



Sparkle Residential Trips Evaluation 2022

November 2022

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Contents

Executive Summary - 3

Introduction - 4

Aim of evaluation - 5

Method - 5

Young people - 5

Parents/carers and Sparkle employees - 6

Case studies - 6

Findings - 7

Demographics - 7

Young people - 7

Parents/carers - 9

Sparkle leisure team - 11

Case studies - 14

Recommendations - 15

Conclusions - 16

Appendix A - 17

Appendix B - 29

Appendix C - 30

Appendix D - 32



Acknowledgements

Thank you to all of the young people, parents/carers and Sparkle staff who participated in the evaluation, and to the Sparkle leisure team for helping collect feedback from young people and parents/carers. Thank you to Ordinary 2 Extraordinary for their generous financial support that makes these trips possible.

Executive Summary

★ This report summarises feedback received from young people, parents/carers and the Sparkle leisure team following Sparkle's residential outward-bound trips in 2022.

★ In total, 25 young people and 16 Sparkle staff attended two Sparkle residential trips in 2022.

★ Parents/carers reported that two of the young people who attended the summer 3-night trip had never stayed away from home overnight before.

★ Young people particularly enjoyed canoeing, abseiling and orienteering, as well as spending time with their friends.

 **75%**
would go again
(summer trip)

★ Despite missing their families and being out of their routines, the majority reported that they would go on a Sparkle residential trip again.

★ The young people gained independence, confidence and friendship from the experience, and supported and encouraged each other to take part in challenges and activities.

★ It is recommended that Sparkle's residential trips continue to be offered to young people with disabilities and/or developmental difficulties, as there are clear benefits for the young people.

41



young people &
Sparkle staff

£10,340.80
total cost
of 2 trips

*The opportunity and
experience is invaluable and
very much appreciated.*

(Parent/carer)

Introduction

Sparkle (South Wales) directly supports children and young people, aged 0-17, with disabilities and/or developmental difficulties, and their families, in Gwent.

Sparkle is the charity partner of Serennu, Nevill Hall and Caerphilly Children's Centres and delivers specialist leisure activities for the children and young people, whilst supporting families via emotional and practical support and information services, workshops and support groups, and fun activities for the whole family to take part in.

Every year, Sparkle aims to take a group of young people, aged 12-17, with disabilities and/or developmental difficulties on either a 1-night (aged 12 and over) or 3- or 4-night (aged 15 and over) residential outward-bound trips.

These young people do not get the chance to go on such trips with their schools or other groups, such as Scouts and Guides, as they are not able to meet their complex needs. Priority is given to young people who have not previously attended a Sparkle residential trip and those who will reach adulthood before the next trip.

This was the first time since 2019 the trips have been able to take place, due to Covid-19. These trips offer the young people opportunities to take part in a variety of fun activities and outdoor challenges, as well as the chance to experience independence from their parents/carers, sometimes for the first time, and to interact socially with their peers.

An evaluation of Sparkle's residential trips in 2019 found improved confidence, social communication, resilience and self-care among the young people; this evaluation was published in the [International Journal of Disability, Development and Education](#).



Aim of evaluation

This evaluation aimed to gain feedback from parents/carers, young people and Sparkle staff to assess the impact of the residential trips and make recommendations for development and improvement for future trips.

Trip 1:



Friday 19th - Monday
22nd August



Calvert Trust, Exmoor



11 young people



6 Sparkle staff

Trip 2:



Thursday 3rd - Friday
4th November



PGL, Liddington



14 young people



10 Sparkle staff

Method

The evaluation was conducted by Sparkle's Research and Development Officer, with support from the Sparkle leisure team. Case studies for 2 young people who had attended the 1-night residential trip in November 2022 were collected, whilst the 3-night summer residential trip was evaluated using online surveys for three target groups: young people going on the residential trips, their parents/carers, and Sparkle specialist play support staff who attended the trip. Only young people whose parents/carers have consented to their child taking part in Sparkle's research and evaluation activities were included.

Young people

Before and after surveys were

created using pictures that represented feelings and activities (Appendix A). Surveys were completed using a tablet computer so the young people could touch the pictures for their answers, whilst there was also the option to provide further comments either by typing on the iPad or a member of the Sparkle leisure team writing down the young person's verbal response. The 'before' survey was completed on the way to the summer residential trip, facilitated by Sparkle leisure staff. The 'after' survey was due to be completed on the way back from the trip, however many of the young people were too tired to complete it at this point, therefore some completed the 'after' survey the following week during Sparkle clubs.

Parents/carers and Sparkle staff

The surveys for parents/carers and Sparkle staff were sent out following the summer residential trip. The survey for parents/carers included questions such as “What did your young person gain from going on the trip?” (Appendix B). The survey for Sparkle staff included questions about how the young people found the trip and questions about how their own experience to help facilitate recruitment for future trips (Appendix C).

Case studies

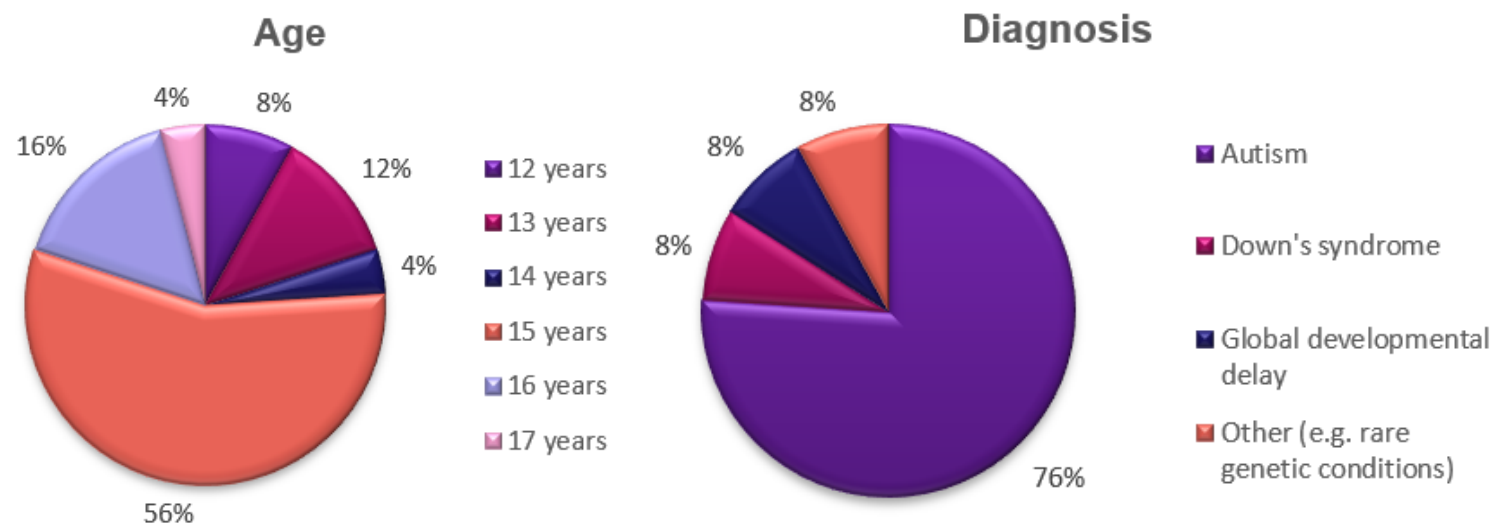
A case study form (Appendix D) was sent to the parents/carers of the young people who attended the 1-night residential trip in November. Parents/carers of 2 young people returned completed case study forms following the trip, and Sparkle staff who accompanied the young people on the trip were able to add their own comments and any direct quotes from the young person.



Findings

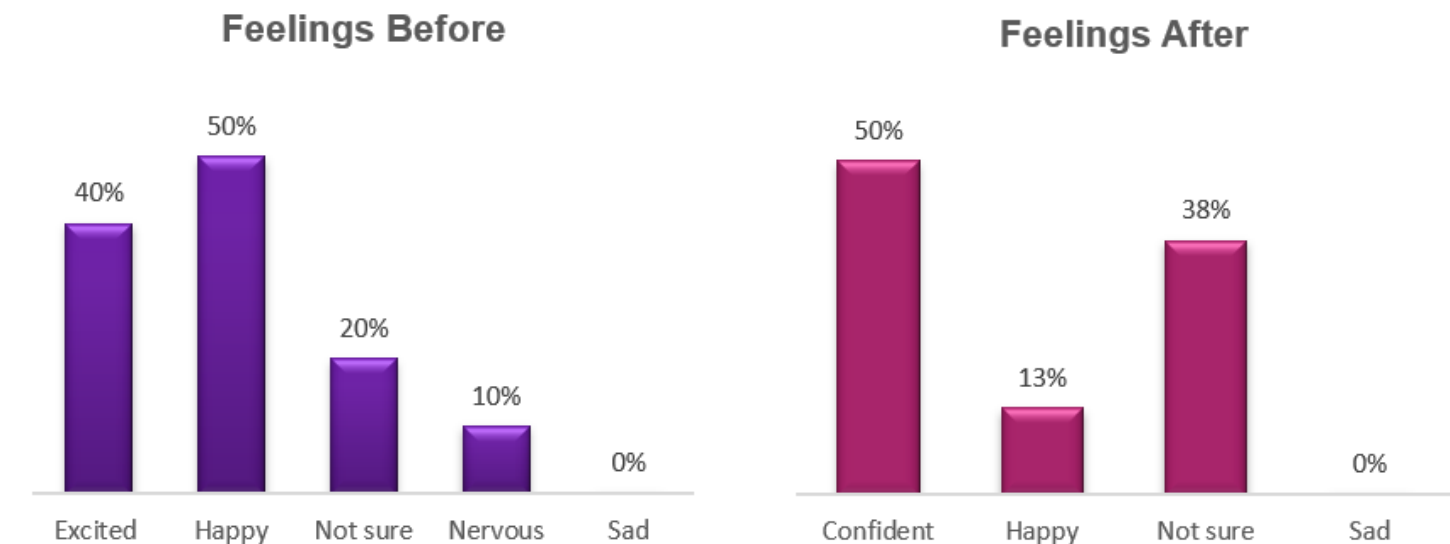
Demographics

Demographic information regarding the young people who attended the two trips is presented below, with a mean age of 15 years and Autism being the most common diagnosis.

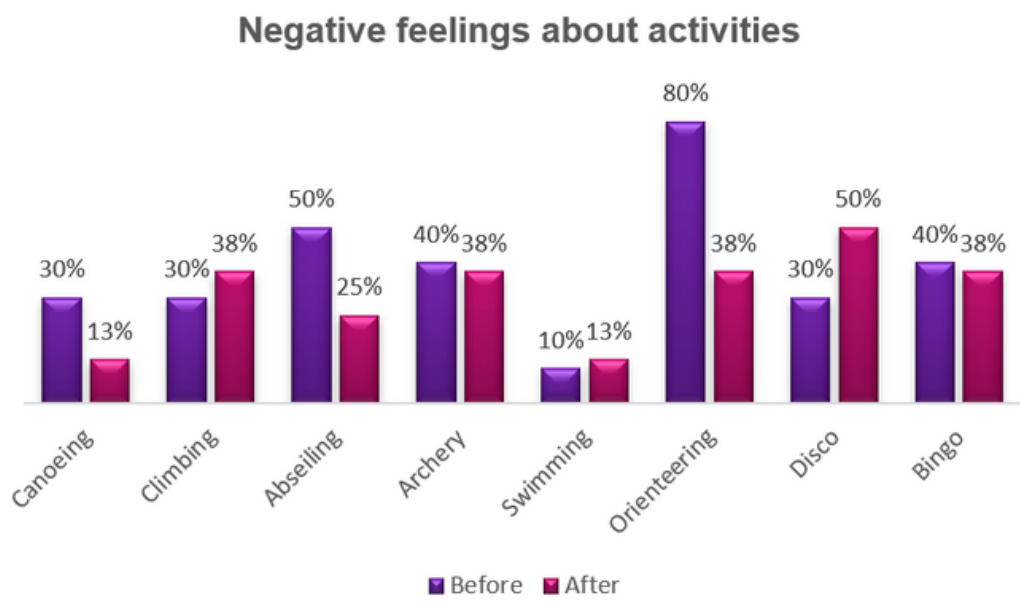
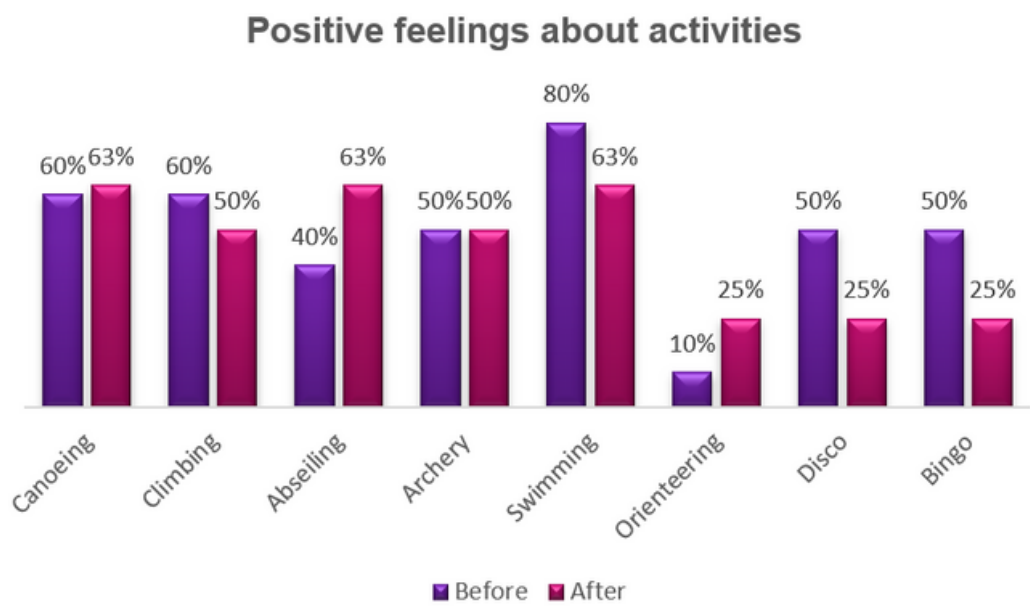


Young people

The summer residential trip was attended by 11 young people, 10 of whom completed the ‘before’ questionnaire and 8 completed the ‘after’ questionnaire. Before the trip, the majority of young people felt ‘excited’ and ‘happy’, whilst a few also felt nervous. After the trip, most young people felt ‘happy’ and ‘confident’ but a few young people weren’t sure how to answer.



The graphs below show how many young people expressed positive feelings before and after taking part in the different activities; this suggests that activities such as canoeing, abseiling and orienteering were particularly enjoyed, as positive feelings increased and negative feelings decreased, however climbing, swimming and the disco may *not* have been as popular.



While the young people described being with friends and trying new things as their favourite parts of the trip, they did not like being away from home, or out of their routine (something which is very challenging for young people with Autism). Whilst one young person who attended the summer trip felt they did not have any independence on the trip, 75% said they would like to go again.

Parents/carers

Parents/carers of all 11 young people who attended the summer trip were sent a feedback survey, which 7 parents completed.

All of the parents felt they were given enough information before the trip, and whilst most agreed they also receive enough communication with Sparkle during the trip, two parents did not receive messages from the team during the trip, which they say may have been due to signal problems and they weren't concerned about it.

The majority of parents (86%) felt excited for their young person to go on the residential trip, however 57% reported they felt anxious, nervous or worried. Parents wanted their young person to go on the residential to experience independence, gain confidence, make friends and feel part of a team, as well as trying new activities and challenges and enjoying time outside.

After the trip, 71% felt proud of their young person, whilst 43% were pleased and relieved that their young person was home; 100% felt their young person had enjoyed the trip.

Was this your young person's first time away from home?



2

Yes



5

No

There wasn't any, but that was absolutely fine. I trust Sara and the team without question.

(Parent 3)

Lots of thumbs up and smiles and told me it was great.

(Parent 3)

She hasn't stopped talking about it and showing the photos to everyone!

(Parent 6)

She was full of smiles on returning from the trip and photos showed the many activities they were able to enjoy.

(Parent 4)

What did your young person gain from going on the trip?



Independence



Confidence



Friendship

When asked if they had any suggestions for future trips, one parent felt the young people could have left for the trip earlier to have more time on the trip, whilst others wanted 'more of the same'.

Leave earlier so they have 3 fuller days

(Parent 5)



Just keep doing what you are doing. The opportunity and experience is invaluable and very much appreciated.

(Parent 4)

More of the same! Thank you so much for providing this trip. Wonderful to see everyone had a lovely time.

(Parent 3)

Sparkle leisure team

Following the summer trip, 5 of the 6 Sparkle specialist play support workers who attended shared their feedback, all of whom felt the young people had enjoyed the experience, saying they had been 'happy and engaged', they 'tried everything' and particularly enjoyed 'canoeing, swimming and being with friends'.

All the young people as part of my group really enjoyed the activities we participated in. They all gave the activities a go, including zip wiring, abseiling, climbing and orienteering - even if they didn't make it all the way they all gave it their best efforts with their team cheering them along.

(Sparkle 5)

I think all young people enjoyed every activity they did. Each of them took part and had a go at everything on offer which was lovely to see. It was especially nice to see (young person) join in the activities, when she hasn't in previous years. She absolutely loved the canoe activity, smiling and laughing the whole time!

(Sparkle 4)

Whilst Sparkle staff were positive about the majority of activities, some felt the archery could have been more inclusive and one group chose not to take part in this activity, and it was also mentioned that the canoeing was difficult for some young people and they would have benefitted from more help from the instructors.

What were the best aspects of the trip for the young people?



Friends



Enjoying themselves



Exploring new activities



Independence



Overcoming fears



Social opportunities

Sparkle staff felt the young people had gained independence and confidence from going on the trip, as well as opportunities to develop their social skills, try new activities, and take part in physical exercise and develop their fine and gross motor skills.

Most young people were able to gain independence by unpacking their own bag and choosing what to wear each day.

(Sparkle 3)

Many of the young people gained confidence when climbing up the wall or zip lining high in the sky and were happy to cheer their team along every step of the way which pushed them to go as far as they could (which was amazing to see!).

(Sparkle 5)

One suggestion for future trips was made: “Young people to have a say on what activities they would have liked to have done to empower them even more during the residential. However, I’m aware that this isn’t always possible.” (Sparkle 3)

Sparkle staff were also asked to provide feedback on their own experience of the residential trip. Reasons for signing up to go on the trip included to support the young people and see the enjoyment they would have, to have a rewarding experience, and because they had either been on one before or talked to other members of staff who had been previously about how enjoyable the experience was. All Sparkle staff felt they were given enough information before the trip and reported that there were no issues during the trip. They felt the trip had been well organised and the team all knew their roles and responsibilities, that the young people were encouraged and trusted the staff, and the team supported each other and worked well together. All would go on a Sparkle residential trip again if they had the opportunity, and when asked what they personally gained from the experience, responses included a stronger bond with the team, an understanding of the amount of work that goes into the trips, and a better understanding of the young people's day-to-day lives and routines and how best to support them.

The team was great. Which for me will encourage me to volunteer to work on more of these residential trips.

(Sparkle 3)

It was lovely to see the happiness and enjoyment on the young people's faces. I would go on another trip instantly.

(Sparkle 4)

I thought it was a great experience for both staff and young people and would love to be a part of that experience again.

(Sparkle 5)

Young person A is 13 and has ASD. He requires a lot of reassurance and guidance as well as a clear schedule. He attended the 1-night residential trip in November and took part in activities such as the zip-wire, orienteering, and a campfire sing-along and toasting marshmallows. He enjoyed interacting with his roommates but struggled with the lack of sleep and would benefit from being in a quieter room if he goes on another residential trip. He had a great time and can't wait to go on another adventure.

"It's been the best trip ever, I loved the campfire and movie and spending time with everyone."



Young Person B is 14 and has ASD. She attends a special school and requires a high level of adult support to access activities. She wanted to go on the 1-night residential trip in November to gain life experience and build and maintain friendships. She enjoyed fencing and the campfire very much, and although she didn't do the zip line, she did climb to the top before changing her mind, which was a very good effort as she is scared of heights. There was some misunderstanding about what she could take with her before the trip which caused some upset, however Sparkle staff said she soon felt better when she was on the trip with her friends. Her parent said communication was good during the trip and when they were on their way home.

"I really enjoyed fencing but did really like aero ball too"

Recommendations

The organisation of the trip, including information given prior to the trip and levels of communication, was commended by both parents/carers and Sparkle staff. It is therefore recommended that no changes are made regarding how the trips are organised, which is clearly thorough and efficient.

It is recommended that the feedback from the young people regarding the activities is taken into consideration when planning future residential trips and, if possible, young people are consulted when activities are planned to further empower them.

The trip was enjoyed by the young people and both parents/carers and Sparkle staff reported clear benefits for the young people; therefore, it is recommended that the residential trips continue to be offered and promoted to young people accessing Sparkle services.



Conclusions

Covid-19 restrictions in 2020 and 2021 meant Sparkle were unable to organise any residential trips, however we were delighted to be able to offer two residential trips in August and November 2022 for 12- to 17-year-olds with disabilities and/or developmental difficulties. The young people shared predominantly positive feelings before and after the trips and enjoyed spending time with their peers and trying new things, despite missing home and being out of their routines.

Parents/carers wanted their young people to experience independence, gain confidence, make friends and try new things, all of which was achieved. Sparkle employees also reported a variety of social achievements, such as supporting and encouraging one another. Sparkle employees personally benefitted from stronger bonds with the team and a better understanding and appreciation of the day-to-day lives of the young people and their families.

Due to the positive feedback received, recommendations largely centred around continuing to organise and offer residential trips in future years without any significant changes, ensuring views and feedback from young people are considered.



**Thank you to Ordinary 2
Extraordinary - without their
generous support, these once-
in-a-lifetime trips would not
have been possible.**







sparkle
helpu plant arbennig i ddisgleirio
helping special children shine

Appendix A

(Before) Residential Trip Summer 2022 - Young People

* 1. Young person's initials:

2. How do you feel about going on the residential trip?

 Excited	 Happy	 Not sure
 Nervous	 Sad	

☐ Other

3. Other:

4. Have you ever stayed away from home overnight before?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not sure

5. Canoeing



Excited



Happy



Not sure



Nervous



Sad

☐ Other

6. Other

7. Climbing



Excited



Happy



Not sure



Nervous








Sad

☐ Other

8. Other






9. Abseiling

 Excited	 Happy	 Not sure
 Nervous	 Sad	

☐ Other

10. Other






11. Archery

 Excited	 Happy	 Not sure
 Nervous	 Sad	

☐ Other

12. Other






13. Swimming pool

 Excited	 Happy	 Not sure
 Nervous	 Sad	

☐ Other

14. Other

15. Orienteering

 Excited	 Happy	 Not sure
 Nervous	 Sad	

☐ Other

16. Other






17. Disco

 Excited	 Happy	 Not sure
 Nervous	 Sad	

☐ Other

Other

18. Bingo




 Excited	 Happy	 Not sure
 Nervous	 Sad	

☐ Other

(After) Residential Trip Summer 2022 - Young People

* 1. Young person's initials:





2. How do you feel after going on the residential trip?

 Confident	 Happy	 Not sure
 Sad		

☐ Other

3. Other:

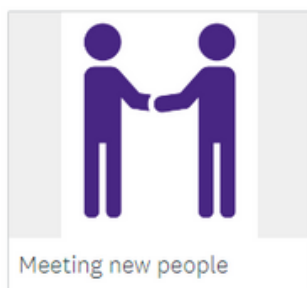
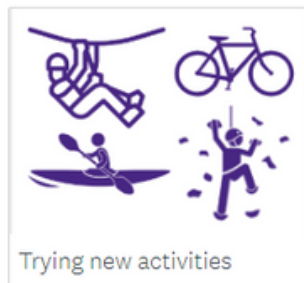
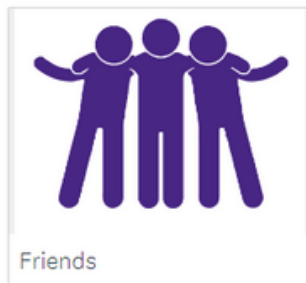
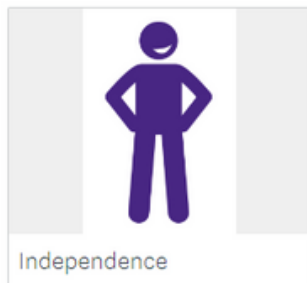
4. What did you enjoy about the trip?

 Independence	 Friends	 Trying new things
 Meeting new people		

☐ Other

5. Other:

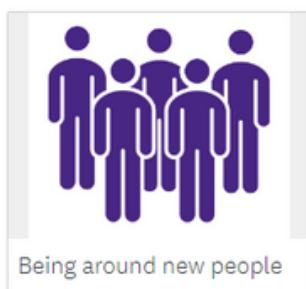
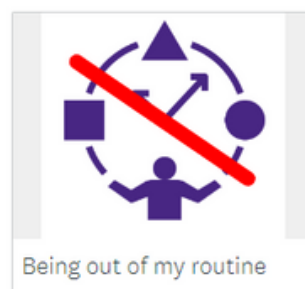
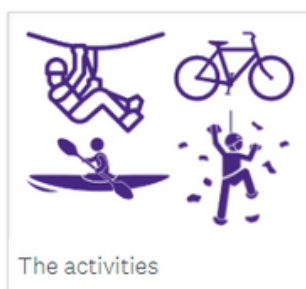
6. What was your favourite part of the trip?



☐ Other

7. Other:

8. What did you not like about the trip?



☐ Other

9. Other:

10. Would you come on a residential trip with Sparkle again if you had the opportunity?

☐ Yes

☐ No

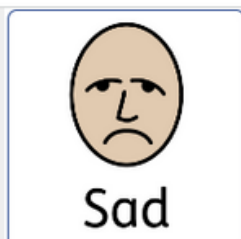
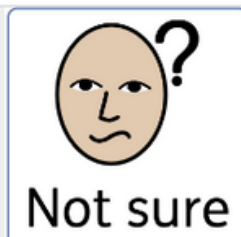
11. Canoeing



☐ Other

12. Other

13. Climbing



☐ Other

14. Other

15. Abseiling/Zipline



☐ Other

16. Other

17. Archery

 Confident	 Happy	 Not sure
 Sad		

☐ Other

18. Other


19. Swimming pool

 Confident	 Happy	 Not sure
 Sad		

☐ Other

20. Other


21. Orienteering

 Confident	 Happy	 Not sure
 Sad		

☐ Other

22. Other





23. Disco

 Confident	 Happy	 Not sure
 Sad		

☐ Other

24. Other

25. Bingo

 Confident	 Happy	 Not sure
 Sad		

☐ Other

26. Other

Appendix B

Parent/carer Questionnaire

1. Young Person's initials:
2. Was this your young person's first time staying away from home overnight, without yourself/another primary caregiver? – Yes, No
3. Were you given enough information before the trip? - Yes, no
4. If no, what else would you like to have known?
5. Why did you want your young person to go on the residential trip?
6. How did you feel before they went on the trip (e.g. scared, excited etc.)?
7. Did you have enough communication with Sparkle during the trip (if no, please explain why)?
8. How did you feel when they returned home from the trip (e.g. relieved, proud etc.)?
9. How much do you think your young person enjoyed the trip? – A lot, quite a lot, a little, not at all
10. Please give a reason for your answer:
11. What did your young person gain from going on the trip (e.g. confidence, friendship, independence, any specific skills etc.)?
12. Were you surprised by any of the activities your young person took part in? If so, which ones and why?
13. Do you have any suggestions for Sparkle if they run residential trips again in the future?

Appendix C

Young person's experience

- 1.How much did the young people seem to enjoy the activities during the residential trip? – A lot, quite a lot, a little, not at all
- 2.Please expand on your answer (e.g. if any specific young people particularly enjoyed certain activities, please mention this using their initials):
- 3.Do you think any of the activities were unsuitable for the young people (if so, please explain why)?
- 4.What were the best aspects of the trip for the young people?
- 5.What did the young people gain from the trip (e.g. independence, confidence, specific skills etc.)?
- 6.Can you think of any examples of positive or negative interactions between the young people and staff/instructors/their peers during the trip?
- 7.Is there any way the trip could have been improved to provide a better experience for the young people?
- 8.Do you have anything else to add about the young people's experience of the residential trip?

Your experience

- 1.Why did you sign up to go on the residential trip?
- 2.Do you feel you were given enough information before the trip?
- 3.If no, what else would you have liked to have known?
- 4.What went well during the trip?

4.What went well during the trip?

5.Were there any issues during the trip or aspects that could have been improved?

6.Do you think there is anything Sparkle can do whilst planning trips to avoid any of the above issues?

7.Did you personally gain anything from going on the residential trip (e.g. specific skills, valuable experience, new knowledge etc.)?

8.Would you go on a Sparkle residential trip again if you had the opportunity?

9.Please give a reason for your answer:

10. Do you have anything else to add about your experience of the residential trip?

Appendix D

November Residential Trip Case Study

Young person's initials*: Age: Diagnosis:

*Case studies will be shared in reports and grant applications anonymously, with any identifiable information removed.

Please provide some background information on your young person:

(e.g. their support needs, likes and dislikes, whether they have stayed away from home overnight before, reason for wanting to go on the residential trip etc.)

Please provide some information about what your young person did during the trip:

(e.g. have they expressed that there were any activities they particularly enjoyed/disliked, or if you feel there were any notable achievements etc.)

Please provide overall feedback on the residential trip:

(e.g. on the level of communication before/during the trip, how you/your young person felt before/during/after, any suggestions for future trips etc.)

Thank you for taking the time to fill in this form – we understand that your time is precious and we really appreciate your feedback.

Please return your completed form to research@sparkleappeal.org