

Furzey Nursery Fundraiser: Inclusion notes and learning

Document purpose: To capture how initial inclusion conversations were run with nursery team, what we learned, and how this will shape the Furzey Nursery fundraising campaign and future engagement.

What happened

Activity: Furzey Nursery fundraiser idea discussed with two groups within the nursery team.

Fundraising context: Early exploration to inform a campaign and ensure the direction and priorities are influenced by the people we support.

Location: Nursery tea shed (chosen because it is familiar, comfortable, and supports relaxed conversation).

Timing: Tea break (chosen to reduce pressure and support a calmer discussion).

2. Approach and facilitation method

Communication approach

Ahead of the sessions, I prepared by reviewing Total Communication questioning techniques and aimed to:

- Speak clearly and keep phrasing simple
- Use fewer words per question
- Break questions into smaller steps
- Check understanding before moving on

This aligns with co-production practice that emphasises inclusion and shared power, supported by thoughtful planning and appropriate support.

Creating the right conditions

- Setting was deliberately informal and familiar (tea shed, during break).
- I aimed to keep discussion open without inserting too much of my own opinion.
- I used examples when abstract questions didn't land, to make participation easier and more accessible.

Use of “wait time”

A key technique was allowing silence for processing. Although it can feel uncomfortable in the moment, allowing time after a question is a known facilitation practice that increases participation and the quality of responses.

3. Group one reflections

What worked well

- Trained staff member supported my questions and helped adapt phrasing for individuals who needed different language. This was particularly effective because he understands each person’s communication needs day-to-day.
- Scenario-based prompts unlocked richer responses. For example:
‘You’ve told me what you do on a rainy day. Now let’s pretend you wake up, the sky is blue, the sun is shining, and it’s a dry day. What do you do in the Nursery, do you go to the polytunnel?’
This “let’s pretend” approach visibly relaxed the group and led to more detailed answers.

Processing and participation

- Sitting in silence supported participation from an individual who needs time to process and tends to ‘think out loud’ before arriving at an answer.
- I noticed another person giggled during silence (which may indicate the awkwardness of waiting), but the pause did lead to the individual contributing after sustained thinking.

Challenges

- One participant needed a lot of processing time and tended to speak while processing. This made it difficult to interrupt, and they sometimes went off topic.
- Staff member’s presence helped keep the space respectful, and other participants listened well.

Outputs relevant to the campaign

- The group were strong at describing how the nursery makes them feel and why it matters.
- They also offered concrete suggestions around tools/equipment.
- This gives us both:

1. emotional and wellbeing language that fits the wider Furzey “restorative” experience, and
 2. practical needs that can translate into clear fundraising asks.
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4. Group two reflections

Group dynamic

- This was a more verbal group. One individual spoke openly about gardening at home and the value of instructor knowledge.
- Another individual was enthusiastic and tangential. While not always giving direct answers, his contributions still added context and surfaced ideas that were relevant.

Inclusion and engagement

This session raised a useful challenge: a conversation-only format may not suit everyone for sustained periods. It prompted me to consider alternative co-production methods that allow different ways of contributing, such as visual activities (for example, collage-making about ‘what we need’, ‘what we enjoy’, ‘how it feels here’). This reflects broader inclusive design principles that value multiple ways to engage and express ideas.

Challenges

- One individual was quiet and needed direct prompting by name to contribute verbally.
- This highlighted the value of doing more preparation with instructors beforehand (communication preferences, confidence in groups, and whether visual/choice-based aids would help).

Outputs relevant to the campaign

- This group generated a longer list of tools/equipment and helped clarify the impact of broken/outdated items and how that affects both productivity and accessibility.
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5. Branding input

At the end of the session, I asked briefly what colours and things remind them of Furzey. This will inform design decisions for collateral.

6. Key learning

Most important learning: the intentional use of silence as processing time. Allowing 'wait time' supported participation and led to clearer contributions.

Other learning

- Scenario prompts and concrete examples can be more inclusive than abstract questions.
- Instructor support materially improves accessibility and the quality of engagement.
- A single format (spoken Q&A) will not work equally well for everyone; we should build in non-verbal and visual options.

Co-production guidance emphasises inclusion, equality, and planning so that people are supported to contribute meaningfully rather than being brought in without the right conditions.

7. Why this document exists

This is a record of early inclusive practice and learning. It matters because we are aiming to work more inclusively, including the people we support in shaping the campaign without compromise, and building a process we can repeat and improve.