

# TurnAround: Ten-Year Report

2007 - 2017

A University of Essex report for Wilderness Foundation UK



**WILDERNESS**  
FOUNDATION UK



University of Essex



February 2018

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Interviewer: ....and the whole programme, when you think back, what do you think you've gained from it?

Participant: (pause)....that I'm actually a nice person.

*Youth ages 15–21 who struggle with family, social, and personal problems find a new way of living through the TurnAround programme. Through outdoor adventures and intensive mentoring, TurnAround empowers young people to build a brighter future*

..... **Wilderness Foundation UK**



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## Executive summary

Wilderness Foundation UK has previously commissioned the University of Essex to independently evaluate the efficacy of the TurnAround programme across the individual cohorts. Ten years since the first cohort, this report aims to encapsulate what the TurnAround project is, to assess the extent of its efficacy in achieving its goals, and to provide understanding as to how and why the project facilitates important changes in young peoples' lives.

This report aimed:

- To outline the TurnAround programme and its approach
- To pool and evaluate existing data collected across previous phases of TurnAround and new data collected during TurnAround Essex Phases 7 and 8, and TurnAround Berkshire Phases 1 and 2.
- To report on the numerically measured outcomes for TurnAround participants by analysing changes reported:
  - from the start to the end of the programme
  - from the start to the end of the first wilderness trail of the programme
  - across all four measured time-points
- To report the qualitatively described changes and processes factors that contribute to those (i.e. how the project leads to changes / outcomes)
- To conclude upon the efficacy of the TurnAround programme, and to provide recommendations for future directions.

### Introduction

TurnAround is a wilderness therapy-based project that seeks to engage and positively change the trajectory and lives of young

people, usually aged 15-19 years, who typically face multiple barriers to success, such as low self-esteem and mental wellbeing, poverty, abusive or ineffective families, drug and alcohol abuse, school failure, and youth offending orders. Many participants have experienced significant social, psychological or physical trauma, and some enter the programme at a stage whereby they are self-harming. TurnAround focuses particularly on participants' self-esteem and self-worth, because of the strong influences of these aspects upon many facets of their lives.

Including the inaugural TurnAround project in 2007, over the past decade, ten TurnAround cohorts have been engaged. Eight cohorts comprised participants from Essex (one of these cohorts included a sub cohort of participants from Hackney), and two cohorts comprised participants from Berkshire.

Wilderness therapy programmes aim to promote feelings of empowerment, responsibility, confidence, and group cohesion within participants, and are centred around a trip or expedition to a wilderness environment and usually include four components: pre-trip planning, the trip itself, post-trip debriefing, and aftercare. The TurnAround programme follows the general principles of wilderness therapy described above, and is also informed by additional relevant theory. It is delivered across six months of engagement (with some variation), via a model comprising three stages: Stage 1 – Getting to know; Stage 2 – Personal and social development; Stage 3 – Transition.

The TurnAround programme comprises:

- Two, week long wilderness trail journeys
- Weekly one to one mentoring from Wilderness Foundation staff members.
- Monthly workshops aimed at personal and employment-related development,

social behaviour change and resilience building

- Monthly social events to build belonging and social skills
- Nature-based activities such as bush craft, canoeing, paddle boarding, horse-riding, orienteering and rock climbing.
- Family engagement / therapy as required
- Graduation and other ceremonies to acknowledge success
- Post-programme support, support in accessing education, training, work experience, apprenticeships or employment.
- In the final weeks of the project, participants are eligible to apply for £200 to fund training, education or items that would benefit their wellbeing. Graduates of the project are then able to bid for a scholarship of £2000 to help with further education or training costs.

### Evaluative methods

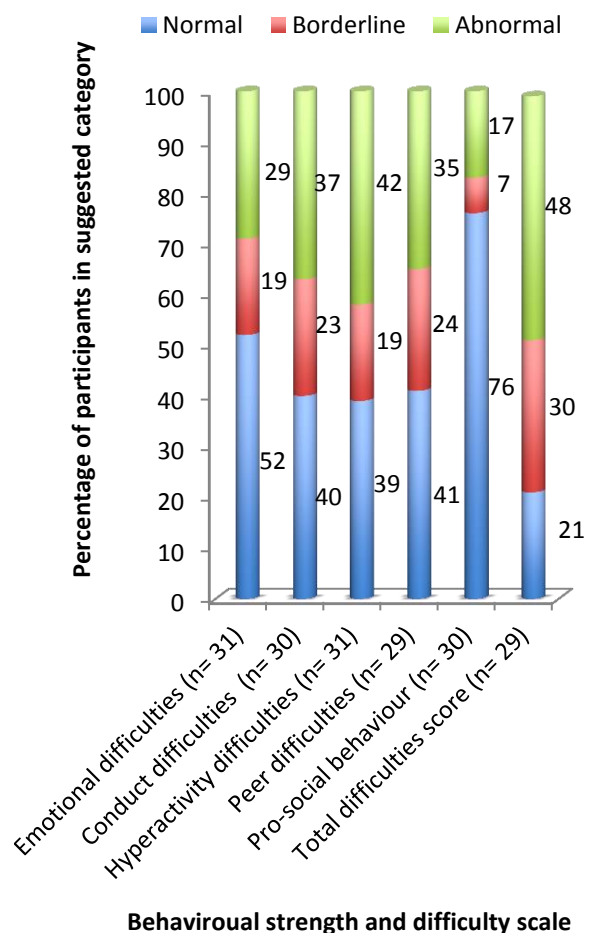
The current evaluation pooled all of the data collected to date, in order to evaluate the TurnAround programme across the past decade.

Analyses focussed primarily on:

- Numerical questionnaire data from the start and end of the programme, and from the start and end of Trail 1, for measures that were most frequently included across programme phases (those were: self-esteem, mental wellbeing, hope, behavioural strengths and difficulties, and nature connection);
- Qualitative insight collected via questionnaires and interviews with participants, mentors and programme leaders.

### Key findings

TurnAround is successful in enrolling adolescents who are most needing and at-risk within the community in relation to mental wellbeing and behavioural difficulties. At the start of the programme, the total behavioural difficulties scores of 74% of the surveyed sample fell within the borderline – abnormal categories (see Figure 3), and 70% of participants reported mental wellbeing scores below the national mean for 16 – 24 year olds, with 33% being categorised as ‘low wellbeing’. These figures might be higher in reality, when considering the enhanced likelihood of socially desirable answering at the start of the programme.



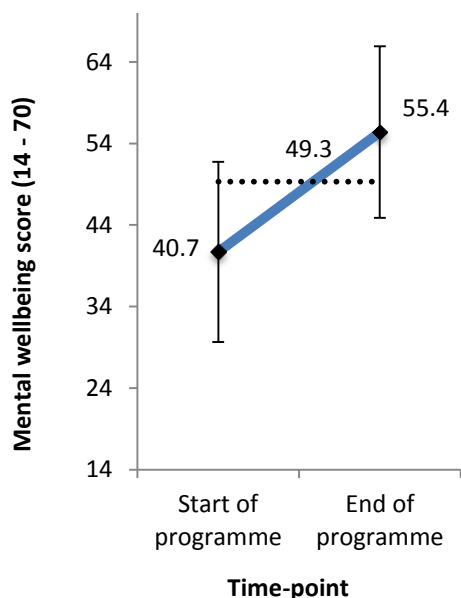
**Figure 3. Percentage of participants reporting categorised values of behavioural strengths and difficulties at the start of the programme**

Analyses of matched numerical data indicated that:

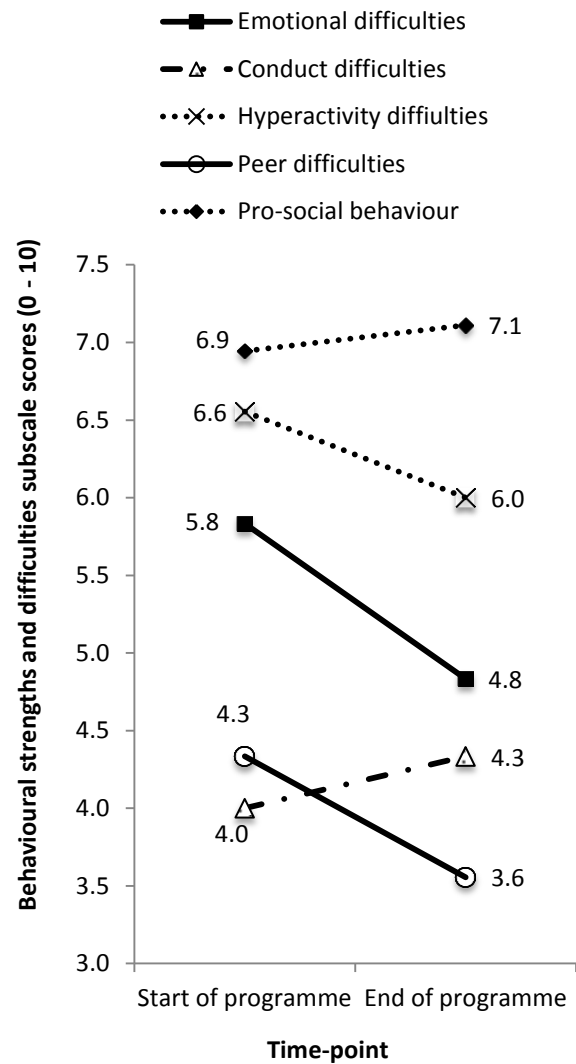
- There was a statistically significant 36% average improvement in mental wellbeing (see Figure 5), and a 45% improvement in participants' reported hope from the start to the end of the programme.
- Half of participants reported increases in self-esteem (53%) and nature connection (52%) scores respectively over the course of the programme.
- Participants reported an average 10% amelioration in behavioural difficulties from the start to end of their programme engagement, with 61% of participants reporting some kind of improvement. Greatest improvement was in the subscales relating to emotional difficulties (17% amelioration of this difficulty type) and peer difficulties (16% amelioration; see Figure 10).

—◆— TurnAround participants

..... UK average wellbeing for 16 - 24 year-olds in 2016



**Figure 5. Change in mean ( $\pm$  SD) self-reported wellbeing scores from the start to the end of the programme (n = 10)**



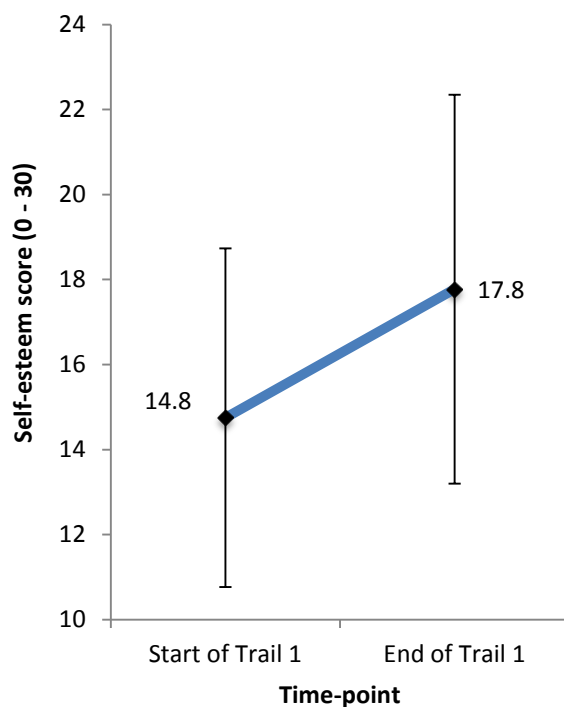
Note: higher cores indicate greater behavioural difficulties, except for the subscale of pro-social behaviour, for which greater scores indicate lesser behavioural difficulty

**Figure 10. Change in mean ( $\pm$  SD) behavioural strengths and difficulties subscale scores from the start to the end of programme (n= 18 – 20)**

Analyses of data collected at the start and end of the first trail of the programme indicated that compared to at the start of the trail, at the end: 73% of participants reported better self-esteem scores (see Figure 11), 54% of participants reported better mental wellbeing, 61% of participants reported improved hope. The trail experience also led to a statistically significant 7% increase in participants feelings of connection to nature, and a 9% amelioration in participants'



behavioural difficulty scores, with this amelioration reported by half of participants.



**Figure 11. Change in mean ( $\pm$  SD) self-reported self-esteem scores from the start to the end Trail 1 (n = 44)**

Qualitative insight from participants and mentors alike indicated that TurnAround fosters positive transformations within participants, perhaps most notably, increases in self-esteem. A key mechanism of this is participants' experiencing social and physical challenges outside of their comfort zones. Both mentors and participants commonly highlighted that engagement on the TurnAround programme had developed participants' ability to cope with difficult social situations, and had made them more socially comfortable and confident. The trail expeditions provide the greatest challenges within the programme, but reflection upon those experiences across all components of the programme (mentoring, social evenings

and workshops) play a crucial role in participants' reported change in mind-set.

The group dynamic can be crucial to positive progression. With the guidance from the programme leader, the cohort becomes self-supportive, serving as a positive experience and demonstration of social support for participants who may not have any previous instances of this. Insight also championed the natural environment as an important ingredient of the programme, particular as a setting for the wilderness trails as it affords opportunities both for challenge and for reflection.

Across the duration of the programme, participants move away from negative self-views, by developing a better understanding of themselves, their thought processes and their behaviours. This functions to increase their sense of autonomy and positive self-empowerment regarding control of their acute behaviours, and more generally their future plans and prospects regarding social relationships and employment or education. Participants become able to successfully apply their learning from the programme to scenarios, situations and motivations in other domains of their lives, and very often to the domains that have been problematic for those specific individuals. This is both through direct application of a changed mind-set, and through use of trail experiences as metaphors for behavioural situations and approaches.

Key ingredients for participants' successful engagement include participants having awareness of themselves and their situation, having a desire to change, having support from their family or peers, and having successful engagement with early parts of the programme. Challenges to the successful implementation of the programme across a cohort include dropouts, cliques within the

cohort, drug and alcohol habits, and severe mental health issues.

A key strength of TurnAround is the combination of its components. That is, the efficacy of the programme overall is strengthened by the dynamic interaction between some of its components. Further strengths of the programme include the fact that it was designed and is continually further informed by theory and evidence, and that the environmental settings of the programme provide further novelty and a removal of difficult everyday 'noise' and better enabling introspective, contemplative and immersed focus.

### **Conclusion**

The aim of TurnAround is to enable vulnerable young people to make positive changes in their lives via engagement in a therapeutic journey that centres on nature-based activities. Considering the findings of the current report together with the findings of previous single-phase reports, it can be concluded that TurnAround is successful in accomplishing its primary aims of engaging with and improving the self-esteem, mental wellbeing and behavioural choices of youth at risk. When contrasted with participants' previous trajectories and likelihoods of at-risk behaviours and/or longer-term implications of low self-esteem and poor mental wellbeing, TurnAround offers great potential for savings across local authority service budgets.

### **Recommendations**

Following from the reported findings that cliques and dropouts can negatively impact on the successful engagement of individual participants and sometimes entire cohorts, this report recommends the continued allocation of time to rigorous screening of participants being enrolled onto the

programme, so to ensure lowest possible dropout rates and the highest possible rate of successful engagement across the duration of the phase.

It is recommended that where possible, any future data collection similar to that featured in this report also includes collection of data from matched 'control group' individuals who do not enrol onto TurnAround. This occurred previously in the evaluation of Essex Phase 3, offering a valuable comparison of the trajectories of TurnAround participants in relation to peers who did not take part in the programme.

Currently, information on past participants' behavioural and employment activities in the years that follow the programme is limited. Improved and increased monitoring would offer valuable insight into the longer-term trajectories of participants, thereby furthering understanding of the potential importance of the TurnAround experience across the lifespan.

In order to compliment the current evidence regarding the efficacy of the TurnAround programme, detailed economic cost-benefit analysis would be of great value. It is expected that TurnAround offers a cost-effective approach that should be of great interest to local services and authorities.

## Introduction

**TurnAround** is a wilderness therapy-based project that seeks to engage and positively change the trajectory and lives of young people, usually aged 15-19 years, who typically face multiple barriers to success, such as poverty, abusive or ineffective families, drug and alcohol abuse, school failure, and youth offending orders. Many participants have experienced significant social, psychological or physical trauma, and some enter the programme at a stage whereby they are self-harming. Including the inaugural TurnAround project in 2007, over the past decade, ten TurnAround cohorts have been engaged. Eight cohorts comprised participants from Essex (one of these cohorts included a sub cohort of participants from Hackney), and two cohorts comprised participants from Berkshire. The Wilderness Foundation has previously commissioned the University of Essex to independently evaluate the efficacy of the TurnAround programme across the individual cohorts. Ten years since the first cohort, this report aims to encapsulate what the TurnAround project is, to assess the extent of its efficacy in achieving its goals, and to provide understanding as to how and why the project facilitates important changes in young peoples' lives.

## Background context

A recent Prince's Trust survey found that youth wellbeing is at its lowest level for at least eight years, with 16% thinking their life will amount to nothing, no matter how hard they try, and nearly one in five young people (18%) think that they do not have the ability to change their circumstances if they want to (1). Additionally, the latest figures show that when asked, 34% of young people in the UK (aged 16-24 years) reported experiencing medium to high levels of anxiety during the previous day (2). Young people are sometimes also subjected to other environmental stressors, such as domestic violence, parental drug and alcohol abuse, physical and sexual abuse, family stress/poorly parented, divorced/single parent families, neglect or school failure (3). Youth at risk can struggle in social situations when interacting with peers, teachers and parents, and can find it difficult to perceive others' viewpoints. They can become socially inept, lack trust and teamwork skills, have poor emotional regulation, experience depression and/or have low self-esteem. These issues can be cyclically compounded. For example, the vulnerability model suggests that low self-esteem contributes to depression, whereas the scar model states that depression erodes self-esteem (4-7), however these models may not be mutually exclusive because both processes can operate simultaneously (8). Additionally, low self-esteem can predict behavioural problems and emotional problems (9), and mental health issues and anti-social behaviour can also be cyclical. For example, young people with higher levels of depression are also more likely to become gang-involved than comparison youth, and membership in gangs exacerbates these underlying problems, creating higher levels of depression and a higher prevalence of suicidal thoughts and actions (10). (11).

Without intervention, many 'youth at risk' can drift into a destructive lifestyle of substance abuse, petty crime, unemployment and anti social behaviour, causing distress and expense to both the state and their community. Along with decisions about gang membership, adolescents commonly

face choices requiring pressurised decisions about violence, alcohol, drugs, sex and pregnancy, that potentially place them further 'at risk'. In adolescence, alcohol use and other risk-taking behaviours such as smoking, substance use and risky sexual behaviour emerge in adolescence and tend to cluster together (12). In England in 2014 around 90,000 pupils aged between 11 and 15 were regular smokers, around 240,000 had drunk alcohol in the past week, 180,000 had taken drugs in the last month, and 310,000 had taken drugs in the last year (13).

Youth crime and anti-social behaviour is a continuing problem in the UK. Compared with the year ending March 2006, there are now 83% fewer first time youth entrants into the justice system, although this still totalled 18,300 first time entrants in the year to March 2016. Again compared with the year ending March 2006, 81% fewer young people received a youth caution or court conviction, although the 12-month reoffending rate for young people is now 4.3% higher than in the year ending March 2006 (14). The cost of youth crime was most recently estimated to be approximately £4 billion per year, with 70% of this figure being spent on policing, 17% on punishment and 13% on trials (15, 16). For young people who are imprisoned for the crimes they commit, the annual cost of a place in a secure children's home has previously been calculated to be 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 (17). With economic inflation, it seems likely that these costs may now be significantly greater.

A range of issues experienced by young people, such as those mentioned here, often contribute to their disengagement from education. Overall school absence rates, now at 4.6% have followed a generally downward trend since TurnAround started in 2007, when the overall absence rate was 6.5% (18). A high number of young people are excluded from school each year, and additionally to the importance of education engagement, young people who are excluded from school are more likely to be involved in criminal activity or anti-social behaviour (19). With secondary school permanent exclusions rising steadily in rising steadily since 2012 (currently at 0.17% of enrolled pupils), the number of permanent exclusions across all state-funded primary, secondary and special schools in 2015/16 was 6,685 (approximately 35 permanent exclusions per day), and for fixed-period exclusions, this figure was 339,360 (approximately 1,790 fixed period exclusions per day) (20).

The wellbeing of youth at risk is an important societal issue. As well as importance at the individual level, the realm of adolescent mental health is more crudely also important at a national level, as these conditions already contribute significantly to the estimated £1.05 billion per year cost of mental health to the UK economy – approximately the entire cost of the NHS (21), and the prevalence of mental health disorders both in adolescents and the adult population is estimated to rise across the 2007 – 2026 period (22).

The inaugural 2007 TurnAround project came in a year that saw a peak in first time entrants into the youth justice system (ages 10 – 17 years). The evaluation report for the inaugural TurnAround cohort illustrated the case for new interventions in relation to youth crime, citing that more than 8 out of 10 victims of crime agreed that they would like more constructive activities to be introduced for young people to prevent them getting into the cyclical criminal process. Indeed, additionally to the intrinsic values of individual-level amelioration of poor self-esteem, wellbeing or life prospects, there

are economic savings to be made via amelioration of self-esteem, wellbeing and behavioural issues in young people.

## **Aims of the current report**

This report draws both on new data and upon data collected across the previous single-phase evaluative research reports by University of Essex, so to encapsulate what the TurnAround project is, to assess the extent of its efficacy in achieving its goals, and to provide understanding as to how and why the project facilitates important changes in young peoples' lives. More specifically, it aims:

- To outline the TurnAround programme and its approach
- To pool and evaluate existing data collected across previous phases of TurnAround and new data collected during TurnAround Essex Phases 7 and 8, and TurnAround Berkshire Phases 1 and 2.
- To report on the numerically measured outcomes for TurnAround participants by analysing changes reported:
  - from the start to the end of the programme
  - from the start to the end of the first wilderness trail of the programme
  - across all four measured time-points
- To report the qualitatively described changes and processes factors that contribute to those (i.e. how the project leads to changes / outcomes)
- To conclude upon the efficacy of the TurnAround programme, and to provide recommendations for future directions.

## The TurnAround programme

The TurnAround programme aims to intervene early, to prevent further deterioration of low self-esteem and mental wellbeing, and to prevent further criminal convictions, school exclusion and escalation of negative behaviour. It uses wilderness therapy, challenging outdoor experiences, one-on-one life coaching, and educational activities, to enable vulnerable young people to overcome their challenges and take control of their lives.

The project is designed to afford the time required for the development of trust and relationships. The Wilderness Foundation works on a case-by-case basis, via one to one interactions with attendees, in groups and with family members. The TurnAround project staff also work in close communication with key workers and other relevant agencies in relation to each participant. The TurnAround project works to help attendees to learn the value of their own choices, and supports them in both developing a future that they hope to have and understanding their responsibility for their actions.

Here, we outline:

- i) wilderness therapy
- ii) the TurnAround approach
- iii) the programme structure of TurnAround
- iv) the participant and referral and selection process
- v) the mentor selection process
- vi) overview of previous evaluation findings

### (i) Wilderness therapy

The term 'wilderness therapy' is often referenced in relation to a number of different rehabilitative, or therapeutic outdoor approaches such as adventure therapy, challenge courses, wilderness experience programmes (23). Wilderness therapy uses the 'wilderness as co-therapist' in addition to any professional therapy that might take place whilst out in the wilderness. Indeed, wilderness therapy can be considered to be *"the use of traditional therapy techniques, especially for group therapy, in an out-of-doors setting, utilising outdoor adventure pursuits and other activities to enhance personal growth"* (24).

Wilderness therapy programmes aim to promote feelings of empowerment, responsibility, confidence, and group cohesion within participants, and are centred around a trip or expedition to a wilderness environment and usually include four components: pre-trip planning, the trip itself, post-trip debriefing, and aftercare (24, 25). Wilderness therapy programmes use a dual-approach comprising (i) behaviour change through experiential learning based on physically challenging experiences and (ii) group orientation (25, 26). As forwarded by Kimball and Bacon (27), in many instances, the philosophical foundations of wilderness therapy programmes are based on Kurt Hahn's Outward Bound model, whereby 'learning by doing' was oriented towards the development of individuals' character and maturity. In recent years, the efficacy of wilderness therapy approach

for adolescent cohorts has been evidenced. As summarised by Wood et al. (28), wilderness therapy can facilitate improvements in adolescents' psychological functioning and reduce distress related to interpersonal and mental health challenges (29-31).

## **(ii) The TurnAround approach**

The TurnAround programme follows the general principles of wilderness therapy described above, and is also informed by additional relevant theory. As Davis-Berman & Berman outline, the two primary components of wilderness therapy are the group setting and the uniqueness of natural environments (32). TurnAround aims to assist small groups of vulnerable and challenging youth to make positive life choices and overcome barriers to social inclusion and financial self-sufficiency. The programme targets youth aged 15-19 years, who often are considered to be 'at risk' of entering into a life of crime, drug and alcohol abuse and anti-social behaviour.

Group settings serve as a change mechanism through their provision of peer understanding, support, comparison and evaluation (32). TurnAround harnesses Rogers' (33) person-centred approach, using reflective language, rapport building, empathetic responses, and enabling the youth to find their own solutions, as far as possible and is safe in their adventure. This offers satisfaction and ownership of their own outcomes, which is very empowering, builds personal responsibility, and reduces patronage from the adult team to the youth. TurnAround also draws upon neuro-linguistic programming and cognitive behaviour models of thoughts, feeling and actions, in order to help the group and individuals to understand their own behaviour processes, triggers and responses. The programme uses metaphors, to relate wilderness trail experience to other aspects of participants' lives, depersonalise discussion and enable emotional thoughts and conversations. Transactional Analysis, mindfulness, and Gestalt Therapy have also been used on the TurnAround programme, although these approaches been more dependent on the particular training of resident therapists, than typical of the programme's format.

The uniqueness of natural, wilderness environments is also key as these offer a broad range of behavioural affordances for experiential learning (34). The understanding that *nature led consequence* lies at the heart of the work and practice of TurnAround; that is, the dynamic natural environment of the trail experiences often dictates scenarios, to which the trail group must adapt, and can later reflect on the choices and actions taken. Linking the environmental and group aspects of the programme, the embedded practice of Leave no Trace ethics underpins the group's commitment to the protection and value of the natural world, but also breeds in the group a sense of respect and responsibility to the outdoors, all of which are transferrable to relationships with humans.

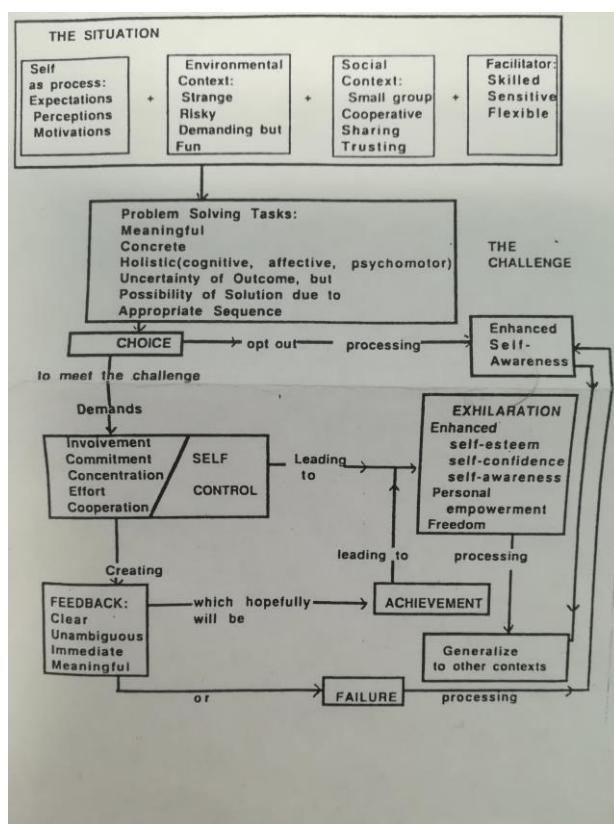
In line with theories such as Attention Restoration Theory (35, 36) and Psycho-evolutionary Theory (37), natural environments also have also been evidenced to have psychologically and physiologically restorative qualities. A body of literature amassed over the past twenty years has demonstrated that spending time in nature, such as wilderness environments can reduce biological markers of stress (38), improve self-reported mood (39, 40), promote social interaction (41), improve ability to concentrate (42, 43) and promote neurological patterns of meditation and low-stress (44). That is,

not only are nature environments effective mediums for the delivery of counselling techniques, nature environments are also therapeutic, or restorative, in themselves.

The TurnAround project is based upon the philosophy of 'The Circle of Courage' (45). This Native American Indian rite of passage is modeled on four key disciplines which represent essential growth needs: i) a sense of belonging, ii) skills and mastery, iii) independence and iv) generosity. Understanding of these themes is considered necessary to allow adolescent youth to make the transition to healthy adulthood. The interpretation of the Circle of Courage for the TurnAround project is as follows:

- **Mastery:** New skills (e.g. communication, resilience building, activities etc.)
- **Belonging:** Building relationships with family members, social peer group and the environment
- **Independence:** What young people do when they leave the TurnAround project
- **Generosity:** How young people support each other and act for others

Within the **Programme Structure** section, Tables 2-7 illustrates how this philosophy is built into the different activities of the programme. Alongside this philosophy, TurnAround embeds practice in and reference to four key values as outlined by familylab (46); those are, the values of equal dignity, authenticity, integrity and personal responsibility. TurnAround is further informed by a range of research and literature, such as the personal growth through adventure model as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. Personal Growth Through Adventure: A Model for the Adventure Experience**

(source: Hopkins D, Putnam R. Personal growth through adventure. Routledge; 2013.)



### **(iii) Participant referral and selection process**

TurnAround engages young people typically aged 15-21, all from eastern England and London, who are mostly described as having complex needs, or are at risk, have had a series of life experiences at a young age that ring out with conflict, poverty of hope and experience, drugs and alcohol abuse, neglect, rejection, lack of safety and love, minimal boundaries, violence and poor aspiration. Referrals to TurnAround have come from Leaving and After Care Teams, Youth Offending Teams, schools, social workers and private referrals.

Participants are recruited through contact with leaving care teams, schools, parents and youth offending teams. Wilderness Foundation staff meet with each of these organisations, explain the purpose and idea of the project and invite them to put forward any potential candidates whom they believe might be suitable for participation in the programme. In particular referring agencies are encouraged to put forward candidates who are likely to enter a life of crime or anti-social behaviour, are involved in alcohol or drug abuse, are in or leaving care and experiencing low self-esteem.

On receipt of referrals, Wilderness Foundation staff interview each candidate, in the presence of a parent, key worker or school pastoral carer. The programme is fully explained to each possible participant and an opportunity provided for candidates to ask questions about the programme. Participants are asked why they want to be involved in the TurnAround programme and are only considered if they have a genuine desire to make changes to their previously destructive lifestyles. Candidates are asked to make assurances about their commitment to the project if they are selected to take part, particularly due to the high number of candidates applying for the programme and the high costs associated with each participant who takes part (£7,000). Wilderness Foundation staff assess each application to ensure that individual needs can be met by the programme and also undertake and put risk assessments in place. Following interviews, young people are selected to take part in the programme. All selected participants are asked to sign a contract of entry to confirm their intent to participate fully in the programme and are informed that they will be removed from the project if they fail to uphold to the agreement. Participants also complete a health declaration form, consent forms and use of image and media permissions forms.

In the ten phases that comprise the focus of this evaluative report, from 2007 – 2017, TurnAround enrolled a total of 99 participants. Table 1 outlines more information about each cohort.

**Table 1. Details of each TurnAround phase / cohort**

| <b>Phase / cohort</b> | <b>Phase start date</b> | <b>Average age (years)</b> | <b>Number at start</b>     | <b>Example referrals x 2</b>                                                                         | <b>Drop outs</b> |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Essex - 1             | November 2007           | 15.7                       | 7<br>(3 males, 4 females)  | A - Anger issues and lack of focus<br>B - Mother left family home and multiple theft of cars         | 1                |
| Essex - 2             | March 2009              | 15.0                       | 9<br>(3 males, 6 females)  | A - Removed from family home<br>B - Poor school attendance and criminal activity                     | 1                |
| Essex - 3             | April 2011              | 17.7                       | 8<br>(3 males, 3 females)  | A - Low self esteem and confidence<br>B - Severe anger issues and aggressive behaviour               | 2                |
| Essex - 4             | April 2012              | 17.3                       | 8<br>(4 males, 4 females)  | A - Drug problems and erratic behaviour<br>B - Victim of domestic abuse and alcohol problems         | 0                |
| Hackney - 4           | April 2012              | 16.3                       | 6<br>(4 males, 2 females)  | A - In foster care, shy with anger issues<br>B - Anger problems with history of criminal convictions | 2                |
| Essex - 5             | October 2013            | 17.5                       | 9<br>(4 males, 3 females)  | A - Domestic violence and 20% school attendance<br>B – Tourette syndrome and bullied at school       | 2                |
| Essex - 6             | April 2015              | 17.0                       | 10<br>(5 males, 4 females) | A - Anger and domestic violence<br>B - Leaving care, anger management issues and depression          | 1                |
| Berkshire - 1         | April 2016              | 17.8                       | 5<br>(3 males, 2 females)  | A. Anger and issues with grief and leaving care<br>B. Self-esteem and depression – leaving care      | 0                |
| Essex - 7             | July 2016               | 17.0                       | 10<br>(7 males, 3 females) | A - Anxiety which can present in controlling behaviour<br>B - Self harm                              | 2                |
| Berkshire - 2         | January 2017            | 20.0                       | 7<br>(3 males, 4 females)  | A – Bi-polar Disorder, anger, family breakdown<br>B- Schizophrenia, supported housing, drugs         | 2                |
| Essex - 8             | February 2017           | 15.5                       | 11<br>(6 males, 5 females) | A - Rebuilding life following domestic violence<br>B - Recovering heroin addict                      | 2                |

#### **(iv) Mentor selection process**

Berman-Davis and Davis paper (32) makes clear that the group leaders of wilderness therapy, and their level of training / expertise, have always been considered as key to the successes of programmes.

The mentor role is a critical part of the TurnAround programme, providing positive and reliable role models for the young people and allowing them to work through their issues between the programme workshops. The mentors are volunteers from the local community who respond to adverts placed in local community volunteer centres, and also Wilderness Foundation staff. All potential mentors are required to provide two references and attend an interview with Wilderness Foundation staff.

Via researcher observation, the Phase 1 report identified the following characteristics of mentors (at that time referred to as 'coaches') that were important to the success of the programme:

- Empathetic to young person's situation
- Good listeners
- Genuine and caring
- Provide encouragement
- Open and honest
- Show compassion
- Non-judgemental and non-critical
- Remain positive and believe there are always solutions to issues
- Patient, not enforcing change in the young people
- Keen to establish trust
- Committed to the project and supporting the young people

Following the selection of mentors, each mentor undergoes enhanced DBS checks. Mentors also receive full child protection training and are required to sign the Wilderness Foundation Child Protection policy and procedures. Training for the mentors is also carried out throughout the programme and regular mentor meetings are held between the mentors and Wilderness Foundation staff. Prior to the start of mentoring, the mentors are provided with information about their role, including the job purpose, key responsibilities and required personal characteristics. There is a structured supervision process for mentors who are required to report in writing how their sessions go and the outcomes and any issues that were picked up on. CPD meetings for mentors are also held quarterly.

The Mentor role is outlined within the **Programme structure** section that follows.

## **(v) Programme structure**

The TurnAround programme is delivered across six months of engagement, via a model comprising three stages: Stage 1 – Getting to know; Stage 2 – Personal and social development; Stage 3 – Transition. Many phases have also included an additional six-months of mentoring following completion of the main programme. Although this additional mentoring period is no longer an official segment of the programme, it is standard practice for Wilderness Foundation staff, most often the specific mentor, to remain available and in regular contact with the young people for a number of years following their programme participation.

On entering into the TurnAround project participants are asked to sign a contract of entry, outlining the rules of participation (Box 1), which participants are free to add to or amend. Participants are encouraged to talk to each other, mentors and Wilderness Foundation staff in order to identify possible solutions to conflicting opinions that are likely to occur throughout the project, as opposed to adults dictating the rules and solutions. This process is important for helping the participants to learn how to effectively resolve conflict and develop negotiation and resilience skills. This document is also sent to parents and carers of enrolling participants where applicable, so to enhance their awareness of the set boundaries and behavioural expectations.

### **Box 1. TurnAround Rules of Participation**

|                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Stay on the project until the end                                                                 |
| Maintain regular contact with your mentor                                                         |
| Be punctual for all events and activities                                                         |
| Dress in a manner that is suitable for the activity                                               |
| Be respectful and courteous to others                                                             |
| Respect the rules of the site                                                                     |
| Keep other people's personal information confidential                                             |
| Inform your mentor or staff if you are unable to attend a particular activity                     |
| No alcohol or illegal substances                                                                  |
| No smoking during activities unless given permission to do so                                     |
| Do not exchange contact details other than with other young people on the project and your mentor |
| Do not initiate or respond to inappropriate physical contact                                      |
| Do not use inappropriate language, threats or violence to other people involved in the project    |
| Do not behave recklessly or endanger others whilst on the project                                 |
| No bullying                                                                                       |

TurnAround project comprises:

- Two, week long wilderness therapy trail journeys
- Weekly one to one mentoring from volunteer mentors.
- Regular follow up and personal visits from Wilderness Foundation staff team for additional support and/or counselling.
- Monthly workshops aimed at personal and employment-related development, social behaviour change and resilience building
- Monthly social events to build belonging and social skills which also included social and wellbeing education in the form of plays, films, speakers with particular life stories or issues.
- Nature-based activities such as bush craft, canoeing, kayaking, paddle boarding, horse-riding, orienteering and rock climbing.
- Family engagement / therapy as required
- Volunteering on site or for other external agencies.
- Graduation and other ceremonies to acknowledge success with a range of invited civic guests, including the High Sherriff, senior police, heads of the local councils, funders, Mayors and Mayoresses for example.
- Post-programme support, support in accessing education, training, work experience, apprenticeships or employment.
- In the final weeks of the project, participants are eligible to apply for the Diana Kemp Welch Scholarship Fund (through the Dulverton Trust) which offers all participants £200 to fund training, education or items that would benefit their wellbeing. Two graduates of the project are then able to bid for a scholarship of £2000 to help with further education or training costs. This is formal and requires an application, selection and presentation to a panel of judges.

We now outline the main components of TurnAround, those are the wilderness trails, workshops, social evenings and mentoring.

### **Wilderness trails**

Two wilderness trails, each one-week in duration comprise a group expedition within a wilderness environment, which involve camping and outdoor activities such as canoeing, kayaking and mountain trekking. One trail occurs in Scotland, the other in the Snowdonia region of Wales. The wilderness trail parties can include the TurnAround cohort, expedition leaders and mentors (depending on availability). These trails, which encompass a number of inevitable tasks (e.g. putting up tents, cooking meals, making camp fires), create numerous physical, mental and social challenges, many of which can only be successfully overcome with teamwork. The isolation of the remote wilderness environments further serve as a detox from mobile phone, alcohol or drug usage. A facilitated group process also forms the frame for each day, morning and evening where the group discuss their achievements and challenges, support each other or are able to express any difficulties or joys together. During the trail, time is given to ensure that discussion as a group, and essential one to one sessions, are embedded in response to any challenges that come up.

Many youth at risk have a history of resistance to authority and frequently try to manipulate their surrounding environments. However, nature cannot be manipulated, controlled or fought and therefore a wilderness trail is a great way of teaching young people different coping strategies as they learn that reacting angrily and fighting situations is not the best resolution. Societal roles and negative responses governing former behaviour are no longer applicable, thereby offering opportunities for behavioural changes.

The aim of the outdoor activities and wilderness experiences are to: break down the physical and emotional barriers that may inhibit social competence; improve self-esteem, self-confidence, emotional regulation, communication and problem solving abilities; instil participants with a sense of accountability to themselves and others; build trust and team-working skills; build resilience, and educate participants in making positive life choices. Indeed, the activities are all aimed at personal development, learning and skills development. The wilderness trail is not designed to be prescriptive with times and activities, but respond to the process of the group, individual and changes in the environment as the trail progresses. The experience can include group therapy sessions, and issues are addressed and discussed as they emerge. The wilderness trail is central to the programme, setting the foundation for future work and triggering an important internal self-discovery process. It is necessary to maximise the experience for all concerned, as it is during the trail that key relationships and communication develop between young people, staff and guides. Shared experience and challenges on the trail provide common examples, 'the remember when you managed...' conversations to refer back to when similar difficulties arise at home.

The following excerpt from the University of Essex TurnAround Phase 2 evaluation report gives more detailed insight into the wilderness trail experience in Scotland (4-13<sup>th</sup> May 2009):

*Both the young people and mentors participated in a ten day wilderness trail in Perthshire, Scotland. The trail took place between 4-13<sup>th</sup> May 2009 and participants were based at the Atholl Estate, where a sense of solitude and natural exposure was experienced. The area was remote and uninhabited providing a contrast from their everyday urban environments. The young people were accompanied by two trained guides, two wilderness psychologists, one researcher and seven volunteer mentors. The group defined their own community structure and the experience was a very fluid process. The intention was not to fill the experience with structured activities, but to achieve a balance of:*

- *Symbolic connection activities to raise awareness of nature and our relationship with the environment;*
- *Outdoor group tasks requiring human connection, communication, expression of needs and responses to others;*
  - *Reflective and solo activities to encourage self awareness and a time for solitude;*
    - *Adventure activities promoting self esteem, resilience and teamwork;*
    - *Group and individual processing of issues and concerns;*
    - *Opportunities for environmental learning and awareness;*
    - *Setting of goals and aspirations upon return to normal life.*

*The therapeutic facilitators approach was not to be prescriptive with times and activities, but respond to the process of the group, the individuals, and the vagaries of the natural environment as*

*the experiences unfolded. Every morning and evening they met with the group for a check in to process the experience. Participants were involved in a number of activities designed to advance the personal development process. Participants learnt how to pack a backpack, put up a tent and cook with a Trangia. Many of the day-to-day activities required teamwork to accomplish the goals, such as cooking dinner or putting up tents. Participants were exposed to simple living and lived in tune with all elements of nature, such as the weather, the terrain and the lack of electrical distractions, home comforts and mobile phones. The experience did not include scheduled 'group therapy' sessions, but issues were addressed informally through group discussions when the normal intensity of emotions occurred.*

*The trail was the central part of the programme setting the foundation for future work and triggering an important internal self-discovery process. Therefore, it was necessary to maximise the experience for all concerned. Whilst it was an intense experience, it was during the trail that key relationships and channels of communication developed between young people, mentors, therapists and guides. Shared experiences and challenges whilst on trail, provided common examples to refer back to when similar difficulties arise at home. Reflecting on similar challenges encountered in the wilderness and how they were overcome is a useful tool for future mentoring sessions. These shared experiences also help to reaffirm relationships. It also allowed the adult team to observe negative actions and emotions expressed by the young people without themselves becoming the target or the enforcer.*

## **Workshops**

The workshops held throughout the TurnAround programme are designed to enable participants to develop and gain new skills, promote environmental knowledge, increase self-awareness, social skills, self-confidence and self-esteem as well as provide opportunities for learning and personal development. The workshops are also designed for the young people's enjoyment and to bring the cohort together and encourage team working. The workshops help to develop participants' ideas about potential future employment possibilities. Each TurnAround workshop is based on one or more of the four disciplines of the Circle of Courage, as described previously. For example, within the TurnAround Essex cohort 6, an life mapping and bush craft workshop was based on the disciplines of mastery and independence, with intended outcomes including self-reflection and identifying needs, learning from the past and planning for the future, and communication and sources of support. The workshops also provide participants with key outdoor skills such as learning to paddle canoes, climb, problem solve, horse ride (as an example).

## **Social evenings**

Social evenings occur throughout the programme, both at the Wilderness Foundation's Chatham Green base, and out at other venues. Social evening activities range from cooking and talking about trust, to bowling and laser tag. Lately the programme has been including guest speakers to share their life story to inspire others, give information and training, or films and plays, chosen to be a fun, but developmental focus.

Like the workshop days, social evenings are designed to reach intended outcomes that are in line with the circle of courage. For example, the intended outcomes of the bowling and laser tag social

evening were to build group identity, trust and teamwork skills as well as offering a chance for fun and trying something new. These outcomes were in line with the circle of courage aspect of belonging.

## **Mentoring**

Young people and mentors are encouraged to meet on a weekly basis, for approximately one hour, at a mutually agreed time and public place. The purpose of mentoring is to help the mentee to find their own true self; to experience their own attempts, failures and successes, and by so doing, to develop their own natural strengths and potential. The mentors are informed that their job purpose is to: i) plan and participate in positive activities with vulnerable young people from a range of backgrounds including being at risk of offending, or who have entered the criminal justice system, leaving care or experiencing other issues, including school exclusion; ii) to act as an exemplary role model for children and young people to look up to.

As part of the University of Essex's evaluation of Essex Phase 8 of the TurnAround programme, mentors were asked to briefly outline the Mentor role. Mentors reported that mentoring component of the programme "provides a continuity and a consistency of engagement through the course of the programme", serving as "a constant drip of encouragement, affirmation and interesting being shown in them". As further highlighted by mentors themselves, the mentoring component functions to ensure that there is 'less opportunity for the young person to slip wildly backwards without it being picked up and without them being supported'. Indeed, one mentor described that mentoring offers the participant 'stability', saying "whatever a young person tells you, you don't judge them, you don't show them anything other than a positive way forward".

The programme introduces the mentor to mentee whilst on a social programme or facilitated by staff so that the relationship has some level of safety for the young person. Additionally mentors are encouraged to join trails where possible and to attend workshops and social events to build on the relationships between the young people and the adults who are supporting them.

To further illustrate the project structure and the functions of component activities, Tables 2-7 outline the activities that comprised TurnAround 6, along with the theoretical focus and intended outcomes of each activity. Table 8 gives an overview of the Trail component for each phase of TurnAround.



**Table 2:** Activities of TurnAround Phase 6 (April – May 2015)

| Date                                           | Activity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Circle of courage focus |   |   |   | Intended Outcome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|---|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | B                       | M | I | G |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| 18-19 <sup>th</sup><br>April 2015              | Camp out <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rules and boundaries of group</li> <li>Getting to know you</li> <li>Why we are here</li> <li>How we are now and what we want</li> <li>Working as a team</li> <li>Outcome stars and University of Essex feedback</li> </ul> | ✓                       | ✓ |   | ✓ | To develop connections with staff and as a group. To set boundaries as a group and learn about how we operate at the Wilderness Foundation. To learn skills such as building fires, cooking and looking after one another. Develop camping and communication skills and begin journey to self awareness.                         |
| 30 <sup>th</sup><br>April 2015                 | Social evening – pizza hut <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shields of courage</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                            | ✓                       |   |   | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group identity</li> <li>Self-awareness</li> <li>Social/personal skills</li> <li>Wellbeing</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 12 <sup>th</sup><br>May 2015                   | Social evening – canoe trail preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Preparing for the trip</li> <li>Questions and answers</li> <li>Boundaries for the trip</li> </ul>                                                                                          | ✓                       | ✓ | ✓ |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group identity</li> <li>Accountability</li> <li>Building trust and team working skills</li> <li>Setting boundaries</li> <li>Facing fears</li> <li>Thinking through personal barriers</li> </ul>                                                                                           |
| 25 <sup>th</sup> -31 <sup>st</sup><br>May 2015 | Trail 1 – Scotland canoe journey and wild camping <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outcome stars and University of Essex feedback</li> <li>Team work</li> <li>Self-care</li> <li>Belonging</li> <li>Resilience</li> </ul>                                            | ✓                       | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Belonging</li> <li>Group identity</li> <li>Setting boundaries</li> <li>Being accountable</li> <li>Building trust and team working skills</li> <li>Positive life choices</li> <li>Social and personal skills</li> <li>Outdoor skills</li> <li>Resilience to cope with adversity</li> </ul> |

B = Belonging; M = Mastery; I = Independence; G = Generosity

**Table 3:** Activities of TurnAround Phase 6 (June – July 2015)

| Date                       | Activity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Circle of courage focus |   |   |   | Intended Outcome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|---|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | B                       | M | I | G |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> June 2015  | Social evening – trail debrief <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outcome star</li> <li>• Cook out on site</li> </ul>                                                                                                                   | ✓                       | ✓ |   | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflective work</li> <li>• Self-esteem monitoring</li> <li>• Social and personal skills</li> <li>• communication</li> </ul>                                                                                                                       |
| 18 June 2015               | Trail presentation evening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback to families, mentors and referrers</li> <li>• Individual feedback – strengths and areas to work on</li> <li>• Chance for each young person to present</li> </ul> | ✓                       | ✓ |   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belonging</li> <li>• Group identity</li> <li>• Acknowledging achievement and positive life choices</li> <li>• Communication and social skills</li> </ul>                                                                                          |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2015  | Social evening – bowling and quasar (lazer guns) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team work</li> <li>• Mentors</li> </ul>                                                                                                             | ✓                       |   |   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group identity</li> <li>• Building trust and team work skills</li> <li>• Fun and trying something new</li> <li>• Time with mentors as a group</li> </ul>                                                                                          |
| 18 <sup>th</sup> July 2015 | Workshop day – life mapping and bush craft <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life map for each young person representing high and low points through their life</li> <li>• Bushcraft workshop</li> </ul>                               |                         | ✓ | ✓ |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-reflection and identifying needs</li> <li>• Belonging</li> <li>• Being accountable</li> <li>• Positive life choices</li> <li>• Communication and sources of support</li> <li>• Learning from the past and planning for the future</li> </ul> |
| 27 <sup>th</sup> July 2015 | Social evening – cinema <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Film “SouthPaw” a boxing film about a fighter who lost everything and had to work to get it all back and be a good parent.</li> </ul>                                        | ✓                       |   |   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group identity</li> <li>• Positive life choices</li> <li>• Fun</li> <li>• Social skills</li> <li>• Reflection on themes</li> </ul>                                                                                                                |

B = Belonging; M = Mastery; I = Independence; G = Generosity

**Table 4:** Activities of TurnAround Phase 6 (August – September 2015)

| Date                            | Activity                                                                                                            | Circle of courage focus |   |   |   | Intended Outcome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|---|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                 |                                                                                                                     | B                       | M | I | G |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 8 <sup>th</sup> August 2015     | Workshop day – bike ride <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ride around Alton Water and picnic lunch</li> </ul> | ✓                       | ✓ |   | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-reflection</li> <li>Identifying needs</li> <li>Belonging</li> <li>Being accountable</li> <li>Positive life choices</li> <li>Sources of support</li> <li>Communication</li> <li>Having a positive mindset</li> <li>Planning for the future</li> <li>Physical exercise</li> </ul> |
| 26 <sup>th</sup> August 2015    | Social evening – jump street                                                                                        | ✓                       | ✓ |   | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Group identity</li> <li>Physical exercise</li> <li>Trying something new</li> <li>Looking after each other</li> <li>Following rules</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                        |
| 12 <sup>th</sup> September 2015 | Workshop day – Danbury outdoors obstacle course and high ropes course                                               | ✓                       | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting each other</li> <li>Facing and overcoming fears</li> <li>Taking part in a way you are comfortable</li> <li>Communication</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                       |
| 22 <sup>nd</sup> September 2015 | Social evening – at Chatham Green<br>Cooking and talking about trust                                                | ✓                       | ✓ |   | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflecting on trust and love</li> <li>Awareness of self</li> <li>Awareness of boundaries</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                  |

B = Belonging; M = Mastery; I = Independence; G = Generosity

**Table 5:** Activities of TurnAround Phase 6 (October– December 2015)

| Date                                                             | Activity                                                                                                                                               | Circle of courage focus |   |   |   | Intended Outcome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|---|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                        | B                       | M | I | G |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> October 2015                                    | Workshop day – am I employable?                                                                                                                        | ✓                       | ✓ |   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning new skills</li> <li>• Skills assessment</li> <li>• Confidence building</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Monday 2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2015                             | Social evening – cinema trip<br>Watched the new James Bond film ‘Spectre’. Was a good opportunity to talk about relationships and priorities.          | ✓                       |   |   | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chance to socialise</li> <li>• Discussion around relevant topics</li> <li>• Opportunity to do something different</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Saturday 21st November 2015                                      | Workshop – anger management                                                                                                                            |                         | ✓ |   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning to monitor and regulate emotions</li> <li>• Ways to express yourself in a healthy manner</li> <li>• Different forms of coping</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Saturday 28 <sup>th</sup> /Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> November 2015 | Weekend away to Suffolk. Conservation and volunteer work focus.<br>Day one – conservation task on site<br>Day two – litter pick as RSPB nature reserve | ✓                       | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting new people, chance to bond as a group</li> <li>• Develop skills such as coppicing and bushcraft</li> <li>• Giving back and how this feels</li> <li>• Working with positive feedback</li> <li>• Opportunity to reflect on home life</li> <li>• Opportunity to detox from alcohol and drugs (one young person specifically)</li> </ul> |
| Saturday 12th December 2015                                      | Workshop – Christmas meal and walk                                                                                                                     | ✓                       |   |   | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time to reflect as a group about the year to date</li> <li>• Ideas around what you can give over the holiday period for example your time or help</li> <li>• Workshop on moving forwards and identifying own needs</li> </ul>                                                                                                                |

B = Belonging; M = Mastery; I = Independence; G = Generosity

**Table 6:** Activities of TurnAround Phase 6 (January – February 2016)

| Date                                                       | Activity                                                         | Circle of courage focus |   |   |   | Intended Outcome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|---|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                            |                                                                  | B                       | M | I | G |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Saturday 9 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2016                          | Workshop – cycle ride<br>Focus on what do I want to be different | ✓                       | ✓ |   | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keeping each other safe</li> <li>• Focus on one goal and how to get there</li> <li>• Learning new skills such as map reading</li> <li>• Supporting each other</li> <li>• Benefits of physical exercise</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                  |
| Thursday 4 <sup>th</sup> February 2016                     | Social evening – preparation for trail                           | ✓                       | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group identity</li> <li>• Accountability</li> <li>• Building trust and team working skills</li> <li>• Setting boundaries</li> <li>• Facing fears</li> <li>• Thinking through personal barriers</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                          |
| Monday 15 <sup>th</sup> – Friday 19 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2016 | Trail 2<br>North Wales<br>Mountain walking                       |                         |   |   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Belonging</li> <li>• Group identity</li> <li>• Setting boundaries</li> <li>• Being accountable</li> <li>• Building trust and team working skills</li> <li>• Positive life choices</li> <li>• Social and personal skills</li> <li>• Outdoor skills</li> <li>• Resilience to cope with adversity</li> <li>• Skills for independent living</li> </ul> |
| Thursday 25 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2016                         | Social evening – cinema and debrief from trail                   | ✓                       |   |   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chance to meet socially and talk about the trip</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

B = Belonging; M = Mastery; I = Independence; G = Generosity

**Table 7:** Activities of TurnAround Phase 6 (March – April 2016)

| Date                            |       | Activity                                                                                                                                                                 | Circle of courage focus |   |   |   | Intended Outcome                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------------|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|---|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                 |       |                                                                                                                                                                          | B                       | M | I | G |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Saturday 12 <sup>th</sup> 2016  | March | Workshop – moving on and reviewing the year                                                                                                                              | ✓                       | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Looking back over the year and supporting each other to look forwards</li> <li>Discussion around preparing for graduation</li> <li>Evaluation of activities etc...</li> <li>Volunteering on site</li> <li>Cook out and practising skills learnt over the year</li> <li>Opportunity to submit Dulverton bids</li> </ul> |
| Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> 2016    | March | Graduation                                                                                                                                                               | ✓                       | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Celebration of success of completion of the project and all the achievements with family, friends, staff and mentors.</li> <li>Reflection</li> <li>Opportunity for each individual to speak</li> <li>Certificates awarded</li> </ul>                                                                                   |
| Wednesday 13 <sup>th</sup> 2016 | April | Dulverton Trust / Lady Diana Kemp Welch Scholarship Awards evening<br>This evening was an opportunity for Graduates to apply for a scholarship. Details sent separately. | ✓                       | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Public speaking</li> <li>Supporting each other</li> <li>Communication</li> <li>Trying something new</li> <li>Learning to 'sell' yourself</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                    |

B = Belonging; M = Mastery; I = Independence; G = Generosity

**Table 8. Overview of Trails by cohort**

| <b>Cohort</b>                               | <b>Trail 1</b>                                                                                                 | <b>Trail 2</b>                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>TurnAround Essex 1</b>                   | Wilderness trail:<br>Scotland<br>(November 2007)                                                               | Sailing trip:<br>Kent<br>(May 2008)                                             |
| <b>TurnAround Essex 2</b>                   | Wilderness trail: Scotland<br>(May 2009)                                                                       | Sailing trip:<br>Kent<br>(October 2009)                                         |
| <b>TurnAround Essex 3</b>                   | Wilderness trail (separate for males and females):<br>Loch Badagail, Sutherland: Scotland<br>(May – June 2010) | Wilderness trail (combined sexes):<br>Snowdonia: Wales                          |
| <b>TurnAround 4<br/>(Essex and Hackney)</b> | Wilderness trail: Scotland<br>(July (Hackney cohort) / August (Essex cohort))                                  | Sailing trip:<br>Kent<br>(October (Hackney cohort) / November (Essex cohort))   |
| <b>TurnAround Essex 5</b>                   | Snow shoeing and climbing in the Pyrenees<br>Sea Kayaking the biosphere reserve, North Menorca                 | February 2014<br>July 2014                                                      |
| <b>TurnAround Essex 6</b>                   | Canoeing and wild camping:<br>Scotland<br>(May 2015)                                                           | Mountain walking:<br>North Wales<br>(Feb 2016)                                  |
| <b>TurnAround Essex 7</b>                   | Climbing and snow shoeing in Pyrenees, Spain                                                                   | Sea kayaking and wild camping in Biosphere marine<br>Reserve, northern Menorca. |
| <b>TurnAround Berkshire 1</b>               | Wilderness trail and Wild Camping:<br>Scotland<br>(May 2016)                                                   | Wilderness Trail<br>Wales<br>(Aug 2016)                                         |
| <b>TurnAround Berkshire 2</b>               | Wilderness Trail and wild camping<br>Scotland<br>(April 2017)                                                  | Wilderness trail and canoeing<br>Snowdonia, North Wales<br>(July 2017)          |
| <b>TurnAround Essex 8</b>                   | Wilderness trail - Canoeing:<br>Wye Valley<br>Wales<br>(April 2017)                                            | Wilderness trail and Wild Camping:<br>Scotland<br>(August 2017)                 |

## **(vi) Brief overview of previous evaluation findings**

Self-esteem is a central tenet of TurnAround; it is both a key outcome and a key mechanism for wellbeing and behavioural choices. For this reason, evaluations of the first six phases focussed on measuring potential changes in self-esteem, wellbeing and other relevant related constructs, as well as gaining insight into the key processes of TurnAround that underpin such changes. Through those evaluations, TurnAround was demonstrated to successfully improve young persons' self-esteem and wellbeing and reduce risk factors associated with youth crime (47).

The Phase 1 report described trends of increasing feelings of trust wellbeing scores over the course of the programme, and a statistically significant increase in connection to nature from the start to the end of the programme, with greatest increase occurring across the first wilderness trail. The Phase 2 report also described that programme completion was associated with statistically significant increases in self-esteem and psychological wellbeing. The TurnAround Phase 3 evaluation included a control sample, and reported that TurnAround facilitated improvements in self-esteem, behavioural strengths and difficulties, and mindfulness, whereas control participants reported worsening across these measures over the same time period. Evaluation of Phase 4 found improvements in self-esteem, hope, behavioural strengths, difficulties and wellbeing. For wellbeing, 60% of participants experienced changes so significant that they altered their wellbeing category. 40% of participants wellbeing moved from 'low' to 'high' and 20% moved from 'low' to 'average'. Data was collected for TurnAround Phase 5, however, analyses of that data is not available at time of writing. The Phase 6 evaluation reported that all completing participants reflected that they felt the TurnAround project was an important and positive experience for them, and reported improvements in both questionnaire-measured hope (improvement of 61%) and behavioural strengths and difficulties (improvement of 20%). Overall, completing participants also reported a 32% improvement in wellbeing. As only three participants completed TurnAround Phase 6, the report provided case studies of all nine participants of the starting cohort. These case studies illustrated that the TurnAround project enrolls severely 'at risk' individuals, and highlighted that some of the non-completing participants still gained positive experiences and outcomes from TurnAround, and made positive life choices after disengaging from the programme. Detailed findings for each previously evaluated cohort, and case studies of participants' journeys through the programme can be found within the respective phase reports.



## The current evaluation

Four further cohorts completing the TurnAround project since the last report (Phase 6 Report, June 2016). These more recent cohorts are those of:

- TurnAround Essex 7 (from June 2016 – to December 2016);
- TurnAround Essex 8 (from February – to August 2017);
- TurnAround Berkshire 1 (from April 2016 – to September 2016);
- TurnAround Berkshire 2 (from January 2017 – to July 2017).

Ten years since the original cohort, the current evaluation pools all of the data collected to date, in order to evaluate the TurnAround programme across the past decade.

## Evaluation methods

The original University of Essex TurnAround evaluation reported that up until that time, the evidence base for wilderness therapy programmes lacked quantitative data and that there had been a preference for qualitative analyses. Case studies and narrative accounts were the most popular methods used, but there was an increasing recognition that outcomes need to be quantified to provide further support of the beneficial effects.

From that starting point, across the phases of TurnAround, multiple methods of evaluation have been used. Although not all approaches have been used across all of the phases, methods have included:

- Composite questionnaires collecting both quantitative and qualitative data (the content of questionnaires has been amended between phases although some content has remained constant)
- Participatory events
- On-site participant observation by a primary researcher
- Semi-structured interviews with participant, mentors and programme leaders
- Case studies, built from the above methods, plus:
- Referral notes, and programme notes from mentors and programme leaders
- Participant-generated documentation from the programme, such as shields of courage, drawings, goals set and achieved.

Table 9 outlines some of the evaluation methods used across each of the TurnAround phases.

**Table 9. Methodological approaches within evaluations of each phase of TurnAround**

| Phase                               | Participant questionnaires | Interviews | Observational analysis | Participatory events | Case studies |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------|------------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| TurnAround Essex 1                  | ✓                          | ✓          | ✓                      | ✓                    | ✓            |
| TurnAround Essex 2                  | ✓                          | ✓          | ✓                      |                      | ✓            |
| TurnAround Essex 3                  | ✓                          |            |                        |                      | ✓            |
| TurnAround 4<br>(Essex and Hackney) | ✓                          |            |                        |                      | ✓            |
| TurnAround Essex 5                  | ✓                          |            |                        |                      |              |
| TurnAround Essex 6                  | ✓                          |            |                        |                      | ✓            |
| TurnAround Essex 7                  | ✓                          |            |                        |                      |              |
| TurnAround Essex 8                  | ✓                          | ✓          |                        |                      |              |
| TurnAround Berkshire 1              | ✓                          | ✓          |                        |                      |              |
| TurnAround Berkshire 2              | ✓                          |            |                        |                      |              |

## Participant questionnaires

A total of 72 TurnAround participants completed at least one questionnaire across the programme duration. This sample comprised 43 males and 29 females, who had a mean age of  $16.8 \pm 2.0$  years (range from 14 – 24 years).

The time-points at which participant questionnaire data was collected varied across the different phases of TurnAround. For example, Phase 2 collected questionnaire data pre- and post-trails, monthly throughout the programme, and at one-year and three-years following the end of the programme, whereas Phase 4 collected questionnaire data pre- and post- trails, and at the start and end of the programme. Some measures and items included in questionnaires were also changed between cohorts, due to learning-informed changes in participant, researcher, programme and funder preferences, changes in the Wilderness Foundation's desire for particular information, and development of new measures. Further to this, as some measures are designed to capture characteristics that change over shorter timescales and others are designed to capture characteristics that only change over longer timescales, not all measures were included in all questionnaires. That is, across most phases, there was some difference in the content of pre- and post-trail questionnaires compared to start and end of programme questionnaires, and questionnaires completed at workshops. Of final prelude, for a number of reasons, not all participants completed all measures across all time points. Reasons for this include difficulties collecting data at some project events, and varied attendance records of participants. For example, from TA 4 report: *'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'*.

Table 10 shows the measures that were included in questionnaires used in each phase of TurnAround. For the purposes of the current evaluation, statistical analysis focuses only on pooled data from the numerical measures that have occurred frequently across the evaluation phases. Those are: self-esteem, wellbeing, hope, nature connection, and strength and difficulties. Description of the numerical measures analysed within the current evaluation follows, in the **Questionnaire measures** section.

As it attests to the efficacy of the programme overall, the most important comparison to be able to make is that between the start of programme data and the end of programme data. Additionally, throughout previous evaluations of the TurnAround programme, the trail experiences have been highlighted as the central component of the programme. ***For these reasons, the current evaluation analyses questionnaire data from the start and end of the programme, and from the start and end of Trail 1.***

Qualitative insight collected via participant questionnaires is reported alongside qualitative insight from interviews and researchers' on-site observational analysis, in the **Qualitatively reported**

**outcomes** section. Description of the qualitative insight items within questionnaires also follows, within the **Questionnaire measures** section.

**Table 10. Measures included in questionnaires across cohorts**

| Cohort                 | Measure            |             |                  |             |                          |                    |                                        |                                 |                                   |                            |
|------------------------|--------------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
|                        | <i>Self-esteem</i> | <i>Mood</i> | <i>Wellbeing</i> | <i>Hope</i> | <i>Nature connection</i> | <i>Mindfulness</i> | <i>Personal and social development</i> | <i>Education and employment</i> | <i>Strengths and difficulties</i> | <i>Qualitative insight</i> |
| TurnAround Essex 1     | ✓                  | ✓<br>(POMS) |                  |             | ✓<br>(CNS)               |                    |                                        |                                 |                                   |                            |
| TurnAround Essex 2     | ✓                  | ✓<br>(POMS) | ✓<br>(MHI)       |             | ✓<br>(CNS)               |                    | ✓<br>(YRPET)                           |                                 |                                   | ✓                          |
| TurnAround Essex 3     | ✓                  |             | ✓<br>(MHI)       |             | ✓<br>(NR Exp)            | ✓                  |                                        |                                 | ✓                                 | ✓                          |
| TurnAround Essex 4     | ✓                  |             | ✓<br>(WEMWBS)    | ✓           | ✓<br>(NR Exp)            |                    |                                        |                                 | ✓                                 | ✓                          |
| TurnAround Essex 5     | ✓                  |             | ✓<br>(WEMWBS)    | ✓           | ✓<br>(NR Exp)            |                    |                                        |                                 | ✓                                 | ✓                          |
| TurnAround Essex 6     | ✓                  |             | ✓<br>(WEMWBS)    | ✓           | ✓<br>(NR Exp)            |                    |                                        |                                 | ✓                                 | ✓                          |
| TurnAround Essex 7     | ✓                  |             | ✓<br>(WEMWBS)    | ✓           | ✓<br>(NR Exp)            |                    |                                        |                                 | ✓                                 | ✓                          |
| TurnAround Essex 8     | ✓                  |             | ✓<br>(WEMWBS)    | ✓           | ✓<br>(NR Exp)            |                    |                                        |                                 | ✓                                 | ✓                          |
| TurnAround Berkshire 1 | ✓                  | ✓<br>(POMS) | ✓<br>(WEMWBS)    | ✓           | ✓<br>(NR-6)              |                    |                                        | ✓                               |                                   | ✓                          |
| TurnAround Berkshire 2 | ✓                  |             | ✓<br>(WEMWBS)    | ✓           | ✓<br>(NR Exp)            |                    |                                        |                                 | ✓                                 | ✓                          |

POMS = Profile Of Mood States

WEMWBS = Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale

MHI = Mental Health inventory

CNS = Connection to Nature Scale

NR-Exp = 'Nature Experience' subscale of Nature Relatedness Scale

NR-6 = Short-form Nature Relatedness Scale

YRPET = Youth at Risk Evaluation Tool

## Questionnaire measures

### Self-esteem

Self-esteem is defined as *“a person’s positive or negative attitude towards the self in totality”*, with low self-esteem being a common occurrence in many forms of mental ill health (48). Self-esteem was assessed using the ten-item Rosenberg’s Self-esteem Scale (RSE) (49). The scale provides a one-dimensional, global measure of self-esteem (50), with each of the ten items scored on a four-point scale from one (strongly disagree) to four (strongly agree). An overall self-esteem score between 10 and 40 is generated, with a high score representing a better self-esteem. Although some phases of evaluation originally scored this self-esteem measure differently, for the purposes of the current evaluation all scores have been adjusted to the scoring system described.

### Wellbeing

Wellbeing is an important contributor to health and is defined as *“a positive physical, social and mental state and not just the absence of pain, discomfort or incapacity”* (51). As indicated in Table 10, after using the Mental Health Inventory within for evaluations of phases 2 and 3, the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) was the used from Phase 4 onwards. This change was in response to WEMWBS becoming recognized as the new ‘gold standard’ mental wellbeing measure in the UK. For the purposes of pooling data across phases, only data collected using the WEMWBS will be included in the current analyses.

The Warwick Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale comprises a global well-being measure including affective-emotional aspects, cognitive-evaluative dimensions and psychological functioning and is short enough to be used in population-level surveys (52). The scale is validated for use in adults and adolescents in the UK (52-54) and consists of 14 items, all of which are worded positively and address positive aspects of positive mental health (53, 55). The scale is scored by summing responses to each item which are scored on a five point likert scale from one (none of the time) to five (all of the time). The minimum score is 14 whilst the maximum score is 70. A higher score represents a better wellbeing.

The WEMWBS was not designed to identify individuals who have especially high or low levels of wellbeing; therefore no official cut points have been developed. However, some research classifies wellbeing as ‘low’, ‘average’ or ‘high’ using the mean and standard deviation (SD) of the data (56), and other evaluations have compared to UK national values. The most recently surveyed national average wellbeing for 16-24 year-olds in England is a score of 49.3, with a weighted-sample standard deviation of 11.0. Average wellbeing can be considered to be within one standard deviation of the mean (38.3 – 60.3). A score greater than one standard deviation above the mean (61 or higher) can be categorised as high wellbeing, and a score that is greater than one standard deviation below the mean (37 or lower) can be categorised as low wellbeing (57).

## Hope

Hope is defined as “an overall perception that one’s goals can be met” and is related to one’s coping ability (58). A state measure of ‘hope’ provides a snapshot of a person’s goal directed thinking. Hope was assessed using the Children’s Hope Scale (59). The scale consists of six items, each of which is scored on a six point scale from one (none of the time) to six (all of the time). A total hope score ranging from 6 to 36 is derived by summing the items. A higher score represents a greater perception that goals can be met.

## Nature Connection

Across TurnAround phases, three measures have been used to measure aspects of participants’ nature connection, namely, the connectedness to nature scale (CNS), Nature Relatedness - Experience (NR-Experience) and Nature Relatedness short-form NR-6.

**CNS** is a “*measure of individuals’ trait levels of feeling emotionally connected to the natural world*” (60). Connection to nature is considered to be an important predictor of ecological behaviour and subjective wellbeing. A shortened adapted version of the CNS scale (but not validated) was used, which was based on the standardised and validated CNS. It was designed to assess whether participating in wilderness experiences and being exposed to nature increased an individual’s sense of feeling connected to nature. Scores on the scale range from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 5, with a score of 5 indicating the most connected to nature.

**NR-Exp** encapsulates one’s “*physical familiarity with the natural world and the level of comfort with and desire to be out in nature*”. The NR-Exp is a subscale within the full Nature Relatedness Scale (61) and consists of six items scored on a five point scale from one (disagree strongly) to five (agree strongly). A total score is generated by totalling the scores for the six items and dividing by six (maximum = 5; minimum = 1). A high score indicates a high level of experience, comfort and desire to be in nature.

**NR-6** is the short-form of the full Nature Relatedness Scale (61, 62). It comprises six items from the full questionnaire, that is, two items from each subscale. In line with Nisbet et al. (61), items are averaged to create a NR-6 score. A higher score indicates a greater level of nature relatedness (maximum = 5, minimum = 0). The NR-6 strongly correlates with the full scale ( $r = 0.91$ ) and has good one- month test retest reliability in college (0.83) and community (0.84) samples (62). As a potentially useful measure for investigating human-nature relationships, the construct of nature relatedness is considered a relatively temporally stable measure of an individual’s cognitive, affective and experiential connection to nature (61, 63). Nature relatedness has been shown to correlate with environmental scales, behaviour, and frequency of time in nature (61), and significantly predicts happiness (64).

## Data treatment

As each of the nature connection measures used across the cohorts generates a score from 0 (minimum) to 5 (maximum) and relates to facets of participants’ extent of nature connection, for the

purposes of the current evaluation, data across these measures was pooled in order to enable it to be analysed together.

### Strengths and difficulties

Behavioural strengths and difficulties were assessed using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ). The SDQ is a twenty-five-item behavioural screening questionnaire that assesses both positive and negative behaviours (65). The items are equally divided into five scales addressing varying aspects of behaviour and behavioural difficulties including conduct difficulties; hyperactivity; emotional difficulties; peer difficulties and pro-social behaviour difficulties. Each item is scored on a three point likert scale from zero (not true) to two (certainly true). Scores are generated for each of the five sub- scales, by summing the scores for the five items within that scale. Each sub-scale score ranges from zero to ten, with a higher score respectively representing greater conduct difficulties, hyperactivity, emotional or peer difficulties and a more pro-social behaviour. A 'total difficulties score' is generated by summing the items for each scale, except for pro-social behaviour. The minimum total difficulties score is 0 whilst the maximum score is 40; a higher score represents a greater number of behavioural difficulties. As shown in Table 11, the scores for each subscale and the total difficulties can be placed into categories which represent either 'normal', 'borderline' or 'abnormal' behaviour. The suggested categorization intends that 80% of adolescents would score within the 'normal' category, with 10% scoring in the 'borderline' category and a further 10 scoring within the 'abnormal' category (65).

**Table 11. Suggested categorisation for strengths and difficulties scores**

|                            | Normal | Borderline | Abnormal |
|----------------------------|--------|------------|----------|
| Total difficulties score   | 0 – 15 | 16 – 19    | 20 – 40  |
| Emotional difficulties     | 0 – 5  | 6          | 7 – 10   |
| Conduct difficulties       | 0 – 3  | 4          | 5 - 10   |
| Hyperactivity difficulties | 0 – 5  | 6          | 7 – 10   |
| Peer difficulties          | 0 – 3  | 4 – 5      | 6 - 10   |
| Pro-social behaviour       | 6 – 10 | 5          | 0 - 4    |

From Goodman et al., 1998



## Statistical analyses of numerical data

IBM SPSS 19 software was used to analyse the numerical questionnaire data (66). Paired samples t-tests were used to examine changes from start to the end of the programme, and separately, from start to the end of Trail 1. Additionally, Wilcoxon ranked sign test was used to assess whether there were statistically significant trends in the numbers of participants reporting increases, decreases and no change in each measure across the comparisons. Finally, a series of repeated measures ANOVAs were used to assess changes in reported values across all four measured time-points. An alpha level of 0.05 was used to indicate statistical significance.

## Qualitative insight

Qualitative narrative was collected to compliment quantitative data. Participants were asked open-ended questions to determine what they were hoping to gain from the programme; what they were excited and nervous about; what they enjoyed most and least, what they learnt about themselves, nature and other people and what they would do differently in the future as a result of the programme (e.g. *What do you hope to get out this wilderness trip?; What are you learning most about yourself? What do you think you will do differently after taking part in this programme?*).

## Interviews

Interviews with participants were semi-structured with participants free to direct the interview conversation. In order to gain in-depth insight, the researcher asked questions that initiated participant-led conversation (for example, from TA 8 end of programme interviews: *“Was there any single bit, or a moment for you that was the best bit of the programme?”*) The researcher continued to respond with prompts further questions along the lines of participants’ discussion, where appropriate.

Interviews with mentors and programme leaders were also semi-structured, with freedom to digress from initial questions as respondents wished. However, these interview dialogues tended to much more readily return to set questions, compared to participant interviews. Researchers’ mentor interview questions from November 2017 included, but were not exclusive to:

*Can you describe the kinds of changes that you see in TA participants over the course of the TA programme overall?*

*Can you think of an example of when the TurnAround programme has gone very well for a particular participant or a whole cohort? What was it about the participant / cohort, or their approach, or the programme itself that led to it being so successful in this instance?*

*Can you please briefly outline the role of the Mentor in the TA programme?*

*What are the main challenges faced by TA mentors?*

## Findings

### Numerically measured outcomes

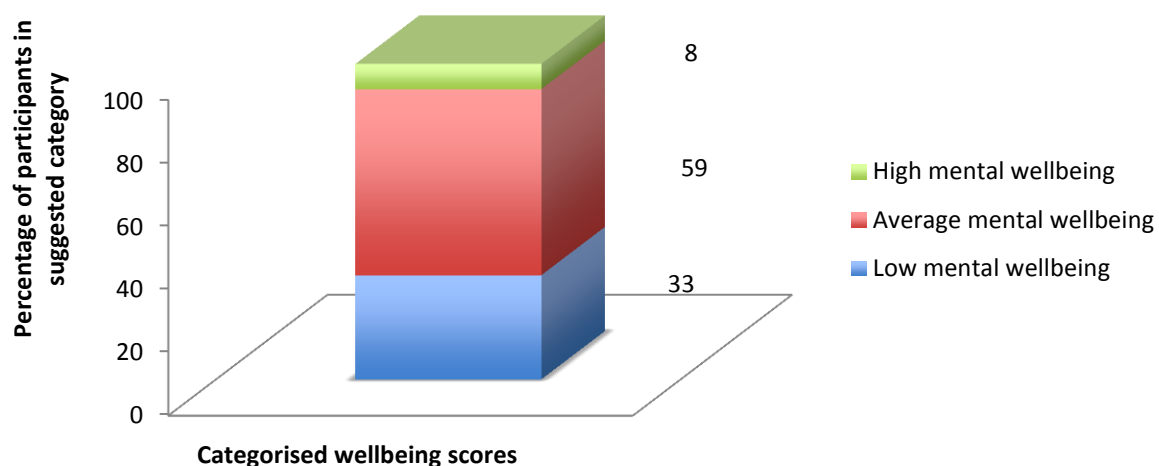
#### *Baseline values across the whole (unmatched) sample*

In order to further numerically describe the TurnAround participants at the start of their programme experience, mean values calculated from all data-points, irrespective of whether participants also completed the respective measure at a later time-point, are presented for each of the measures of focus (Table 12).

**Table 12. Mean  $\pm$  SD start of programme (baseline) values for whole sample**

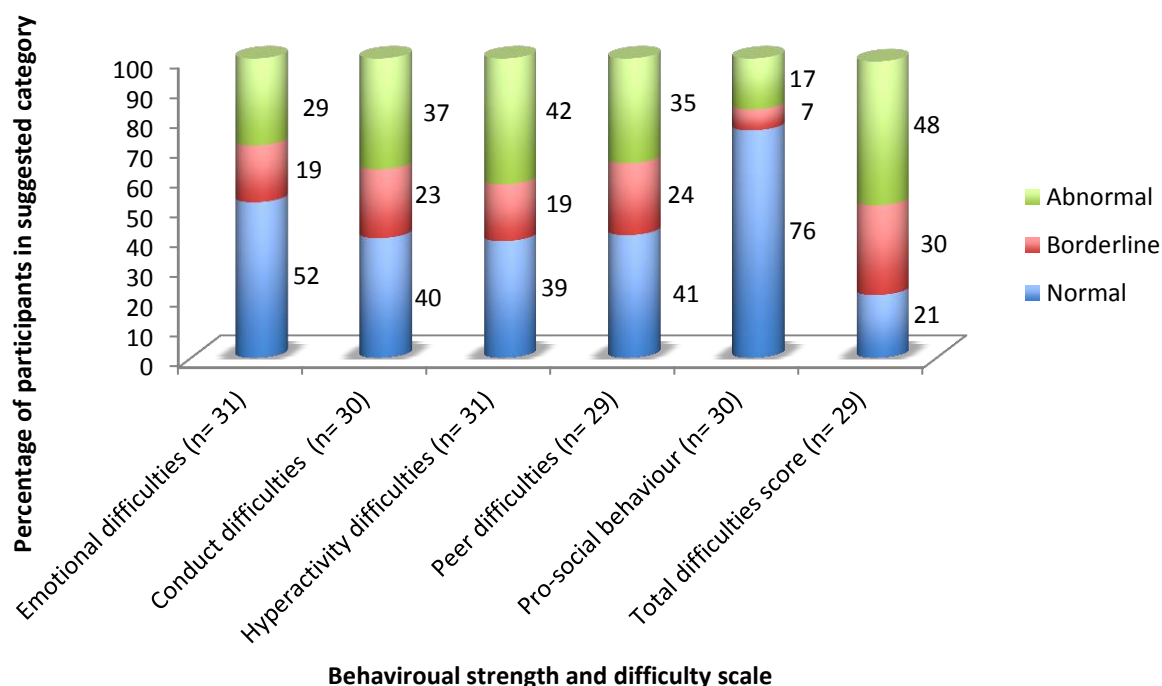
| Measure                                | Sample size                    | Range of reported scores | Mean ( $\pm$ SD) start of programme value | Value categorisation                                                    |                       |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Self-esteem                            | 35                             | 0 - 27                   | 15.3 $\pm$ 6.2                            | N/A                                                                     |                       |
| Mental wellbeing                       | 27                             | 22 - 70                  | 42.6 $\pm$ 12.3                           | Below the national mean value, but within the $\pm$ SD average category |                       |
| Hope                                   | 29                             | 7 - 35                   | 19.0 $\pm$ 6.9                            | N/A                                                                     |                       |
| Nature connection                      | 41                             | 1.3 – 4.8                | 3.51 $\pm$ 0.89                           | N/A                                                                     |                       |
| Behavioural strengths and difficulties | Emotional difficulties         | 31                       | 0 - 10                                    | 4.8 $\pm$ 2.6                                                           | ‘Normal’              |
|                                        | Conduct difficulties           | 30                       | 0 - 6                                     | 3.8 $\pm$ 1.5                                                           | ‘Normal - Borderline’ |
|                                        | Hyperactivity difficulties     | 31                       | 1 - 10                                    | 6.1 $\pm$ 2.0                                                           | ‘Borderline’          |
|                                        | Peer difficulties              | 29                       | 0 - 10                                    | 4.2 $\pm$ 2.4                                                           | ‘Borderline’          |
|                                        | Total behavioural difficulties | 29                       | 5 - 29                                    | 19.2 $\pm$ 5.6                                                          | ‘Borderline’          |
|                                        | Pro-social behaviour           | 30                       | 1 - 10                                    | 7.1 $\pm$ 2.3                                                           | ‘Normal’              |

For the measures that enable categorisation, that is, for mental wellbeing and for behavioural strengths and difficulties, categorised percentages of participants are shown in Figures 2 and 3.



**Figure 2. Percentage of participants reporting categorised values of mental wellbeing at the start of the programme (n= 27)**

A high proportion of participants reported low mental wellbeing scores at the start of the programme, with 70% of participants reported scores below the national mean for 16 – 24 year olds. It is also reasonable to suggest that given the life situations of enrolling participants, high wellbeing scores may have been cases of inaccurate, or socially desirable reporting. The total behavioural difficulties scores of 78% of the surveyed sample fall within the borderline – abnormal categories. Therefore, as the categories were suggested in order that 10% of adolescents in the community would be categorised as ‘borderline’ and a further 10% as abnormal (65), Figure 3 demonstrates that TurnAround is successful in enrolling adolescents who are most needing and at-risk within the community in relation to behavioural difficulties.



**Figure 3. Percentage of participants reporting categorised values of behavioural strengths and difficulties at the start of the programme**

### ***Analyses of changes in reported values for matched data***

This analysis encompasses only the data generated in instances whereby individual participants reported on the given measure at both of two time-points, or all four time-points. That is, an individuals' data is 'matched' across the given number of time-points, in order to evidence change.

For each measure of interest, three comparisons are made:

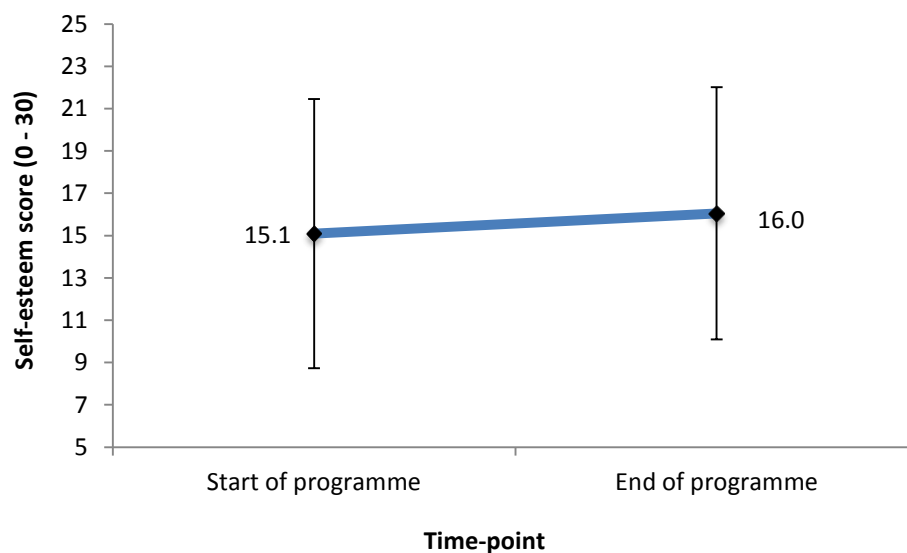
- Comparing the start of the programme with the end of the programme
- Comparing the start of Trail 1 with the end of Trail 1
- Comparing over the course of the programme across all four time-points (this data was only generated for the measures of self-esteem, hope and nature connection)

Full statistical values are reported only in case of statistically significant changes.

## Changes from start to the end of the programme

### *Self-esteem*

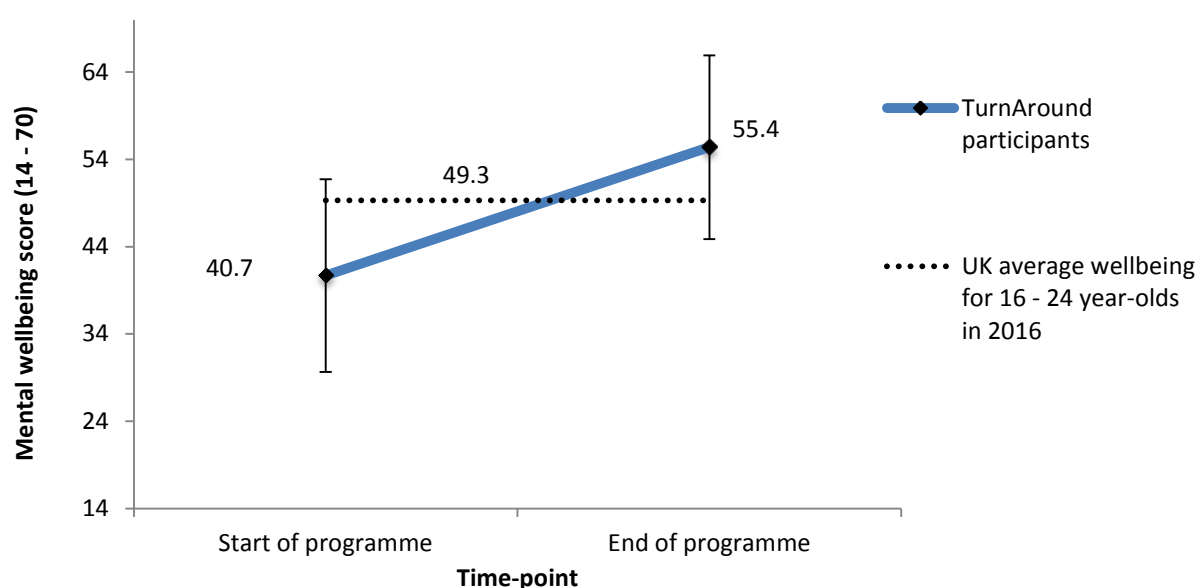
A sample of 21 participants reported an average 1% increase in self-esteem from the start to end of their programme engagement, although this change was not a statistically significant ( $p = 0.536$ ; Figure 4). 53% of participants reported better self-esteem at the end of the programme compared to at the start (33% worsened; 14% no change). To speculate, as this measure contains a number of negatively worded statement items (e.g. 'I feel I do not have much to be proud of'), this is the most likely measure to elicit defensive, sometimes socially desirable responding from participants. Such responding is particularly likely to occur at the start of the programme. Instances of this may have contributed to falsely high self-esteem scores at the start of the programme, leading to lesser measurable improvement at the end of the programme when responses may have been more honest. Consideration of this numerical finding alongside qualitative insight is therefore important.



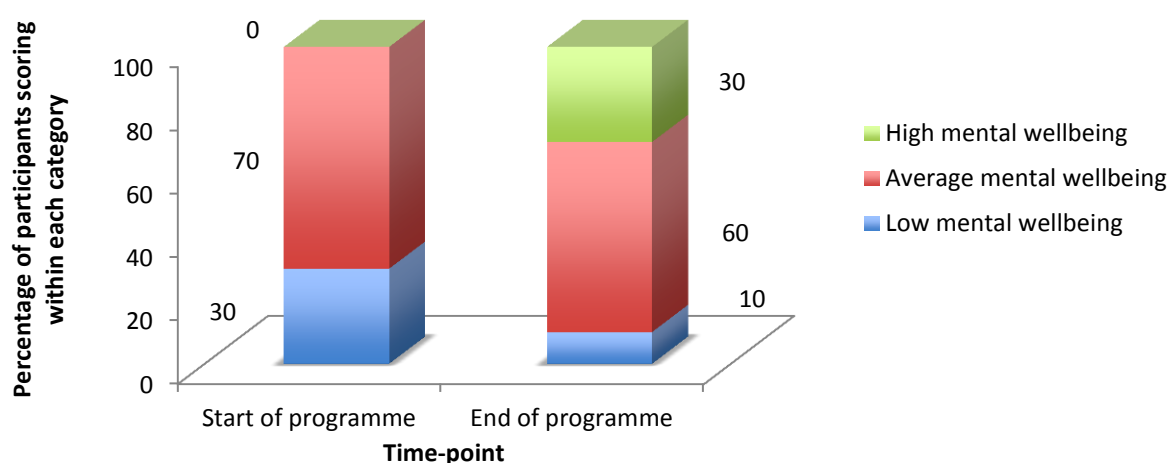
**Figure 4.** Change in mean ( $\pm$  SD) self-reported self-esteem scores from the start to the end of the programme ( $n = 21$ )

## Wellbeing

From a total sample of 10 participants who reported on the WEMWBS at both the start and end of the programme, there was a statistically significant average improvement of 36% in mental wellbeing from the start to the end of the programme ( $t_9 = 3.03$ ,  $p = 0.014$ , 95% CI [3.7, 25.7]; Figure 5). 90% of participants reported better wellbeing scores at the end of the programme compared to at the start (0% worsened; 10% no change), and this was a statistically significant trend (Wilcoxon ranked sign test;  $Z = 2.67$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ). From the outlined sample of 10 participants, 4 participants moved into a higher mental wellbeing score category over the course of the programme (the other 6 participant remained in the same category). The number of participants reporting scores categorised as low wellbeing fell from 3/10 at the start of the programme to 1/10 at the end of the programme (Figure 6).



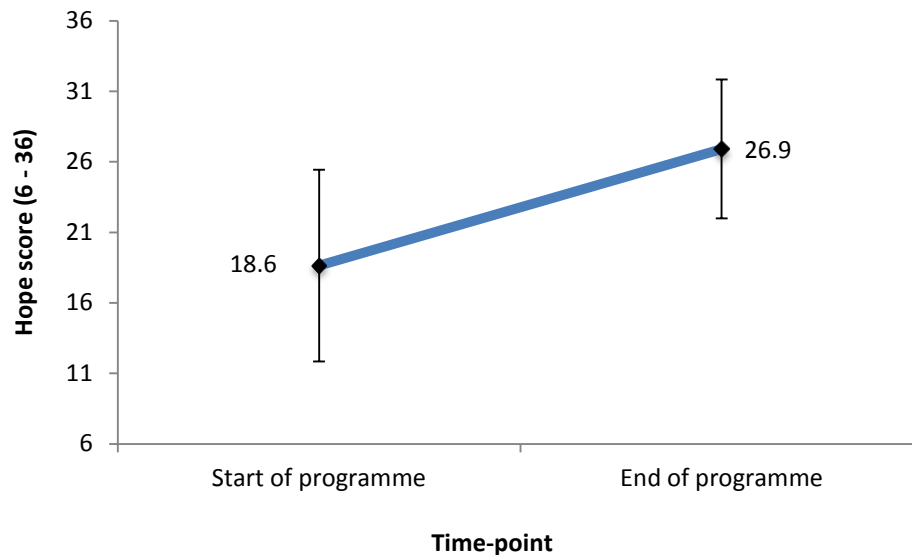
**Figure 5. Change in mean ( $\pm$  SD) self-reported wellbeing scores from the start to the end of the programme (n = 10)**



**Figure 6. Change in percentage of participants scoring within suggested mental wellbeing categories from the start to the end of the programme (n = 10)**

## Hope

A sample of 11 participants reported a statistically significant average 45% increase in hope from the start to end of their programme engagement ( $t_{10} = 3.39$ ,  $p = 0.007$ , 95% CI [2.8, 13.7]). 82% of participants reported better hope scores at the end of the programme compared to at the start (9% worsened; 9% no change), and this was a statistically significant trend (Wilcoxon ranked sign test;  $Z = 2.60$ ,  $p = 0.009$ ).



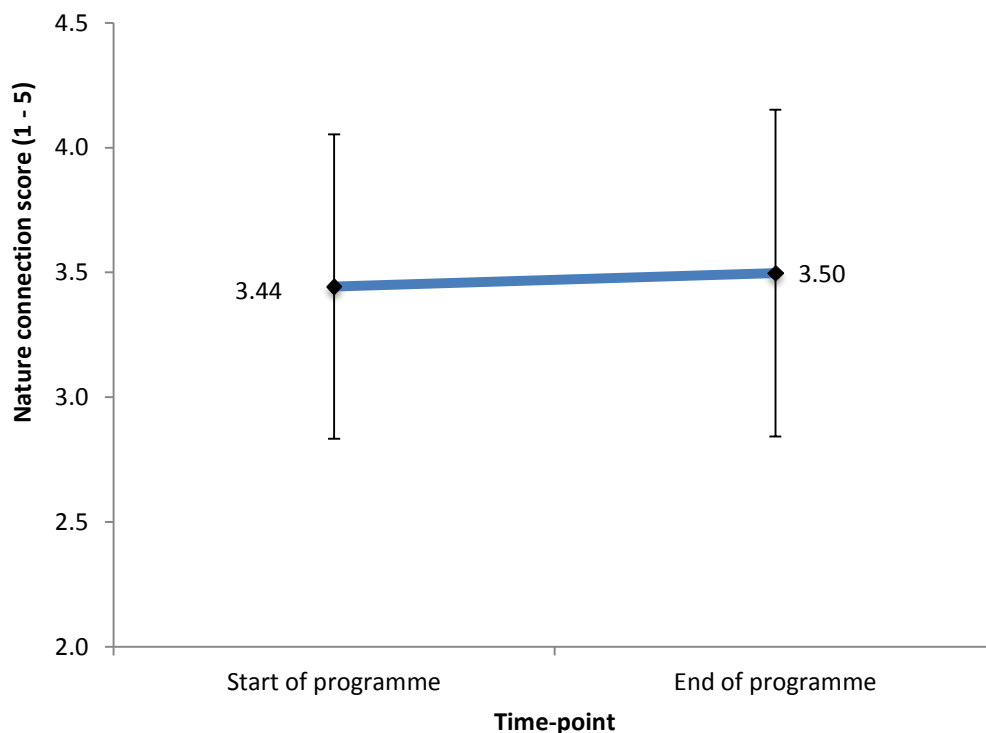
**Figure 7. Change in mean ( $\pm$  SD) self-reported hope scores from the start to the end of the programme (n = 11)**

### *Nature connection*

A total matched sample of 25 participants was available. 20 participants were from cohorts for whom the NR-Exp measure was used to assess nature connection, and 5 participants were from cohorts in which the CNS measure was used. No matched data was available from the TurnAround Berkshire 1 cohort, in which the NR-6 measure was used.

A paired-samples t-test showed that there were no statistically significant differences between the measures of CNS and NR-Exp in terms of the values reported at the start of the programme ( $p=0.196$ ), suggesting that was reasonable to analyse changes in nature connection across the pooled data.

Participants reported a mean 3% increase in nature connection scores from the start to the end of the programme, although this was not statistically significant ( $p=0.689$ ; Figure 8.). Whereas half (52%) of participants reported higher nature connection scores at the end of the programme compared to at the start, 40% reported lower scores and 8% reported the same score at both the start and the end of the programme.



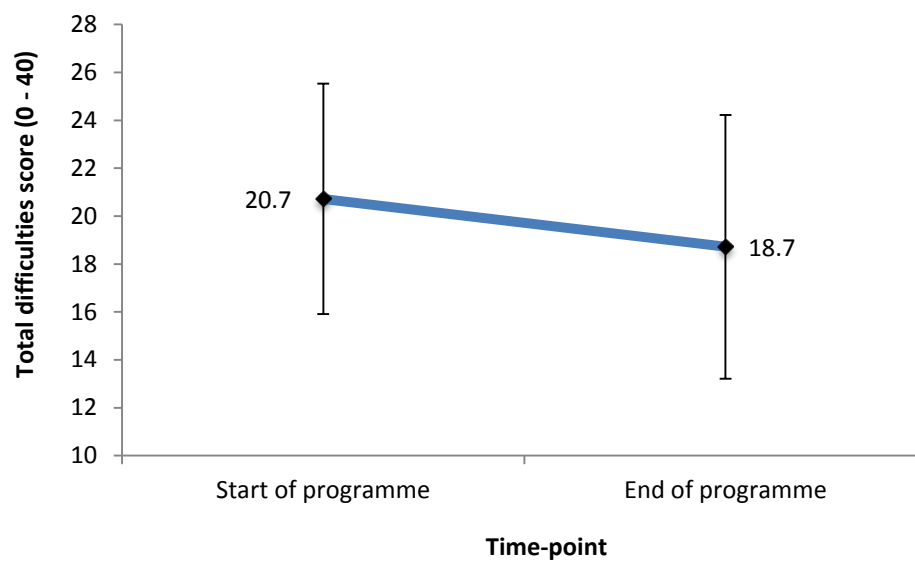
**Figure 8. Change in mean ( $\pm$  SD) nature connection scores from the start to the end of programme (n= 25)**



### *Strengths and Difficulties*

A sample of 18 participants reported an average 10% improvement in their rating of their total difficulties from the start to end of their programme engagement, although this change was not a statistically significant ( $p = 0.283$ ). This change was not statistically significant partly because there was relatively high variation in participants' responses across the sample, as denoted by the standard deviation bars within Figure 9.

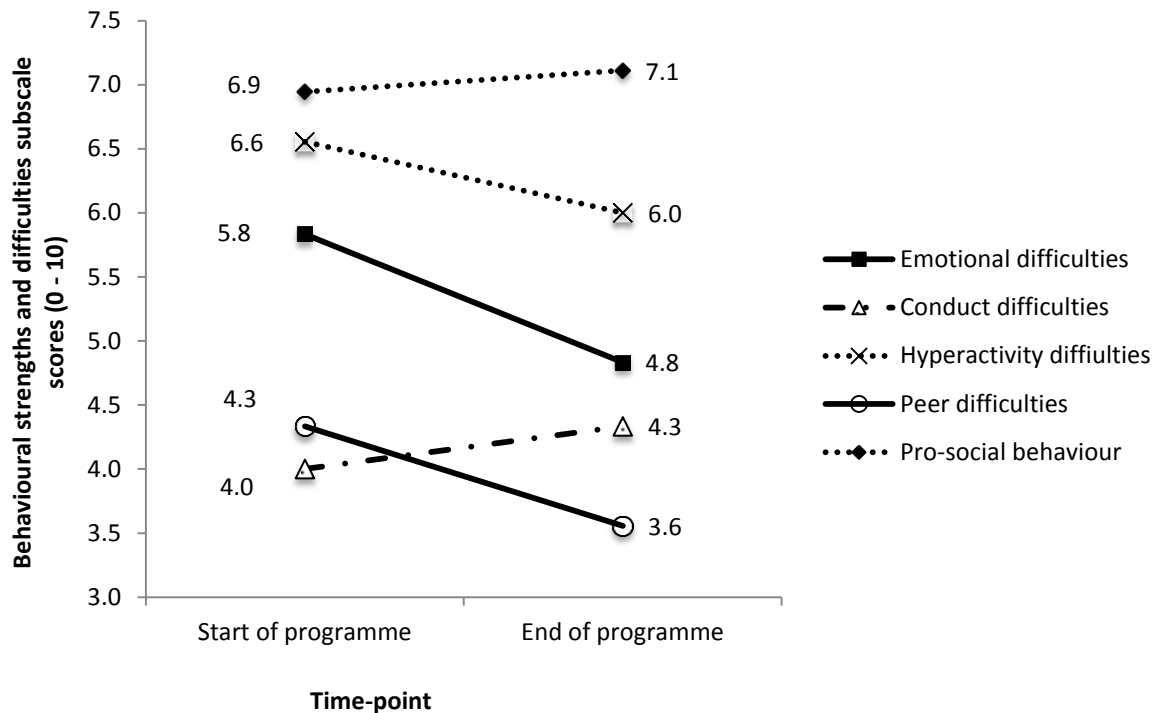
Using this measure, 61% of participants reported ameliorated behavioural difficulties over the duration of their TurnAround experience (39% worsened; 0% no change).



**Figure 9. Change in mean ( $\pm$  SD) total difficulties scores from the start to the end of programme (n= 18)**

Some participants only partially completed the SDQ, therefore scores were able to be calculated for some subscales but not others. For this reason, final sample size varied between subscales (the previously presented total difficulties scores could only be calculated where participants had fully completed all items across all of the four contributing subscales). Subscale sample sizes are shown in Table 10.

Mean improvements were reported across four of the five behavioural subscales. Participants reported greatest improvement in the subscales relating to emotional difficulties (17% amelioration of this difficulty type) and peer difficulties (16% amelioration). Least change was reported for pro-social behaviour difficulties, for which a mean average of 3% amelioration was reported (Figure 10 and Table 11).



Note: higher scores indicate greater behavioural difficulties, except for the subscale of pro-social behaviour, for which greater scores indicate lesser behavioural difficulty

**Figure 10. Change in mean ( $\pm$  SD) behavioural strengths and difficulties subscale scores from the start to the end of programme**

**Table 11. Mean behavioural strengths and difficulties subscale change values and percentage of participants reporting different directions of change from start to end of TurnAround**

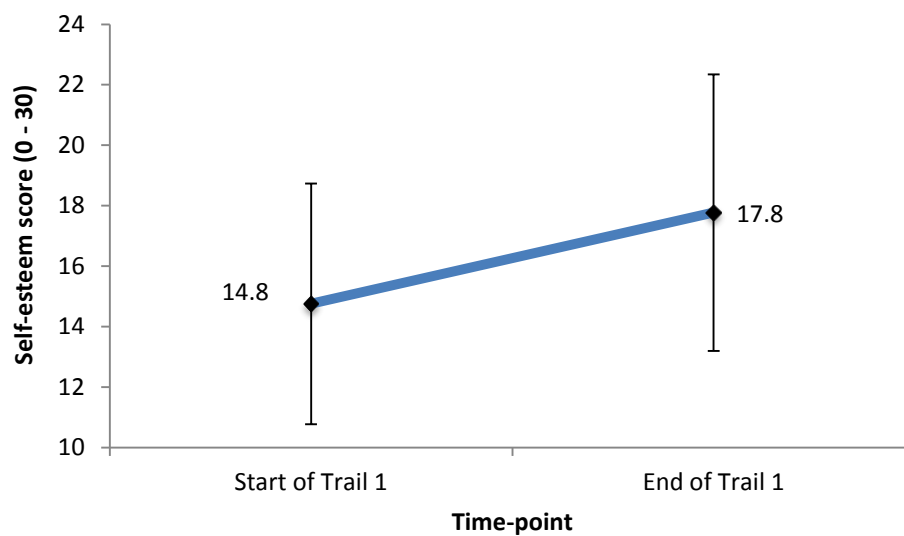
| Subscale                                  | Mean percentage change | % of participants reporting amelioration | % of participants reporting deterioration | % of participants reporting no change |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Emotional difficulties (n= 20)            | 16% amelioration       | 55                                       | 30                                        | 15                                    |
| Conduct difficulties (n= 19)              | 7% deterioration       | 47                                       | 42                                        | 11                                    |
| Hyperactivity difficulties (n= 20)        | 9% amelioration        | 40                                       | 25                                        | 35                                    |
| Peer difficulties (n= 18)                 | 16% amelioration       | 44                                       | 28                                        | 28                                    |
| Pro-social behaviour difficulties (n= 19) | 3% amelioration        | 37                                       | 37                                        | 26                                    |

## Changes from start to the end of Trail 1

### *Self-esteem*

From a total sample of 44 participants who reported on self-esteem at both the start and end of Trail 1, there was a statistically significant average improvement of 20% in self-esteem from the start to the end of Trail 1 ( $t_{43} = 4.79$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , 95% CI [1.7, 4.3]; Figure 11).

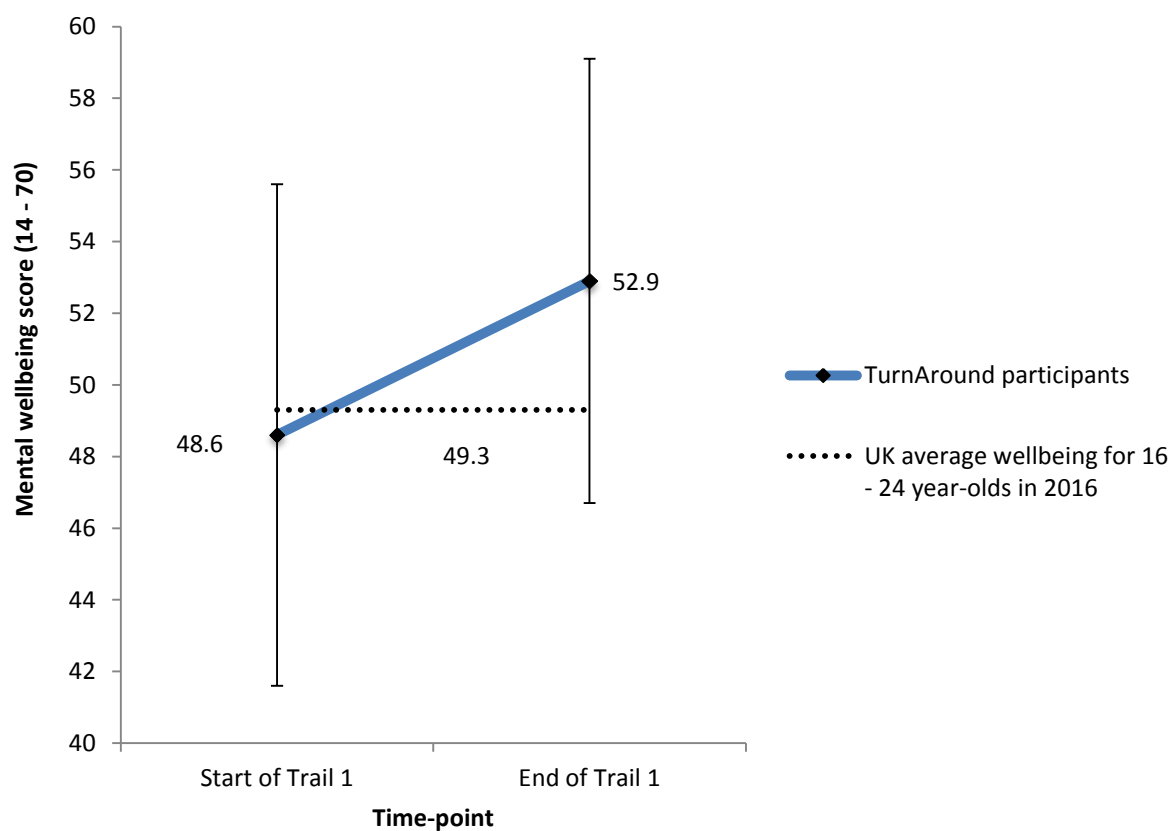
73% of participants reported better self-esteem scores at the end of Trail 1 compared to at the start (18% worsened; 9% no change), and this was a statistically significant trend (Wilcoxon ranked sign test;  $Z = 4.0$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).



**Figure 11. Change in mean ( $\pm$  SD) self-reported self-esteem scores from the start to the end Trail 1 (n = 44)**

## Wellbeing

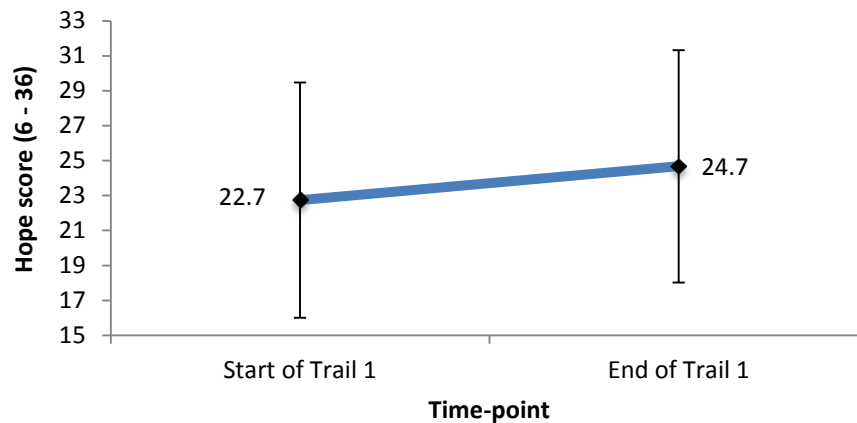
A sample of 13 participants reported an average 9% increase in mental wellbeing from the start to end of Trail 1, although this change was not a statistically significant ( $p=0.08$ ). 54% of participants reported better mental wellbeing at the end of Trail 1 compared to at the start (38% worsened; 8% no change; Figure 12)



**Figure 12. Change in mean ( $\pm$  SD) self-reported mental wellbeing scores from the start to the end Trail 1 (n = 13)**

## Hope

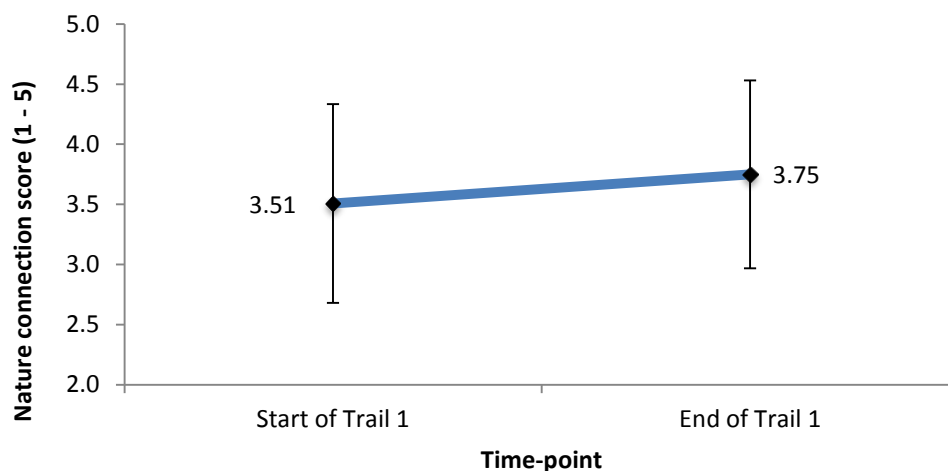
A sample of 31 participants reported an average 9% increase in hope scores from the start to end of Trail 1, although this change was not a statistically significant ( $p=0.07$ ). However, 61% of participants reported improved hope scores at the end of the programme compared to at the start (29% worsened; 10% no change) and this was a statistically significant trend (Wilcoxon ranked sign test;  $Z=2.28$ ,  $p=0.023$  Figure 13).



**Figure 13. Change in mean ( $\pm$  SD) self-reported hope scores from the start to the end Trail 1 (n = 31)**

## Nature connection

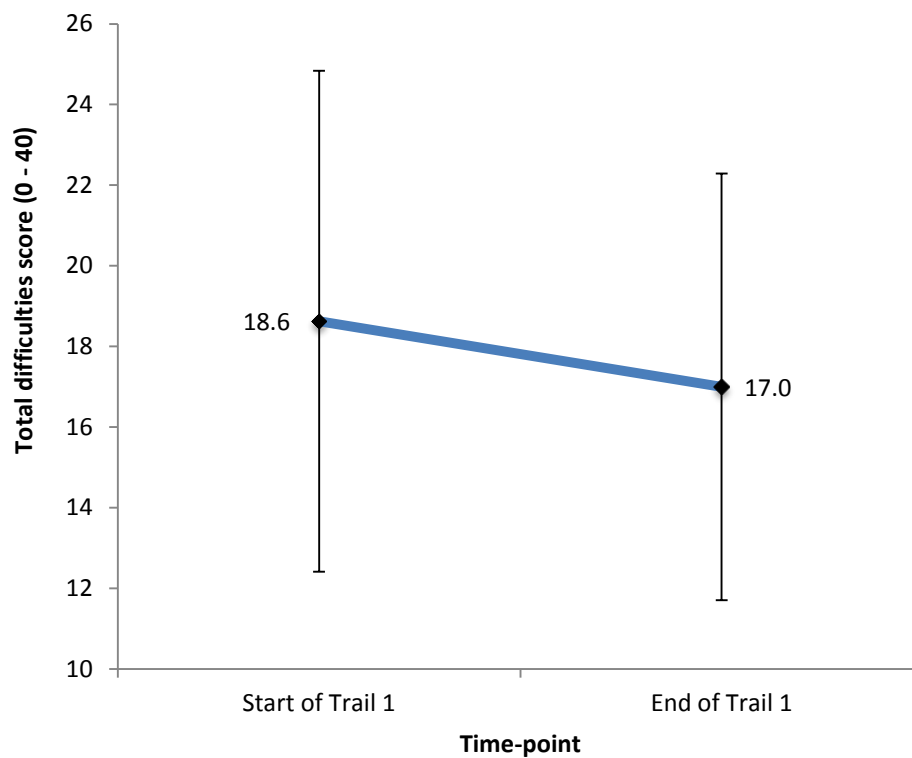
From a total sample of 51 participants who reported on the nature connection measures at both the start and end of Trail 1, there was a statistically significant average increase of 7% in nature connection from the start to the end of Trail 1 ( $t_{50}=2.39$ ,  $p=0.021$ , 95% CI [0.04, 0.45]; Figure 14). 65% of participants reported higher nature connection scores at the end of Trail 1 compared to at the start (24% worsened; 11% no change), and this was a statistically significant trend (Wilcoxon ranked sign test;  $Z=2.9$ ,  $p<0.004$ ).



**Figure 14. Change in mean ( $\pm$  SD) self-reported nature connection scores from the start to the end Trail 1 (n = 51)**

### *Behavioural strengths and difficulties*

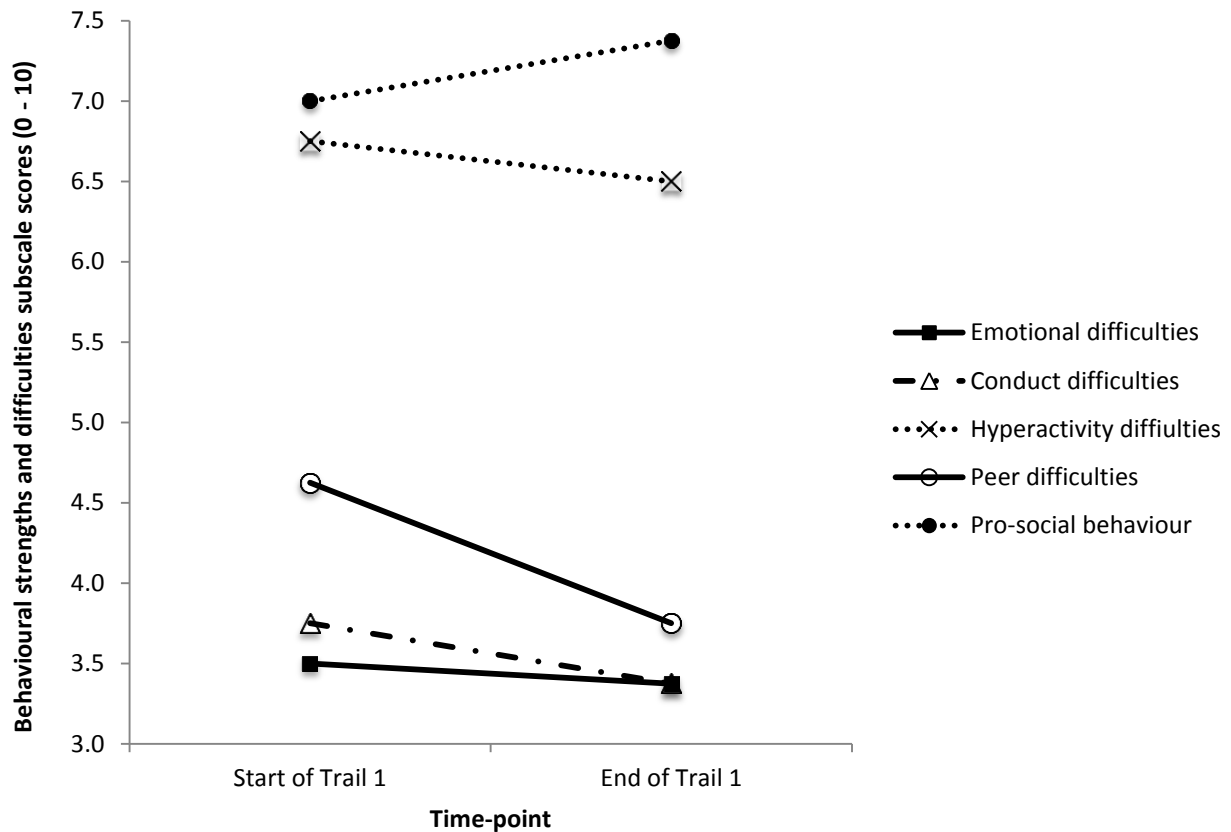
A sample of 8 participants reported an average 9% amelioration in their total difficulties scores from the start to end of Trail 1, although this change was not a statistically significant ( $p = 0.23$ ; Figure 15). 50% of participants reported ameliorated total difficulties scores at the end of the programme compared to at the start (38% worsened; 22% no change).



**Figure 15. Change in mean ( $\pm$  SD) self-reported total difficulties scores from the start to the end Trail 1 ( $n = 8$ )**

Mean improvements were reported across each of the five behavioural subscales.

Participants reported greatest improvement in the subscale relating to peer difficulties (17% amelioration of this difficulty type), and half or more participants reported amelioration of difficulties relating to emotional-, peer- or hyperactivity-related behaviours (Figure 16 and Table 12).



Note: higher scores indicate greater behavioural difficulties, except for the subscale of pro-social behaviour, for which greater scores indicate lesser behavioural difficulty

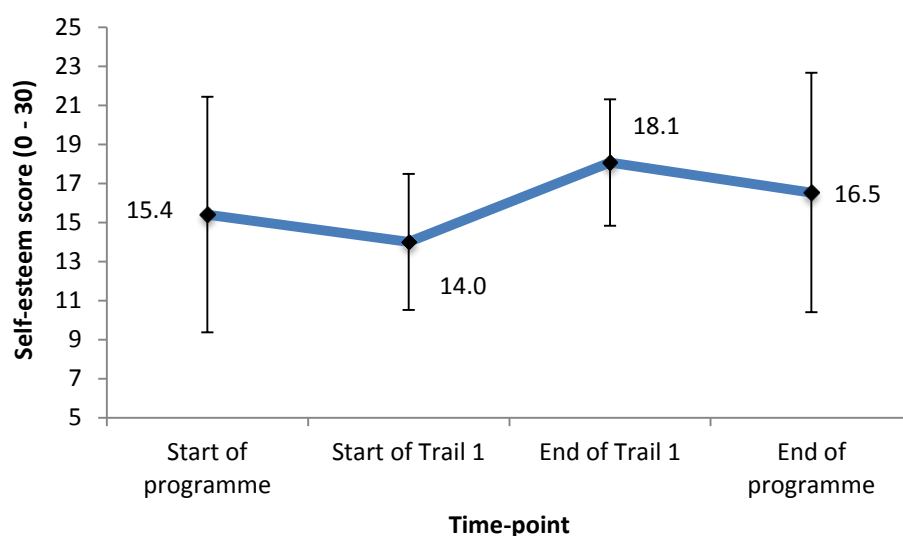
**Figure 16. Change in mean ( $\pm$  SD) behavioural strengths and difficulties subscale scores from the start to the end of Trail 1 (n= 8)**

**Table 12. Mean behavioural strengths and difficulties subscale change values and percentage of participants reporting different directions of change from start to end of Trail 1 (n= 8)**

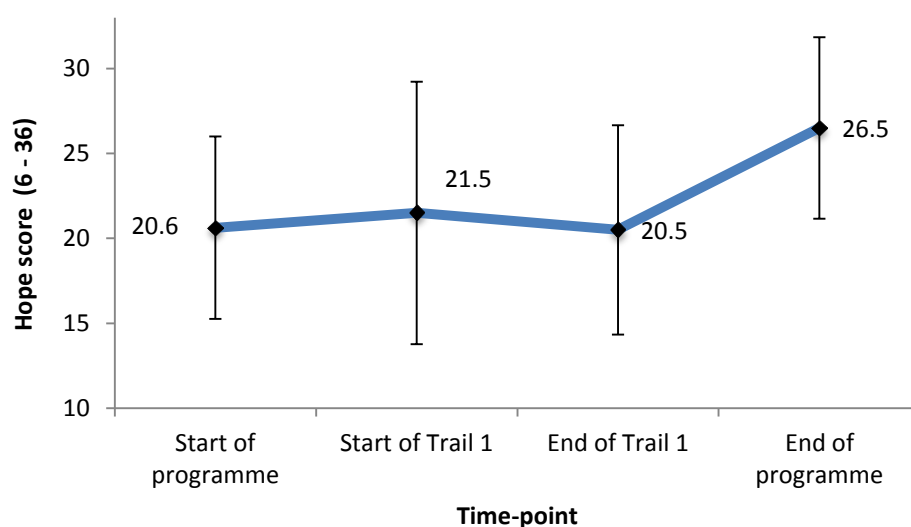
| Subscale                          | Mean percentage amelioration | % of participants reporting amelioration | % of participants reporting deterioration | % of participants reporting no change |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Emotional difficulties            | 3%                           | 50                                       | 38                                        | 22                                    |
| Conduct difficulties              | 11%                          | 38                                       | 25                                        | 37                                    |
| Hyperactivity difficulties        | 4%                           | 50                                       | 25                                        | 25                                    |
| Peer difficulties                 | 17%                          | 63                                       | 12                                        | 25                                    |
| Pro-social behaviour difficulties | 6%                           | 38                                       | 12                                        | 50                                    |

### Changes across all four time-points

A number of participants reported on the questionnaire measures of self-esteem, hope and nature connection at all four time-points of focus, that is, the start and end of the programme, and the start and end of Trail 1. Changes across these four time-points are now presented, so to illustrate participants' progression through the programme experience. As shown in Figures 17 – 19, although participants reported a mean decline in each of the three measures at some stage over the course of the TurnAround experience, end of programme mean values were better than start of programme values.

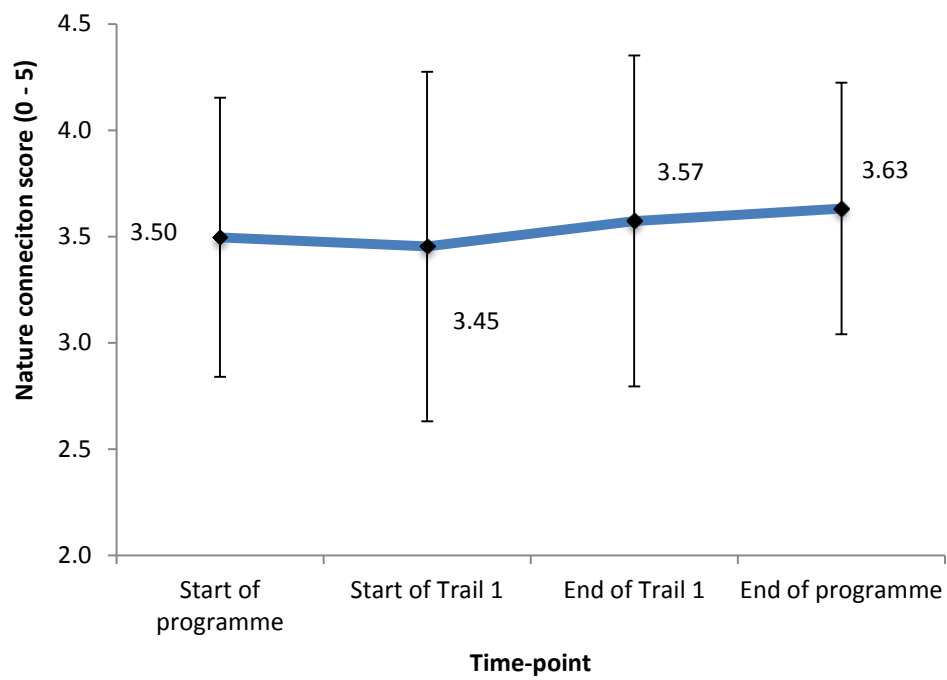


**Figure 17. Change in mean ( $\pm$  SD) self-esteem scores over course of TurnAround participation (all four time-points; n= 15)**



**Figure 18. Change in mean ( $\pm$  SD) hope scores over course of TurnAround participation (all four time-points; n= 8)**





**Figure 19. Change in mean ( $\pm$  SD) nature connection scores over course of TurnAround participation (all four time-points; n= 20)**

### ***Summary of numerical findings***

Analyses of the unmatched start of programme data matched data indicated that TurnAround is successful in enrolling adolescents who are most needing and at-risk within the community in relation to mental wellbeing and behavioural difficulties. The total behavioural difficulties scores of 74% of the surveyed sample fall within the borderline – abnormal categories.

Analyses of matched data that assessed changes from the start of the TurnAround programme to the end indicated that:

- Despite only an average 1% increase, 53% of participants reported better self-esteem at the end of the programme compared to at the start
- There was a statistically significant average improvement of 36% in mental wellbeing from the start to the end of the programme, with 90% of participants reporting higher scores.
- Participants reported a statistically significant average 45% increase in hope from the start to end of their programme engagement, with a further statistically significant 82% of participants reporting some extent of improvement.
- Although half (52%) of participants reported increases in nature connection scores over the course of the programme, only a reported a mean 3% increase was reported.
- Participants reported an average 10% improvement in behavioural difficulties from the start to end of their programme engagement, with 61% of participants reporting some kind of improvement. Greatest improvement was in the subscales relating to emotional difficulties (17% amelioration of this difficulty type) and peer difficulties (16% amelioration). Programme engagement was associated with 3% increase in reported pro-social behaviour.

Analyses of matched data that assessed changes over the duration of Trail 1 indicated that:

- There was a statistically significant average improvement of 20% in self-esteem from the start to the end of Trail 1. Indeed, 73% of participants reported better self-esteem scores at the end of Trail 1 compared to at the start, and this was a statistically significant trend.
- 54% of participants reported better mental wellbeing at the end of Trail 1 compared to at the start
- 61% of participants reported improved hope scores at the end of the programme compared to at the start, and this was a statistically significant trend
- There was a statistically significant average increase of 7% in nature connection scores from the start to the end of Trail 1.
- Trail 1 was associated with 9% amelioration in participants' behavioural difficulty scores, with this amelioration reported by half of participants.

Analyses of matched data that assessed changes over all four measured time-points indicated that although participants reported a mean decline in each of the three measures at some stage over the course of the TurnAround experience, end of programme mean values were better than start of programme values.

## Qualitatively reported outcomes

The details and mechanisms of change are very much unique to each individual participant. These In this section, we draw on the qualitative findings of the previous distinct single-phase reports, and consider new data collected from the most recent four phases (those are, Berkshire phases 1 and 2, and Essex phases 7 and 8). New interviews with Mentors from the programme, and programme leaders, are also drawn upon. Firstly, qualitative insight is addressed regarding the participants' development through programme generally, followed by qualitative insight into the lived experience and the change mechanisms of specific components of the programme.

### ***Insight into changes across the programme overall (from start to the end)***

What participants said at the start of the programme

On review of the previous reports and both questionnaire and interview data from the recent four cohorts, at the start of the programme, participants have tended to report that they hoped to have new experiences, gain in confidence, gain qualifications and meet new people via TurnAround. Many participants alluded or explicitly stated that they do not like aspects of their lives; one participant on Phase 4 (Essex) said that they were nervous *'about my future and myself. I feel not so good about my life or about my opinion of myself and other people'*.

Whereas many participants reported not being nervous about anything regarding the programme, others mentioned that they were nervous about leaving their hometown, some of whom had never done so. One participant said: *'I am nervous about how I am going to be here, go to Scotland and other places as I have never been out of Chelmsford before it will stress me out completely and have a mental breakdown'* (Phase 7 – Essex). One of the aspects of the programme that participants were common nervous about was meeting new people; for example, one Berkshire Phase 1 participant reported in the start of programme questionnaire that they were nervous *'about what people think about me'*. Despite it being a cause for nervousness for many, meeting new people, and the prospect of making new friends, was also frequently a cause for excitement, along with going to new places and having new experiences. Examples of qualitative insight from participants' questionnaire responses are given in Table 13. Additionally, Word-Cloud Figures 20 – 22 show the 25 most frequent words across participants' responses to questionnaire items regarding what they were most excited and nervous about, and what they were hoping to gain from their TurnAround experience.

**Table 13. Examples of participants' reported feelings at the start of the programme**

| How participants felt                                     | Examples                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Hoping to gain confidence                                 | <i>'Learning to be more confident around people and more confident within myself'</i> (Phase 7 – Essex)                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Hoping to make friends                                    | <i>'More confidence, less hate. Different skills, more English experiences. Have my love, attitude and faith revived'</i> (Phase 4 - Essex)                                                                                                                                 |
| Hoping to do something different and change themselves    | <i>'Feel better in myself'</i> (Phase 4 - Essex)                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Hoping to gain qualifications and improve their prospects | <i>'The experience of doing something different'</i> (Phase 1 – Essex – comment at participatory event)<br><br><i>"To not be doing crime, to get some qualifications, get a job"</i> (Phase 1 – Essex – comment at participatory event)                                     |
| Nervous about meeting new people                          | <i>'About what people think about me'</i> (Phase 1 – Berkshire)<br><br><i>'Not being accepted for who I am'</i> (Phase 2 – Essex)<br><br><i>'Nervous about meeting new people'</i> (Phase 7 – Essex)                                                                        |
| Nervous about being away from home and in a new place     | <i>'Being away from home'</i> (Phase 3 - Essex)<br><br><i>'Leaving Harlow and things going wrong when we are away and getting stuck'</i> (Phase 7 - Essex)                                                                                                                  |
| Excited to meet new people and make new friends           | <i>'The fact that I'm doing outdoor activities with people I don't know. Team building'</i> (Phase 1 – Berkshire)<br><br><i>'Learning new things about people and what they are interested in'</i> (Phase 7 - Essex)                                                        |
| Excited to see new places and have new experiences        | <i>'Seeing plans on the boat trip.....Travelling- I hate where I live. Wandering in the woods, learning new things about people and what they are interested in'</i> (Phase 4 - Essex)<br><br><i>'Going to Scotland'</i> (Phase 1 – Essex – comment at participatory event) |



Figure 20. Top twenty-five words of participants' questionnaire responses to what they hoped to get out of the TurnAround programme

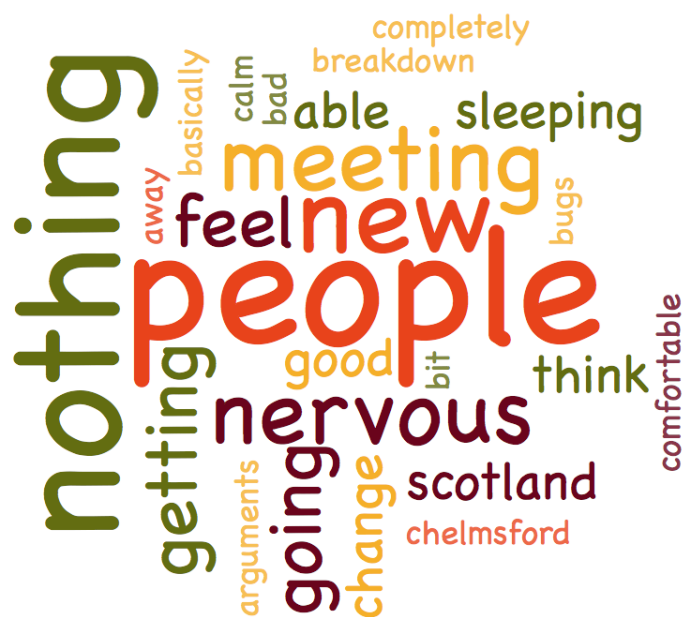


Figure 21. Top twenty-five words of participants' questionnaire responses to what they were excited about most about TurnAround at the start of the programme



**Figure 22. Top twenty-five words of participants' questionnaire responses to what they were excited about most about TurnAround at the start of the programme**

#### Participants' reflections at the end of the programme

Participants reflected very clearly that they saw themselves as having transformed positively over the course of the programme, into more ambitious individuals who better understood themselves and how they might progress through the next phase of their lives. As one participant of the Essex Phase 8 cohort described at the end of the programme:

*"It's (TurnAround) made me the person that I am now. And it's, these, especially with the work that I want to go in with, they're very strong qualities that you need to have in that line of work - you couldn't walk into a social care environment and walk in with your head low and be really insecure and low confidence - worried what people think - you can't - like you're gonna accomplish more feeling higher of yourself. And also you can see, like I set myself bigger goals now than what I would have done, because I know that I'm more than capable, and this has helped me realise that I'm more than capable of pushing myself outside that comfort zone."*

Qualitative feedback gained from questionnaire indicated that participants felt that their TurnAround experience had functioned to improve their social confidence and their ability to remain calm and considered during difficult social situations. Responses also evidenced that the programme was a journey of self-discovery, resulting in participants' increased self-esteem, self-respect and positive feelings about the future. Box 2 gives examples of participants' responses to the questions 'What did you get out of the programme?' and 'What have you learned about yourself?'

**Box 2. Examples of participants' answers to the questions 'What did you get out of the programme?' and 'What have you learned about yourself?'**

| Theme                                                                         | Example answers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Improved ability to remain calm and considered in difficult social situations | <p><i>'Be calm and get along with people and see the better in people'</i></p> <p><i>'To be independent and more controlling of my emotions and more confident'</i></p> <p><i>'Coping with people learning, e.g. Scotland when the whole group left the *unknown*. I think it was unfair. I coped with them being disrespectful - I dealt with it. That's new for me.'</i></p> <p><i>'To have patience and learn to control my anger'</i></p> <p><i>'Keep chilled out. To stay calm.'</i></p> <p><i>'Lots of things. I am calmer about situations and address them in a better mind-set. I don't stress as much.'</i></p> |
| Enhanced general confidence and self-belief in own abilities                  | <p><i>'I am more active and can push myself to the limit and even further'</i></p> <p><i>'I am way more confident. Able to sail a boat/camp in a blizzard/ actively ???'</i></p> <p><i>'I can do more things if I put my head towards it,'</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Improved social comfortableness and confidence                                | <p><i>'I've changed a lot, grown up a lot, more confidence, meet lots of people'</i></p> <p><i>'Learning to talk to other people.'</i></p> <p><i>'I have learned to work as a group and get along with different types of people'</i></p> <p><i>'Help others concentrating learning about talking about my feelings. Working in teams. Reliable'</i></p> <p><i>'Met new people and feel better about myself'</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Increase self-esteem and self-respect                                         | <p><i>'Not to get angry (all the time). Having fun. Being kind to yourself.'</i></p> <p><i>'That I worry about things more than I need to. I used to look at myself and my abilities in a very negative way but it's a lot better now.'</i></p> <p><i>'Learnt to be who I am and how to look after the people that matter to me'</i></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Self-discovery and positive feelings about future life-trajectory             | <p><i>'Less angry, less stressed, I know what I want tin the future'</i></p> <p><i>'I've learned more about who I am and who I want to be'</i></p> <p><i>'That I am willing to learn new things'</i></p> <p><i>'TA let me try new goals and I see I can do many things i never thought I could. See there is more to life'</i></p> <p><i>'I'm more confident, like myself a lot more'</i></p> <p><i>'That I am an alright guy, I can accomplish goals, I have a future, I can make a difference'</i></p>                                                                                                                  |

### *Enhanced confidence and social mentality*

Within one-to-one interviews with researchers, participants spoke of a newfound or reinstated confidence and comfortableness in themselves, and ability to work with, support and take support from others. One participant reflected that:

*"I would always care what other people thought (before starting the programme), too cautious about 'what if he thinks this, what if he thinks that', but I'm not like that anymore"*

Indeed, these are changes that often start on the very first dates of the programme, on a camping weekend held at Wilderness Foundation's own Chatham Green site, as illustrated by a female participant of the Berkshire Phase 1 cohort:

*"Just because I'm very, like if I see something and I know it's going to be difficult, I just think 'I can't do it'. Like earlier when we were doing the... the tarpaulin. I was like, I stood there and I was like 'I can't do this', and in the end I was like, I looked at it, and still I was like 'I can't do it' but in the end I was like 'yeah I can – yeah I can, a little bit of help.'"*

Participants frequently identified that a key process contributing to their enhanced confidence was that of instances of being pushed outside of their comfort zone. For example, one participants said that:

*"Just kind of being pushed out of my comfort zone over and over and over again, it kind of made me a stronger person, well IT HAS made me a stronger person.... there are parts of it where I really struggled with it, but after I've come out and I just feel like I'm ready for the next challenge really... after each one yeah. Because I came out of it and I was like 'oh that's proved that I can cope with something like that again'"*

The programme also fosters a sense of control and a sense positive empowerment to deal with difficult social situations, and these are changes that go on to drive positive transformations across numerous aspects of participants' lives:

*"I guess I think differently about situations, like I want to solve them I don't want to just leave them and let them get worse anymore. Before, I wouldn't have, like if something bad was going on in my family that I didn't know much about, I probably would have just like let it happen, yeah now I see that it makes it so much better knowing that I've sort of solved the problems"*

*"The biggest change? I guess I being able to solve problems and being able to sort things out, yeah erm, I guess, also with, the whole reason I'm on the project is because I was about to get kicked out of school and the school was throwing different things at me to try and keep me in school and none of them were working and then one day I just, they showed me TurnAround and the Wilderness and then I just, at the start I thought it's just gonna be another things that's not gonna work, but it's really worked. I've managed to stay in school, all of my grades and my effort grades in school have gone up. I guess life at home as well, is much, much easier right now as well."*



### *Transferring TurnAround outcomes to other life domains*

Many participants were able to clearly describe the transfer programme-related changes in themselves into other domains of their lives. For example:

*“Interviewer: Is there any other bits of your life where this change (a more positive and ‘can do’ mind-set) in you has been helpful in some way?”*

*Participant: yeah I went on a course in digital marketing, and now I'm going to get my English and Maths. Yeah, what I'm trying to do with my life right now, because I did really bad at school, I'm just trying to get like all the grades that I did really bad on, and I'm getting help with my English and maths at the moment to try to catch up on the things I missed out on years ago.*

*...Interviewer: ....so what did you take out of the TurnAround project experience that has or is helping you with that career stuff...*

*Participant: It's mainly learning I can survive outside of my comfort zone - it's almost been like a rehab kind of thing because about two years back I had a job that was an apprenticeship but my mental health got really bad, every day it just got worse and worse and they let me go, because, I said 'I can't really do it anymore' because I had a mental breakdown at work I think”*

Another participant identified that positive personal changes taken from their TurnAround experience had helped both in their decision to go to college the following September, and to remain in a job that they had initially struggled with:

*“Participant: At the start I wasn't really amazingly good at it (the job) and I didn't really get up with the pace, and then I suppose because I was also doing the wilderness course as well I think I was kind of happy to leave more or less after two months because I felt like I still wasn't getting to grips with it, but then after a while I thought 'oh just keep on going, it seems, I don't really want to be, I don't know, I didn't want to seem one of those people who just throws in the towel after like....”*

*Interviewer: “...So you carried on?”*

*Participant: “Yeah. So I'm still there now”*

Finally, one of the younger participants explained that the programme had taught him to remain calm and considered when met with affront:

*“I'm definitely a lot more happier, in the trails, like I can see it straight way as soon as I get back home I can, I want to be back in that situation more and I'm a lot more happier, a lot more relaxed as well because, usually, say somebody tries to start on me (fight) I'm just straight in there just like billy big balls, erm I've been more relaxed and I've been more calm about it and I've just been like, erm, someone at school punched me in the face and I didn't even hit them back and went straight to the teacher and told my headmaster, and you wouldn't have got that from me a year ago at all.”*

### *Nature as a tool*

Participants identified that their TurnAround experience had developed their emotional connection with nature environments, which could be a usable asset for their futures in dealing with mental stresses. Within an end of programme group discussion one participant poignantly noted:

*“(long pause)... it's kind of like, this is gonna sounds weird but it's kind of like you mate, because wherever you go like it's following you, like it's always there but each time you see it it's different, like it's never the same, like each direction you look, in, you're gonna see some sort of like tree, or a leaf, just say.”*

Others said that:

*“It (nature) clears my head a bit, and it gives you a break from like the mainstream world, like it refreshes you I suppose”*

*“It replenishes you”*

### Mentors' and referral agencies' reflections on programme outcomes for participants

In interviews with University of Essex researchers, Mentors described what they felt were some of the more frequently observed changes in participants across the course of the programme. Mentors emphasised that although there are instances whereby positive changes are not achieved, commonly, clear improvements in participants' self-esteem, confidence, acceptance of themselves, maturity and willingness to take responsibility and control of specific situations and life choices are observed across the course of the programme. One mentor summarised:

*“When I think about the young people that I've seen come through the project, at the start they are very down on themselves, they are quite negative towards who they are – the language they use to describe themselves is usually laced with profanities and they kind of you know ‘I'm fucked up’ or ‘I'm a waste of space’ or those kinds of things they think about themselves, and I think as the project goes on they start to change the way they think about themselves but also what they believe about themselves in terms of capabilities, what they are worth, what they should be.”*

Mentors identified that key mechanisms that enable these improvements include:

- *“taking young people outside their comfort zone and giving them the opportunity to experience the fact that when they get outside their comfort zone it doesn't always end in disaster - they can deal with it and feel real sense of achievement from that”*
- *“putting them consistently in situations where their social skills are put to the test (and) developed... the young people are given the chance to work on their social skills”*
- A very different approach to behaviour change than participants have experienced previously through traditional routes”

- *“what everyone’s highlighted, whether that’s the police or social service or carers or whoever, (is the) continual or reoccurring statement of ‘you are trouble,’ or ‘it’s your fault’... what we create is an environment where they can start to discover the positives, and that gives the confidence, I think it was always there but they’ve just had their attention directed away from it because of other factors and external influences”*

A communication written by the referral agency of one of the participant of the Phase 7 - Essex cohort reflects on the transformation observed in the participant’s behaviour and outlook (participant’s name has been changed):

*‘Since completing the Turnaround project Max has grown in confidence. When he stood up and gave his speech and not only that but offer to go first was a major thing for him. We were all so proud of him and could see the difference in increased confidence. Max also had the confidence to walk into the leaving and after care Christmas celebration where there were 30/40 unaccompanied asylum seekers and organise the pool tournament. Max was very hesitant at first because he thought he wouldn’t be able to communicate with them. However, he went round taking their names, asking them to spell them and then organised the run of play. Max has also joined the asylum seeker football team. He introduced himself and joined their WhatsApp group. Again this may not seem like a big thing but in Harlow it has been hard at times to break down the barriers in terms of different groups mixing.*

*Max has told me that he would like to work with me to find a college or training course in the new year and is also considering some part time work. Max has told me that he would like to volunteer on the Turnaround project and has attended one of the taster sessions for new participants in that capacity.*

*Max does not stop talking about his experiences on the project and everything he has learned. Max was able to draw on his experience of restorative justice to be able to settle a huge falling out he had with someone in a very mature and understanding manner.*

*As a professional I feel Max was extremely lucky to have been able to experience this therapeutic and educational project.’*

### ***Qualitative insight into the wilderness trails***

The environmental setting of the wilderness trails is a key mechanism that affords transformational experiences for the TurnAround cohort. As one peer mentor described, the remoteness of the trail environment strips the 'noise' of everyday life from participants' minds, enabling them to first focus on momentary experiences and then to reflect meaningfully:

*"the removing of loud noise of the world and being in that wild space allows the young person and again going back to that team building and that building the safe space, goes back to them being completely who they are and being completely comfortable with who they are, and knowing that the people around them are not going to judge them, the world's not gonna see it - and I think that's when the confidence starts to grow and the self-belief starts to grow, and the ability to think that they can achieve things, and the achieving of things, and the saying to somebody 'you just walked up that hill', you know, lots of encouragement and that builds the self-esteem. Trust, again going back to being in that situation but also trusting themselves when they say 'I can do this' - trusting themselves that they can" (Mentor)*

The trails enable metaphorical understanding and engagement with the challenges of natural environments, as a learning tool for participants understanding of themselves and their behavioural choices:

*"None of us are perfect, and I think being in that wild space and being in that imperfect space and dealing with the challenges and the issues that that imperfect brings, I think helps with the acceptance of ones self... using nature and using the beauty of nature and using and interpreting nature and using that in reflection and taking that into yourself I'd say a fundamental foundation of the project yes." (Mentor)*

### **Challenge**

It has been noted already that being pushed outside of their comfort zone was frequently a key process for participants' mind-set development. Many of these instances occur during the wilderness trails, in the form of both physical challenges such as erecting tents in torrential weather in the mountains, and social challenges within the cohort. As one participant alluded:

*"There weren't really any getting away, which means I just had to deal with it, like you hit a point where you're just like 'there ain't any way I can get out of this'.... I just thought 'I can sit here feeling depressed about it or I can try to make some fun out of it and try to make the experience as enjoyable as I can while it lasts'..."*

And:

*"because there were people there that also had mental health problems we could relate to each other, and we knew what we were all experiencing and everything, and I reckon that made it a lot easier to deal with... we just read each other's body language, like 'yeah he needs a minute, we'll just leave him alone for a bit', and he's come back and we'd just carry on as normal really, so yeah"*

On one of the trails of TurnAround Essex Phase 8, there was a particularly difficult instance whereby a participant left walked away from the rest of the group during the night. Reflecting on this instance it was clear that the difficulty of the experience had led to personal development across the group members:

*“As bad as it can be, you always see it through, or, I think you can be frightened but always find a way to get through it, even no matter how bad the situation can be. Like I felt like that was kind of the case in Scotland” (Participant)*

*“I think so too, we like, that was real like (bad), but we smashed right through it, and for me to be able to say something nice about somebody after that happening as well is very difficult, and I did it” (Participant)*

As alluded in the quote above, the wilderness trails appear to be an integral part of the TurnAround programme in terms of developing participants’ sense of self-competence. One participant stated that:

*“... in Scotland, so when you're wild camping I really didn't think I could do it, and it's away for three days, and you're just kind of relying on what you've got, if I'm fully honest I didn't think I could do it, but I just kind of, I still went along with it and I just thought it still can be done, but I didn't realise I'd see myself all the way through it.... (it made me feel) pretty proud really, happy that I've kind of accomplished something”*

#### Social bonding and development

At the end of the wilderness trail in Scotland, one participant from the Phase 7 – Essex cohort reflected that through the trail he had learned that ‘I need to stay calmer and could of helped more’. Another reported that the trail experience enabled them to feel more open and honest with other people. When asked what was it about that trip that made them feel that way, they alluded to the social dynamic whilst on trail, responding:

*“Participant: Because people were kind of the same way, so they was honest about stuff, what they have going on at home and then you know.”*

*Interviewer: how did that make you feel then? When people were telling you personal stuff about their lives?*

*Participant: I suppose it's kind of, yeah like a lot of trust - that's what I'm trying to think of. They kind of have put their trust in to you, and, yeah...*

*Interviewer: How does that make you feel, the fact that they obviously trust you, like, and what, did that then change the way you dealt with them or other people going forwards after that?*

*Participant: Yeah, I think just to be more a lot more caring, and I suppose we were a lot more understanding as well"*

This insight elucidates participants' change towards being more socially confident and able to trust others. Another participant explained that this kind of enhancement of trust and feeling comfortable with himself and others led to his talking to others meaningfully, alluding to increased likelihood of his embracing socially supportive networks more in the future:

*"Participant: So we've got, we are kind of like 'no emotion, don't show emotion', and the first time I ever actually expressed my feelings to man or a boy was on the first trail that I did, and that was a REALLY big thing for me, I never shared my emotions with a male before*

*Interviewer: So having done that, what did that make you feel like?*

*Participant: I felt like I could actually talk to my male friends about more things, like, not just talk about football and Playstation"*

As alluded to within the two previous quotes, the group context of the programme is an important aspect for the young people; as another participant said:

*"Probably the other young people has been the biggest thing in the whole of the journey, yeah, not because like where we've been and what we've been doing wasn't enough, but I feel like the people that have been on this trail... I had a lot of panic attacks, a lot of tears, and I've never really been like that, but all the \*other participants\* were so supportive, and so was all the staff members, and I felt like I was in the best place for it to happen. I'm just glad it was under the circumstances that it was... a bubble of protection is really important in my scenario, purely just because I never really know what I'm capable of, and if anything was to ever go wrong, them five \*other participants\* would be the people that I would want around me..."*

### ***Summary of Qualitatively reported outcomes***

Insight from participants and mentors alike indicated that TurnAround fosters positive transformations within participants, perhaps most notably, increases in self-esteem. A key mechanism of this is participants' experiencing social and physical challenges outside of their comfort zones.

Whereas qualitative insight consistently reported participants to have had poor low self-esteem at the start of the programme, and also consistently reported large and meaningful increases in self-esteem across the programme duration, these findings were not fully reflected via participants' reporting on the numerical self-esteem measure. It is possible that some participants gave socially desirable answers via the questionnaire measure at the start of the programme, although this can only be speculated. The Rosenberg self-esteem scale contains some negatively worded items, which may have provoked a defensive, self-protecting response. A similar story may also be applicable for quantitatively reported nature connection, with participants possibly feeling that they should portray themselves as 'nature loving' in order to convince themselves or others that they were suitable for engagement with the programme.

Both mentors and participants commonly highlighted that engagement on the TurnAround programme had developed their/participants' ability to cope with difficult social situations, and had made them more socially comfortable and confident. The trail expeditions provide the greatest challenges within the programme, but reflection upon those experiences across all components of the programme (mentoring, social evenings and workshops) play a crucial role in participants' reported change in mind-set.

The group dynamic can be crucial to positive progression. With the guidance from the programme leader, the cohort becomes self-supportive, serving as a positive experience and demonstration of social support for participants who may not have any previous instances of this.

Insight also championed the natural environment as an important ingredient of the programme, particular as a setting for the wilderness trails as it affords opportunities both for challenge and for reflection, away from the noise of everyday life.

Across the duration of the programme, participants move away from negative self-views, by developing a better understanding of themselves, their thought processes and their behaviours. This functions to increase their sense of autonomy and positive self-empowerment regarding control of their acute behaviours, and more generally their future plans and prospects regarding social relationships and employment or education.

Participants become able to successfully apply their learning from the programme to scenarios, situations and motivations in other domains of their lives, and very often to the domains that have been problematic for those specific individuals. This is both through direct application of a changed mind-set, and through use of trail experiences as metaphors for behavioural situations and approaches.

## Key strengths and challenges of the programme

### Key strengths of TurnAround

Over the course of the past decade, a key strength of the TurnAround programme has been that its design is informed heavily and expertly by theory, and that its approach has been continually modified by ten consecutive years of experience. Leadership within the Wilderness Foundation has remained consistent over the past decade, which has aided consistency across the separate phases of the programmes' implementation, and enabled insight from each phase to contribute to their continued development. Related to this, some programme leaders have been short-term employees or interns (such as social worker trainees). Although all following the described programme format under guidance from longer-term programme leaders and management, over the years of involvement from a range of staff has contributed to some refinement of 'what works and what doesn't', with each programme leader bringing a slightly different skill-set and approach.

A unique strength of TurnAround is the combination of its components. The efficacy of the programme overall is strengthened by the dynamic interaction between some of its components. For example, social evenings, mentoring and workshops prepare the cohort for the trails in a way that serves to maximise outcomes. Additionally, as well as focussing on other important tasks and process in their own right, the workshop and social evening sessions later provide opportunity for reflection upon trail experiences, thereby further ensuring maximum learning and gains. As one mentor noted the importance of workshops throughout the programme:

*"I think it's because it (workshops) maintains momentum. So once you've done the wilderness journey and started the transformational process, if you didn't have the follow-up workshops to keep reinforcing and bringing their minds back to the things they've achieved and using those skills, you'd lose momentum, so I think they have a real significance to keep the progression going"*

This kind of strength in combination was evidenced within End of Programme interviews with participants of the Essex Phase 8 cohort. For example, on being asked what were the key ingredients of TurnAround that drive personal development one participant responded:

*"I guess the **trails** mainly, because that's where you face the most problems, but you really need to like, everyone needs to work as a team, and then like the **workshops** and things like that, it really helps you reflect on everything that's went on in the trails and it helps you reinforce those new lessons, and then it makes you also realise certain things that you may need to improve on as well"*

In another example, a participant alludes to their development as a chronological chain of events across the programme process:

*Interviewer: "So for that thing in particular, that 'well I'm comfortable with myself now', was there any activities or moments on the project that really made you more like that? Or was it just the project gradually as a process got you there?"*



*Participant: "Yeah, just , because, yeah. One big chain of events really - one thing led on to another thing, and then.. just got better and better and better.... yeah I just got better and better and better and better, and then, yeah"*

A further key strength of the TurnAround approach is that although with some exceptions, it is somewhat flexible in dealing with participants on a case-by-case basis. The mentoring component of the programme ensures that there is a detailed and bespoke focus on each individual participant, which compliments the group setting throughout the other components. Talking in relation to the bespoke quality of the mentoring component, one Mentor described that TurnAround mentoring is *"not one size fits all... I was mentoring two young people from the group and they were both very different in what support they needed and how my sessions would pan out with them"*.

As highlighted by qualitative insight, some of TurnAround's key strengths are those of the programme's approach and environment being something different for participants. That the programme is presented as optional, and that participants are only enrolled onto the programme if they want to be, is often different from other services that may have been previously encountered to that point. Further, that TurnAround is based on challenging outdoor activities is usually a different approach to more traditional counselling, behaviour therapy or educational services encountered by participant. These two characteristics seem to shift participants' focus onto themselves, with conscience wrestling replacing previously encountered more dictatorial style instruction. That the natural environmental settings of the programme provides further novelty and a removal of difficult everyday 'noise' and better enabling introspective, contemplative and immersed focus is another key strength of TurnAround.

## **Positive and negative determinants of successful engagement**

Across all TurnAround staff interviewed, it was consistently easier for staff to identify challenges to successful programme engagement, that is, 'what doesn't work', than it was to identify clear characteristics of 'what does work'.

### **Awareness of self and desire for change**

Interviews both with programme leaders and mentors identified the most important determinants of successful engagement to be participants' awareness of themselves and their current situation, and their own desire for changing; as well as their openness to engage with the programme and its inevitable taking them out of their comfort zone.

*"Some of those boys who were just doing this to kind of get out of school, so they were using it, and we've had kids come on TurnAround where it's something to do, so their commitment actually to a change process is very low. They're just ticking a box or filling a space, or their parents want them to come – you just can't penetrate that. And then you've got others who are willing to show some level of vulnerability, and vulnerability is one of the key elements here, and to not see vulnerability as a weakness but to see vulnerability as a strength, and when you can work with that young person who*

*is able to be willing to risk a little bit of their vulnerability, you've got an enormous opportunity to work with that."* (Programme leader)

Commenting on an instance of successful participant engagement, a mentor noted:

*"I think she recognised that she had made some choices in her life that weren't healthy, and I think she had the maturity to know that things had to change... I think it's really important to have that level of maturity, because if they don't recognise a need for change then they're not really likely to change"* (Mentor)

### **Good early engagement**

One mentor suggested that the first trail experience can be particularly important to whether participants engage with the rest of the programme or not, describing first what had led to one participant's notably successful progression, and then giving an example of another participant's disengagement:

*"I think she had had a very good first trail, I wasn't around for that one but she'd gone away and discovered actually she enjoys being outside and it wasn't anything to worry about."*

*".... and I think that, even though we'd briefed them and we'd prepped them and we'd done the initial experiences, you know the camping weekend and things – it was so far removed from their realm of experience... I know that young man didn't complete the course because it was just too much for him at that point"*

### **Support from family**

One mentor identified that buy-in from participants' families can boost the likelihood of successful engagement, for emotional, social and logistical reasons:

*I'd say, a home background which is supportive and encouraging of them being involved (in the programme) – that's at the practical level – someone who is prepared to drive them to things consistently, but it's also if they're wobbling, someone who is going to encourage them – 'you know, you owe it to your mentor, he's just driven half an hour to come and meet you, you owe it to them to make the meeting'*

Indeed, one participant who successfully completed TurnAround mentioned the support of her family within an interview with a researcher on the first weekend of Berkshire Phase 1:

*'actually, now I've been doing this, my family have been more interested in what I'm up to, which is nice because I don't normally talk to them. So hopefully...'*

Programme leaders also highlighted that a number of participants enrolled onto TurnAround do so following engagement with Wilderness Foundations' 'OutThere' programme, which is shorter. Participants who enrol via this route are often more open to change, and are relatively more

comfortable in recognising and saying that they want to change themselves, although they (most often) do not know how to do so.

### **Drop-outs and cliques**

Perhaps obvious because 'at-risk' individuals can be difficult to maintain programme engagement with, a major challenge to the success of TurnAround cohorts are instances of participants dropping out from the programme or only engaging inconsistently. This can destabilise the cohort, changing the group dynamic and sometimes raising doubts in other cohort members.

*"I've seen groups be less successful where there are early drop-outs, so if you've got a group where a certain proportion drop out of the programme for whatever reason quite early-on, you get a sense that that in some way undermines the sense of commitment of the others. Sorry, not necessarily dropping out altogether, but if you have a handful of individuals who are inconsistent in coming along to workshops or trails or whatever, that feels like it's undermining to the rest of the group. And, again this is a negative, but you can flip it into a positive. (Mentor)*

However, as alluded to in the above quote, from the perspective of participants, despite participation disengagement having initial detrimental impact to the remaining group, it can also foster a stronger sense of relatedness throughout the remainder of the programme. After initially identifying that when peers do not take part in trails, or drop out from the programme it "it sort of lowers morale" of the cohort, one participant reported that: *"I think that probably the only positive from people quitting or stopping taking part for whatever reason, it sort of brought the group closer together, the people who stayed on."*

Although they can be learned from, divisive cliques can also become a problem for cohorts' progress, making numerous interpersonal relationships within a cohort more difficult and thereby stunting some interactions and group processes that are important positive outcomes. One mentor even noted that it makes it more difficult for mentors and project leaders to work broadly when the group is together. Additionally, with the formation of cliques, the undermining disengagement or attendance inconsistency of one participant can quickly lead to others following suit.

Across questionnaires and one-to-one interviews with researchers, a number of mentors and participants discussed that further efforts in screening the participants before enrolment could help to minimise problems with participants disengaging with the programme for example:

*"It was definitely something that was spoken about a few times and actually was spoken about during graduation that they were upset that people didn't really commit thoroughly and some of them did say that we need a better screening process, to guarantee people to finish – and that's coming from them." (Mentor)*

## Drug / alcohol habits and severe mental health issues

Drug and/or alcohol habits were identified as ‘barriers’ to the processes of the programme, and that that these are consistently detrimental to the successful engagement for both individual participants and cohorts overall. For example programme leaders said:

*“Where we’ve got really quite heavy drug use, I think it always backfires... it’s a barrier between you and the young person... you’re dealing with another, like a little double person, but that also brings up paranoia, anxiety, and a range of shut-down behaviours.”* (Programme leaders)

*“I’ve certainly seen individuals who are, who have a reasonably serious and consistent drug habit, that’s a definite counter-indicator to getting positive benefits out of the programme”* (Mentor)

Further, these problems are exacerbated if the cohort also includes young people experiencing severe mental health issues.

*“We’ve dealt with lots of young people who’ve got a borderline personality disorder, lots of people on the autistic spectrum, we’ve got lots of young people with severe depression and anxiety, but it’s the scale of it. When we’ve had drugs and borderline we just can’t bring the level of rationality into the programme that we need”* (Programme leader)

However, a programme leader also highlights that drugs and alcohol are “such a common thread” through the young people who enrol onto the programme, that it would not necessarily be wise or viable to exclude participants on the basis of these characteristics; and the presence of large inter-individual differences suggests that suitability for enrolment should continue to be decided on a case-by-case basis following interviews with individual young people.

## Key findings, conclusion and recommendations

### Key findings

TurnAround is successful in enrolling adolescents who are most needing and at-risk within the community in relation to mental wellbeing and behavioural difficulties. At the start of the programme, the total behavioural difficulties scores of 74% of the surveyed sample fell within the borderline – abnormal categories, and 78% of participants reported mental wellbeing scores below the national mean for 16 – 24 year olds, with 45% being categorised as ‘low wellbeing’.

Analyses of matched numerical data indicated that:

- There was a statistically significant average improvement of 36% in mental wellbeing from the start to the end of the programme, with 90% of participants reporting higher scores.
- Participants reported a statistically significant average 45% increase in hope from the start to end of their programme engagement, with a further statistically significant 82% of participants reporting some extent of improvement.
- Half of participants reported increases in self-esteem (53%) and nature connection (52%) scores respectively over the course of the programme, although reported mean increases were only 1% and 3% respectively. Socially desirable answering at the start of programme should be considered as a possibility in relation to these measures. Emphasis may therefore be placed upon qualitative findings, particularly for self-esteem.
- Participants reported an average 10% amelioration in behavioural difficulties from the start to end of their programme engagement, with 61% of participants reporting some kind of improvement. Greatest improvement was in the subscales relating to emotional difficulties (17% amelioration of this difficulty type) and peer difficulties (16% amelioration).

Analyses of data collected at the start and end of the first trail of the programme indicated that compared to at the start of the trail, at the end: 73% of participants reported better self-esteem scores, 54% of participants reported better mental wellbeing, 61% of participants reported improved hope. The trail experience also led to a statistically significant 7% increase in participants feelings of connection to nature, and a 9% amelioration in participants’ behavioural difficulty scores, with this amelioration reported by half of participants.

Qualitative insight from participants and mentors alike indicated that TurnAround fosters positive transformations within participants, perhaps most notably, increases in self-esteem. A key mechanism of this is participants’ experiencing social and physical challenges outside of their comforts zones. Both mentors and participants commonly highlighted that engagement on the TurnAround programme had developed participants’ ability to cope with difficult social situations, and had made them more socially comfortable and confident. The trail expeditions provide the greatest challenges within the programme, but reflection upon those experiences across all

components of the programme (mentoring, social evenings and workshops) play a crucial role in participants' reported change in mind-set.

The group dynamic can be crucial to positive progression. With the guidance from the programme leader, the cohort becomes self-supportive, serving as a positive experience and demonstration of social support for participants who may not have any previous instances of this. Insight also championed the natural environment as an important ingredient of the programme, particular as a setting for the wilderness trails as it affords opportunities both for challenge and for reflection, away from the noise of everyday life.

Across the duration of the programme, participants move away from negative self-views, by developing a better understanding of themselves, their thought processes and their behaviours. This functions to increase their sense of autonomy and positive self-empowerment regarding control of their acute behaviours, and more generally their future plans and prospects regarding social relationships and employment or education. Participants become able to successfully apply their learning from the programme to scenarios, situations and motivations in other domains of their lives, and very often to the domains that have been problematic for those specific individuals. This is both through direct application of a changed mind-set, and through use of trail experiences as metaphors for behavioural situations and approaches.

Key ingredients for participants' successful engagement include participants having awareness of themselves and their situation, having a desire to change, having support from their family or peers, and having successful engagement with early parts of the programme. Challenges to the successful implementation of the programme across a cohort include dropouts, cliques within the cohort, drug and alcohol habits, and severe mental health issues.

A key strength of TurnAround is the combination of its components. That is, the efficacy of the programme overall is strengthened by the dynamic interaction between some of its components. Further strengths of the programme include the fact that it was designed and is continually further informed by theory and evidence, and that the environmental settings of the programme provide further novelty and a removal of difficult everyday 'noise' and better enabling introspective, contemplative and immersed focus.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of TurnAround is to enable vulnerable young people to make positive changes in their lives via engagement in a therapeutic journey that centres on nature-based activities. Considering the findings of the current report together with the findings of previous single-phase reports, it can be concluded that TurnAround is successful in accomplishing its primary aims of engaging with and improving the self-esteem, mental wellbeing and behavioural choices of youth at risk. When contrasted with participants' previous trajectories and likelihoods of at-risk behaviours and/or longer-term implications of low self-esteem and poor mental wellbeing, TurnAround offers great potential for savings across local authority service budgets.

## **Recommendations**

Following from the reported findings that cliques and dropouts can negatively impact on the successful engagement of individual participants and sometimes entire cohorts, this report recommends the continued allocation of time to rigorous screening of participants being enrolled onto the programme, so to ensure lowest possible dropout rates and the highest possible rate of successful engagement across the duration of the phase.

It is recommended that where possible, any future data collection similar to that featured in this report also includes collection of data from matched 'control group' individuals who do not enrol onto TurnAround. This occurred previously in the evaluation of Essex Phase 3, offering a valuable comparison of the trajectories of TurnAround participants in relation to peers who did not take part in the programme.

Currently, information on past participants' behavioural and employment activities in the years that follow the programme is limited. Improved and increased monitoring would offer valuable insight into the longer-term trajectories of participants, thereby furthering understanding of the potential importance of the TurnAround experience across the lifespan.

In order to compliment the current evidence regarding the efficacy of the TurnAround programme, detailed economic cost-benefit analysis would be of great value. It is expected that TurnAround offers a cost-effective approach that should be of great interest to local services and authorities.

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