

THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST IN SCOTLAND

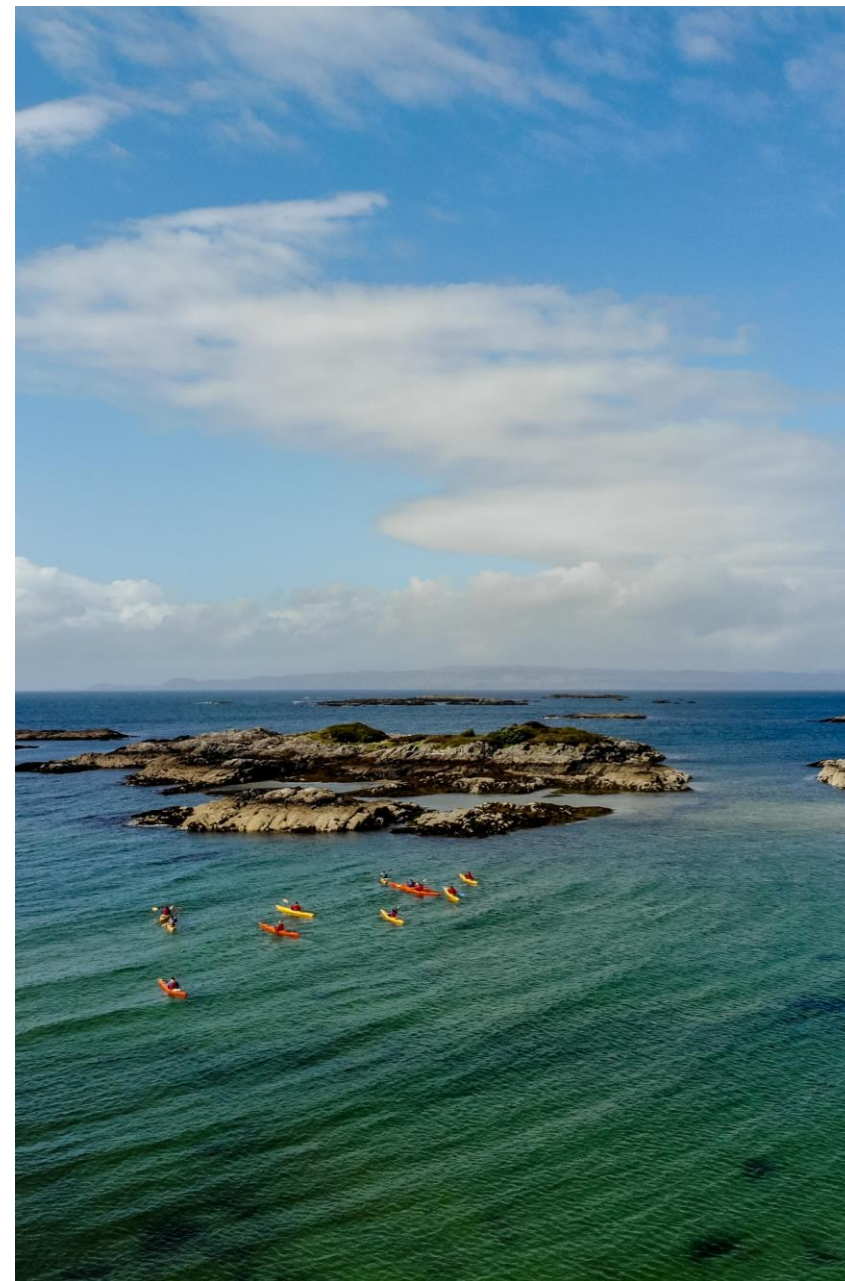
2024/25 Evaluation Report





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YOUR SUPPORT

In 2024-25, donors generously supported The Outward Bound Trust, playing a key role in supporting our mission to inspire young people in Scotland to realise their full potential.

Your support is crucial in ensuring we can offer charitable funding to young people who otherwise would be unable to access such opportunities.

Over the past year, we partnered with 150 schools and youth groups in Scotland, providing 5,084 young people from across the country with Outward Bound courses. 80% of the young people who attended required charitable funding to do so.

At Outward Bound, young people in Scotland develop the foundational social and emotional skills that support positive behaviours and attitudes, enabling them to thrive at every life stage, regardless of background or income.

We assess the impact of our courses by evaluating the attitudes, skills, and behaviours young people develop during and in the months after their experience. This report draws on insights and data from both young people and their teachers, informing the themes discussed;

- Building resilience
- Nature connection
- Strengthening sense of self, capability and confidence
- Developing connections with others
- An opportunity for adventure, freedom and fun



“

There was one pupil who is from Ukraine who was fully funded [to go to] Outward Bound. He had only recently arrived in Scotland and the trip gave him an immense opportunity to really appreciate his newly adopted country. He established new friendships with other pupils he did not know before the trip and discovered new activities that he had not tried before. This gave a massive boost to his self-confidence and helped set him on a positive pathway in the school.

John Millar, Teacher, Lanark Grammar School, South Lanarkshire, commenting two months after their course

”

THE NEED FOR OUR WORK IN SCOTLAND

In today's rapidly evolving world young people - our digital natives - seamlessly navigate the array of online networks in which they find themselves.

However, while they can easily communicate online, the nuances of face-to-face interactions, empathy, and emotional understanding often remain underdeveloped. Teachers frequently describe to us the resulting difficulties that young people face in building meaningful relationships, handling conflict, and managing emotions such as stress and anxiety in real-life situations.

Additionally, the disconnect from nature and the outdoors further exacerbates this issue. As young people spend more time indoors, they miss out on valuable opportunities to build resilience, confidence and self-awareness, all of which provide key foundations to an individual's positive self-identity and wellbeing.

Teachers observe that this reliance on the digital world is influencing young people's daily lives and highlight the importance of providing young people with **opportunities to develop foundational skills, behaviours and attitudes** that enable them to make positive choices as they navigate different stages of their lives.

Our courses, set in **inspiring and wild, natural environments**, provide a unique opportunity to **step away from their screens, and from the pressures, distractions, and routines of daily life.**

Outward Bound offers young people the chance to embark on an **adventure, discover freedom, and have fun.**

Our evaluation findings indicate that by **disconnecting, slowing down, and reconnecting with others and with nature**, they gain valuable insights about themselves and their surroundings which help shape their sense of identity.



In the longer term, teachers and young people begin to see a **positive impact on their social skills, engagement at school and their overall wellbeing.**

Most of the young people who participate in an Outward Bound course come from underserved urban and rural communities across Scotland, where access to the outdoors and opportunities are far more limited compared to their more affluent peers.

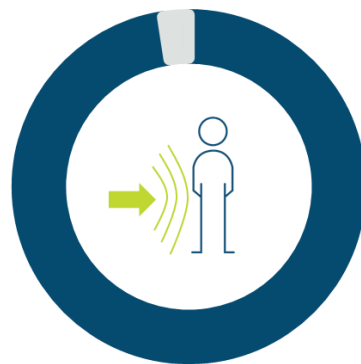
BUILDING RESILIENCE: RESPONDING TO UNCERTAINTY AND CHALLENGE

Facing challenges, working through them to find solutions and experiencing achievement or success are key stages that a young person will journey through whilst at Outward Bound; physically, emotionally and both in an individual sense and as a community.

Whilst out on the hill, paddling a river or during social time, an Outward Bound experience presents different challenges, at different times to different individuals.

Overcoming challenge for a young person can feel daunting and scary, though as our evaluation shows, can also be transformative as they learn that resilience is something that can be developed when rooted in **optimism, determination and the support of a nurturing environment.**

Through facing individual and shared challenges, young people develop an awareness of **what resilience can look like for them** and others. They realise by **setting small, achievable goals**, by adopting a **growth mindset** and through the **support of their peers**, that they have the personal tools to navigate through situations and realise **they are not alone in their difficulties.**



80%

Young people reported increases in **resilience** and **emotional control** at the end of their course

Resilience N= 185
Emotional Control N=182



“

I learnt that even if I find it hard or difficult, I can still do it (like carrying bags when going camping).

Eilidh, 14, McLaren High School¹

”

1. Throughout this report, young people's names have been changed to protect their anonymity; school staff names and job titles have been used where we have permission to do so.

CASE STUDY: DEVELOPING RESILIENCE IN YOUNG PEOPLE AT LANGHOLM ACADEMY

27 young people from **Langholm Academy** attended an Outward Bound course at our Ullswater centre at the end of April 2024. The course was designed to help the young people **realise their capabilities, handle new situations and recover from setbacks**; skills which will support them through their upcoming exam year.

The Outward Bound Course Director described how having the overnight expedition in the middle of the week helped the young people build trust and confidence. While many still felt nervous, feedback showed that the earlier days spent **boosting their confidence and ability to persevere** made it easier for them to overcome challenge and complete the expedition.

The young people also exhibited **improvements in their understanding of and in their ability to control their emotions**. Through overcoming obstacles and listening to each other, they began to better understand themselves and their emotions. They became particularly aware of how their emotions can impact others when working in teams.

At the end of the course:

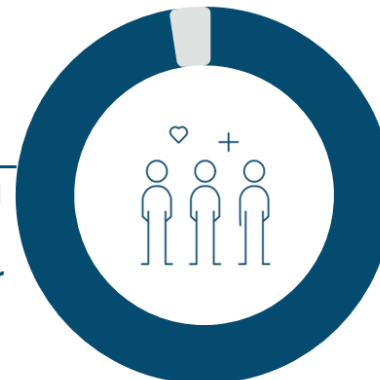
85%

Of young people agreed they are **more resilient than they thought they were** (N=26)



92%

Of young people reported they were more able to **control and regulate their emotions** (N=26)

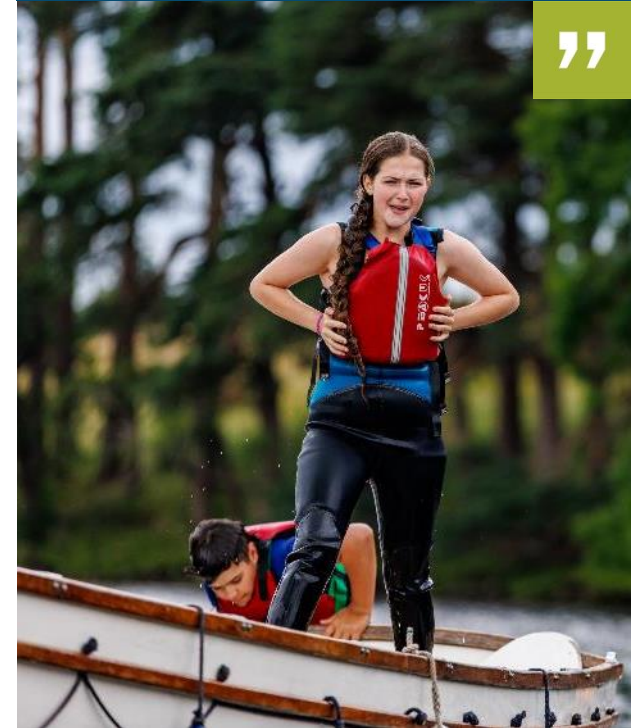


“

A moment of the week was when they watched one of their friends be brave and overcome their fear of water by standing up on the water raft.

Steph Heeley, Course Director, The Outward Bound Trust

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STRENGTHENING SENSE OF SELF, CAPABILITY AND CONFIDENCE

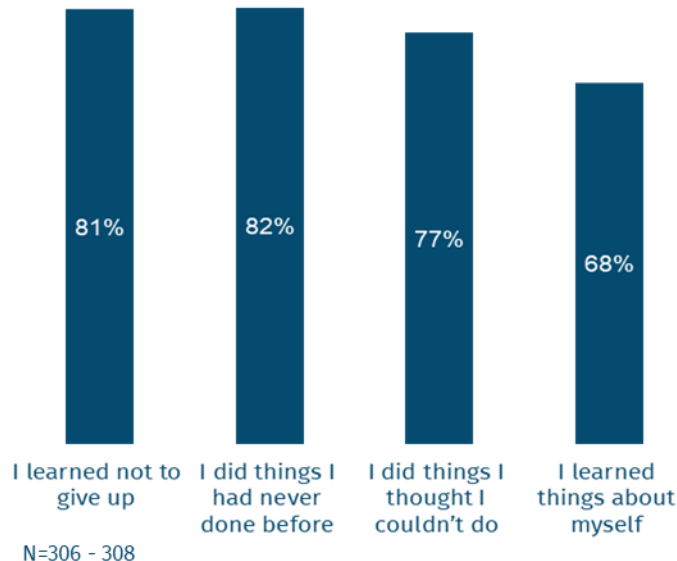
The desire for independence, agency and self-identity is what drives many of the behaviours and attitudes of our young people. Whilst dealing with a rollercoaster of hormonal and neurological shifts, young people at the same time are on the constant search for validation – an innate feeling of accomplishment, pride, competence and confidence, and also feeling accepted and valued by those around them.

At Outward Bound young people are provided with repeated **opportunities to explore where, with the right mindset, their capabilities and ambition can take them.**

They identify personal goals, work towards them, learn from mistakes and in doing so experience the results of their efforts, each time leaving them **feeling enabled, valued and sure of what they can do.**



At the end of their course, primary pupils reported they had..



85% reported increases in confidence (N=185)

75% are more confident to set themselves challenges and achieve their goals (N=439)



“

They will bring more confidence and self-belief back to the classroom and into their future careers.

Mark Smith, Teacher, Hazlehead Academy

”

CASE STUDY: SEEING CONFIDENCE AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS GROW IN PUPILS FROM DUMBARTON ACADEMY, WEST DUMBARTONSHIRE

Steve MacDonald acting Deputy Headteacher and **Allison Rollings** Technical Teacher at **Dumbarton Academy** described how they see many young people facing a pressure to be perfect and as a result, often fearing failure. They shared how **Outward Bound has been a catalyst for a growth in confidence** in their young people allowing them to step up and give things a go. 24 S3 pupils visited our Loch Eil centre in October 2024.

“

When you give them something new to do, they automatically think ‘no, I can’t do that’. Rather than giving it a shot and trying, it’s an automatic ‘I can’t do that’ or ‘I don’t know’. A lot of the time it isn’t the fact they *can’t* do it; it’s [that] they don’t want to try in front of others because they don’t want [their peers] to see they can’t do it.[...] Some of them feel like they have to get it right on their first shot.

”

Their overnight expedition along the shores of Loch Arkaig provided a pivotal moment where the young people began to embrace the challenge they faced in the cold, wet weather, **realising that they are able to work through difficulties and benefit** from it.

“

During the expedition it was a case of ‘ok, this is the situation, this is how I overcome it.’ [...] If you opt out the whole group opt out and turn back. [They realised] there’s challenges, I know there’s bits I’m not feeling comfortable with but we’re going to keep going.

”

Following the course, staff have seen pupils being **more willing to contribute in class or to volunteer** for leadership. Some of the pupils have taken on leadership roles and delivered classes to local primary schools.

“

Quite a number of them [have been] going out to primary schools and deliver P.E coaching sessions where they speak in front of full classes.

”

With every new opportunity that the young people take on, they see their enthusiasm and confidence grow.

“

They come back from Outward Bound and they’ve got all that love for it and the experience, and they just want to share with everybody else and let them know what has happened to [them], you just see that confidence come out, it’s really nice.

”

70%



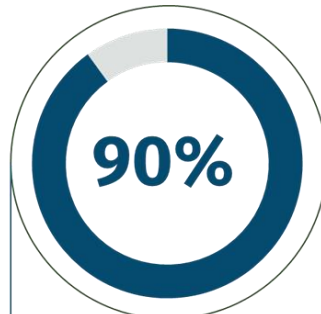
3 months after their course, young people continued to report an increase in confidence in their **leadership skills** and in **working through challenges** to achieve their **goals**, compared to before their course

(N=10)

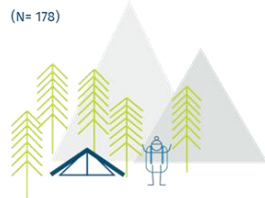
AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ADVENTURE, FREEDOM AND FUN

The 2024 Good Childhood report states that UK's 15-year-olds have the lowest average life satisfaction in Europe². At Outward Bound, we believe **adventure, freedom and fun play a crucial role in the personal growth, happiness and wellbeing** of young people.

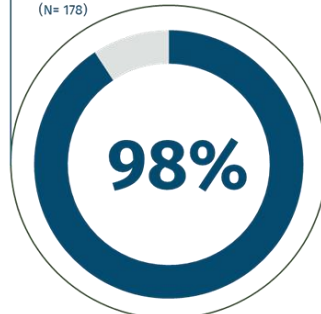
By engaging in memorable, often emotional experiences in the outdoors which are rooted in real-world conditions and consequences, young people are able to explore psychologically and physically.



Young people found their Outward Bound course adventurous
(N= 178)

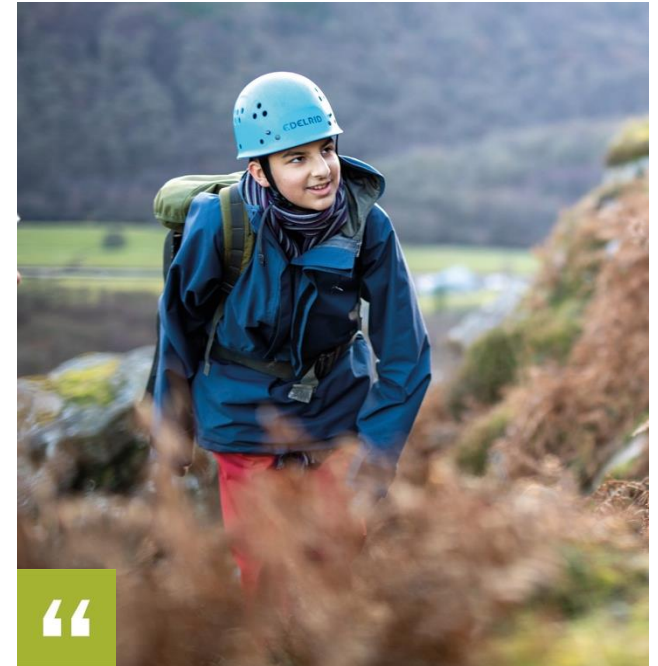


Young people had fun during their Outward Bound course
(N= 178)



Through moments of fun, freedom and adventure, they **embrace and value who they are** as individuals, engage in their natural surroundings and build connection with others.

Facing their fears during an abseil, overcoming problems whilst raft building or experiencing a sense of achievement after jumping into the loch; these experiences **strengthen their sense of self**, and we begin to see **positive shifts in their behaviours** and mindsets which change how they think about themselves, others and their futures.



“

I found it fun trying new things. Going down to the water and just exploring the whole place and the woods behind [the centre] it was quite adventurous.

Nathan, 14, Dumbarton Academy

”

CASE STUDY: A WELCOMED REALITY FOR STUDENTS FROM ANNAN ACADEMY, DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY

Jamie Brand, Principal Teacher of Performing Arts at **Annan Academy**, shared how the experiences and adventure at Outward Bound offer a valuable contrast to the TikTok-driven lives many of his students lead. 16 pupils came to our Howtown centre in February 2025.

“

A lot of our students' lives revolve around what they see on TikTok, which doesn't reflect the reality they live in. There's a disconnect between their actual lives and where they imagine they want to be, but they often lack the understanding of what it takes to get there, or the effort required.

”

He further explained that Outward Bound provides his students with the chance to experience firsthand the effort and time needed to achieve success in real life—an experience far removed from the instant gratification of a six-second TikTok video.

“

[Outward Bound offers] young people a chance to turn their lives around and see a world beyond their own town. It shows them that with effort, success is attainable—even if the journey is challenging or uncomfortable at times.

”

A moment of clarity for the students came when they climbed Steel Knotts and were **rewarded with a breathtaking view** which one of the students likened to being inside a picture.

“

While the thrill of the moment was similar to the satisfaction of a TikTok video, the effort required to reach that point made it all the more rewarding.

”

“

The hit [of seeing the view] was just as good, but the effort to get the hit was so much greater than watching something on TikTok – [confirmed by the] ‘this is actually amazing’ moment and the smile and the enthusiasm on the faces.

”

Jamie went on to explain the power of such moments for a young person in **recognising their own capabilities** and the realisation of when they put effort in, what opportunities they have available to them.

“

But what is getting to the top of the hill? What do you [gain] from being able to see the view? What have all of these things done? It makes the young people recognise they can.

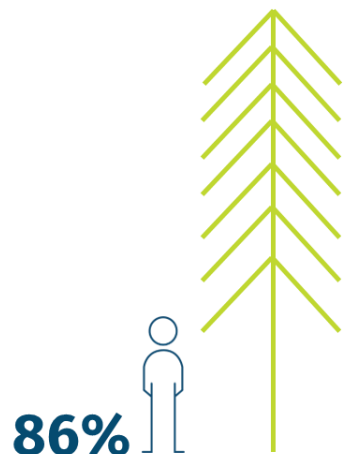
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CONNECTING WITH NATURE

The 2023 Nature of Scotland report indicated that people living in the 10% most deprived areas, were twenty-one percentage points less likely to visit the outdoors frequently than people living in the least deprived areas³.

The inspiring, natural environments surrounding our centres provide an awe-inspiring backdrop to a young person's course. The mountains, lochs and beaches allow **time and space to pause**, and provide **moments of calm and connection** with their surroundings in a tangible way.

For young people whose lives are increasingly fast-paced and where experiences are often lived vicariously online, Outward Bound provides an opportunity to be fully present in the moment.



of young people reported an increased connection to nature at the end of their course (N=291)

Group and individual reflection time during their course allows them to **process their thoughts and connect with nature** on a level they may have not done before.

Young people leave Outward Bound with **a sense that they are part of something bigger** and with that comes an increased appreciation and awareness of opportunities that the world has to offer them, reshaping and influencing their actions, attitudes and aspirations.



“

I felt a connection to nature when I was sleeping in my tent and heard the birds singing, during this moment I felt happy.

Lydia, 13, Drummond Community High School

”

A SHARED EXPERIENCE: CONNECTING WITH OTHERS

Despite being well connected online, many young people continue to feel isolated⁴. Relationships flourish at Outward Bound; **sharing the fun, the challenge, the responsibilities and goals** all lead to ‘real’, **meaningful connections**.

Outward Bound provides a ‘safe’ space. Young people are surrounded and guided by **positive role models, social barriers are broken down** and individuals are free to be their authentic, often vulnerable selves. This environment nurtures a **young person’s compassion, understanding and awareness of themselves and those around them**.

During their course, they hone the skills needed to navigate social interactions and to overcome their differences, and experience what it feels like to be supported by their peers. They return to school with an **increased sense of belonging**, support and acceptance of who they are.

At the end of the course, young people reported increased confidence in their social skills and sense of belonging when compared to the start of their course...



77% increased confidence in their interpersonal skills
(N=444)

79% increased sense of belonging
(N=298)



Our pupils are better at communicating with us if they have worries rather than going straight to destructive, aggressive behaviour. I think it is a combination of seeing what they can achieve with their peers but being with staff in a different environment has built a lot of trust.

Linsey Scott, Youth Worker, Beeslack Annex

LASTING IMPACT: OBSERVATIONS FROM SCHOOL STAFF

The experiences and insights gained at Outward Bound remain with young people as they return back to school and move through their education.

The information in this section is drawn from observations from school staff between two and three months following the course as well as from reflections shared by young people up to six months after their course.

Back in the classroom, school staff report noticeable improvements in **students' engagement with and attitudes towards their studies**. They have observed a marked improvement in **young people's interpersonal skills** along with a **greater willingness and confidence** in tackling tasks they perceive to be difficult.



“

One pupil has benefitted significantly from the course. Since the course she has become much more confident in speaking with her peers and with staff. She will now more often ask for help and attempt problems that she previously would not have which has had a significant impact on her attainment.

Aimee Creamer, Teacher, Beeslack Community High School, Penicuik, Midlothian, commenting two months after their course

”

Up to 6 months after their course, school staff report positive changes in the young people's **self confidence, awareness and resilience...**



95% Are aware of their strengths

93% Are aware of what they are capable of achieving (N=157)

92% Attempt things they believe to be difficult more often

93% Keep going when they encounter difficulties more often (N=151)

LASTING IMPACT: REFLECTIONS FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

Up to six months after their course, young people continue to experience impact from their Outward Bound course.

The connections and experiences they gained continue to shape their lives. Before their course, they may have shied away from social situations but with deepened connections and friendships they feel a **greater sense of support and belonging** amongst their peers.

Outward Bound has inspired a **shift in their attitudes towards the outdoors**. They report encouraging others to spend more time outdoors.

Newfound confidence in their capabilities has allowed them to take on other aspects of life with a positive mindset. Rather than fearing failure, they now view it as an **opportunity from which to learn and grow**.

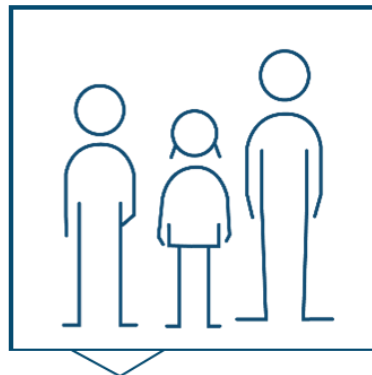
“

I learnt that if I try hard enough to reach my goals, I can achieve them and more.

Naomi, 14, McLaren High School, commenting at the end of her course

”

Up to 6 months after their course, young people reported increased confidence in their skills when compared to the start of their course... (N=108)⁵



74% increased confidence in their **resilience**

89% increased confidence in **setting themselves challenges** and **achieving their goals**

85% increased confidence in their **interpersonal skills**



“

I feel like if I put my mind to things I can actually achieve my goal [...] I'm more likely to give new things a try.

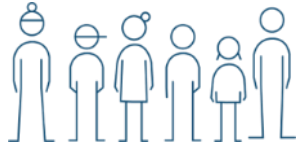
Glenn, 14, Dumbarton Academy commenting three months after his course

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ORGANISATIONAL UPDATE

In 2024, we launched our new strategy that sets out bold ambitions for the years ahead. **The Next Horizon** outlines our strategic intent between 2024- 2030. The strategy focuses on Our People, Our Charity and Our Capacity.

Our People



Over the last year, Outward Bound has delivered over 6,000 hours of training to support and upskill staff including; Understanding Young People, Mental Health First Aid, Safeguarding and Psychology Awareness.

25 members of staff serve as EDI Champions who drive improvements for both the young people we work with and our staff; including providing more inclusive outdoor equipment, prayer mats for expedition use and weighted blankets to support those with neurodiverse needs.

“

“The water sports hijab made me feel much more confident to participate in water activities.”

Young person comment to instructor

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Our Charity

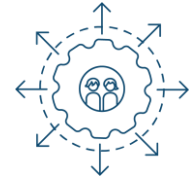


In 2024, a total of 24,473 young people attended Outward Bound; with 15,028 receiving funding.

Our Digital Transformation project is aligning all areas of the organisation into the same digital sphere; a new CRM and a new bookings system have been embedded, with a new finance system and a Programme Manager planned for this year.

With a strategic target to reach net-zero emissions by 2035, we are committed to reducing carbon emissions. So far, we have cut emissions by 65% since 2008, and we have signed up to the Outward Bound International Environmental Charter.

Our Capacity



The culmination of decade long improvement works at Outward Bound Loch Eil has drawn to a close with the completion of the Clan Village which officially opened in May 2025. This is an ambitious and inspirational space for young people to plan and reflect on their Outward Bound experience.



LOOKING FORWARD

We know that the challenges faced by young people in an ever-changing and increasingly digital world will only continue to increase; impacting their wellbeing, social mobility and development into positive world citizens.

Outward Bound's mission to inspire young people to believe they can achieve more than they ever thought possible - to break down barriers and unlock opportunities for those who need it most - is more important now than ever.

In the coming years, in addition to delivering impactful courses in the wild, we will seek ways to innovate by piloting a non-residential schools' outreach project that will engage young people who face barriers to attending a residential. We are also exploring partnerships with like-minded organisations to increase capacity through the development of a new centre that will deliver courses to an extra 5,000 young people each year.

Thank you for joining us on this journey; we couldn't do it without you.



The skills and behaviours developed at Outward Bound act as foundations and protective factors in times of adversity.

Thank you.





FURTHER INFORMATION

The Outward Bound Trust's Social Impact Report 2024: www.outwardbound.org.uk/our-impact/social-impact-report

Latest Annual Report and Accounts: www.outwardbound.org.uk/trusts-and-foundations

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