

## Executive summary

This report is a follow-on from three preceding TurnAround (TA) reports and should be read in conjunction with previous information. UK Youth crime and anti-social behaviour is a continuing problem; approximately one quarter of all crime in the UK is committed by young people, a figure which is disproportionate given that young people account for 1 in 10 of the population above the age of criminal responsibility. In the UK, the cost of youth crime is estimated at £4 billion per year. The annual cost of a place in a secure children's home is approximately £120,000 per year, whilst the costs of a place in a secure training centre and young offender's institution are £160,000 and £60,000 per year respectively.

Due to the high costs associated with youth imprisonment, and the high reoffending rates of up to 38%, much attention has been placed on the use of alternative methods of tackling crime, reoffending and anti-social behaviour. Evidence suggests that therapeutic interventions providing skills and mentoring are effective at changing behaviour and protecting against risk factors such as low self-esteem and self-confidence, mental illness and alcohol and substance abuse. Wilderness therapy programmes are also effective at reducing recidivism. Wilderness therapy programmes provide counselling, education, leadership training and primitive living conditions which aim to foster community and group working, honesty, awareness, openness and the ability of individuals to take responsibility for their actions. The TurnAround programme therefore uses skills workshops, mentoring and group activities combined with a number of wilderness trails, to target youth crime and anti-social behaviour.

The aim of TA4 was to enable vulnerable young people to make positive changes in their lives through engagement in nature based activities. Two projects ran simultaneously, one in Essex and Hackney. The Hackney project ran from April 2012- January 2013, whilst the Essex trail ran from April 2012- March 2013. Both programmes comprised of skills workshops and outdoor activity days, weekly one-to-one mentoring and two wilderness trails. The main objective of the programme was to intervene early preventing further criminal convictions, school exclusion and escalation of negative behaviour. The programme used outdoor activities and wilderness experiences to i) break down the physical and emotional barriers that inhibited social competence; ii) improve self-esteem, self-confidence, emotional regulation, 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; vi) generate employment and training opportunities and/or further education prospects.

Each programme began with a 5-day wilderness trail to Scotland. The initial trail was central to the programme triggering an important internal self-discovery process and setting the foundation for work to follow. The sailing trip at the final stages of the programme was designed to re-affirm relationships, set goals and look towards the future and possible employment and education opportunities. In between the two trails were various activity days and skills workshops and one-to-one mentoring sessions. A mixed methods approach was used to assess changes in hope, nature experience, self-esteem, well-being and

behavioural strengths and difficulties throughout the duration of the project. Internationally standardised instruments were used to capture key evidence alongside qualitative feedback providing rich narrative.

Six young people took part in the Hackney programme and seven young people took part in the Essex programme. Due to unforeseen circumstances questionnaires were only distributed at baseline, wild camping, pre and post wilderness trail and project end in the Hackney programme. In the Essex programme questionnaires were completed at baseline, wild camping, pre-post trail and sailing, at the cinema trip and the project end. The average age of the six young people from Hackney was  $16.3 \pm 1.1$  years, whilst the average age of the Essex participants was  $17.3 \pm 1.5$  years. 54% of participants were male and 46% were female.

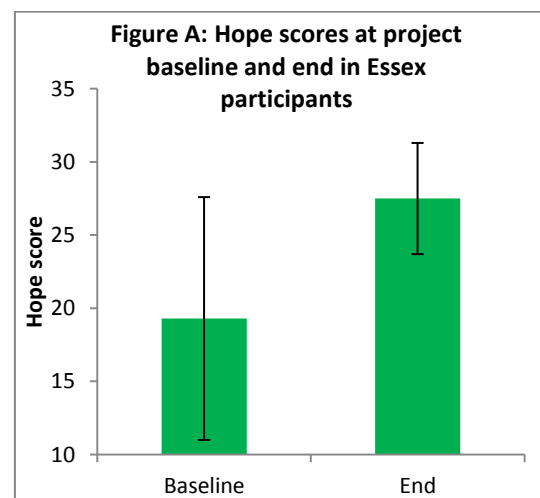
Due to low attendance at the Hackney project it was not possible to track changes in scores over the course of the project. However, several participants completed the questionnaires pre and post the wilderness trail, the scores were therefore compared across these two time points. Essex participants' scores were tracked over time, involving project baseline and endpoint comparisons in addition to pre and post trail data.

As a result of the wilderness trail, both the Essex and Hackney groups experienced improvements in all assessed parameters. In the Hackney group the total hope score increased by 8%, representing an improvement in the participants' hope that goals could be met. Self-esteem also improved by 20% and a 2% increase in participants desire to be out in nature was reported. Similarly in the Essex group the total hope score increased by 7% and self-

esteem improved by 14%. However increases in nature experience were larger in the Essex group, with a 12% increase in their desire to be out in nature.

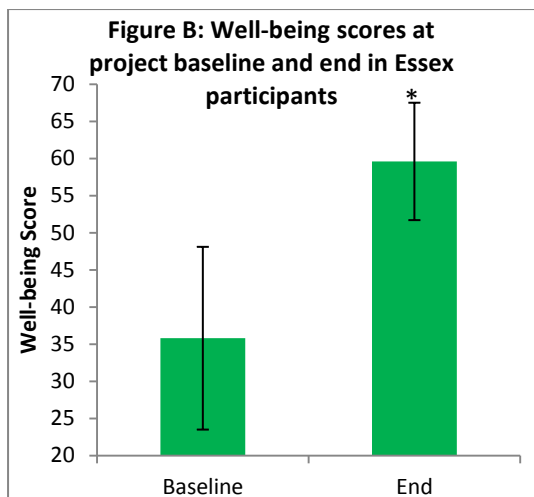
The Essex group also improved their scores throughout the course of the project. From project baseline to end hope scores increased by 28% (Figure A).

Well-being scores significantly increased from project baseline to end ( $Z=-2.0$ ;  $P<0.05$ ), representing an improvement of 43% (Figure B). 60% of participants experienced changes so significant that they altered their well-being category. 40% of participants well-being moved from 'low' to 'high' and 20% moved from 'low' to 'average'.

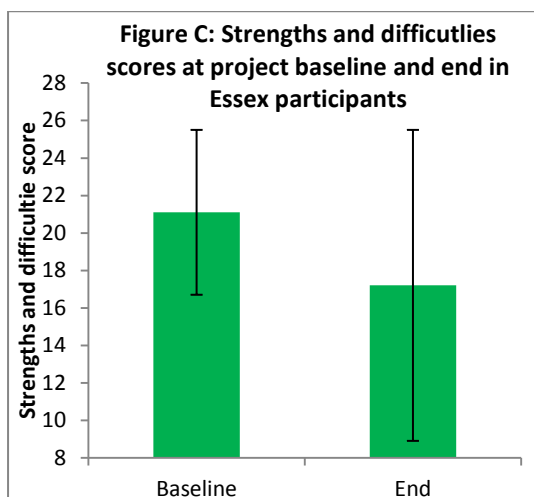


A high score=greater hope that goals can be met.

The self-esteem score also improved from project baseline to end by 10%. Emotional symptoms decreased by 17%, peer problems by 19% and hyperactivity by 16%. Pro-social behaviour improved by 10% and overall behavioural difficulties saw a reduction of 10% from project baseline to end (Figure C).



High scores=better well-being. \* indicates an improvement in well-being at project end ( $P<0.05$ )



A high score=more difficulties.

Whilst the mean scores in the assessed parameters showed a general trend for improvement, individual experiences of the project varied. Some participants responded more positively and enjoyed the experience more than others; this was to be expected given that everyone had a differing relationship with nature. However, overall the project was successful at targeting youth at risk of developing further behavioural problems, being excluded from school, partaking in criminal activity or anti-social behaviour. For example, the reductions in behavioural difficulties identified could stop the young people from being disruptive at school and therefore being excluded. Furthermore the improvements

in self-esteem experienced could help participants to place more value on themselves and thus not want to engage in behaviours which will jeopardise their future and potentially cause them to be imprisoned.

As well as improving well-being, self-esteem, hope, behaviour and increasing participants desire to be in nature, the project helped participants' to develop new skills through engaging in new activities, work as a team, communicate effectively with others, develop coping mechanisms, become self-aware and confident and develop a willingness to change. Participants enjoyed the experience and liked *"interacting with new people"*. They *"became more open, confident and trusting"* and learnt to *"never give up"*. Participants felt that participating in the project would help them to *"try harder to achieve what they want in life"* and *"be more positive, set goals and talk to and give people a chance more"*.

The findings of this report suggest that projects like TA4 should be used as a tool to prevent the increasing trend for youth anti-social behaviour and crime. Therapeutic and wilderness projects should be considered as an alternative to discipline, deterrence and imprisonment in the battle against youth crime. The TurnAround project is a scheme which is successful at targeting the risk factors and causes of youth crime.

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