

WILDERNESS

FOUNDATION UK



Information for Parents & Referrers- Turnaround Cohort 19

What is TurnAround?

TurnAround is a well-established programme run by the **Wilderness Foundation**, supporting young people aged **16–23** who are facing personal, emotional, or social challenges.

Since **2007**, TurnAround has supported **18 cohorts** of young people, with strong outcomes. A high proportion of participants complete the programme feeling more confident and go on to **education, training, or employment**.

The programme uses **nature and outdoor experiences** alongside **mentoring, counselling, and family support** to help young people make positive, lasting changes in their lives.

Who Is TurnAround For?

TurnAround supports young people who may be:

- Struggling with confidence or self-esteem
- Experiencing anxiety, depression, grief, or emotional regulation difficulties
- Socially isolated or withdrawn from education
- Facing complex family or life circumstances
- At risk of self-harm or low mood

Young people do **not** need outdoor experience, but they do need to be willing to try something new and engage with support.

How the Programme Supports Young People

Each participant receives **individualised support**, including:

- One-to-one mentoring (weekly)
- Access to counselling or therapeutic support where needed
- Group work focused on confidence, communication, and social skills
- Support into volunteering, training, or work experience

The programme is delivered by **experienced outdoor therapists, qualified guides, and trained volunteer mentors**.

The Wilderness Experience

The wilderness element is central to TurnAround and is carefully managed and supported.

Wilderness Trails

Participants take part in **two fully supported wilderness journeys**:

- **First Trail:**
 - 7 days wild camping (often in Scotland)
 - Canoeing or hiking, depending on the season
- **Second Trail:**
 - 5 days wild camping (often in Wales)

During the trails, young people:

- Camp outdoors in safe, remote locations
- Carry their own equipment with group support
- Cook meals together and work as a team
- Are supported at all times by qualified staff

All equipment and food are provided. The group travels at the pace of the slowest participant, and staff adapt activities to meet individual needs.

These experiences help young people build:

- Confidence and resilience
- Teamwork and problem-solving skills
- A sense of achievement and independence
- Calmness and emotional regulation

Ongoing Programme Activities

Throughout the programme, participants also:

- Attend **monthly day sessions** focused on personal development
- Meet **weekly with a volunteer mentor**
- Take part in **group sessions** to build social skills
- Access **community volunteering and work experience**

Creative and reflective activities may include:

- Bushcraft and fire-making
- Journaling and reflection
- Nature-based creative activities
- Group discussions and presentations



Attendance & Commitment

TurnAround is a **full-commitment programme**.

Participants are expected to:

- Attend all wilderness trails and workshops
- Engage regularly with their mentor
- Take responsibility for their own progress

This structure is essential to achieving positive outcomes.

Communication & Safety

- Young people have **limited phone contact** during wilderness trails to help them fully engage with the experience
- Staff can arrange contact with home if there is a genuine need
- Safety is a top priority, with experienced staff, clear risk management, and ongoing support

After TurnAround

As the programme ends, young people are supported to:

- Transition into education, training, or employment
- Continue personal development with confidence

Some graduates choose to return as **peer mentors**, supporting new participants.

A **graduation celebration** brings together families, referrers, mentors, and supporters to recognise each young person's achievements.

Eligibility Criteria

Young people must:

- Be **16–23 years old**
- Live in **Essex** (particularly Colchester and Chelmsford)
- Be willing to engage with outdoor activities
- Benefit from confidence-building and personal development
- Show a genuine willingness to make positive changes

Referral & Application Process

1. Online referral form completed by referrer or young person
2. Interview with the staff team
3. Taster day with other applicants
4. Final selection

This process ensures the programme is the right fit for the young person and that they feel comfortable joining.

Practical Information

Food & Equipment

- All food and outdoor equipment provided
- Dietary needs and allergies fully catered for
- Participants need suitable waterproof boots and personal clothing

Transport

- Families/referrers help with transport to local sessions where possible
- Transport to wilderness trails is fully provided

Cost

- **Fully funded through grants and donations;** the programme costs a minimum of £5,000 per place
- Contributions (financial or in kind) are welcomed but not required.

Web: [Wilderness therapy, specialist group and 1-2-1 support for vulnerable young people](#)

Please Email: Turnaround@wildernessfoundation.org.uk



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