Nearly half the children here grow up in poverty. The Outdoor Guide Foundation kits out a Harpurhey state primary school, with WWF backing its next 100

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Children's TV presenter and author Gemma Hunt will join pupils at Manchester Communication Primary Academy as the Foundation, now a Community Interest Company, delivers Waterproofs & Wellies kits that keep children learning and playing outdoors whatever the weather.

MANCHESTER, 15th October. Pupils at Manchester Communication Primary Academy in Harpurhey will today unpack and play in brand-new outdoor waterproofs, as The Outdoor Guide Foundation brings its Waterproofs & Wellies Kits to one of the communities that needs them most.

Nationally, 4.5 million children were living in poverty after housing costs in 2023/24, around 31% of all children, roughly nine in every class of 30. In Harpurhey, the reality is starker. Across the local Blackley and Middleton South constituency, 43% of children are growing up in poverty, close to one in two, or around 13 children in a class of 30. For these families, waterproofs and wellies are often out of reach; many children miss outdoor lessons and play on wet days because they lack the right kit.

The Foundation's mission is to deliver ten sets of outdoor clothing kits directly to each state primary school, so pupils can join in, stay warm and feel they belong. Its research points to the wider gain: Natural England's Natural Connections project found 92% of teachers reported pupils were more engaged outdoors and 85% saw improved behaviour. With 1 in 5 children and young people aged 8 to 25 now having probable mental health struggles, the Foundation believes regular time outdoors is a practical part of healthier childhoods.

The barrier, it says, is rarely motivation. Teachers want children outside, but when it is wet, those unable to afford proper coats and boots are left watching from the sidelines. The intervention is simple, quick and relatively inexpensive, and it makes a direct difference to inclusion.

That mission is now drawing significant backing. WWF has committed to supporting the Foundation across 100 state primary schools as part of its Happy By Nature programme. Alongside it, The Healthy Back Bag Company has come on board with match funding and a donate-at-checkout option for its customers, and the Foundation has secured support from a growing number of charitable trusts and grant-makers. The Foundation identifies schools, presents the kit to pupils during term time, and reports the impact back, turning these commitments into coats and boots on children's feet.

Gina Bradbury Fox, Director of The Outdoor Guide Foundation, said:

"Outdoor learning and play should never depend on whether a family can afford waterproofs. Here in Manchester you can see exactly what removing that barrier does; children who were watching from the window are now out in the rain with their friends. Backing from WWF and others lets us reach further and faster, but the mission is ours and it is simple: no child is left out."

Gemma Hunt, Ambassador for The Outdoor Guide Foundation, said:

"When you see a child go from watching through a window to jumping in puddles with their friends, you understand what this really does. It is not just kit. It is belonging, joy and the freedom to be a child outdoors."

Jon Turner, Head of Education and Families at WWF-UK, added:

"We know that time in nature boosts children's wellbeing, confidence and learning - but many pupils, especially in lower-income communities, face barriers that keep them indoors. Schools want to take children outside more often, but they need the right support to make it possible."

"That's why continuing our partnership with The Outdoor Guide Foundation is so important. By providing essential clothing and practical help, we're enabling schools to unlock the power of nature for every pupil, every day."

Media:









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Individuals and businesses can support the appeal now by donating, sponsoring a school's kits, or making a place-based commitment through the Foundation's Regional Champion programme. Supporters can also add a donation at checkout through The Healthy Back Bag Company.

Donate: https://theoutdoorguidefoundation.org/

Partnership enquiries: suzanne@theoutdoorguide.co.uk · gina@theoutdoorguide.co.uk

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Interviews and filming: Gina Bradbury Fox and Gemma Hunt are available for interview on the day. Photography and video of children are used only with written parent or guardian consent, collected through The Outdoor Guide

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Sources: local child poverty figure, End Child Poverty, local indicators of child poverty after housing costs, 2023/24; national child poverty figure, DWP Households Below Average Income, 2023/24; teacher engagement, Natural England Natural Connections project; children's mental health, NHS Digital, 2023.

About The Outdoor Guide Foundation

The Outdoor Guide Foundation is the not-for-profit arm of The Outdoor Guide, the free walking resource co-founded by television presenter Julia Bradbury and her sister Gina Bradbury Fox. Its aim is simple: to make the outdoors accessible for every child. Its goal is to get ten sets of wellies and waterproofs to every state primary school in the UK. The Foundation is now a registered Community Interest Company, an asset-locked, regulated structure that strengthens its governance and transparency.

About Gemma Hunt

Gemma Hunt is a children's TV presenter, outdoor enthusiast and mother, with hundreds of live hours of television experience. She began her career with BBC Children's and presents the BAFTA-winning CBeebies series Swashbuckle, now in its seventh series. In 2020 she joined the BBC One Songs of Praise presenting team, and in 2023 released a series of acclaimed children's books.

About Julia Bradbury

Julia Bradbury is a journalist, TV presenter and Number One Sunday Times bestselling author who co-founded The Outdoor Guide with her sister Gina Bradbury Fox. She is credited with revamping BBC One's Countryfile in Sunday night primetime and has presented long-running series including Watchdog and Top Gear. Following her breast cancer diagnosis and surgery, she now dedicates increasing time to healthy living and nature therapy.

About WWF

WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) is a global environmental charity, and we're bringing our world back to life. With nature in freefall, we're urgently tackling the underlying causes that are driving the decline – especially the food system and climate change. And we're finding solutions so future generations have a world with thriving habitats and wildlife.

It's a huge challenge, but there is hope. We're working globally with governments, companies, communities and others who have the will to act and the power to transform our world. We're using our ground-breaking scientific research, our global influence, and the backing of our many supporters to make sure the natural world's vital signs are recovering by 2030.

WWF. Bringing our world back to life.

Find out more about our work, past and present at **wwf.org.uk**

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