

# Every child should have a bit of adventure in their lives

Hostelling Scotland is opening its doors to children and families who might not normally be able to experience a trip away, writes **Fiona Russell**

Arriving at a trampoline park in Inverness, a group of 10 and 11-year-old children buzz with excitement.

Yet this is no ordinary outing, for the pupils from a primary school in East Ayrshire have planned it all themselves.

No one has told them where to go or how to get there. In fact, the youngsters have never been to Scotland's most northerly city before.

One child sums it up for all the others when he remarks with unbridled surprise: "We have actually made it."

This is one of many heart-warming episodes in a two-night trip taken by 22 children from Muirkirk Primary School to Inverness Youth Hostel, supported by Hostelling Scotland's Explorer Fund.

The innovative programme aims to encourage school and youth groups from deprived areas of Scotland to organise residential breaks.

Lois Marshall is Hostelling Scotland's Youth and Volunteer Engagement Manager, a post that was created two years ago to boost the numbers and range of people accessing the charity's youth initiatives.

Explaining the aim of the Hostelling Scotland Explorer Fund, Lois, 35, of Glasgow, says: "The fund, launched in 2018, provides funded residential trips for disadvantaged young people aged eight to 25, to stay at one of our youth hostels for up to three nights at a time. "They can choose where to

stay, whether a rural or urban hostel, and are encouraged to plan their own trip away, such as organising and arranging activities, meals, excursions, games and more.

"We will also provide information about local activities, as well as information on things to consider."

The youth hostel experience is frequently a young person's first time spending a night away from home.

Lois says: "Many of the young people will have rarely had the opportunity to travel, even out of their local area, and most have never stayed a night away from their parents, let alone two or three.

"These residential breaks are an amazing experience for the young people."

Research by campaign group Learning Away shows the benefits of residential learning experiences. The group is a driving force of a UK-wide consortium of 18 organisations, including Hostelling Scotland, that aims to make "high quality residential a reality for every child".

Kim Somerville, the chief executive officer of the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, says: "Our research shows clearly that residential provide opportunities and advantages that cannot be achieved in any other educational context or setting for children and young people of all ages, improving their resilience, achievement,

relationships and engagement with learning."

Natalie White, an Outdoor Learning and Development Leader with East Ayrshire Council has observed many of the benefits first-hand while playing a supporting role in the Muirkirk school residential.

She says: "These children come from one of the most deprived areas in our region and without the Explorer Fund they would not have been able to make the trip to Inverness Youth Hostel.

"The children were very involved in the planning, ordering food, booking transport and arranging the excursions.

"They learned so much, including basic life skills, communication and team work. It was great to see their confidence grow and to believe in themselves to make things happen, such as the trip to the trampoline activity."

To date, the Explorer Fund has supported more than 50 youth and school groups to have residential breaks (and continues on from the Give Us a Break fund which Hostelling Scotland ran for over 10 years).

This year, funding has been widened by Hostelling Scotland to include younger children.

A Mini Explorers Fund was piloted last year, and in 2019 it is supporting three further groups to get away working with both Early Years Centres and charities, which support parents.



Lois said: "The Mini Explorers Fund supports Early Years outdoor learning residentials and is aimed at disadvantaged nursery aged children and their families or carers.

"Five families from Woodburn Nursery in Falkirk along with the Nursery leaders took part in the pilot enjoying a two-night stay at our Rowardennan Youth Hostel on the shores of Loch Lomond. "They managed to fit in

a boat trip on the loch, a hike, singsongs around the campfire, seeing bats in the dark, toasting marshmallows, paddling in the loch's waters and a forest walk. It was all rounded off with tasty meals, board games and a sleepover for two nights in the youth hostel."

There are benefits for the young children, as well as other members of the family.

Lois says: "Woodburn Nursery staff had found that the majority of the children attending did not usually access the outdoors with their families, due to a range of barriers.

"Through the trip they aimed to create a programme of activities to help the children and families experience the outdoors together – and to show them the fantastic fun and benefits that this can offer.

"The trip also built on the relationships between the nursery staff and parents and guardians, so that they would be keen to take part in future outdoor learning sessions planned by the nursery."

For the young children, the residential offered first experiences and created great memories.

Lois says: "After the trip, they talked excitedly about the boat trip, the walks, the campfire and where they stayed. One child saw sheep for the first time.

"For the parents, the impact was amazing. It gave them fun times away with their children

and helped to improve relationships and boost self-confidence. It also showed them what they might be able to do in the future on their own as a family.

"In many cases, a lack of confidence and perceived knowledge, as well as financial concerns, stop families from enjoying a short break away from home."

While many young people in Scotland take it for granted that they will enjoy a range of travel experiences with their family and the primary school "right of passage" residential trip, there are still a significant number that do not.

Lois says: "Hostelling Scotland believes it's important that Scotland is accessible to everyone – and everyone has the chance to see some of the many amazing places and locations we are lucky enough to have here.

"As a charity we want to enable more of these first experiences and help young people to make life-long memories.

"My work is very rewarding and one of the best bits is the follow-up sessions when I hear from the children and families about all they have seen, learned and enjoyed on a residential break.

"People often do not realise the value of time away from the ordinary routine to visit new places until they actually do it. The benefit to these young people and families is extraordinary."



## A FOCUS ON YOUNG PEOPLE

Hostelling Scotland, which was founded almost 90 years ago, is a not-for-profit charity with more than 60 youth and affiliate hostels.

Part of the organisation's charitable aims is a range of youth initiatives to give young people and families, who otherwise wouldn't have the opportunity, the chance to experience Scotland and develop their skills for life, learning and work.

Programmes include the Explorer Fund and the Mini Explorer Fund. The Scotspirit programme, which is run by VisitScotland in partnership with the Family Holiday Association, sees Hostelling Scotland provide short holidays with accommodation and catering for families.

Hostelling Scotland also works with partners, such as Shared Care Scotland to support the Scottish Government backed Respite programme, which provides respite breaks for unpaid carers working directly with the Scottish hospitality industry. Hostelling Scotland donates short breaks in their hostels

for both young carers and adult carers.

In addition, Hostelling Scotland set up the Braw Buildings initiative in partnership with The Scottish Civil Trust.

Hostelling Scotland run the project and provide free accommodation in a range of locations over the Doors Open Days weekends for both families and young people aged 16 to 25 enabling them to visit new locations, explore Scotland's unique buildings and experience hostelling.

Other projects have included partnership with New College Lanarkshire for a "hostel take over" by students studying travel and tourism. This was followed up with students undertaking placements in three youth hostels in Glasgow, Stirling and Edinburgh.

Young people were also invited to design and plan GlenFest as part of the Year of Young People 2018 celebrating the opening of the newly refurbished Glen Nevis Youth Hostel. Find out more at [www.hostellingscotland.org.uk](http://www.hostellingscotland.org.uk)



## 'I started with a mini van and I've seen everything, done everything'

Lord Sugar's passion for *The Apprentice* is still undimmed after 15 years, he tells **Laura Harding**

It seems hard to believe that *The Apprentice* has been on our screens for 15 years.

Indeed nobody is more surprised than Lord Alan Sugar, who was merely Sir Alan back when it launched in 2005.

"Time has flown very, very quickly," he muses. "It doesn't feel like it at all."

But the series, which pits a bunch of wildly over-confident would-be entrepreneurs against each other in the hopes of dodging the immortal line, "You're fired," still rumbles on.

In 2010, the prize changed from a £100,000-a-year job in Lord Sugar's company to a £250,000 investment in the winning candidate's business idea and, according to Lord Sugar, that is why it has lasted so long.

The new series will see the hopeful entrepreneurs create a new electric bicycle to pitch to the market, harness new tech to design a rollercoaster for a theme park and venture into the world of music management by marketing an unsigned artist.

Last year's winner was Sian Gabbidon, who triumphed over her idea for a swimwear brand, and is one of a string of female candidates who have done well on the show at a time of increased scrutiny on the number of women in positions of leadership in business.

"I have no preference for women or men," Lord Sugar says. "I just want the best person, sometimes the best is the best bloke and sometimes the best is the best woman, end of story."

While the bluster and braggadocio of this year's contestants is as reliably consistent as ever (one claims "I love business more than sharks love blood"), there is diversity in their background. One is a para athlete, another a beauty brand owner.

There is also an artisan baker, a librarian and a luxury womenswear consultant, as well as a sports management agent, the owner of an ice cream company and the owner of a pillow company. That kind of mix should be enough to keep things



↑ Lord Sugar with Baroness Karren Brady and Claude Littner

interesting for Lord Sugar and his trusty advisers Baroness Karren Brady and Claude Littner, who keep an eagle eye on the candidates while they are embarking on their various challenges.

But one fact that is inescapable for the 72-year-old tycoon is he is 15 years older now than when the show started.

"I've often had thoughts of when am I going to give it up," he admits.

He stresses that the decision to carry on with the show always lies with the BBC, but adds: "I think I would max out at 20 years, a 20-year ceremony."

"I think enough is enough then, I would be 77 and I might not be compos mentis by then, you never know."

He says the show could

**"I have no preference for women or men. I just want the best person"**

carry on without him, but hints it might never be the same.

"One, I've got an exceptionally good memory, and two, I've done all this. "I started with a little mini van and I've seen everything, done everything, had disappointments.

"I know what selling is all about, know what not to do. I've sat in boardrooms in banks and negotiated big deals with banks at hundreds and hundreds of millions of pounds but (when) I started off, my first sale was most probably five pounds with five car aerials.

"I've loaded lorries, sat on the production line, produced more goods on the production line than any of these people have ever done, done my own marketing, my own advertising, buying components, getting the prices right, designing products.

"I've done it all, so I think they would find it very hard. If you look at some of the other business programmes that are on TV, I'm not sure there is such an all rounder there."

Littner is even more explicit. "The fact of the matter is Karren and I work very, very hard on the ground but, in all honesty, Alan holds the whole thing together and if you listen hard to the business messages, that is what it's all about.

Baroness Brady nods in agreement. "If you look at great shows that have changed the lead, they failed and I think this one would go the same way."

With high praise like that was there ever any comparison between him and Donald Trump, who hosted the US version of the show before moving into the White House?

"He was useless, completely useless," Lord Sugar says dismissively. "Totally useless, you cannot even talk in the same breath. There is no comparison."

● *The Apprentice* continues on BBC1 on Wednesdays at 9pm.