

THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST PARTNERSHIP REPORT

SCOTLAND'S NEXT GENERATION & THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST: 2019



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SCOTLAND'S NEXT GENERATION

Scotland's Next Generation (SNG) enables disadvantaged young people from Scotland to develop their capabilities and unlock their potential through the 19-day Outward Bound Skills for Life Award¹. The SNG project 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. This report focuses on the Skills for Life Award as part of the SNG project and the impact it has on the young people.

In 2019, **36 young people** from across Scotland took part in the project, supported by **24 donors**. **19 Course Mentors** were also involved, who help the participants to prepare for the course and afterwards encourage them to further reflect on their learning and offer practical advice on how they may apply some of the skills, behaviours and attitudes learnt on the course. Most of the young people took part in a **preparatory day**, which allowed them to meet instructors, ask any questions, and most importantly to meet some of the other people they would be with on their Award. Two preparatory days were offered; one close to Glasgow, and the other close to Edinburgh. At the end of the Award, the young people gave **presentations** at Loch Eil on the 18th July and the 8th August. These were very emotional experiences for all concerned with some powerful testimonials of the impact of the Skills for Life Award.

Location	Course	Date	Number of young people
Loch Eil	Serious Adventure	13 th – 19 th July	1
Loch Eil	Skills for Life Award	1 st – 19 th July	17
Ullswater	Skills for Life Award	8 th – 26 th July	3
Loch Eil	Skills for Life Award	22 nd July – 9 th August	15

WHY SNG IS NEEDED

We are increasingly concerned by the growing number of risks to young people's life chances; risks which reduce the likelihood that they will have a healthy, happy childhood, succeed at school and secure a fulfilling adulthood.

¹ One participant attended the seven-day Serious Adventure course.

Mental health and **wellbeing** issues are on the rise, young people growing up in low-income families face significantly reduced chances of succeeding in **education** and **employment** and, despite our youth being one of the best-connected generations, loneliness and social isolation prevent them from developing the happy, healthy **relationships** they need in order to thrive in life.

The Skills for Life Award re-frames how young people can **approach**, **tackle** and **overcome** the **challenges** that life throws at them, be it at school, home, in their social lives or in the workplace.

BACKGROUND OF SNG PARTICIPANTS

Young people aged 15-19 are referred to participate in the project through their school, youth group or social care support. The majority of participants 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.

THE SKILLS FOR LIFE AWARD

The Skills for Life Award is a personal development course centred around 19 days of adventure and challenge in wild, natural environments. Throughout the 19 days, 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 think they are not capable of, individuals' **confidence and self-belief** grows as they step outside their **comfort zones**, and in doing so, they also develop their ability to **persevere** and become more **resilient**. They live alongside others during the 19 days, **forming relationships and developing trust, awareness, respect and tolerance** of 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, the young people are guided towards **achieving their personal goals** by skilled Outward Bound instructors and pastoral teams.



THE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Questionnaires and interviews are used to assess the outcomes of the Skills for Life Award. In total, 31 SNG participants completed a questionnaire at the end of their course that measured changes to their skills and attributes, including **communication** and **working with others, resilience** and **time management**². The following percentages indicate the proportion of young people who felt more confident in each area at the end of the Award:

	Meeting new people	90%
	Working with others in a team	84%
	Putting forward their ideas	81%
	Being the leader of a team	77%
	Sticking at tasks they find difficult	71%
	Staying calm when things go wrong	71%

Improvements for the SNG group were compared to those of the wider Skills for Life Award participants. The data confirms what we hear anecdotally from young people each year, during the end-of-course presentations at the centre and in their moving thank-you letters to their sponsors: though starting the course with lower levels of confidence and less developed soft skills, the personal growth of these young people during the 19 days is comparatively higher than that of their peers. **The data clearly shows that the SNG programme is improving the confidence and skills of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in a very significant way.** (see Figure 1). The support young people have prior to the course plays an important role in helping to achieve this. The meetings with Course Mentors before the Award help the young people to overcome some of the practical and emotional barriers that they are faced with and ensure they are adequately prepared for their course. The preparatory day is a great opportunity for project participants to learn to overcome some of the anxiety around meeting new people. Both elements contribute towards achieving a deeper impact for this target group.

² Participants' retrospective pre-course scores are used. 'Retrospective pre-course score' enables participants to re-rate themselves against each of the items at the end of the Award, allowing for changes in self-awareness to be taken into account. Participants have a strong tendency to re-rate themselves lower than their initial pre-score, which may give a more accurate measure of personal growth experienced during the Award.

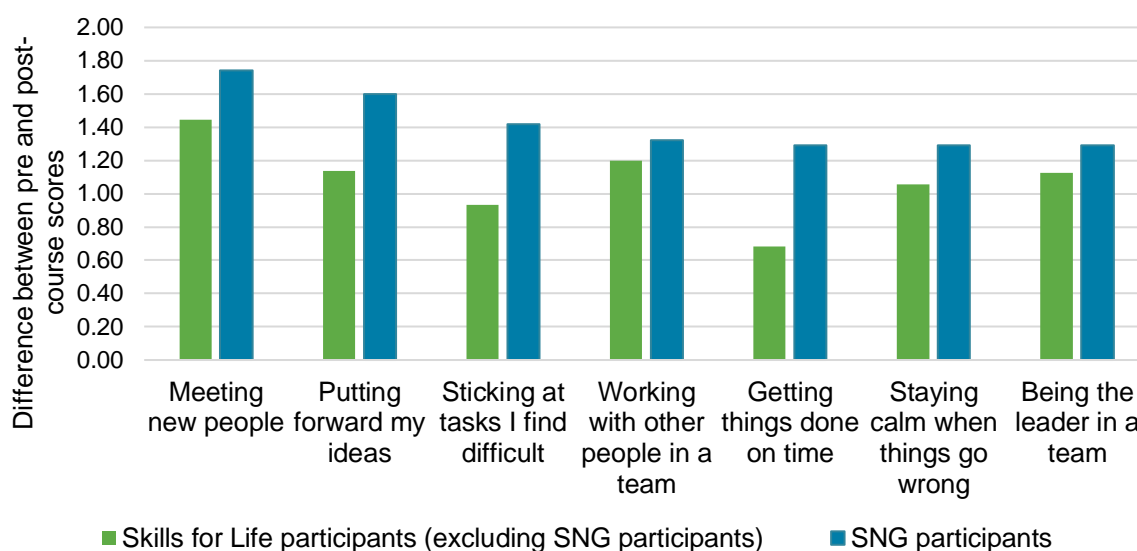


Figure 1: Outcomes for SNG participants compared to wider Skills for Life Award participants: The increase in participants' confidence from the start to end of the course.

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEWS

Every young person we work with has their own unique experience on the Skills for Life Award³, and each individual has their own story to tell about the way that the Award has impacted them. Interviews were carried out with a sample of SNG participants between 2 and 4 weeks after their course in order to understand the issues facing them in more detail, and the impact the Skills for Life Award has had on them.

These interviews highlighted clear themes around the challenges that young people face in respect to living in today's fast-paced, online, digital world, which leaves them feeling immense **social pressure** to behave, look and act in a certain way. They fear **being judged, feeling inferior and appearing awkward**, and **worry about not connecting with others**. The pressure they feel to succeed leaves them feeling **stressed and anxious** about **social situations**, their **studies and exams**, and their **future career plans**. Many tell us how they believe they **lack control over their lives**, and often feel they are dictated to by their carers, family, friends or teachers. For others, **relationships** with friends and relatives present a big challenge: **conflicting interests**, or a lack of **communication skills** or **awareness of others' needs**, are often the cause. They tell us they often find it easier to **hide themselves away** from the situation, **isolating themselves** from the people involved and removing themselves from potential conflict – this strategy often exacerbating problem rather than addressing the root causes. The following stories illustrate some of these issues and show how participation in the SNG project has helped individual young people:

³ Participants' names have been changed to protect their anonymity. All photos are Outward Bound library images.

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AMEENA, 18, describes how her Skills for Life Award helped build her confidence in social situations and when talking to people she didn't know.

“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.”

On her Skills for Life Award, Ameena spent all day, every day for 19 days, 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.”

Ameena now feels in a much happier place; she has more self-esteem and confidence to start conversations and meet new people as she moves to University.

“I think now, moving forward to uni, I know everyone feels the same as me, we're all just feeling a bit nervy, 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.”

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For BRIDGET, 17, the outdoors element of her Skills for Life Award left a lasting impression on her. Before she went on her Award, she would rarely spend any leisure time outdoors, being active with her family. Much of her leisure time would be spent indoors, on her phone. Spending 19 days outdoors on the Award changed her appreciation of the Scottish scenery and has changed her motivation to spend time outside, being active.

I think if you're family's really into the outdoors and that then you're gonna be into it as a young child. My family are kinda opposite. We live in a city and you have to really travel far to see natural scenes and stuff like that. Being on Outward Bound, was the most natural environments I've seen in my lifetime! I've done Duke of Edinburgh but that's just a snippet, this was 19 days. I didn't think Scotland was so beautiful, obviously I mostly only see the city – it's all polluted and littered but when you go out into the countryside and you go up further north you see it's actually a very scenic place. I was really wowed by it. If I ever have kids, I want to do this with my kids.

[Since the course], any time we get good weather I'm like, 'come on, we need to go for a walk, it might seem bad but once you're out there you'll absolutely love it' any chance we can get, I'm like, 'come on, we need to go on a road trip!'

I just used to spend time sitting and talking or talking over the phone, whereas now I'm like get up and go, come on, we need to do this. Because that's what you did at Outward Bound, you woke up, you did your activity, you'd eat lunch then you'd do another activity, and you'd do the exact same thing every day, it was a cycle, it got you into that 'get up and go' routine.

She talks about how being outdoors gives her a sense of relief and calm and she reflects on how being in the outdoors environment allowed her the space to pause and take a break and reflect on her actions.

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KIRSTEN (16), came from a very difficult, turbulent home situation. She had very little self-confidence, low self-esteem and doubted herself a lot. At the beginning of the Award she felt daunted with new people to meet, a new environment to get used to, and 19 days ahead of her, full of new challenges.

We were all quite shy at the start, and were like, “Oh my God. You know. We’re with people we don’t know. What do we do?”

One of the things we were taught when we first came was, “This is a fresh start. You can be whoever you want to be here.” I think I really took that on, and I thought, “Okay. I can be myself and just get on with it.” Then I feel like a few people started talking up, and then I spoke up. I think, that’s when I started to realise that I kind of pushed all my worries to the side for once, and thought, “You know what? I’m just going to be whoever...

All the way through the Award she was encouraged to be herself. By completing challenges and being encouraged and supported by her teammates and instructor, her confidence and self-belief grew. Setting goals, reflecting on and reviewing her achievements allowed her to put herself first and to congratulate herself on what she had achieved - something she had never done before.

Before the course, I wasn’t really confident in myself. I didn’t really say anything nice about myself, so having that action plan to say what you have achieved so far, what you are pushing to do, I think that really helped, because you kind of had to say something nice about yourself and what you’d achieved, kind of things. I remember, I think I put on it before the course, I remember putting, “I haven’t achieved anything.” Then I remember talking to my instructor, and he was like, “Well, look at what you have achieved, and how you can push yourself.” I saw that as we wrote in each little text box, I saw the self-confidence and, you know, belief in myself and kind of just being nice to myself for things. A bit of credit for what I was doing. I think that really helped. That came from myself for once, instead of someone else. I think it just kind of makes you smile a bit, and you know, you want to push yourself because you want to say you’ve done more than just a couple of things.

This made her want to achieve even more. After the Award, she continued this drive and determination; she moved to a new house, started a college course to follow her dream of being a performer and got a job to pay for her course fees.

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FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

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.

<http://www.outwardbound.org.uk/about-us/alumni/>

Patron's Company Members

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

www.outwardbound.org.uk/about-us/our-supporters.html

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/media/102611/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/

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Eskdale, The Lake District, England
Loch Eil, The Highlands, Scotland

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