

## **Executive summary**

This report is a follow-on from two preceding TurnAround (TA) reports and should be read in conjunction with previous information. UK Youth crime and anti-social behaviour is a continuing problem, estimated to cost the UK economy £4 billion per annum. Young offenders exhibit some of the highest re-offending rates, with 40% of young offenders re-offending within one year, increasing to 75% in those who receive a custodial sentence. Attention has been turned towards the use of interventions to tackle youth crime, anti-social behaviour and re-offending, due to the increasing costs associated with the criminal justice system and the ineffectiveness of custodial sentences. Evidence suggests that therapeutic interventions providing skills and mentoring are effective at changing behaviour and protecting against risk factors such as low self-esteem, substance addiction and low IQ, which are often the root cause of these problem behaviours.

The aim of TA 3 was to assist small groups of vulnerable and challenging youth in Essex to make positive life choices and overcome barriers to social inclusion and financial self sufficiency. The programme ran from April 2011-January 2012 and comprised of skills workshops and outdoor activity days, weekly one-to-one mentoring and two wilderness trails. The main objective of the programme was to intervene to the young peoples problem behaviours at an early stage; thus preventing further crime, problems at school and escalation of negative behaviour. The programme used outdoor activities and wilderness experiences to i) break down the physical and emotional barriers that inhibited social competence; ii) improve self-esteem, self-confidence, emotional regulation, communication and

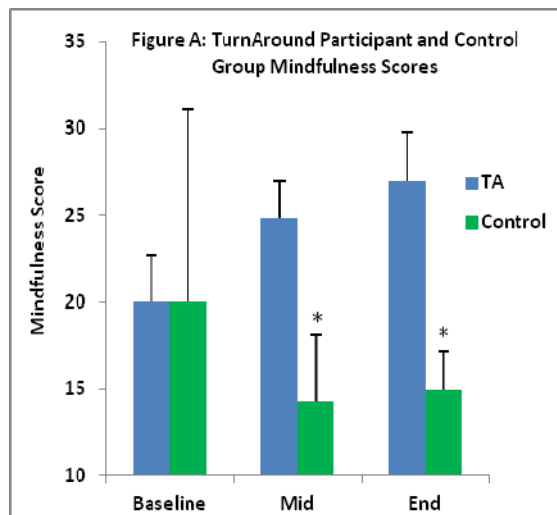
problem solving abilities; iii) instil a sense of accountability to themselves and others; iv) build trust and team-working skills; v) educate young people to make positive life choices; vi) generate employment and training opportunities and/or further education prospects.

The programme began with a 6-day wilderness trail to Scotland. The initial trail was central to the programme triggering an important internal self-discovery process and setting the foundation for all future work and behavioural changes. The trail to Wales at the final stages of the programme helped to re-affirm relationships, set goals and look towards the future and possible employment and education opportunities. In between the two trails were various activity days and skills workshops and one-to-one mentoring sessions. A mixed methods approach was used to assess changes in mindfulness, nature experience, self-esteem, general well-being and behavioural strengths and difficulties throughout the duration of the project. Internationally standardised instruments were used to capture key evidence alongside qualitative feedback providing rich narrative.

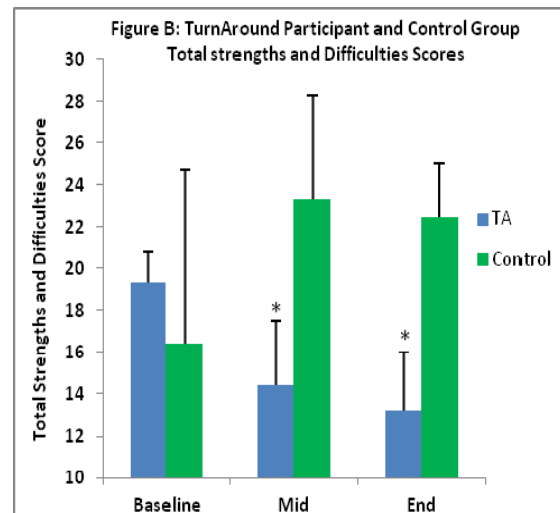
Eight young people took part in the programme. However two dropped out at the early stages and their data was therefore removed from the analysis. One further young person dropped out at the very final stages of the programme; this data was included. The average age of the six young people was  $17.7 \pm 1.2$  years, three participants were male and three were female. Six young people also acted as a control group, consisting of three males and three females. These youth were also deemed to be 'at-risk', but were not actively involved in the TA3 project or any other intervention. The control group

had an average age of  $16.8 \pm 0.6$  years. The control and intervention group completed identical questionnaires at baseline, midpoint 2 (wild camping workshop) and project end, whilst the TA group also completed questionnaires at the initial trail, and at midpoint 1 (go-cart making workshop).

The mindfulness and total strengths and difficulties scores improved in the TA group over the course of the project, but deteriorated in the control group. Although there were no differences in the mindfulness or total strengths and difficulties scores at baseline, Mann-Whitney U-tests revealed a significant difference between control and TA group mindfulness scores at midpoint ( $z = -2.3$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) and endpoint ( $z = -2.5$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ) (Figure A) and the control and TA group strengths and difficulties scores at midpoint ( $z = -2.1$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ) and end point ( $z = -2.5$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ) (Figure B), with the TA group displaying more mindful qualities and fewer behavioural difficulties.



High scores = more mindful qualities. \* indicates greater mindfulness in TA group ( $P < 0.05$ )

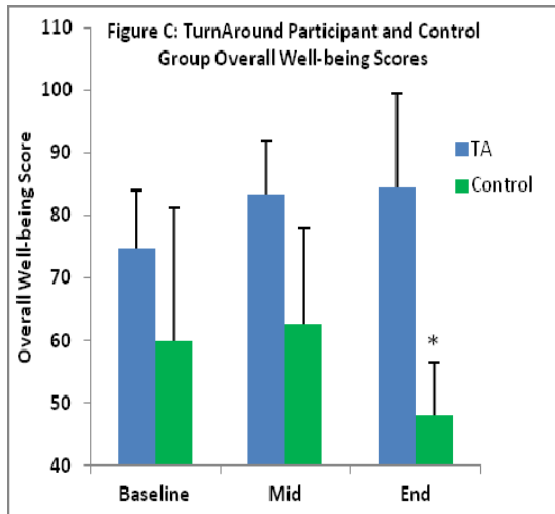


High score = more behavioural difficulties. \* indicates fewer difficulties in TA group ( $P < 0.05$ )

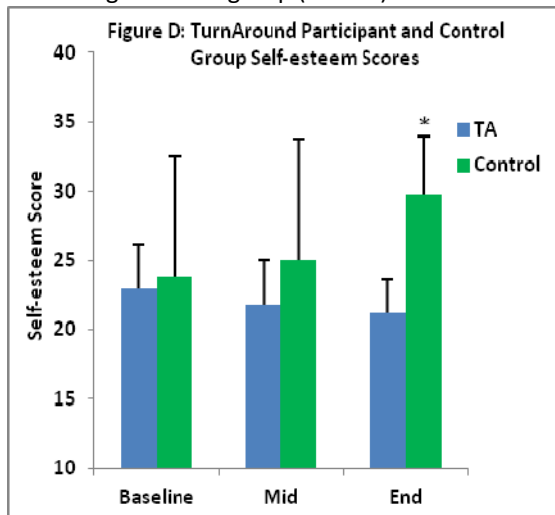
The TA group also improved their self-esteem and well-being over the course of the project, whilst the control groups deteriorated. There were no significant differences between the scores at baseline or mid point; however Mann Whitney U-tests revealed that well-being ( $z = -2.5$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ) and self-esteem ( $z = -2.3$ ;  $P < 0.05$ ) were significantly better in the TA group at the end of the project (Figures C-D).

The wilderness trail to Scotland also impacted on participants, leading to acute improvements in self-esteem, mindfulness and nature experience. Mindfulness experienced the greatest change due to the wilderness trail, with participants experiencing a 10% improvement in their mindfulness scores. Several participants commented that they enjoyed the views and having time to sit down and think about their future. Mindfulness is related to how individuals 'pay attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgementally, thus the natural environment of the wilderness allowed them to focus on where they were and what they were doing at the given time. The wilderness trail also gave them an opportunity to conquer their

fears and go on a journey of self-discovery.



High scores=better well-being. \* indicates better well-being in the TA group (P<0.05)



A high score=lower self-esteem. \* indicates better self-esteem in TA group (P<0.05)

Although the TA project led to improvements in self-esteem, well-being and mindfulness and reductions in behavioural difficulties, the experience had different effects on each individual, with some participants responding more positively and enjoying the experience more than others. Individuals all have different relationships and experiences of nature; thus it was expected that there would be individual variation in the response to the programme. However the TA3 project successfully targeted youth

at-risk of developing further behavioural problems, being excluded from school, taking part in criminal activity and anti-social behaviour. The project not only fostered improvements in well-being and health, but it also helped to develop skills, encourage team work, and provided participants with a wide range of role models and opportunities to build relationships with others, a factor that was limited in most of the youth at-risk. The Participants also developed communication and problem solving skills, became more self-aware and confident, became more positive and demonstrated a willingness to change. The development of skills was an essential aspect of the programme, as these could be applied to potential employment or education opportunities. The findings of this report suggest that projects like TA3 should be used to treat and potentially prevent the growing number of youth at-risk. These types of projects should be considered as part of a reformed response to youth justice and anti-social behaviour.



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