

Oxenwood 2025 School Holiday Clubs

Join us at Oxenwood Outdoor Education Centre for an action-packed, school holiday adventure with our new holiday clubs launching in Spring 2025.

Activities include:

Paddle sports - From April onwards and will include an introduction to Stand up Paddleboard and canoeing. The equipment to be used, the dangers that could be encountered (and how to not get in that situation in the first place!) paddle strokes and self-rescue. Ensuring you get the skills necessary to enjoy and safe and fun day on the water

Mountain biking - Learn the skills necessary to conduct repairs and identify faults with your bike, skill-based sessions designed to make better riders of all abilities, journeys out from the centre teaching the skills for moving across country safely and added basic navigation.

Bushcraft - Could you fend for yourself without any home comforts? How would you get on if you were lost or stranded in unknown territory? This day will teach you to get to grips with a few vital survival skills that could keep you alive and get you home in one piece. Learn how to prepare yourself for the unexpected, find water and make it safe, prepare and cook game, build a shelter, make fires for warmth and cooking and live in harmony with nature. You will also learn how to make distress signals for rescue or to navigate your way home.

Targets and trajectories - This day will involve various shooting techniques, utilising archery, olympic style air rifle, snap barrel air rifle and BB guns. The day will cover how to safely use all systems, how to zero your rifles, utilise alternate point of aim, how to fire from different positions and learn how to achieve the maximum points on offer every time!

History / theme days - The British Isles boasts a long and proud history and what better way to explore this history as becoming part of it! During our history day you will find out what its like to be drilled into shape as a Roman Legionnaire or discover how the Vikings became a feared invader of our islands, this immersive experience will ensure you leave here ready to invade and pillage!

Multiple activity day - This will incorporate all activities available during the week, condensed to give the attendees a taste of each. This will incorporate, bushcraft, mountain biking, riles shooting, Ar chery and climbing. A fun multi activity day for a range of ages.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	09:00 - 16:15	09:00 - 16:15	09:00 - 16:15	09:00 - 16:15	09:00 - 16:15
8 - 11 years	Mountain Bike	Bushcraft	Targets and trajectories	History / Theme Day	Multi activity day
12 - 16 years	Bushcraft	Mountain bike	History / Theme Day	Multi activity day	Targets and trajectories

Price: £30 per person, per day

Ages: 8 - 11 years old
12 -16 years old

Lunch: Attendees should bring a packed lunch.

For more information or to reserve your place email: info@oxenwood.org.uk

Village Halls Week 2025

Village Halls Week is an annual campaign led by Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE). As the ACRE network member for Wiltshire and Swindon, Community First will be supporting local village halls and community buildings as part of the 2025 #VillageHallsWeek campaign which will take place between 17th - 23rd March 2025. The aim of Village Halls Week in 2025 is to encourage and support the efforts of volunteers to keep these important rural community buildings open.

In England alone, it is estimated that over 80,000 people regularly volunteer their time with village halls, from those on management committees who oversee the day-to-day use of the building and its finances, to those who organise events and group activities for the benefit of the local community.

Community First Village Halls Advisor Heather will be attending several local events throughout the week and we will be sharing information about the campaign on our social media channels. ACRE has also set up a page where halls and buildings can share what is happening in their local area:

<https://acre.org.uk/village-halls-week-2025-local-events/>

Please keep an eye out for more information in March and help support the campaign by liking, sharing and commenting to show your support for our local village halls.

Wiltshire Association of Local Councils (WALC) Conference

The Wiltshire Association of Local Councils (WALC) celebrated its annual Conference at the Corn Exchange in Devizes on Tuesday 5th November.

The conference featured a keynote address from Andrew Towlerton, National Planning Advisor at the SLCC, on the updated National Planning Policy Framework.

As part of the event, Andy Reeves, Principal Officer at Central Swindon North Parish Council, discussed his experiences of asset transfer from Swindon Borough Council and Perry Holmes, Director of Legal & Governance Our Wiltshire (Wiltshire Council), talked about improving decision-making through improved Councillors' conduct.

Conference workshop contributors included:

- Becky Maddern, talking about accessible and inclusive play parks
- Jason Salter, Head of the Passenger Transport Unit at Wiltshire Council, setting out the Council's commitment to developing public transport in the county
- Trevor Cherrett and Steve Vaux our Rural Housing Enablers, looking at affordable homes in small rural communities.
- Justin Robinson led a practical session on preparing for next year's local elections.
- Chris Manuel from the Wiltshire and Swindon Local Resilience Forum, explored what Town and Parish Councils can do to help prepare their communities against the risk of flooding.
- Andrew Towlerton considered how best to prepare and review a Neighbourhood Plan.

Thanks go to all our speakers and Community First staff who supported the day. Many thanks to everyone who attended and took part in the sessions and workshops.

Voice It, Hear It - Help shape the future of health and social care services.

Voice It, Hear It, is a new project that unifies the collective strength of its partners to support the voice and engagement of people in Wiltshire. The project is delivered by Community First, Wessex Community Action, Wiltshire Service Users' Network, Age UK Wiltshire, Alzheimer's Support and Celebrating Age Wiltshire. Working alongside Wiltshire Council and the Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board (BSW ICB), Voice It, Hear It engages with people living and working in Wiltshire to co-produce, co-design and co-develop health and social care services in Wiltshire.

The team works alongside people with physical disabilities, sensory needs, mental health conditions, learning disabilities, neurodiversity, long-term conditions, complex needs, older people and dementia. Empowering and facilitating them to have their say and get involved in shaping how health and social care services work for them now and in the future.

How you can be involved:

Register with us - Complete our registration form and let us know how you would like to be involved. This helps us reach the right people for consultations and ensures diverse representation from a range of audiences. When we engage and consult, we provide summarised insights that you can use to inform your own work, advocate for change, or shape the services you provide. Your voice really does matter! You can make a difference.

<https://survey.zohopublic.eu/zs/7DDXym>

Stay up to date - Sign up to our email list to stay up to date with the latest engagement and consultation opportunities. You'll receive updates on newly published reports, which could serve as helpful evidence for future funding applications or advocacy work. We'll also keep you posted on what Wiltshire Council has achieved as a direct result of your feedback, options, and proposed actions - ensuring accountability and transparency.

<https://mailchi.mp/3d305f3b4ab7/voice-it-hear-it-sign-up-form>

How you can help us:

- **Spread the Word:** Inform your clients and members when we are seeking input on their experiences.
- **Stay Informed:** You can find the most up-to-date information on consultations through our Voice It Hear It page on Wiltshire Together (<https://wiltshiretogether.org.uk/voice-it-hear-it>)
- **Shape Sessions:** Help us design consultations or share relevant information you have already gathered that could inform the engagement process.
- **Encourage Registration:** Invite other groups and organisations you work with to register with us, building a stronger network that reaches deeper into our communities.
- **Share Information:** Distribute engagement event details, flyers, postcards, and surveys that promote our engagement opportunities.
- **Support Participation:** Assist those you work with attending events and workshops, completing surveys, providing feedback, or signposting them to someone who can offer further support.

Current Engagements:

Learning Disability Strategy Aims Engagement

Do your clients wish to share their views on whether the aims are appropriate or if anything is missing from the strategy?

- Encourage your members to book a 1-to-1 telephone consultation: voice@communityfirst.org.uk
- Invite us to run a workshop or group chat in person or online via voice@communityfirst.org.uk

Young People 18-25yrs with Learning Disabilities and Autism on Technology Enabled Care

We're exploring what tools young people might use or would like to use for maintaining and creating greater independence. Can you help us engage with young people? Email: voice@communityfirst.org.uk

Share this information in your newsletters and social media posts.

For more information about Voice It, Hear It visit: www.communityfirst.org.uk/voice. You can also follow us on Facebook by searching 'Voice It, Hear It.'

Recruiting Community Health Champions

Does Your Organisation Support Inclusion and Health Equity? We're seeking your help to identify potential Health Research Champions from among your members, staff, or volunteers.

This is a fantastic opportunity for individuals to gain new skills, make a real difference in health research, and promote inclusion and diversity in the field.

What Do Health Research Champions Do?

- **Raise Awareness:** Help others learn about health and care research and encourage participation.
- **Speak to Groups:** Share information with community and patient groups.
- **Promote Research Opportunities:** Inform people about studies, like those on Be Part of Research and Join Dementia Research.
- **Engage with the Public:** Join events, media interviews, or school visits to promote health research.

Why Encourage Your Members to Get Involved?

Becoming a Health Research Champion provides:

- **Skill Development:** Champions receive full training, adding valuable skills to their personal and professional toolkit.
- **Personal Growth:** A chance to connect with others, learn, and grow while making a tangible impact.
- **Increased Impact:** Champions play a vital role in shaping more inclusive health research and improving treatments for all.

Our Motto: *"No Research About Us, Without Us."*

Let's ensure health research reflects everyone's voice and needs. Together, we can promote equity in health and care research. Share this opportunity within your organization and help us identify individuals from the global majority or people with disabilities who would like to take part. For more information or to connect potential champions with us, please contact askyring@communityfirst.org.uk.

We're happy to share more details about the role, the available training, and how we'll support champions every step of the way.

To register your interest as a Community Health Champion - please complete the online form:
<https://www.cognitofrms.com/communityfirst2/healthresearchchampionregistrationform>

Employability Programmes

Referrals for the Building Bridges Programme in Wiltshire are temporarily paused. We are still accepting referrals for the Building Bridges Swindon programme and via the Wiltshire Housing Support and Rough Sleeper Team. For more information, please visit: www.buildingbridgessw.org.uk or email: hello@buildingbridgessw.org.uk

Briefing prepared by:

Ellie Ewing

Marketing and Communications Manager (Community First)

eeving@communityfirst.org.uk