



The Wild Swim Project

Summary Impact Report

The Wild Swim Project is a project to introduce people to the mental and physical health benefits that immersing in cold water, within the natural environment, brings. To give them the skills and knowledge to build confidence and encourage participants to follow their own, safe, and supported, wild swimming journey. It is specifically designed to support those with mental health challenges.



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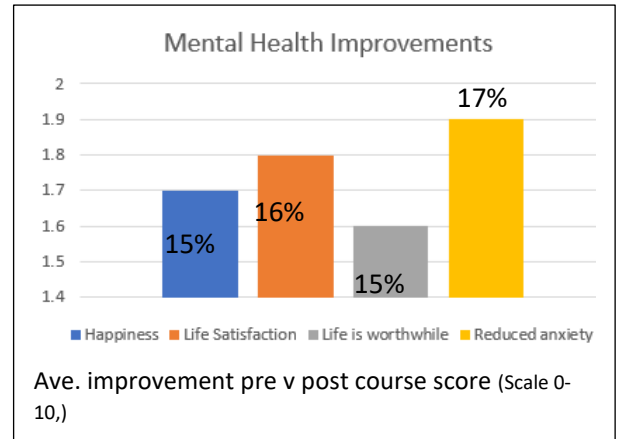




Transforming Lives

The Impacts that the Wild Swim Project has achieved in a very short period of time has far exceeded all expectations held by participants, sponsors and the Wild Swim Team themselves, with longer term outcomes still improving. Rigerious collection of pre and post course data shows dramatic mental health improvements.

- Their **happiness level** 'yesterday' increased on average by 1.7 points. (15%)
- **Life satisfaction** increased on average by 1.8 points (16%)
- An average increase of 1.6 points in the level of how **'worthwhile things they do in life' are** (15%)
- That their **levels of anxiousness** 'yesterday' reduced by 1.9 points (17%)



Longer Term Outcomes Our cohort of swimmers that have maintained their regular group wild swim for 6 months or more found the results even more positive. These showed life satisfaction up 25%, happiness up 20%, worthiness of things they do up 23% and anxiety down 18%.

There is so much more to these impacts than data points alone can describe. For those participants who have been regularly seeing clinicians, their input and observations have shone an additional light and professional opinion on the impacts observed, as well as the verbatim comments shared on further pages.

The project provides a non-clinical model for treating severe depression that is based on behavioural activation theories. Clinicians observed an immediate calming effect, often with depressive symptoms reducing and self-harm reducing or stopping. The project gave participants a 'purpose', a significant increase in their positive well-being, improved confidence and a 'connection' with something positive. In summary achieving results far beyond their expectation in a very a short time period.

Background

The Wild Swim Project has pioneered a course format and structure that uses 'wild open water



swimming' as the focus for individuals suffering with significant mental health challenges. The core methodology uses a 'weekly' swimming session in the heart of nature to meet, swim or dip and then enjoy a hot drink and cake whilst rewarming. With a group size of 12 people, along with two qualified outdoor swimming coaches and lifeguards, a bond between the group who are all facing similar challenges with everyday life quickly forms. The sessions provide learning about safe wild swimming, as well as an opportunity to meet, bond with a group, and gain mental strength and confidence.



Course participation

So far, over 100 participants have enthusiastically signed up and enjoyed participating in the Wild Swim Project. 60 of these have joined a 4-session course, whilst 48 have had a shorter programme. Course participants include adults referred via Linkworkers under the Green Social Prescribing national trials, teenagers receiving support from the local NHS CYPS (formerly CAMHs) teams as well as broader NHS teams. Most participants were able to attend the full course on offer however, where individuals were unable to join a session, the reasons shared provided an insight into the often troubled, challenging and complex lives faced by our participants.

Data Summary

Measuring and demonstrating the impacts for participants is a vital element in communicating project value. An ONS4 questionnaire as well as the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing scales have been used to gather pre and post course data and show impacts. Collecting data from participants is always challenging and a wide range of situations explain the underlying reasons for this. The use of verbatim comment relating to their experiences help 'bring the impacts to life' more tangibly.



Course Outcomes

The Office of National Statistics (ONS) defined 4 questions we used, commonly referenced as the ONS4. Below we show the movement pre and post course, all questions used a scale of 0 to 10.

Life Satisfaction. Overall, how satisfied are you with your life these days? Where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely". The average pre course score was 5.1, with 6.9 being the post course score - *At the end of the course, the life satisfaction for our participants increased on average by 1.8 points.*

Worthwhile. Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile? Where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely". The average pre course score was 5.2, with 6.8 being the post course score. *At the end of the course, participants reported an increase, on average, of 1.6 points.*

Happiness. Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday? Where 0 is "not at all" and 10 is "completely". The average pre course score was 5.7, the average score for post course was 7.4. *The happiness level for our participants 'yesterday' increased on average by 1.7 points.*

Anxiety. Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday? 0 being 'not at all anxious' and 10 being 'completely anxious'. The average score pre course was 5.5. The average score for post course was 3.6. *The levels of anxiety for our participants 'yesterday' reduced by 1.9 points following the course.*



Participants Additional Comments

Additional comments help colour and describe the *'real life'* impacts the courses have delivered for participants. These illustrate the impacts more so than the numeric scale point shifts. An illustration, *'Reported Benefits'* combines comments by theme from one participant who expressed a very profound positive impact in some detail.

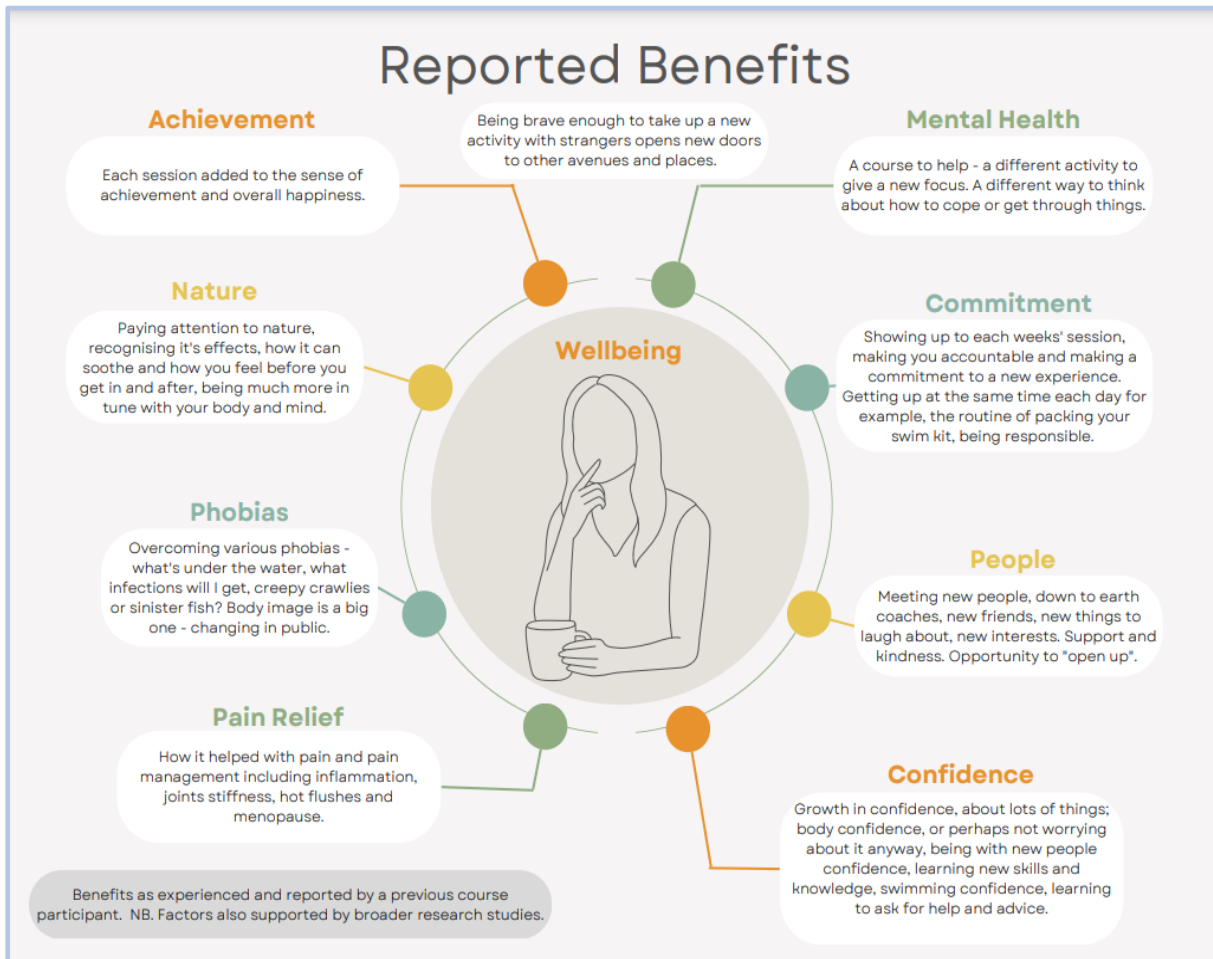
It is clear that the courses are delivered professionally, participants feel welcome, safe, in good care and all aspects of the course, both in and off the water is of great benefit to them, helping to raise their self-esteem and feeling of worth. These comments show some of the value gained...

- Gave us an improved mood, a lift, a zing, enabled a step change into a new better place.
- All the bad thoughts trickled out of my body and into the water, I got out a calmer person.
- It delivered a slice of peace and tranquillity that has opened the door to new things.
- My mood has improved considerably. The benefits I have experienced have far exceeded my expectations, my confidence has been boosted and it has encouraged me to go out and do other activities helping my mental health and self-care.
- The course has inspired me to think of the future. I am encouraged that I will feel better and that it is okay to let people help. I have even applied for a job - as my mental health is significantly better.
- There are no words to describe how amazing this experience has been. From a quick dip to swimming 600m with incredible people has been life changing.
- The wild swim project has been one of the most enjoyable experiences of my life! I have met some wonderful people and I am finding the well-being benefits extraordinary, including feeling calmer and happier.
- This group has been amazing, best thing I have done in years, feel much happier and positive.
- The wild swim project has made a huge difference in my life. I am so grateful for this opportunity. It has made me more confident and encouraged me to get out more.
- The course was innovative. The leaders were supportive, informative and encouraging. It has given me confidence. It has helped me to gain clarity and peace of mind during an extremely challenging and difficult period in my life. I would highly recommend this course to others.
- "I spend my life caring for others, both at work and at home, it was just lovely to have 10+ minutes of 'me time' during these sessions.



Reported Benefits

A single individual gave extensive written feedback after the course and went into considerable detail of where and how they experienced benefits. These have been aggregated below under our descriptive subheadings, using their description and terms for how it benefitted them.



The Wild Swim Project

The Project has been designed and is delivered by Paul Mackenzie and Jude Palmer through Embrace Adventures CIC. They are both outdoor adventure professionals trained, qualified, and insured to deliver a wide range of outdoor activities. The Project is focused on those who could benefit from connecting with blue and green spaces by means of open water swimming, trail running and walking for the purpose of fun, adventure, social, physical and mental health benefits, with a focus on reaching those traditionally not represented.

