

**THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST REPORT**

# **HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE RECONNECT, REBUILD AND RECHARGE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**AUGUST – DECEMBER 2020**



**THE  
OUTWARD  
BOUND TRUST**

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## FOREWORD

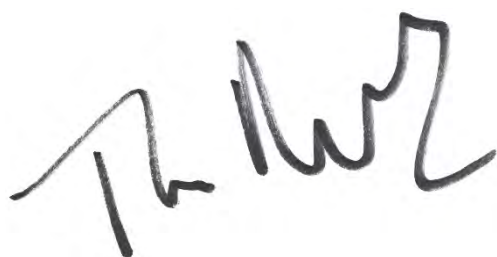
In late March 2020, The Outward Bound Trust closed all its centres and furloughed 90% of its staff. We entered a period of hibernation. This report speaks to our gradual and continuing emergence from that state. It speaks to our determination to support young people through the pandemic and beyond into the future.

It has been challenging. Our expertise lies in running residential courses in the mountains with high levels of adventure and high levels of learning for the young people involved. I am extremely proud of the way we are adapting and innovating during a time when we cannot do precisely what we do best. Under the mantra of “Safe, Simple and Fun” we started work again in the August summer holidays and have now been able to build on this and work once again with young people at school in the run up to Christmas. There is plenty more to come as we learn what works and what can be fitted into the ever-changing rules and regulations surrounding the pandemic.

What has already become very clear is that we are doing significantly more than provide safe, simple and fun experiences. The feedback from participants, parents and teachers has been wonderfully positive. It is clear that our ability to contribute to the well-being and development of young people and their school, even when we operate in ways that are new to us, is significant.

And of course, the need is greater than ever. Not only have there been some fairly obvious and well reported issues for young people as a result of isolation, lockdown and disruption but there are likely to be ramifications well into the future in terms of lost opportunities and blighted employment prospects. If ever young people need to develop the age-old Outward Bound attributes of resilience and the ability and confidence to rise to a challenge, then it is now.

Back in March we gave ourselves two overlapping priorities. The first was to get busy and help young people now. The second was to survive as an organisation so that we can help young people into the future. This report tells of our first steps on both counts.



**NICK BARRETT**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**For many young people, life is on hold.** Routines have been upended, restrictions have been placed on seeing family and friends, exams have been cancelled and job prospects have been erased. And whilst the Covid-19 pandemic has affected everyone in society, **young people have been disproportionately affected**, both socially and economically. They risk becoming a ‘**lost generation**’ whose future prospects are **permanently scarred**.

We are deeply concerned about the effects of this disruption on young people’s **mental and emotional wellbeing, aspiration** and **future life chances**. We are on the verge of a **mental health crisis** that threatens to devastate their lives, as figures for eating disorders, sleep disorders and self-harm have increased at an alarming rate since the start of the pandemic and young people up and down the country report increased levels of **anxiety, loneliness** and **worry about the future**. Unemployment has risen more sharply for 16-24 year olds than for any other age group, and the pandemic has served to **exacerbate existing inequalities**, with the circumstances of those who are already vulnerable and facing hardship becoming increasingly desperate. **Many are losing hope and abandoning their ambitions completely**.

Young people are in **urgent need of support**, and we firmly believe that enabling them to **re-connect with others safely** and **feel positive** is essential to **restoring their confidence, getting their lives back on track** and **giving them hope for the future**.

Between August and December 2020, we will work with **3,183** young people in the outdoors in a non-residential capacity through Adventure Days and in-school programmes. By Easter 2021 we aim to have reached **14,000** young people across the UK. These sessions are providing **a life-line to many young people**, offering freedom, respite and the chance to be active and socialise in a Covid-safe way.

An evaluation of the work carried out so far indicates that it is meeting an **urgent social and educational need** during a time of crisis. Those attending the Adventure Days report feeling **more confident, more motivated** and **more positive about overcoming challenges** in the future. They also say they are keen to be **more active** and **spend more time outdoors**, which will undoubtedly help them to maintain positive wellbeing as the pandemic continues. The in-school programmes are helping pupils to **manage their emotions** whilst adapting to changing routines and providing much needed **safe social interaction** with their friends. **Listening, attention** and **engagement with learning** have improved and teachers have also gained significantly from the expertise of outdoor instructors to build their own confidence to deliver outdoor learning in school grounds.

Looking ahead to the coming months, as lockdown restrictions continue to significantly limit the social interaction and freedom of young people, the threat of a severe mental health crisis over the winter becomes more and more real. **Opportunities for young people to get outdoors and connect with others safely are urgently needed to avoid the crisis of a generation**. We will continue delivering Adventure Days and outdoor learning in schools local to our centres throughout the winter, when and where permitted. We also plan to deliver a new and varied programme of in-school adventures across the UK, tailored to the needs of individual schools and students. Until we can deliver residential courses again, we are confident that we are doing the best we can to help young people recover from the effects of this crisis.

## A LOST GENERATION: THE EFFECTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON YOUNG PEOPLE

**For many young people, life is on hold.** Routines have been upended, restrictions have been placed on seeing family and friends, exams have been cancelled and job prospects have been erased. And whilst the Covid-19 pandemic has affected everyone in society, **young people have been disproportionately affected, both socially and economically, and risk becoming a ‘lost generation’<sup>1</sup>.**

We are deeply concerned about the effects of this disruption on young people’s mental and emotional wellbeing, aspiration and future life chances. We are on the verge of a **mental health crisis** that is predicted to affect **young people and those from deprived backgrounds the most**<sup>2</sup>. Covid-related job losses have hit 16-24 year olds the hardest<sup>3</sup>, further compounding feelings of despair for the future. Numerous studies reveal **significant increases in anxiety, loneliness and worry** during lockdown<sup>4,5,6</sup>, coupled with **significant decreases in optimism and hope for the future** as the pandemic continues<sup>7</sup>. Young people will undoubtedly feel the effects of this disruption well into their adult lives.

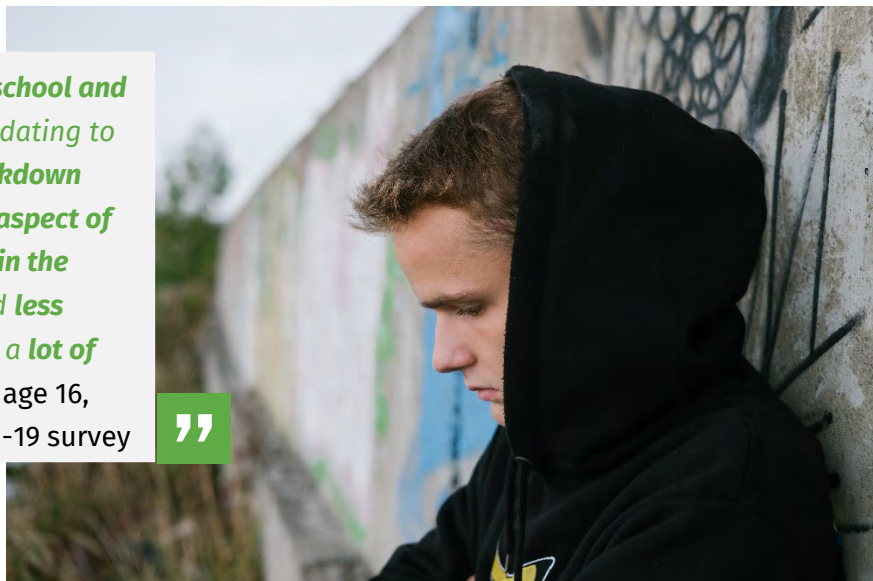
### LOSS OF HOPE

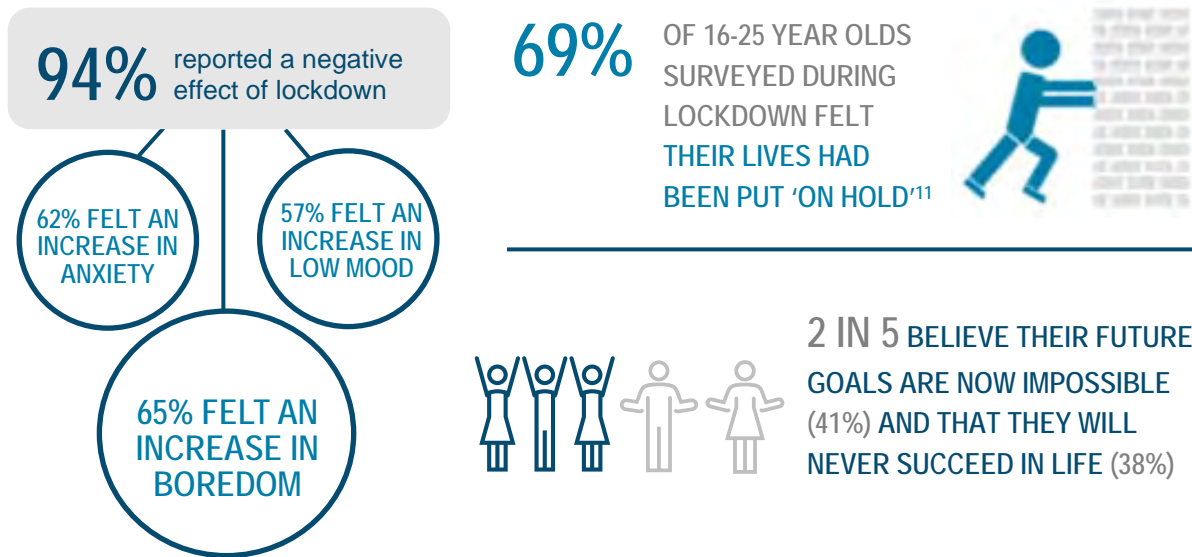
In an Outward Bound Trust survey<sup>8</sup>, **94% of young people reported at least one negative impact of lockdown**, with **62% reporting increased anxiety, 57% reporting increased low mood and 52% reporting increased loneliness**. Even more worryingly, a Prince’s Trust report<sup>9</sup> shows a **devastating aspiration gap opening up**, with young people losing hope and abandoning their ambitions completely. **41% of young people believe their future goals now seem impossible to achieve and 38% feel they will never succeed in life.**

“

*“Lots of **worry about school and the future**. Very intimidating to see how badly the **lockdown affected every single aspect of life**. Made **everything in the future more rocky and less certain** which created a **lot of extra stress**.”* Ethan<sup>10</sup>, age 16, Outward Bound Covid-19 survey

”





### FALLING BEHIND IN EDUCATION

Much of this lost aspiration has been caused by the sudden disruption to their education. Pupils have lost on average **three months of learning** as a result of school closures<sup>12</sup> and many fear the education they've missed will **set them back permanently**<sup>13</sup>. Those from disadvantaged backgrounds are believed to have **lost significantly more** because they are less likely to have had access to the internet and computers during lockdown and are less likely to have received support for learning from parents or carers, for a number of reasons. Teachers estimate that **more than half of pupils at schools in the most deprived areas lost four months or more**, compared with just 15% of those in the least deprived areas<sup>14</sup>, thereby increasing the attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers<sup>15</sup>.



### JOB PROSPECTS ERASED

The jobs crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has made an uncertain future even more precarious. Unemployment caused by Covid-19 has risen more sharply for 16-24 year olds than for any other age group<sup>16</sup> and the employment rate for 16-24 year olds has fallen by 156,000 in the last quarter to 3.63 million<sup>17</sup>. **Many young people feel an increasing sense of despair as they watch their future job prospects evaporate.**

*"I was due to finish college then go for a 3 month role that will help me towards my career, but I couldn't go so it has been changed to next year. **My life has sort of been put on hold 'til then ... so I definitely feel more like I maybe can't succeed at working in the field I want to** whereas before lockdown I was confident in myself being able to achieve my dream career." Alice, age 18, Outward Bound Covid-19 survey*

## A MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS

Many health experts fear we are on the verge of a mental health crisis that threatens to devastate young people’s lives, and it is predicted to affect those with pre-existing mental health conditions and from deprived backgrounds the most<sup>18</sup>. Figures show that **eating disorders, sleep disorders** and **self-harm** have **increased at an alarming rate since the start of the pandemic**<sup>19</sup>. Teenagers at key points of transition in their education (into secondary school, college or university) have felt the stress and anxiety around their transition more acutely, having missed out on key support mechanisms that would usually be in place.



ALMOST A THIRD OF YOUNG PEOPLE WERE UNABLE TO ACCESS THEIR MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT DURING LOCKDOWN<sup>20</sup>



*“My mental health took a hit, my weight increased, I felt useless not having somewhere to go and something to do.”* Ruby, age 16, Outward Bound Covid-19 survey

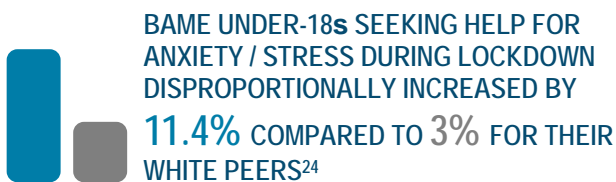


## INCREASING INEQUALITIES

The circumstances of young people who are **already vulnerable and facing significant hardship have become increasingly desperate**. During lockdown, **over a million young people faced increased risks to their safety**, living in households struggling with addiction and domestic violence<sup>21</sup>. The pandemic has also **exacerbated inequalities**, with those from **deprived and BAME backgrounds** more likely to have been **directly affected by Covid-19** and concerned about its long-term effects<sup>22</sup>. It is also projected that around 300,000 more children will be living in poverty by the end of 2020<sup>23</sup>.

*“Being in lockdown has been really, really difficult. It’s made me feel more insecure about myself and it has pushed me to my limits. I’ve had to care for my disabled brother for longer and not had much me time which has drained me.”*

Hannah, age 17, Outward Bound Covid-19 survey



DURING LOCKDOWN OVER A MILLION YOUNG PEOPLE FACED INCREASED RISKS TO THEIR SAFETY LIVING IN HOUSEHOLDS STRUGGLING WITH ADDICTION AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



YOUNG PEOPLE IN RELATIVE POVERTY:



VERY WORRIED ABOUT LONG TERM EFFECTS OF THE VIRUS

YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN RELATIVE POVERTY:



VERY WORRIED ABOUT LONG TERM EFFECTS OF THE VIRUS

## FREEDOM, FRIENDS AND HOPE: THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST DURING COVID-19

It has never been more important than it is now to ensure young people have the confidence and skills to navigate this period of uncertainty, and we remain deeply committed to developing young people into strong, resilient and curious individuals, who are ready for the challenges of life.

We firmly believe that enabling young people to re-connect with others safely, re-build their confidence and feel positive is essential to getting their lives back on track. Positive experiences in the outdoors play a significant role in boosting wellbeing<sup>26</sup> and can therefore help reverse some of the effects of lockdown, **restoring confidence and enabling young people to feel hope for the future again.**

Despite not being able to deliver residential courses, we are finding ways to work with young people in a Covid-secure way through non-residential sessions. Between August and December 2020, we will work with **3,183 young people**, through 'adventure days' or **in-school programmes**, either local to our centres or across the UK, that enable them to meet safely with people their own age again, get active and have fun. By Easter 2021, we aim to have reached as many as 14,000 young people. In this report, we present the findings from evaluations carried out into the impact of the Adventure Days and programmes run in schools local to our centres.



*Between August and December 2020:*

**2,062**

young people local to our centres are currently taking part in a programme of outdoor learning in their school

**599**

young people have taken part in one or more Adventure Days

**522**

young people from schools across the UK are booked to attend an in-school adventure programme



## WORKING IN A COVID-SAFE WAY

In order to protect young people and Outward Bound staff during outdoor sessions, a number of measures have been put in place. At Outward Bound centres, social distancing is observed in equipment and changing areas and on minibuses (which are only used when absolutely necessary). Equipment is cleaned throughout the day and socially distanced handwashing stations have been set up. Outdoor kit is either soaked or quarantined before being dried and re-used. During the sessions, social distancing rules are followed (except where rules for organised outdoor sports can be applied), face coverings are advised when activities require close proximity to one another and regular handwashing is factored into the day. During in-school sessions, some instructors have become part of the school 'bubble', meaning that they have been able to support classroom-based learning as teaching assistants as well as delivering outdoor sessions.

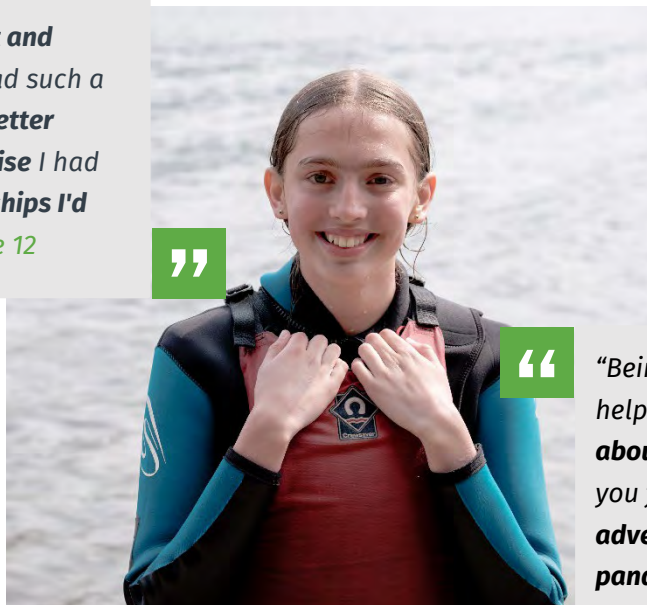
## THE IMPACT OF THE ADVENTURE DAYS

**599 young people** aged 10 – 17 have attended one or more Adventure Days at our Loch Eil and Ullswater centres since August 2020. Following months of cancelled plans and restrictions forcing them to stay indoors, these days provided many with the **first positive thing they could look forward to**: their first chance to interact with people their own age, to leave their local area and to spend time in nature. **The experience of freedom and release was urgently needed** and gave an **immediate boost to their wellbeing**. An evaluation of the impact of the Adventure Days was carried out<sup>27</sup> to understand the extent to which they were meeting the needs of young people.

“

I felt **really confident and happy** because I'd had such a good time and **felt better** because of the **exercise** I had done and the **friendships I'd created**. *Eleanor, age 12*

”



“

“Being outside doing activities helps me feel **good and happy about myself**. The pandemic makes you feel **sad and upset**. **The adventure day is opposite to the pandemic**.” *Claire, age 12*

”



**98%** enjoyed being physically active



**97%** were happy to be outdoors



**93%** enjoyed spending time with others



**66%** made new friends

## HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE RECONNECT, REBUILD AND RECHARGE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Throughout August, it became clear to instructors that the **main priority was to give young people a sense of freedom**, enabling them to **shed the feelings of restriction and containment** they had experienced for several months. Their needs were simple: **to swim in the lake, to move around unconstrained, to be in the fresh air – no matter the weather** and **to make friends**. The small group sizes imposed by Covid-19 restrictions have been a blessing, enabling instructors to give more attention and support to each individual.

In September and October, activities have expanded to include gorge walking, rock climbing, scrambling and hill walks to reach local summits, all the time involving fun, adventure, the chance to make friends and feel a sense of accomplishment. Independence and personal responsibility in managing their kit and equipment have been encouraged, again due to Covid-19 restrictions, and there have been opportunities to learn about local geography and connect with nature.



**92%** said their mood improved



**81%** said they felt more confident



**81%** said their motivation increased



**81%** felt more confident they could overcome challenges in the future



**68%** said they were now keen to spend more time outdoors

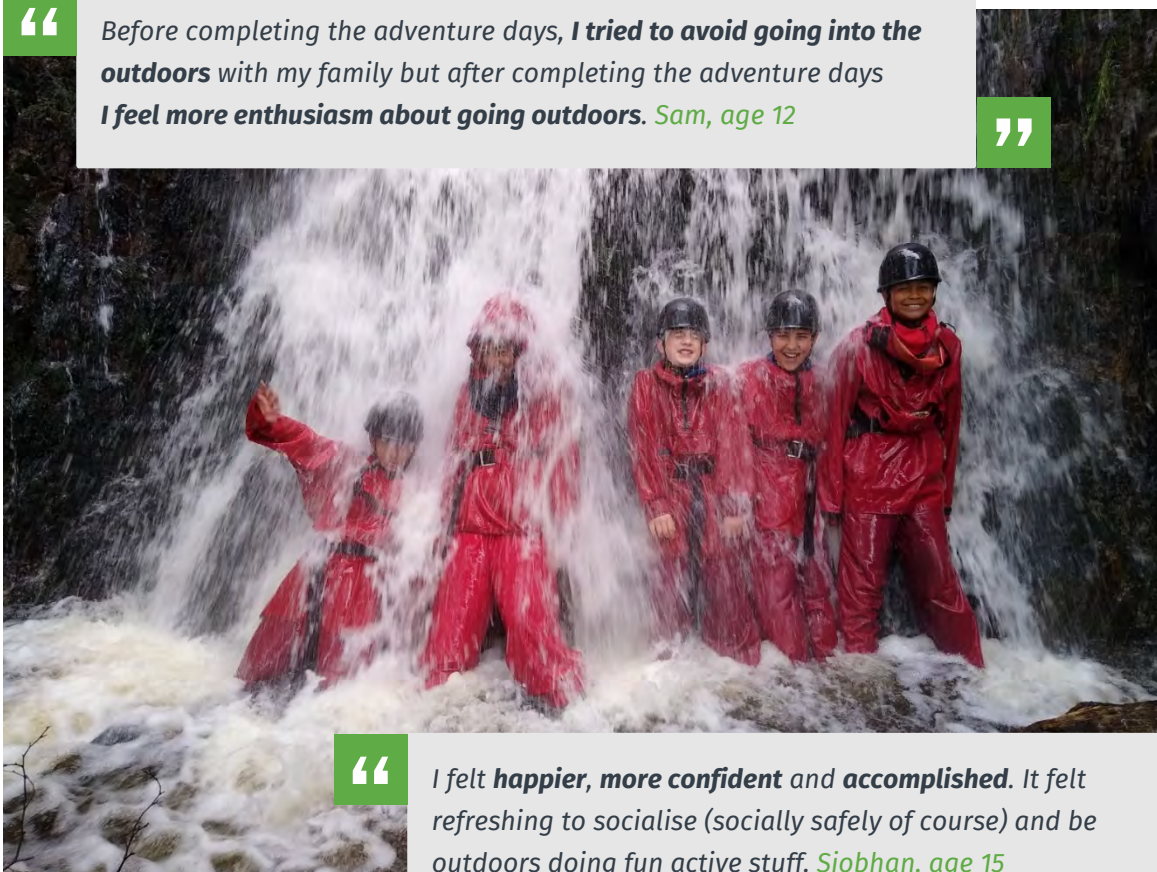


**64%** said they were now keen to be more physically active

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*Before completing the adventure days, I tried to avoid going into the outdoors with my family but after completing the adventure days I feel more enthusiasm about going outdoors. Sam, age 12*

”



“

*I felt happier, more confident and accomplished. It felt refreshing to socialise (socially safely of course) and be outdoors doing fun active stuff. Siobhan, age 15*

”

## THE IMPACT OF OUR IN-SCHOOL ADVENTURE PROGRAMMES

At the end of March 2020, schools were rapidly closed to help curb the spread of Covid-19, meaning that millions of young people were required to continue their education at home through online teaching. It is estimated that pupils lost, on average, three months of learning, although both **disadvantaged and BAME pupils are estimated to have lost significantly more.**

Since the start of the autumn term, teachers have seen a **deterioration in pupils' social and emotional skills** as a result of lockdown, most notably in their **listening and attention skills, social skills** and **overall wellbeing**. Many also observed **weight gain amongst pupils** as a result of reduced physical activity. Whilst schools are now under intense pressure to make up for months of missed learning, **ensuring the mental and physical wellbeing of pupils has also become a top priority.**

*"[Since the start of the pandemic] Some of the children **haven't even been outdoors, out of the house, they haven't had exercise.** Some of them have been quite low, especially children without siblings, they've had nobody to talk to or play with."*

Jennifer Bradbury, Headteacher, Ysgol Craig Y Deryn, Gwynedd

In August 2020, we began delivering in-school adventure programmes that support teachers in rebuilding pupils' **confidence, enthusiasm** and **engagement in learning**. From August to October we focused on delivering these programmes in schools local to Outward Bound centres due to government-imposed restrictions. In November we began delivering them across the UK. This section of the report highlights the impact of the work we have carried out so far in schools local to our centres.

Working with **Nursery to Year 8**, and in consultation with teaching staff, instructors deliver sessions that align with the curriculum and are inclusive of the needs of all pupils. Most activities are **delivered outdoors** within or near school grounds and focus on developing **teamwork, communication, independence, personal responsibility** and **problem-solving skills**. They form a regular part of the school timetable and are intended to run on an ongoing basis for several months.

An evaluation of this work, involving telephone interviews with Headteachers<sup>28</sup>, indicates that **the sessions are meeting an urgent social and educational need during a time of crisis and ongoing uncertainty** and **making a significant contribution to teachers' ability to meet the emotional and social needs of pupils.**

“

*Outward Bound have worked diligently and with great consideration for the safety of the pupils to devise a programme of activities which makes the most of our great outdoor space here in Craig y Deryn whilst sensitively addressing many issues amongst the pupils such as low self-esteem, lack of confidence and reinforcing friendships/team building.*

”

Jennifer Bradbury, Headteacher, Ysgol Craig Y Deryn, Gwynedd

## HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE RECONNECT, REBUILD AND RECHARGE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

There is a strong sense that having skilled and experienced outdoor instructors in school on a regular basis is a real privilege, serving to **enrich the curriculum** and **alleviate pressures** felt by staff who are **stressed and overwhelmed** due to **teaching pressures** and **anxiety around virus transmission** in school. Headteachers could not express strongly enough how **grateful they are for the support The Outward Bound Trust is providing**, not least to assist with additional Covid-19 procedures such as hand-washing and regular cleaning. **Regular sessions outside with Outward Bound instructors** provide teachers with a **unique opportunity to work with smaller class sizes indoors**, enabling them to give **more attention to the most vulnerable** and those who have **fallen furthest behind in their learning**.

Overall, the outdoor sessions are proving not only to have a positive impact on pupils, but on teachers and the wider school as a whole, as the **enthusiasm and excitement they generate positively impacts the mood, energy and engagement of pupils throughout the school day**. Three key themes of impact have emerged from the interviews, which are described below.

**Pupils from Shap Primary School in Cumbria learn social skills and how to put up a shelter with their Outward Bound instructors**



## SUPPORTING PUPIL AND TEACHER HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The outdoor sessions support with the physical, social and emotional wellbeing of pupils by providing opportunities throughout the week to get active, connect with each other and feel less anxious whilst adapting to changing rules and routines. They provide **periods of calm during the school day** and foster resilience, which helps pupils to **regulate their emotions**. The sessions are **positive** and **fun**, providing something they eagerly look forward to and feel genuine excitement about.

Despite living close to nature, many of the pupils rarely spend time in the outdoors with their families. The sessions also enable them to learn more about, and appreciate, nature close to where they live, which is important for maintaining healthy wellbeing. One pupil was reported to have said: **“We must be the luckiest school in Wales”** after one session.



*They come in smiling; they look forward to the next session, they're doing things like 'life skills' that they maybe haven't had the opportunity to do before, they're motivated and happy and that's what we're aiming for.*

**Katie Chappell, Headteacher, Shap Primary School**



*[Being outdoors] makes me happy because I haven't connected with my friends in lockdown. **Henry, age 12***



*When I am outdoors I feel free and more connected to the world especially because of covid-19. **Sophie, age 11***



For one pupil, the sessions have been transformational. Prior to lockdown, he was physically and verbally aggressive and teachers would struggle to engage with him in class. Since taking part, there has been a **major change in his behaviour and engagement with school**.



*There's been a lot of support from different agencies to help with his behaviour and I definitely think **Outward Bound has had the most impact that we've ever had. The progress that he's individually made is huge with his self-regulation...** it's something we'll definitely be using with him in the future... because it's a way that really calms him. **The impact for him has been huge, and for the class.***



**Siobhan Bradley, Depute Headteacher, Lundavra Primary School**

The wellbeing of teaching staff has also been a concern due to increased anxiety of keeping themselves safe in a role where social distancing is difficult. In the majority of sessions, teaching staff accompany the pupils outdoors and their **involvement in activities outside, in a lower-risk environment**, has had a **positive impact on their own wellbeing**.



*"I think it's good for staff...they definitely appear to be more relaxed and less anxious when coming in from a good session outside. Staff, generally, have had anxiety [about coming back to school], so watching them come in with their wellies on and their rosy cheeks it definitely seems to have helped.*



**Katie Chappell, Headteacher, Shap Primary School**

## RE-ENGAGING PUPILS WITH LEARNING AND SUPPORTING THE CURRICULUM

The sessions are helping to **enrich the curriculum** and **energise pupils** for classroom-based learning, thereby playing a **valuable role in supporting pupils to catch up on missed learning**. The outdoors is an ideal setting for making learning practical, and Outward Bound instructors use their creativity to design sessions that support **core subjects** from **literacy** and **numeracy** to **history** and **geography**, bringing topics to life from the Stone Age to World War 2 in ways that enthuse pupils. The sessions reveal strengths of character in pupils previously unknown to teachers, such as leadership and determination, which broadens their knowledge and understanding of each individual child. By helping them to recharge, the sessions have also led to **improved attention** and **concentration in the classroom**.



“

Their **attention in class** and their **ability to focus** has been **positively impacted** from the experience of getting outside, getting active and doing things... It also **informs teachers** because they see some of the children who are less able to sit still and focus on chair based tasks out in the wilderness climbing trees, **getting themselves sorted, keeping track of their kit, their stamina** on walks – they see those children in a different light, see their different strengths.

”

Emily Brown, Acting Headteacher,  
Spean Bridge Primary School

## BUILDING TEACHERS' CONFIDENCE TO DELIVER OUTDOOR LEARNING

One of the main barriers for teachers to running outdoor learning in school is a **lack of confidence** and **knowledge**, due to limited experience. A major benefit described by Headteachers is how, through observing instructors in action, teachers have **learnt how to approach outdoor learning**, from how to plan and prepare for sessions outside to specific activities and managing behaviour. With significantly increased confidence **to run outdoor sessions** themselves once the non-residential work ends, there is a strong sense that the work will leave a **valuable legacy of outdoor learning** within the schools that will benefit pupils well into the future.

“

One of the main [benefits] has been the **teachers' confidence for outdoor learning**. I've been teaching for nearly 20 years and I'm outdoorsy but even myself, just taking that class out [is challenging], especially if you've got any pupils that are tricky. It's just building up that bank [of activities] and that confidence. **I think it's a bit of a legacy** – once the instructors go, they're going to have **empowered a whole cohort of staff at our school to take this forward**, which I think is huge.

”

Siobhan Bradley, Depute Headteacher, Lundavra Primary School

## RECONNECTING PUPILS TO NATURE AND ENHANCING HEALTH AND WELLBEING: A SNAPSHOT OF OUR WORK WITH PUPILS IN SCOTLAND

**Instructors** have been working with **primary schools** across the Scottish Highlands, delivering a programme both within school grounds and in the local area through off-site visits. The programme delivered to all year groups in each school has combined **physical activity** with outdoor learning to help improve pupils' **health and wellbeing**, whilst **linking the learning to curriculum topics** such as the weather, sustainability, and conservation.

For instance, instructors have led sessions that involved **creating weather stations** to track changes in local rainfall and temperatures, **making bird feeders, bug hotels** and **wormeries**, completing a **beach clean** and carrying out a **plastic survey** in local areas. The curriculum has a strong emphasis on learning about the natural environment, and the sessions are supporting all pupils in working towards either the RSPB Wild Challenge<sup>29</sup> or the John Muir Award<sup>30</sup>.

Some sessions in one school have encouraged a healthy approach to risk, as pupils have created risk assessments for the activities they are doing outdoors, such as building campfires or climbing trees. These have offered the opportunity to **talk openly about risk** and to encourage pupils to think about **keeping themselves and others safe** whilst **not letting fear stop them from challenging and enjoying themselves**.

“

*[Creating risk assessment] fits in well with outdoor learning. It fits in well with keeping themselves safe generally but I think it also helps **contextualise hopefully for them the pandemic that's going on around them**, that risks are around us all the time and **we can all take steps to mitigate or control those risks**, but nothing is ever risk free. So it's about weighing up the risk and reward in any activity ... but that **shouldn't stop us from getting out there and enjoying ourselves**, but we can also **take responsibility to protect ourselves and others** in the best way we can.*

”

**Emily Brown, Acting Headteacher, Spean Bridge Primary School**

In each of these schools, **instructors have been fully integrated into the school staff team** and have also provided **additional learning support** for individual pupils with specific learning needs for part of their school day, in addition to delivering the outdoor learning programme.

Since the end of September, permission has been granted in Scotland for school groups to take part in day excursions, meaning that instructors have been able to plan longer activities in the local area. Pupils have taken part in hill and river walks, explored local nature reserves and learnt about local flora and fauna.

## ENHANCING THE CURRICULUM AND RE-BUILDING KEY SKILLS FOR LEARNING: A SNAPSHOT OF OUR WORK WITH PUPILS IN ENGLAND

**Instructors** have been working with **schools** in Cumbria through a series of outdoor sessions rotated throughout the week within school grounds. Sessions focus on developing pupils' **cognition** and **teamwork** skills, with challenges that provide opportunities for **problem-solving** to build confidence and resilience. They also aim to improve skills that teachers have observed to have deteriorated over lockdown, such as **listening** and the **ability to work with others**.

By utilising the school grounds, kinaesthetic activities such as bushcraft and shelter-building are **connecting pupils with the outdoors**, and many of the outdoor learning sessions have a direct **link to the school's curriculum**. Immediate benefits of Outward Bound instructors have been observed by each school, including improvements in pupils' **happiness**, **motivation** and their **ability to work cooperatively with others**. There is also hope that further impact will be evident in the long-term as the instructors continue to work with pupils.

Headteachers also spoke of the impact Outward Bound has had for their staff. Returning to school during the pandemic and at a time of uncertainty, **teaching staff are under immense pressure** to adapt quickly to new routines to ensure schools are Covid-secure and pressure to catch pupils up on missed learning, all of which has created a cause for concern for staff wellbeing. **Outward Bound instructors have provided relief for classroom teachers** balancing their new and increased workload.

“

They're **having fun**, they're outside... but at the same time there's **someone who's guiding** it and making sure **it's fair and it's structured**...there's that concept of playing in a **constructive way**, **setting rules** that are **there for everyone** and I think that's really helping.

”

Karl Laithwaite, Headteacher,  
Temple Sowerby Primary School



“

They know that the little ones are studying forests and fairy tales and the others are learning about World War 2, so they're trying to complement the existing learning that's going on in the classroom, so that's been really beneficial. They're very creative activities as well. I'm really impressed with them, they're doing a great job.

”

Katie Chappell, Headteacher, Shap Primary School



## DEVELOPING CONFIDENCE AND INTERPERSONAL SKILLS: A SNAPSHOT OF OUR WORK WITH PUPILS IN WALES

**Instructors** have been working with both primary and secondary **schools** in Snowdonia. In the primary schools, instructors have worked with all year groups from **Nursery to Year 6**, providing opportunities for pupils to have structured time outside for **physical activity** where they can **connect with natural surroundings**. Activities have provided opportunities to **develop social skills** and **confidence** through immersive team-building tasks outdoors in school grounds, which have also **pushed pupils outside their comfort zone** to develop their **resilience** and **self-belief**. Pupils have taken their new-found confidence and social skills and **transferred this into the classroom**.

“

*It's lovely to see back in class that they're encouraging each other. They were having to do a presentation to be on the school council, and normally it would be quite a stressful situation for some children, but when they did the presentation the others were [cheering] them on, and I don't know if we would have had got that perhaps without the input of Outward Bound and the afternoon's where they have been having to support each other and [learning] the importance of working in a team.*

”

**Jennifer Bradbury, Headteacher, Ysgol Craig y Deryn**

The ability to teach outdoors has provided school staff with an opportunity to break down the barriers that they currently face teaching in classrooms with Covid-19 restrictions and inspire pupils to appreciate the local area.

“

*They feel a lot safer [outside], because you're in an enclosed space in a class and staff are wearing visors at the moment...you've got this visor on and you feel there's that barrier...to be outdoors you're able to keep a distance but you're also able to interact with them without that barrier.*

”

**Jennifer Bradbury, Headteacher, Ysgol Craig y Deryn**

Within one secondary school, instructors have worked with PE teachers to deliver sessions to **Year 7** and **Year 8** which develop **pupils' ability to support each other** in a team, improve their **communication skills** and learn to **challenge** themselves. The school had seen an increase in low level behaviour across this cohort of pupils since returning from lockdown, and so the programme was tailored to develop **teamwork skills** gradually, broken down to a week-by-week structure in order to build rapport, trust, and then the opportunity for experiential learning.

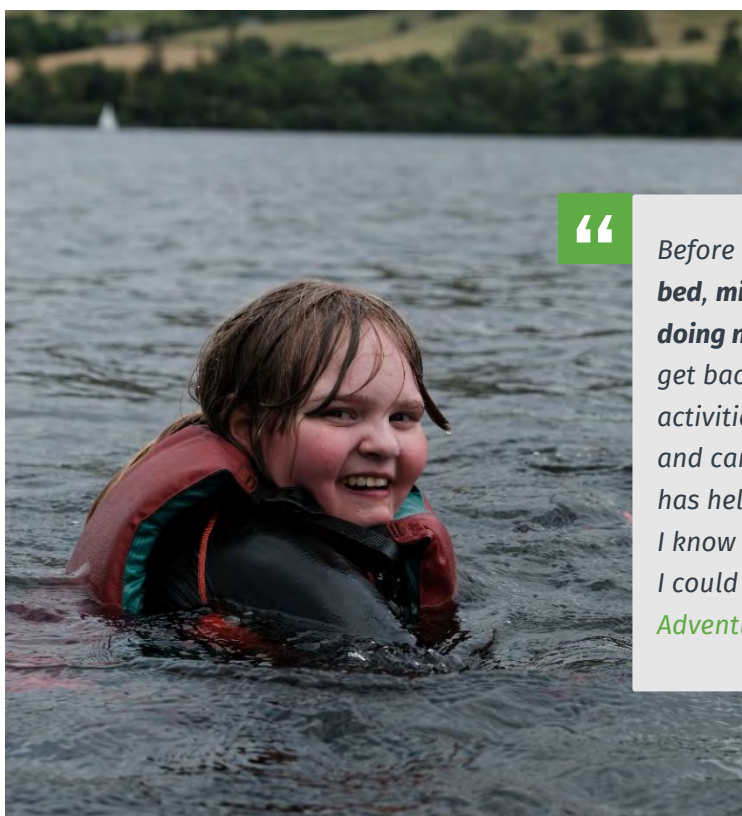
## LOOKING FORWARD

As lockdown restrictions continue to significantly limit the social interaction and freedom of young people, the threat of a **severe mental health crisis** over the winter becomes **more and more real**. Opportunities for young people to **get outdoors** and **connect with others safely** are urgently needed to avoid the **crisis of a generation**.

It is clear that the non-residential outdoor sessions we have delivered so far are meeting an urgent social and educational need, providing young people with **freedom**, a **positive experience** to look forward to and the chance to be **physically active** and **make friends** in a Covid-safe way. This is having a positive impact on their social, physical and emotional wellbeing, helping them to feel a sense of capability and possibility once more after so many months of containment.

Since November 2020, we've been able to travel further afield to deliver **in-school adventure programmes to schools across the UK**. We are currently working with and are committed to working with pupils from a wide range of inner-city and urban areas including (but not limited to) **London, Birmingham, Manchester, Stoke-on-Trent, Blackburn, Bradford** and **Dundee**. Each programme is designed to meet the specific needs of the school; some aim to build the confidence and skills of pupils across the whole school or in key year groups, whilst others are more intensive and will support the most vulnerable and in need. Each of the programmes will be informed by the success of our work in schools local to our centres and will focus on meeting the social and emotional needs of pupils. **By Easter 2021, we aim to have reached as many as 14,000 young people**.

Throughout the winter, we will continue to deliver Adventure Days and school-based outdoor learning programmes wherever they are needed across the entire UK. However, we know that we will continue to face challenges over the coming months due to changing lockdown conditions and Covid-19 outbreaks within schools and we will adapt our focus as and when we need to. And until we can deliver residential courses again, we are confident that we are doing the best we can to help young people recover from the effects of this crisis.



“

*Before I was **struggling to get out of bed, missing my friends and school** and **doing normal things**. Now I just want to get back on Ullswater and do the activities. I also am **happier at home** and can **concentrate better at school**. It has helped me be **stronger to cope**, now I know I can do things that I didn't know I could do before. **Kelly, age 11, Adventure Day participant***

”

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<sup>28</sup> Telephone interviews were carried out in October 2020 with Headteachers in 6 schools to understand the key areas of impact.

<sup>29</sup> The RSPB Wild Challenge encourages children to connect with the natural world by helping and experiencing nature.

<sup>30</sup> The John Muir Award is an environmental award that encourages people to discover, explore, conserve and share their experiences of a wild place.



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