

Impact Report 2020 - 2021



**Country
Trust**

Connecting children with
the land that sustains us all

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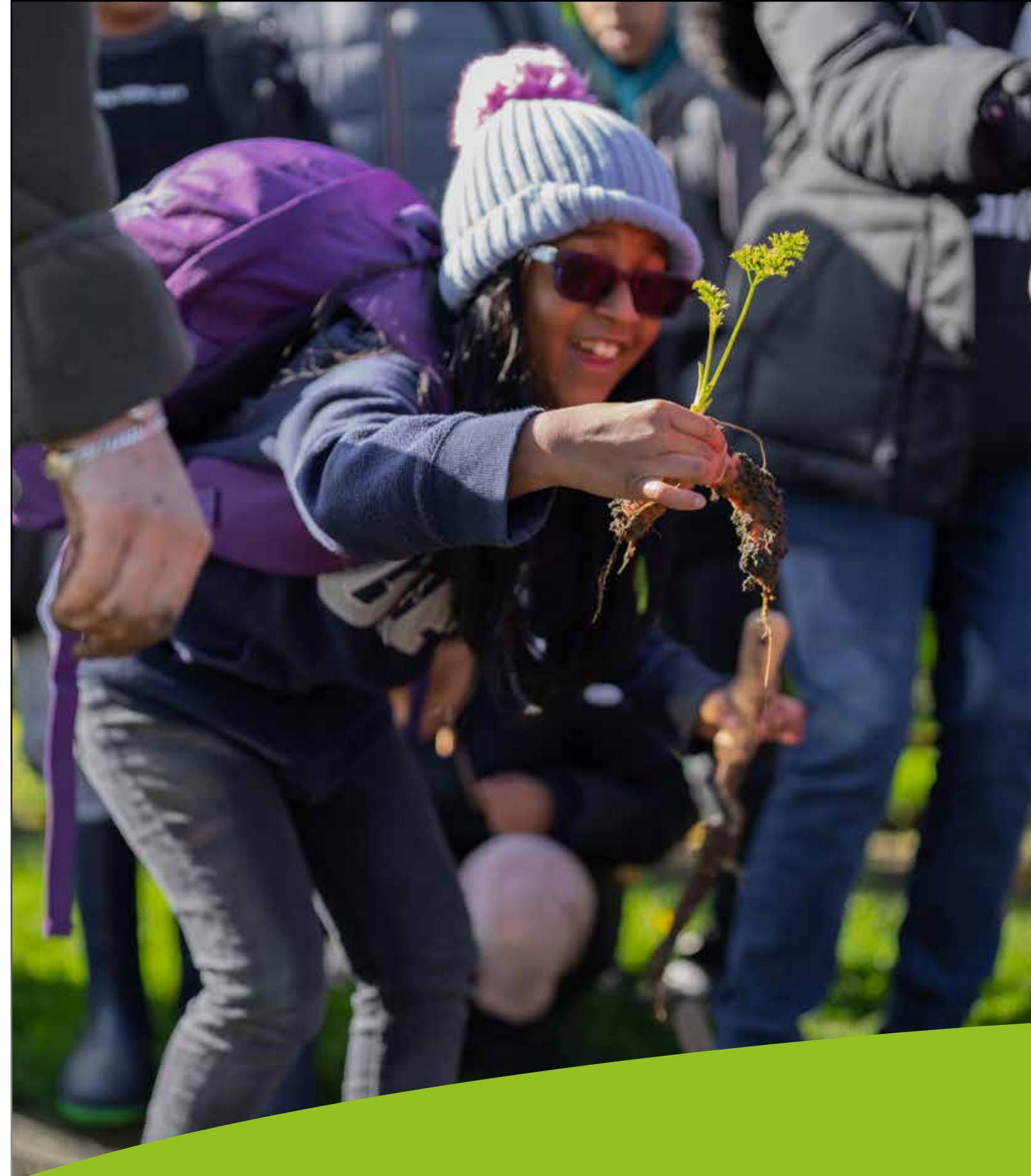
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The Country Trust is the leading national educational charity that connects children from areas of high social and economic disadvantage with the land that sustains us all

The Landscape



Our mission:
Through food, farming and countryside experiences we aim to empower children to be confident, curious and create change in their lives and the world around them, so that they and society thrive

Why we exist

Poverty of opportunity and experience from an early age can negatively impact health, wellbeing, and, as Covid-19 has highlighted, access to education that develops resilience, wellbeing and supports high aspirations and attainment. This then has an effect on the ability to achieve success in adult life.

According to the Child Poverty Action Group 31% of children in the UK (4.3 million) were living in persistently disadvantaged circumstances in 2019-20 owing to poverty.¹ Additionally, children are also disadvantaged by Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, social and physical isolation, by their status as a looked after child, refugee or asylum seeker or by their responsibilities e.g., as a Young Carer. As a result, the range of life experiences these children can access may be very restricted, for example:

- they may rarely travel outside their immediate community and therefore may have limited access to quality green space and the countryside
- access to good, healthy and varied food may be limited
- they may have little or no opportunity to grow things, have contact with animals, pursue hobbies or take part in cultural or sporting activities
- they are more likely to miss out on opportunities to meet positive adult role models, to be inspired and pursue ambitions.

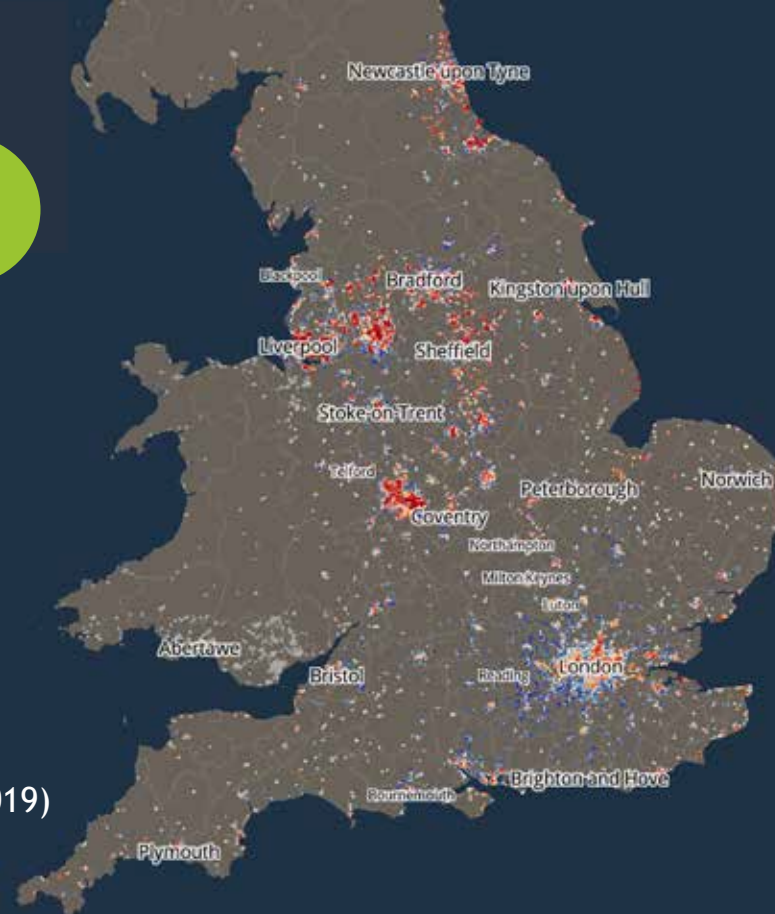
Children are becoming disconnected from the natural environment. They are spending less and less time outdoors. In fact, the likelihood of children visiting any green space at all has halved in a generation. Young people themselves say that outdoor space is one of the things that they need to ‘feel good and do well’².

¹ Households Below Average Income, Statistics on the number and percentage of people living in low income households for financial years 1994/95 to 2019/20, Table 4_5db. Department for Work and Pensions, 2021

² The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature, HM Government, June 2011
Link: [The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature CM 8082 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/442612/natural-choice-securing-the-value-of-nature.pdf)

Our Beneficiaries

Indices of Multiple Deprivation Map (2019)
Source: mapmaker.cdrc.ac.uk/



Who we support

We work with children who experience disadvantage through:

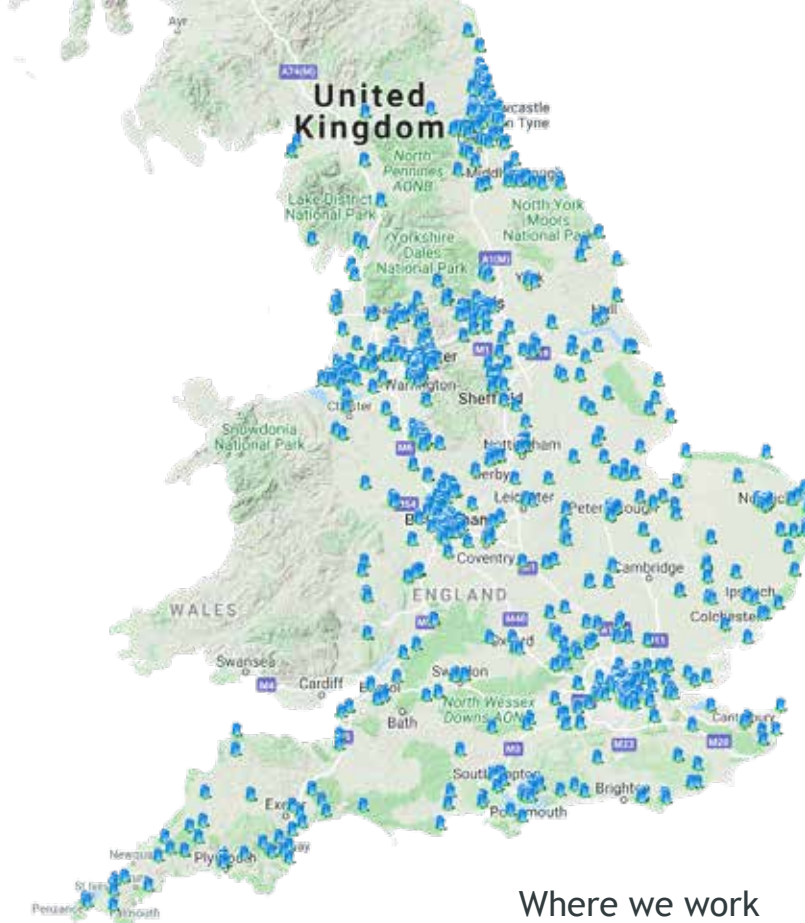
- low family income
- being on the margins of, or excluded from, or refusing mainstream education
- SEN/D (Special Educational Needs/Disabilities) or SEMH needs (Social, Emotional or Mental Health)
- being looked-after children, or children in care
- having responsibilities as Young Carers
- having refugee or asylum seeker status.

For this Impact Report, the term ‘children’ refers to children who experience disadvantage in these particular ways.

Where we work

Our Farm, Food and Residential Coordinators are located across England and North Wales delivering hands-on, real-world food and farm experiences.

In addition, our Farm in a Box National Programme targets schools located in the country’s most deprived areas.



Where we work
across all programmes

Impact of Covid-19

It’s clear to see that Covid-19 had an impact on all sections of society, including our youngest members. Not only have disadvantaged children been worst affected by Covid in terms of educational development and their physical and mental wellbeing, but the number of children living in poverty has risen sharply as a result of the pandemic.

We’ve had two disrupted years due to Covid. Children have missed enrichment activities and opportunities to experience the great outdoors.

Pauline Ashcroft, Year 6 Teacher
Claremont Primary, Manchester

It’s not in single figures, there are a number of children in each class who suffer from anxiety and attachment issues.

Jennifer Taylor, Year 4 Teacher
Our Lady of Victories, Keighley

Children lack social skills, simple things like asking questions, showing empathy and general communication is a real downfall at the moment. I’ve noticed that children are more anxious, they’re scared of something happening next.

Amy Postlethwaite, Year 2 Teacher
St Anne’s Catholic Primary, Gateshead

How we support our beneficiaries

We deliver our mission through four programmes:

- **Farm Discovery:** Visits to real working farms and estates are central to all our programmes. Thanks to our incredible hosts every year thousands of children gain in-depth, hands-on experiences of food and farming.
- **Food Discovery:** A tailored yearlong programme to fully immerse children in all aspects of growing, cooking, tasting and even selling food.
- **Farm in a Box:** The newest of our programmes, Farm in a Box is delivered to schools and is packed with hands-on experiences, investigations and activities.
- **Countryside Residential:** 2-4 night stays in Yorkshire, Suffolk or Norfolk. Giving children the opportunity to fully immerse in the wonders of the countryside.

All our programmes are designed to create moments that provoke curiosity, making learning irresistible. Children learn most deeply when they are following their natural curiosity as it places them at the centre of their learning¹.

Giving children time, space and the tools to understand the world around them - whether its in their school grounds, a farm or the beach - allows children to discover for themselves the wonder and connectedness of life.

As so many of the children we work with have limited experiences, we ensure that new experiences are crafted carefully and consciously into our programmes.

¹ Pete Moorhouse, Curiosity www.birthingto5matters.org.uk

2020 - 2021 Academic Year Snapshot



Supported 24,984 teachers and pupils through our Farm in a Box Local and National programmes



Connected 4,442 children with the land, across our Farm, Residential and Food Discovery Programmes



Welcomed 31 new farmer hosts from a diverse range of farms

Details of each of our programmes can be found on pages 20-29

Our Impact

Curiosity

Children who take part in our programmes better understand how to interact with the natural world around them. They feel more curious about the world particularly food, farming and the countryside.

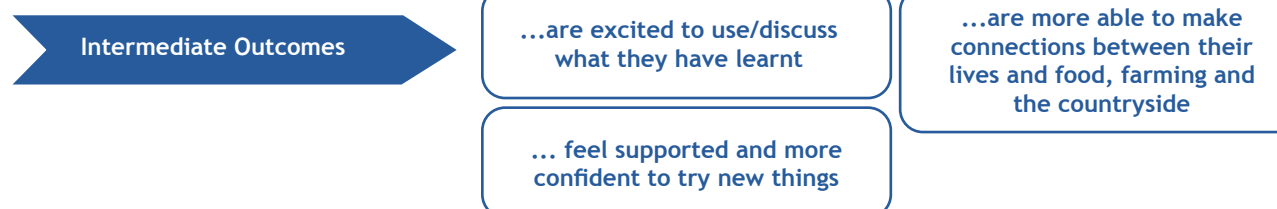
We want pupils to enjoy what they do with us. Enjoyment is key to irresistible learning¹. Across our programmes, at least 88% of teachers report that their pupils' interest in learning increases as a result of their enjoyment of the activities. We deliberately plan hands-on and sensory activities in all our programmes in order to give children the experience and tools to interact with the natural world, whether by touching, noticing or listening. For many children these are new skills which have to be learned, and then the child can explore at their own pace. This allows space and time for curiosity to develop and for children to experience wonder. This also allows for those children who struggle with formal classroom education to engage with learning.

Many children have not visited the countryside before and have little understanding of where food comes from. Visiting farms and the countryside is one way of introducing children to this world, and we do this in our Farm Discovery and Residential programmes. However, it is critical for all our futures that children see the relevance to their lives and can find connections on their doorstep.

Our Food Discovery and Farm in a Box programmes enable children to explore their own world through the lens of farming and nature and teachers tell us their pupils are more curious about and interested in food, farming and the countryside as a result.

¹ Working in environments of enquiry - Mick Waters qca-1.pdf (sightlines-initiative.com)

Theory of Change Pupil Outcomes



Country Trust Programmes



Details of our programmes can be found on pages 20-29

Our Impact

Confidence

Children who take part in our programmes are excited by what they have learnt, feel supported and more confident to try new things.

We want children to feel confident to talk about and share what they are learning. We make an assumption that feeling excitement (or another positive feeling) will result in children wanting to share, use or talk about what they are finding out. It is this same excitement and passion that can result in a child discovering their own agency (a longer-term outcome). Coping with trying new things - whether food or experiences - is something which children get better at the more supported attempts they have. Enabling children to feel success (regardless of their enjoyment of the attempt) is an important part of helping them try new things.

Over 82% of children who have taken part in our programmes report that they have done something for the first time. These 'firsts' can vary: visiting the countryside, tasting a particular food, looking at or holding an insect, and staying away from home are all common firsts for many of the children who take part in our programmes. Each programme consciously builds and scaffolds these experiences, supporting children to find ways they can manage new challenges in the future.

Language and communication are critical skills. When children want to share their learning through talking to each other, and feel that they can ask adults like farmers and Country Trust Coordinators questions, we know that they have some confidence to pursue their interests. All programmes allow opportunities for pupils to learn new vocabulary and Coordinators build in time for focused discussion and exploring what questions pupils want to ask farmers or other knowledgeable adults.

Theory of Change Pupil Outcomes

Intermediate Outcomes

...have a better understanding of how to interact with the natural world around them

...feel more curious about the world, particularly food, farming and the countryside

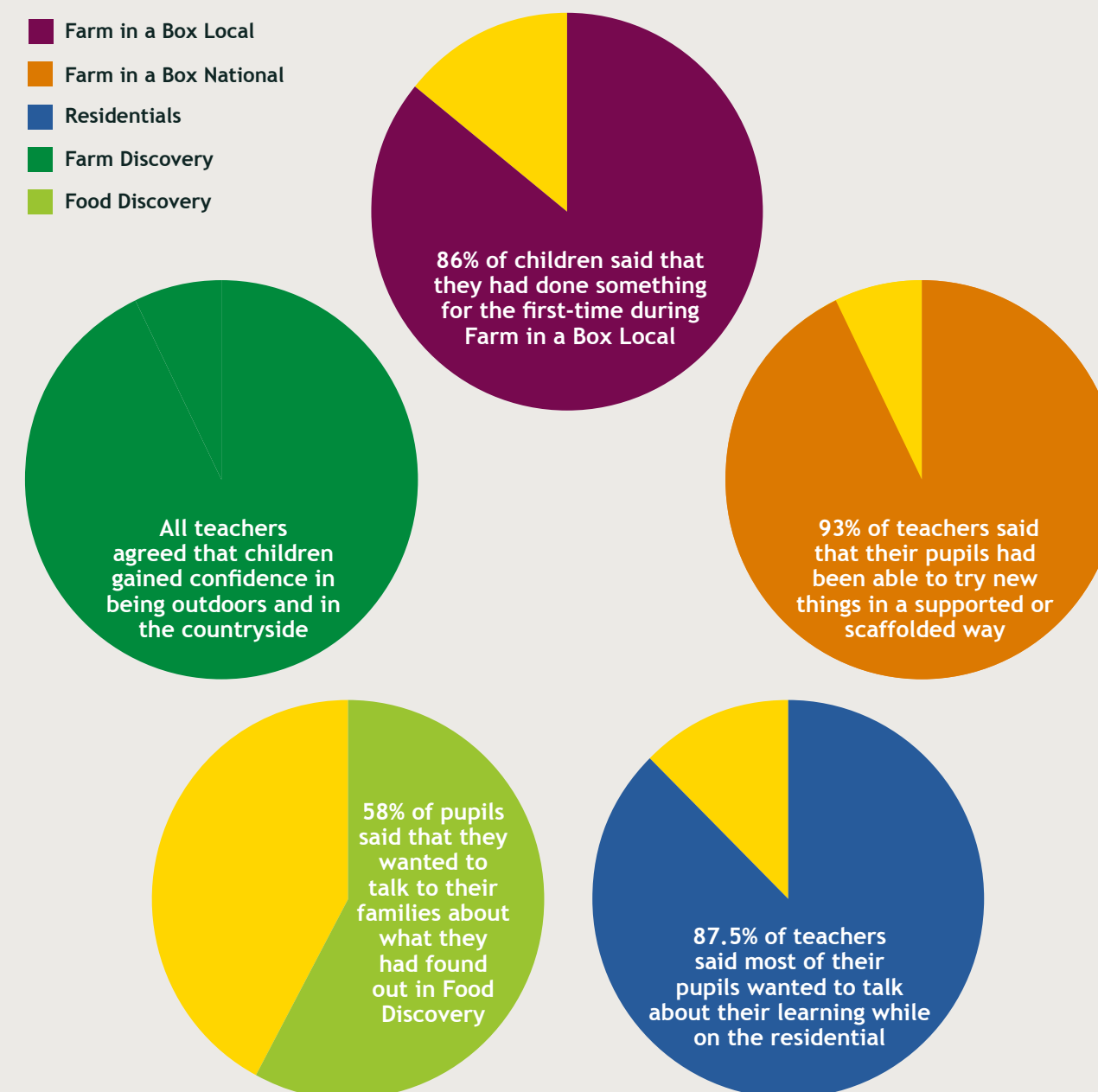
...are excited to use/discuss what they have learnt

...are more able to make connections between their lives and food, farming and the countryside

... feel supported and more confident to try new things

Country Trust Programmes

- Farm in a Box Local
- Farm in a Box National
- Residentials
- Farm Discovery
- Food Discovery



Details of our programmes can be found on pages 20-29

Our Impact

Connections

Children who take part in our programmes are able to make more connections between their lives and food, farming and the countryside.

Many children (and adults) have little appreciation of the complicated journey of food from farm to fork. This results in little knowledge of what farms do and how important they are to our lives, and that our actions and choices can have an impact on our health. Understanding the real value of food (including the time, energy, knowledge and skill it takes to grow crops and rear animals) and how much all of us depend on farmers and farmers depend on nature is critical in understanding how interconnected the world is. All of our programmes are designed to enable children to explore these connections to a greater or lesser extent; and curiosity and confidence help to support this exploration.

Over 82% of teachers said that their pupils had a better understanding of where food comes from as a result of taking part in one of our programmes. For Farm in a Box, where the children have not yet visited a farm, 94% of teachers tell us that the activities enabled the children to be better prepared for a real farm visit.

The connections children make are not necessarily all about food and farming, but more a general connection to the natural world and how they can find this in their own lives.

Theory of Change Pupil Outcomes

Intermediate Outcomes

- ...have a better understanding of how to interact with the natural world around them
- ...feel more curious about the world, particularly food, farming and the countryside
- ...are excited to use/discuss what they have learnt
- ...are more able to make connections between their lives and food, farming and the countryside
- ... feel supported and more confident to try new things

Country Trust Programmes

- Farm in a Box Local
- Farm in a Box National
- Residentials
- Farm Discovery
- Food Discovery



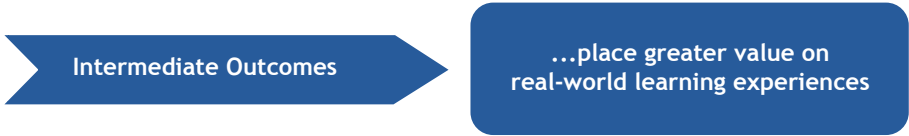
Supporting Teachers

The Country Trust aims for teachers who work with us to place a greater value on real world learning experiences for their pupils and, longer term, to gain confidence in offering broader, pupil-led opportunities.

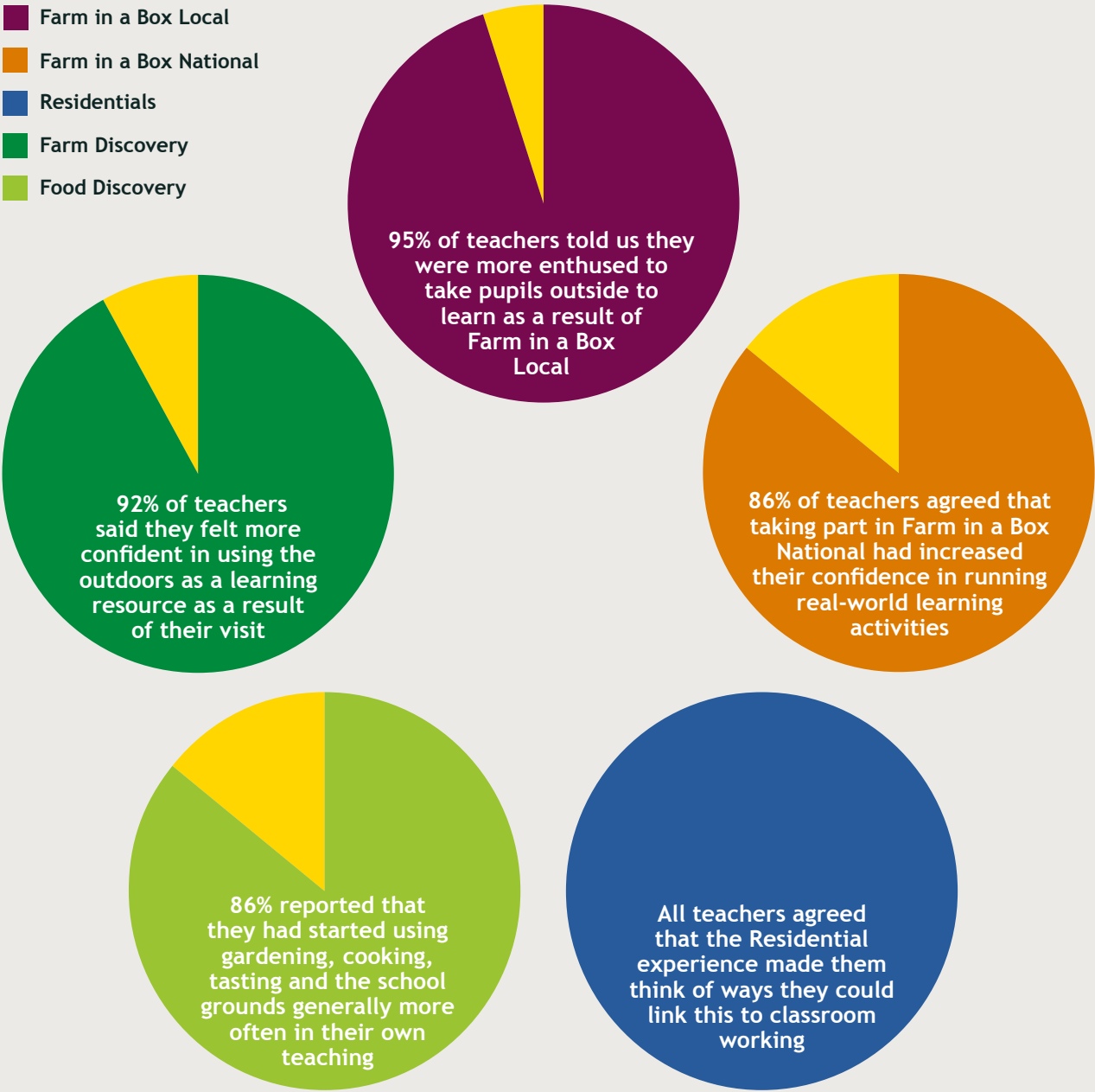
Over the year we have delivered a small number of formal Continuing Professional Development training sessions for teachers, both in person and online. However, throughout all our programmes we aim to model real-world learning experiences and show the benefits of pupil-led learning.

90%-100% of teachers (depending on the programme) told us that they wanted to take their pupils outside to learn more often as a result of working with us, with 90% saying that they felt more confident in doing this because of Country Trust input. Over 96% of the teachers we worked with told us that they use elements of whichever programme they had received in their general classroom teaching. This ranged from using the class’s shared experiences to using particular techniques and tools in their own practice to referring back to the programme in a variety of other subjects.

Theory of Change
Teacher Outcomes



Country Trust Programmes



Our Programmes

Farm Discovery

Our long-established Farm Discovery visits to real working farms (well over 500,000 children so far) are made possible by our network of amazing volunteer host farmers, working with our Coordinators. The visits are an opportunity for children from disadvantaged backgrounds to participate in real-world learning on a working farm. Children have the opportunity to spend the day alongside the farmer, gaining an insight into what life as a farmer involves and taking part in a range of practical hands-on experiences and activities to help them better understand how to interact with the natural world around them and develop their understanding of where their food comes from. The visits use food and farming as a medium to help children's educational, social and emotional development.

Our experienced Coordinators work with farmers and teachers to ensure that Farm Discovery visits are relevant, enjoyable and safe for the children who come. This involves supporting and guiding the host to share their farm in way in which children can understand and relate to, and providing children with real experiences and achievable challenges. These can then support children to enjoy exploring the new environment safely and curiously.

These trips benefit the children so much, most of whom have never been to a farm in the countryside before. Thank you to the Country Trust for organising these essential learning experiences which engage hard to reach children and families, and give even the most reluctant of learners a renewed interest in our curriculum, enrich their vocabulary and give them more of a sense of purpose in their writing.

Teacher, Myatt Garden Primary

A fabulous, well organised farm visit. Staff were very knowledgeable and experienced in delivering visits. All children were well catered for. Children were engaged throughout the day.

Sacred Heart RC Primary

Lovely to see some of the timid children gain confidence with the animals as day progressed.

Coordinator, Sarah Davey

Our Programmes

Food Discovery

Food Discovery encourages children to be curious about food and the natural world, affording many opportunities for children to develop their confidence - especially around trying new food - and provides space for children to make connections between food, the natural world and the people who work in it.

Food Discovery is primarily delivered in-school by Country Trust Coordinators, and children, their teachers, and sometimes parents and carers, are able to find out about food: growing vegetables in the school grounds; learning how to prepare and cook simple, nutritious, balanced meals with the crops they are growing - a skill for life; exploring a wide variety of foods through tasting; learning how food is produced commercially by visiting local farms; learning how food gets to consumers by running markets in their playgrounds; and in the majority of programmes, preparing and sharing food at a celebratory harvest feast.



Hands on and very interactive.
The children loved exploring
the vegetables.

Teacher - Belle Vale

With Covid they hardly had the
chance to try something new. The
different activities they did with
Food Discovery has enabled them
to have different experiences.
Some were inspired to do the
activities again at home.

Ruksana Begum, Hague Primary

I wasn't sure about the blueberry
but now I've tried it I've got
a new favourite.

Child, Mile Cross Primary

Our Programmes

Countryside Residentials

Our residential programme offers pupils a chance to spend extended time in the countryside, to experience the variety of a working rural landscape alongside the well-known benefits of a residential experience. By organising the full programme, from transport to activities, we support time- and confidence-limited teachers to provide cost effective and unique opportunities. By providing funding to cover 25% of the cost of these experiences we also increase the accessibility of these experiences to schools and families for whom the cost of a residential would put it beyond reach. Covid 19 had a catastrophic effect on residential experiences across the sector with Government restrictions only lifted in May 2021. Consequently the number of residentials we were able to run was reduced significantly in comparison with a pre-Covid year, and we had no visits at all to Suffolk.

Our activities are designed to create moments that provoke curiosity, making learning irresistible. Children learn most deeply when they are following their natural curiosity as it places them at the centre of their learning. In Norfolk, pupils spend a day at Barton Turf geocaching, charcoal making, learning about peat and the creation of the broads and going on a boat trip. Spending a whole day focused on this National Park offers a fantastic opportunity to become fully immersed in the natural world whilst understanding how people in the local area have interacted with that space over thousands of years. In Yorkshire, children undertake a four mile walk along the River Warfe which offers time for self-reflection as well as guided exploration of the route, connections to the Countryside Code as well as a huge sense of achievement. In both Yorkshire and Norfolk, children visited a working farm as part of their experience, aligning Country Trust residentials with both Farm and Food Discovery.

Every aspect of the trip that we attended was exemplary: the children enjoyed every minute. They were exposed to experiences that some had never taken part in before and they all rose to the challenge of becoming more independent in a situation that was unfamiliar to them.

Teacher - Soleby Primary Academy

The Coordinators were absolutely brilliant and taught the children (and adults) so much. They were great with the children, especially children who needed reassurance; accommodations were made for different needs/behaviour.

Naomi, St Anne's Catholic Primary

Our Programmes

Farm in a Box Local

Farm in a Box Local is a way of enabling children and teachers to have a farm-centred experience without leaving their school grounds. Coordinators match schools with a local farm which determines the theme of the Box. The Coordinator works with the farmer to create a personalised video of the farm, and with the teacher to choose from a menu of activities so that the whole day is tailored to the needs of the class. The Coordinator and the farmer then gather all the resources needed for these activities, pack them in the Box, along with the activity cards, and the Coordinator delivers this to the teacher. With all these resources provided by The Country Trust, the teacher then delivers the Farm in a Box to the class. Teachers can also choose to have a live link up with the farmer at the end of the day to provide pupils with the opportunities to ask the farmer questions.

Farm in a Box was carefully designed to enable The Country Trust to meet its outcomes: children were given space and opportunities to be curious, develop their confidence through a range of experiences, and make connections between their world and food, farming and the countryside; teachers were able to see the value of real-world learning experiences and grow in confidence in using this type of learning.

Farm in a Box Online

During January to March 2021 England went into another full lockdown due to rising numbers of people testing positive for Covid-19. Once again schools were closed for all but key-worker and vulnerable children and many teachers were working from home some of the time. All normal Country Trust activities had to be postponed and in response we put together farm-centred resources that schools could use with all pupils whether they were attending school or staying at home. The resources included a nine-minute film from five different farms, a quiz related to the film, and activities which followed on from the film.



The best part was being able to keep class pets (cockroaches and earthworms) having them here is a lot better than just looking at pictures of them because you actually see how they live.

Child, GUST Independent School

Children were so excited! They were engaged all day, curious and interested.

St Helen's Primary, Farm Discovery

Our Programmes

Farm in a Box National June 2021 Partner: Warburtons

Discover Warburtons Wheat Farm in a Box National was designed for schools in areas that are high on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (see map on page 6) but where the Country Trust has no presence on the ground and is therefore unable to offer real farm visits. The entire project was designed to meet our new outcomes: activities to stimulate children's curiosity; opportunities for them to develop their confidence; and ways for them to explore their world to enable them to make connections with the farmer's world, their own lives, their school learning, and each other.

The Discover Wheat Farm in a Box had a short 'Tour of Oxmead Farm' film for schools to use as an introduction, and each large box had nine activity cards and associated resources packed into it. The activities were differentiated for Early Years/Special Educational Needs, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Every school that took part was also invited to join an hour-long live session with a farmer growing wheat for Warburtons. These were designed and scripted to give children the opportunity to 'meet' a real farmer, and a Warburtons Food Scientist, ask questions and be interactive.

Delivered in partnership with:



The activity cards for the teachers were great. Simple to follow and easy to match up with the children's learning. Just what teachers look for! Thank you.

Teacher ~ St Joseph's Catholic School

Our pupil premium ratio is high and we know that many of our youngest children do not get the opportunity to visit farms or petting farms. It has been a valuable experience for them to understand that their food is not made/grown 'in the shops' but comes from elsewhere.

Teacher ~ The Oaks Primary School

My pupils all have severe or profound learning disabilities and associated sensory needs. The Farm in a Box resources gave them the opportunities to explore in a practical way using real life items. They were able to engage at a sensory level appropriate to their level of understanding.

Teacher ~ Ellen Tinkham School.

Case Studies

A teacher from Ark Primary School, Ilford told us..

“ [Because of Covid] The children haven’t learnt all the important real-life lessons they acquire from just being out and about. We haven’t taken them anywhere at all.

Particularly for the younger children, I think they’ve missed out on gaining confidence, they’re not as independent because they’ve been at home more. They haven’t had the sensory experiences of seeing and touching and smelling and hearing things .

The [Farm in a Box] introductory video was really good. They loved watching that. And that set a lovely context... They loved it, it was quite short, there was sort of music and lots of visuals and, and little sort of cartoony diagrams, showing things clearly, it was quite varied.

The children certainly had a lot of fun. They loved trying to grind down the corn, and they love trying the bread. And I think it’s given them a better understanding because, for many children, I guess they think bread grows on trees or something. So I think it has certainly made them more aware of the different processes. I think it was in the introductory video that it explained about corn, how it goes to the barn, then processed in a factory, then goes to the shops and bakeries. So I think it helps them have a clearer understanding of where it came from and a better appreciation of the natural world and a love for the environment. Because obviously, [food] is not made in a factory or a box, it’s come from a plant. So I think that all has been very helpful and very good.

I was totally impressed with all of it, it was so well thought through. I mean, everything was there, everything was so clear and easy just to pick up and teach from even if you haven’t really had much of a chance to look at it.

”

Case Studies

A teacher from St Patrick's School, Workington told us...

“What we did find was, Farm in a Box opened up children's minds to try different kinds of foods. And we've got a couple of children who are really quite picky eaters, to be honest with you, but they are actually now willing to try.

It's the progress that we've actually started in September, but I think it's actually helped in the past few weeks [during the FIAB activities] seeing where food comes from.

They've been asking lots of questions, which is really great for reception about food and about taste. I've had lots of conversations about different kinds of foods and how they grow. And that links with how important the weather is and the climate is for the kinds of foods that you can grow. We are Reception and I was quite pleased with the reaction.

They all wondered about the different kinds of things he (the farmer) did on the farm, and the kinds of machinery that he had, it kind of widened their worlds, that's their curiosity, to widen their world, and to make them aware that these things out there exist.

So that was the curiosity and the feeling the different textures that they felt in the field activity. They're really curious about that. They're curious about why bees do the waggle dance.

We've got children trying food that they wouldn't have tried before and curious about where it comes from. So I take that as a win. One parent has actually mentioned that their child is now trying lots of foods that they weren't trying before.”



Our Influence

By speaking out and influencing government policy our aim is to ensure that food, farming and countryside opportunities and experiences are available to ALL children, especially those who are persistently disadvantaged.

We know these opportunities offer the right balance of emotional, physical, social, and educational benefits for children and that teachers desperately need them for their pupils. High quality educational farm visits, delivered by farmers with the support of organisations such as The Country Trust, are vitally important for the future of British agriculture, and for people and planet to thrive.

That's why we are urging Defra (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) to include educational access to farms as a stand-alone public good, worthy of public support in its own right, alongside other 'public goods' such as clean air, clean water etc... in the new Environmental Land Management Scheme.

How we eat determines how the world is used and how we live. Together with the Food Education Network, we are driving for better and more food and agriculture education. A key part of this is backing the 'Eat and Learn' recommendations in the [National Food Strategy](#).¹

We are asking Government to join up, work across departments and take a creative approach to ensure we achieve the much-needed shift in food culture to create a sustainable, resilient food system that supports people to live healthy lives. Food, farming and countryside opportunities and experiences should be part of a fair education for all children.

¹ National Food Strategy, Chapter 16, July 2021, Recommendation 3
Link: [The National Food Strategy - The Plan](#)

We are calling for:

- **Every child to have the opportunity to visit a real working farm, to discover through first-hand experience where their food comes from**
- **Every child to have the chance to discover the connections between the food they eat, their own health and the health of the planet**
- **Every child to be able to develop the confidence and curiosity to explore the natural world**



**Country
Trust**

**To support our work visit:
www.countrytrust.org.uk**

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