



# Out-of-school-hours learning (oshl) Mini guide for community and voluntary groups

## What is out-of-school-hours learning (oshl)?

Out-of-school-hours learning (oshl) is any activity that young people take part in voluntarily, outside normal school hours – before the start of the school day, at lunch times, after school, at weekends or during the school holidays.

Oshl activities may be as diverse as nail art, powerboat sailing, climbing, gardening, maths clubs and drama productions. Many people will remember these kinds of activities from their own school days as extra-curricular activities.

## About this guide

This mini guide is one of a series looking at out-of-school-hours learning from different points of view.

The complete set of mini guides and other useful resources relating to oshl can be downloaded from [www.continyou.org.uk/oshl](http://www.continyou.org.uk/oshl).

*Cohesive communities depend on a clear understanding of what people can realistically expect of each other in social situations. Oshl provides a fantastic non-pressured setting to develop an understanding of other people from other backgrounds and life experiences and how they see the world.*

Ian Bottrill, National Development Director, ContinYou Cymru



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## Why should our group take part in oshl activities?

Oshl can open up opportunities that, in many cases, quite literally change lives. While the prime purpose of oshl is to enable young people to follow a specific interest or fulfil a particular need, an important outcome is the improvement in their motivation and self-esteem, and their ability to become more effective lifelong learners.

The potential impact of oshl cannot be underestimated, both locally and nationally. At its best, it will result in the next generation being confident lifelong learners who are better prepared for success in our changing financial and political world.

### Addressing child poverty

One very important Welsh national agenda that oshl can help to address is child poverty, as referred to in the Estyn report, *Tackling child poverty and disadvantage in schools*, (January 2010): 'What is different in the schools that do well in disadvantaged areas is that they have highly effective leadership and consistently good teaching, and place an emphasis on particular activities or combination of activities. For instance, they attach great importance to extra-curricular and out-of-school-hours provision, including cultural and sport enrichment, as well as extra educational support such as homework clubs, at lunch times or after school'.



## How can oshl strengthen the local community?

Out-of-school-hours learning can help young people to reach their full potential in all aspects of their development.

Participating in a wide range of local, quality, fun out-of-school activities can improve the quality of life for children and young people and, by association, can have significant advantages for their families and communities.

Oshl can also help to strengthen communities and contribute to community cohesion by responding to local needs, and involving members of the community.

Specifically, oshl gives groups and organisations in the community a chance to:

- actively contribute to the broader learning and wellbeing of local children and young people
- get more involved with their local school
- get involved in, and help to provide, learning opportunities for the local community
- raise the self-esteem of other adults who can share their expertise in a skill/interest with others
- encourage children to become involved in local clubs, societies and other community organisations
- gain support for their own projects
- develop a community spirit around the school
- enhance the quality of life in the local community
- build new, and improve existing, relationships within the community
- promote their existence and attract support for the future within the immediate community
- enhance future business opportunities, for example, by a local employer supporting a specific oshl activity.

*'Running drama workshops in my community centre for local children took me back to that pleasurable space where I was a child again, seeing the world through an 8 year old's eyes. It was great to see shy, underconfident little ones gradually flourish and blossom as the weeks went on. I discovered there are a fair few budding comedians in my area, and they made me laugh!'*

Chris McLennan, Community Drama Volunteer Leader

## Setting up a new group or activity

Small local groups and agencies are often best placed to identify local needs, and have the contacts necessary to make a new venture successful.

Sports Wales, for instance, works with local voluntary groups to encourage physical activity and to help children and young people become more active. For more information about the work of Sports Wales, visit [www.sports-council-wales.org.uk](http://www.sports-council-wales.org.uk).

## Linking to a larger group

Being linked to a widely known organisation can help when you need to promote your club to new members and attract local support.

If you are considering setting up a local group that is affiliated to a larger organisation such as scouts, guides, Forest School, or a netball/football/rugby club, you will benefit from: ongoing practical help and support on developing policies and good practice; training; and, if required, assistance with start-up costs.

*'Having trained as a Forest School leader, I was keen to start working with children from our community in the village woods. I soon realised that to apply for most pots of funding, I needed to be part of a recognised group/organisation.*

*'Forming a community group was a bit daunting as I had never done it before. I sought advice from a friend who had a great deal of experience and she put me in touch with WCVA who paid for and processed all our Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks.*

*'The setting up of a bank account was the hardest thing as it involved the co-operation of other members of our quickly assembled committee (signatures, addresses, dates of birth, and so on). We also needed to send the bank a constitution, which needed to be amended a few times.'*

Henni Tremlett

## Bettws Youth Time Banking Project

In Bettws, a small community in the south Wales valleys, the police were faced with the highest levels of youth anti-social behaviour out of 39 wards in the borough. They recognised the need to engage positively with young people. A new partnership was developed between the Boys and Girls Club, the Communities First Partnership, the school, local community groups, Time Banking Wales and the police to establish a T4YP (Time for Young People) Time Bank.

Young people from the area earned time credits by giving their time to community-based projects, facilitated by the Boys and Girls Club, community groups and the school. They included, for example, getting involved in anti-bullying and environmental projects, supporting local community groups with activities, helping to run children's and youth activities at the Boys and Girls Club, such as a Halloween party, attending training by the police, and making decisions with staff and the local community police at the youth PACT meeting.

The young people used their time credits to take part in classes at the youth club, for example, first-aid, health and beauty, judo, cheerleading and carpentry, as well as attending events and social activities.

The project has led to improved relationships between the police, service providers, community members and young people, which has resulted in lower crime rates (down seventeen per cent), increased community trust and community intelligence.

For more information, please visit [www.timebankingwales.org.uk](http://www.timebankingwales.org.uk).





## Working in partnership with schools

Many schools work in partnership, forming clusters based around a secondary school and its feeder primary schools. Working with a school cluster may dramatically broaden the number of children and families you are able to contact.

### Tips for working with schools

- Having established a contact within the school, ensure that you have the full backing of the school's senior management. It will really help to get the school's 'buy-in' if your vision for the activity can fit easily into the whole-school improvement strategy.
- For any after-school activity that will take place in the school building, make sure that you have discussed your plans with site staff.
- When publicising a new club/activity, don't forget that local schools are often happy to send home information or printed flyers promoting oshl activities.
- Many schools are very experienced at fundraising and may be able to offer you practical help. Putting your group/organisation in contact with the friends of the school/community association/PTA could lead to them fundraising on your behalf.
- Don't forget that small donations can be used to get matched funding from other organisations.
- Remember that WCVA will undertake free CRB checks for established community groups. Visit [www.wcva.org.uk](http://www.wcva.org.uk) for more details.

## Practicalities and legalities

For further help and advice on the following aspects of setting up and sustaining oshl activities for children and young people, please visit [www.continyou.org.uk/wales](http://www.continyou.org.uk/wales):

- funding
- child protection/safeguarding
- safety
- setting up a new club
- sustainability
- planning
- quality
- monitoring and evaluation
- health and safety.

The diverse nature of the voluntary sector in Wales puts it in a unique position to offer young people opportunities to participate in a wide range of exciting and engaging learning activities that will broaden their life experience and may very well be life changing.

## Acknowledgements

ContinYou Cymru is committed to supporting out-of-school-hours learning as a means of ensuring children and young people reach their potential and enjoy the wonders of becoming a lifelong learner.

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It was written by Angela Davies. It was produced for publication by staff at ContinYou: Paul Mephram (design) and Louise Reilly (editing). Welsh translation is by Vernon Hughes.

This guide is one of a series of oshl mini guides, which can be downloaded from [www.continyou.org.uk/oshl](http://www.continyou.org.uk/oshl).



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