

A photograph of two young women walking in a field. They are wearing green jackets and backpacks. The woman in the foreground is seen from the back, and the woman behind her is smiling and looking to the right. The background is a blurred green field.

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SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE

**IN FEELING SECURE WITHIN
THEIR SOCIAL GROUPS
AND NETWORKS**



The extent to which a young person feels connected to, accepted and understood by those around them, be that in their social lives, at school or in the workplace, has a large impact on their mental health and overall general wellbeing.

Fear of being judged, labelled or feeling different can leave many young people fearing social situations and feeling anxious. With the concept of a young person's community constantly changing and expanding, the need for a young person to feel safe and confident in the multitude of networks in which they find themselves interacting with others, is vital.



SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE

IN FEELING SECURE WITHIN THEIR SOCIAL GROUPS AND NETWORKS

Each Outward Bound course is underpinned by an understanding of the basic needs young people have in order for them to feel, safe, valued and understood by those around them. In 2022 we incorporated a fifth value, *a belief that all staff and participants should always feel valued and encouraged to be themselves*. We are committed to ensuring the outdoors is a space for everyone, and over the past five years, we have made considerable progress towards our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategic goals.

As a charity, remaining relevant and living our values is paramount for our continued success. Our primary mission is positive impact for young people.



I didn't feel the difference between the adult that my instructor was and myself - he was like a friend.

Summer Adventures participant, 19, 2023.



Our belief is in developing human potential. As we strive to become bigger, to continue doing impactful work with an ever-increasing number of young people in an ever more diverse world, the need to continue recruiting and retaining the best staff from the widest pool will become greater. We also want all of our staff to have a deep understanding of the wide variety of backgrounds our young people come from, so that they are enabled and empowered to recognise the opportunities for influencing inclusive culture through leadership, decision making and process planning.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion milestones achieved at Outward Bound since 2022

- Led and delivered a range of events and initiatives to raise awareness of young people from diverse ethnic minority backgrounds in the outdoors.
- Delivered three Women's Outdoor Leadership courses, providing training to 26 prospective female outdoor leaders.
- Recruited and trained 25 EDI Champions across Outward Bound.
- Made changes to our HR policies and procedures to ensure they are inclusive of people from a range of different backgrounds.
- Delivered training to ensure we are able to understand and deliver the most impactful experiences possible for young people from all backgrounds.
- Collaborated with our partners in the Access Unlimited coalition* to facilitate a series of sessions sharing best practice with EDI in the outdoor sector.

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We believe that the outdoors should be accessible, and a place where everyone, regardless of background, identity or where they come from, can feel accepted and inspired. We want to ensure that Outward Bound reflects this, and we strive to be somewhere where every young person can see themselves represented so that they feel seen and understood. We believe, by making changes to our visual identity, our actions and approach, that our courses have potential to be even more impactful for young people. This is a key focus for us moving forwards and is expressed in our fifth value - the belief that our staff and participants should always feel valued and encouraged to be themselves.

Kate O'Brien, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Strategic Lead, Outward Bound.

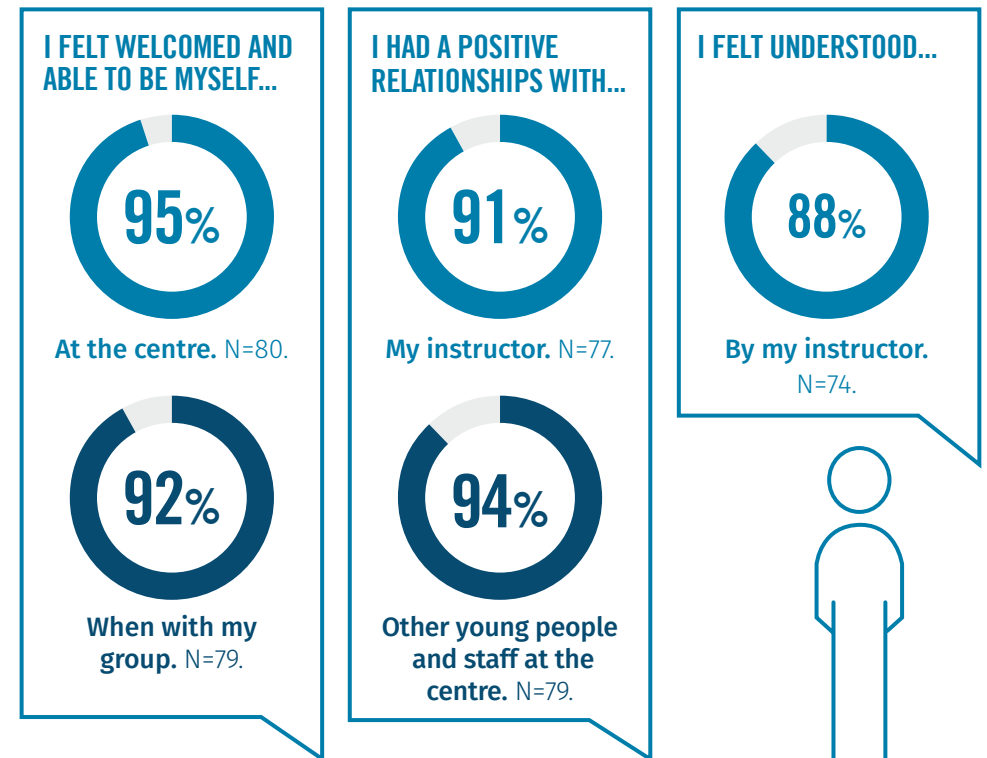
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At the start of 2023, influenced by our EDI strategy, we worked together with Developing Youth Practice on an 'Understanding Young People' initiative. This involved trust-wide training underpinned by Choice Theory developed by Dr. William Glasser¹⁵. The theory uses five basic psychological needs (including love and belonging, self-worth and power) to explain an individual's behaviours, emotions and thoughts.

Guided by an understanding of these basic needs and a young person's context, we aim to provide a setting where each individual can feel valued, able to be themselves and ready to take part in experiences that have potential to positively impact their self-perception, mindsets and future ambitions.

The percentage of young people reporting they experienced feeling welcomed, positive relationships and felt understood 'often' or 'always' whilst at Outward Bound.

Figure 2.



*(YHA (England & Wales), Scouts, Girlguiding, Field Studies Council and the 10 English National Parks).

During an adventure in the outdoors, teamworking skills such as communication, problem solving and leadership are put into practice. Each face-to-face interaction, be that out on the water, in the mountains or during social time on the course, are key in developing rapport and a connection. Spending time with others, getting to know each other, sharing unique and often emotional experiences away from social labels that may exist in their home, school or work lives allow a young person to deepen their relationships with those around them. Regardless of the stage they are at in their education and careers, it provides opportunities to develop an understanding of one another, respect and sense of support that they may not have felt before.

Figure 10.



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I used to feel embarrassed when I was wrong, but now because I've gotten closer with my team, I feel confident no matter what. My favourite moment on the course was when we made it to the top of the mountain and reached the summit together. It shows we are equal and care about each other strongly.

Abdullah, 12, Dixon's Trinity Academy, Bradford.

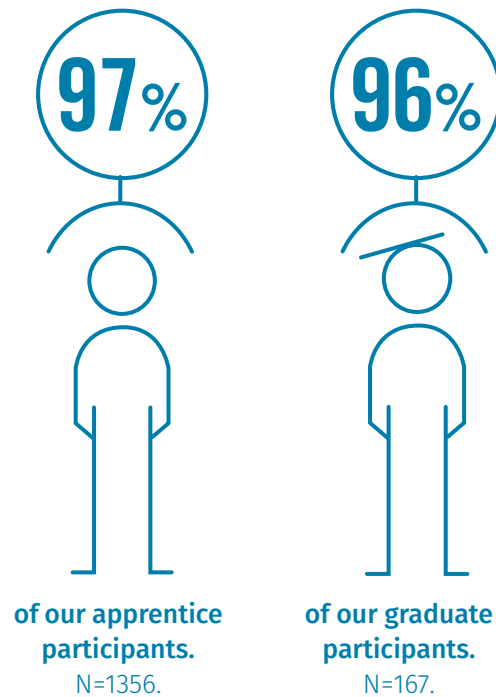
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Over a ten year period, October 2012 to September 2022, we evaluated our early careers courses to understand how apprentices and graduates benefit from an Outward Bound programme. Results were analysed based on the participants' ability to demonstrate key competencies. Working with others was one of several key standout requirements highlighted by our clients and instructional teams.

Following the Outward Bound programme, apprentices and graduates reported increases in their ability to work with others. Average percentage of respondents (between 2012 and 2022) who agreed they were able to 'fully' or 'mostly' meet the 'working with others' learning objective.

Figure 11.



Outward Bound has helped me to be more confident with new people when working collaboratively in a group, this helped me to be more vocal when expressing an opinion. The main benefit from Outward Bound was understanding that different personalities of people mean adapting personally to achieve better results.

Male Participant, Rolls-Royce, commenting in 2022, six years after his course.



Young people feeling understood, and understanding others

At Outward Bound, there is an emphasis on seeking to understand one another - to understand an individual's story and, with it, their behaviour. This approach increases empathy on many levels. Young people leave Outward Bound feeling safer and more supported in their relationships and more connected with their peers and teachers. With a heightened sense of belonging and security, an individual feels more confident, willing to try new things and more comfortable expressing their emotions. Belonging is a key component to resilience and an individual's ability to adapt to changing situations and overcome challenges.

Results from Outward Bound International's Outcome Survey³ indicate that young people improve their resilience, their social competence and their compassion for others after taking part in one of our courses.

At the end of their course, young people reported improved scores for resilience, their social competence and compassion for others compared to their retrospective pre-course score. % of participants reporting improved scores. N=1337.

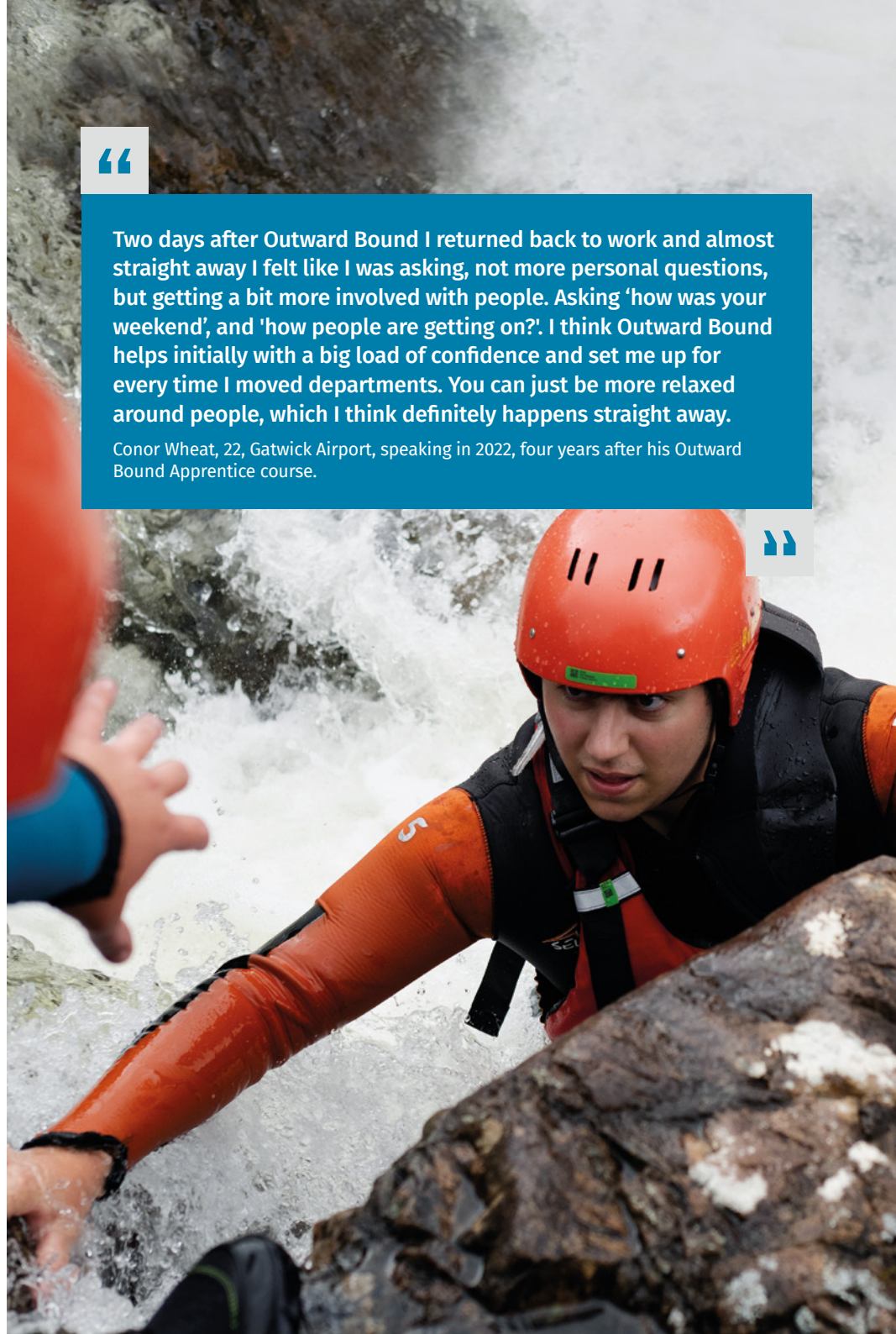
Figure 12.



73% ↗
RESILIENCE

69% 💬
SOCIAL COMPETENCE

76% ❤️
COMPASSION FOR OTHERS



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Two days after Outward Bound I returned back to work and almost straight away I felt like I was asking, not more personal questions, but getting a bit more involved with people. Asking 'how was your weekend', and 'how people are getting on?'. I think Outward Bound helps initially with a big load of confidence and set me up for every time I moved departments. You can just be more relaxed around people, which I think definitely happens straight away.

Conor Wheat, 22, Gatwick Airport, speaking in 2022, four years after his Outward Bound Apprentice course.

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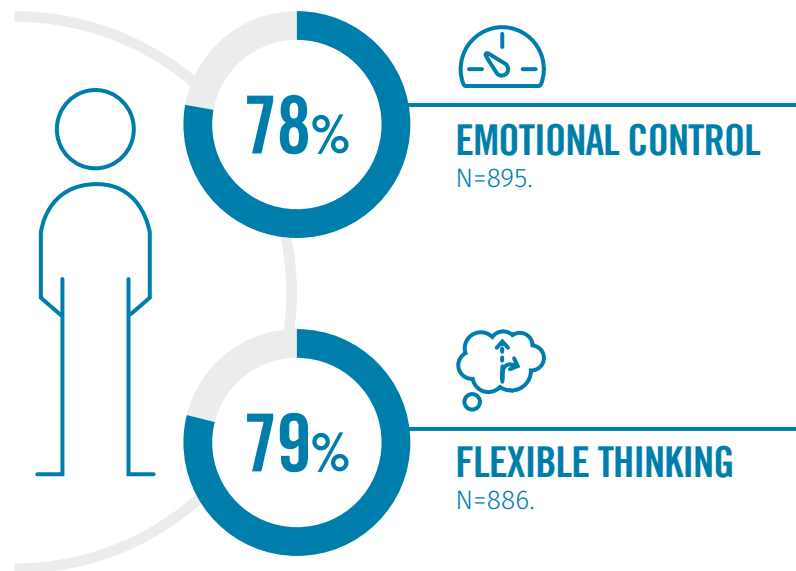
I usually tend to cry or have panic attacks at things I find scary – I learnt I can be independent if I want to be.

Sarah, 13, St. Margaret Ward Catholic Academy, Staffordshire.

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At the end of their course, young people indicate feeling more able to express their emotions and adapt to changing situations. Percentages indicate those who reported an improved score at the end of their course compared to their retrospective pre-course score*.

Figure 5.



*Full results of pre/post scores provided in research appendix.

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The main change in pupils' attitudes is their ability to interact positively with adults. Breaking down barriers and building rapport in the adventurous environment humanises us and enables the students to seek support and positively engage with us.

Miles Powell, Trainee Teacher, St Margaret Ward Catholic Academy, Staffordshire.

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For young people with additional learning needs or for young people who, for other reasons such as caring responsibilities, may face barriers to integrating socially, an opportunity to strengthen bonds and create a common understanding and appreciation of one another's needs can be particularly powerful. It helps them feel they are not alone and in turn, increase their willingness to step into new situations and try new things.

Young people reported feeling more supported by others after their course.

Figure 14.



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I used to feel overwhelmed in terms of my anxiety in groups, thinking how they'd perceive me and how I was acting. Being around people I didn't know and them helping and encouraging me means I can now see them as equals, so to speak. They're like me, just with different strengths and weaknesses. I didn't think I could do the course; I didn't think I'd be able to get through it, but I did, and it has shown me that I can get through anything.

I'm a lot happier. I'm willing to go and do things and just get up and go out. I'm more capable, I can do things I wasn't able to do before. I can cook more meals, go out to Tesco on my own. I think I can live on my own more now. I feel like I'm more capable of doing that and just being independent.

Oliver, 20, Summer Adventures participant, 2023.

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*Full results of pre/post scores presented in research appendix.

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None of the learners attending had ever attended an overnight school trip before or been away from home without a family member overnight. The relationships developed between the Outward Bound staff and our learners was incredible. Trust developed immediately from the initial school visit and from there, learners felt able to go and participate.

Since returning, our learners have formed bonds with each other. Despite being in different classes and year groups, firm friendships have developed. Friendships and social interactions can be challenging for our learners, and this opportunity has increased social skills, empathy, and communication abilities. It has been incredible to see the confidence developed in our learners.

Iona Mccroary, Principal Teacher and Specialist ASN Provision, Stirling Secondary Autism Provision at St Modan's High School, Stirling.

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CASE STUDY - STAFFORDSHIRE SCHOOLS

294 YOUNG PEOPLE

FIVE-DAY COURSES

ABERDOVEY, ULLSWATER AND LOCH EIL CENTRES

Many children growing up in Stoke-on-Trent in Staffordshire are likely to suffer the effects of poverty and neglect, more so than those living in other regions in the UK. Many who came to Outward Bound had special educational needs or experienced low educational attainment. A lack of self-esteem, confidence and resilience typically characterises the young people, resulting in low aspirations; a lack of opportunity is one of the biggest challenges they face.

"One young boy in my group was really apprehensive about everything, to the point, where we had to have joint conversations each night about the next day's activities. He swore he would not go in the tunnels, gorge walking and did not want to do the overnight expedition. He managed to do all three. It's difficult to gauge but he certainly seems to walk a little taller around school and is not as shy in a classroom setting."

Teacher, Staffordshire school.



The aim of the Outward Bound course was to provide an opportunity for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in the West Midlands to experience activities in wild, natural environments which will develop their confidence, their engagement with learning and improve their confidence in working with and building relationships with others.

Each course was tailored to the needs and abilities of the students and involved activities such as mountain walking, rowing and canoeing, culminating in an overnight camp.

Figure 16.

THREE MONTHS AFTER THEIR COURSE

Accompanying staff observed improvements in the young people's sense of capability, in their resilience and in their willingness to have a go at things they perceive to be difficult. N=15.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE MORE:

100%

Aware of what they are capable of achieving.

Likely to keep going when they encounter difficulties and setbacks.

Aware of their strengths.

THE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO:

93% Attempt things that are difficult.

87% Seek out new opportunities to challenge themselves.

CASE STUDY - YOUNG CARERS

72 YOUNG CARERS

FIVE-DAY COURSE

LOCH EIL, HIGHLANDS

Eight different young carers organisations from Scotland wanted to make sure that carers are recognised, valued and given the support they need to give care with confidence. They also wanted to provide an opportunity to focus on and consider their own health and wellbeing outside of caring.

The purpose of the trip was for the young people aged 10 - 18 to have fun, build connections with other carers, increase their confidence and have a well-deserved break from their home lives. They took part in activities including gorge walking, canoeing and rock climbing.

"I want to be a social worker, this course has helped me overcome fears and will help me get there."

Rosie, 13, Dundee Carers Centre.



"The young people will benefit from this experience in a number of ways; more self-belief, being more aware of helping others, organisational skills and dealing with uncomfortable emotions."

Lorna Vinson, Support Worker, Crossroads Young Carers.

"The course has contributed to the young people's lives back at home because they have had an essential break. They now have the confidence to say 'yes' to more and try new things."

Sarah Parker, Young Persons Practitioner, Action for Children.

Through sharing experiences with others who are in a similar position to themselves and being supported to overcome challenges, their key workers hope they leave the course with an increased sense of belonging, a heightened confidence in and awareness of their own capabilities. They also hope the young people will have increased willingness to take on other opportunities in the future.

AT THE END OF THEIR COURSE

The young carers reported improvements in their relationships with others. N=70.

90%  Reported that they got to know other young carers better.

85%  Reported got to know their key worker better.

Figure 22.

Young people adapting and responding to changes in their world

Spending time, getting to know others who come from different backgrounds and life experiences to their own, especially for those who live in areas of low social mobility, is key for young people to feel comfortable in today's ever-changing, diverse society. This exposure expands a young person's awareness of others' values, needs and opinions and with it helps them feel less intimidated by difference and more able to adapt to the different social contexts in which they will inevitably find themselves.

As a young person progresses from the familiar setting of school, into the work environment, they will come into contact with people who hold different viewpoints and values to their own. The skills to be able to negotiate social situations, listen to, and challenge viewpoints in an appropriate, respectful way are key.



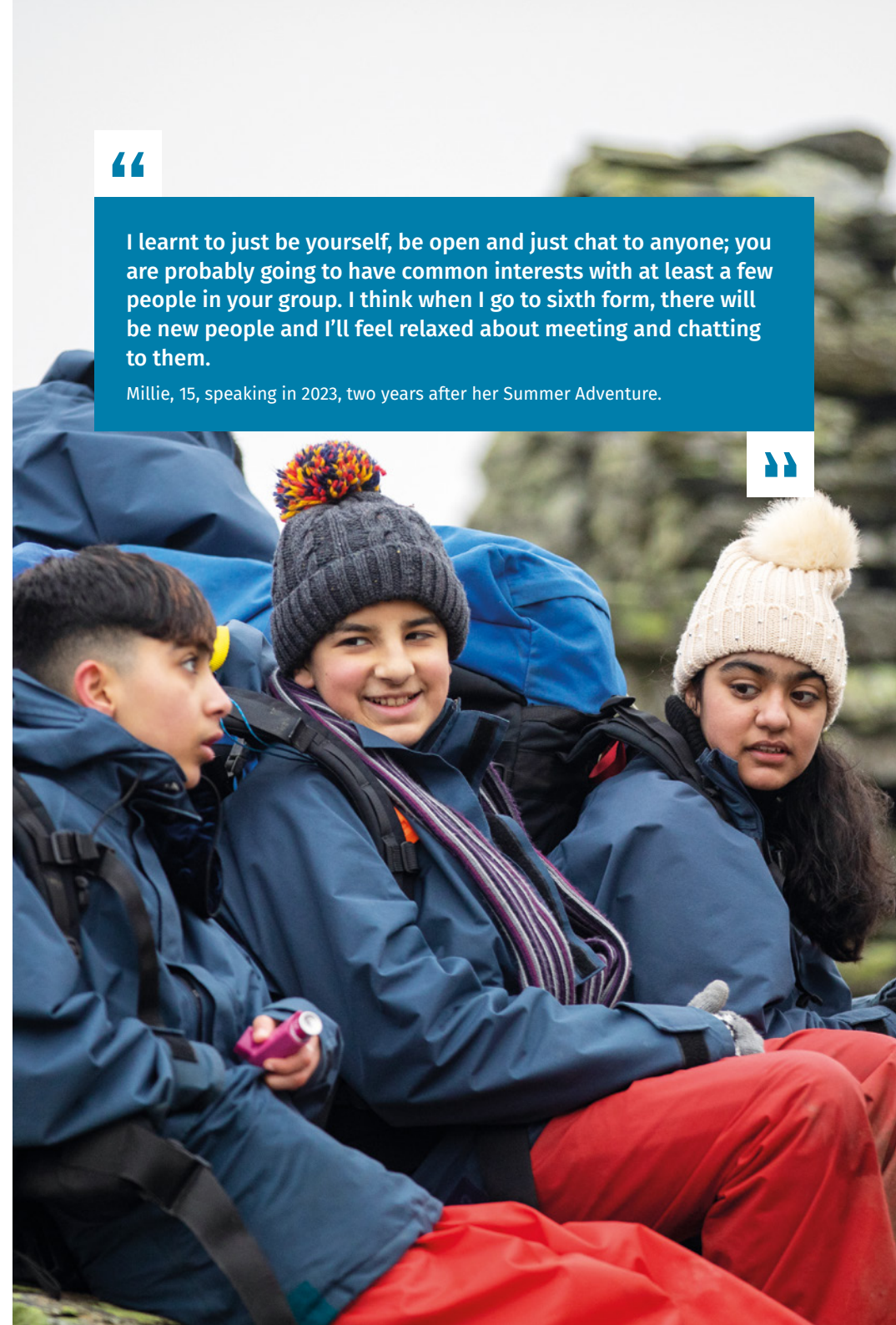
I will try to speak up more when I disagree with the group, I have had feedback from them that when I do this, it's useful and not taken the wrong way.

Graduate trainee, Skipton Building Society, commenting on their course in 2021.



I learnt to just be yourself, be open and just chat to anyone; you are probably going to have common interests with at least a few people in your group. I think when I go to sixth form, there will be new people and I'll feel relaxed about meeting and chatting to them.

Millie, 15, speaking in 2023, two years after her Summer Adventure.



CASE STUDY - THE MARK SCOTT LEADERSHIP FOR LIFE AWARD

141 YOUNG PEOPLE

SIX-MONTH BESPOKE COURSE

LOCH EIL, HIGHLANDS

Bringing together young people from diverse backgrounds is one of the aims of our bespoke programme in Scotland – the Mark Scott Leadership for Life Award.

The Mark Scott Leadership for Life Award was developed by The Mark Scott Foundation and Outward Bound following the unprovoked sectarian murder of Mark Scott in 1995. The aim of the Award was to bring together young people who were often separated by their backgrounds, sectarianism, racism or territorialism. The Award, delivered over a six-month period, starts with a five-day Outward Bound residential course designed to develop young people’s personal skills and attributes, such as confidence, determination and the ability to work with others. Upon returning to school, they work in groups to identify, organise and deliver a project that benefits their local community. The Award provides a unique opportunity for young people to prepare for their next step onto higher education, training or employment and to make a positive contribution to society.

"Some young people can attend the Award with quite a narrow viewpoint of others. This seems to be formed due to a lack of time spent with others with a different experience of life to their own. Time and space, shared experiences such as going on an expedition together, reviewing and reflecting, project planning and agreeing on issues that impact them within their communities. This can help those with previously fixed opinions of others from different backgrounds, upbringings, histories, and opportunities.

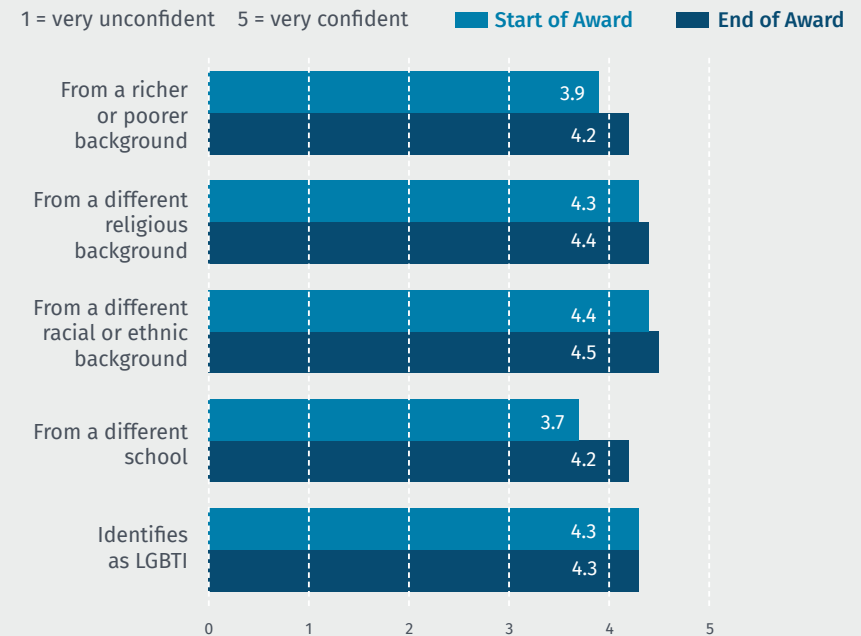
The Award creates this time, space, reflection and shared experience that can help challenge preconceived notions of others and find common ground and respect for difference."

Chris McGeown, Project Coordinator, Leadership for Life Award Team, Outward Bound.



Figure 23.

Young people reported an increase in their overall social confidence at the end of the Award compared to at the start: Average scores for participants' confidence in helping or asking for help from people from different backgrounds. N=33*.



*N=33 is a sample of the 141 young people who participated in the Award in 2022/23.