

# THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST PARTNERSHIP REPORT

## THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST IN SCOTLAND

2020



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## THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST IN SCOTLAND

For young people growing up in Scotland today, life is tough. **Pressures** to achieve the **best possible grades** at school, to lead **unobtainable perfect lifestyles** promoted by social media, and to find work in an **increasingly crowded job market** are causing them to feel **more stressed** and **unhappy than ever before**. For those living in poverty or with limited finances, the **challenges to succeed** and **get ahead** are **even greater**. All told, young people face an increasingly uncertain and changing future. **A future we believe can be different.**

### THE NEED FOR OUR WORK

A recent report into the health behaviour of school-aged children in Scotland<sup>1</sup> showed that, for an increasing number of young people, **their health and well-being is under threat**. Lifestyle changes, whether through the structures and routines of home-life or the amount of time spent indoors and online, are making young people more sedentary and isolated, and those from poorer families are affected the most<sup>2</sup>.

The **pressure** young people feel **to achieve** is the **highest it has been for 25 years**<sup>3</sup>, affecting **almost half of school pupils**, and all young people – no matter what their circumstances – are leading **increasingly sedentary lifestyles**, with 4 in 5 teenagers in Scotland not getting the recommended amount of daily exercise<sup>3</sup>. This coincides with a substantial increase in time spent online and playing computer games during the course of each day<sup>5</sup>.

The pressures young people feel are taking a toll on their mental health. Nearly **two thirds** report that they **“always” or “often” feel stressed** and **just over half** report that they **“always” or “often” feel anxious**<sup>6</sup>. Over a third do not feel they have control over their lives, despite having strong ambitions for the future<sup>7</sup>.

**Poverty in Scotland is rising**, with **1 in 4 children** (24% or 240,000)<sup>8</sup> currently living in households below the poverty line, and it's well known that these circumstances severely reduce their chances of **doing well at school**<sup>9</sup>, of making a positive **transition into the workplace**<sup>10</sup> and of enjoying **good overall health and well-being**<sup>11</sup>. Those living in ex-industrial areas, isolated and rural communities and deprived inner-cities find it far harder than others to progress in life, for a range of reasons including poor access to services and both limited and low-paying job opportunities<sup>12</sup>.

41% OF YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL PRESSURE TO SUCCEED AT SCHOOL



4 IN 5



DO NOT GET ENOUGH DAILY EXERCISE

55% OFTEN OR ALWAYS FEEL ANXIOUS



We are more determined than ever before to give young people the skills they need to **cope with whatever life throws at them, to take charge of their lives, and to live life to the full.**

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## THE YOUNG PEOPLE YOUR SUPPORT ENABLES US TO WORK WITH

In the last year<sup>13</sup>, **78 donors** supported us in helping to transform the life chances of disadvantaged young people in Scotland. **£718,830** of bursary funding was raised, which enabled us to provide thousands of young people with an experience that helped shape their future aspirations, no matter what their circumstances.

Partnering with **137 schools** and **colleges** and **7 youth organisations**, we worked with **5,212 young people** from across Scotland. **90%** of them received some form of financial assistance to attend the course. The majority live in deprived inner-cities such as **Glasgow, Dundee** and **Aberdeen** where, for many, opportunities to experience the outdoors are severely limited. A smaller proportion live in rural communities across the **Highlands and Islands**, such as **Argyll & Bute, Skye** and **Orkney** where rural isolation reduces access to services and job opportunities, and social isolation can have a detrimental impact on young people's well-being and employability.

Many receive **Free Schools Meals** or **Pupil Equity funding**, which means that, without targeted support to access experiences like Outward Bound, it is significantly less likely that they will achieve the qualifications and develop the skills that will enable them to flourish in life and secure and sustain positive employment.

These pupils are typically selected by their teachers because they experience **low self-confidence** and self-esteem, shows signs of **stress or anxiety, poor engagement in their learning** or **poor social skills**. These worries and concerns have been identified by their teachers as factors that hold them back from achieving their potential.

5,212

YOUNG PEOPLE  
ATTENDED FROM  
SCOTLAND

90%

RECEIVED  
A BURSARY

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## THE OUTWARD BOUND EXPERIENCE

Outward Bound gives these young people a **different experience of challenge and achievement** – one they may never have felt before. It pushes them to the limits of what they think they're capable of and shows them that there is more in them than they think.

Their course takes place in **wilderness environments** that they may never have experienced before, nor even imagined existed. Away from school, where many feel a **crippling fear of failure** and an overwhelming **pressure to succeed**, they're given the opportunity to go on a **real adventure**, to **take risks** and to **learn from their mistakes**.

*“We live in a city and you have to really travel far to see natural scenes and stuff like that. Being outdoors, it feels brilliant, it's like a relief.”*

The challenges start small – jumping into a loch or working together to scale a high wall. Gradually, they increase to include canoeing, kayaking or rock climbing adventures, and culminate in an overnight expedition where they sleep out in tents or bothies. They're trusted to take responsibility for their kit and equipment, to think as a team rather than individuals, and to live alongside others who they have never met before.

Day by day, their confidence increases and where they would previously have given up in the face of something they're afraid to do or that seems too hard, **they realise that they can go further**.

By the end of the week, they've **discovered qualities they didn't know they had** – qualities they can be proud of and that can help them to live life more fully, especially during periods of difficulty. Instead of feeling **isolated** and afraid of **being judged by others**, they feel **valued and accepted for who they are**, and are often surprised to learn that they can make friends, especially with people they thought were different to them.

*“It's made me realise my worth and how I am important and valued”*



OUTWARD BOUND TAKES YOUNG PEOPLE ON A REAL ADVENTURE, WHERE THEY TAKE RISKS, LEARN FROM THEIR MISTAKES AND ACHIEVE BEYOND THEIR EXPECTATIONS.



THEY DISCOVER QUALITIES THEY DIDN'T KNOW THEY HAD AND FEEL VALUED AND ACCEPTED FOR WHO THEY ARE.

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# BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND RESILIENCE IN YOUNG PEOPLE FROM ARGYLL & BUTE

## THE PROGRAMME

In January 2020, **107 pupils** from **eight schools** across Argyll & Bute<sup>14</sup> travelled to Loch Eil to attend a 5-day Outward Bound course. The communities that the schools serve are spread across a very wide geographical area, the majority of which are characterised by **rural isolation, mixed economies** and a **prevalence of low-paid jobs**.

Many of the pupils live on remote islands, travel long distances to school and live on-site during the week. Some also have special educational needs, including severe and complex needs. Whilst the schools each provide a varied curriculum for young people, some of which are outstanding, as a result of rural isolation, many individuals **struggle to develop strong social skills**, which are formed through regular contact with new people and those from different backgrounds. Added to this, poor broadband and mobile coverage compounds the social isolation that many young people feel and prevents them from accessing the types of opportunities available to others.

## THE OUTWARD BOUND EXPERIENCE

The purpose of the course was to develop the pupils' social skills and resilience to be able to cope with challenges, adapt to new situations and make a positive transition into employment. The vision for the week was "**Staying resilient to open new doors**", and instructors designed challenges that would enable the pupils to develop these skills, ranging from **canoeing to scrambling and gorge walking**. Specific tasks required them to overcome fears of water and heights, from **jumping in the loch** to jumping for a trapeze bar on the **leap of faith**, and the course culminated with an **overnight expedition**, which involved walking for several hours carrying heavy bags in the cold and rain and **camping out overnight**. Indeed, the weather was particularly wet, cold and windy, which tested many of the pupils to the limit.

*"[My biggest challenge was] Crossing the bridge at Glen Nevis in 80mph winds – I was nearly blown off my feet. I put my fears aside, tightened my harness and crossed it."* **Josh<sup>15</sup>, age 14, Tarbert Academy**

Meeting new people and making friends was one of the biggest challenges for the pupils, many of whom arrived with very low social confidence and high levels of social anxiety. Alongside making new friends, they appreciated the opportunity to spend an extended period of time in the wilderness, learning about the natural environment and getting to know a different part of Scotland.

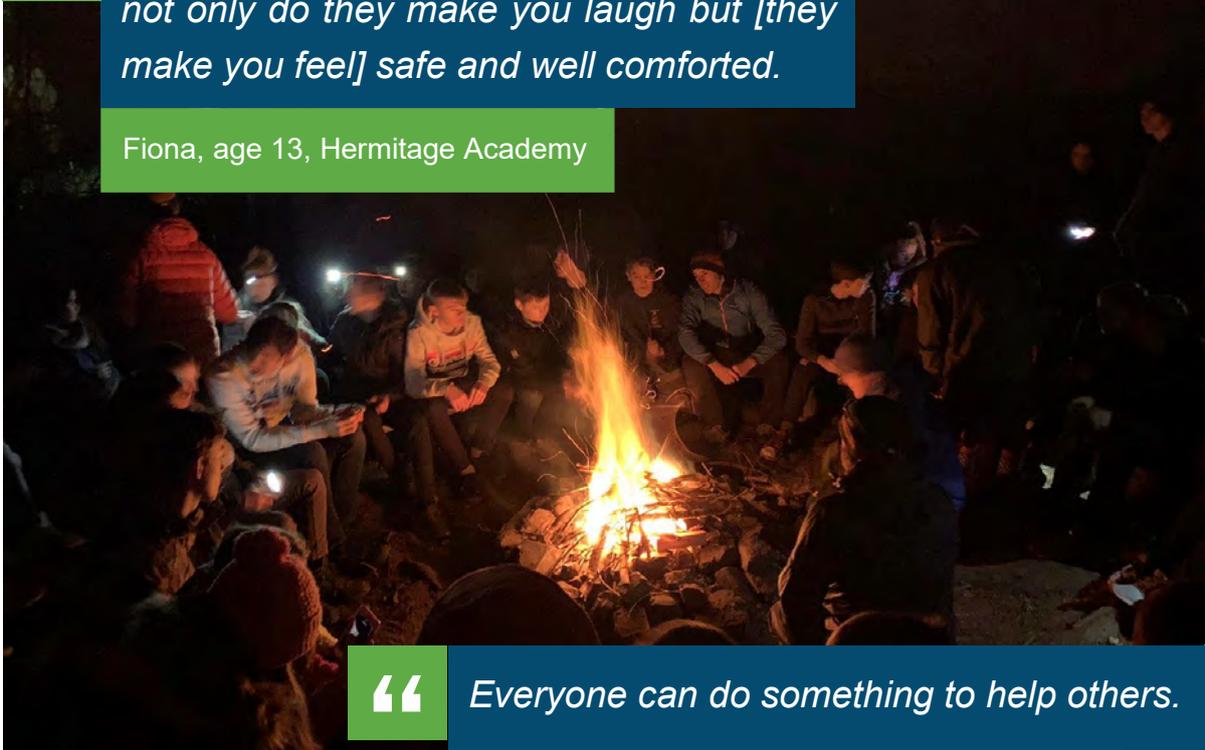
*"I loved being outside and seeing all of the nature and everything and making new friends."* **Luca, age 14, Dunoon Grammar School**



*I learnt that you can rely on people because not only do they make you laugh but [they make you feel] safe and well comforted.*



Fiona, age 13, Hermitage Academy



*Everyone can do something to help others.*



Beatrice, age 14, Campbeltown Grammar School

## THE LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the course, pupils and their accompanying teachers completed a questionnaire for us to assess the key outcomes. The main areas of learning for the pupils were around improved **confidence**, **resilience** and **trust in each other**.



**93%** felt more confident that they can **overcome challenges**



**86%** felt better able to **keep going when they face difficulties in the future**



**85%** were more aware of the **strengths they need to develop**



**81%** felt more confident in their ability to **reach the goals they set themselves**

“

*“[I learnt that] Some people may not have the same ability as me, so I would go at their pace and not mine.”* **Billy, age 14, Islay High School**

*“I learnt that, even if you’re broken down and scared, you can still achieve with a bit of courage from around you.”* **Claire, age 14, Campbeltown Grammar School**

*“I learnt to take everyone’s opinion into consideration as it might be the best way.”* **Andrew, age 13, Rothesay Academy**

*“I learnt that even when you don’t know someone, they can help you with something and if you see that someone is struggling, give them a hand of support.”* **Ivan, age 14, Oban High School**

*“I enjoyed working outside my boundaries doing things I never normally would. I overcame my “fear” of heights and at first was terrified then just went through the courage of my clan. I was crying and shaking but then with the courage of people I went for it. !! Felt! AMAZING! Like I could do anything I set on doing without the shaking and butterflies.* **Isla, 14, Campbeltown Grammar School**

”

“

*You can get on with ANYONE and EVERYONE if there’s effort on both sides to work together.*

”

Maria, age 14, Tarbert Academy



## The accompanying teachers also observed positive impacts for the pupils.

Having observed shyness and a reticence to engage with pupils from a different school to theirs at the start of the course, by the end of the week the majority of pupils were “*more talkative*” and “*cooperating fully with each other*”. They supported each other to overcome shared feelings of home-sickness and became more confident to try new things in front of people they didn’t know – showing less fear of being judged and laughed at, and more trust and support for one another.



**100%** of the teachers agreed that the pupils developed their ability to **work collaboratively with others**



**100%** of the teachers agreed that the pupils realised they were **more capable than they thought**



**92%** of the teachers agreed that the pupils’ **resilience had increased**

“

*Confidence levels increased immensely. They took part in all activities, even if they were apprehensive or reluctant beforehand.*

”

Kylie Glen, Biology Teacher, Tarbert Academy



“

*Pupils have shown kindness – looking out for people they normally wouldn’t be around.*

”

Kirsten McKenzie, Pupil Support Teacher,  
Islay High School

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## SCOTLAND'S NEXT GENERATION & THE SKILLS FOR LIFE AWARD

Scotland's Next Generation (SNG) targets young people in Scotland who, through circumstances beyond their control, **face multiple challenges in life and do not have the financial means** to access the same opportunities as their peers.

In 2019, **36 young people** from across Scotland took part in the project, supported by **24 donors**. **19 Course Mentors** were also involved, who helped the young people prepare for the course and encouraged them to reflect on their learning afterwards, offering practical advice upon returning home.

The young people who attended were aged 15-19 and were referred to participate through their school, youth group or social care support. The majority come from disadvantaged communities from **across Scotland** and face challenging home lives that limit the opportunities that are available to them: some are living in **foster care or kinship care** or **are young carers**, whilst others have **recently experienced a bereavement**. Some have a learning disorder such as Asperger's or suffer from **extreme shyness and social anxiety**. Each had a strong reason for wanting to take part in the Skills for Life Award course, from learning new skills and strengthening their CV to having some respite from a disruptive home life.

36

YOUNG PEOPLE  
ATTENDED FROM  
ACROSS SCOTLAND

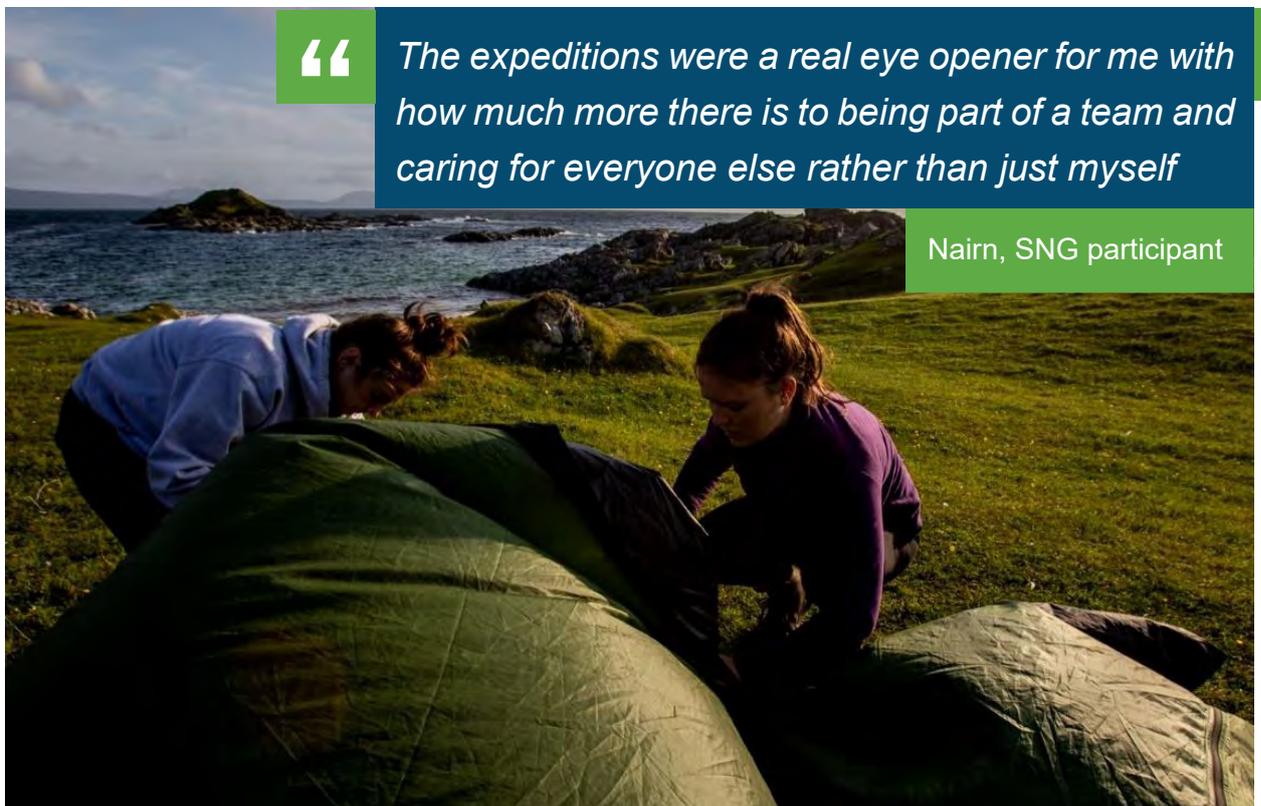
### THE SKILLS FOR LIFE AWARD

The Skills for Life Award is a 19-day residential course. Young people develop **their ability to work in a team** by learning **communication, organisational and planning skills**, and learn to **support, motivate and encourage** others to overcome **physical and emotional challenges** whilst completing activities such as **rock climbing, canoeing, cliff jumping, gorge scrambling and mountain expeditions**.

The variety and level of challenge on the Award gradually increases over the 19 days and in doing so, tests and builds confidence, culminating in a four-day, self-led expedition. By completing activities which, at first, they may not think they're capable of, their **confidence and self-belief** grows as they step outside their **comfort zones**. In doing so, they develop their ability to **persevere** and become more **resilient**.

Living alongside others during the 19 days, they **form relationships** and **develop trust** and **respect** for people from many different walks of life.

Throughout the Award, young people experience a range of different emotions. Regular **reflection and review** sessions play a large part in helping them make sense of their experiences and, throughout the 19 days, they are guided towards **achieving their personal goals** by skilled Outward Bound instructors and pastoral teams.



“

*The expeditions were a real eye opener for me with how much more there is to being part of a team and caring for everyone else rather than just myself*

”

Nairn, SNG participant

*“This experience has changed me to become more pro-active and always to have a growth-mindset about challenges and not to lack self-belief or confidence. It’s made me realise my worth and how I am important and valued.”* **Christy, SNG participant**

*“I’ve learned how to watch out for others and know when they are struggling so I can stand up for them and say can they get a hand if they are unable to do it themselves.”* **Ailie, SNG participant**

## IMPACT OF THE SNG PROGRAMME

An evaluation was carried out with the young people who participated in 2019 using a pre and post course questionnaire. Overall, this showed that the course helps individuals to improve their **interpersonal skills**, **resilience** and **determination**:



**90%** felt more confident about **meeting new people**



**81%** felt more confident about **putting forward their ideas**



**77%** felt more confident about being the **leader of a team**



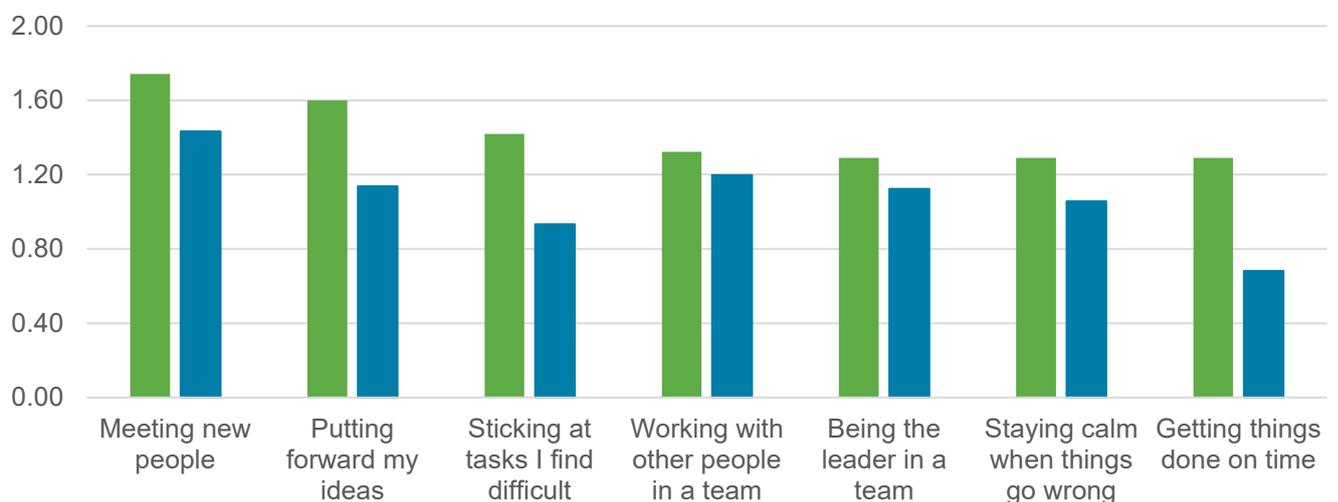
**71%** felt more confident about **sticking at tasks they find difficult**



**71%** felt more confident about **staying calm when things go wrong**

Further analysis was carried out to assess the difference in impact for young people who participated through the SNG programme (which includes a targeted approach to recruitment and a strong level of support to help individuals prepare for their course) compared with those who attend through an 'open enrolment' process. The data indicates that SNG participants gained more from the course in all the areas measured, and that the SNG programme is improving the confidence and skills of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in a very significant way (see Figure 1 below).

**Figure 1: Increases in confidence recorded for participants at the end of their course compared to the start. ■ SNG participants (n=31) ■ Non-SNG participants (n=88)**





“

I MIGHT JUST PUT MYSELF FORWARD AND JUST NOT BE AFRAID OF WHETHER OTHER PEOPLE THINK YOU'RE ALRIGHT OR NOT BECAUSE I'M FINE, LIKE, I'M ALRIGHT AS A PERSON

Ameena is 18 and describes how her crippling social anxiety and negative view of herself used to prevent her from making meaningful connections with other people.

*“I'd kinda trap myself into the box that I'm shy and quiet and that I can't kinda talk to people. Then I get this almost – it's not actual anxiety but its nearly there, where I get really panicked about meeting people until I actually do it. I'd actually plan out conversations in my head. I feel like I just want them to think I'm a normal person, then if I'm being a stuttering, spluttering mess, they may not think that.”*

During her Skills for Life Award, Ameena spent all day, every day, surrounded by other people. There was always an opportunity to start a conversation and get to know people and the more she did this, the easier social situations became for her.

*“During the Skills for Life Award, being with others really wasn't as bad as I thought it would be – I was definitely playing it up in my head. I think it's just the constantly being with people – 24 hours a day you're with everyone – you're surrounded all the time and that meant I had to get used to it.”*

She describes how, during her course, she opened up to her group about her feelings – negative, destructive feelings she had held inside for many years.

*“I talked to someone about my feelings. It may seem trivial but normally I say I'm fine regardless of how I feel. I can go years without making a single hush about a problem I'm having. But spilling my guts out felt great. I think it's okay to put yourself first sometimes, it's okay to say how I feel and it's okay to have negative emotions because they are a part of your entire life. These lessons are ones I am going to carry with me and I'm already enacting.”*

Ameena now feels in a much happier place; she wants more for herself and for her life. She has more confidence to start conversations and to pursue her dreams.

*“I've been chasing confidence for ages not knowing what I wanted. For me, it's self-esteem, it's the ability to just talk. I might just put myself forward [now] and just not be afraid of whether other people think you're alright or not because I'm fine, like, I'm alright as a person. I want to find a passion. I know I have time, so I am doing a degree which can hopefully open doors to many careers. Honestly, who knows beyond that.”*

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## OUTCOMES FOR EMPLOYEE AMBASSADORS

Employee Ambassadors are individuals who accompany young people during their Outward Bound course, acting as positive role models, providing valuable emotional and practical support throughout the week, and helping participants make the link between skills learnt at Outward Bound and the skills needed for employment.

In 2019, **8 Employee Ambassadors** attended one of our courses from across **14 corporate supporters**, accompanying young people throughout their Outward Bound experience.

Our ongoing evaluation shows that, as well as supporting young people to get the most out of their course, Employee Ambassadors themselves benefit in a significant way by developing a **range of skills**, both **professionally** and **personally**. They become more motivated and engaged with their work, and feel an increased sense of pride for the company they work for.

**8** EMPLOYEE  
AMBASSADORS

**14** CORPORATE  
SUPPORTERS



**90%** said they felt better able to **manage challenging situations at work**



**92%** said they improved their **communication skills**



**91%** said they felt increased **pride for the company they work for**



**87%** said they improved their **teamwork skills**



**86%** said they improved their **leadership skills**



**83%** said they felt more **enthusiasm for their work**

“

*I gained patience and understanding, and empathy. I have learnt a lot from the children and staff this week. My emotional intelligence has certainly increased significantly. This will most certainly help when dealing with difficult situations and conflict management.*

”

*Mark Sowerby, Swagelok*

“

*“[The course] was a small window of what life could have been like for me as I wanted to be a physical education teacher when I was younger. I saw that there is more to that job than I thought, and I have a new respect for how far these teachers go above and beyond. The group leaders were so patient with some of the more challenging pupils and after a time, they had the attention and the respect of the group. I was shocked at how many kids nowadays are not active. Watching the less confident children grow was amazing, they all seemed to have a newfound respect for the people that were in their group.”*

”

*Richard Wood, Whyte and Mackay*

“

*I am always 100mph. One thing this programme has taught me is that sometimes it is best to stop and fully assess a situation before diving straight in as it could create an entirely different outcome.*

”

*Denise Petrie, Swagelok*

“

*[I] built my confidence in groups of new people and environments. Learned the importance of being well prepared [and] realised how effective sharing a workload is and the importance of tailoring a role to someone based on their skillset.*

”

*Ross Sinclair, Dundee Cold Stores*

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## MESSAGES FROM THE YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR TEACHERS

The young people and their teachers who were able to experience Outward Bound as a result of your funding wished to express their thanks:

“

*“Thank you so much, I loved every moment of it, and I was so happy it helped me step out of my shell”.* **Luca, age 14, Dunoon Grammar School**

*“Thank you for funding this trip for us all. It was a bit of a wake-up call on what I need to work on. Thank you for a once in a lifetime opportunity.”* **Ciara, age 13, Hermitage Academy**

*“Thank you, for the opportunity to go and push myself persevere and keep doing difficult things even if I don’t want to.”* **Daisy, age 14, Campbletown Grammar School**

*“Not only have you been someone who has given me a 19-day experience, you’ve given me lessons that will stay throughout my life.”* **Ameena, SNG participant**

*“I sincerely thank you. I wouldn’t have been able to challenge myself as big and discover a different meaning into life and a whole lot deeper into myself. I have learnt about myself in all different ways and have made out a plan on how I can achieve my dreams.”* **Niamh, SNG participant**

”

“

*“Thank you. The course is an amazing opportunity for our pupils to step out of their comfort zone, or environment they are merely surviving in, and through experiencing the outdoors, have a window to the wider world, [where] positive opportunities [are] opened for them. The Outward Bound staff – instructors, course organisers, catering staff, cleaners, office staff – all treat the pupils with kindness and respect, and always with a smile. It is an amazing team.”* **Kirsten McKenzie, Pupil Support Teacher, Islay High School**

*“Thank you for providing this opportunity for our young people. The unique delivery and experience is like no other course I know. It adds impact to their learning and development which will no doubt lead to success.”* **Andrew Arbuckle, Teacher, Hermitage Academy**

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## LOOKING FORWARD

As the number of children and young people living in poverty continues to rise and the effects of this, along with other factors, on their future life chances become more widely understood, it is ever more critical that charities, funders, youth services and education providers work in partnership to create opportunities that will secure a more promising future for them.

At The Outward Bound Trust our mission remains clear: to transform the lives of as many young people as possible by equipping them with the skills to cope with whatever life throws at them and the aspiration to believe that, with the right attitude, they can achieve anything they want to in life. We are extremely grateful for the generosity of all of our supporters and it is our sincere wish that, with your continued support, we will be able to play our part in improving the life chances of many more thousands of young people in the future.



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## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Health Behaviour in school-aged children: World Health Organization Collaborative Cross-National Study (HSBC) (2018)

<sup>2</sup> As above

<sup>3</sup> As above

<sup>4</sup> As above

<sup>5</sup> As above

<sup>6</sup> Prince's Trust Ebay Youth Index 2019

<sup>7</sup> As above

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/poverty-income-inequality-scotland-2015-18/>

<sup>9</sup> Education Endowment Foundation (2018). The Attainment Gap 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Impetus (2019). Research Briefing 1: Establishing the Employment Gap.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/statistics/mental-health-statistics-poverty>

<sup>12</sup> Social Mobility Commission (2017). State of the Nation 2017: Social Mobility in Great Britain.

<sup>13</sup> Between October 2018 and September 2019

<sup>14</sup> Tarbert Academy, Islay High School, Tobermory High School, Hermitage Academy, Dunoon Grammar School, Oban High School, Campbeltown Grammar School, Rothesay Academy

<sup>15</sup> The names of the pupils have been changed throughout this report to protect their anonymity. Visiting staff member names have been quoted only where they have given us permission to do so.



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## 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