

THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST PARTNERSHIP REPORT

THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST SCOTLAND REPORT

2022/23



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THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST IN SCOTLAND

'Gen-Z' are proving they are anything but the vulnerable and fickle¹ generation that they are regularly characterised as in the media. Over the past three years, they have adapted and dealt with disruption to their lives on a scale that a generation has not been required to do for decades. Despite having *survived* the pandemic, it is clear from our own research^{2,3,4} and other reports, young people's wellbeing has not recovered and many still struggle to find a way forward. Their mental health, their confidence, happiness and sense of belonging continue to be further negatively compounded by challenges of the digital world in which they live, the continuing national and global issues such as the cost-of-living crisis⁵ and environmental and humanitarian issues^{6,7}. These all add to the uncertainty and volatility of the world in which our young people are growing up.

THE NEED FOR OUR WORK

Young people's confidence, resilience and aspirations are continuing to be challenged against a global backdrop of uncertainty, inequality and imbalance.

The past three years of missed opportunity, disruption and insecurity to young people's lives as a result of the pandemic remain as scars on their social and emotional development and behaviours.



Uncertainty is very much being felt on a local level by young people in Scotland; a recent survey highlighted finances were a concern to 70% of young people⁸ with many **families struggling financially** to heat their homes, buy clothes and put food on the table due to rising costs. Young people too **feel anxious** about finances⁵, their job prospects⁹, and are **unhappy** about their education¹⁰. All this, on top of already **fractured**

social relationships, low levels of happiness and limited physical activity^{11,12,13} is resulting in young people struggling to reintegrate socially, to re-gain their confidence, their motivation and ambition.



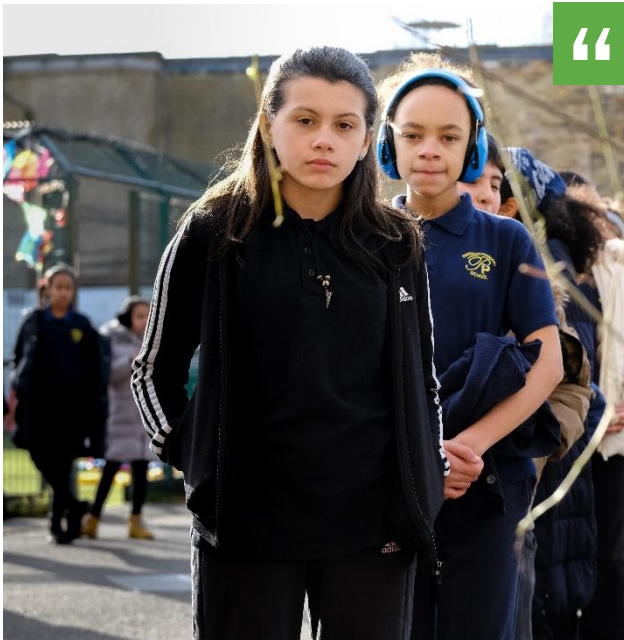
YOUNG PEOPLE'S CONFIDENCE AND HAPPINESS

Confidence, our sense of purpose and how we feel life is going all contribute to our general happiness and are vital elements of our wellbeing. Confidence impacts an individual's drive and motivation together with their perception of what they believe they are capable of.

Young people's confidence and happiness remains lowⁱ with **finances, emotional health, school⁵, a fear of failure**, worries about their **relationships**, their **appearance, physical health**, and their **futures** all identified as key drivers¹⁰.

ⁱ Young people's confidence and happiness remains lower than a peak recorded in 2012⁵

A *give up* or *opt out* culture has developed amongst young people which teachers believe has been brought about by an increasingly **technology-driven existence** combined with the fact that young people have **missed out on opportunities** to experience new places, meet new people and to experience and overcome challenge during recent years.



Our current S2s missed out on interhouse competitions and missed out on sport. You know, all the extra activities that we did, where you do get a chance to see each other out with the classroom, and interact, and compete, and support, and be part of a team. They've missed out on that, and those are the gaps that we need to try and fill.

Jim Purdie,
Headteacher,
Hazlehead Academy



Young women in particular are more likely to lack self-confidence, feel anxious about finances, have lower aspirations for the future⁵ and generally experience poorer mental health and wellbeing outcomes⁷ than their male peers.



Young people who are NEET or from ethnic minority backgrounds, have particularly low levels of confidence and happiness

The Princes Trust NatWest Index 2023 highlight **young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)** as reporting the lowest overall confidence and happiness score – the most significant drop seen in recent years, along with **young people from ethnic minority backgrounds** who reported lower confidence and happiness scores than their white peers⁵. The motivation and concentration in the classroom of **young people eligible for free school meals** has also been highlighted as a concern⁷. The pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis are reported to have particularly negatively impacted **white, working class, males**, further widening the gap between them and their more affluent peers, especially in terms of their engagement in school and university participation¹⁴.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S MENTAL HEALTH AND ANXIETY

There is a continuing **decline in the mental health and wellbeing** of young people in Scotland¹⁵. Rates of anxiety and mental health issues amongst young people remain a concern⁷ with high numbers of young people **accessing counselling**¹⁵ and being referred to **mental health support services** -particularly from areas in SIMDⁱⁱ 1 and 2¹⁵. This situation is impacting on their attendance at school, their ability to focus in lessons and their motivation¹⁶. Parental mental health issues are adding to the pressure felt by young people who have found themselves increasingly taking on caring roles^{17,18}.



Rates of anxiety and mental health issues amongst young people in Scotland remain high



The number of young people either with mental health difficulties or voicing their mental health challenges is definitely increasing. [...] There are also a lot of mental health difficulties amongst our parent and carer community, so young people are trying to support that – the level of young carers is higher than it has previously been.

Caroline Penny, Guidance Teacher, Braeview Academy



Attendance rates is one of the biggest challenges currently facing schools, absences are at the highest they have been for yearsⁱⁱⁱ with pupil **anxiety** cited as one of the contributing factors¹⁹. Teachers describe a **change in attitudes** to education amongst young people and their parents, which is adding further challenge when trying to re-engage young people in school. The social and emotional needs of young people against the backdrop of a challenging financial climate adds considerable additional demands on schools and teachers. Headteachers describe having to channel **additional resource** to be able to support families who are struggling with food and clothing together with additional subsidies to fund social intervention teams and blended learning packages for those pupils who are unable to attend full time⁷.

ⁱⁱ Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation: A tool for identifying areas of disadvantage in Scotland.

ⁱⁱⁱ In the week commencing 6th February 2023 absence rates were reported as 7.4% - compared to 4.9% in Autumn 2019 before the pandemic hit.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

Despite repeated calls for inclusion and tolerance and being one of the most well-connected generations, the instances of young people **reporting loneliness** have been on the rise⁷. In their 2023 -26 strategy, the Scottish Government highlights an increase in loneliness in young people aged 16-24²⁰. Young people report feeling excluded from society due to a lack of money⁵ and those eligible for free school meals are less likely to feel safe and a sense of belonging at school than their more affluent peers.



The instances of young people reporting loneliness is rising

As was the case through the pandemic, social contact for young people was and still is largely online and as a result have **limited opportunities for face to face contact, play** and socialisation to establish deep, trusting bonds. As a result, teachers continue to report a **high dependency for adult intervention**, increased **immaturity**, a **lack of self-awareness** and **emotional fragility** in their classrooms.



Because they've missed out on so many experiences, [they don't know] how to handle situations properly. Little disagreements take on a whole set of other arms and legs. Whereas in the past, they were little things that just were normal, and they got used to how they all interact.



Jim Purdie, Headteacher,
Hazlehead Academy

Lack of contrast and **time away from their normal surroundings** and social situations remains a legacy from the pandemic that teachers believe is **stifling young people's aspirations, confidence** and **sense of capability**. There is a **reluctance and anxiety** amongst young people and their parents to travel away from home and take part in opportunities outside of the norm. These anxieties are compounded by families' **financial constraints** in the current crisis, particularly so for young people with additional educational needs and those in receipt of pupil equity funding^{iv} and free school meals.

^{iv} Pupil equity funding is additional funding allocated directly to schools and targeted at closing the poverty-related attainment gap [Pupil Equity Funding: national operational guidance 2021 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/Pupils-Equity-Funding-national-operational-guidance-2021)

THE YOUNG PEOPLE WE WORK WITH

In 2022-23, The Outward Bound Trust partnered with 131 schools and youth groups in Scotland to provide approximately 4,700 young people from across the country with an experience that helped shape their future aspirations, no matter what their circumstance. 84% of these young people received bursary funding.

Many of the young people we work with come from deprived urban and rural communities from **in Scotland** who would typically have few opportunities to experience life outside their normal social and physical surroundings, to be challenged, develop a sense of capability - social and emotional skills which strengthen their wellbeing and increase the chance of them flourishing in life.

While young people from a variety of different socio-economic backgrounds are facing significant financial, social and emotional challenges in the current climate, the barriers for young people from **BAME backgrounds, white working-class males**, those in **receipt of free school meals** or **pupil equity funding** to achieving their potential are particularly amplified. Teachers have identified an urgent need for these pupils to have experiences that will help develop skills to support their **engagement in learning**, their **social skills** and their **low self-confidence** and **aspirations**.

THE OUTWARD BOUND EXPERIENCE

The **wild, natural environments** at Outward Bound provide an awe-inspiring backdrop to a young person's course.

Away from technology, their familiar home and school environments, young people are given **time and space** away from the constraints, pressures and social labels that often add to a young person's anxiety and low confidence. Experiences are carefully tailored to the young people's specific needs and school contexts, ensuring the degree of challenge is pitched at exactly the right level in a **safe and supportive environment**.



Often starting their course with a **jog & dip^v** or working together to get their team safely over a **high wall**, the young people's confidence and resilience steadily begins to grow and so too does the level of adventure and challenge to include activities such as **canoeing, rock climbing or a gorge scramble**. Their course often culminates in an **overnight expedition** where they sleep out under the stars or stay in bothies.

Away from home, young people are encouraged to take **responsibility** for their belongings, kit and for each other. They make **decisions** about their food, routes and equipment, and **living alongside new people**, they learn about the **value of support** and **deepen connections** with their peers and teachers.

As a result of the immersion in new environments, attempting and completing activities they thought they weren't capable of, all the while learning from mistakes, young people return home with a new **sense of pride** and **awareness of their abilities**. Having learnt to support one another, they feel a stronger **sense of belonging** and **value** amongst their peers, they feel **accepted** for who they are and **less likely to feel judged or isolated**. Coupled with their **increased confidence** and the knowledge that they are able to face and **overcome future difficulties**, young people are more likely to **engage at school**, seek out and take on **new opportunities, broadening their aspirations** and **sense of what is possible**.

CASE STUDIES

Working closely with schools, we ensure we have a full understanding of the specific needs and contexts of the young people who come on our courses. Each experience is carefully tailored to ensure the degree of challenge and achievement is pitched at the appropriate level required to enable personal growth and development.

The following two case studies highlight the experiences that can be had at Outward Bound and the range of outcomes that can be gained from our courses.



^v A short run, followed by a dip in the loch.

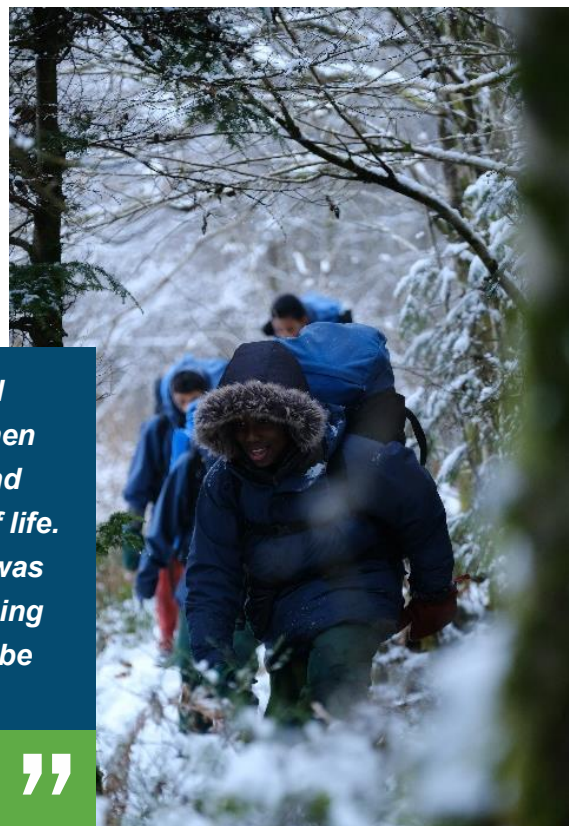
DEVELOPING RESILIENCE IN PUPILS FROM HAZLEHEAD ACADEMY IN ABERDEEN

Hazlehead Academy and The Outward Bound Trust, 30th January-3rd February 2023, Loch Eil

Hazlehead Academy is an urban, comprehensive secondary school in Aberdeen city. The pupils come from a large, diverse catchment to the west of the city with around a 50:50 representation from the upper and lower deciles of the Scottish indices of multiple deprivation. Around 20% of pupils are eligible for free school meals and 20% of the pupil population are from a minority ethnic background²¹.

In January 2023, 92 S2 pupils attended a 5-day course at our Loch Eil centre to help build their confidence, sense of capability and to develop their **emotional and physical resilience**.

The S2 group had missed out on a residential experience during primary school due to the pandemic. Their week was designed to prepare the pupils for the challenges they will inevitably face in their lives; to challenge and demonstrate to the pupils what they can gain when they step outside of their comfort zones and take up opportunities to try new things.



“

For most, [life is] a bit of a rollercoaster, and there are times when things are difficult. When that happens, the conversation you often find yourself having is the fact that this is part of life. When you've been through something that was difficult once, the next time you find something challenging, it's not quite as scary as it maybe was the last time round.

Jim Purdie, Headteacher,
Hazlehead Academy,

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The experiences at Outward Bound provided the pupils with real life challenge and discomfort in a safe environment. Back at school, they are able to reflect back on how they worked through them and employ similar strategies and mindsets when they are facing difficulties with exams or schoolwork.

As a result of their course:



93% reported an **increased score for resilience** (N=84)



84% reported an increased score for **emotional control** (N=80)



81% reported an increased score for **flexible thinking** (N=84)

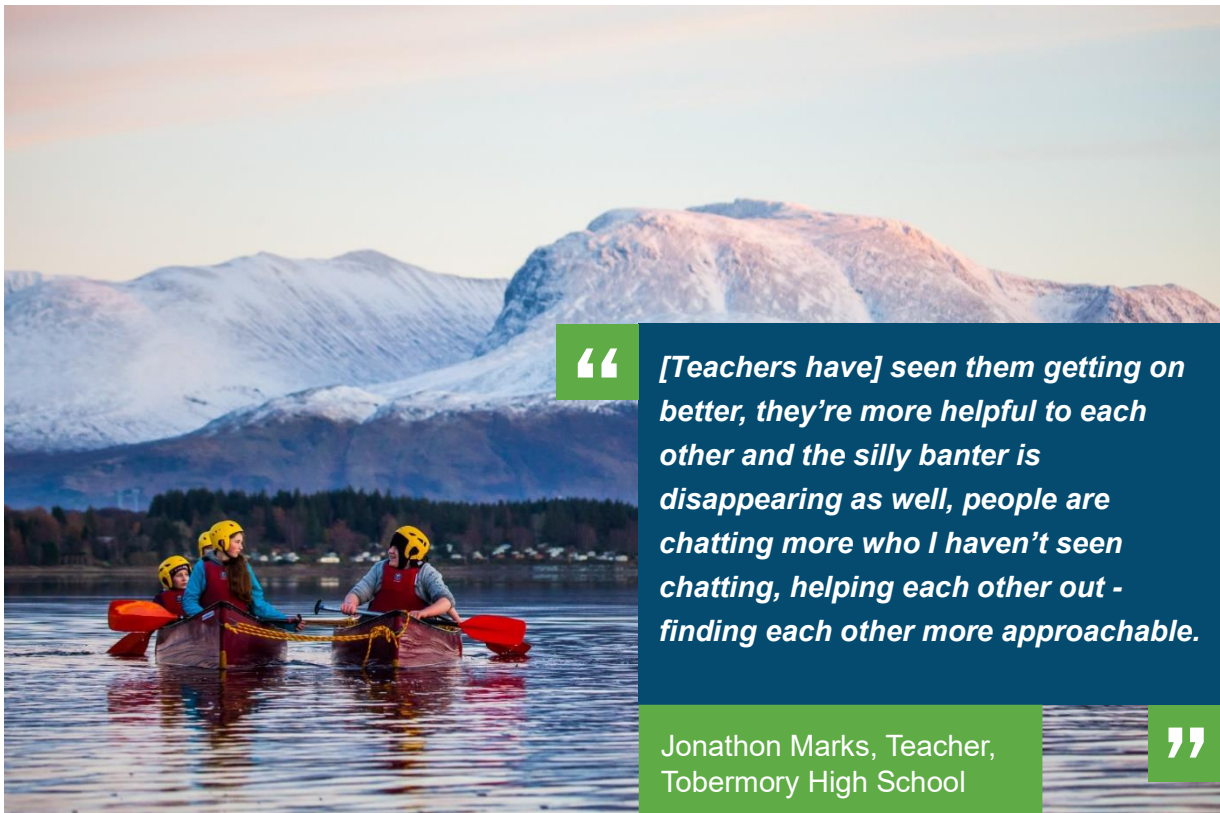
LASTING IMPACT: INCREASED SENSE OF BELONGING FOR PUPILS AT TOBERMORY HIGH SCHOOL 6 MONTHS AFTER THEIR COURSE

Tobermory High School and The Outward Bound Trust, 6th- 10th December 2021, Loch Eil

Tobermory High School is a small, rural state secondary school on the Isle of Mull. The school serves the town and villages on the island with most young people coming from SIMD deciles 6 or 7²².

22 young people from S3 came on a five-day course at our Loch Eil centre. Despite coming from a closeknit island community, teachers had noticed a particular lack of cohesion and cooperation between pupils on their return back to school after periods of lockdown and so **teamworking, communication** and **strengthening of relationships** became a focus for their course.

The pupils completed activities such as **raft building, canoeing** and **abseiling** and towards the end of their course, they enjoyed a **cookout** and **star-gazing**.



During their week, the young people were encouraged to work with peers who they wouldn't usually choose to work with. Time away from familiar surroundings and shared experiences, gave pupils an opportunity to see different sides to their peers' characters and skills – sides that perhaps they hadn't seen before.

Back at school, teachers commented that they had seen positive changes in the pupils' interactions with one another.

Six months after their course, **74% of the young people reported an increased sense of belonging** – the extent to which they felt supported by and able to share things with their friends, compared to before their course (Figure 1).

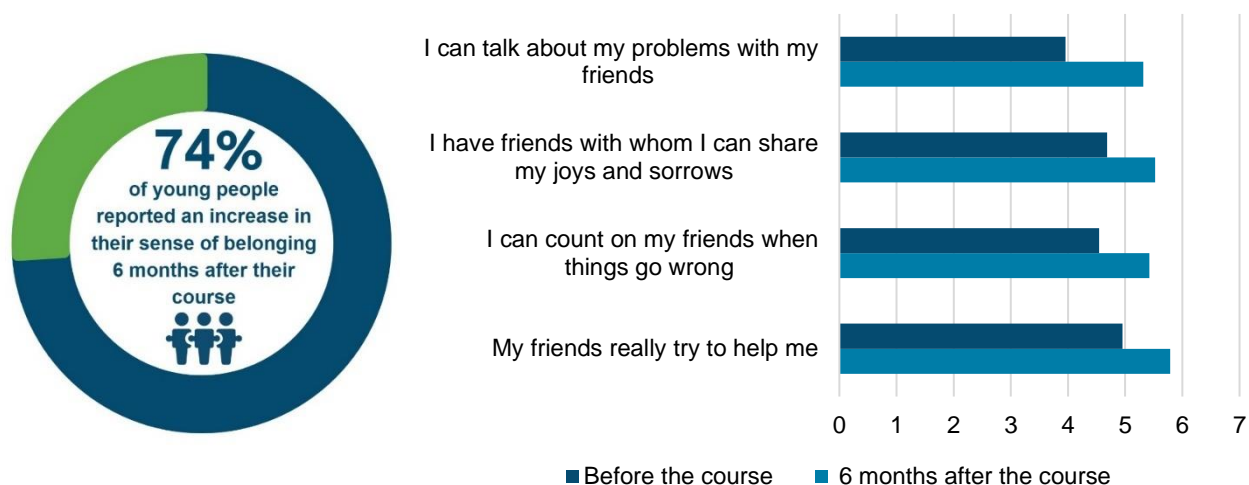


Figure 1: 6 months after their course, 75% of pupils reported an increase in their sense of belonging compared to their pre-course score. Pupils indicated their agreement on a 7-point scale ranging from 1= Very strongly disagree to 7=Very strongly agree. N=19.

OUTWARD BOUND LEARNING OUTCOMES

By assessing the attitudes, skills and behaviours that young people develop during their course, we are able to understand the impact that Outward Bound courses have on improving the life chances of young people in Scotland.

To evaluate the impact of our courses, young people and their teachers complete questionnaires, before, after and several months on from their course. We combine these with interviews to gain a deeper insight into the value an Outward Bound experience has on the lives of young people and how they are able to use their learning in their home lives, as they progress through their education and into the world of work. The following data and insights are taken from a range of courses for young people from across the UK^{vi}.

^{vi} Young people's names have been changed to protect their anonymity, school staff names and job titles have been quoted where we have permission to do so.

DEVELOPING RESILIENCE AND THE ABILITY TO COPE WITH UNCERTAINTY AND CHANGE

Without the skills and attitudes to be able to adapt and respond to discomfort and change, a young person growing up in today's uncertain and volatile world is likely to experience anxiety, stress and feel easily overwhelmed. If these feelings are left to continue long-term, it can negatively impact aspirations, educational and outcomes and overall wellbeing.

“

[I learnt] that it is easy to do something once you have overcome it in your head

Adam, 13 Bucksburn Academy

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At Outward Bound, young people are given the opportunity to **face and overcome challenge** in a **safe, supportive space**. Through tangible experiences and by employing a positive mindset, young people become aware of what they are capable of, and the possibilities open to them. They leave Outward Bound knowing they can **cope in emotionally and physically challenging situations** (Figure 2) and have a new willingness and a more **flexible attitude** to challenge, risk and discomfort.

92%
of young people reported an increased score for resilience at the end of their course (N=108)

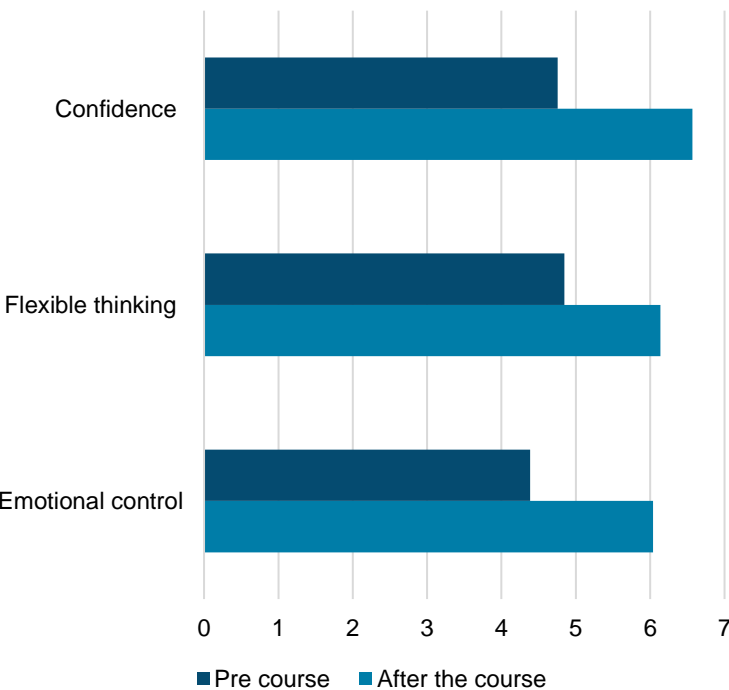


Figure 2: Young people leave their course knowing they can cope in emotionally and physically challenging situations. Participants average scores before and after their course. N=110 for Confidence and Flexible thinking and N= 108 for Emotional control. Responses were indicated on an 8-point scale from 1 – False, not like me to 8 = True, like me. Participants were asked to give a retrospective pre-course rating.

“

The reason I'm passionate about [Outward Bound] is because you learn and think differently - if the young people are sitting in the same classroom day after day it can become a bit stagnant, it stifles the curiosity, their initiative, they sit in their comfort zone. So taking them down to Loch Eil was a real eye opener; kids who would usually sit at the back of the class and not say boo to a goose were encouraged – not forced to, 'let's give this a go, let's try this. I watched some of the kids and there was the fear, the enjoyment, the excitement, the terror all rolled into one, and I think the immersive experience helps them understand their emotions better.

Stuart Caddell, Deputy Headteacher,
Gairloch High School,

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Accompanying school staff observed improvements in young people's awareness of their own capabilities and ability to persevere through challenges.

94%



of accompanying staff agreed that the young people will be more likely to persevere when they encounter difficulties in the future, as a result of the course (N=35).

100%



of accompanying staff agreed that during their course, the young people realised they were capable of more than they had thought (N=35).

On each course, the level of challenge is tailored to the needs and abilities of the young people to ensure personal growth and development. On our primary-school courses, young people are given the opportunity to build strong foundations in social skills, independence and confidence, meaning that as they progress through their lives, they will be less likely to fear new situations or making mistakes (Figure 3).

Primary school aged participants reported they developed the ability to persevere through challenges and complete things they thought they would not be able to do. In doing so, they learned more about themselves and their capabilities.

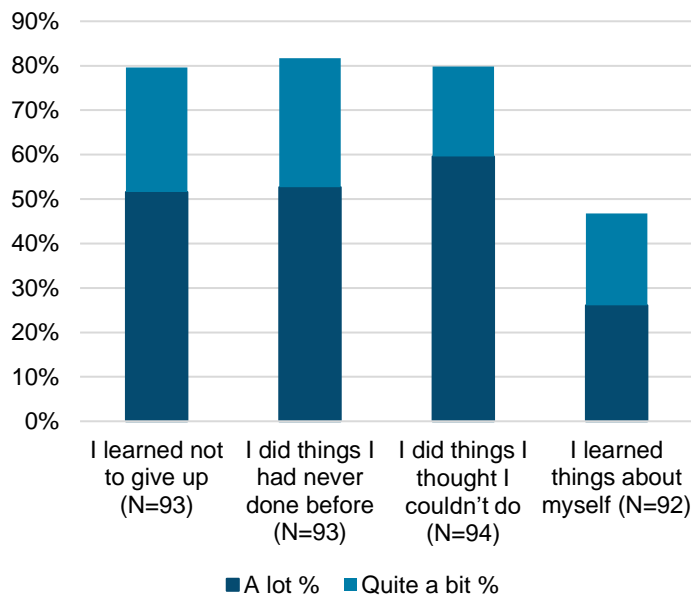
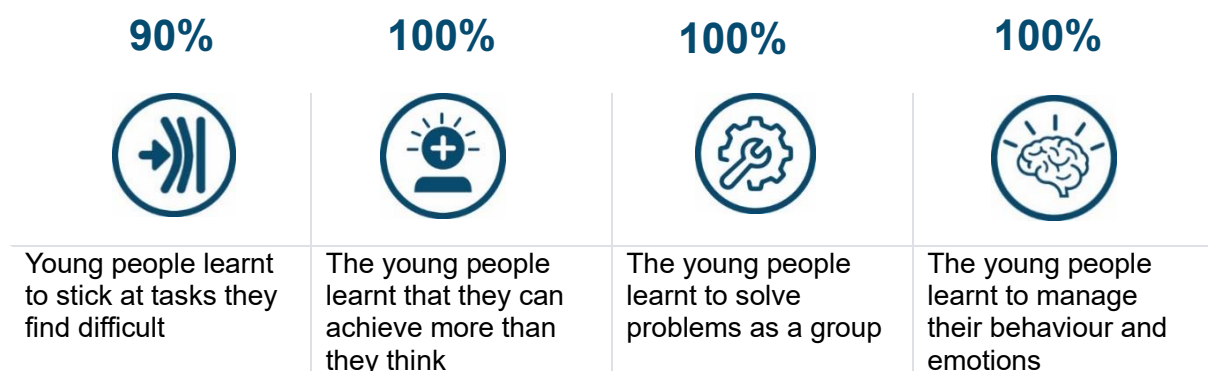


Figure 3: Primary aged young people developed their resilience at Outward Bound. The percentage of participants in agreeing 'a lot' or 'quite a lot' with the statements at the end of their course. Responses were recorded on a 4-point scale ranging from 'not at all' to 'a lot'.

Accompanying primary school staff^{vii} agreed that during the course, the young developed an increased sense of what they were capable of, they learnt to work together to solve problems and stick at things they found difficult, and they learnt how to manage their emotions when doing so.



^{vii} N=10

DEVELOPING INDEPENDENCE, CONFIDENCE AND SELF-BELIEF

Many young people continue to lack the confidence and independence they need to feel purpose and in control of their lives. Confidence and sense of capability are key to a young person feeling happy, a sense of direction and being able to navigate their own pathway through what can often seem like a confusing and noisy world.

“ [A challenge I overcame was] swimming against a waterfall in gorge walking. I put mind over matter and just tried my hardest to get to the other side. I felt proud of myself and surprised by my own ability.

Steve, 17, Langholm Academy



Being **away from their familiar home environments**, having **fun**, working physically hard to **solve problems** and overcome challenges requires young people to step **outside their comfort zones**. It provides a unique **sense of adventure** and a chance to show different skills and behaviours.

As they learn about and develop a **connection with the natural surroundings** it brings alive concepts that they may have only seen in books or on screens, it opens up



“ It's good to put them out of their comfort zone because at high school they're going to be out of their comfort zones until they settle in. It's good they get to experience that feeling in a very safe environment and [share] the experience - knowing that they're not the only one feeling a bit wobbly about things, that it's good to do things that are adventurous. I think it's great that they get the opportunity to be challenged.

Tracey Fraser-Lee,
Headteacher, Beaulieu Primary
School

conversations, and their **understanding of the world** around them grows.

Accompanying teachers^{viii} agreed that young people **learned to look after themselves** and **learnt new things about themselves** during their course.

This increased awareness and understanding, combined with opportunities to make **decisions** and take **responsibility** builds **independence** and confidence (Figure 4).

^{viii} N=10

Young people return home with a new sense of what they are capable of which translates back in school in increased **engagement, motivation** and **enthusiasm** for learning.

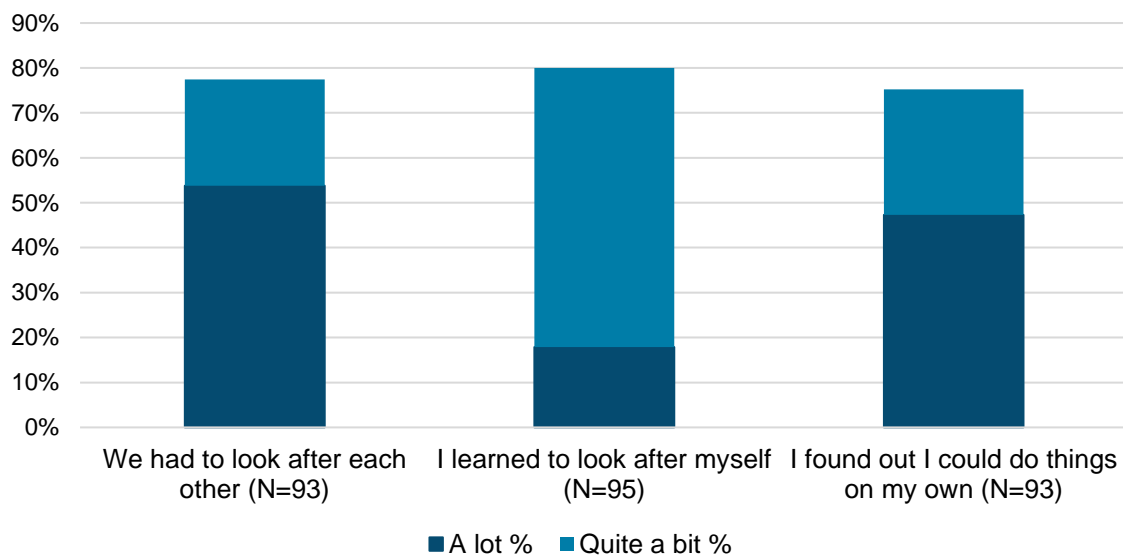


Figure 4: Primary aged young people developed their independence at Outward Bound. The percentage of participants in agreeing 'a lot' or 'quite a lot' with the statements at the end of their course. Responses were recorded on a 4-point scale ranging from 'not at all' to 'a lot'.

DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS AND SOCIAL SKILLS

Shared experiences, living together and completing challenges at Outward Bound provides young people with an opportunity to **repair fractured bonds** and **deepen relationships** and connections. It gives individuals the opportunity to show **different skills** and sides to their personalities. This combined with the safe, reassuring environment, encourages young people to be honest about their fears and difficulties. Throughout the week, they become more **aware of each others' needs** and they learn the **value of receiving and providing support**.

74%

of young people reported improved confidence in their interpersonal skills at the end of their course



Young people return to the classroom with an increased social confidence (Figure), sense of belonging and an increased understanding, and acceptance of others.



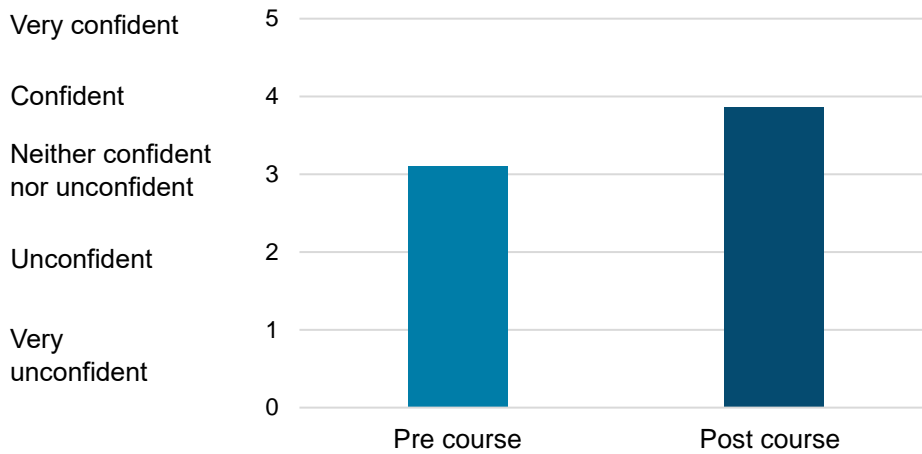


Figure 5: Young people reported an improved confidence in their interpersonal skills. Confidence was indicated using a five-point scale where a higher score indicates a higher level of confidence (N= 302).



When I got off the bus with them at the end of the day, I actually had tears in my eyes because it was just the most fantastic week. And I still think of that night [rowing] with all the kids, and there were 24 pupils that we wouldn't normally put together at all. And they're now a team [...] I know I can work them now for the next four years until they're in sixth year and they will be leaders in our school. And they will be part of a team of leaders because that bond they developed, what they remember from it, is going to continue.

Caroline Penny, Guidance Teacher, Braeview Academy



LOOKING FORWARD

As a generation of young people across Scotland continue to face a series of challenges to their education, finances and their social and emotional skills, the relevance and need for the Outward Bound Trust to support their wellbeing and resilience is greater than ever. With over 80 years of experience in developing vital life skills that young people need to thrive in an uncertain world; our mission and core values combined with the skills of our instructors against the backdrop of the inspiring, wild locations in which we operate mean we are able to deliver quality adventurous, residential experiences that will create a positive, long-lasting impact on young people's aspirations and life chances.

We are now halfway through our Outward Rebound strategy²³, which focuses on returning to our pre-pandemic scale of operation, running high quality residential courses at our six centres. With a new Chief Executive leading the charity from March 2023 and a surge forward in our transformative trust-wide digital project, we are more determined than ever to transform the lives of the young people we work with for the better.

The Outward Bound Trust would like to thank the school staff and young people that made this report possible by being involved in our research.



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¹⁹ Hingley, S *et al.* Government Social Research, Parent, Pupil and Learner Panel – June wave, December 2022. Cited at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1122899/PPLP_report_rw4_june.pdf

²⁰ Scottish Government, Social isolation and loneliness: Recovering our connections 2023 to 2026. Cited at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/recovering-connections-2023-2026/pages/3/>

²¹ Smarter Scotland, Scottish Government. Cited at https://scotland.shinyapps.io/sg-secondary_school_information_dashboard/

²² Argyll and Bute Council, School profile 2020/21; Tobermoray High School Area Committee Report November 2021. Cited at <https://argyll-bute.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s180703/Performance%20Report%20Tobermory%20High%20School%202021%20ver%202.pdf>

²³ The Outward Bound Trust, Outward Rebound: Emerging from the pandemic 2022-2024. Cited at <https://www.outwardbound.org.uk/assets/pdf/uploads/Trust%20general/Outward-ReBound.pdf>

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Outward Bound Trust's Official Website

Our official website contains a wealth of information about The Trust, including information on our centres, the courses we offer, staff members and our upcoming events, as well as our latest news and additional case studies.

www.outwardbound.org.uk

The Outward Bound Trust Alumni

At the end of 2009, we launched a new initiative called 'Generations' to reach out to the million+ individuals who have participated in an Outward Bound course since the creation of the Aberdovey Outward Bound Sea School in 1941. The stories that over 400 alumni have shared with us suggest that an Outward Bound course can have a positive and enduring influence on their lives.

<https://www.outwardbound.org.uk/ob-alumni>

Patron's Company Members

A number of businesses and individuals support The Trust on a regular basis.

<https://www.outwardbound.org.uk/support-the-outward-bound-trust>

The Outward Bound Trust's Social Impact Report 2017

<https://www.outwardbound.org.uk/our-impact/social-impact-report/>

The Outward Bound Trust's Latest Annual Report and Accounts

<https://www.outwardbound.org.uk/assets/pdf/uploads/Trust%20general/annual-report.pdf>

The Outward Bound Trust Images on flickr

This site is full of photos from courses and of the stunning landscapes in which our centres are based.

www.flickr.com/photos/outwardbounduk/sets/



THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST

HEAD OFFICE

Hackthorpe Hall, Hackthorpe, Penrith, Cumbria CA10 2HX

Tel: 01931 740000

Email: enquiries@outwardbound.org.uk

LONDON

4th Floor, 207 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8XD

Tel: 0203 301 6481

Email: fundraising@outwardbound.org.uk

GLASGOW

Robertson House, 152 Bath Street, Glasgow G2 4TB

Tel: 0141 4130244

Email: enquiriesscotland@outwardbound.org.uk

THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST CENTRES

Aberdovey, Snowdonia, Wales

Ogwen Cottage, Snowdonia, Wales

Ullswater, The Lake District, England

Howtown, The Lake District, England

Eskdale, The Lake District, England

Loch Eil, The Highlands, Scotland