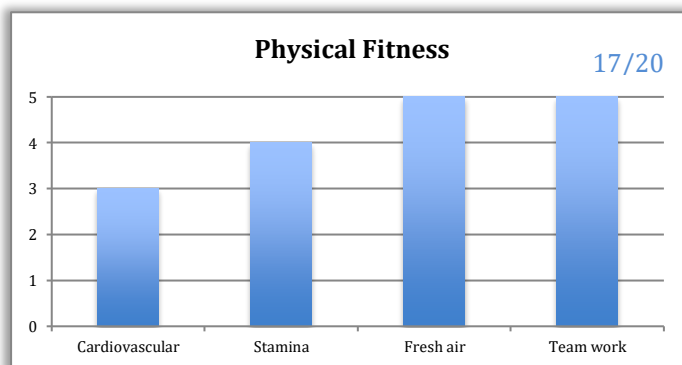
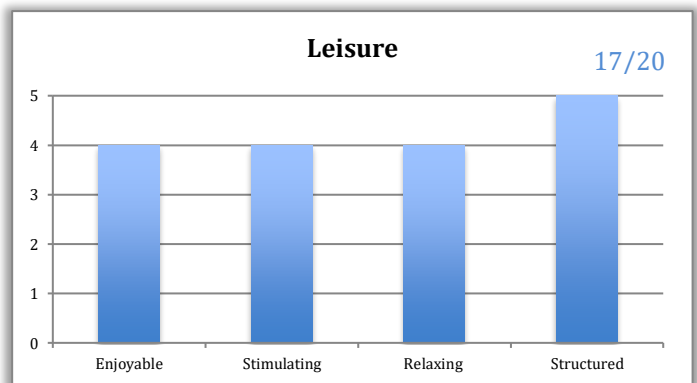
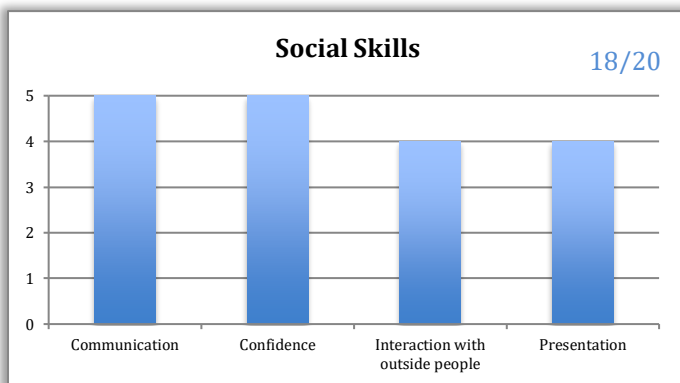
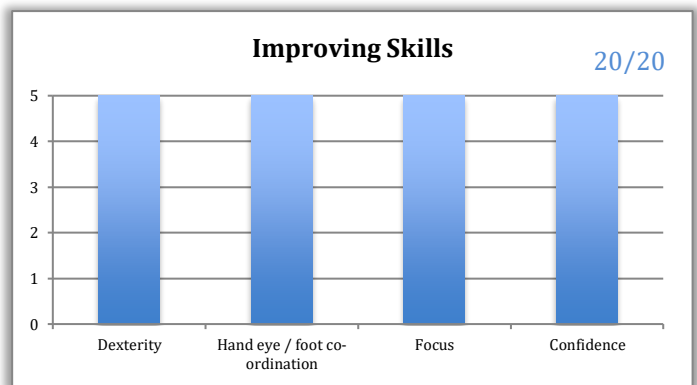
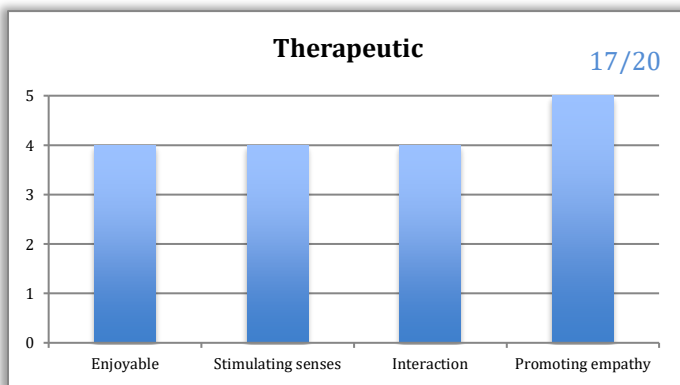
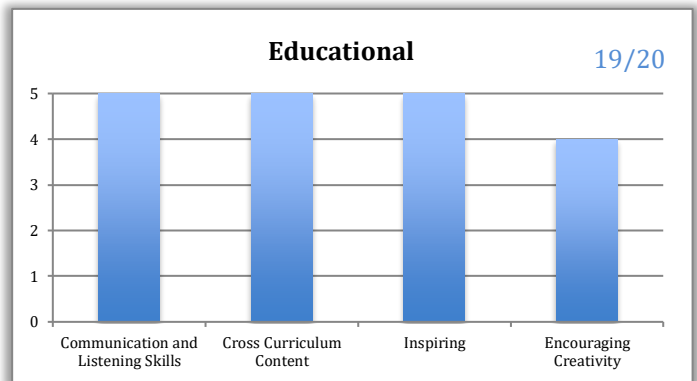
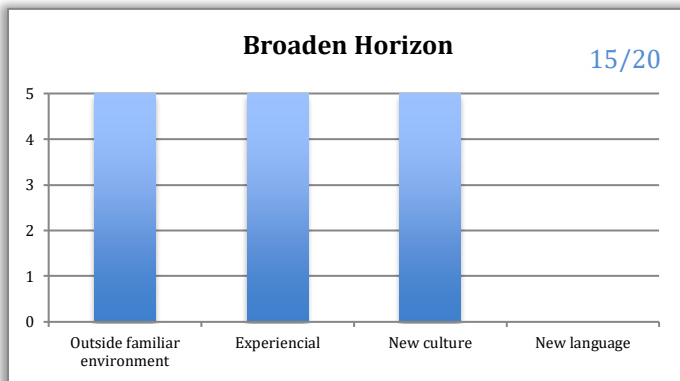
The two young men who went on to other places to be employed were able to make the transition relatively seamlessly as the environment, culture and expectations were very similar.

Graph showing assessment and summary of attributes



General Farm Work and Gardening

Graph showing assessment of elements



Once a member of staff was discussing with me our way of training young people and preparing them for the working world. He commented that the work ethics and culture could have been taught by having a workshop or factory setting, and that it was because of my love of the countryside that we used farms. It was at that point I knew I had to write this document as so many important points had been missed.

Indeed, when looking at the range of different activities, coupled with the environment, the scope of opportunity becomes apparent.

When looking at this section, we could have measured separate activities such as using the strimmer, driving the ATV, or the tractor for various different reasons. We could have looked at time in the garden or working in the woods. However, the fact is, that it is the overall experience that is important and the skills measured over a period of time and not just on one occasion. It is a diverse high value activity bringing many attributes, as a result of many high value elements.

It without question, broadens horizons, yet I still have to deal with members of staff who tell me that their children don't want to come to the farm. They are forgetting that initially, it is very much outside of their familiar environment and the anxiety that goes with that to begin with, but this is soon overcome.

There are high elements of educational value, communication and cross curriculum in the way of English, Mathematics, Geography and Science. It is inspiring young people to want to learn more. The practical tasks and improvisation very much encourage creativity at a basic level.

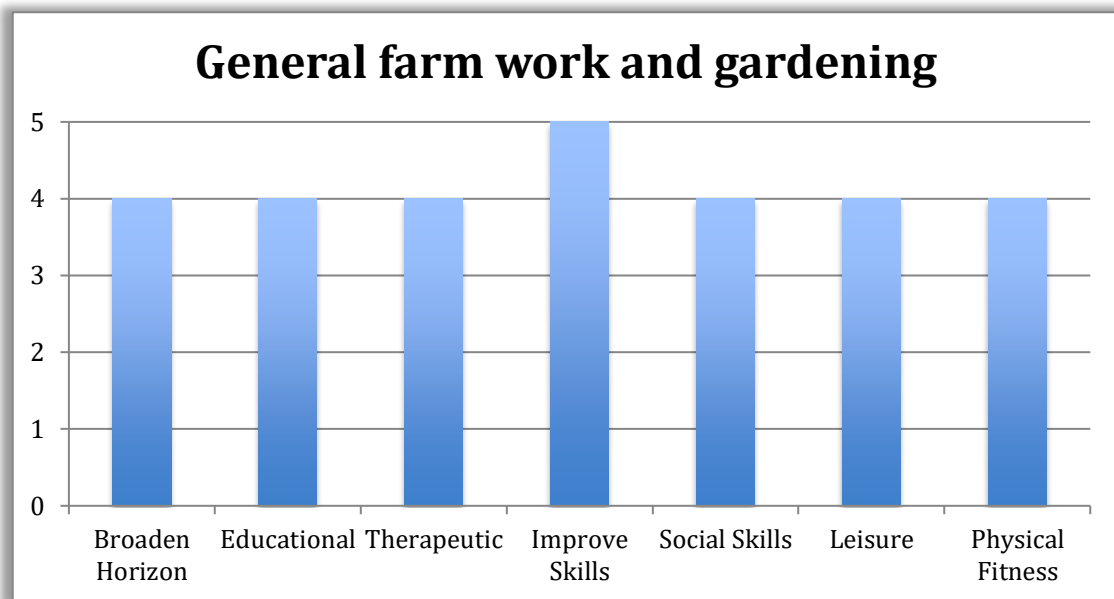
From a therapeutic perspective, it has high elements, particularly promoting empathy whenever looking after livestock.

Improving skills is a strong point, as using the kind of machinery that we have, starting with driving a wheelbarrow in a straight line, leading to tractor work.

As with the horses, one young man has gone on to become a qualified forklift truck driver and worked for three years in an engineering factory. This young man was no more outstanding than anyone else when he first came to us, and he learned everything on the farm, demonstrating the value of transferable skills. Social skills also has a part to play, as it is important to wear the right work clothes when regularly coming into contact with vets, farriers, feed merchants etc.

Finally, leisure and physical fitness also demonstrate strong elements. Again, the important factors here are teamwork and fresh air. This was demonstrated very well this year at hay time, as we had young men working together to achieve an outcome. They were absolutely exhausted, but were loving every minute of it.

Graph showing assessment and summary of attributes



Dr Bruce Perry, in his presentation at Hardwick Hall on the 17th November 2014, spoke about the benefit of calming activities and the importance of rhythm in a child's life. He mentioned the calming rhythm that goes with casting a line while fishing, the process of sitting quietly side by side with a Carer whilst doing this activity.

He talked about a facility he had been asked to consult with to help an extremely damaged child. Here the most successful member of staff in being able to help this child was the caretaker. He described how he allowed the child to watch him milk the cow every morning and each day he placed a second milking stool next to him for the child. Over many weeks the child got closer and closer to him, eventually one day sitting next to him. When Dr Perry asked the caretaker, where did you learn to do that he replied "It was obvious, I used to work with horses". Dr Perry Concluded by saying, "If you've ever come across those horse whisperers don't dismiss them, they've got so much to offer" !

Many of the high value activities discussed have that rhythmical element to it and we add to this by building in routine and structure.



Current research is demonstrating that contact with nature (in whatever way it is organised) is improving our health more than we realise.

Young people who back pack for 3 days or more show higher creative and cognitive abilities than those that don't.

It reduces stress, enhances cognitive abilities, problem solving, academic performance, nutrition, eyesight, improved social relationships and self discipline (self regulation).

Hospital patients that can see natural landscapes recover faster than those that don't.

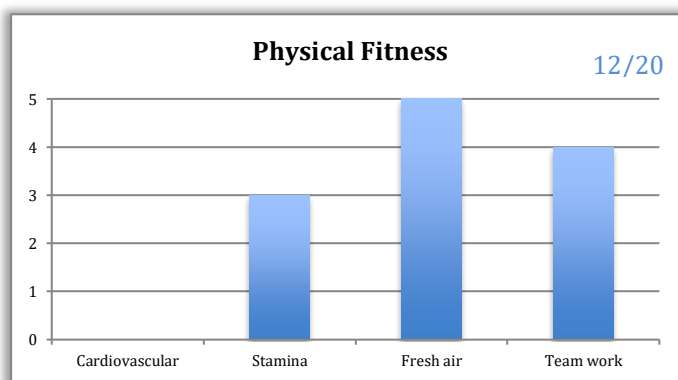
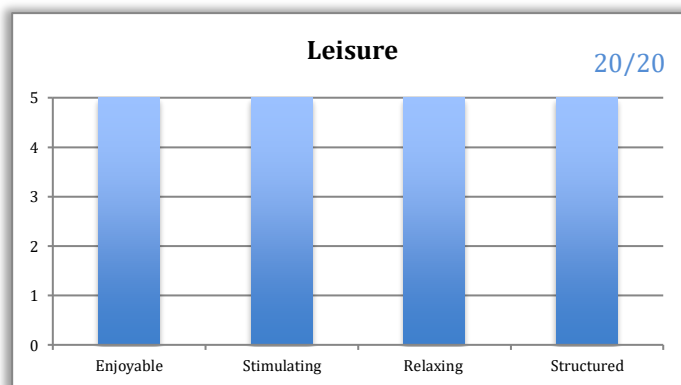
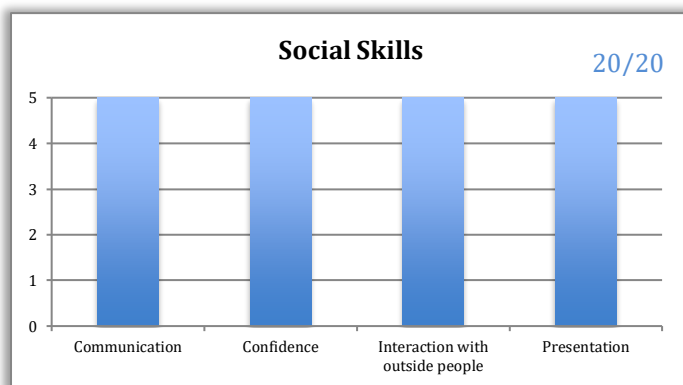
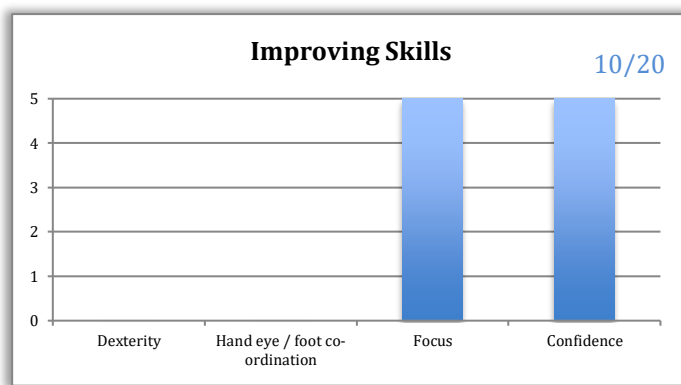
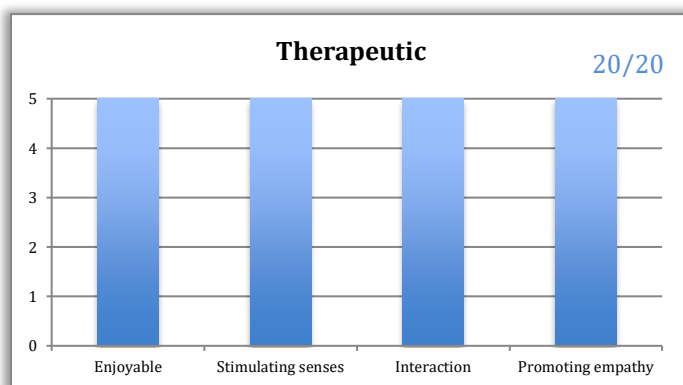
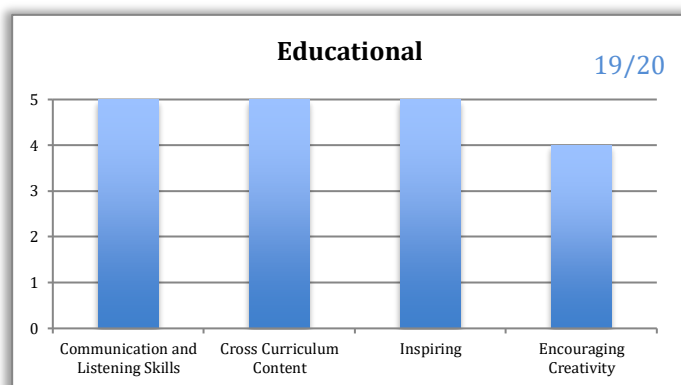
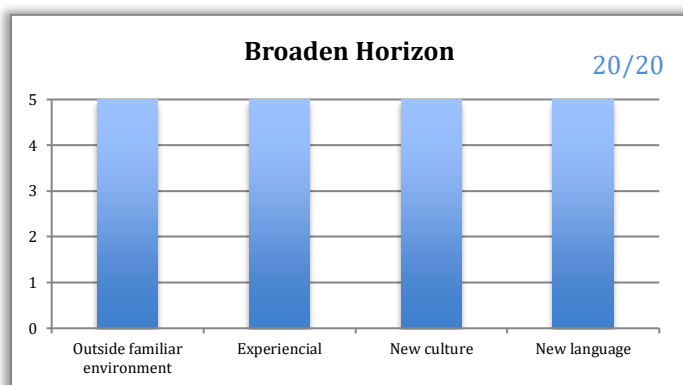
Marc Bekoff Rewilding our hearts. 2014.

With the above in mind Marc discusses students and patients, this represents the Pear Tree children in requiring both an education and recovery. Indeed the term therapeutic means "to heal". Therefore the above research indicates the importance of contact with nature as significant to the value of our work.

Therefore the importance of outdoor education and rural science whether in a structured way during the school week or in an informal way during holidays and weekends is significant, not just for the time they are experiencing nature but to support and enhance everything else undertaken by everyone else.

The Holiday in France

Graph showing assessment of elements



Pear Tree holidays started in 1994 at the "Blue Dolphin" caravan park at Scarborough. 1996 saw the first day trip to London, 1997 the first foreign holiday to Euro Disney. This five day holiday consisted of two days in the theme park, a day in Paris and on the journey home we took in the war graves. I remember visiting Notradame Cathedral and one young boy began to cry because the characters from the Hunchback of Notradame weren't there. He was clearly confused by Disney and the Real World! 1998 saw the first trip to Normandy again, using caravan parks.

In 2003, we took a group of young people to the Bahamas to swim with dolphins. A lack of referrals led me to think it would either be my swan song or get people in the profession talking about us. It worked, with winners all round as the young people had a wonderful time, along with the staff, and the referrals started to come thick and fast.

However, the most successful holiday that ticks all of the right boxes is, without doubt the trip to Normandy as a result of finding a superb holiday cottage to rent year after year.

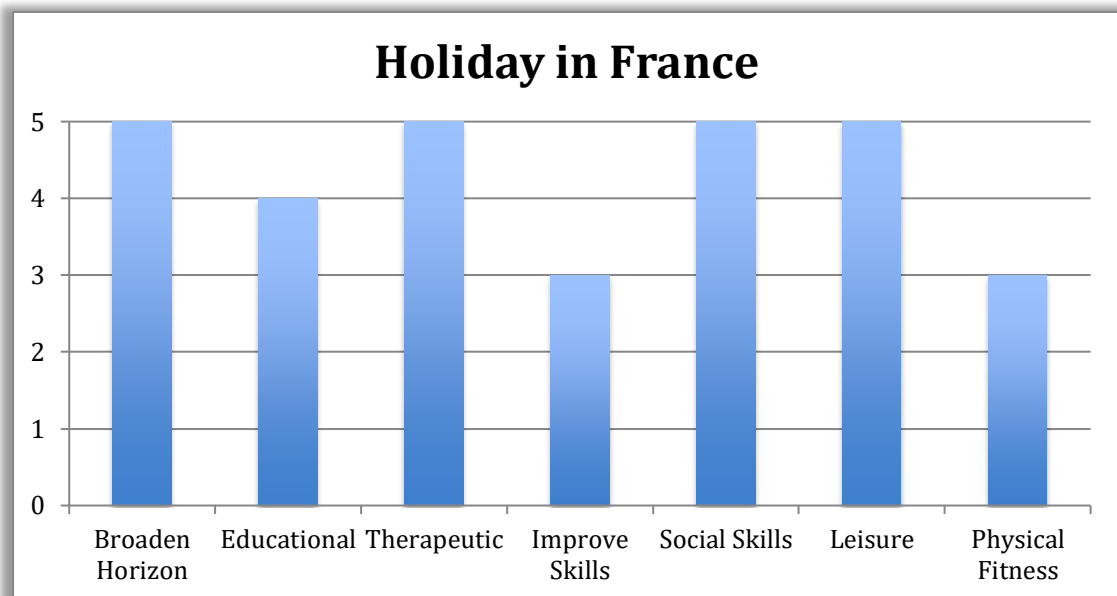


This takes on board so many high value elements. The ones worth highlighting that you won't find anywhere else are of course broadening of horizons, and new language in particular. The country may be next door but culturally it is a world away.

It is also an exceptional educational experience, with so many cross curricular features including, Language, Geography, and History being the obvious ones. From the Bayeux Tapestry depicting the most significant event in the history of the British Isles, being the last time that we were successfully invaded. This, through to the events of World War Two, which are still in living memory.

From a kid's point of view, it has "tanks". What could be better than that! Oh yes, they're near the Beach, perfect!!

So leisure and just having fun feature highly as well.



Playing

At this point, it is worth talking about the value of just having fun. Whilst we are measuring elements and considering how we can value them and in many ways, discussing what others may call values in a general context. This document helps to substantiate the values and acknowledge what each element brings to the day. However, we must not forget the value of fun. Paddling in the river, making a camp etc. It is worth looking at the "National Trust ", 50 things to do before you're 11 $\frac{3}{4}$ (<https://www.50things.org.uk/>). Whilst most of our young people are older, they have certainly missed out, so we should make sure that they have done as many things on the list as they can. Flying a kite, building a den, climbing a tree, visiting an island to name but a few.

Our young people need the opportunity to play, but usually due to the nature of their problems, there needs to be some kind of guidance and usually 'role model leadership' and always clear boundaries. However, when possible, stand back! To the experienced parent, the children playing nicely without concern, produces the most beautiful music. You can also tell the second it changes to something less harmonious.

Desmond Morris describes the Play Rules as being:

1. You shall investigate the unfamiliar, until it has become familiar.
2. You shall impose rhythmic, repetition on the familiar.
3. You shall vary this repetition in as many ways as possible.
4. You shall select the most satisfying of these variations and develop these at the expense of others.
5. You shall combine and recombine these variations with one another.
6. You shall do all of this for its own sake and as an end to itself.

Certainly, these are the rules of play that I have employed to my holiday, which are a grown up way of playing. These rules could be applied to many of the activities above also.

Here, also a word of warning. In his experiments with apes, he concluded that the absence of play often resulted in juveniles being anti sexual and anti parental. Now where have I heard that one before?

Play is such an important part of a child's development and yet the young people that come to us, who are often older than their years, for them it has already gone wrong. How can we help to put it right? Going back for some young people and being allowed the time to heal and regain aspects of a missed childhood has to be invaluable as long as it is safe to do so!

Some years ago at the start of the summer holidays, I took my children to Danby. It was a really hot July day and we walked down to the river at the bottom. I sat under a tree and promptly fell asleep. Slightly dozing I could hear them playing in the

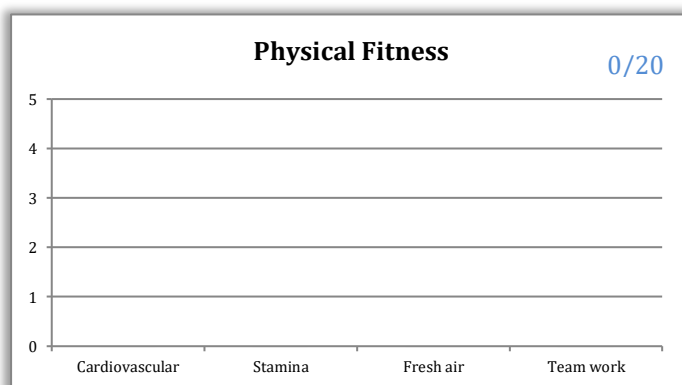
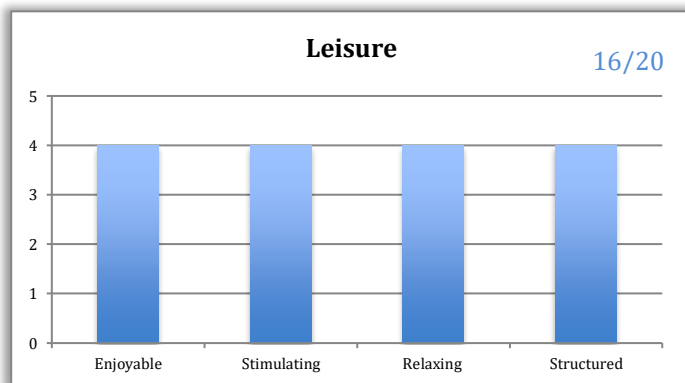
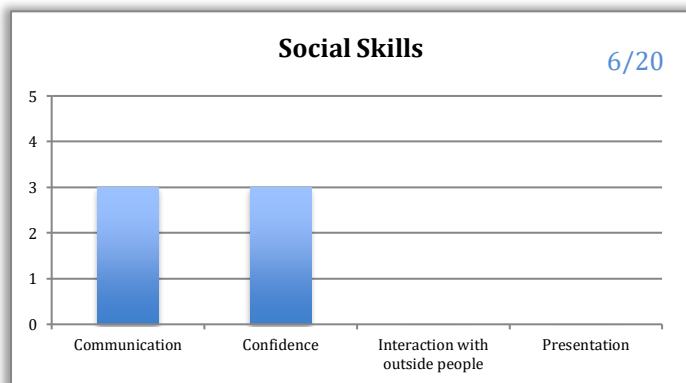
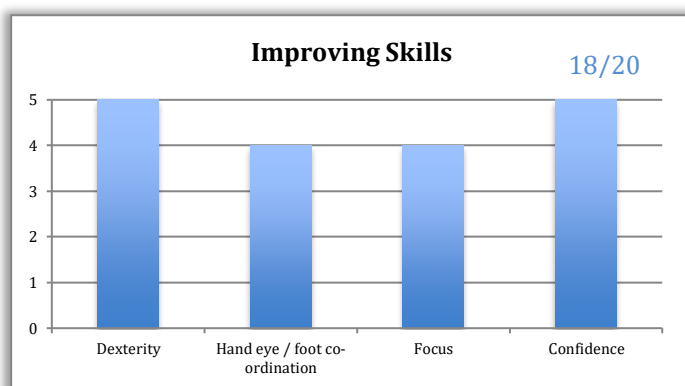
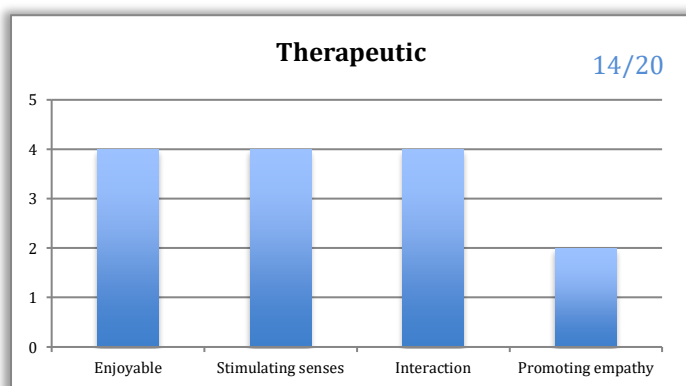
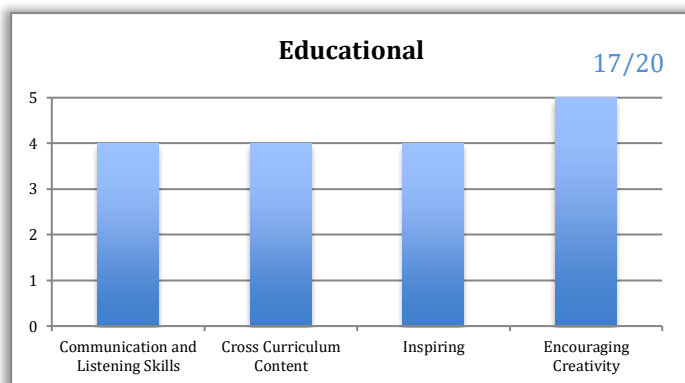
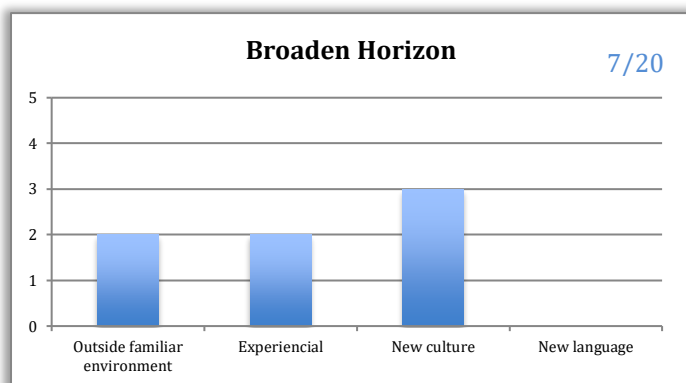
river and creating the most beautiful music. Every July since I have wanted to recreate that moment, due to the weather, circumstances it has never happened again. Now they are older, if the situation allowed the opportunity, he'd drown her!

“Seize the moment”



Arts and Crafts.

Graph showing assessment of elements



Arts and Crafts is one of those activities that can be done in a classroom setting with a teacher or as an evening activity on the dining room table with a carer, often with equally impressive results. Providing the carer who has a genuine interest in the subject and enjoys doing it. (As with many other activities also.)

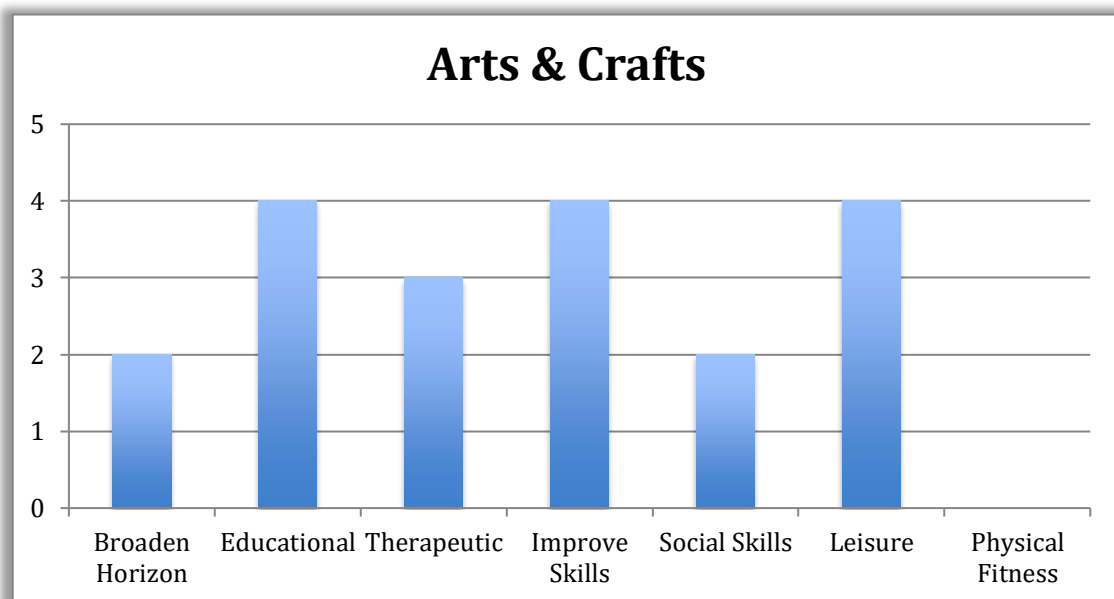
Broadening horizons is relevant, as from a Pear Tree perspective, sitting in a formal setting, is outside the familiar environment and looking at the subject, there must be exposure to a cultural activity that may not always be that familiar. Again, adding to this, as we often do, takes this to another level when we visit "The National Gallery " in London, specifically to take the exposure further, to another culture and to be inspiring!

From an educational perspective, as you would hope for a educational activity, all elements are relevant.

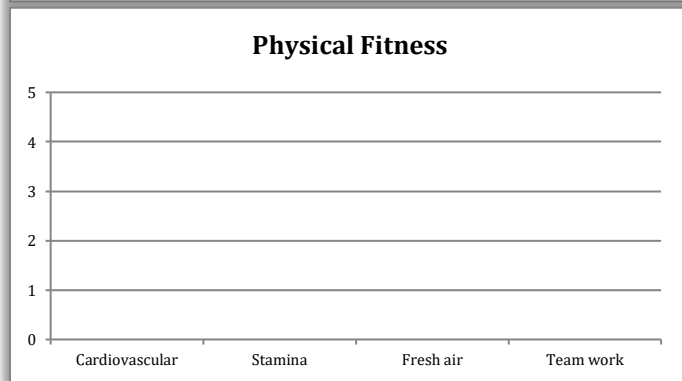
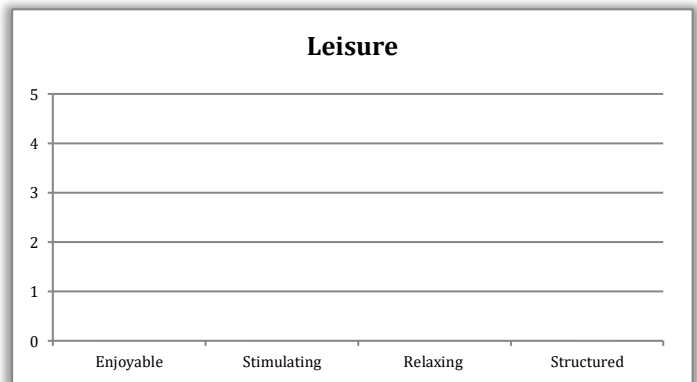
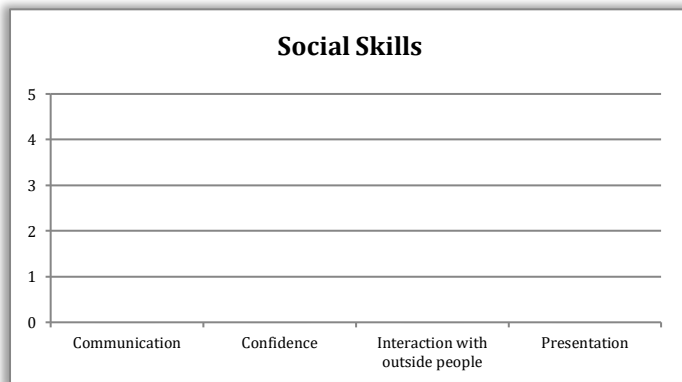
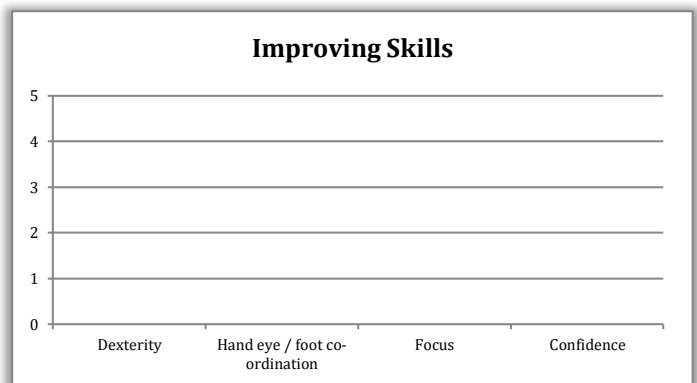
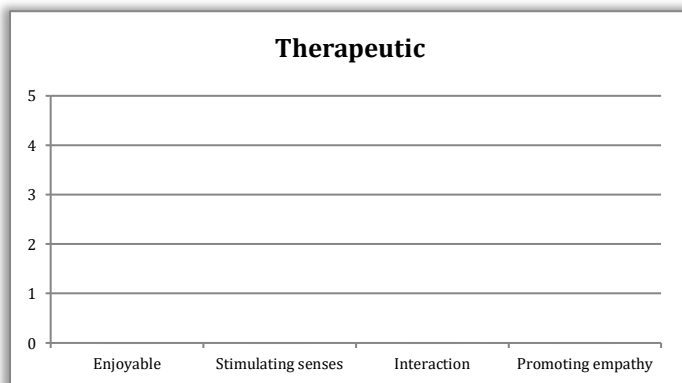
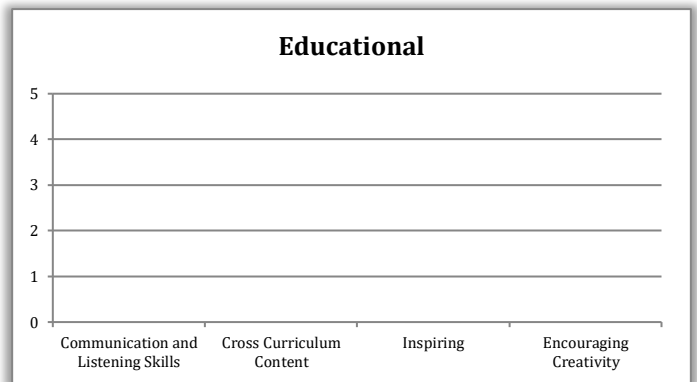
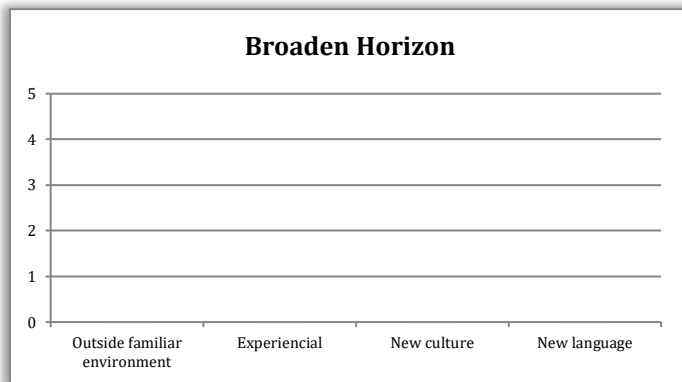
There is a therapeutic value to it and most definitely improving skills, particularly fine motor skills, or dexterity. It is at this point that I can mention a little known or talked about issue called 'Exaggerated Reward!' I will discuss this further and in more detail as a separate chapter.

It isn't of course a physical activity, but it is an enjoyable, leisure activity in its own right. A number of young people over the years have used their love of Art to take up Art classes independently and therefore, the subject has helped to promote their independence.

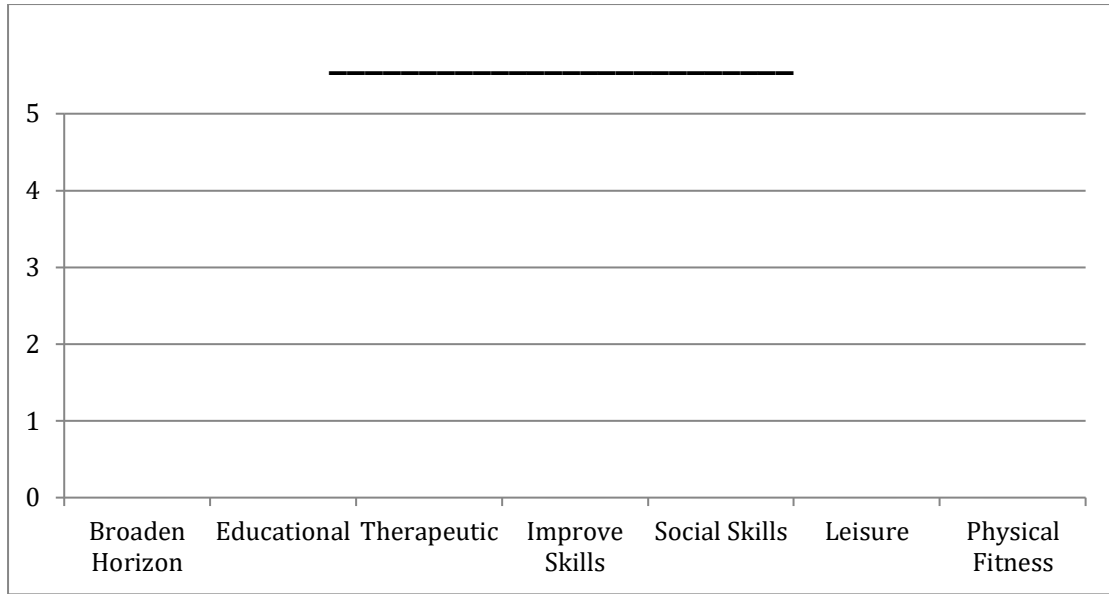
Graph showing assessment and summary of attributes



Why not use the system to measure other activities. I suggest you do it as a group discussion. It can work for any activity but please consider our sports day and you will see what a marvelous occasion that was!



$$\begin{aligned}
 0 - 4 &= 1 \\
 5 - 9 &= 2 \\
 10 - 14 &= 3 \\
 15 - 19 &= 4 \\
 20 &= 5
 \end{aligned}$$



Exaggerated Reward!

Desmond Morris in his wonderful and life changing book *The Naked Ape*, that I have consistently encouraged people to read was written in the sixties and it looks at human behaviour from a zoological perspective, and he describes the process called exaggerated reward.

Morris describes that amazing moment in a child's life, when they discover how to use a pencil, or a paint brush. As a result of a slight delicate move, a mark is made which appears disproportionate to the effort used. This then quickly develops to painting a line and then a process develops next as a circle.

When a circle is painted, you then find another level of thinking, as you have two areas, one inside and one outside of the circle. By adding two dots and a curve, you then have created an amazing thing, a face that smiles back at you. This is all created with very little effort.



This process, in my opinion, goes much further than that, as painting with much more sophisticated thinking leads to colour and three dimensions being developed. Pottery, clay modelling and sculpture is also a good example of exaggerated reward, as through slight use of dexterity, creations develop in front of your eyes and literally in your hands.

It's a wonderful thing, brilliant!

Business people use the same principal to make money, by adding value with little effort. Indeed, property make over shows, show you how to make the most out of what you've got with as little effort as possible.

An example of this in our organisation, is the trees planted at the Manor. Overnight, the property went from a derelict farmhouse surrounded by ex quarry land, to a Manor house with a tree lined avenue surrounded by parkland.

Desmond Morris wrote his book in the sixties, and I have often wondered what he would make of the issues of today? Indeed, one of the best examples of exaggerated reward today, is the use of digital technology in the form of mobile phones and computer games.

As a result of the smallest movements of fingers, and with today's technology not necessarily with any accuracy you can fly jets, drive cars and shoot hundreds of people or be connected to hundreds of people via the social media. All with the smallest of movements.

It is a fact, that the British Army now recruit young men with good computer game skills, as they are in the best position to use the modern warfare tools of the trade.

Hopefully this goes with high levels of intelligence. It isn't likely to be relevant for the young people that use our service.

When I was a child, I would have killed for the most up to date computer game. It would have given me excitement and something which all children strive for, the ability to control something and shoot people that fall down when shot, and even blow things up. From the bedroom, you can now talk to your friends and even people you don't know in another country, all with very little effort. But you have to ask yourself, if I'd spent all of my youth playing computer games, would it have prepared me for adult life?

It's not just computer games that we should consider, but also other forms of entertainment such as amusement arcades, where the process is very similar.

This leads me to consider the other side of this process, 'negative attributes'!

Negative Attributes

Once again, this section is from a Pear Tree perspective, in that as with positive attributes, I've considered these and broken them down into seven relevant negative attributes. These are:

1. Addictive qualities
2. Negative reinforcement
3. Tap Tap reward
4. False adrenaline rush
5. High followed by a low
6. Physically detrimental
7. Time consuming with no positive outcome

1. Addictive qualities

Without trying to reinvent the wheel, or looking unnecessarily deeply into something, this means what it says on the tin. It is an activity/behaviour that could result in an addictive quality being promoted. Smoking, is the most obvious to demonstrate the point. Despite years of debate, it is pretty much accepted that smoking is addictive. Other things may include anything where an obsessive behaviour is promoted, where the young person no longer feels in control of their behaviour, such as drugs, alcohol or perhaps in our case pornography.

2. Negative reinforcement

This is where a young person has powerfully held beliefs, but wrong beliefs, that by indulging in these activities, these beliefs are upheld and promoted. Pornography and child pornography in particular, is a good example of this. This is where illegal acts or in the case of adult porn, sexually inappropriate for the age and maturity of the young person is evident. This is not to be confused with images of the naked or semi naked body, which are accessible on every beach (apart from Scottish beaches) that young people have access to and should know how to conduct themselves accordingly.

3. 'Tap Tap reward'

This the term used by a scientist studying the effects of computer games, using mice. They have found a link to addictive qualities where a number of taps are followed by

a reward of positive reinforcement. In mice, it was food, in humans it is a point score or an achieved outcome i.e. shooting someone on a computer game.

4. False adrenaline rush.

This is where a young person receives an adrenaline rush for no real reason. Again, computer games lead you into a world of make believe, where a perceived threat is evident i.e. your competitor is going to kill you, which alerts your fight or flight hormone for no real reason, as there isn't really a threat. This subject opens up for discussion, a whole topic of adrenaline and its effects, which I shall address in the next chapter. A false adrenaline rush often leads to the next attribute.

5. High followed by a low.

This is self explanatory, and whilst it is in the context of considering negative attributes, it also is worth pointing out, that over the years, many incidents have taken place by young people who have just had a really good day. The only apparent explanation after the event when all is well again, is the inability to deal with an anti-climax and the need to return home and get things back to normal.

6. Physically detrimental.

This is a quality that can have a negative, physical effect on a person's well being. Alcohol or substance misuse being the obvious examples.

7. Time consuming with no positive outcome.

Whilst this may be largely open for debate, I strongly feel that we have no time to waste with these young people and anything that takes up a large amount of time with no positive outcome is a negative factor.

Again, personally, my target is to make every day count. Not just in experience, but moving myself and family forward. We are not going to be here forever, there is no time to waste, as the clock seems to tick a little faster every day.

What negative activities?

With the list above being pretty self evident, there is no need to go into depth with the negative elements, but let us just consider a few issues against our graph system and see what things look like.

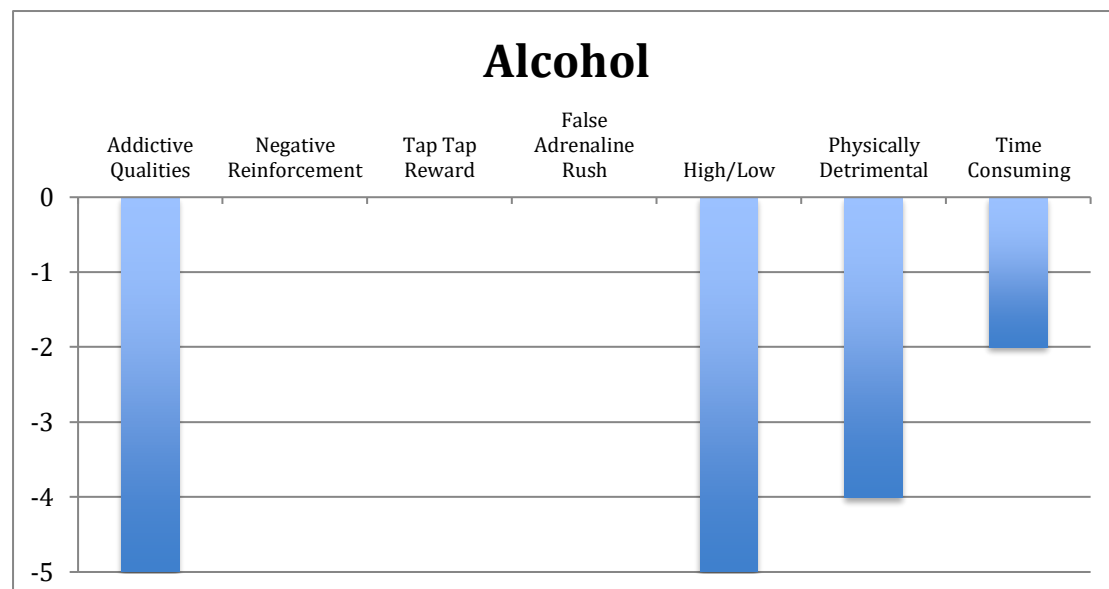
Drink, drugs and smoking

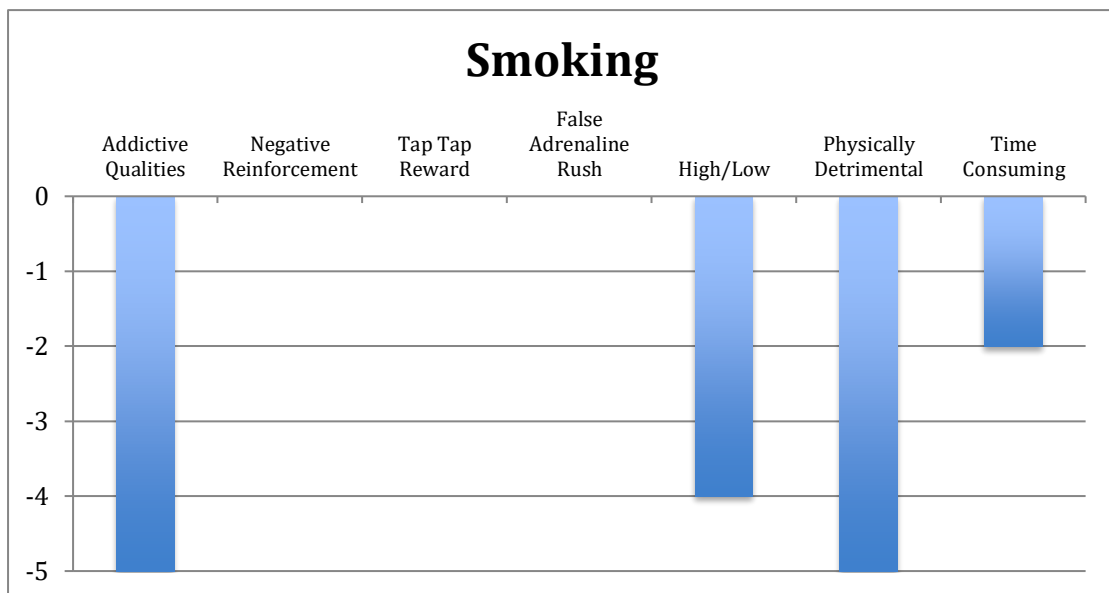
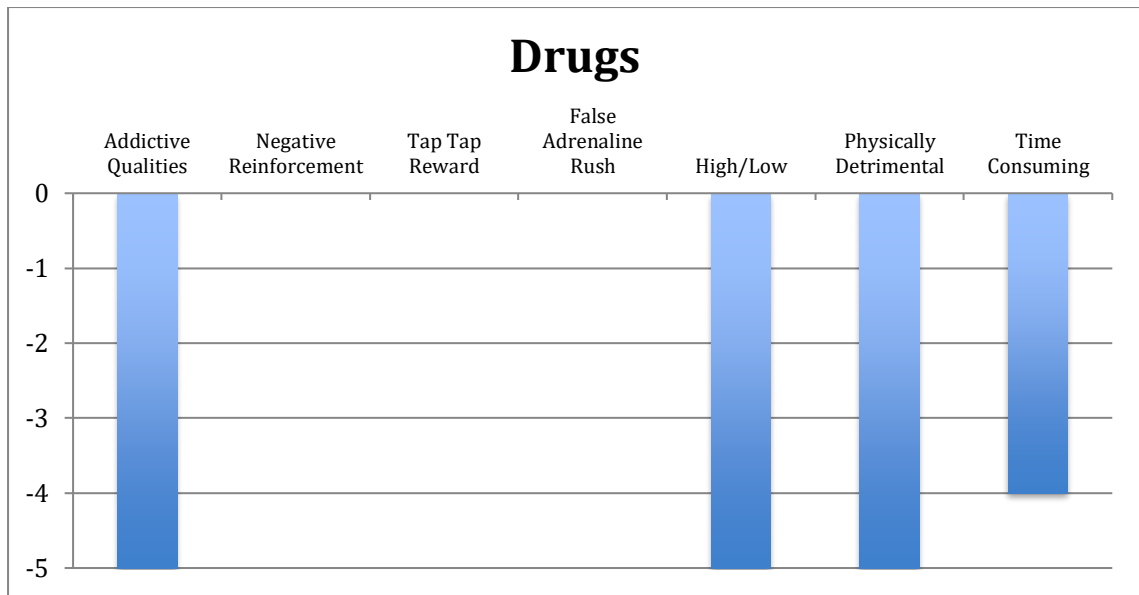
Here, it is clear to see how with the absence of boundaries, these things can quickly get out of control. Negative qualities abound as many attributes are showing high negative measurements. Young people are going to be exposed to these things and it's the ability to "just say no" as the 1980's appeal said.

As our young people previous to being looked after by ourselves, have lived in an environment where there were no boundaries, therefore hoping that they will be able to impose internal controls at key times without support and education, is unreasonable to expect. We therefore, have to give them as much information as possible, in a controlled environment, to help them to make informed decisions for themselves.

It has often impressed me, how house managers at the right time, have allowed young people often in their latter stages of their time with ourselves to have a drink with a meal when on holiday or at the Christmas party etc. This removes the taboo and the risk of them going de-mob happy when the boundaries are relaxed. Whilst most people enjoy a drink, drugs is a different matter, with a zero tolerance approach due to the addictive qualities along with the level of physically detrimental effect which it has on people.

Likewise, smoking, due to the above, coupled with restricting life opportunity elements and the fact that children with fire lighting materials can lead to tragedy of untold proportions.





Visiting amusement arcades

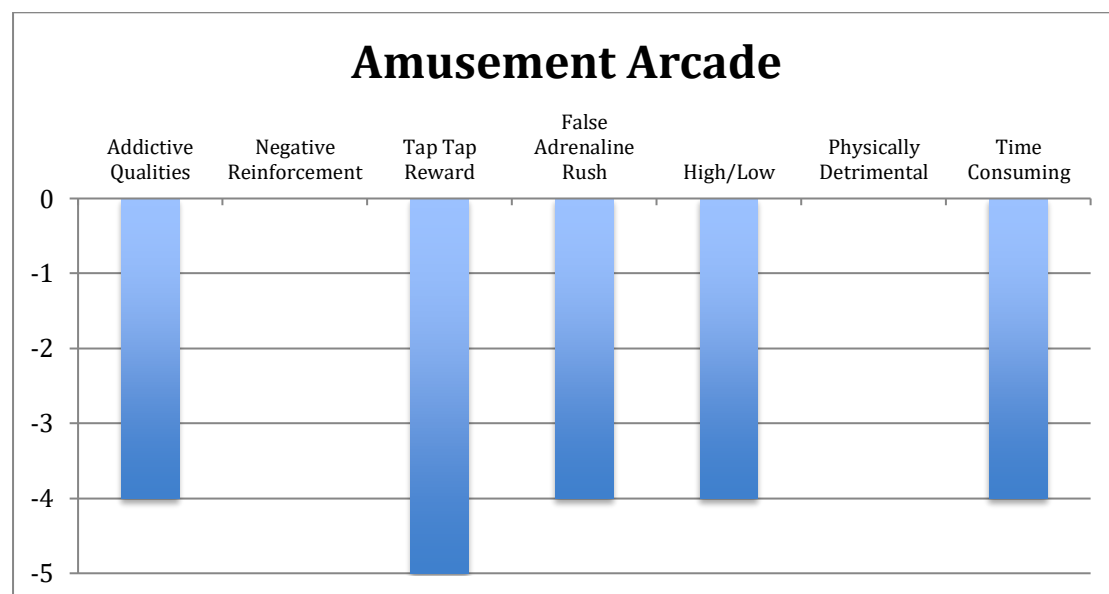
One of the reasons for this document, is to remove the argument that at Pear Tree I only promote what are often referred to as 'middle class' activities and don't promote what others refer to as 'lower class' activities, both of which I believe to be utter rubbish.

The work above on positive activities, demonstrates how you can break activities down and value their elements individually. These activities bring something to the party, in terms of preparing young people to engage with and function in a positive adult world. There is however, a correlation between having skills, positive mental attitude and economic well being! That's just an obvious fact that people don't want to say.

Likewise, over indulging in negative activities and negative thinking can lead to social, emotional and economic difficulties. It's not rocket science is it?

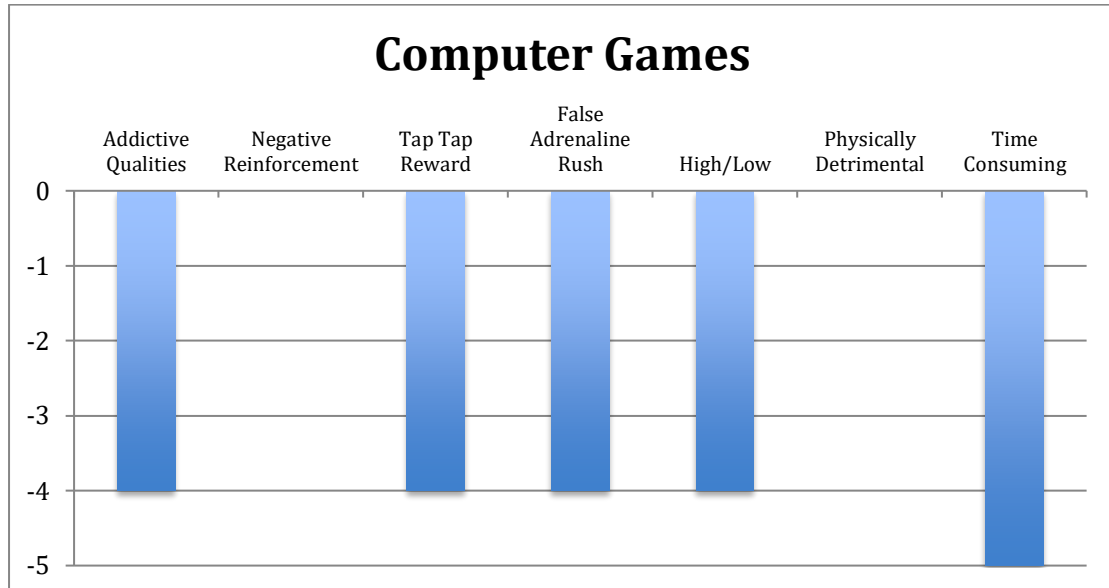
In all of my time of visiting children in the looked after system, listening to how professionals who are paid to look after and prepare young people for the next stage of their lives, allow young people to consistently have their unopposed say over activities and regularly allow them to over indulge in amusement arcades often with either money provided by the local authority or by ill gotten means astounds me. Looking at our graphs, it has nothing positive to bring to the party, but plenty of negatives to consider.

Whilst I am not saying never to go into these places, as there will be occasions when it is cruel to walk past without having a look, and young people need to be exposed to all kinds of risks and threats in this world. You must be in a position to put immediate boundaries in place i.e. time and cost, and you must be able to impose these boundaries without question. If not, don't go in the arcades in the first place!



Computer Games

As with visiting arcades, it has a number of attributes that need to be managed and the use of structured boundaries that can be enforced. In this case, as there is no cost, other than the purchase price, it is about time and avoiding these games taking up too much time when you could be doing something far better instead. Time management and boundaries.



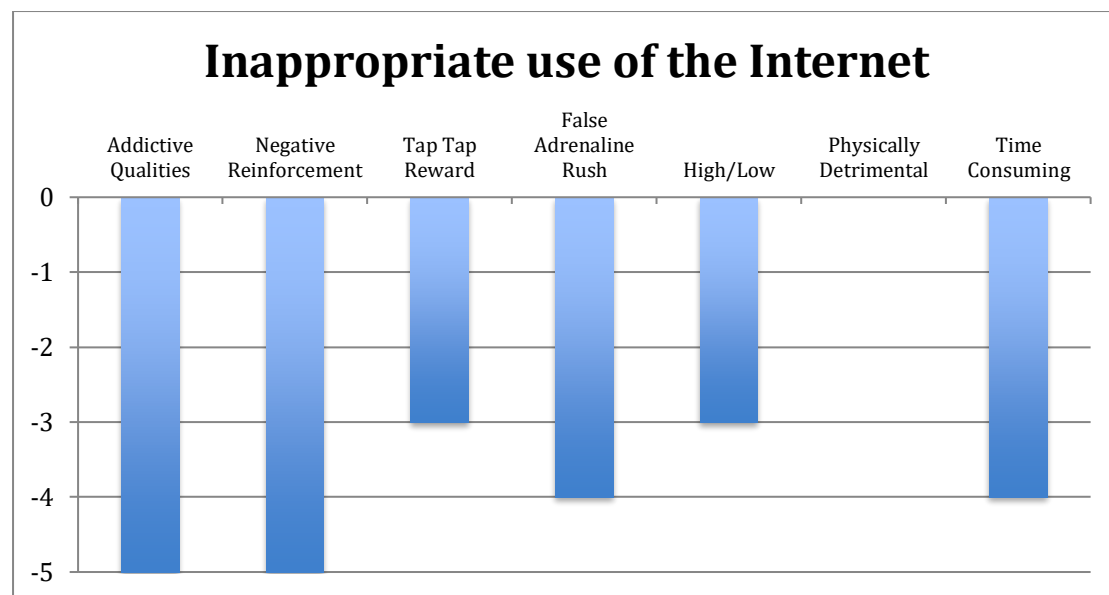
We have to consider the effects of 'negative reinforcement'. If a damaged impressionable young person is allowed to spend significant periods of time in a virtual world killing virtual people. In Ruby Wax's book, *A Sane New World*, she talks about how the brain can be and is molded through environments and events, 'Neuroplasticity'. If constantly exposed to negative thoughts becomes wired in that way. How often have you heard someone say "are they tuned into an issue". The conclusion has to be that we take responsibly for ensuring our damaged impressionable young minds are not over exposed to inappropriate negative reinforcement in whichever form it manifests itself.

Inappropriate use of the Internet

This is one of the most concerning, due to the amount of information that's available and the potential sites which young people can be exposed to. We once had a young man, who's Local Authority had decided, as a point of principal, that all looked after children should have their own computer regardless of their ability or situation. He wasn't far off discharge, and due to their conditions we refused to take responsibility for it. The computer was delayed until he left our service.

Six months later, he had been arrested for downloading child pornography and was going through criminal proceedings. Helpful wasn't it!

The overriding issue here, is when dealing with young people who have been sexually abused and may pose a risk of abusing others, to be allowed access to inappropriate sites would give them visual stimulation that would reconfirm beliefs that abusive behaviour was acceptable. This stimulation may undo years of work and would be many times more powerful than ourselves telling them that all they had been brought up to believe was wrong.



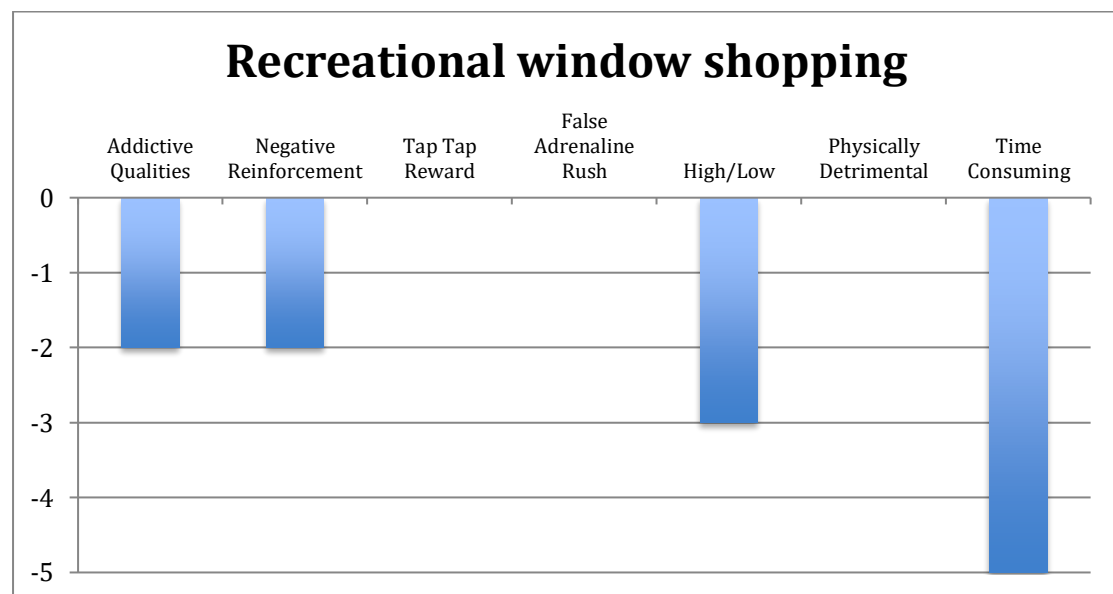
Shopping!

Now this will get an argument going!

Taking young people to town with funds to buy items needed can be a most positive thing. It can be educational, therapeutic, improve money skills and be relationship building. However, wandering aimlessly around town with no money, looking at things which you cannot afford to buy and as a result of wasting time, not doing anything to improve your chances of economic well being in the future, doing what I would call "recreational window shopping" brings nothing to the party and I think has negative attributes.

This is due to the fact, that for some people it can be addictive, leading to negative reinforcement, looking at all of the material items which you cannot buy because of your situation. A high followed by a low, as you leave with very little if anything, for your time, and you've used a lot of time with no positive outcome.

So why do young people in care spend so much time wandering around the shops? The answer is because they have nothing better to do - but our young people have, so let's get on with it!!



Best use of time!

Finally, when considering activities and what to do, whether from a manager's perspective, managing a team of people and engaging children in activities or from a member of staff's point of view, you must take into consideration the best use of time allowed.

In my view, they would fall into the following order of value:

5. Activities that involve more than one day
4. Full day, or full evening
3. Half day/evening, with options to do something else
2. Only used half the amount of time available
1. Only a short amount of time used

A simple cost benefit analysis prior to planning the day is needed. There is no point driving for two hours, to spend a couple of hours and drive home with nothing much to show for it. Over the years I've seen examples of this, where less able members of staff have done this as they fell into the trap of thinking it is an easy way of killing time and managing young people's behavior at the same time. Wrongly they have thought the completion of a visit to a far away place would impress managers and colleagues. Unfortunately a brief conversation with the young people exposes the flawed plan. In conclusion, plan your day well.

	Time of Day			More than one day
	Morning	Afternoon	Evening	
Meals Out				
Arts & Crafts				
Fishing				
Ice Skating				
Football				
Outdoor Ed/Challenge				
Mountain Biking				
Day at Farm				
Going on Holiday				

Stress and Adrenaline

Over the years, it has become apparent to me that one of the most overlooked issues when considering a young person's situation, health and well being, is the effect of adrenaline on the body and how it has an impact on a person's behaviour.

The number of times that I've assessed young people that have been in a state of chaos, where they have literally been shaking with anxiety. The number of times that I've sat through health reviews for children prior to admission, where they have been prescribed medication to calm them down or as a result of information from parents about their behaviour to help the parents manage that behaviour.

The fact that professionals were highly concerned that the child was a victim of sexual abuse but due to a lack of evidence, they were unable to declare it publicly. As a result, the medical practitioner being aware but not being prepared to factor these issues into the equation, chooses to put them on medication.

On numerous occasions, children and young people, shortly after their admission to Pear Tree have had their medication reduced, if not removed altogether.

This, I have no doubt, is as a result of living in a calm, structured and above all safe environment, where they're not constantly on edge wondering where the next threat is coming from.

So what is adrenaline? Let's look at a layperson's guide to adrenaline. I am not a doctor or scientist in any way, so let's just talk about what I know and the information gathered over the years coupled with some interesting facts to put it into some sort of context.

Adrenaline is the 'fight or flight' hormone, designed to help the body to deal with a threat to survival. It enables the body to undergo physical changes, to be able to deal with the threat i.e. fighting the threat off or by running away. Blood is pumped to the limbs for immediate action and senses are on high alert. The brain functions at high speed, taking in and processing all of the information that might have a bearing on the outcome.

Ask any horseman/vet and they will tell you, that horse adrenaline is beyond understanding. Jockeys harness their energy to get a performance from their rides, and they can carry on with near fatal injuries as a result of the amount of adrenaline that is pumping through their body.

Regretfully, knacker men will tell you that horses killed through trauma i.e. as a result of racing or other sport, that their muscles when skinned are physically very different as a result, they are almost white. As are bulls killed in the Spanish bull fighting ring.

Wolves will bate a deer, to enable its adrenaline to be digested by the wolf and its powerful qualities passed on through digestion, will not only to have impact on the wolf itself, but wolves from other packs, will be able to smell the increased adrenaline in the scat left by the first wolf, and interpret that to mean that the first wolf is more powerful than it actually is.

Lone Wolf - Jodi Picoult. <http://www.thewolfcentre.co.uk/>

So what has this got to do with humans? In one of the bars in Darlington, (not that I go there to do any shopping or anything!) has on the wall in a frame, a newspaper cutting from the 1850's telling of the last man in Darlington to be prosecuted for slaughtering a bull without first bating it with dogs. It was considered to be a criminal waste to allow the opportunity for quality meat to go without the effect that bating has on the bulls body.

This shows evidence that our ancestors and wolves understood the effect of adrenaline, which shows that it is nothing new, just forgotten.

How many workaholics do you know that work flat out without a day off work for sickness until they go on holiday. How many Olympic athletes phone in sick? Why is the Army sickness rate less than the social work department?

If adrenaline has such profound effects on the body, it is easy to see how a child who by definition is vulnerable, in a chaotic environment with physical threats to its well being, will be negatively impacted on by the ongoing experience.

Therefore, a key element in our recovery and intervention plan, is the need to calm it all down. Many will know that I'm not a fan of pretend adrenaline, high buzz activities such as theme parks, apart from rare, special occasions, maybe once a year. Yet again, most children and young people in care, will have been to most theme parks, or similar kind of things.

The kind of activities which I promote, as I feel that they have more substance, have more long term positive effects. Young people coming into our service need a period of calm, just to get their metabolism back to a more normal level of functioning.

My observations are that the body benefits from having a level of adrenaline regularly stimulated. Indeed the questions above are answered by that fact that Adrenaline helps to keep your senses alert and this I think likely to maintain the bodies immune system. Keeps minor illnesses away and keeps the brain active. As a result of being involved in activities that stimulate adrenaline at work or play, people are usually physically fitter.

Those that don't experience healthy levels of adrenaline often become desensitized, less alert and altogether less switched on. Lack of physical activity often results in weight and health issues sometimes leading to mental health issues.

So again the issue is the right kind of excitement and not living in a state of constant anxiety and unacceptable stress that has a negative impact on the body chemistry and long-term damage.

Stress in the form of anxiety continues to be the most relevant but underestimated issue in situations with our young people today.

Bruce Perry the internationally renowned Forensic Psychologist explained that different kinds of stress have different effects on the body in that -

Unpredictable	Predictable
Sever	Moderate
Prolonged stress	Controlled
=	=
Vulnerability	Resilience.

With this in mind it is easy to see how living in an abusive environment where you don't know when your going to be beaten or abused next can result in a child growing up with increased vulnerability leading to a further downward spiral of negative events and interactions. (Toxic Stress, Garner et al, 2012/Lieberman 2012)

Whereas a child brought up in a stable positive environment exposed to stress in the form of education, sport and activities grows stronger, building in confidence on the back of successfully dealing with the challenges he or she faces.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Living in a state of constant anxiety with unacceptable levels of stress has often resulted in me considering if a child or young person was actually suffering from 'Post Traumatic Stress Disorder'.

In November 2009 a friend who was ex army, still involved in helping the forces, contacted me. The number of casualties returning from Afghanistan was alarming and with the success of the medical teams ability to keep people alive, the army had to play catch up with their thinking as they admitted they had lost the skills that they previously had, in terms of helping people through rehab as it had been so long since a major operation of this kind. My mate's frustration was that at that time there were some three hundred service men returned home that had been lost in the system and no one knew where they were, or more significantly, what they needed.

They also had an officer's wife about to be homeless due to her husband having been killed.

In reply I said, *"get me their addresses and I'll have them all visited and assessed by Christmas"*. My response was that of an entrepreneur seeing an opportunity and getting involved, then my conscience kicked in and when the question was *"How much will that cost"*? My reply was immediate, nothing! In the time of history we

were in I could not think of anything more important to do and knew with the beliefs and values that I shared with many of my colleagues, I knew we could do it, even if we had to draft in other organisations to help. It was one of those things that just needed organising and getting on with.

In respect of the officers wife, we had an empty house and she could move in immediately. I also made available the holiday homes to any one in need of convalescence.

The response was rapid, and a couple of days later I rendezvoused with a chauffer driven brigadier on the side of the A1 and he followed me to another country house in North Yorkshire. Our meeting was to last a couple of hours of solid talking in a way I hadn't predicted.

I was to learn much later, that my initial reaction had caused a rumpus as I thought it would and focused the minds (perhaps with some embarrassment) to solve those problems. The reason for the meeting was that in the tooing and frowning of information they had identified something else. That I had direct experience of running homes (which they were wanting to do) and our client group possibly suffering from PTSD was not that dissimilar to their client group and what were my thoughts. Tired of doing the same old stuff, the brigadere wanted to know what I thought they should focus their energies on?

My response was to keep people involved in trying to make some kind of contribution, the way solders were considered no use to the forces after a disability or injury would add to their deteriorating mental health and lead to other problems. Getting the men to help each other and still in the game was to me the obviousness way forward. I explained my aspirations as to "make them tax payers" as if they are it means everything else will fall into place.

Many months later I was to learn from a completely separate source that "make them tax payers " was the mantra for the British Army in respect of those in rehab.

The offer on the holiday homes was gratefully received but declined as it was to far from the pub and not on a bus route to the pub.
Can't win them all!!!

P.S.

BBC News 6th September 2013.

Reports of a project where ex-servicemen with disabilities join archeologists to recover a spitfire from a bog. Whilst I will never be able to prove it, when interviewed the servicemen spoke about how given a task together, being physically active and involved in something important had helped them physically and mentally in almost the same sentences I used with the Brigadier. This is one of many expeditions involving disabled soldiers reported in the national press.

The Pear Tree experience may be more significant than you think.

Structured activities verses entertainment?

Throughout my career, I have promoted that staff should be thinking every day about doing activities to avoid having problems and to solve in terms of poor behaviour. Other care facilities don't put as much thought into this as they do into education facilities, but the result is that they spend a lot of time putting things right as the inevitable happens and 'the devil finds work for idle hands!'

As a result of my expectations, it is often interpreted that I think children should be constantly entertained, which is not the case.

There is a time to play, a time to work and a time to rest. Balance is the all important issue. The key words from our Recovery and Intervention Plan are:

- PROTECT
- ENGAGE
- OCCUPY
- RELATE
- INFLUENCE

Indeed, there is plenty of evidence to say that children and young people find it easier to build relationships with people who do things and interact with them. I remember a study carried out on young offenders some years ago, and the post analysis was that those who had gone onto make something of their lives could all identify one individual who showed interest in them above and beyond the call of duty.

What I don't subscribe to is a belief that you can only have fun if it costs money.

My observations over the years are that there is a perverse culture among many young people in the looked after system, that they must have the most expensive, designer items, trainers a priority!

Where does this come from?

My view is that it is linked to such low self-esteem. Previously in society, young people could create an identity by having skills, achievements and an individual personality. In the absence of the above, the focus moves to material items that identify a young person as being part of something, i.e. a group, and the trappings of objects that identify you with that group.

It is easy to see how gang culture has developed so quickly in some parts of the country, as the absence of 'role model leadership', suitable education and training means that they have nothing to work towards. Loyalty and a cause to

fight for gives young people all of the things that they normally get from education training and employment.

In this under class world you are only worth something if you wear the right gear!

As good parents, we are trying to educate our children to be prepared for the life ahead of them and functioning in the adult world. Building their self-esteem, to know better than this and to be valued for all of the right reasons is an important part of that role.

Likewise, activities are often viewed in a similar way, in that they aren't worth doing unless there is a false adrenaline rush and a cost. In their view the way is to be entertained, gratify oneself in material items and experience what you think everyone else is experiencing; that is everyone else with nothing to do and nowhere to go!

My view is simple, that as corporate parents we have a moral duty to see through the above issues and educate our young people and prepare them for the next stage of their lives; to be entirely positive, without being unrealistic as to their future opportunities.

Therefore, high value, structured activities are required. Educate young people as to the value of a good walk, knowing how to cut the grass, use the public swimming baths. Things that we've already talked about that don't cost much, because in the future they will have to pay for it themselves.

Where would they be if they didn't know how to build a life with interests other than when someone takes you out and does something for you, and pays the bill?

"Since this documents 1st draft was written I have been fortunate to assess a young person to come to us. He has been out of education for two and a half years, has no structure to his day but has been quad bike ridding at a circuit and to a number of theme parks. He has holidayed three times at the seaside. Would anyone like to bet me they took a principled avoidance of the amusement arcades?

His main daytime activity is the Xbox. As I have said earlier regarding my own aspiration as a child, he said, "I would die without my Xbox". The home is unable to offer any education, which is why he is moving to us. On arrival his education will start with some outstanding 'role model leadership' and a whole 'real world' will open up to him."

Update, 1 Year on.

This young man is taller, fitter and enjoys physical exercise. He regularly plays squash and enjoys walking and mountain biking. He has fully engaged in his education and has not been involved in any inappropriate behaviour.

Conclusion

As a corporate parent, you are in a position of great importance as the rest of their lives is in your hands. The last word on the list above is 'influence'. Pear Tree is now in its 24th year and in that time we have seen so many young people come through our service as frightened, difficult and often very disturbed young people. When they leave they are without doubt very different. Whilst we can't say that every young person is back on the normal developmental pathway as if they have come from the most stable of backgrounds, some have!

Others without question have managed to reach their own full potential. This hasn't happened by accident. It happens because of the hard work and effort that goes into their experience while they are with us. It is a life changing experience. As professor Finley Graham once said to me in the early 90s *"judge their experience by the opportunities that these young people have had and your work by how hard you've strived to give them those experiences"*. With that in mind, I know we have consistently done our best, for 23 years and don't doubt we will continue to, for years to come.

Postscript

In July 2013, with council cuts beginning to have impact on the financial stability of the company it was necessary for me to engage the duty managers to tightly manage every activity every day. As a result only high value structured activities, with the odd treat thrown in were allowed.

The feedback was that we had had one of the most positive summer holidays ever with a lot of very happy young people. Whilst we had to manage the money and the mileage this was done without any negative effect on the young people.

David Bartlett.

MD September 2013.

Updated/Revised May 2015

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