



## Council for Learning Outside the Classroom

### **Council for Learning Outside the Classroom Update**

*Beth Gardner, Chief Executive of the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, brings us up to speed on the latest Council news*

As spring unfurls and more and more schools and other organisations supporting young people venture out to experience learning outside the classroom, it is exciting to see the numbers of Quality Badge holders increasing steadily every week. Providing a simple solution to help schools recognise those providers offering high quality learning outside the classroom experiences, the Quality Badge assists education professionals further by cutting through red tape and identifying organisations who manage risk effectively.

With over 600 organisations now awarded or working towards the Quality Badge, the Council is now reviewing recent research undertaken by CAPE UK to look at the viability of developing a Quality Badge specifically for individuals working in the learning outside the classroom field. A wide range of stakeholders have been consulted; from schools to local authorities and individual practitioners to employer organisations; and views collated to form a series of recommendations. Further developments will be reported in future issues of the LOtC e-newsletter.

### ***Regional conferences***

The main focus of the last few weeks has been the successful delivery of a series of four regional LOtC conferences. Spanning the country from Bristol to Leeds, and Birmingham to Peterborough, over 400 delegates attended the events representing schools, Early Years settings, local authorities, governors, and a range of provider organisations spanning all 8 LOtC sectors.

The DCSF set the scene explaining the LOtC journey so far, and formally handed over the baton for LOtC to the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom. This was the first opportunity for many of the delegates to hear about the work of the Council, and its key priorities for 2009. The **Quality Badge** remains an important area of work for the Council and its partners as they work together to promote and develop a system to promote high quality LOtC. The Council is also working to develop a **baseline research** project in order to measure the current level of LOtC across the country, and to provide a framework from which to analyse trends year on year. The **Out & About** package on the website continues to develop, with plans for a new Flash Wizard under construction to provide a bespoke route through the website for different users. Finally, **communications** work is crucial to the success of LOtC, and delegates were challenged to use their local and regional networks to spread the LOtC message by considering the following questions:

- How can YOU promote the benefits of LOtC for young people?
- How can YOU raise the quality of provision amongst local providers of LOtC?
- How can YOU raise awareness of the Out & About package on the LOtC website, and the access to free resources to support teachers and other professionals to develop a LOtC integrated curriculum?

### ***Involving you in planning for the future***

One of the main reasons for this series of conferences was to engage more widely with practitioners on the ground to obtain your ideas and see how you would like to work in partnership with us in order to mainstream and develop Learning Outside the Classroom for the benefit of young people. We are very interested in what you think the Council should be doing, and how you would like to see it working *for you* to take Learning Outside the Classroom forward. As the Council starts to put together its Strategic Plan for the future, the conferences enabled a wide range of people to feed in their ideas to this process. Feedback from the discussion sessions and specific questions asked on the evaluation forms is being collated, and key themes emerging include:

- The need to develop sustainable sources of funding to move forward with Learning Outside the Classroom developments into the next decade and beyond.
- The demand for curriculum planning materials to assist educational professionals to integrate LOtC as a key learning mechanism, particularly in light of the new secondary curriculum and the primary curriculum review.

- A sustained focus on communication with schools to promote the importance of developing LOtC as part of an integrated curriculum, showing examples of how this can be achieved in practice.

Feedback will continue to be collected from stakeholders to inform the development of the draft Strategic Plan, which will be available to members for consultation in early 2010.

### **2009 Learning Outside the Classroom Awards**

The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom is proud to announce that the 2009 LOtC Schools Award Scheme is due to be launched in June. The aim of the Awards Scheme is to recognise the commitment of schools, colleges and educational establishments in providing valuable and positive learning experiences for young people in locations beyond the classroom. This year we are seeking nominations from educational establishments who are creating novel, innovative and inspirational approaches to Learning Outside the Classroom whether in the school grounds; in the local community such as on visits to museums, art galleries or sacred spaces; through adventurous activities; or on cultural exchanges abroad. These national awards are your chance to set a shining example and encourage other schools and young people's organisations to embrace hands-on practical learning. If you are keen to register your interest or want to find out more, please contact [lotc.nominations@live.co.uk](mailto:lotc.nominations@live.co.uk).

### **Council membership**

The Council for Learning Outside the Classroom is a membership organisation created to support, and driven by, its members.

One of the key things for the Council now that it has assumed independence is to develop a membership base, which will directly influence and shape the work of the Council to ensure it continues to meet the needs of key stakeholders with an interest in learning outside the classroom. A priority area of work for the forthcoming months is to develop a membership strategy as an important part of the charity's governance.

To date, an interim Board has been elected – 8 representatives from a wide range of user and provider backgrounds, who stand as *independent* members to represent *all* aspects of LOtC. The interim Board members have worked hard to set up and establish the Council, and have a legal responsibility to drive forward the Council in its first year of work.

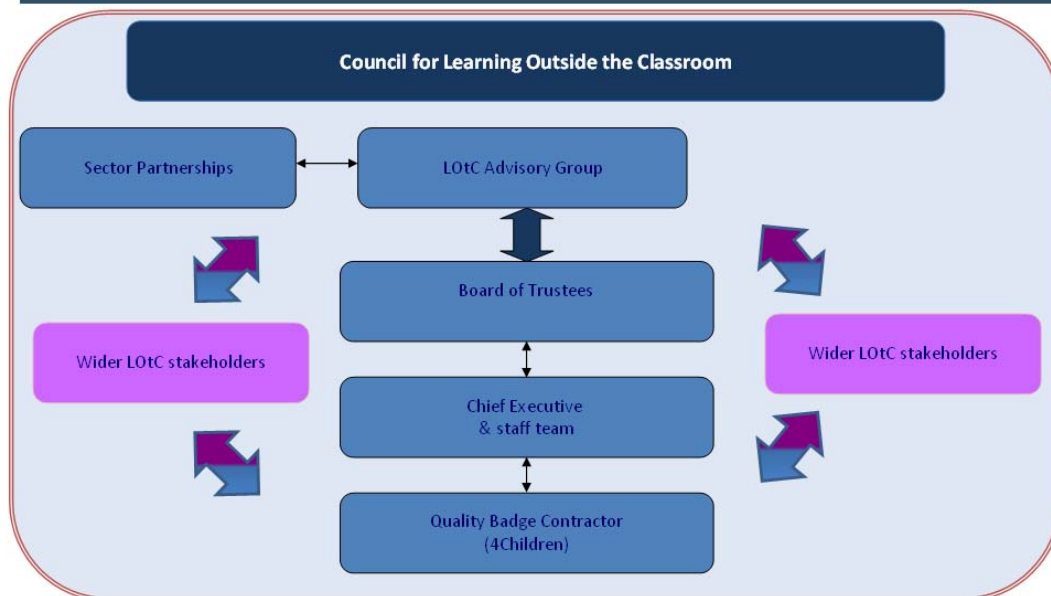
The interim Board works closely with the LOtC Advisory Group - which acts as a critical friend – with representatives spanning users and providers from all key sectors from school

grounds and early years to the built environment; from the natural environment to school workforce unions and governors to local authority Outdoor Education Advisers. The Advisory Group provides direct links to those delivering LOtC on the ground, enabling the Council to stay firmly abreast of key challenges and opportunities occurring right across the world of Learning Outside the Classroom.

The Council's AGM will be held in December, where members will vote to elect the first substantive Board. Further details of how to formally join the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom and become one of its inaugural members will be detailed in forthcoming edit



## How is the Council structured?



Thanks to all of you who have taken the time and trouble to get involved with the work of the Council so far, from playing an active part in the regional conference discussion groups to posting case studies on the LOtC website; from working hard to prepare your own organisation to achieve the Quality Badge, to distributing LOtC leaflets to providers and educational professionals with whom you come into contact. The Council has been set up to act as YOUR voice for Learning Outside the Classroom, and we look forward to welcoming you as members.