

ANSON CABIN PROJECT

Open Access Play Project 2007-11

Replication by Other Communities

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MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL

Introduction

The work of the Anson Cabin Project provides a model that is replicable by other communities, particularly on densely populated estates with significant deprivation. This report gives some of the background to the Project, how it has developed and focuses on the specific, successful areas of work that should be possible to reproduced in other communities.

In the summer of 2001, a consultation was undertaken with residents of the Anson Estate, a very deprived estate (bottom 1%) on the border of the Rusholme and Longsight wards in Manchester. This explored what was wanted and needed in the area. This consultation showed that activities for children and young people were the highest needed provision identified by those living on the Estate. This led to the creation of The Anson Cabin Project in December 2001.

A small portacabin was hired with funds granted by the local police team, and was used during the evenings by play and youth workers to deliver activities for children and young people in the area aged 5 to 14. The sessions were kept to under 2 hours long as there were no toilet facilities, which meant it could not be registered with Ofsted.

After 5 years of running this basic provision, it was recognised that more could be done by the Project and so further funding was sought to expand the project. A partnership was developed with the local Residents Association, which resulted in a City Council grant to purchase a large portacabin with toilet facilities and disabled access. This meant that the Cabin would be able to open for longer hours and be registered with Ofsted to offer a community playgroup facility.

At the same time, a successful application was made to the Big Lottery's 'Playful Ideas' programme for a 4 year Open Play project. In October 2006 the double size portacabin was put in place (although full installation of water and electricity was not completed until March 2007). In May 2007, the Open Play lottery project started.

Using a Portacabin

The simple structure – a double portacabin – is a cost-effective way of creating a building suitable for children to play. However, the use of the small amount of land around the Cabin and of local Parks is almost as important. Our experience taught us that, with a reasonable amount of floorspace, when planning is effective, an amazing range of activity can take place.

What we also identified was that, just as valuable as the activities within the Cabin itself, was the opportunity to use it as a base to plan activities with Children that would take place outside – in our garden area, in local parks and, as described later, in other places of interest. Identifying facilities as close to areas of populations as possible makes it easy for children and parents to access, but also increases pride in the community and gives a sense of ownership of the project to those attending. Our use of the local park has led to increased ownership and usage of the park on other occasions by families who say how much more they now value it.

Being Diverse

The Cabin has been a venue for diverse creative and performing arts activity (drawing, painting, graffiti, sculpture, textiles, dance, drama, music); health activity (cooking, Wii, sexual, safety and other workshops), as well as a multitude of play activities in line with the Hughes Play Types¹ (Rough and Tumble, Socio-dramatic, Social, Creative, Communication, Dramatic, Symbolic, Deep, Exploratory, Fantasy, Imaginative, Loco motor, Object, Role, Recapitulative).

¹ Bob Hughes, 'A Playworker's Taxonomy of Play Types' 2nd Ed., Playlink, Ely, Cambs, 2002

This diversity is essential to meet the wide range of differing needs that the children coming have.

We are always aware of the need to be adaptable in our activities, including for children with both physical and mental disabilities. Whatever the programme, activity or trip, we are able to adapt what we provide appropriately. Over the last 2 years we have enabled 3 children in wheelchairs to go on trips and have worked with Aim High to enable 30 children with a range of disabilities, including autism, aspergers, cerebral palsy and deafness, to participate in our holiday programmes. This is in addition to several regular Cabin attendees with different disabilities. The Cabin itself has full disabled access with wide doors and a disabled toilet.

We find that the Wii is a particularly good activity to enable involvement of almost all disabled children. Other examples of adapting programmes include how we enable a child with cerebral palsy to play Tig. After discussing her getting involved she asked to be pushed by another child – and this enables her to fully participate. The only problem is the other children arguing over who will get to push her!

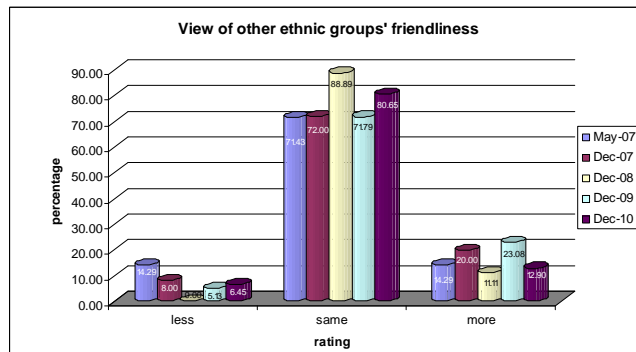
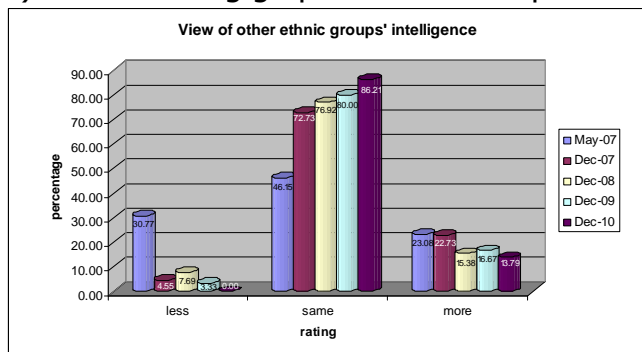
We also have a basketball net at a suitable height and, particularly for autistic children, repeat activities that they enjoy and replicate indoor activities, outdoors. This has included 2 children playing in the sink or in puddles. Our response was to put water trays and paddling pools outside and create games for all children to participate, alongside these children.

Celebrating Cultural Diversity

The Cabin’s approach to celebrating cultural and ethnic difference has been an unqualified success. The integration of sessions on different cultures, nationalities and religions into the regular sessions, meant that they were not seen as an add-on or separate. On the back of this work, arranging visits to local, diverse venues such as the Manchester Jewish Museum, Sikh Temple, Manchester Cathedral, Eco-Mosque and the Chinese Art Centre was a natural extension and further contributed to the children and young people’s easy attitude towards each other.

In addition to this, children also got involved in local events such as the Manchester Parade, Chinese Parade, Irish Parade and Euro-Cultured, as well as organising our own Community Parades, including one with the theme of ‘Countries of the World’.

We were also able to evidence the improved attitude of children to those of other ethnic groups through our evaluations, which asked the same, measurable questions each year (see appendix 1). The following graphs show the improvements:



Involvement: Children’s Board, Junior Play Workers, Street Team

Involvement in planning and delivery is essential to get significant improvements in both skills and confidence for children and young people. It also leads to greater respect for the premises

and equipment as well as mutual respect with staff and volunteers. Measures of self-esteem rise as children are given real opportunities to take control over this aspect of their lives.

Our two initial methods of involvement at The Cabin were a Children's Board and Junior Play Workers. The former initially gave 6 children aged 7 to 10 the opportunity to meet with the Management Committee to increase mutual understanding, and with staff to direct the work of The Cabin. They then planned, alongside staff, activities for The Cabin and particularly some of the trips and fun days. The latter gave the opportunity for 6 children aged 7 to 13 the opportunity to shadow staff and support the delivery of play and other activities.

The children themselves devised the selection methods for both groups and, over time, brought other children into these roles. However, as we reached saturation point, with nearly all regular attenders having undertaken the roles, a malaise started to set in. At that point we discussed with the Children's Board finding new approaches for involvement and, at the beginning of 2010, came up with the Street Team – children volunteering in the local community undertaking gardening, litter picks, painting and other useful roles.

Training

A number of our older children (10+) and young people were very interested in gaining new skills and qualifications. Our first training session we undertook was how to plan a programme using the NAOMIE framework². The training was for 8 of our 10 to 11 year olds and enabled them to take account of Needs, Aims, Objectives, Methods, Implementation and Evaluation in their planning. This easily understood framework continues to be used in our planning by these children and their successors.

Within the Lottery project, we then delivered an accredited leadership training course covering communication skills, programming, budgeting, leadership styles, groupwork, marketing, health issues and volunteering. 10 young people attended the course with 7 achieving the accreditation.

We then delivered several further courses that meant that we covered all five areas of the Every Child Matters Outcomes Framework, including:

Accredited drama sessions: 15 attendees with 7 accreditations

First aid: 8 attendees with accreditations

Lifesavers course: 6 attendees with 4 accreditations

Rock climbing level one: 6 attendees with 3 accreditations

Skiing level one: 6 attendees with 4 accreditations

As well as the accredited outcomes, we also recorded achievement, in line with 'Credit Where It's Due'³ and 25 young people gained at least one recorded outcome. Overall 13 young people gained at least one accreditation, with a total number of 33 accreditations being gained. 25 young people gained at least one recorded outcome.

Trips

Part of the Leadership Training Course was the opportunity for young people to plan and fundraise for a trip of their own interest. They grasped this opportunity wholeheartedly, fundraising through letters to local companies and organisations, and running a raffle at one of our Fundays. They raised almost £600, which bought 2 8 person tents a 2 person tent, stools,

² Jonny Wineberg, *'Time to Transform Our Communities'*, www.timetotoc.org/needs.html, CIC, Manchester 2006

³ Wendy Flint, *'Credit Where It's Due'*, 3rd Ed., NYA, Leicester 2005

stoves, kettle, crockery and cutlery as well as contributing to food and hire of a minibus and driver.

The 6 young people only needed to pay £15 each for the 2 night camping trip to the Lake District, accompanied by staff and volunteers from local Police Community Support Officers (whom they had also asked for, and received, support). They went rambling, stream walking, played team games, cooked and learnt a range of camping skills.

Their efforts also led to a further trip for the younger age group, 8-12s, who went on a 2 night trip to Snowdonia. They went rambling, stream walking, made bivouacs, played team games and learnt a range of camping skills. However, whilst they were able to do much of this, they were less able to cope with the exertion of some of the activities and the lack of home comforts.

Our recommendation would be to target such activity to over 12s, particularly where they have fundraised for it themselves and so are motivated to enjoy the experience more.

Other trips that children and young people have planned include swimming, which is the most popular trip with the over 8's; theme parks, laser quest, local parks including play builder sites, museums (Science and Industry, Imperial War, People's History, Urbis and Gallery of Costumes), bowling and the cinema. These sit alongside the trips to culturally diverse venues and provide a rich experience for children that, we know, raises their aspirations as to what they want to achieve.

Children and young people's involvement in planning such trips is crucial in yielding additional motivation and inspiration for future activities.

Parenting courses

29 parents and carers accessed parenting training through the Anson Cabin Project, and 12 parents reported that the Anson Cabin Project helped them to access employment and further education. We used the Webster Stratton Course for this with 2 staff and 2 parents being trained to deliver this at the Cabin. We recommend this approach as it gave us the capacity to deliver 3 courses flexibly for our parents rather than having to rely on outside trainers. Through good networking, we have also been able to refer other parents needing help with their children to another centre delivering a parent survival course when we were not.

We held 28 English and Numeracy sessions at the Anson Cabin Project, through the International Learning Centre, with 5 local parents gaining levels one and two in English and Numeracy. The feedback was excellent with a recognition of improved opportunity to get jobs and participate more fully in the community. This also helped us develop our link with the International Learning Centre, leading to 4 local parents having the opportunity to gain NVQ Level two in Business and Administration.

We have also held two family numeracy sessions at the Anson Cabin Project through Manchester Adult Education Centre, which were specifically designed to give parents the skills and knowledge to help their children with homework. 15 parents benefited from this course.

We have also helped 3 parents access employment by completing references for them as well as employing 2 parents during holiday periods, giving them the opportunity to gain new skills and confidence to gain further employment.

We recommend this approach of involving parents in activities that benefit them as well as their children within any children's project as it creates a whole community atmosphere for the

project. It has also meant that our new initiatives are more likely to be supported and we have been able to push boundaries positively, particularly around challenging stereotyping and bullying behaviour. It also means that the parents trust us to discipline their children, where necessary, without this needing to be taken back into the home setting, thus leading to a trusting environment for all concerned.

Youth Work

A natural extension of our work came about as the children who had been attending the Cabin for several years became teenagers. Several had been active on our Children's Board and as Junior Playworkers and were keen to become leaders for their teenage peers.

We did recognise the need for specialist youth work, particularly around issue-based activities such as sexual health, careers, personal safety, criminal behaviour, stress and peer pressure. Whilst we did employ a part-time youth worker, it was the specialists we brought in to deliver sessions on issues identified by the young people where we saw the best impact. Again, young people's involvement in planning and delivery of activities was a key aspect to our success.

We currently have over 30 young people attending our youth sessions, including several who never attended as children. What is hugely positive is the understanding of our young people of the need to be welcoming and involve all their peers, derived from the experience and environment that the Cabin has offered them.

Whilst we have chosen to establish our own youth provision, we recognise that it is just as appropriate to partner with another provider, where one exists, so that young people can transition to youth provision successfully.

One aspect that, we believe, arises from our focus on involvement is the atmosphere in the Cabin is not one of only being for younger children. Offering them the respect of staff and volunteers throughout their experience with us means that they still feel comfortable attending activities here as they get older. They know that they can set the agenda and direct new pieces of work as equals and so continue to attend. This is different from many other providers who struggle with 'keeping' young people who see the building they came to as a child as not one they wish to still go to as a teenager.

Evaluation

Simple and consistent evaluation has been a cornerstone of identifying what works and what needs to be improved. We use a one sheet evaluation form with fifteen questions in total - thirteen quantitative and 2 qualitative (Appendix 1). The forms are given out at the end of the summer programme (for those who do not attend regularly) and in during December.

Eleven of the quantitative questions ask for a rating on a 0 – 10 scale, with two point intervals shown (i.e. 0,2,4,6,8,10). Satisfaction in these areas is measured by a score of 6 or above. This method also gives the opportunity to identify an average and to see the spread of scores. There are two quantitative questions on attitudes towards other ethnicities that measure perceptions of intelligence and friendliness. These help reflect the effectiveness of our multi-cultural work.

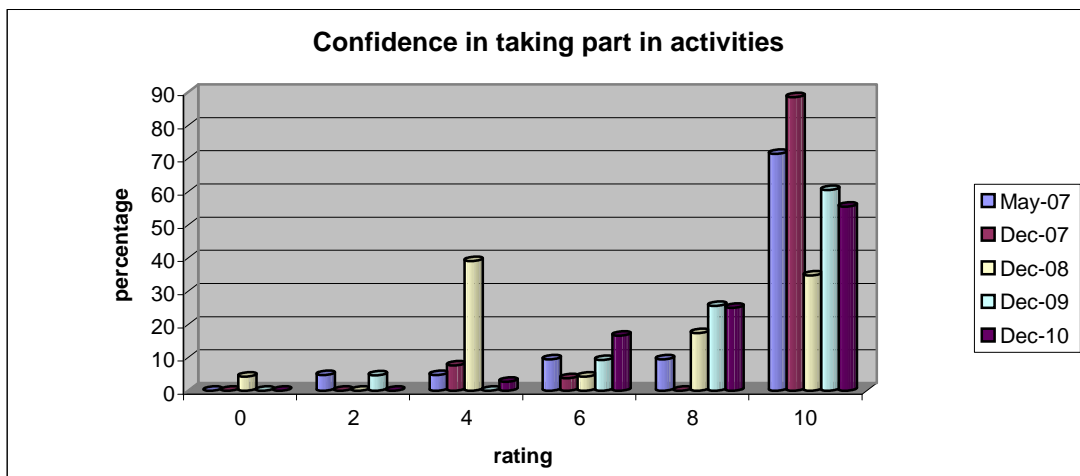
The two qualitative questions ask what would increase involvement and what would make activities better.

The evaluation is, for the most part, organised by children themselves who distribute and collect back the forms. Where children have literacy issues, they are supported to complete them. The simple nature of the form makes this an easy exercise.

For the parents, we ask similar questions from their perspective with the addition of whether the Cabin has helped the parent engage in other activities i.e. employment/training/voluntary work etc. (Appendix 2). Parent feedback is also collected informally through general conversation. We also ensure that we give feedback to parents on their children’s development, particularly younger children.

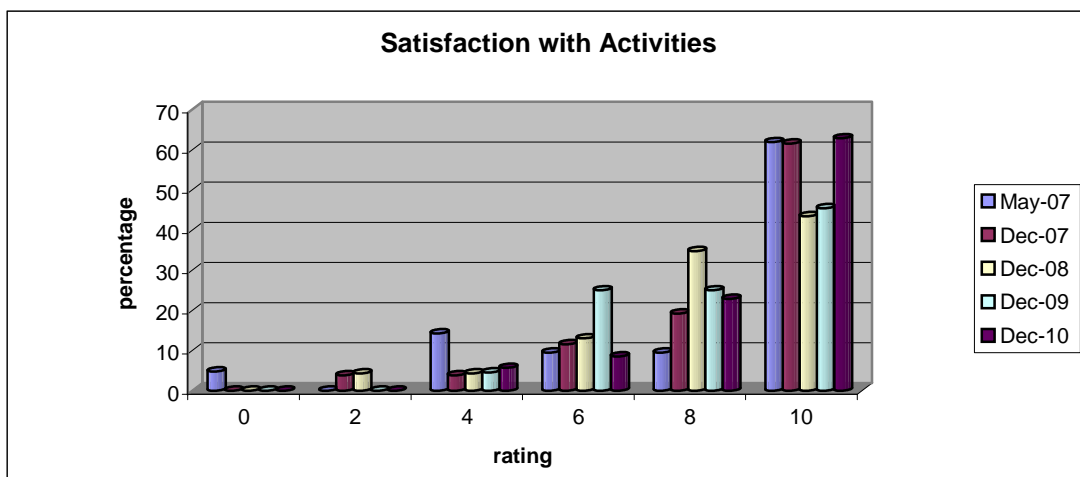
The most important part of the process is that we do not just collect the forms and glance through them, but that we analyse them, producing an annual evaluation report with recommendations that we look to implement over the next year. (A copy of our 2010 Evaluation Report is available on our website at www.ansoncabin.co.uk.)

One of our greatest successes was as a result of identifying a sharp decline in confidence in taking part in activities in 2008. Further analysis showed that this was a combination of new children coming on to the project and some incidents of bullying that had been occurring. We put in place a new members induction programme with befriending of new participants and a new project around no tolerance for bullying with a focus on older children helping those younger. The improvements shown in subsequent evaluations evidenced success of these approaches.

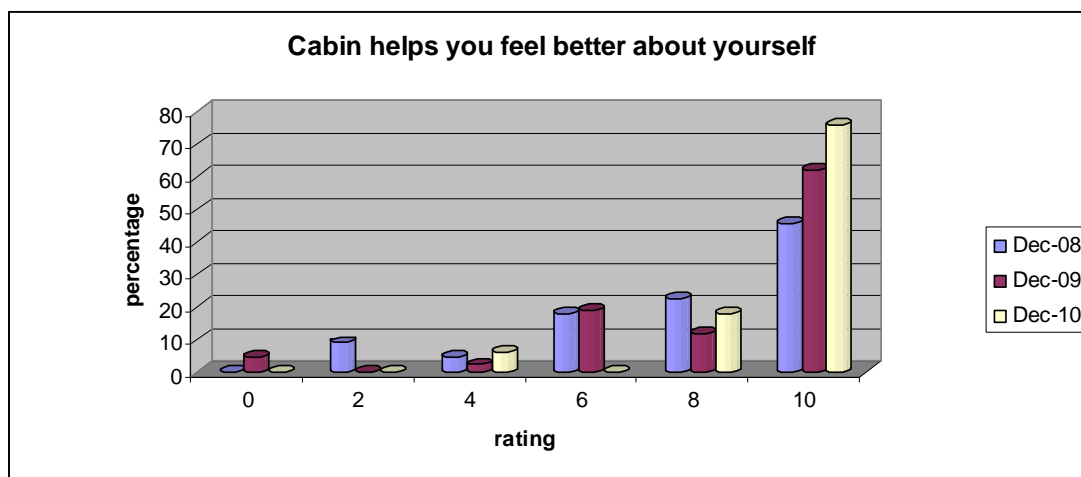


| | May 07 | Dec 07 | Dec 08 | Dec 09 | Dec 10 |
|------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Percentage saying confident: | 90.5% | 92.3% | 56.5% | 95.3% | 97.2% |
| Average Rating: | 8.76 | 9.38 | 7.48 | 8.74 | 8.67 |

Two more of our headline results are shown below.



| | May 07 | Dec 07 | Dec 08 | Dec 09 | Dec 10 |
|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Percentage Satisfied: | 81.0% | 92.3% | 91.4% | 95.3% | 94.3% |
| Average Rating: | 8.10 | 8.62 | 8.17 | 8.23 | 8.86 |



| | Dec 08 | Dec 09 | Dec 10 |
|---------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| Percentage saying helped feel better: | 86.4% | 92.9% | 93.9% |
| Average Rating: | 7.82 | 8.38 | 9.27 |

Conclusions: 8 tried and tested methods replicable in other communities.

A low-cost building is just as good, if not better, than an all-singing, expensive edifice. The effective planning of its use, and the willingness to use other venues, is the most important thing, along with the ownership by its users.

Being Diverse is crucial to enable your activities to meet the wide range of differing needs of children. Be prepared to put on as many different activities as possible, be directed by the children themselves and be adaptable. Using NAOMIE can help implement this.

Involvement of Children and Young People is essential to build their self-esteem and skills. We recommend both a Children's Board and Junior Play Workers as initial methods, with children devising selection procedures themselves. Turnover of some children every 6 months keeps the groups fresh, allows more children to have ownership and gives inbuilt succession planning. Finding creative, innovative ways of involvement, generated by children, (such as our Street Team) is also important to keep the processes dynamic and attractive.

Celebrating Cultural Diversity is of huge value regardless of the ethnic make-up of your community. Integrate sessions on different cultures, nationalities and religions into your regular sessions; arranging visits to local, diverse venues; get involved in local events and arrange your own. Make sure you evidence your success in this area with a measurable evaluation.

Trips, particularly to local venues, are great to reinforce learning and increase enjoyment but keep **Residentials** for the 12s and older. Their involvement in planning and fundraising makes them more motivated to enjoy the experience and inspires them to plan future activities.

Training children how to use the NAOMIE programming framework is a great way to help them understand how to plan activities. Further training in communication skills and other aspects of leadership should then be attractive and adding accreditation to the mix will motivate them to get involved.

Parenting Courses help parents get a direct benefit from a project in addition to that enjoyed by their children and helps create a whole community atmosphere. It also leads to more support for new initiatives and increased trust in the project's care for their children.

Integrated Evaluation helps identify successes and areas for improvement and can be as simple as completing a form on a single sheet of A4 paper.

Annual Evaluation 2010

1. Were you satisfied with the last year's activities put on by the Anson Cabin Project?
 Totally unsatisfied 0 2 4 6 8 10 Totally satisfied
2. Did you have opportunity to be involved with planning and delivering the activities?
 No Opportunity 0 2 4 6 8 10 Lots of opportunity
3. Does the service provided by the Anson Cabin Project meet your needs and interests?
 Not at all 0 2 4 6 8 10 Totally
4. What would increase your involvement with the Anson Cabin Project?
5. What would make the activities put on by the Anson Cabin Project better?
6. How confident would you say you are in taking part in activities with other children/young people?
 Not at all 0 2 4 6 8 10 Totally
7. How confident would you say you are in new situations?
 Not at all 0 2 4 6 8 10 Totally
8. Has coming to the Cabin in the last year increased your confidence?
 Not at all 0 2 4 6 8 10 Totally
9. Has coming to the Cabin in the last year helped you feel better about yourself?
 Not at all 0 2 4 6 8 10 Totally
10. Has coming to the Cabin made you believe you can do more with your life?
 Not at all 0 2 4 6 8 10 Massively
11. Do you have the ability to help run activities for other people your age?
 Not at all 0 2 4 6 8 10 Totally
12. Do you find it easy to make friends with other children/young people from other ethnic groups?
 Not at all 0 2 4 6 8 10 Totally
13. What do you think of most people from other ethnic groups as compared to your ethnic group?
 They are less intelligent Just as intelligent More intelligent
 They are less friendly Just as friendly More friendly
14. Has coming to the Anson Cabin Project made you more positive to people from other ethnic groups?
 Not at all 0 2 4 6 8 10 Totally
15. Any other comments?

Gender: Male Female

Please circle your age: 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

Name (optional)

Thank you for your feedback.

Parent's Annual Evaluation 2010

1. Were you satisfied with the last year's activities put on by the Anson Cabin Project?
 Totally unsatisfied 0 2 4 6 8 10 Totally satisfied
2. Does the service provided by the Anson Cabin Project meet your child/ren's needs and interests?
 Not at all 0 2 4 6 8 10 Totally
3. How do you find out about what is on at the Anson Cabin Project? (please tick all that apply)
 Sent to home Leaflets Newsletter From friends Posters School
 Family Other (please describe)
4. What would increase your child/ren's involvement with the Anson Cabin Project?
5. What would make the activities put on by the Anson Cabin Project better?
6. How confident would you say your child is in taking part in activities with other children/young people?
 Not at all 0 2 4 6 8 10 Totally
7. How confident would you say your child is in new situations?
 Not at all 0 2 4 6 8 10 Totally
8. Has coming to the Cabin made your child/ren believe they can do more with their life than before they came?
 Not at all 0 2 4 6 8 10 Massively
9. Has coming to the Cabin made your child/ren more confident in situations with their friends?
 Not at all 0 2 4 6 8 10 Massively
10. Has the Anson Cabin Project helped you to engage in other activities i.e. employment/training/voluntary work etc.
 Not at all 0 2 4 6 8 10 Massively
11. How has the Cabin helped you as a parent?
12. Any other comments?

Gender: Male Female Please circle your child/ren's age: 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

Name (optional)

Thank you for your feedback.