

## Executive Summary

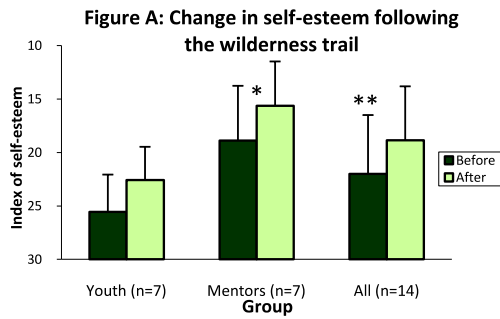
This addendum report is a follow-on document from the first review of the TurnAround project and should be read in conjunction with the earlier report. The Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Antisocial Behaviour (ICYCAB) recently set out a blueprint for a reformed response to youth justice and antisocial behaviour due to the associated increasing costs. The ICYCAB recommends that costs and reoffending rates could be reduced if fewer young offenders received custodial sentences and alternative rehabilitative interventions were introduced. Preventive interventions for adolescents with behavioural problems also produce acute improvements and lower the risks of chronic persistent offending. TurnAround2 (TA2) is an example of an early preventive alternative intervention which combines nature-based activities in wilderness settings together with mentoring and workshops.

The aim of TA2 was to produce sustainable positive changes and improve the life chances of a selected group of disadvantaged and vulnerable young people in Essex. The structured programme ran from March to December 2009 and comprised nine monthly skill workshops and outdoor activity days, along with weekly one-to-one mentoring sessions and two wilderness experiences which topped and tailed the programme. The main objective was to intervene early, preventing the escalation of negative behaviour and minimising the risk of criminal convictions and further school exclusion. It used outdoor activities and wilderness experiences to i) break down the physical and emotional barriers that inhibited social competence; ii) improve self confidence, self-esteem, communication and problem solving abilities; iii) instil a sense of accountability to themselves and others; iv) build trust and

team-working skills; v) educate young people to make positive life choices and vi) generate employment and training opportunities and/or further education prospects.

The programme started with a ten day wilderness trail in Perthshire, Scotland and finished with a five day sailing trip around the Essex Coast. The trail was the central part of the programme setting the foundation for future work and triggering an important internal self discovery process. The sailing trip provided an opportunity for team work, independence, mastering a new skill and reviewing their personal development in a structured, adventurous setting. In between the two wilderness experiences participants attended a series of nature-based activity workshops and engaged in weekly one-to-one mentoring sessions. A mixed-method approach was used to assess changes in self-esteem, general wellbeing, connectedness to nature, personal and social development, mood, behaviour and attitude throughout the duration of the project. A combination of international standardised instruments quantifying key outcomes and anecdotal evidence capturing rich narrative was adopted.

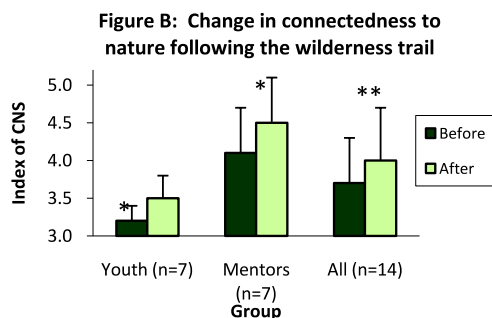




Low scores= high self-esteem; \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01; Bars = 1SD

Seven participants completed the programme including two females and five males with an average age of  $15.0 \pm 1.2$  (SD) yrs. Following the wilderness trail self-esteem improved by an index of 3.0, representing a 10% improvement in this measure. Five out of seven young people (71.4%) experienced an improvement in self-esteem (Figure A).

Participants experienced small reductions in feelings of anger, confusion and depression, a much bigger decline in tension and vigour and a large increase in fatigue. With the intensity and duration of the activity, the increase in fatigue is not surprising and consequently this mood factor had a strong influence on the overall mood scores. The moods experienced by the young people were often negatively influenced by the range of personal challenges they faced when reflecting on behavioural problems and discussing emotional subjects.



High scores= more connected to nature; \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01; Bars = 1SD

A Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test reported a significant difference in the aggregate ( $Z=-3.1$ ,

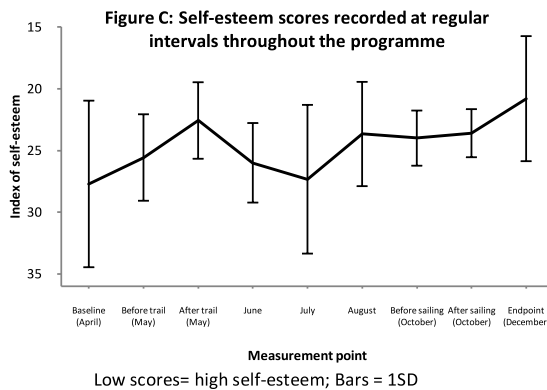
$p<0.01$ ), young people ( $Z=-2.0$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and mentor CNS scores ( $Z=-2.4$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) pre and post trail (Figure B). CNS improved by an index of 0.3 in young people, representing an 8% improvement in the measure. Six out of seven young people (85.7%) experienced an improvement in CNS. Thus, participants felt more connected to nature after spending time in the wilderness environment and experienced an increased awareness and appreciation of nature.

Levels of self-esteem improved following the sailing trip by an index of 0.4 representing a 1.3% improvement in the measure. There were moderate reductions in feelings of anger, depression, fatigue and vigour and a much bigger decline in tension and confusion. Thus, the experience was a lot more positive in lifting mood compared to the first trail. CNS improved by an index of 0.6 representing a 12% improvement in the measure. Four out of five young people (80.0%) experienced an improvement in CNS.



The biggest improvement in self-esteem was seen after participating in the first wilderness trail, before levels regressed when participants returned to their usual

environments. Scores picked up again in August, improved slightly after the sailing trip and the programme ended with the highest values recorded (Figure C). A Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test reported a significant difference between the baseline and endpoint values ( $Z=-1.8$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Self-esteem improved by an index of 6.9 representing a 23.0% improvement in the measure.



A Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test also reported a significant difference between the first and last month's Psychological Wellbeing (PWB) scores ( $Z=-2.0$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). PWB improved by an index of 4.4, representing a 6.1% improvement in the measure. Five out of six young people (83.3%) experienced an improvement in PWB implying their psychological health was improving as the programme progressed.

TA2 successfully targeted marginalised young people who were at risk of developing further behavioural problems, expulsion from school or engaging in criminal activities and antisocial behaviour. TA2 programme provided them with the opportunity to go on an inward bound personal growth journey using connections with nature and the landscape. The wilderness experiences had different affects on each individual and some responded more positively than others. The majority of participants commented on the enjoyment of exploring the scenery and

wildlife and how the experience provided an ideal opportunity to escape difficulties at home. The quiet remote environment allowed an opportunity for solitude and reflection and a time for introspection away from negative influences and distractions.

One of the strong aspects of TA2 was the intra- and inter-generational contact, providing participants with a wide range of role models, experiences and advice. Participant ratings of self-confidence, effective problem solving, cooperative teamwork and community engagement steadily improved over the duration of the project. They also became more self-aware and demonstrated a willingness to change. They learnt how to turn negativity into positivity, how their actions affected others and the importance of accepting personal and social responsibility for their choices. They mastered new skills and improved their self-management, social and communication skills. The project gave them a real sense of achievement and each participant felt valued and respected. They started to understand the importance of listening and communicating with respect and school attendance and classroom behaviour both improved. Thus, the findings imply that projects like TA2 should be seriously considered as part of a reformed response to youth justice and antisocial behaviour.



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