# THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST REPORT FOR THE NINEVEH CHARITABLE TRUST

2019

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## THE NEED FOR OUR WORK IN THE UK

We are increasingly concerned by the growing number of risks to young people's life chances; risks which reduce the likelihood that they will have a healthy, happy childhood, succeed at school and secure a fulfilling adulthood. The **attainment gap** between pupils from richer and poorer backgrounds continues, **mental health concerns** amongst young people are on the rise, and they report increasing levels of **loneliness**, despite being one of the best connected generations. Combined, these trends predict a worrying future for young people growing up in the UK. **A future we believe can be different.**

Many of the factors known to predict young people's life chances are beyond their control. Growing up in poverty is one of the most significant; affecting 30% of children in the UK[1] and severely reducing their chances of **doing well at school**[2], making a positive **transition into the workplace**[3] and having **good overall health and well-being**[4]. Not only this, but *where* they grow up is closely linked with their chances of getting on in life, with ex-industrial areas, isolated and rural communities and deprived inner-cities offering far poorer prospects for disadvantaged young people to progress in life.[5] There are more deeply rooted barriers to education and employment for these young people than previously understood[6], and long-term investment is required to break the cycle of underachievement for good.

**30%**

**young people in the UK live in poverty**

**poorer attainment** | **reduced life chances**

Other factors have a strong influence on young people's quality of life, health and well-being. Notably, their changing lifestyles – with computer games, smartphones and a host of other technologies increasing the amount of time they spend in isolation from others and reducing the amount of time spent active and outdoors.

This has coincided with a rise in mental health issues amongst young people of all backgrounds, irrespective of their personal circumstances. A recent study[7] shows they are becoming more stressed and anxious than previously recorded, with nearly **two thirds** reporting that they "always or "often" **feel stressed** and **just over half** reporting that they "always" or "often" **feel anxious**. Over a third **do not feel they have control over their lives**, despite having strong ambitions for the future.

# THE OUTWARD BOUND EXPERIENCE

Outward Bound gives these young people a **different experience of challenge and achievement** – one they may never have felt before. It pushes them to the limits of what they think they're capable of and shows them that there is more in them than they think.

Their course takes place in **wilderness environments** that they may never have experienced before, nor even imagined existed. Away from school, where many feel **afraid of failure** and an overwhelming **pressure to succeed**, they're given the opportunity to go on a **real adventure**, to **take risks** and to **learn from their mistakes**.

The challenges start small – jumping into the sea or working together to scale a high wall. Gradually, they increase to include canoeing, kayaking or rock climbing adventures, and culminate in an overnight expedition where they sleep out in tents or cabins. They're trusted to take responsibility for their kit and equipment, to think as a team rather than individuals, and to live alongside others who they have never met before.

Day by day, their confidence increases and where they would previously have given up in the face of something they're afraid to do or that seems too hard, **they realise that they can go further**. By the end of the week, they've **discovered qualities they didn't know they had** – qualities they can be proud of and that can help them to live life more fully, especially during periods of difficulty. Instead of feeling **isolated** and afraid of **being judged by others**, they feel **valued and accepted for who they are**, and are often surprised to learn that they can make friends, especially with people they thought were different to them.

In the following sections of this report, we present three examples of work we are able do with young people from disadvantaged backgrounds in the UK as a result of the funding we receive. Each example describes a partnership with a school where we work with young people at a different stage of their education and for a different purpose. We then present broader evidence of the impact of Outward Bound.

## BEDE ACADEMY, NORTHUMBERLAND

**Course for Year 8 & 9 students, 18th – 22nd March 2019, Ullswater**

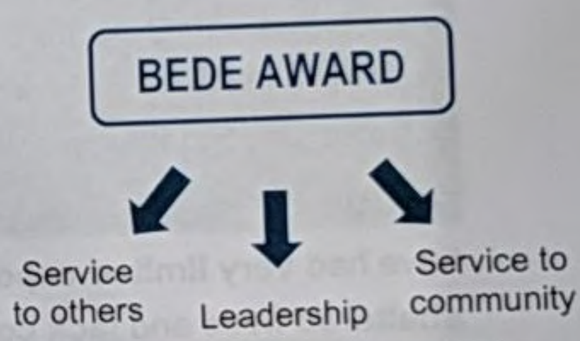
Bede Academy is a very large secondary school, also based on a council estate, in the town of Blyth, Northumberland. Blyth is the **most deprived community in Northumberland** and falls into the **most deprived 2% of communities in England**[8]. A high number of residents have **no qualifications**[9], the percentage of people who are unemployed is above the UK average[10] and there is a **high percentage of single parent families**[11].

➡ Deprived **post-industrial community** in Northumberland with a history of **high unemployment** & **low aspiration**.

The school has also worked with Outward Bound for nine years to help break the cycle of low aspiration and underachievement in students. The course, targeted at students in **Years 8 & 9**, forms part of the "Bede Award", which is a school-wide initiative to develop young leaders who have the skills needed to make a difference in their school and wider community.

**47 students** attended in 2019 and were encouraged to believe "**I can be a leader**" throughout the week. Learning was focused around **leadership styles**, **responsibility** and **giving and receiving feedback** through challenges that included gorge walking, rowing and an overnight expedition.

Strong outcomes were reported by the students around different ways to work with, support and lead others, as is reflected in their feedback below.




*"People may have a range of ideas but we all have to agree on something that works for everyone."* **Ann, 13**

*"I have learnt that being a team is more than just achieving the end goal, but getting to know one another and having fun along the way."* **Katie, 14**

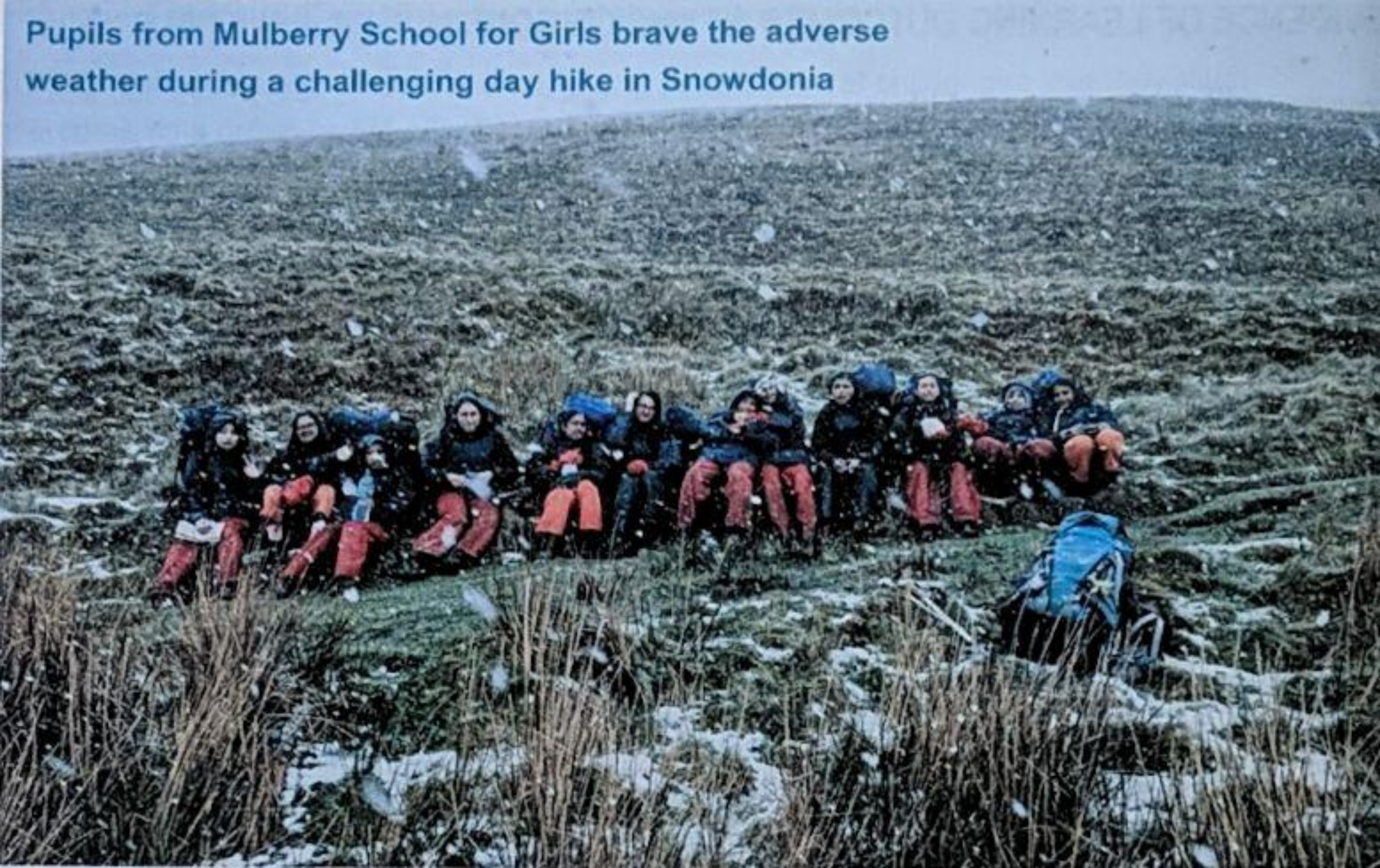
*"Everyone has a different mindset and you have to be able to work with those different mindsets to be able to get the job done."* **Sasha, 13**

*"I've learnt that you need to give people more than one chance to show who they really are. If you don't like someone, still help them."* **Imogen, 13**

**IMPROVED INTERPERSONAL SKILLS**

**81%** were more confident about **working with others as a team**

**74%** were more confident about **putting forward their ideas** and **being the leader of a team**



Pupils from Mulberry School for Girls brave the adverse weather during a challenging day hike in Snowdonia

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End of course



## Improved planning, goal-setting and determination

Throughout each stage of their course, young people are set challenges that they must overcome as a group, using effective **planning** and **problem-solving** as well as **determination** and **resilience**. Through a process called "plan, do, review", they learn to approach tasks methodically and to reflect on both their **successes** and **failures**, identifying ways to improve for next time. As a result, they become more confident about **facing and overcoming challenges**, **setting and achieving goals** and **coping with difficulty**.

A recent evaluation showed that **90% of students improved an aspect of their thinking and planning skills**. They were most likely to improve their **confidence to stick at things they find difficult** and **set challenging goals for themselves.**

**improved their planning & goal-setting skills**

**73%**
were more confident about sticking at tasks they find difficult

**70%**
were more confident about setting themselves challenges

**63%**
felt more able to stay calm when things go wrong

*"The students were really proud of themselves after the trip. Confidence was definitely greatly improved. Motivation was at a high and the students were really keen to speak to us about their next steps back at school and how they felt able to really challenge themselves to do things they never thought possible."*

**Kirrie Wallace, Head of Computer Science, Skinners' Kent Academy**

Figure 2 below shows the students' average level of confidence in relation to each situation at the start and end of their course, indicating the extent to which they improved in each area.
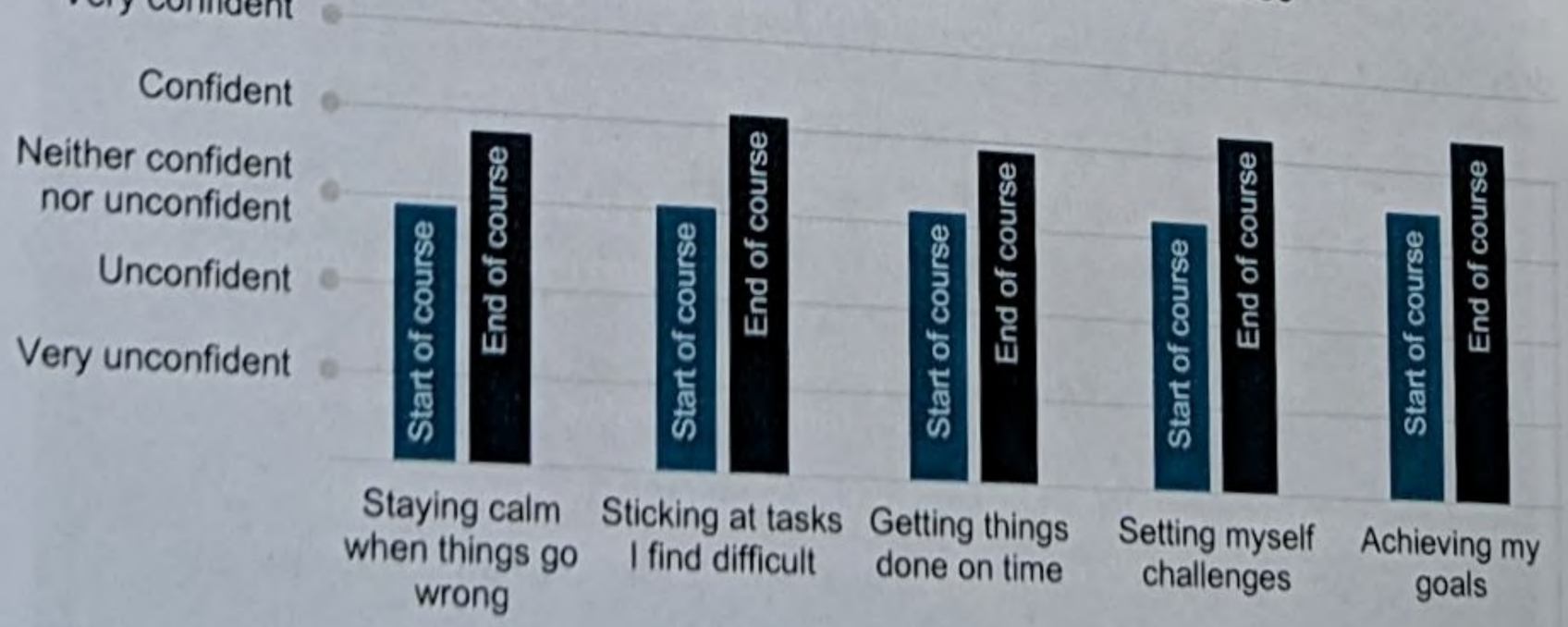
**Figure 2: Students' self-assessments at the start and end of their course**