



FREEDOM TO BE CAMP NEWSLETTER 2017

WHO CAME TO CAMP?

91 children and young people living with HIV aged from 11 to 16 attended, from all over the UK and Ireland.

CAMP AIMS?

CHIVA aims to support children and young people living with HIV to:

- improve knowledge and understanding
- facilitate peer to peer friendships to reduce isolation
- improve confidence, self esteem and hopes for the future.

These aims were addressed through our camp theme of 'acceptance' and all the workshops and activities centered around this.



'It helped me know how strong I am'

We ran workshops using art, drama, music and performance poetry to further explore HIV and provide different means of creative expression. There were also smaller group sessions to look at growing up and having relationships. In the poetry workshop participants wrote about their feelings and daily life growing up with HIV: which some of them went on to perform at a sharing session along with performances from the music groups:

'HIV is a part of me. Not all of me, just some of me, a little bit of me. And of course, I want to be free'

The rest of the time was spent on outward bounds, sports and games; to build up confidence, try out new things



WHAT HAPPENED?

Everyone at camp attended two half-day workshops to address living well with HIV. The first, 'knowledge and understanding' covered basic HIV information, how medicine works in the body, viral load, CD4 count, and rights and reproduction.

The second workshop 'skills and strengths' explored talking to other people and acceptance. Within this workshop a 'tree of life' was made by participants. This was to explore individual skills and strengths, hopes and dreams, and to identify the people that are important. It is worth noting that in this part of the workshop many of the young people described losses they have experienced.



‘The best thing about camp is meeting new friends that have HIV so I can speak to them about it instead of keeping it all a secret.’

and help support the development of friendships. Everyone took part in all of the activities both on and off the site, including abseiling, canoeing and bush craft. They were supported by facilitators from the centre and our volunteer team.

The trained volunteers -many of whom are also living with HIV, worked throughout camp and were each responsible for supporting a small group of participants.

In the evenings there were lots of activities to take part in such as table tennis, table football, film night, pampering, board and card games, bake-off and juice bar. On the last night there was a camp party organised by the camp leader volunteers.

On the last morning the group came together as a whole for the closing ceremony which is a time for people to think about their time at camp. Everyone was invited to write something on a postcard about what they have learnt and experienced, and shared with the group if they wanted to.



An independent evaluation of camp is carried out each year which takes into account all feedback to incorporate into our planning for next year. This years evaluation will be available on the camp pages of our website soon and there is further camp information there too.

‘Being at camp made me feel free. I used to be worried about my future but now I feel much better. I used to think I am the only one with HIV but I was wrong, and thanks for proving me wrong.’

CHIVA are running our first ever Families Conference ‘Going Forward’ in London on Saturday 3rd March 2018. More details to be announced soon. chiva.org.uk/conferences/2018-chiva email: getinvolved@chiva.org.uk

