

THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST IN WALES

2024/25 Evaluation Report



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SUMMARY

In 2023-24, donors generously supporting the Outward Bound Trust played a key role in supporting our mission to inspire young people to realise their full potential.

The £3.5million received in bursary support last year was crucial in ensuring we can offer charitable funding to young people, many of whom face barriers to accessing such opportunities.

During 2023-24, we partnered with 315 schools and youth groups and provided 19,533 young people with Outward Bound courses.

At Outward Bound, young people develop the foundational social and emotional skills that support positive behaviours and attitudes, enabling them to thrive at every life stage, regardless of background or income.

We assess the impact of our courses by evaluating the attitudes, skills, and behaviours young people develop during and in the months after their experience¹. This report draws on insights and data from both young people and their teachers, informing the themes discussed;

- Building resilience
- Strengthening sense of self, capability and confidence
- An opportunity for Adventure, Freedom and Fun
- Nature connection
- Developing connections with others



“

Our mission statement is to change our community and our country for the better and we're only going to do that by producing young people who are ready to go out into the community and make a positive change; they're only able to do that if they're able to advocate for themselves.

Owen Lewis, Teacher, Coed Eva Primary School

”

1. Young people's names have been changed to protect their anonymity; school staff names and job titles have been used where we have permission to do so.

THE NEED FOR OUR WORK

In today's rapidly evolving world young people - our digital natives - seamlessly navigate the array of online networks in which they find themselves.

However, while they can easily communicate online, the nuances of face-to-face interactions, empathy, and emotional understanding often remain underdeveloped. Teachers frequently describe to us the resulting difficulties that young people face in building meaningful relationships, handling conflict, and managing emotions such as stress and anxiety in real-life situations.

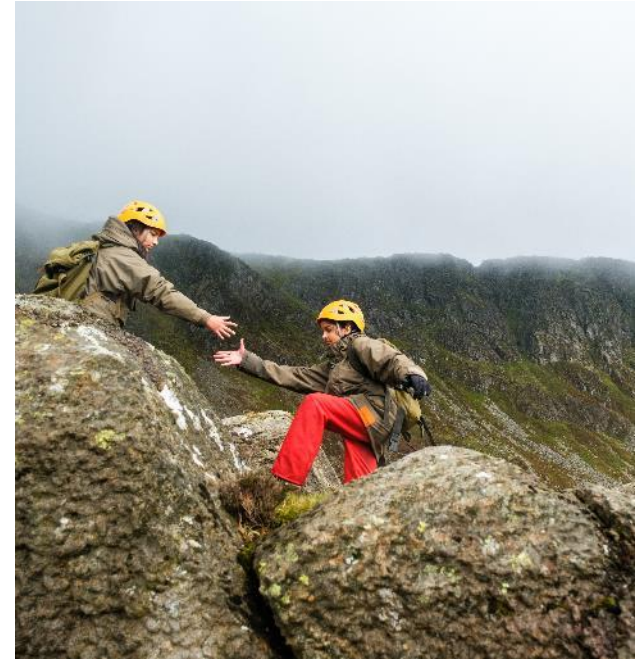
Additionally, the disconnect from nature and the outdoors further exacerbates this issue. As young people spend more time indoors, they miss out on valuable opportunities to build resilience, confidence and self-awareness, all of which provide key foundations to an individual's positive self-identity and wellbeing.

Teachers observe that this reliance on the digital world is influencing young people's daily lives and highlight the importance of providing young people with **opportunities to develop foundational skills, behaviours and attitudes** that enable them to make positive choices as they navigate different stages of their lives.

Our courses, set in **inspiring and wild, natural environments**, provide a unique opportunity to **step away from their screens, and from the pressures, distractions, and routines of daily life.**

Outward Bound offers young people the chance to embark on an **adventure, discover freedom, and have fun.**

Our evaluation findings indicate that by **disconnecting, slowing down, and reconnecting with others and with nature**, they gain valuable insights about themselves and their surroundings which help shape their sense of identity.



In the longer term, teachers and young people begin to see a **positive impact on their social skills, engagement at school and their overall wellbeing.**

Most of the young people who participate in an Outward Bound course come from underserved urban and rural communities across the UK, where access to the outdoors and opportunities are far more limited compared to their more affluent peers.

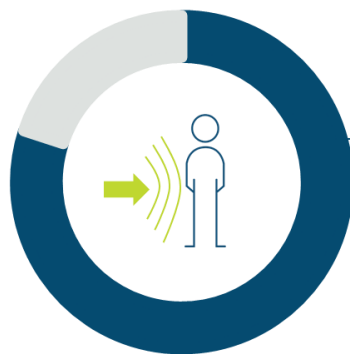
BUILDING RESILIENCE: RESPONDING TO UNCERTAINTY AND CHALLENGE

Facing challenges, working through them to find solutions and experiencing achievement or success are key stages that a young person will journey through whilst at Outward Bound; physically, emotionally, as an individual and also as a community.

Whilst climbing a mountain, paddling a river or during social time, an Outward Bound experience presents different challenges, at different times to different individuals.

Overcoming challenge for a young person can feel daunting and scary: our evaluation proves it can also be transformative as they develop resilience rooted in **optimism, determination and the support of a nurturing environment.**

Through facing individual and shared challenges, young people develop an awareness of **what resilience can look like for them** and others. They realise by setting **small, achievable goals**, by adopting a growth mindset and through the **support of their peers**, that they already possess the personal tools to navigate through challenging situations and realise **they are not alone in their difficulties.**



80%

Young people reported increases in **resilience** and **emotional control** at the end of their course

Resilience N= 185
Emotional Control N=182



“

[I learnt that] when I say ‘I can’t’. I can.

Phillipa, 13, Ysgol Harri Tudor

”

CASE STUDY: BUILDING FUTURE CITIZENS IN PUPILS FROM THE FEDERATION OF BLENHEIM ROAD COMMUNITY AND COED EVA PRIMARY SCHOOLS, SOUTH WALES

Paul Keane, Executive Head Teacher of the **Federation of Blenheim Road Community and Coed Eva Primary Schools**, shared how Outward Bound helps develop confident, capable young citizens in an often overwhelming world where pupils may struggle to see beyond their local area. In December 2024, 72 of their pupils visited our Aberdovey centre.

“

We talk about growing good moral citizens of Cwmbran and Wales and the wider world, that we want our kids to be able to do the right thing to make the right choices.

It's a tough time to be a child ... you're underexposed to certain things and overexposed to others.

”

Paul noted that after Outward Bound, his pupils show **greater confidence**, **speak up for themselves** and their peers more often, and **work better together to solve problems**.

“

You see the benefits in the class who've been to Outward Bound. [It's] an anchor point, a reference point for the class to [use to] resolve issues ... it leads into our crew sessions [at school], there's an ability to solve those problems, to make a stand, to give praise to other people, to give gratitude.

”

Owen Lewis, Year Six Teacher at **Coed Eva Primary School**, saw one pupil's confidence and independence grow significantly during the residential.

“

To see him by the end of the trip just knocking about a campfire, making food independently with no need for adult help ... that's real progression isn't it, that you can see that independence [and] that growth really starkly there.

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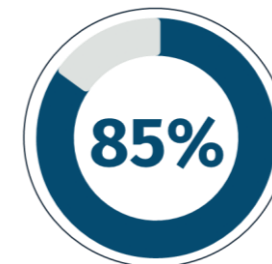
Owen explained that recognising their capabilities **boosts confidence, advocacy skills, and independence in their education**, especially for vulnerable pupils.

“

Even if they're not at the stage where they're cognitively able to take on the full responsibility of someone of their chronological age, they're starting to take steps towards that.

It gives them [that] belief that when they go out on their own, they're going to be OK. They're going to manage ... it just gives them a bit of belief.

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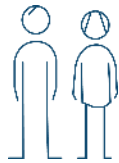


STRENGTHENING SENSE OF SELF, CAPABILITY AND CONFIDENCE

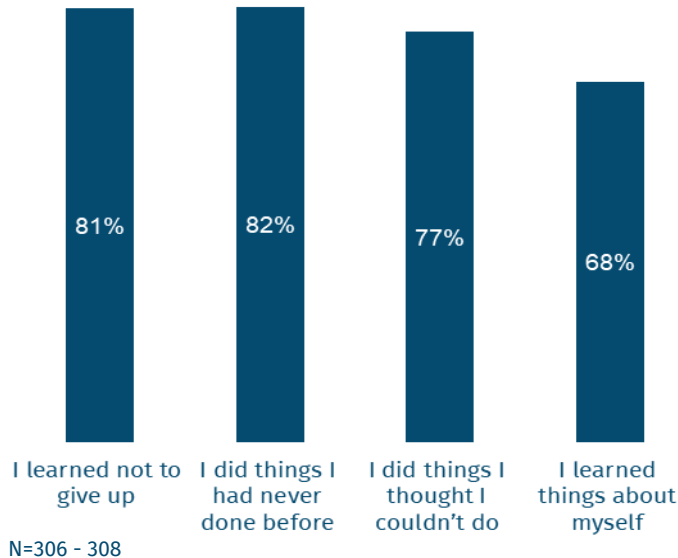
The desire for independence, agency and self-identity is what drives many of the behaviours and attitudes of our young people. Whilst dealing with a rollercoaster of hormonal and neurological shifts, young people at the same time are on the constant search for validation – an innate feeling of accomplishment, pride, competence and confidence, and also feeling accepted and valued by those around them.

At Outward Bound young people are provided with repeated opportunities to explore where, with the right mindset, their capabilities and ambition can take them.

They identify personal goals, work towards them, learn from mistakes and in doing so experience the results of their efforts, each time leaving them feeling enabled, valued and sure of what they can do.



At the end of their course, primary pupils reported...



85% reported increases in confidence (N=185)

75% are more confident to set themselves challenges and achieve their goals (N=439)



“

I believe they will feel more empowered to tackle school life, they will have the confidence to believe in in their exams and themselves.

Amber Davies, Youth Worker,
Ysgol Harri Tudor

”

CASE STUDY: THE CORRIDOR WANDERERS: SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE FROM YSGOL HARRI TUDOR TO RE-ENGAGE IN THEIR LEARNING

Suzanne Moses, Youth Development Worker at **Ysgol Harri Tudor**, noted a positive **change in relationships and attitudes towards school and learning** following their Outward Bound course in Aberdovey in September 2024.

“ Prior to the residential, attendance was an issue, engagement in lessons was an issue, many of [the young people] were what we call the ‘Corridor Wanderers’, often hiding out in toilets, unable to go to lessons. ”

Suzanne notes that parental attitudes and a desire to protect their children contributed to the disengagement. She reflects on how the residential provided a focus, helping **strengthen relationships with parents and encouraging their re-engagement with school** and which in turn, has had a **positive impact on their children’s learning**.

“ One of the nice things about doing the residential is that you actually get to communicate with the parents. We’ve had some parents come in and do family workshops, and that in itself then has a kind of knock-on effect [on the] learners’ engagement. ”

Suzanne notes that the relationships with Outward Bound instructors on the course, along with improved ties to parents, has **boosted the young people’s sense of capability and happiness at school**.

“ They all developed such an affinity with the instructors who all have their own story to tell, and I think that kind of resonates with the young people, and they think, actually, ‘I can do this, and I have got the ability to do this’. ”

“ Following the residential, what we find is that they are more engaged in lessons, their attendance has improved, their attitude to learning has increased and their relationships with teachers has improved. ”

Comments from the young people also reflect **positive changes in their attitudes towards school**.

“ My attendance has gone up a lot. I now come into school on time and attend most of my lessons. I used to be a corridor wanderer but no more. ”

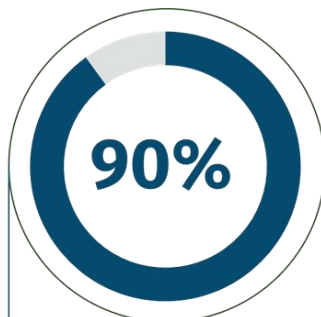
I have got a lot better at talking to my head of year and other teachers and know I can go to them for support.

Comments from Pupils at Ysgol Harri Tudor, Wales

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ADVENTURE, FREEDOM AND FUN

The 2024 Good Childhood report states that UK's 15-year-olds have the lowest average life satisfaction in Europe². At Outward Bound, we believe **adventure, freedom and fun play a crucial role in the personal growth, happiness and wellbeing** of young people.

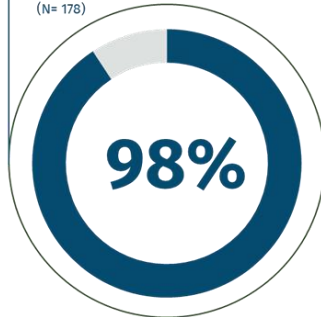
By engaging in memorable, often emotional experiences in the outdoors which are rooted in real-world conditions and consequences, young people are able to grow both psychologically and physically.



Young people found their Outward Bound course adventurous
(N= 178)



Young people had fun during their Outward Bound course
(N= 178)



Through moments of fun, freedom and adventure, they **embrace and value who they are as individuals**, engage in their natural surroundings and build connection with others.

Facing their fears during an abseil, overcoming problems whilst raft building or experiencing a sense of achievement after jumping into the lake; these experiences **strengthen their sense of self**, and we begin to see **positive shifts in their behaviours** and mindsets which change how they think about themselves, others and their futures.



It's about that kind of self-discovery and sense of belief in themselves, the freedom to be who they want to be. For many, [Outward Bound has] given them the opportunity to think 'do you know what?, actually, I can be whoever I want to be, I can do whatever I want to do'. [...] It's helping them to see the bigger picture and keep that bigger picture highlighted – recognising what they're good at and running with it.

Suzanne Moses, Youth Development Worker, Ysgol Harri Tudor, Wales

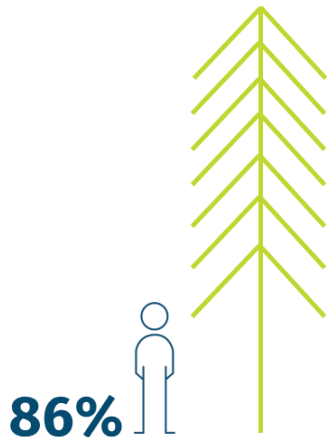


CONNECTING WITH NATURE

The most recent Mental Health and Nature policy briefing for Wales³ highlighted that young people were more likely than adults to say that they didn't want to, or enjoy, spending time in nature; despite 95% of adults in Wales supporting and encouraging children to connect with nature.

The inspiring and natural environments surrounding our centres provide an awe-inspiring backdrop to a young person's course. The mountains, lakes and beaches allow **time and space to pause** and provide **moments of calm and connection** with their surroundings in a tangible way.

For young people whose lives are increasingly fast-paced and where experiences are often lived vicariously online, Outward Bound provides an opportunity to be fully present in the moment.



of young people reported an increased connection to nature at the end of their course (N=291)

Group and individual reflection time during their course allows them to **process their thoughts and connect with nature** on a level they may have not done before.

Young people leave Outward Bound with **a sense that they are part of something bigger** and with that comes an increased appreciation and awareness of opportunities that the world has to offer them; reshaping and influencing their actions, attitudes and aspirations.



[Before the course] they'd be in the woods, smoking, drinking, you know, doing what teenagers do - getting into trouble with the police for being in places they weren't allowed to be - all that has changed with them. Now, [after the course] it's more about being outdoors, having adventure, walking, exploring, just enjoying being in nature. [...] That's one of the beautiful things that's built into Outward Bound courses, the instructors instilling in them how we are all responsible for our own environment and as individuals, it's up to us to care for it.

Suzanne Moses, Youth Development Worker,
Ysgol Harri Tudor, Wales



A SHARED EXPERIENCE: CONNECTING WITH OTHERS

Despite being well connected online, many young people continue to feel isolated⁴. Relationships flourish at Outward Bound; **sharing the fun, the challenge, the responsibilities and goals** all lead to ‘real’, **meaningful connections**.

Outward Bound provides a ‘safe’ space. Young people are surrounded and guided by **positive role models, social barriers are broken down** and individuals are free to be their authentic, often vulnerable selves. This environment nurtures a young person’s **compassion, understanding and awareness of themselves and those around them**.

During their course, they hone the skills needed to navigate social interactions, overcome their differences, and experience what it feels like to be supported by their peers. They return to school with an **increased sense of belonging**, acceptance and value of who they are.

At the end of the course, young people reported increased confidence in their social skills and sense of belonging when compared to the start of their course...



77% increased confidence in their interpersonal skills
(N=444)

79% increased sense of belonging
(N=298)



“

When we did the walk, it was so fun talking to friends, being still and listening. Everything was fun and adventurous to me!

Angharad, Coed Eva Primary School

”

LASTING IMPACT: OBSERVATIONS FROM SCHOOL STAFF

The experiences and insights gained at Outward Bound remain with young people as they return to school and move through their education.

The information in this section are drawn from observations from school staff between two and three months following the course as well as from reflections shared by young people up to six months after their course.

Back in the classroom, school staff report noticeable improvements in **students' engagement with and attitudes towards their studies**. They have observed a marked **improvement in young people's interpersonal skills** and awareness of others, along with a greater **willingness and confidence** in tackling tasks they perceive to be difficult – their **resilience**.



“

We still have children who make poor decisions and that's life isn't it?, that's growing up. But they recognise much more quickly that they have done something to upset somebody and that probably means they need to atone for their actions. They're quite good at deciding on an appropriate sort of response to try [...] and are just more responsible for what they've done.

Owen Lewis, Coed Eva Primary School, South Wales commenting 3 months after their course

”

Up to 6 months after their course, school staff report positive changes in the young people's **self confidence, awareness and resilience...**



95% Are aware of their strengths

93% Are aware of what they are capable of achieving (N=157)

92% Attempt things they believe to be difficult more often

93% Keep going when they encounter difficulties more often (N=151)

LASTING IMPACT : REFLECTIONS FROM YOUNG PEOPLE

Up to six months after their course, young people continue to experience impact from their Outward Bound course.

The connections and experiences they gained continue to shape their lives. Before their course, they may have shied away from social situations but with their deepened connections and friendships they feel a **greater sense of support and belonging** amongst their peers.

Outward Bound has inspired a shift in their **attitudes towards the outdoors**. They report encouraging others to spend more time outdoors.

Their newfound confidence in their capabilities has allowed them to take on other aspects of life with a positive mindset. Rather than fearing failure, they now view it as an **opportunity from which to learn and grow**.

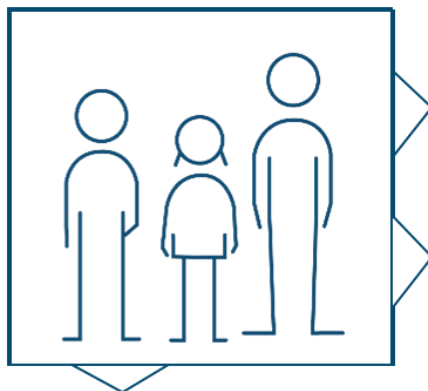
“

I feel more confident trying new things. I think about my emotions more and try to manage my anger better. I also encourage others to do more adventurous things.

Cai, Ysgol Harri Tudor, Wales, commenting 4 months after their course

”

Up to 6 months after their course, young people reported increased confidence in their skills when compared to the start of their course... (N=108)⁵



74% increased confidence in their **resilience**

89% increased confidence in **setting themselves challenges** and **achieving their goals**

85% increased confidence in their **interpersonal skills**



“

[I feel like my relationships with others have] changed a lot. I feel I have made connections with my peers have grown stronger and I found things out about my peers that I would have never found out anywhere else.

Evelyn, Coed Eva Primary School, Wales, commenting 3 months after their course

”

5. Percentages reflect those young people who reported an increase in at least one area of each skill.

ORGANISATIONAL UPDATE

In 2024, we launched our new strategy that sets out bold ambitions for the years ahead. ***The Next Horizon*** outlines our strategic intent between 2024-2030. The strategy focuses on Our People, Our Charity and Our Capacity.

Our People



Over the last year, Outward Bound has delivered over 6000 hours of training to support and upskill staff including; Understanding Young People, Mental Health First Aid, Safeguarding and Psychological Awareness.

25 members of staff serve as EDI Champions who drive improvements for both the young people we work with and our staff; including providing more inclusive outdoor equipment, prayer mats for expedition use and weighted blankets to support those with neurodiverse needs.

“

The watersports hijab made me feel much more confident to participate in water activities.
Young person comment to instructor

”

Our Charity

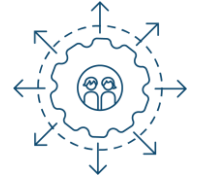


In 2024, a total of 24,473 young people attended Outward Bound; with 15,028 receiving funding.

Our Digital Transformation project is aligning all areas of the organisation into the same digital sphere; a new CRM and a new bookings system have been embedded, with a new finance system and a Programme Manager planned for this year.

With a strategic target to reach net-zero emissions by 2035, we are committed to reducing carbon emissions, so far, we've cut emissions by 65% since 2008 and have signed up to the Outward Bound International Environmental Charter.

Our Capacity



The culmination of decade long improvement works at Outward Bound Loch Eil has drawn to a close with the completion of the Clan Village which officially opens in May 2025. This is an ambitious and inspirational space for young people to plan and reflect on their Outward Bound experience.



LOOKING FORWARD

We know that the challenges faced by young people in an ever-changing and increasingly digital world will only continue to increase; impacting their wellbeing, social mobility and development into positive world citizens.

Outward Bound's mission to inspire young people to believe they can achieve more than they ever thought possible - to break down barriers and unlock opportunities for those who need it most - is more important now than ever.

In the coming years, in addition to delivering impactful courses in the wild, we will seek ways to innovate by piloting a non-residential schools' outreach project that will engage young people who face barriers to attending a residential. We will build partnerships with like-minded organisations to increase capacity through the development of a world class new centre in Wales that will deliver courses to an extra 5,000 young people each year.

Thank you for joining us on this journey; we couldn't do it without you.



The skills and behaviours developed at Outward Bound act as foundations and protective factors in times of adversity.

With your continued support we can provide young people with as positive a start in life as possible.

Thank you.

FURTHER INFORMATION

The Outward Bound Trust's Social Impact Report 2024: www.outwardbound.org.uk/our-impact/social-impact-report

Latest Annual Report and Accounts: www.outwardbound.org.uk/trusts-and-foundations

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