

Throughout this assignment I have used AI to create posters for my scrapbook.

1. Context page
2. Reflection
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Part 2 Reflection

Hello, my name is Ria Ratti, and my discussion topic is about the Gnull Country Park. The aim of this reflection is to explain my reasoning for choosing my destination and what I have been finding out while attending the area. The Gnull country park is a sociable area in Neath filled full of memorable scenic views that is perfect for a family day out.

To begin, when I found out about the John Muir Award, I instantly knew I wanted to complete mine at Gnull Park. When my siblings and I were younger, we always attended The Gnull Park with my grandparents, it provided us with many happy memories that we are able to cherish. Recently I took my nephew to the Gnull to share the same memories we were able to experience. The Gnull Park is a historical country park that provides visitors with the opportunity to visit natural woodlands and a play park, which makes The Gnull a perfect place for a family trip. When I was younger I spent many happy day trips in the Gnull Park however, a question I always wondered was where does the wildlife in the Gnull live. This is one of the main reasons I completed this activity.

As you are most likely aware, the Gnull has had a upgrade it has focused on making the area accessible and more approachable for all family members. For example, the Gnull has created new parks for children and has the apparatus for children with a disability and has created an area for families to sit down and relax after completing the family trial, like I did with my nephew. The Gnull has created some wonderful new additions which are bringing more families to visit the Gnull however, all these do not support the wildlife. I created two different posters providing information on the activity that will be completed. I differentiated the first poster and made the second poster a child-friendly one which provides the readers with the knowledge that the group is for everyone. This poster was provided to all classes in my work

settings and many other areas to ensure everyone in the community was aware so they could join.

A group of volunteers came together at the community room in the Gnoll, and we used recyclable and sustainable materials to create homes for the wildlife. I wanted to create these homes with volunteers, as it brings the community together and provides everyone with the understanding and importance of caring for the wildlife. This provided everyone attending with a sense of accomplishment that we are creating a positive difference for all the wildlife in the Gnoll. Throughout each group that has been held, I have learnt how creating these small differences can create such a difference for all wildlife. By creating an activity like this, it encourages family members and me to explore the outdoors more. In order to get the materials for the habitats before the groups began, I asked the Gnoll if they had any spare materials we could use, they were very pleased with our idea and provided us with spare materials they had. It was important this activity worked, as wildlife deserve a place where they can rest, have access to food, and be protected.

My scrapbook explored the four different stages. Discover, explore, conserve and share while explaining why the activity is beneficial. For example, when I was younger and was attending the Gnoll Park, I did not pay as much attention to the wildlife as I focused more on playing with my siblings in the park. Now I am older, and when I took my nephew to the park, I had more appreciation for the wildlife and believed they should be respected more.

However, when planning this activity, a challenge I faced was the usage of equipment. To ensure this challenge was addressed correctly, I arranged with my brother, who is qualified and experienced in using the required equipment, to cut all the materials before each session. This allowed the group to safely focus on having fun while completing the wildlife's houses. Another challenge I faced was ensuring the habitat was created safely enough for the wildlife to use. To resolve this matter before each house went up in the Gnoll Park, the workers risk-assessed it and ensured it was safe enough for the animals.

Overall, my experience completing the John Muir Award was extremely enjoyable. I have learnt many new interesting facts about the wildlife, and I am proud of the community and myself for creating different habitats for the wildlife to explore.

Part 2 B

To begin, education focuses on providing a connection with children and nature. This also provides children with an understanding of how to look after nature from a younger age this is known as 'sustainability in early years' (The Curiosity Approach, 2023). Agreeing with this, another source explains sustainability should be introduced to young children and any adolescents or adults who are unaware of it, as it is everyone's responsibility to care for the world they are living in (Barry and Boyd, 2022). The policy of sustainability is to demonstrate to children why it is beneficial for children to understand how to respect their community and their environment (NCFE, 2022). Throughout this assignment it explains how undertaking an opportunity such as the wildlife habitat in the Gnoll country park can support principles of early childhood education for sustainability.

A fundamental principle of early childhood education for sustainability is children are found to have a more positive experience of learning through real-world experiences as the world provides children with all the challenges and support they need to understand something (Learning through play, 2024). To support this, a journal explains often adults can restrict children's involvement. This is why providing children with the opportunity to explore through the real world allows the children to not be restricted (Paujik et al., 2020). This influenced the wildlife habitat activity that was taking place in the Gnoll Park as children and their family members were able to explore the world around them while creating habitats for the wildlife. By using the natural materials and considering the benefits of the wildlife, the children and adults were able to develop a more meaningful understanding of the ecosystem as they interact and create items for the natural environment.

This approach works closely with Dewey's theory. Dewey's theory focuses on experiential learning. Dewey's theory argues that children should be introduced to real experiences that support reflection and future plans, as children are found to engage more with the world around them than learning through books this also makes learning more meaningful for children (Dewey, 1938). Another theorist who also agrees with this is Kolb's. Kolb's theory focuses on four stages of the experiential learning cycle. The four stages are "concrete experience, reflective

observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation". These stages provide guidance for what the children can access from real experiences (Kolb, 1984). These theorists both show the activity in the Gnoll Park is not only beneficial for the wildlife but also displays to the children how using sustainable materials can make a difference for the wildlife while learning how to reflect and taking their knowledge into future activities.

However, there is not only one area that promotes sustainability. Some researchers argue outdoor activities may not provide meaningful routines this can also become a routine for practitioners (Grand Rising Behavioural Health, 2025). For example, by children taking part in creating wildlife's habitats, it is unlikely to develop sustainable values unless the adults who are leading the activity encourage the children to reflect and communicate their findings throughout the activity. Therefore, adult assistance remains important, as it provides children with a safe environment and provides support for children while they are problem-solving and exploring (Learning Through Landscapes, 2022).

In addition, the John Muir Award focuses on four different aspects. One of these aspects that will be discussed is explore. Sustainability in early years supports the aspect of explore in John Muir as it supports children to build a meaningful bond with the environment around them while independently investigating (John Muir Trust, 2023). Encouraging children to explore the outdoor area supports children in assessing wildlife and plants while preparing children with knowledge and skills to critically think and problem-solve. Holistic development is also supported as children have access to physical activity and communication (Chawla, 2020). While children are completing the John Muir, they are able to progress on critical thinking as the children observe and assess what can be changed. Critically thinking is beneficial for all children to enhance their self-esteem and support children with their own opinion (Jigsaw Education Group, 2024). This links to the Well-being of Future Generations Act, as this act impacts children's holistic development while supporting the environment and culture (Welsh Government, 2015).

Adding to this, play-based learning is a key part of early childhood education and education for sustainability. The curriculum for Wales explains young children learn more when they are learning through play and exploring. Allowing children to explore

and investigate is useful as it develops their holistic development and risky play (HWB, 2008). Adding to this, learning through play provides children with the opportunity to explore, be imaginative and create a bond with the world around them (Ofsted, 2015). This is supported by Vygotsky's theory. Vygotsky's theory focuses on cognitive development and believes learning appears throughout social interaction with the community around them, as communication and language play an important part of children learning to understand (Openlearn, ND). This supports the wildlife habitat, as children are working with their community and listening and responding to support each other in creating the habitats

To add to this, according to, Learningthroughplay, (ND), it is beneficial for children to be experiencing play-based learning in all aspects of their lives, as play encourages children's imagination and problem-solving while creating their game to be tailored to them. However, an argument has come to the researchers' attention, as, according to the Education Endowment Foundation (2023), even though play-based learning is beneficial for all children's early development, it is useful for practitioners to not rely on play-based learning when children become older, as older children often require independent work and instructions to support their independent knowledge. Linking this back to play-based learning, it provides children with compassion for nature while exploring why the ecosystem is important, looking after their world and supporting their knowledge on the environment around them (Cutter-Mackenzie and Edwards, 2013).

Also, education for sustainable development and global citizenship is known as an education approach that aims to prepare children with knowledge and respect to support sustainability and the world (Welsh Government, 2008). To support this, ESDGC also encourages children in having an understanding of how the environmental, economic, social and cultural issues bond while noticing the consequences from their community and countries (Welsh Government, 2008). An approach that supports the ESDGC is the education for sustainability. Both these approaches express how important developing children's understanding and respect for their environment are (Davis, 2015). Throughout childcare settings in Wales ESDGC principles provide an impression on the curriculum for Wales, as a main aim of ESDGC is to ensure all early years children are being influenced to create ideas on how to support their world (Welsh Government, 2020). This is supported by the

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, as article 29 explains how all children should have respect for their families and the environment they live in (UNICEF, 2019). To support this, the ESDGC provides children with an understanding of the choices they can make and learn about their human rights while understanding everyone has a responsibility to care for their planet and treat everyone the same, including the planet (Tinney and Merriman, 2018).

Adding to this, researchers suggest that practitioners should provide children in their care with weekly opportunities to receive nature walks, as experiencing natural environments allows curiosity and develops children's wellbeing (Harris, 2015). Also, children are able to develop relationships with wildlife while exploring their sensory needs. However, although these benefits have been highlighted, practitioners have displayed multiple barriers that can prevent practitioners from completing these nature walks. A barrier that came to the practitioners' attention was the shortage of staff. In all childcare settings it is a legal requirement that all staff are in ratio, as it is a safeguarding procedure to secure the safety of all children (GOV.UK, 2023).

Another barrier is many settings have unfortunately got no access to a natural environment. Many settings have explained that in order for them to explore a natural environment, they have to get transport and travel, children are then unable to use their senses to explore and acknowledge a natural environment (Ernst, 2024). A theorist who disagrees with this is Montessori. Montessori's theory explains that nature should not be acknowledged as an option, as nature is an important factor of all children's learning and growth. Children are able to view real-life experiences while learning about their world and the importance of nature, as outdoors is viewed as an outdoor classroom (Gilder, 2009). Montessori relates to sustainability in early years, as they both ensure children take responsibility to care for their environment and experience the different areas of nature.

To conclude, it is beneficial for all children to access nature continuously to spark children's imagination and allow them to experience hands-on learning. Play-based learning supports children as they focus on problem-solving and critically thinking. Sustainability allows children to actively understand how important caring for nature and wildlife is. The wildlife habitat activity supports children as they are able to communicate with their peers in the group and provide suggestions for upcoming activities.

Reference list 2B

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