

WILDERNESS

FOUNDATION UK

INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for showing an interest in the Wilderness Foundation and the TurnAround Project.

The TurnAround project has been offered since 2007 and we have had 15 cohorts of young people through the project in this time. TurnAround is a structured nine month long self-development and employability project for young people aged from 15 to 21 years old. The aim is to enable each young person to make positive change to their lives using nature as a catalyst. We support each young person with their own individual needs which is what makes the project a success. TurnAround is evaluated by Essex University and our success to date is that 83% of graduates are engaged with education or employment by the end of the project.

Participants are usually struggling with different areas of their lives such having low self-esteem and confidence, mental health difficulties such as anxiety and depression, difficulties at school, unhealthy relationships, bullying, little or no direction, and challenging behaviour.



TurnAround uses wilderness therapy, challenging outdoor experiences, one-on-one youth work and mentoring, and educational activities to enable young people to overcome their challenges and take control of their lives.

Throughout the project, the group will attend workshops aimed at exploring and learning about the different areas they struggle with – mood and anger management, understanding feelings, dreams and goals for the future. We hold regular social evenings which focus on developing social skills and increasing self-confidence.

There are two wilderness trails towards the beginning and end of the program. Trained guides and professional wilderness facilitators lead the young people out of their urban environment and into the wild. They begin to learn problem-solving, teamwork and persistence through camping, cooking, and living together. They calm their bodies and minds through immersion in a peaceful and beautiful natural setting, and work on emotional and interpersonal issues with intensive adult support.

Each young person is paired with a volunteer mentor who they meet at least once a week, who is also available by phone or email between weekly sessions. Mentors provide the young people with a stable, mature and reliable presence, and act as a positive role model. There will also be opportunities to volunteer throughout the project. This can be arranged to be as frequent as the young person would like.

At the Graduation Ceremony, young people, families, mentors, supporters, and youth workers come together to celebrate young people's TurnAround achievements. Awards and certificates not only recognize the work participants have done but also reinforce their self-confidence, their sense of achievement and belief in themselves.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA & SELECTION PROCESS



This project is aimed at the following:

- Young people aged 15 to 21 years old
- Young people who reside in Essex
- Young people who are comfortable to be outdoors
- Young people who can benefit from confidence building and personal development
- Young people who can benefit from improving their employability skills
- Young people who have a desire and commitment to change

APPLICATION PROCESS

Our application process and taster day enable us and the young people to get to know each other and for us it is important to see that:

- The young people are committed to change
- That they like the kind of activities we run
- Young people can work as part of a team
- Groups are safe and comfortable for every participant
- We build up a picture of their interests and needs

It is also helpful to us because we can work on the specific programme content and logistics based on the youth requirements such as the gender ratio, their ages and specific area of needs.



TURNAROUND PROJECT FAQ

Do participants need to bring their own food?

We provide food for Wilderness Journeys and workshops. If young people want to bring sweets or snacks we would ask them to be willing to share with others. We do aim to have healthy, locally sourced food on our programmes. We need to be advised on any food allergies, please complete this on the application form.

What equipment do the young people need?

We provide all the outdoor equipment such as tents, sleeping bags, backpacks, cutlery, plates, cooking equipment etc.

Young people need to have a sensible, waterproof pair of boots for use throughout the project - do contact us if this is not possible - warm clothing suitable for outdoors, personal medication and toiletries.

We discourage young people from bringing electronic equipment or any luxury goods to any trails or workshops.

We negotiate minimal use of mobile phones.

Do the young people have to attend the entire project?

YES! Once committed we will expect them to attend regularly. The Wilderness Trails are a huge part of the project and both MUST be attended. Participants must also meet their mentor on a regular basis as agreed between themselves and their mentor.

Will young people be able to phone home regularly when away on trails?

We believe that no news is good news and suggest to our participants not to contact home, look at Facebook or call friends. This is important as it can dilute the experience, cause upsets, and unsettlement. If there is a serious reason to call home please let us know the circumstances and we would be more than happy to coordinate this.

How will young people get to the venues?

We ask families, referrers and young people to help where possible with transport to social events and workshops. This may be parents or carers dropping off and picking up, social workers providing travel warrants and so on. If transport may be a challenge then we just need to know and we can support you with this. Transport is always tricky so we need all the help we can get!! Transport to the Wilderness Trails is provided and we travel together as a group.



What are the costs of the project?

For a participant to attend the TurnAround Project it is FREE OF CHARGE to the family/referral services. Although there is no cost to you, each place on the project is worth a minimum of £5000 depending on need and level of support. Whilst we understand not everyone can contribute hence the project is FREE, we do ask that parents, families, carers and referral services who are in a position to contribute to the charity to do so. Even just helping to raise a little money through a cake sale or boot sale all goes towards helping the next group of young people turn their lives around.

What is the Wilderness Trail that is mentioned?

The Wilderness Trail is the heart beat of the project and where significant change happens. In the first trail we generally go away for seven days and wild camp in a location such as Scotland. We may either canoe or hike depending on the time of year and other factors. The second trail is generally five days and we again may either canoe or hike depending on time of year and other factors, we generally choose to go somewhere closer to home such as Wales for the second trail.



We travel throughout remote areas and are self-efficient so we carry all our food and possessions and working as a small team together. Food is cooked on small camping stoves, water is taken from the river, and we are outside for this whole period regardless of the weather. We explore and learn about nature, landscape, heritage and any other elements that present themselves to us.

Experienced and qualified guides lead this process with the young people and facilitation staff. We travel at the pace of the slowest and cater for all food, fitness and other needs. We aim to grow a sense of achievement and accomplishment in our participants through finishing these trails. We also hope to create connections

with wild places, a sense of awe and wonder and a love of the outdoors that they can carry forward.

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

There is an ongoing process of facilitation and workshops to develop confidence, self-esteem, self-awareness, resilience and strengths recognition. Some are simply done moment to moment and others are informal workshops that can include are:

- Bushcraft skills
- Fire making
- Nature art
- Team games
- Nature Poetry
- Walks and Solo time
- Journaling
- Sharing in the group
- Communicating with the group and opportunities to present to family, friends and other interested parties.



AFTER TURNAROUND

We work with each young person so that they feel confident finishing the project and moving on. There is an opportunity for young people to become peer mentors and support other young people through the project. We are also committed to supporting young people in pursuing further education or employment.

INTERESTED? NEXT STEPS

Please see our website or contact us for a referral form. Alternatively please contact Mark O'Sullivan, Youth Services Officer for a chat or to arrange an informal meeting.

'TurnAround'

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TURNAROUND
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