



## Hertfordshire HAF Summer 2023 Case Study

Demonstrating the power of HAF in Hertfordshire

Theme: SEND children

### Mudlarks

“Attendees all learnt new skills and were able to try new things such as using a knife to whittle wood, using a saw to saw logs. These new experiences were commented on by parents who spoke to staff and emailed in to the charity to say how wonderful the experience was for their children. All attendees enjoyed the freedom of the woods and were able to relax in a calm, tranquil environment.”

### What is the opportunity or issue?

Mudlarks provided a forest school summer camp for SEN children over the summer, accessing HAF funding for the first time. This scheme not only impacted the participants having purposeful and interesting days, but also doubled as respite for their parents/carers and siblings. The secure diverse native woodland, run and overseen by qualified Forest School Leaders, was a perfect location to explore/observe nature and wildlife habitats, create sensory trails, build shelters, and learn how to cook on an open campfire. For the majority of participants, it was their first opportunity to enjoy the freedom of exploring beautiful woodlands in safety, exclusively for their use.

### What has been the impact?

All attendees became more confident and outgoing and were able to form new friendships. They were able to take calculated risks with equipment and the woodland environment under supervision. These new experiences were commented on by parents who spoke to staff and emailed into the charity to say how wonderful the camp was for their children. The young people learnt to use a saw, a hammer, to chop wood with an axe, to build a fire, to cook over an open fire, and many craft skills including weaving and mask making. They explored the woods, built dens and flags, and collected wood for the fire. They made charcoal by burning pieces of wood, and then used the charcoal to draw patterns onto the flags. Some participants discovered they liked foods that they didn't necessarily think that they liked before. All attendees made choices, used numeracy and literacy; carving names onto walking sticks, and made bracelets from wool and elder branches. Some participants made such strong friendships that they asked their parents for contact details to stay in touch.

### How do you plan to build on this?

The Mudlarks team have loved the summer camp and felt it was very beneficial to all the participants and families. It exceeded expectations of what the participants would gain from the forest school. They have also shared that they are happy to liaise and offer training and advice for any provider with SEN attendees.