



Forest School
Training

Level 3 Certificate in Forest School Programme Leadership



Course Information - England

What is 'Forest School'?

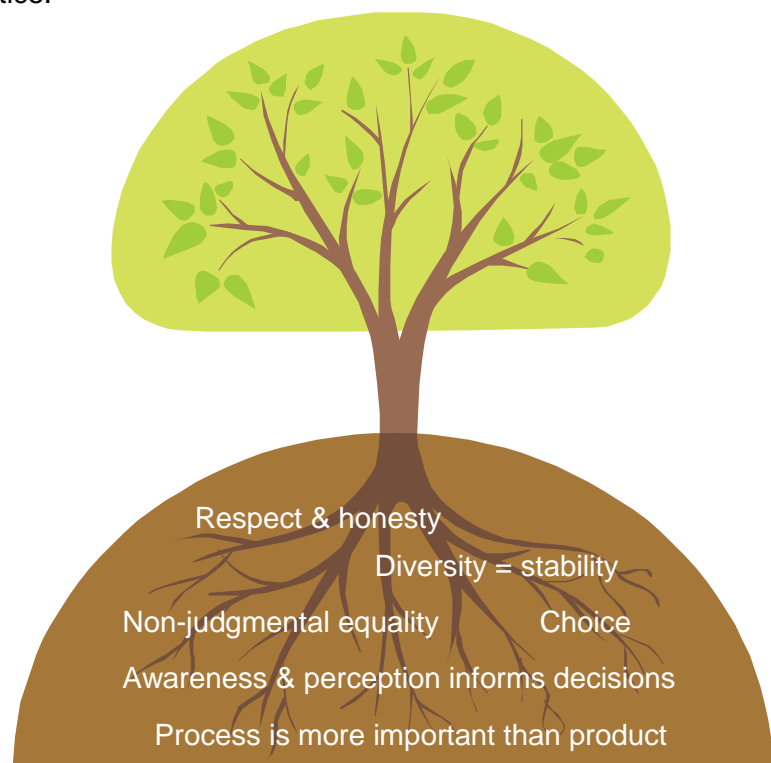
Forest School is a long term, learner-led, continuous learning process that takes place over a period of time using a natural space (not necessarily a Forest!). Forest School is a specific type of outdoor learning which originates from Scandinavian educational approaches. The Forest School ethos focuses on building relationships with one another and the natural world to develop personal, social and emotional skills. Forest School practitioners facilitate this process through careful application of theoretical and practical skills to designed to raise self-esteem, develop confidence, independence, a sense of connection, awareness and mindfulness.



Every Forest School programme will be unique, depending on the group, site and leader, however there are some key principles, recognised by the Forest School Association (www.forestschoollassociation.org), please visit their website for more information:

- FS is a long-term process of regular sessions, rather than a one-off or infrequent visits; the cycle of planning, observation, adaptation and review links each session.
- FS takes place in a woodland or natural environment to support the development of a relationship between the learner and the natural world.
- FS uses a range of learner-centred processes to create a community for being, development and learning.
- FS aims to promote the holistic development of all those involved, fostering resilient, confident, independent and creative learners.
- FS offers learners the opportunity to take supported risks appropriate to the environment and to themselves.
- FS is run by qualified Forest School practitioners who continuously maintain and develop their professional practice.

We at the Forest School Training Cooperative (FSTC) believe that Forest School is a powerful approach, through which people of all ages can find their way to connect with nature, develop their awareness, questions and reflect on what is truly means to be human. At FSTC we believe that there are some core values that are the roots upon which our Forest School practice and training grow & bloom:



Forest School Training

Forest School is delivered by qualified practitioners. People from many different backgrounds train in Forest School; teachers, playworkers, rangers, ecologists, artists, learning support assistants, parents and conservation volunteers may all come to Forest School to provide meaningful outdoor learning experiences for the children they work with.



Forest School
Training

There are 3 levels of training. To deliver 'Forest School' the practitioner must have completed a Level 3 Forest School Practitioners Award.

- Level 3 – Certificate in Forest School Programme Leadership (1 credits = 180 hours)
- Level 2 – Award in Forest School Programme Support (6 credits = 60 hours)
- Level 1 – Award in Introduction to Forest School Principles (3 credits = 30 hours)

FSTC as a Training Provider



The Forest School Training Cooperative has evolved from the Forest School Training Company, who has been providing Forest School training across the UK since 2004. We are a group of people who feel strongly that quality processes are important and have united to work together to promote Forest School.

All our Forest School training courses are accredited by the Open College Network West Midland Region (OCNWMR) and are nationally recognised qualifications on the Qualification & Curriculum Framework (QCF). FSTC is a member of the UK Forest School Training Network, and is involved in the standardisation and development of Forest School qualifications within the UK. This ensures FSTC training is continually up to date with current UK practice.

FSTC training is delivered with the belief that the training of Forest School should model the Forest School ethos as far as is practical (and yes, we recognise that the irony is that it is a qualification!):

- **Long Term, extended experiences** – Our unique modular training format, breaks learning into small achievable chunks which build and develop, allowing learners to consolidate skills & understanding. We have developed our 12 day course (longer than most other FS training providers) to ensure topics are covered in sufficient depth and in an experiential way so that practitioners can develop their own processes relevant to their Forest School, rather than prescribing methods.
- **First Hand experiences in natural places** – Our training focuses on real life & first hand experiences in natural places. All our training venues have access to woodland areas that will be used throughout the training. Our training courses begin with a woodland transition day focusing on outdoor living skills and culminate with a woodland sleep out as we feel that these are fundamental skills for the Forest School Leader and they have to be 'lived' to be understood fully.
- **We celebrate diversity** – We recognise that everyone is a unique human being who have different interests and strengths and aim to facilitate a community of mutual appreciation and respect. Our training uses learner centred approaches to help

practitioners find the right process and methods for them, their situation and ultimately the Forest School they shall be establishing. We encourage questioning and sharing and focus on processes rather than prescribed outcomes. We use a wide variety of assessment methods throughout the training (such as practical demonstration, verbal questioning, written essay, presentation etc), to ensure a fair representation of a learners knowledge and skills.

- **Flexibility & adaptability** – Our modular training allows students to ‘top up’ their training to a higher level, without having to start from the beginning again. The methodology of training allows some adaptability in the training activities delivered meaning we are able to modify the training to better meet individuals and the groups needs. This process based approach allows learners some choice over the content of their learning journey.
- **Awareness of impact** – Our training includes and promotes ecological understanding and sustainable use of woodlands. We feel that a key part of Forest School is to encourage people to think about and question the lifestyle choices they make.
- **Specialist Tutors** – All our lead tutors are qualified Forest School practitioners themselves and have run a wide variety of long term Forest School programmes themselves. They also have background experience and/or qualifications in a range of practical, environmental and/or educational skills (often both). They also all are active members of national and local Forest School networks such as the Forest School Association or Forest Education Initiative groups. You can read our tutors biogs on our website.



What do our past students say?

“It has been a brilliant course. It has made me question my own practice... I am motivated and equipped to develop the outdoor practice and environment in school.” – Teacher

“This was a well delivered, thought provoking course which all schools & settings would benefit from attending.” – Local Authority Advisor

“I know this may sound silly, but it has been a life changing experience.... it has made me question things within my own life, not just professionally but personally.” – Special Needs Teacher

“This was an excellent course which completely convinced me of the value of outdoor learning, the connection with child development and how it could be translated into school.” – Freelancer

Contact Information:



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The OCNWMR Level 3 Certificate in Forest School Programme Leadership

Level 3 training is the nationally recognised standard of training required to lead 'Forest School' programmes it is designed for those practitioners wishing to be qualified to establish and deliver a Forest School. The course covers a variety of practical skills and theory that will support practitioners' to create innovative and meaningful Forest School programmes for children and young people.

What does the qualification cover?

This OCNWMR course carries a total of 18 credits at level 3 and consists of 5 units;

- Practical Skills for a Forest School Programme
- Forest School Programmes and the Woodland Environment
- Learning and Development at a Forest School Programme
- Planning a Forest School Programme
- Delivery of a Forest School Programme

Practical Skills for a Forest School Programme

Working safely and practically within a natural environment is key to the effectiveness of Forest School. This unit develops skills and understanding in the safe application of outdoor living & learning tasks. It also considers appropriate processes for using natural materials for crafts and constructions within a Forest School context. Topics covered include:

- Tool use at Forest School – personal skills, tool procedures, storage and maintenance, personal protective equipment, learner centred processes for teaching tool use.
- Teaching and using appropriate knots and lashings at Forest School
- Shelter building – applying skills to construct temporary shelters.
- Fire lighting, safety and management – understanding fire preparations, procedures, campfire cooking techniques and extinguishing
- Using natural resources – applying practical skills to make craft items from natural materials



Forest School Programmes and the Woodland Environment

Woodlands are dynamic natural systems, rich in learning opportunities and resources. This unit develops skills and understanding to use the potential of woodlands effectively, safely and sensitively to support learning and development within a Forest School context. Topics covered include:

- Woodland ecology & structure – understanding succession in the UK, the history of British woodlands and comparing native broadleaf and coniferous plantations
- Woodland species identification and observation – considering the importance of understanding natural history for the Forest School leader
- Sustainable management of woodland – considering historical and current management practices and how these may be relevant to Forest School

Learning and Development at a Forest School Programme

Forest School supports holistic development and is particularly effective at building confidence and self esteem in children and young people. The philosophy of Forest School is rooted in learning theories, psychology and neural development. Its ethos is formed through a combination of the natural physical environment and the safe, open and trusting community created by the supporting adults. This unit covers some of the theoretical components that underpin the Forest School ethos. Topics covered include:

- Understanding the Forest School approach to learning – considering its benefits to participants and the role of the leader in facilitating the ethos
- Learning theories – considering relevant learning theories and how they support the Forest School philosophy
- The importance of holistic development and how it can be promoted at Forest School
- The role and benefits of play at Forest School
- The role and benefits of risk taking at Forest School
- Self esteem and emotional intelligence – how these can be developed at Forest School and considering the role of the leader in this
- Understanding factors which effect behaviour – considering neural development, self esteem and emotional development



Planning a Forest School Programme

This unit draws together the skills and understanding of the previous 3 units and combines them to consider how Forest School programmes are planned. Every Forest School programme will be different, depending on the site, the leader and the needs of the individuals within the group. This unit covers the necessary aspects to consider before a Forest School programme begins. Topics covered include:

- Forest School history and research – considering Forest School in the UK and locally and reviewing current research about it
- Creating a Forest School handbook – containing all relevant policies and procedures required for the operating of the Forest School
- Creating a communication strategy – to share aims and inform stakeholders
- Monitoring & managing Ecological Impact – consider methods to observe the ongoing impact that Forest School has on the natural environment and how we can minimise our effects through proper management
- Plan an initial programme of 6 Forest School sessions – based on learners needs and interests

Delivery of a Forest School Programme

This unit follows on from the previous one and applies the theory to practice. This unit is about the practitioner leading their own Forest School programme and is a culmination of all the prior work of the qualification. At FSTC we assess Forest School Leadership by observing students in the workplace, as we believe that this is the best way of evaluating whether a practitioner can facilitate the Forest School ethos and can offer tailored feedback & support for their professional development. Topics covered include:

- Deliver and evaluate a minimum of 6 Forest School sessions – showing how observations have informed future plans and taken account of learners needs and interests
- Observing individual learners over time and evaluating impact



Who is the qualification designed for?

The level 3 training course is designed for practitioners who already have experience of working with children, young people and/or adult groups and wish to establish and deliver Forest School programmes. Practitioners have come to Forest School training from a variety of different backgrounds – environmental education, ecologists, countryside rangers, artists, teaching assistants, teachers, Early Years practitioners, child minders, parents, scout/guide leaders, youth workers and many more. The level 3 qualification is the leadership level and

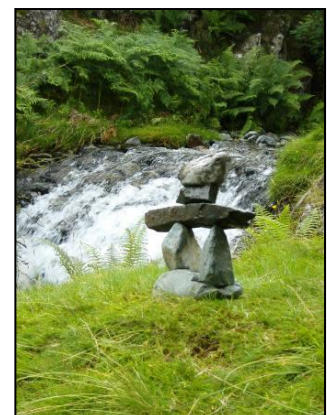


thus practitioners should be aware of the level of responsibility this will entail as a Forest School leader. We would advise you to talk to your employer before training if you have concerns about this.

The level 3 qualification is a substantial commitment, in time, money and energy. We want to help prospective students make the best decision for their need and situation. If you are considering undertaking the level 3 leadership training we would strongly recommend that you thoroughly research and/or visit an established Forest School to ensure you are fully aware of the philosophy and that it is an appropriate outdoor learning ethos for your situation. We have observed that those practitioners who are uncertain about Forest School have gained assurance in doing the level 1 qualification before committing to the full level 3.

Entry Requirements for a FSTC Level 3 Course

- A passion for spending time with nature (personal outdoor experience is useful but enthusiasm is essential!)
- To be at least 21 years old
- Have at least 2 years experience of working with groups (children, young people, adults) in a leadership capacity and/or a recognised qualification to level 2 at least in; teaching, childcare, play work, youth work or support work.
- An open, questioning mind and willingness to make decisions about own practice
- A playful attitude to life & learning



Before you run your programme you will also need:

- Access to a group of children/young people/adults to work with (it is permissible for students to work together on their Forest School programmes, so sometimes students who do not have access to a group link with another student who does).
- Access to an appropriate site & permission to run a Forest School programme on it.
- Appropriate Outdoor First Aid training (we would strongly recommend a 16 hour, outdoor course, appropriate to the age group you are planning on working with). See links on our website to training providers. Please see guidance on the Health and Safety Executives website (www.hse.gov.uk) about First Aid in the workplace if needed.
- Appropriate Safeguarding Checks (DBS, CRB) – if working with under 18's or vulnerable adults. Please see guidance on the Disclosure & Barring Services website (www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service) if needed.

How is the training course delivered?

The OCNWMR Level 3 Certificate in Forest School Programme Leadership carries 18 credits at Level 3 and is usually delivered over a 9-12 month period. Level 3 is the equivalent standard of an A level standard and 18 credits refer to 180 hours of learning time, approximately 96 hours of these are guided learning hours where students have contact with a tutor/assessor (84 hours is the 12 day training and approximately 12 additional hours for assessments, tutorials and correspondence). The remaining 84 hours are self directed learning hours by the student for subject reading, research, practice of skills, preparation for assessments and coursework. Please note that these learning hours are designed as a guide, the actual number of learning hours necessary will vary from student to student, depending on their prior knowledge and skill level.

The Guided Learning Hours

FSTC delivers the training course in a unique modular format, which we believe is more flexible and supportive for students. The course begins with 'Immersion' (an experiential outdoor induction day) followed by 5 modules of 2 or 3 days each, usually 4 – 6 weeks apart. The final module is an overnight camp out where students can put their practical skills into practice by spending a night in the woods.

- **Immersion** – 1 day induction within the woodland, focusing on outdoor living skills, establishing processes for the learning community and connection to the woodland environment. This day aims to be an immersive experiential experience for practitioners to acclimatise to the natural world and focus on their own skill & knowledge level.
- **Module 1** – 2 days. Often this module follows directly on from the woodland welcome day.
- **Module 2** – 2 days
- **Module 3** – 3 days
- **Module 4** – 2 days
- **Module 5** – 2 days (usually a weekend) woodland camp out, focusing on applying all the practical skills developed on the training course. Please note that attending the days of this course component are required but spending the night is optional (although we very much hope that students will feel confident and secure enough in the woods by this point to try it!)



Assessment of the qualification

We understand that people have different learning styles and preferences for demonstrating understanding, so within our training we use a wide range of assessment methods to gauge how our students are meeting the requirements of the qualification. The assessments are based on the criteria of the qualification and are distributed across the training course, to break it into small achievable chunks. The nature of the qualification means that evidence is either complete or not (there is no grading system), however we will support our students to provide additional evidence if required, meaning students are provided with every opportunity to pass the qualification. Our assessment methods include:

- **Delivery Assessment** – Towards the end of the training process a tutor/assessor will visit students at their Forest School whilst they are running their programme. At FSTC we feel that this is fundamental in ensuring quality Forest School, as well as an opportunity to provide tailored feedback to students about their practice & site. During this process we will support students to create a personal practice plan for their future development after the qualification.
- **Practical Demonstration** – The practical components of the qualification will be assessed by tutor/assessors observing students applying their skills and understanding.
- **Practice File** – As the level 3 certificate is a practitioners award, there are many elements which are necessary for the Forest School leader to have in place for good practice (such as a handbook, risk management systems, planning and evaluation processes, environmental impact management etc). The training will support students to create these systems/processes to meet the specific situation of their Forest School practice.
- **Presentation** – As the level 3 is a leadership level, students will be encouraged to present some course components to the rest of the group.
- **Verbal Questioning** – Some criteria will be assessed by question & answer with a tutor/assessor. Some of this will be done by topic, over the phone or Skype and booked by the student when they feel ready.
- **Written assignments** – Some criteria will be assessed by written essay.



Student Support for Self Directed Learning

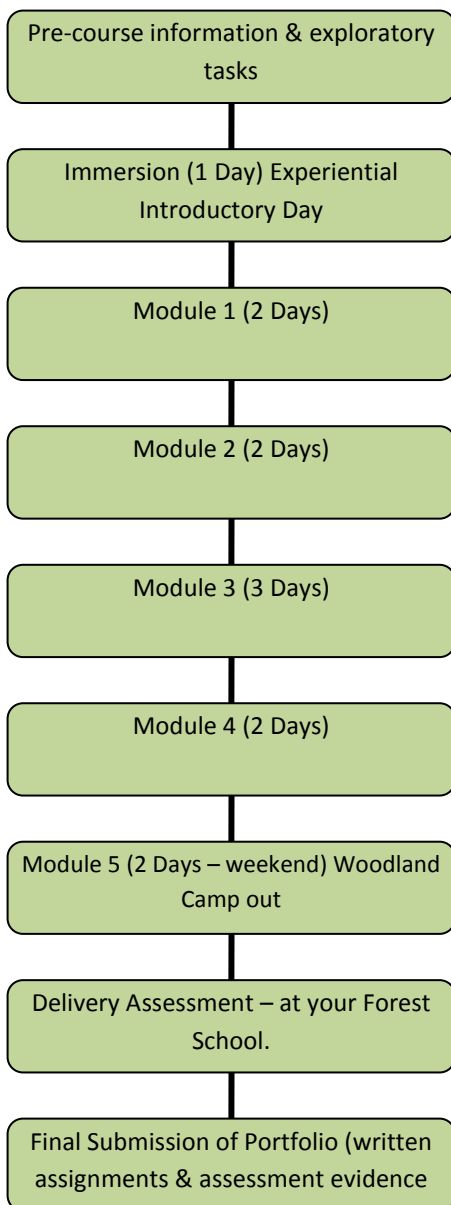
Approximately half the qualification time is expected to be self directed learning by the student. We recognise that some students will find it useful to have a starting point for this, as well as advice and guidance on some issues. We aim to support our students during this self guided time as well as the contact time with tutors and have a variety of methods available for this:

- **Student Web pages** – All students will be issued with a username and password in order to access the student sections of our FSTC website. Within these web pages are reading list and links on various topics, handouts and resources, as well as electronic copies of all resources used during the training course.
- **'Tutor on call' days** – We have regular days where a FSTC tutor/assessor will be 'on call' for students to book tutorials or assessments with. Students will be made aware of these days during their training & on the student web pages.

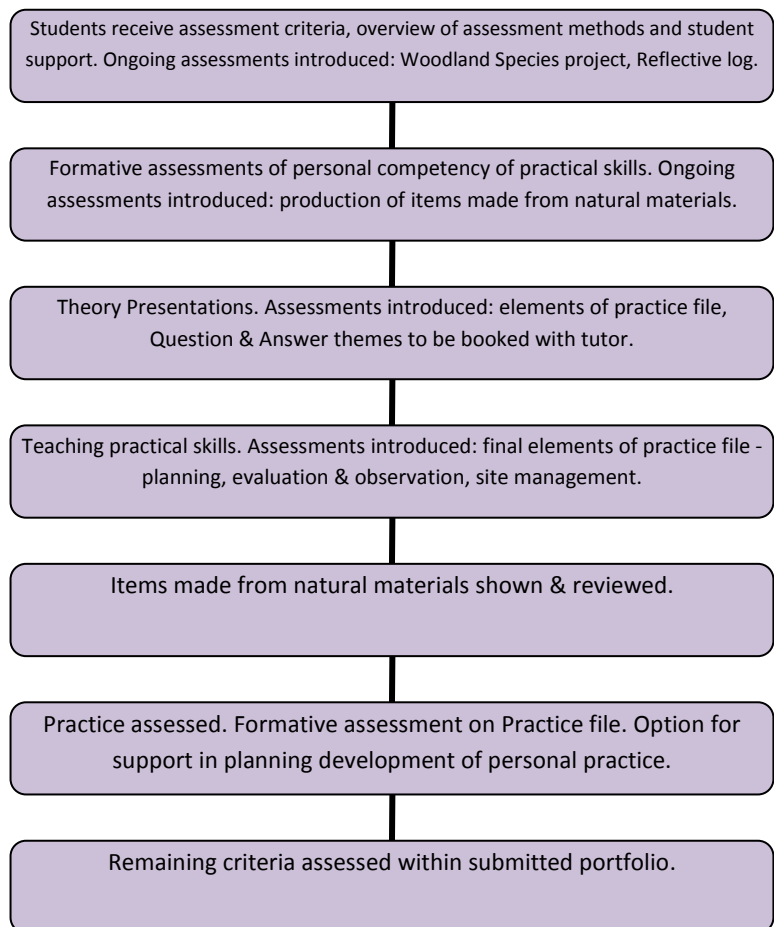
- **Practical practice days** – Our local tutors/assessors run regular days within the woods, designed to be a space for students and practitioners to come and practice their practical skills, such as tool use, fire lighting & camp cooking, knot tying and rope structures etc. These days are free to current FSTC Level 3 students. Students will be made aware of these days during their training & on the student web pages.
- **Video Tutorials** (Coming soon!) – FSTC will be creating a series of video tutorials for different course elements, that will be available on the student web pages.



The Training Journey



Assessment Information



Venues & Facilities

We use a variety of different training venues throughout the UK. Where possible we try to use venues of organisations who share a similar environmental and/or educational ethos as us. When choosing a venue we balance the facilities it offers (both indoors and outdoors), the need of the training and environmental sustainability. We aim to use a venue that can sustain all elements of the training course, however on some cases it may be that venues cannot provide for all elements, in which case we may use more than one venue for the duration of the course to cover the different elements. Module 1 to 4 will have both indoor and outdoor facilities, however the immersion day and Module 5 (overnight camp) may only have access to outdoor spaces. All training venues will have access to drinking water, toilets, & parking.

The majority of our training courses require participants to bring a packed lunch, however hot drinks and snacks will be provided.



Forthcoming Dates, Venues & Prices

All forthcoming course details are posted on our website www.forestschoolltraining.co.uk, please look at the course dates pages. Each course will have a downloadable flier detailing venue, dates & prices.

Application Process

We invite people who are interested in booking onto level 3 courses to apply using the online form within the course dates page of our website. Once we have received your application we will telephone you to discuss your booking and needs. There are many different training providers and courses in Forest School and we want to do our best to ensure that our training course will be right for you. After this discussion, if both applicant and FSTC are happy to continue, we will accept your booking & instruct you on how to register onto the course.

How to Prepare for the Level 3 Training



It is strongly recommended that before you commit to the level 3 training that you research the Forest School ethos fully to ensure it is the right approach for you (on both a personal and professional level). FSTC would recommend prospective students ask local existing Forest School practitioners to arrange to talk to or visit them to find out more about how Forest School can work in practice. There are many different Forest School networks that exist through the Forest School Association local groups, as well as online social media and sometimes local authorities.

We would also recommend visiting the Forest School Association's website www.forestschoollassociation.org to explore more about Forest School principles in the UK. All our students will get a 1 year free student membership to the Forest School Association once enrolled on one of our training courses.

We would encourage prospective students to begin developing relevant skills and understanding for working within the natural

world. If the outdoor environment is a new workplace for you, it is fundamental that you have the right clothing and personal kit. It would be wise to invest in some good quality outdoor clothing and footwear to ensure your comfort all year round. You also may wish to begin learning more about the ecology and species you may find within a woodland environment. As this knowledge underpins the majority of what happens at Forest School. We will be exploring this in more detail during training, but it is a subject area that is continuous and requires time to develop. Take time to go out into a woodland on a regular basis, pick one or two species and focus on noticing it – where it grows/lives, its shape & size, its patterns & details. Try to recognise it in many different places. The following websites may assist you with identifying species:

- I – Spot – www.ispot.org.uk
- Woodland Trust – www.woodlandtrust.org.uk

You may also wish to start researching some of the principles, values and theories that have inspired Forest School ethos and practice. A full reading list will be provided during the training, but some starting points may be:

- **Last Child in the Woods; Saving our Children from Nature Deficit Disorder** – by Richard Louv ISBN: 1848870833
- **Toxic Childhood** – by Sue Palmer ISBN: 0752880918
- **No Fear: Growing up in a Risk Adverse Society** – by Tim Gill ISBN: 1903080088
- **What Every Parent Needs to Know** – by Dr Margot Sunderland ISBN: 1405320362

Or if you prefer to listen to speakers, then these people are worth looking up on Youtube:

- [The authors listed above](#) and;
- [Sir Ken Robinson](#)
- [Alfie Kohn](#)



Contact Us:



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