

Outdoor Network

Joe Gibson reports:

At the Dbl European Conference in Lille, August 2013, there was a productive meeting with Lucy Drescher the Dbl network co-ordinator. At the network session we looked at a video from the first outdoor week, held in Scotland in 2012. Kari Schjøll Brede from Norway did a presentation about the upcoming Outdoor event planned for late September 2013.

We then had an interesting discussion about the future of the network, including what people wanted from the network; how the network might be able to support people and what people could contribute. Twenty-one new people from five countries signed up to the network during the conference. There are now over 50 individuals on the network list representing the following 16 countries: Austria, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, Germany, Greece, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Scotland, Sweden, Switzerland, USA and Wales.

The importance of the outdoors was featured in the conference on several occasions. Svein Olav Kolset, father of Torgeir, his son with CHARGE syndrome, powerfully encouraged the use of the outdoors in his plenary presentation. Two workshops - "I can do it with my friends" by Kari Schjøll Brede and "Golden Moments" by Inge Mogensen, Karina Højbjerg & Bente Knudsen, both powerfully discussed the use and potential of the outdoors for people with deafblindness.

The second Outdoor Network week was held in Sømådalen, Norway, September 16th- 20th. During the week, participants from Norway, Denmark, England and Scotland got the opportunity, among other things, to travel across a fjord in rowing boats, then hike to a cabin built by two young deafblind men, and spend the night camping out and cooking over a fire. They also experienced catching, cleaning, smoking and then eating fish from the fjord and cooking part of a cow in a fire pit. All these experiences were great starting points for communication with some powerful stories to take home. Everyone had an amazing week and many thanks to Reidar Martin Steigen and all those involved in the planning and running of the week.

If you would like to become part of the Outdoor Network or make contact with people in your country who are part of the network please get in touch with the network coordinator Joe Gibson, jjgibson@sensescotland.org.uk