

The current Middlesbrough location (though they'll be moving soon).



Part of the Seahouses retreat was a visit to the Alnwick Garden.



Lunch on the street.



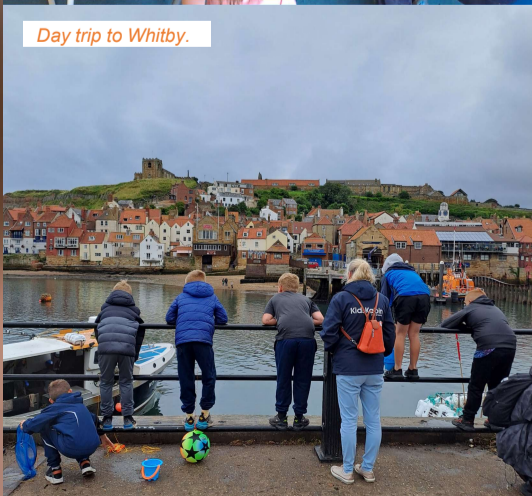
The Middlesbrough team I worked with for Summer 2023 (from left to right): me, Sue (manager), Ivan (a Filipino volunteer), and Monica (a Spanish volunteer). Katie (not pictured) joined later as a project worker.



A typical arts-and-crafts day.



Day trip to Whitby.



“POTENTIAL”

A reflection on my Leadership-In-Action project with Kids Kabin



I spent 6 weeks volunteering with 'Kids Kabin', a UK-based charity that provides children in disadvantaged neighbourhoods with **fun, engaging and enabling** activities. Their aim is to create a **safe space** for these children to be creative and **develop various lifelong skills**.

I was primarily based in Middlesbrough, though I also visited their Newcastle location. I met and worked with children from different **backgrounds**, with different **personalities and interests**. I also worked alongside other volunteers to run sessions, including those held on the street.

Initial Thoughts

I aimed to design and run sessions that taps into aspects of everyday life that I personally value: an opportunity to engage in **problem solving**, a curiosity for **science**, and an appreciation for others' **cultures**.

Early Days

I observed how Kids Kabin operated in different locations. I learned about the variety of **relationships** that children develop, and how to keep a child's **best interest**.

One of my favourite moments was in a Newcastle location. The activity was creating tie-dye handkerchiefs using Sharpies and rubbing alcohol. Coincidentally, this demonstrated the principles behind chromatography, a scientific technique used to separate mixtures of chemicals. I used this knowledge to challenge a boy to see whose ink could travel through the fabric furthest. Sadly, I lost.

I also accompanied a group of children from Middlesbrough to a retreat at Seahouses. With an excess of bananas, we made some treats including some (delicious) banoffee pies and some (experimental) oat & banana cookies.

Leading a Week

For my final week, I planned a complicated set of activities that incorporated problem solving, other cultures and science. Needless to say, things didn't go entirely to plan.

Expectation	Reality
building a city with wooden blocks and designing paper planes (for a paper plane competition)	sticking wooden blocks together, then painting them realising the glue hadn't dried so it falls apart (also no paper planes)
designing large flags that express one's own identity, and making decorations for the new Middlesbrough location	replicating England's flag with various twists related to football, and painting ceramic money boxes
demonstrating how plants absorb water by making dye-coloured flowers, and making baking-soda volcanoes	making wooden planes, and having a competition for who can draw Kids Kabin Middlesbrough the best

The images on the right show some of the children's arts and crafts during this week.

Lessons Learned

I didn't go to another country like a traditional Laidlaw experience. However, I did work with international volunteers from the Philippines, the US and Spain. I helped these volunteers navigate through and immerse in Northeast England's culture. In return, I'm hoping to visit them in their countries soon!

My time at Newcastle showed me how even a very diverse set of leadership styles in one group can function successfully – with the most important thing being **communication**.

Over the course of my final week, the big lesson I learned was to personally have a more **on-the-fly approach**. No one can really predict the weather, or a group of children's interests and values, or how a group of children will be that day. What is important is to **constantly learn and draw on my past experiences** to achieve the best outcome.

The best part of the week, however, was getting to know a young boy (on the right panel of images, third from the bottom). I was really impressed by how **he took the initiative**, coming up with ideas for his flag, and helping out others.

The biggest lesson I learned was that of **potential**. By having the opportunity to be creative in a safe space, the children really impressed me with what they could do. This extends to many things. When leading a team, for example, a leader should think carefully about how everyone can get the most out of the entire experience.

Impact

The impact that Kids Kabin have is **immense**, with Newcastle's location existing for more than 25 years now. They have built a name that locals **trust** on, and this is the same vision that they have for Middlesbrough's location.

For me, I'm looking forward to continuing to volunteer at Kids Kabin. I want to help them with their efforts in relocating to a new Middlesbrough location, and their broader efforts in giving children a chance **to learn and be inspired**.

