

GEORGE'S FUND

Round Two REPORT



Impact Report March 2026

Contents

About Herefordshire Community Foundation	Page 2
Memorial Funds	Page 2
About George's Fund	Page 3
A Word from Laura	Page 4
Fundraising for George's Fund	Page 5 and 7
Summary of Round 1 funded projects	Page 8
Table of funded projects	Pages 9 and 10
• Cultivating Learning and Nature CIC	Pages 11 to 14
• Brampton Abbotts C of E Primary School	Pages 15 to 18
• Hope Support Services	Pages 19 to 22
• Herefordshire Nurture through Nature CIC	
• Orchard Multi-Academy Trust	Pages 23 to 28
• Longtown Outdoor Learning Trust	Pages 29 to 32
• Riverside Primary School	Pages 33 to 36
• Growing Local CIC	Pages 37 to 40
• Marches Family Network	Pages 41 to 46
• The Cart Shed	Pages 47 to 50
Contact details and donate QR code	Pages 51 to 54
	On back page

About Herefordshire Community Foundation

Founded in 2002, Herefordshire Community Foundation is a vibrant, independent grant-making charity dedicated to helping people and communities thrive across Herefordshire, with a strong commitment to supporting local people.

By bringing together donor funds (including George's Fund), trust transfers, programme funding and generous donations, HCF positively impacts the lives of vulnerable, isolated, and disadvantaged people, with a primary focus on those living in Herefordshire.

The foundation proudly backs charities, voluntary organisations and community groups that deliver lasting public benefit, while also providing direct grants to individuals and families who need extra support. Since it began, HCF has distributed over £8,000,000 across the county, driving positive change, strengthening communities, and transforming lives every single day.

Memorial Funds

HCF memorial funds offer a thoughtful and lasting way to honour loved ones with a connection to Herefordshire. We work at your pace, making arrangements as quickly or slowly as you wish. If required, a fund can be established within days.

Memorial funds provide an opportunity to:

- Celebrate the memory of a loved one in a meaningful and enduring way.
- Support a cause that held a special place in their heart.
- Create a positive and personal focus for family and friends to unite around.
- Augment donations through tax-efficient schemes e.g. Gift Aid.
- Avoid the complexities and administrative burden of establishing a separate charitable memorial trust or foundation through the Charity Commission.

About George's Fund

George's Fund was set up by Laura Hughes in 2020, to honour and remember her five-year-old son, George.

Laura and her family had their lives turned upside down on 27 August 2020 when their son suddenly became sick. The next day he was diagnosed with Diffuse Intrinsic Pontine Glioma (DIPG), a highly malignant brain tumour (cancer) which affects children almost exclusively between the ages of 4 and 11. In the consultant's words, they had been "hit by lightning".

Determined to make the most of the time they had left, Laura, her husband Tom, and George's two brothers, Oscar (six) and Harry (two), focused on creating precious family moments and just six weeks later, on 12th October 2020, George passed away peacefully in their arms.

George's Fund celebrates George's short but meaningful life. Laura explains, *"As a mum, one of your most important roles is to reassure your children that everything will be okay. I couldn't do that for George. But if, as a family, we can make a small difference in another child's life, it will give us great comfort."*

George's Fund supports projects for children aged 3 to 11 in Herefordshire. Applications are considered annually.

Sign up to our e-newsletter at impact@herefordshirecf.org for updates.

A Word from Laura

“George’s Fund was never meant to become what it has.

It started as something very small, just a way for us, as a family, to try and make sense of what had happened and to do something positive in George’s name. I don’t think I had any real idea where it would go, only that if we could make even a small difference to another child, that would matter.

What has happened since has been far beyond anything I expected.

With the support of family, friends and a growing community around us, we’ve now been able to fund projects across Herefordshire that are doing genuinely important work. Reading through this report, the impact is clear, time outdoors helping children build confidence, feel calmer, and find their place.

One of the things I’ve come to love most is the fundraising side of it. Seeing people turn up in their orange t-shirts, giving their time and energy, and the generosity that comes with that, it never really stops surprising me.

There are still moments where it all feels a bit surreal, that something so positive has come from something so difficult. But knowing George’s name is part of something that is helping other children brings us a huge amount of comfort.

Thank you to everyone who has supported the fund in any way. It means more than I can properly put into words.”



Fundraising for George's Fund

Laura and her family would like to express their heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has supported George's Fund through fundraising efforts and donations. While there are too many incredible people to list, here are some memorable highlights:

Couch To 5K Charity Walk Nige and his partner carried a couch 5 kilometres across Herefordshire, with a collection pot for George's Fund.

Bridie and Faith completed The Lakeland Trails Marathon in June 2025, taking in a complete circuit of Coniston with a 3000ft elevation! They raised nearly £2,000

Malvern End to End in May 2025, saw 60 people, 4 dogs, 2 coaches, 60 cans of Fanta, 10 miles, 14 hills, 1,000 bluebells and £2,000 raised Thanks to Steven Massey Hiking Tours who gave time and energy to make it happen.

George's friend Floyd took on an incredible 30-day challenge, covering 5 kilometres each day through a mix of running, walking, and cycling throughout September 2025. He completed the final day on 29th September, his 10th birthday (a date that would also have marked George's birthday.) In total, he raised an amazing £6,885

Floyd was supported by his school, St James Primary school, who held a wear an orange t-shirt day with cake sale to boost his fundraising at the start, by £104 sponsorship

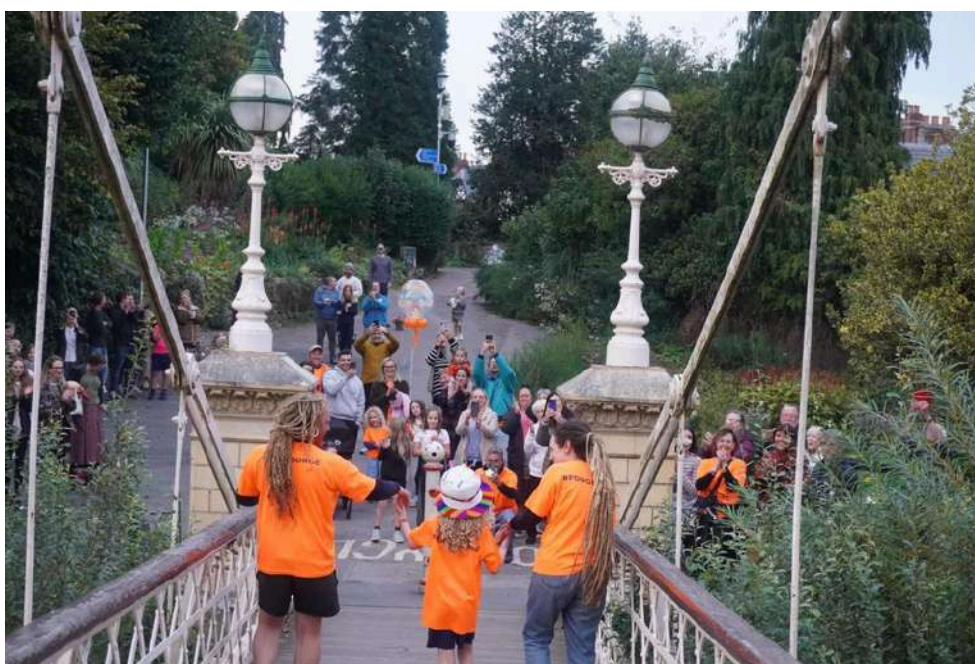
There was another 'Spin for George' fundraiser held at De Koffee Pot with support from Full Cycle Studio "Joe's Spin Sessions" The sessions in September 2025 had 31 bikes, 12 hours of riding and raised an incredible £5784.16.

Fundraising for George's Fund

The Hoople Group chose George's Fund as their charity for the football match versus Allpay at Pegasus FC on 12th September 2025.

George's mum's old school friend Emma aced the Cardiff Half-Marathon and raised £340.

Super donations from Madley Annual Charity Bingo, St Michael's Bodenham CE Primary School, Hereford Rugby Football Club' Charity Quiz.



Floyd reaches the finish line of fundraising for George

Summary of Round 2 funded projects

The second round of funding for George's Fund awarded £38,476 across ten outdoor projects to support the emotional and physical wellbeing of children aged 3 to 11 in Herefordshire. This supported projects throughout 2024 and 2025.

There was a broad range of projects across the county, and activities included natural history learning, structured outdoor learning, gardening, campfire cooking, tool use, and forest school improvements and activities. The projects gave children the opportunity to be adventurous by exploring, playing, and learning outdoors, building resilience and improving their health and wellbeing.

Round 2 funded projects

Name	Project	Project Outline	Award	Number of Beneficiaies
Cultivating Learning and Nature CIC	Future Naturalists Phase 2	Offering young people the opportunity to improve natural history skills by connecting with target schools, implementing public events and training up other professionals.	£4,600	916
Brampton Abbotts CE Primary School	Through Nature Navigators	Children in KS2 who rarely access nature will learn bushcraft survival skills outdoors, working with a Forest School leader over ten weeks.	£1,435	67
Hope Support Services	Hope Forest School Days	Hope's under-11 groups will learn outdoor skills and outdoor cooking with a forest school leader, engaging in activities to help them talk about their experiences and make friends.	£2,688	16
Hereford Nurture through Nature	Wild and Well	A newly devised structured outdoor programme to support vulnerable young children in Leominster to connect with nature through activities such as campfire cooking and tool use.	£3,224	70
Orchard Multi-Academy Trust c/o Stretton Sugwas C of E Academy	Forest School area enhancement	Enhancing the school's Forest School site will foster emotional literacy and promote mental health and well-being in children through immersive nature experiences and supportive peer interactions.	£4,800	250

Round 2 funded projects

Name	Project	Project Outline	Award	Number of Beneficiaies
Longtown Outdoor Learning Trust	Longtown Outdoor Learning Programme	100 days of outdoor learning and adventure experiences for year 4-6 primary school age children living within a 30-45 minute radius of our centre in Longtown.	£4,140	56
Riverside Primary School	Children's Garden Project	Children's Garden to support Emotional and Mental Health and Wellbeing and give the children opportunities to plant, grow and nurture their plants, grow produce and have fun doing it.	£3,500	100
Growing Local CIC	Children's Garden Workshops	15 fully funded holiday workshops at Growing Local's Children's Educational Garden in South Wye for families of pre-school and primary aged children.	£4,988	300
Marches Family Network	Play+ for 11 and under -	Play sessions specifically for a smaller age range, providing the opportunity to socialise with peers of a similar age.	£4,326	12
The Cart Shed	Explore the Woods	Sessions for neurodivergent year 6 pupils experiencing high levels of anxiety/distress, who are transitioning to High School will give the opportunity to learn to understand and manage their emotions to enable successful transition.	£4,775	10

Cultivating Learning & Nature (CLaN) – Future Naturalists Two

CLaN is passionate about engaging people of all ages in ecological issues, natural history and wildlife. They work across Herefordshire with all ages, hosting community events and working with schools.

The award from George's fund enabled CLaN to carry out 24 school sessions of wildlife engagement, focusing on identification. This varied across schools and included:

- looking at bird wings/skulls
- hunting for plants
- invertebrate recording
- pond dipping

One high school focused on botany and this acted as a work experience day for those interested in a career in ecology.

“The children all absolutely adored the opportunity to hold lots of different objects including bones and insects. The consensus across the school is that all year groups could have happily continued looking for wildlife in our forest school area using the collecting nets and pots for hours and hours! The whole school was buzzing with excitement after the workshops.”



Tim and Children pond dipping.

Other comments from pupils included:

“It was fun seeing how many different insects there were in one small area.”

“It was great so many fascinating species.”

“I enjoyed being outside.”

“It was crazy how small some of the bones were.”

“I loved the poo!”

“My favourite part was that we got to do bug hunting”

“I liked seeing insects I’ve never seen before”

“We felt happy but a little bit scared about what we might find”

“Tim was really good at telling us about the animal skulls he bought with him”

“We liked how Tim loved nature”



A boy studying and an invertebrate he captured

Each school collated data of species found and these have been sent to the school and Herefordshire Biological Records Centre (via iRecord). There were just over 1400 records made overall. Many species found were very common, but others were rare and unique recordings.

CLaN also ran the following activities with schools and the public.

- two courses for teachers and professionals who work with children on botany and freshwater life
- three public events in Garway, Leominster and Ross-on-Wye

One mother commented, *“We loved it, so heartwarming to see the kids running around all excited about what they can find.”*

On Facebook, Ross on Wye Community Garden said it was the most people that had ever attended for that sort of event.



Future Naturalist family event in Leominster.

Brampton Abbotts CE Primary School

The school received an award from George's Fund, which allowed them to run **Nature Navigators**, in which children in Key Stage 2 who rarely access nature, learnt bushcraft and survival skills outdoors, working with a Forest School leader over six weeks.



Children building shelters

A varied programme of activities enabled the children to grow over the six weeks.

Week 1: Fire. Being able to build and maintain a fire in various situations is a life skill. The children learned about different types of fire, materials, and lighting methods. They cooked a meal using the Dutch Oven (cooking with embers on top of and below the pot).

Week 2: Shelters. How do you make a shelter that is comfortable, safe, strong and leakproof? The children learnt about different types of shelter and why a waterproof shelter is crucial. The children constructed and tested their own shelters.

Week 4: Wellbeing. Bushcraft is about enjoying being in nature and thriving, not just surviving. The children were invited to connect with nature, cooperate and be mindful, allowing them to discover what makes them happy in the wild.

Week 5: The Wild Community. Learning about the flora and fauna outside. The children learnt about the creatures that visit urban green spaces and identified the plants in their nearby wild spaces, increasing their connection to the area.

Week 6: Celebration with a wild BBQ lunch. The children chose their favourite activities for the past few weeks and made their own fireside feast.

“As a result of the sessions, one year 3 and one year 5 brother and sister had engaged with the sessions in their respective classes so much that they convinced their parents to take them camping and to have one meal cooked outdoors on an open fire. Parents reported this to me recently upon our return in September 2025.”



Cooking on the campfire



Mastering firelighting skills

The school employed a specialist bushcraft teacher. This not only benefitted the children, but through working alongside them, school staff have observed the advantages of engaging with the outdoors in a meaningful way and have become advocates of outdoor learning and greater engagement with nature.

The whole school curriculum has been re-emphasised to incorporate nature and harmony into everyday learning across the school, but more particularly in Key Stage 2 classes, where it had previously been lacking.



Working together



Finished pancake made on the campfire

Hope Support Services

Hope Support Services is based in Ross-on-Wye and supports over 500 children and young people age 5 to 25, and their families, when a loved one is diagnosed with a terminal or serious illness. Activities include:

- one-to-one and group youth sessions
- activity days
- residential activities
- family days
- and a guided youth management team

Hope also delivers support in schools, at home, in the community and online and advocates for improved recognition of this vulnerable group.

Funding from George's Fund provided four half-day outdoor activities to two existing monthly under-11 youth groups in 2025 and four full-day Hope Forest School Days.

Early intervention is critical in achieving the best outcomes for children experiencing family health crises. Many have not been able to talk with anyone about their experiences before they come to Hope. Getting outdoors can be elusive at home when families are dealing with a health crisis, such as a parent with a terminal diagnosis. For young children, the possibility of losing a parent can be overwhelming.



Working together to build dens

The distraction of learning new skills outdoors, and the restorative aspects of nature, helped the children to open up and talk with their peers and staff, make new friends, and forget about their worries for a day or a few hours.

All the children had the opportunity to try new things and challenge themselves. Staff observed that the children became more resilient and pushed themselves to try things they would not have done previously. Benefits to them included:

- connection with nature and the proven therapeutic benefits it brings
- connection with one another and making friends as a pre-cursor to peer support
- opportunity to open up and talk about their experiences, feelings and needs with staff
- an escape from situations at home and a chance to ‘just be a kid’
- a sense of accomplishment, independence and resilience when self-esteem may be low



Children walking in the woods

The Forest school leader was led by the children's interests.

“The children really enjoyed picking blackberries to make dye, which was meant to be a short activity, but they had lots of fun so we kept the activity going for longer.”

Forest Days included:

- A day using fire – this is a foundational activity where children can learn how to light and maintain a fire safely and cook over it. The subsequent days used these skills.
- A day using tools
- A day building shelters
- A day of nature identification
- A day of outdoor crafts



Fire lighting and coking activitiest

“This was a very successful programme for these children and we would love the opportunity to repeat the sessions in the future. It would be fabulous to offer sessions in each of the four seasons as a way of grounding the children in the natural environment and its ebbs and flows as the year moves around, helping them to better understand the ebbs and flows of their emotions and circumstances.”

Hereford Nurture through Nature CIC

Herefordshire Nurture through Nature is run by an experienced primary school teacher/ university lecturer/ Forest School leader and connects people with nature.

Funding from George's Fund enabled the provision of a newly devised structured outdoor programme, supporting vulnerable young children in Leominster to connect with nature through activities such as campfire cooking and tool use, focusing on outdoor engagement and skill development over 12 weeks.

The children identified were living in families who were struggling with issues such as poverty and domestic violence. They were able to spend more time moving outdoors, which improved sleep, physical health and mental wellbeing. Preparing and cooking their own food helped form healthy eating habits and improved wellbeing.

Before the project, the children were not accessing the outdoors regularly, missing out on the physical and emotional benefits of nature. Some of the parents and carers do not have access to a garden, and many were not feeling confident enough to take their children to public green spaces, fearing judgment or struggling with anxiety. Over time, the children improved their behaviour and social skills, with some who had showed very challenging behaviour at the start of the 12-week project becoming more cooperative and engaged. The combination of outdoor play, structured activities, and parental support created a positive ripple effect for the whole family.

During each session, loose parts were provided with open-ended materials like stones, pine cones, fabric scraps, plastic guttering, sand and water; to encourage creative exploration. These resources allowed children and parents to collaborate naturally, whether building imaginary worlds, constructing simple structures, or engaging in tactile discovery.

Activities included:

- Nature-based projects, such as assembling dragonflies from gathered materials
- Tool workshops introduced safe use of peelers for whittling, drills for woodwork, and hammers for basic carpentry
- WaterPlay – pouring, channeling and sensory interaction
- Den-building - families worked together using natural materials like branches and tarps, along with pegs for securing structures.
- Physical challenges featured obstacle courses and supervised ladder climbing
- Sensory observations encouraged exploration of the local environment.
- Weekly fire-based cooking, where families prepared simple recipes together. These included rosemary potatoes cooked in the Dutch oven, Welsh cakes griddled over the flames, decorative "painted bread" using natural food colourings, and seasonal treats like toasted apple and elderflower fritters.
- Older children received supervised instruction in safe fire-lighting techniques using flints and kindling.
- Midway through the programme, a professional storyteller facilitated a dedicated session where families participated in interactive storytelling using props and call-and-response techniques.



Cutting potatoes

The activities were designed to maintain engagement across different interests and age groups.

Hereford Nurture through Nature liaised with the health visitors and Children's Centre staff, with pre- and post-session communications so that activities could be tailored to attendees' needs. Regular check-ins with referring professionals ensured appropriate adaptations for new participants and adjustments for individual family requirements.

Some of the very vulnerable parents and carers received tailored support with parenting issues and with their mental health. The majority of the parents and carers who attended struggled with their wellbeing, and this has affected their parenting as well as their ability to cope with routine tasks. Many expressed feelings of isolation and being overwhelmed, unsure where to turn for help. Through being outside weekly, the adult participants felt less stressed, often describing the sessions as a lifeline.

The practitioner was able to discuss some of their issues in a small group or on a one-to-one basis and, if necessary, refer them to specialist support. Some had simple questions about parenting issues such as eating or sleeping, highlighting how even small guidance could make a big difference in their daily lives.

Sessions were structured to allow for both guided activities and child-led exploration, with all resources provided on-site to ensure accessibility. The combination of natural materials, practical skill-building, and collaborative tasks created a framework for organic interaction, while the outdoor setting offered a neutral space for families to engage at their own pace.

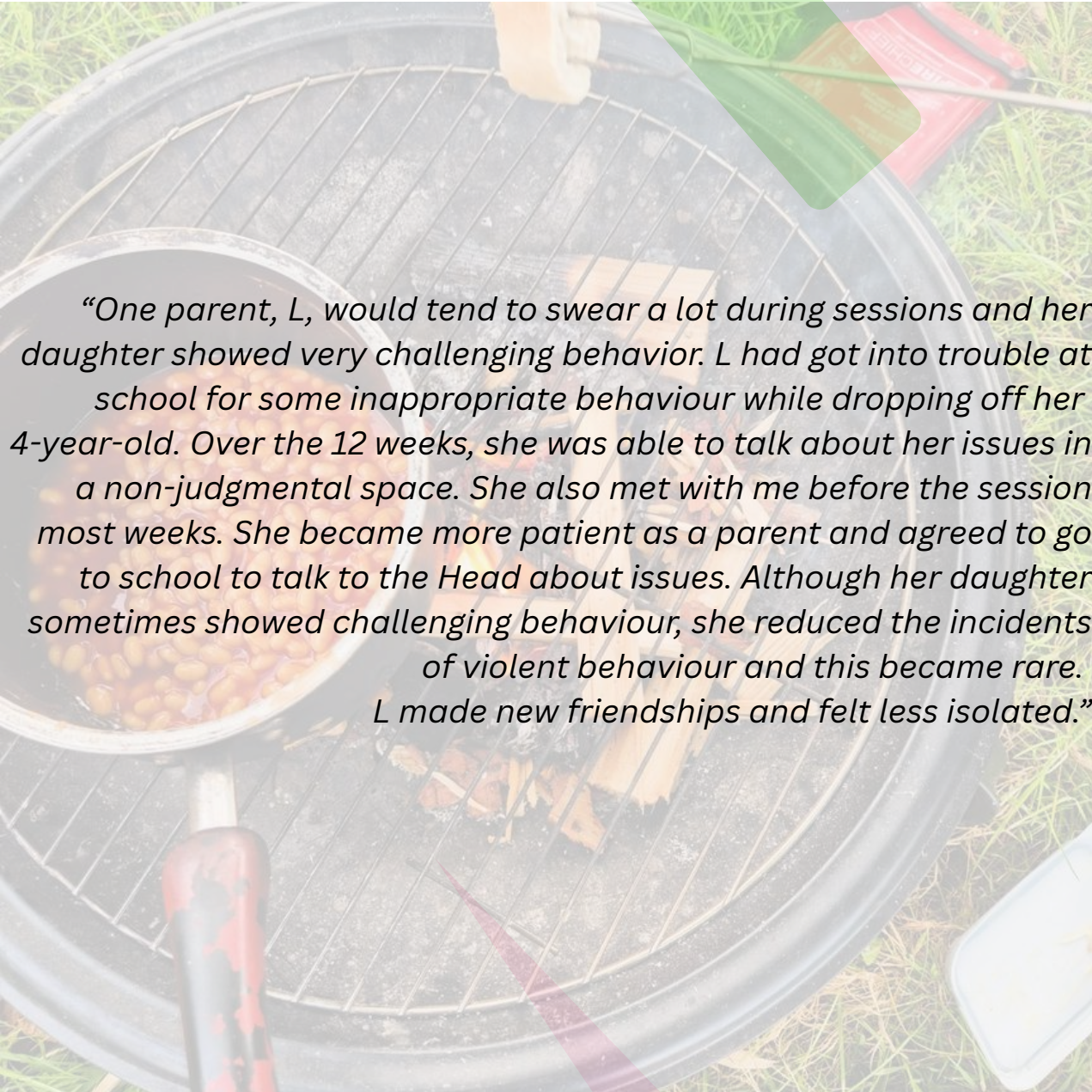
Many of the adults really enjoyed the crafts; some would excitedly ask what we were going to do each week, showing how these activities provided not just skills but also joy and a sense of achievement.

Story of Change

- Stress and anxiety amongst participants were reduced and confidence and independence increased.
- It is hoped that the children gained a sense of accomplishment by tackling manageable challenges outdoors. This will build their resilience and increase self-confidence.
- The children developed practical skills, improving resourcefulness and leading to long-term lifestyle changes.
- Through time spent outdoors, engaged in activities, stronger bonds were created between children and their parents/carers, leading to the children experiencing better parenting and safer day-to-day lives.
- Vulnerable children learnt new social skills and vulnerable adults were able to connect with other adults, building supportive relationships. Isolation and loneliness were reduced.



Threading with pipe cleaners



“One parent, L, would tend to swear a lot during sessions and her daughter showed very challenging behavior. L had got into trouble at school for some inappropriate behaviour while dropping off her 4-year-old. Over the 12 weeks, she was able to talk about her issues in a non-judgmental space. She also met with me before the session most weeks. She became more patient as a parent and agreed to go to school to talk to the Head about issues. Although her daughter sometimes showed challenging behaviour, she reduced the incidents of violent behaviour and this became rare. L made new friendships and felt less isolated.”



Using the ladder with supervision



Making bubbles

It is hoped that both the children and carers may be inspired to spend more time outdoors as a family, leading to more nature-based activities that promote mindfulness and wellbeing, where time in nature could become a regular part of their lifestyle.

Orchard Multi-Academy Trust - Stretton Sugwas C of E Academy

The award from George's Fund enabled the school to develop its Forest School site, creating diverse areas that enhance pupils' emotional literacy and promote their wellbeing through engaging outdoor experiences.


The funding provided the addition of a fire pit area, a greenhouse and a wooden shed, both with shelving. A safety knee rail was also added around the pond area, increasing the safety and usability of the area.



The pre-existing tepee shelter was boarded on the back so that it can now be used in all weathers. The water butt allows the children to water plants around the site, including newly planted saplings.



Pond watching



The Forest School site now provides a rich, immersive environment that supports emotional and social development while fostering a love for nature.

Story of change

Poppy played a key role in developing the Forest School area, contributing her time, creativity, and enthusiasm to help create a warm, engaging space for pupils. Through planting, designing, and maintaining the area, she developed pride, ownership, and confidence, while also building leadership, teamwork, and creative skills.

As SATs pressures grew, the Forest School provided a calm, supportive refuge where Poppy felt valued and capable. This helped reduce her anxiety, build resilience, and foster a sense of achievement. The experience boosted her confidence and motivation, enabling her to approach SATs with greater self-belief.

Before receiving the grant, the Forest School area was underused and lacked purpose-built areas for creative exploration, problem-solving, and physical development. Outdoor learning was limited to the playground or occasional visits off-site. Now, the children have the opportunity to engage in regular, structured Forest School sessions where learning about nature and the environment can be hands-on, with greater opportunities for structured learning or child-led discovery in nature.



Boy planting saplings



A quiet place for reading



“This area will benefit our entire school community and beyond. Having the sheltered areas also means that we will be able to hold sessions throughout the year in all weathers.”

Head Teacher

Longtown Outdoor Learning Trust

Longtown Outdoor Learning Trust works with local schools in Herefordshire and Monmouthshire to provide outdoor learning to children on their school grounds, on the Longtown site, and in the Brecon Beacons.

An award from George's Fund enabled them to provide 100 days of outdoor learning and adventure experiences for year 4-6 primary school-age children living within a 30-45 minute radius of the centre in Longtown.

Initially, a day onsite and a day offsite was planned, but due to the needs of the children, this was sometimes changed to two onsite days, as anxiety amongst some was high.

Over the days children took part in a range of activities such as:

- high ropes course
- low ropes course
- zip wire
- climbing tower
- team challenge
- canoeing and hill walking



Plunge practice for canoeing

Taking on the challenges of these activities in a supportive environment with the guidance of experienced tutors improved the children's wellbeing and physical health and also helped them develop new friendships.

Through the 'challenge by choice' concept, the children developed the confidence to undertake activities once feared. This helped them to overcome fears, grow in confidence and find out that they could do things they thought beyond their reach. Teachers and leaders saw the children improve their resilience, independence and communication skills and be transformed and empowered by the activities in which they took part.

A teacher's account of the impact for an individual

“Owen - year 5 tends to be shy and emotional. He is a follower and not a leader and is a gentle soul.

Today, when his peers voted him in to be team leader his face absolutely shone. He was stood in the centre of them all and he just beamed.

He took on the task with relish - he showed confidence, care, direction and this would have empowered him to take on more challenges in the future. His peers listened well to him and he was not bossy in giving direction to them.

Hopefully this experience will last him a lifetime.”



Hillwalking near Longtown

The whole Longtown team loved working on the George's Fund programme and found themselves moved by how much the experience changed the children. One of their instructors commented on what an incredible day they had had with the children and said that it made them remember why they had become an Outdoor Learning Instructor.

This fund has helped the organisation grow its presence and provision for outdoor learning in Herefordshire.

A positive outcome of the programme was the development of strong connections with local schools. Historically, Longtown operated as a Northamptonshire County Council centre, serving only Northamptonshire schools. Since becoming a charity in 2018, it has worked to build links with more schools in the surrounding area.

Through George's Fund, participating schools were able to see first-hand the impact of the provision and the transformative effect it had on the children involved. This led some schools to consider how they could further develop their relationship with Longtown in the future.



Fun, friendship and jumping

Riverside Primary School

At Riverside Primary School, funding from George's Fund enabled improvements in the Children's Garden to support emotional and mental health and wellbeing, by giving the children opportunities to plant, grow and nurture plants, grow produce and have fun doing it.

Within the school, children use the garden area daily, on a one-to-one or group basis to carry out jobs that need to be done. The garden provides them with the opportunity to take ownership of something that they can see through from start to finish. Whilst each term has a focus group from a different year group, others are always asking to come along and help in the garden.

The grant allowed the supply and assembly of 6 x 3m polytunnel with rainwater gullies and collecting tanks and raised beds, plus garden tools and protective clothing to support learning.

Having a usable, dry and equipped outdoor learning space has meant that children can access learning all year round. Pastoral support staff use the garden daily with one-to-one and groups of children - they do little jobs and "talk" about emotions, feelings, friendships and share problems they have. This enables them to "offload" emotions. This better equips them to return to the learning environment with a clearer state of mind, ready for learning.

The school's group of Military children have their own little space as a "Garden of Remembrance" next to the polytunnel, where they have just planted Poppies to use in Remembrance activities.

The Polytunnel and Garden is used by a Year One Gardening group on a Tuesday. During their After School Session, they plant, water, weed and learn about nature, food and environment - taking home with them key pieces of information that will add to their learning and that they will hopefully take forward in life with them.



In addition, SEND support staff use the polytunnel and garden at lunchtimes with the children they work with during the day. It's a quieter space for them to be and to explore without the hustle and bustle of the playground

“As a practitioner working with children who have additional needs, I find the garden to be an invaluable area of our school. It provides a safe and nature-rich environment for our children. It is an incredible sensory experience, encompassing the smells of lavender and rosemary, the sound of bees and other insects, and the beautiful colours of the flowers. It also provides an excellent educational tool, teaching children about our environment, as well as the pride of seeing vegetables they have grown being served in our lunch hall.

Having the garden enriches our pupils' school experience and helps them learn skills for life.”

SEND Support Worker

The Polytunnel is an invaluable asset to The Children's Garden and they use the space proactively and take ownership of the things they create and look after.

“We were so happy to gain funding from George's, as we know that it was created to ensure that children can have the opportunities to have fun and learn outdoors - Thank you so much on behalf of all of Riverside children.”



A teacher's account of how being in the garden helped a child

“The garden is such a calm and relaxing place for children to have time to self-regulate, express their emotions and feelings, and have some quiet time and space for themselves when needed. This morning, a Riverside pupil was struggling to manage his behaviour and self-regulate in class. Staff walked with him to the garden and he soon immersed himself in watering, weeding around the potato plants and was particularly interested in identifying new things growing in the greenhouse. He was keen to share this with some other younger pupils who were also having some time in the garden today. He returned to class more settled and regulated and was able to engage again with his learning.”



The garden at Riverside Primary School

Growing Local CIC

Growing Local was established in 2009 to connect the local community with their food and improve health and wellbeing through working outside, engaging with nature and cooking and eating better food.

In the Autumn of 2023, the organisation began the development of their new 19-acre agricultural site on the southern edge of Hereford. The Growing Local Gardens project is in the process of establishing a community market garden, a children's educational garden, orchards and picnic areas here. It is growing into the new destination for the people of South Wye Hereford and Herefordshire. In 2025, the Southside Community Learning Hub has become home to its field-to-fork cook school, community cafe, farm shop and indoor learning space.

The award from George's Fund was made to provide 15 fully funded holiday workshops at the Children's Educational Garden in South Wye to families of pre-school and primary-aged children.

However, Growing Local successfully became a HAF programme delivery partner from the Summer 2025 workshops onwards. This meant the Georges Fund award went even further than expected, helping to extend its impact and support additional community days. There will be one further Community Day workshops on the 11th April to complete the funding.



Pumpkin Lanterns

New Skills

Everyone who took part said they picked up new skills from attending:

- kitchen skills
- willow weaving
- how to harvest vegetables
- how to dig up carrots
- how to cut vegetables safely
- seed sowing skills
- plant knowledge and identification
- composting and how to make a wormery
- prepare food safely
- how to water plants
- woodworking and carpentry skills

What was best about attending a Growing Local Session?

All participants said they would love to come along again. The aspects they valued most included:

- strengthening confidence
- improved interaction skills
- nurturing a love of nature
- trying new foods
- trying new activities
- foraging of food
- variety of activities offered
- staff engagement
- atmosphere of the farm
- inclusivity, ease of engagement and lack of pressure
- how *“calm, engaging and child focused all the staff were”*
- *“The work of Growing Local is the best activity in the world”*
- *“The staff made it a very positive experience.”*
- *“preparing a whole lunch from scratch with the vegetables picked from the garden”*



Making homes for wildlife - February Half-Term Workshops

Young people and their families were encouraged to try new vegetables and foods. Virtually all of these (bar five!) said that they would be more likely to eat more fruit and vegetables following the workshops and all but two said they would be more likely to cook from scratch at home.

New foods tried included:

Vegetables - kale, pumpkin, squash, sweetcorn

Herbs - dill, parsley, coriander, mint

Salad leaves - rocket, red mustard leaves, mizuna.

Homemade bread

Soup (a huge number had never eaten soup before)

Nasturtium flowers

Homemade pasta

Fruit - Strawberries, raspberries, watermelon (all grown locally!)



Preparing lunch on the farm

As a result of the funding, Growing Local started new monthly Community Days.

These have been a wonderful opportunity to engage with many new families who cannot usually access the gardens during the week or the holidays. Many of these families heard about Growing Local through social media, the veg box scheme, school visits or local word of mouth. Many children return to each Saturday session, where they can participate in child-focused growth activities while their parents take part in adult volunteer tasks.



Sowing seeds - Community Day



Getting stuck in - planting

Marches Family Network

The Marches Family Network is dedicated to supporting young people with disabilities and their families across Herefordshire.

They provide a wide range of high-quality, accessible short breaks, respite, and support services that empower young people and those who care for them.

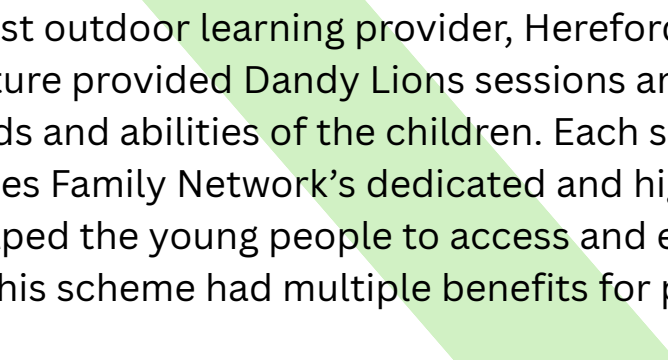
Working with individuals up to the age of 25, they currently support more than 170 families, representing a wide spectrum of disabilities.

Their commitment is rooted in the belief that no young person should face exclusion because of a disability. They strive to help each young person reach their full potential while raising disability awareness and promoting social inclusion.

A grant from George's Fund opened the door for Marches Family Network to test a 4.5-hour session designed exclusively for children aged 3 to 11. Play+ offered a valuable opportunity to see how changing the session style might boost interaction, friendships, and shared experiences.



Boy with Drill



Employing a specialist outdoor learning provider, Herefordshire Nurture through Nature provided Dandy Lions sessions and tailored activities to the needs and abilities of the children. Each session was supported by Marches Family Network's dedicated and highly trained youth team, who helped the young people to access and engage with the activities fully. This scheme had multiple benefits for parents and children.

The children:

- Gained confidence and independence whilst working outdoors – this was demonstrated by lighting fires and using hand drills
- Nature-based play reduced their anxiety whilst promoting calmness and building resilience
- Being outdoors provided a safe space for self-expression, which can be especially valuable for children with communication difficulties
- The children formed friendship bonds whilst sharing activities.

The parents:

- Gained valuable respite time, knowing that their children are in safe hands
- Spent time with their other children, their family members and friends
- Witnessed happy children when collecting them from sessions

The Dandy Lions' activities provided fun and nurtured confidence, resilience, wellbeing, and inclusion for children, while strengthening families.



Bubble Machine

Story of change

A is a young boy with a diagnosis of autism. He is often overlooked and underestimated due to being nonverbal. He can often be seen struggling to interact with his peers, and prefers to follow his own plan for the day (this is often spent playing with lots of cars and trains).

A spent from 10.30 am until 1.45 pm with Sarah and Dandy Lions. He enjoyed making a s'more over the campfire and ate it (a massive achievement for him as his diet is extremely limited due to his sensory needs). He also loved playing with the bubble gun. In fact, staff had not seen him smile as much at any session that he had previously attended.

He also wowed everybody when he was able to independently use a hand drill to create holes in a wooden cookie.

An impact was also able to be seen for his parents. They both had respite for the day, as both A and his younger brother (who also has autism) spent the day at Marches Family Network. The impact of having respite cannot be underestimated for parents with children with high support needs, as this allows them to spend some important time for themselves.



Outside play with Marches Family Network

The Cart Shed

At its site in Norton Canon, Herefordshire, The Cart Shed provides opportunities for people to improve their health and wellbeing through the engagement of rural activities in a safe environment. They provide tailored therapeutic support in a woodland setting, helping those experiencing an imbalance in their lives to heal, learn new skills, find friendship and a future.

An award from George's Fund supported 'Explore the Woods' sessions with The Cart Shed, offering neurodivergent year 6 pupils experiencing high levels of anxiety or distress, the opportunity to learn to understand and manage their emotions to enable a successful transition to high school.

The grant supported young people who were worried about transitioning to high school, helping to ease their fears and set them up for success. Many gained confidence, and some built new friendships along the way.

Despite issues around attending sessions in the summer holidays, the young people had a fabulous time and all due to transition to year 7 did so successfully.



Making a wooden spoon

Activities were varied and included:

- playing games in small groups and as a whole
- individual creative activities such as whittling and cooking. Cooking activities ranged from making simple 'damper bread' where a small ball of dough is attached to a stick in a sausage shape and slowly baked over an open fire. Once cooked the bread is eaten with butter and jam.
- Participants also picked blackcurrants that were growing at The Cart Shed's polytunnels, which they turned into their own 'Ribena'!

During the time in the woods, the young people were able to express their concerns in relation to starting new schools or transitioning to another year. Friendships were formed, which helped the young people who were transitioning from a small school to a larger one, as they had a friend they could meet up with at the school gates on day one or had formed friendships that developed beyond The Cart Shed.



Clay creations

Making friends



Two young people who met on the programme have formed a friendship outside The Cart Shed. One has joined the other's football team and they now both feel secure in having a friend - they both started the summer feeling friendless, alone and not able to connect with others their own age.





Finding tranquillity in the woods

Contact Us

Herefordshire Community Foundation
The Fred Bulmer Centre
Wall Street
Hereford
HR4 9HP

☎ 01432 272550

🌐 www.herefordshirecf.org

✉ impact@herefordshirecf.org

**Please use the QR code below if you
would like to make a donation to
George's Fund.**

