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**OCEAN YOUTH  
TRUST NORTH**  
changing lives, inspiring futures

University of  
**Cumbria** 

# Ocean Youth Trust North: A report on the social impact of sail training



### Acknowledgements

The Ocean Youth Trust North and the researchers wish to thank the Garfield Weston Foundation and the Tyneside Charitable Trust in funding this study. The researchers would also like to thank Caroline Callahan, Research Director, Social Research Institute at Ipsos MORI for her *gratis* advice and assistance in the design of the online survey.

### How to cite this report:

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## Foreword

There is an increasing need for evidence of the impact of sail training experiences for children and young people, parents/carers and other stakeholders. There is no doubt that sail training voyages as unique and safe residential experiences are meaningful in the lives of participants but the research to support these anecdotal and sporadic accounts, to date, has been limited.

This Social Impact study was commissioned by the Ocean Youth Trust North (OYT North), a sail training charity based in North East England to the University of Cumbria working with a Lead Researcher at OYT North, Dr Eric Fletcher. The research sought to bring together immediate feedback from participants on their sail training experiences (end of voyage feedback) as well as eliciting the meaning that these experiences have had on the lives and aspirations of young people in the longer term. The project also sought to fill a gap in research about the impact for other types of beneficiaries in sail training – the full-time and volunteer sea-staff, and stakeholders who might support or sponsor young people on these voyages. The study uses multiple data sources including an online questionnaire, interviews and focus groups (in 2019) in addition to *naturally occurring* data such as ship's logs and reports, end of voyage forms, social media posts and correspondence. This range and quantity of data provides evidence that sail training experiences provide rich and powerful experiences in the lives of participants and others who vest time and commitment for OYT North.

The findings from the research are that all the key differences that sail training have made to participants relate to social impact.

*"It's not just about the sailing, it's about the journey"*

95% of the respondents immediately after the voyage felt that they were more confident in what they could do and 100% of the respondents felt that they did something during the voyage that they thought that they could not do (2015 & 2016 data,  $n=270$ ). Using all the datasets, the main impacts of sail training were identified as **increased self-confidence, a greater appreciation of one's capabilities and respect for, and cooperation with others.**

There is no doubt that the work of the OYT North is having a significant impact on the lives of young people. This research reports a selection of the data that substantiate the rich and powerful effect of sail training and add to a limited but growing body of literature of both immediate and longer term outcomes of residential experiences. It also establishes a dataset on the perspectives of sea-staff and stakeholders involved in sail training. Our findings for the OYT North will have broader application for sail training organisations, and for wider discourses on social inclusion and youth transition through children and young people's participation in outdoor and adventurous experiences.

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University of Cumbria  
UK

## Background

The *Ocean Youth Trust North* (OYT North) is a sail training charity specialising in the social and personal development of children and young people through *Adventure under Sail*<sup>®</sup>, an exhilarating but safe residential experience aboard a sailing vessel with the ambition of *changing lives and inspiring futures*. Operating from the Royal Quays, North Shields the OYT North (vested in 2011) has its origins in the Ocean Youth Club (OYC)<sup>1</sup>, a charity founded in 1960 by Chris Ellis and Chris Courtauld to give young people the opportunity to experience adventure under sail at sea.

In 1982, members of the Royal Northumberland Yacht Club (RNYC), Blyth began a campaign to establish a local branch of the OYC, developing a network of supporters stretching from Berwick upon Tweed to Hull. In 1984, the North East supporters proposed building a *Shipwright 70* ketch, designed by Laurent Giles to be sailed by young people, as part of a £200,000 Manpower Services Commission/ Youth Training Scheme project for unemployed young people, at the former Hawthorn Leslie shipyard, Hebburn on the River Tyne. The *James Cook*, a 21-metre steel hulled ketch and the OYT North flagship, was launched in 1987, originally with a blue-coloured hull, by Princess Alexandra. In 1988 the *James Cook* acquired her now trademark yellow-coloured hull. In 1997, the *James Cook*, in a world first, completed a circumnavigation with crews of young people<sup>1</sup>. In 1999 the OYC was disbanded; the Ocean Youth Trust North East (1999 to 2011) was formed and purchased the *James Cook*; and later became the Ocean Youth Trust North to reflect its provision of *Adventure under Sail*<sup>®</sup> for children and young people from across the north of England. In her thirty years of service (to 2017) *James Cook* has taken more than 9000 young people to sea<sup>2</sup>.

During 2017, the Rank Foundation's *Time to Shine* funded an alumni project, enabling OYT North to employ an intern to (re-)contact young people who had sailed with OYT North aboard *James Cook* between 2001 and 2016 for which data were available (i.e. except 2002, 2004 and 2006). Using archived booking form data (i.e. postal addresses, e mails and contact telephone numbers) this project communicated with 3880 former crew or their 'emergency contact' recorded on their booking form (involving 3572 postcards, 2173 e mail and more than 400 telephone contacts). This project received a positive response from 66 young people and 8 group leaders who had sailed aboard *James Cook*. A further 67 respondents had indicated that whilst they were not interested in further contact as alumni, they would be interested in participating in this study.

## Current position

The OYT North is now based in North Shields, operating *James Cook* from the Royal Quays Marina to provide overnight, weekend, five- and six-day voyages. To meet increased demand during summer months the charity has chartered a second vessel allowing voyages to be delivered from North Shields, whilst *James Cook* sailed from Whitehaven. In addition to sail training activities OYT North Training, a subsidiary of the charity, is a recognised Royal Yachting Association (RYA) Training Centre delivering Sail Cruising (practical and shore-based) and Powerboat courses for adults and young people using *Lene Sono* (a Rival 34 yacht gifted to the charity in 2015) and the *OYT Rib*.

Sail training berths are offered to young people aged 12 to 25 years; whilst pro-active contact is made with schools and youth organisations who have sailed previously and new contacts, the demand for voyages fluctuates from year to year, see Table 1<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See *50 years of Adventure under Sail: Ocean Youth Club – Ocean Youth Trust*, available at [http://www.oigtsouth.org/pdfs/50th\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.oigtsouth.org/pdfs/50th_brochure.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.oynorth.org.uk/news/ocean-youth-trust-north-celebrates-james-cook's-30th-anniversary>

<sup>3</sup> Figures for 2013 through to 2016 are taken from OYT North Annual Reports.

Year	Berth Occupancy
2013	'more than 500'
2014	450
2015	460
2016	470
2017	396
2018	416

Table 1. Crew: Berth occupancy 2013 to 2018

Analysis of the crew manifests<sup>4</sup> for the 2017 and 2018 seasons shows that most crew participants were children and young people aged 15-years or under (2017: 73.9%; 2018: 72.5% - see Table 2). The provision of *Primary to Secondary* school transition voyages has intentionally extended the provision of vessel-based experiences for Year 6 children (10 – 11 years) (see p.19).

Year	No. of crew	<12yrs	12-15yrs	16/17yrs	18-25yrs	>25yrs	Leaders <25yrs	Leaders >25yrs
2017	396	113 (29%)	180 (45%)	57 (14%)	32 (8%)	14 (4%)	4	43
2018	416	167 (40%)	135 (33%)	81 (20%)	25 (6%)	8 (1%)	9	64

Table 2. Analysis of berth occupancy (crew) by age

The increase in the number of leaders sailing (2017:  $n=47$ ; 2018:  $n=73$ ), particularly aged over 25-years, may be a consequence of the Primary to Secondary transition voyages where children are accompanied by teachers and other teaching staff, and *James Cook's* participation in the 2018 Sunderland Tall Ship's Race.

#### End-of-voyage feedback

In 2013 an end-of-voyage feedback form, adapted from the Sail Training International (2011) *Self-Assessment Toolkit*, comprising five statements and three open questions was introduced to capture the reaction to their voyage of young crews immediately before they departed the *James Cook* (or charter vessel). The feedback form was completed on the last day of most but not all voyages; in 2013, 42.6% of crew completed the form; in 2014, 50.8%; in 2015, 33.7%, and in 2016, 24.5%.

Since 2017 OYT North have participated in the development and piloting of an end-of-voyage feedback process by the Association of Sail Training Organisation (ASTO) to provide consistency across UK sail training organisations<sup>5</sup>, this is ongoing and is not detailed here. This type of feedback informs the voyage-by-voyage development of operating practices, it is particularly useful for sea-staff who sailed on the voyage.

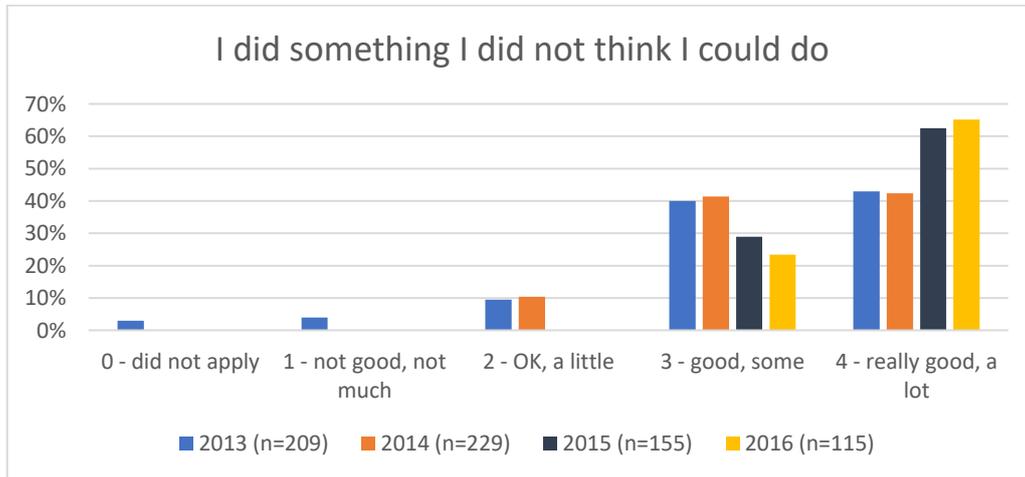
Set out below is a comparison of crew responses to the five statements; respondents were invited to rate these statements using a scale of 0 – did not apply to 4 – really good, a lot. These tables are indicative only, they do not differentiate voyage duration, age and gender of the crew, the vessel (i.e. *James Cook* or the summer charter vessel). All open comments use pseudonyms with the ages of respondents given in brackets in years. Other voyage variables might include the

<sup>4</sup> The figures for crew exclude those who sailed as 'leaders', such as accompanying group leaders, youth workers or teachers, these are listed separately and do not include those sailing as sea-staff.

<sup>5</sup> This is part of a larger ASTO project. The *ASTO Theory of Change, evidence review and measurement framework* is detailed at <https://uksailtraining.org.uk/images/stories/Sailtrainingworksevidence/public-ASTO-Theory-of-Change-measurement-framework.pdf>

characteristics and experience of the sea-staff (full-time and volunteers), whether sailing in the North Sea or Irish Sea, the sea state and weather conditions.

Many young crew participants embark on their voyage as a novel residential experience, often with preconceptions of what they will or will not be able to do, for example, many children and young people find the challenges of socialising with other crew or the sea-staff daunting whilst others are more challenged by the technical aspects of sailing. Being able to overcome a pre-voyage preconception can be a very positive experience for many young crew members.



Examples of what some crew members found they were able to do:

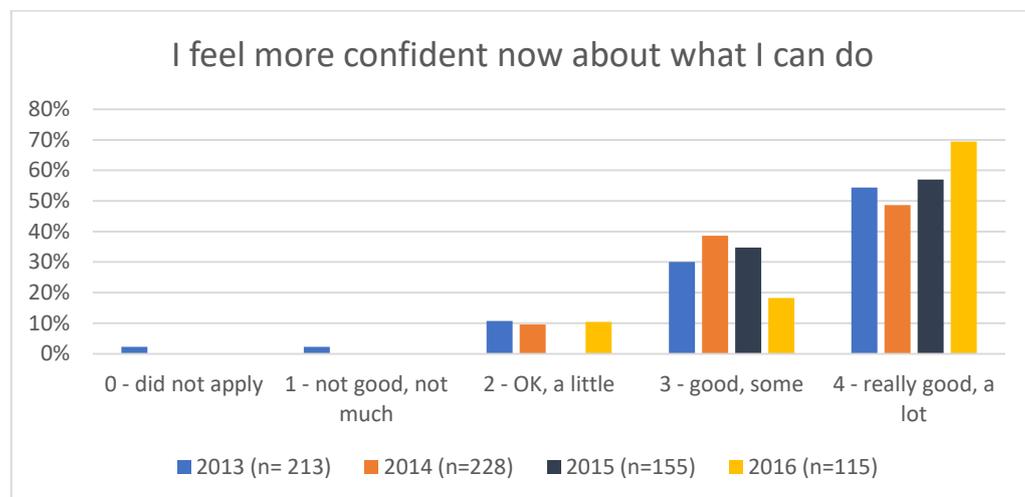
*I was worried about getting along with everyone* (Emma, 15)

*Laugh so much* (Kim, 14)

*Live without my phone* (David, 14)

*To work confidently in a large group* (Chloe, 14)

Confidence is an often-cited outcome of sail training; it can mean different things for different people and may be used in different ways making it difficult to measure (see *Interviews*, pp.14-19). In rating the statement: 'I feel more confident now about what I can do' respondents consistently report an increase in confidence.



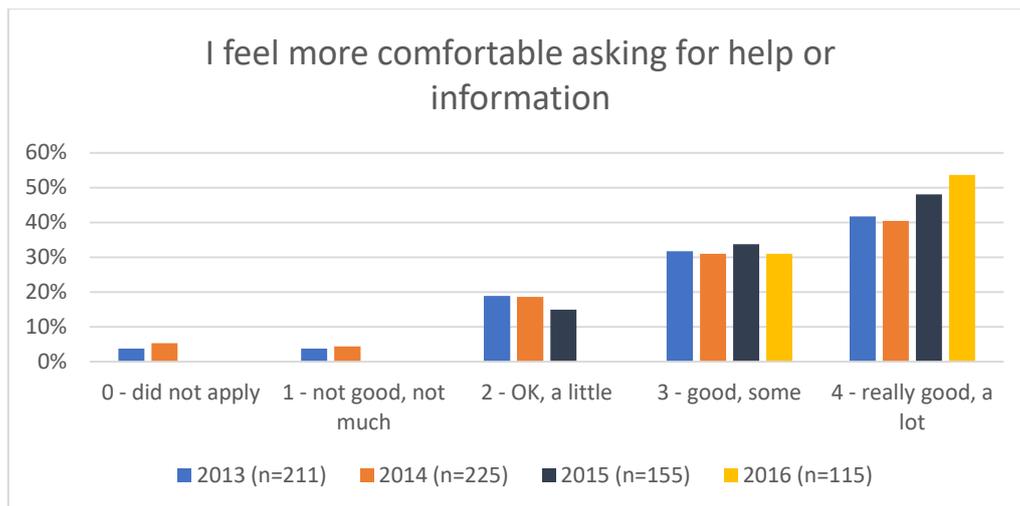
Crew members described how their confidence had improved:

*Can do things but only if I try* (Catherine, 15)

*Work better now with people* (Jeffrey, 15)

*Working with strangers* (Mark, 15)  
*I gained more confidence by working together* (Sam, 19)  
*I feel more confident about meeting new people* (Helen, 15)  
*Throughout the week I have done lots of new (and sometimes difficult) things I didn't think I could do – but I did!* (Jenny, 16)  
*Yes, because you can learn how to do anything* (Rebecca, 17)  
*I can do a lot of stuff that I thought I couldn't do* (Daniel, 13)  
*I feel much more confident about making friends* (Tracey, 17)  
*Not so worried about talking to strangers* (Laura, 15)  
*Respecting personal space, living without phone* (Rachel, 14)  
*Clean up after myself everyday* (Liz, 12)  
*I now feel like I can do anything if I try* (Steve, 12)

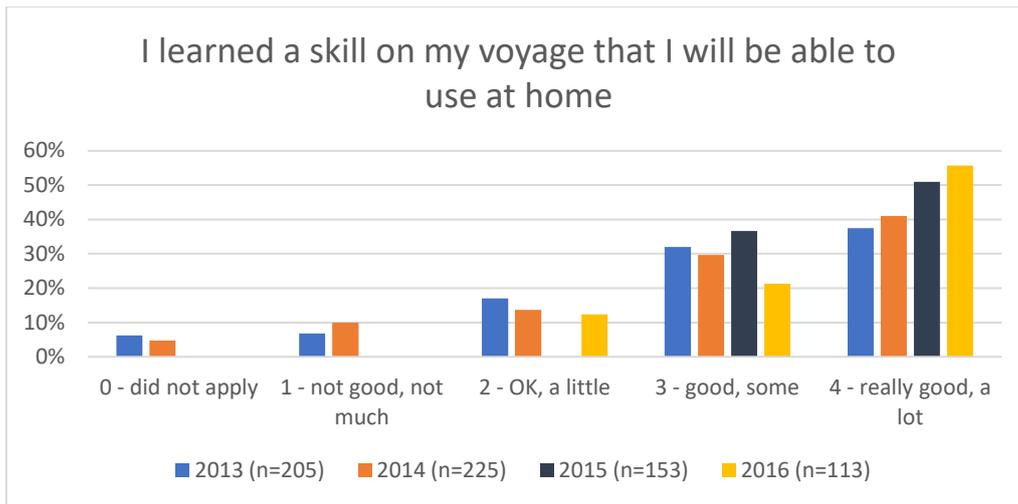
The nature of the social interactions found during a sail training voyage, many of which occur naturally in the day-to-day operation of the vessel as opposed to those that may be experienced in more contrived settings (such as classrooms), support the development of help-seeking behaviours. Seeking help, falling short of complete dependence, is a demonstration of intrinsic motivation and is a viable to approach when encountering the 'unknown', such as the vessel setting with unfamiliar crew mates and the sea-staff.



Respondents provided examples of when they sought help:

*I know now it's v.v. important to use a team* (Trevor, 12)  
*Yes, never [really] wanted to ask for help but feel comfortable asking now* (Colin, 21)  
*I'm less nervous round (sic) people* (Keith, age not given)  
*Not as scared to ask for help* (Joseph, 14)  
*It boosted my confidence to talk to people I don't know* (Maisy, 16)

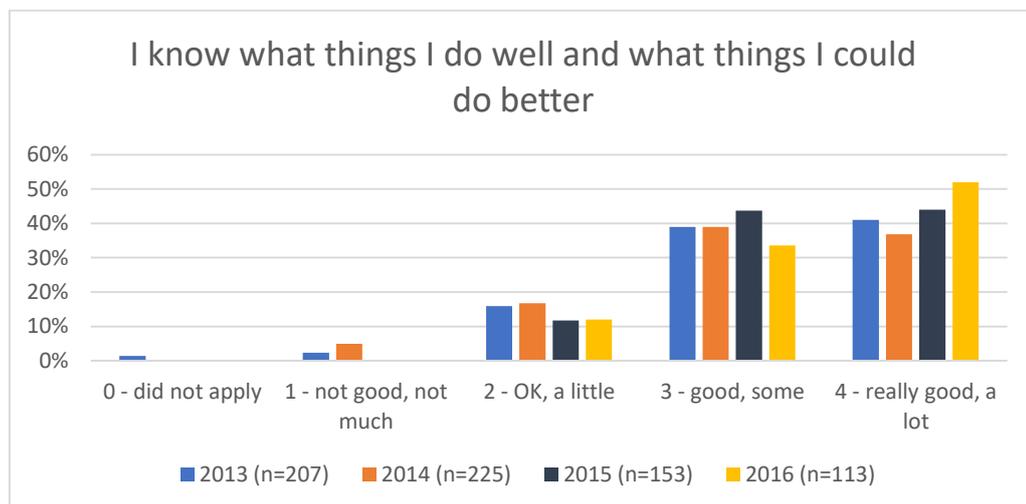
The voyage-setting allows young crew members the freedom to engage in the routine but culturally valued activities of the vessel, such as domestic chores (washing and cleaning) and sailing operations (sail handling and helming), which are often completed as group activities. Completed as a group task even washing-up presents the opportunity for social interaction between the crew and sea-staff (see *Primary to Secondary Transition voyages*, p.19).



Examples of skills that could be taken away from the voyage:

- Involving children in chores that are about them as well!!!* (Group leader)
- Learning to live closely with others and all that comes with it* (Karen, age not given)
- Team work & communication* (Lydia, 14)
- I have learned [...] more about understanding others and their feelings* (Peter, 15)
- Team work & communication skills* (Steph, 15)
- Getting on with people I don't know* (Colin, 19)

Reflection is a key component of learning from experience. The sail training voyage provides opportunities for individual crew members and sea-staff to think about their experience whilst still in the setting where the experience is taking place. De-briefing of each day's events and the overall voyage is a regular practice aboard *James Cook*, this provokes reflection to often give participants valuable insights in to their own personal development.



Examples:

- I know my mobile doesn't have to be in my hand CONSTANTLY* (Christina, 23; emphasis in original)
- Talking to new people* (Robert, 17)
- I maybe could've volunteered more instead of sitting quietly* (Wendy, 15)
- I know now that I am more confident than I think* (Jess, 15)

*Meeting new people* (Paul, age not given)  
*I know I could do things better if I try harder* (Nathan, 14)  
*I learnt a lot about myself on this trip* (Nina, 16)  
*I did things I didn't think I could do* (Graham, age not given)  
*Working harder and more effort* (Julie, 15)  
*I can do anything but sometimes need to read the situation a bit better because I tend to rush at it* (Mandy, 16)  
*I realise that I may need help for some things and when I don't* (Simon, age not given).

## Other beneficiaries of sail training

In addition to providing *Adventure under Sail*<sup>®</sup> for children and young people, the OYT North also supports the development of all of those engaged in the sail training experience. The charity's operating model relies on the commitment and support of volunteers, with a variety of life experiences and sailing experience, to complement the full-time professional sea-staff, and offers opportunities for young people who aspire to a career in sail training, or the wider sailing sector. Much of the academic literature has neglected the impact of sail training for full-time and volunteer sea-staff; this study only touches on some of the benefits for these roles and are described below:

### Volunteers

Volunteers are key to the operation of OYT North, a current (2019) cohort of 117 volunteers, of whom 53 have sailed in 2017 and 2018, complement the full-time professional sea-staff, as they use their varied life experiences to engage with and support the children and young people during their sail training voyage. Volunteers complete an Induction Voyage<sup>6</sup> and then, once referees are checked and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate is obtained, can book on voyages with children and young people.

In 2013, recognising the value of this support the OYT North conducted a survey of its volunteers ( $n=63$ ) with 23 (36.5%) respondents; one respondent described the charity's ethos as:

A good volunteer aboard *James Cook* would be someone who enjoys working alongside young people, helping them to grow in confidence whilst passing on their knowledge to the crew and being eager to learn themselves, fun, hard working and making sure that safety is paramount at all times.

Respondents to this survey valued their experience aboard *James Cook*, recognising their own development:

[The skipper] has been an inspiration to all who sail with her, especially myself, passing on her expertise and knowledge so that I, as a volunteer whilst being pushed out of my comfort zone at times, leave the boat a better person.

It is up to you how much to get involved, the more you do the more you get out of it. [The skipper] and the other staff are always willing to encourage learning new things, i.e. navigation, this can lead to qualification like Watch Leader.

Very patient since its [sic] taken a time developing people skills and confidence. The debriefs this year were really good and honest. I know where I stand and have a focus on how to move forward.

### OYT North Career Development Programme

The OYT North provides opportunities for young people to complete work experience, on-the-job training and gain RYA sailing qualifications in a structured programme for young people as full-time volunteers. Since 2013 this rolling, two-year programme, the OYT North *Career Development Programme*, has recruited, through open competition, a new candidate each year and

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<sup>6</sup> For more details of the OYT North *Safer Recruitment* process for full-time and volunteer sea-staff, see the OYT North Safeguarding Policy at <http://www.oynorth.org.uk/about/policies>

it is testimony to the effectiveness of this programme that the four recent graduates (since 2015) have all secured employment with other sailing training providers as professional full-time sea-staff.

Extracts from exit interviews<sup>7</sup> demonstrate the value of this programme for its graduates:

I really do feel that the last two years have definitely helped me prepare for that job [...] and I think I am more excited about that than other things that don't really matter. [...] Two years ago [...] I wouldn't have hired me, just because I was so quiet, so shy and it is really your relationship with the kids that matters. [...] I have definitely changed ...you could wrap it up and say confidence, enjoying people's company [in addition to] the skills that you get through and the qualifications.

I guess I've learnt that you can't just go at things and keep going at them; you've got to have time to just stop and think about what you're doing. I've learnt how to manage people ...rotate people around, don't just get the same three people, just because you know those three can drop a sail and stow it neatly; get other people doing it because otherwise you're going to wear them out ...and that way people enjoy it more. And also learn to delegate ...that's an ongoing one ...you can't do everything!

I am really happy that I found [sail training] because I had no idea about what I wanted to do. [...] I've realised this year that all of the things that I enjoyed most at school, like school trips when you went away and did outdoor activities, [...] I never realised that I could make it a job.

## This study

### Context

Sail training has been the subject of limited academic study<sup>8</sup>. Many studies have isolated, identified and measured inter-personal and intra-personal outcomes for crew participants; in our previous study aboard *James Cook* we investigated the on-board activities and how these might influence participant well-being and character formation and development<sup>9</sup>. However, the outcomes for other types of beneficiaries, such as full-time and volunteer sea-staff, have not been explored, an aspect of sail training that is included in this study. In the largest study to date, Sail Training International and the University of Edinburgh<sup>10</sup> proposed that some of these voyage outcomes were sustainable beyond the voyage experience. However, there has not yet been an investigation of longer-term outcomes or how these outcomes may translate to real-world impact for those who have participated in *Adventure under Sail*<sup>®</sup> voyages, for example, academic achievement, life-long learning, employability, social mobility or citizenship.

The planning for the current study began in 2016 with negotiations between the OYT North and the University of Cumbria; leading to fund raising. The funding made available for this study has shaped the design and methodological approach. The research questions were:

- Is there a longer-term impact of sail training voyages for crew participants and full-time and volunteer sea-staff?
- Do 'commissioning organisations' observe benefits following a sail training voyage?

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<sup>7</sup> Exit interviews are conducted with all full-time sea-staff as they conclude their service with OYT North.

<sup>8</sup> Schijf, M., Allison, P. & Von Wald, K. (2017) Sail Training: A Systematic Review. *Journal of Outdoor Recreation, Education, and Leadership*. 2017, Vol. 9, No. 2: 167-180.

<sup>9</sup> Fletcher, E. & Prince, H. (2017) Steering a course towards Eudaimonia: The effects of sail training on well-being and character. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning*, Vol. 17(3): 179-190. Available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/qSh9xP35rDRQnauj9ar4/full>

<sup>10</sup> The report of this study is available at <https://sailtraininginternational.org/research/the-characteristics-and-value-of-the-sail-training-experience/>

## Method

The intention for this study was to conduct sequential activities to explore subjective and objective experiences of OYT North and sail training voyages aboard *James Cook* (or any other vessel chartered by OYT North). In practice, research methods were developed and used concurrently, these included an online survey, focus groups and semi-structured interviews. *Naturally occurring* data, such as the Ship's Log Book, Skipper and First Mate voyage reports, end-of-voyage feedback, social media posts, and correspondence (e.g. letters/ emails of thanks, reports to/ from funders, alumni project) were also reviewed.

The online survey was developed by the researchers (with the *gratis* support of Caroline Callahan, Research Director, Social Research Institute, Ipsos MORI), and hosted on the University of Cumbria *Jisc Online* platform. The survey was 'live' from the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2018 and was made available to study participants in a link contained in an OYT North e-newsletter (sent to 593 recipients on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2018) and posted on the OYT North website and social media accounts. On 30<sup>th</sup> December 2018 a reminder was sent to 414 recipients (some of the prior recipients had unsubscribed from the OYT North e-newsletter). The survey remained open until 5<sup>th</sup> January 2019; there were 29 responses (7%) which is considered a low response rate and any inferences from the data should be considered with caution (see *Online survey results* below). However, several of the respondents to the survey indicated that they wanted to provide more detailed responses, and these were captured through interviews.

Three focus groups at a venue at North Shields were organised and the details circulated via an OYT North e-newsletter, however, there was no response to the invitation, so responding to feedback on this approach these focus groups were cancelled and an invitation to participate in telephone interviews was made through an OYT North e-newsletter. During this study thirteen semi-structured interviews (two face-to-face and eleven by telephone) were conducted with a range of participants.

Separately, invitations were sent to schools ( $n=15$ ) and organisations ( $n=19$ ), through teachers and leaders as established gatekeepers in their relations with OYT North, to host focus groups with young crew participants at their school or meeting venues. The response to this invitation was mixed, ranging from no response at all to tentative expressions of interest; in the event only one primary school was able to arrange a focus group with four teaching staff regarding their experience of the *Primary to Secondary Transition* voyage.

## Limitations

This study is limited due to the sample size, i.e. the number respondents to the online survey ( $n=29$ ) and interviewees ( $n=13$ ), albeit the contributions provide compelling accounts of the benefits of sail training, it is also limited by the motivations of these participants. The contacts with potential study participants were arranged within the existing OYT North lines of communication, for example, current schools and organisations who use *Adventure under Sail*<sup>®</sup>, the alumni project, current and former sea-staff and volunteers and subscribers to e-newsletters. It is, therefore, a reasonable assumption that these participants will have a favourable disposition to the OYT North.

Maintaining communication with crew participants under the age of 18 is problematic, this is particularly relevant to this study as more than 70% of young crew who sailed in 2017 and 2018 were aged 15-years or under. Due to issues of informed consent, both from participants and their parents or guardians, it was necessary to limit the online survey and invitations for interviews to those over-16-years only. The planned focus groups with schools or youth organisations were hoped to overcome this challenge, however, these did not take place.

## Ethical approach

The study was subject of the ethical approval of the University of Cumbria, with a full application being submitted to the university's Ethical Committee for approval. The commitment to ethics was ongoing throughout all phases of data collection, data analysis and in this final reporting. The study did not collect any personal data; access to potential participants was managed through the OYT North's existing lines of communication (e.g. e mails and e-newsletters) and within the OYT North's approach to the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018. Survey respondents and interviewees have been anonymised, except where additional consent was secured, for example, Trevor Woodward of *Rotary Youth Development Under Sail (RYDUS)*.

A separate e mail account ([research@oytnorth.org.uk](mailto:research@oytnorth.org.uk)) was set up for this study to ensure that contact details did not leave the OYT North domain. Access to naturally occurring data was arranged with the OYT North Managing Director acting as 'gatekeeper', these arrangements were set out in a written Memorandum of Understanding.

## Online survey results

### Respondents and their experiences of sailing with OYT North

The respondents to the survey were drawn from across the range of interest groups including those who had sailed as crew, as group leaders, as full-time and volunteer sea-staff and stakeholders (24%) including parents/guardians, sponsors and mentors/coaches. The highest proportions of respondents were from crew (37.9%) and volunteer sea-staff (41.4%). Of those who specified when they had sailed, 42% recalled their experiences from sailing in 2018 although three others recalled voyages from more than twenty years ago in 1989, 1992 and 1998. Most had sailed on voyages of at least five days with 47% sailing locally to Tyneside; others sailed to or from other countries or part way round Britain. Of all respondents, 54% were male and 46% were female; all identified as white British and across a range of ages from 16-75 years.

### Outcomes for participants

The '**pluses**' of participants' experiences with OYT North were almost equally divided between personal and social development, with teamwork being mentioned a number of times, and sailing itself including the opportunity for qualification (1 response) and the landscapes encountered (2 responses). One respondent differentiated between the outcomes that they saw as a crew member and as volunteer crew, with the latter being about watching young people's confidence grow during the voyage, a view that was endorsed by other respondents. One respondent recognised a possible longer term plus for the young people,

(It) gives them a sense of adventure in a challenging (but safe) environment. The more positive experiences they encounter, the greater will be their ability to push themselves in the future.

Respondents were asked to give specific examples of these outcomes, and the 'pluses' varied from specific sailing skills to on board observations of the young people, 'some found new resources and skills in themselves, even if they had not had success in other areas of school and teen life'. Overall, there was more introspection from individuals in the examples given, with some also stating longer term outcomes.

Staying in touch with people who I have met through sailing has allowed me to see the impact OYT North has had on their lives. Some have been changed massively, for example, choosing and undertaking a new career path and others have simply had a fun week.

...sailing with the OYT was partly what led me to a career in youth work.

Of the '**minuses**', 37% (7) indicated that there were none. 26% described aspects that contributed to lack of comfort such as seasickness (2), the weather (1) or the berths (2) with two

others saying that young people often had contrasting views of the same experience, 'some really enjoyed it, others said they would never do it again'. There were further minuses concerning the logistics and the feeling of a volunteer crew member that they could not contribute effectively because of only being able to sail intermittently. A further comment was made about the length of a voyage needing to be five days or longer to enable the crew to work together effectively.

The 'interesting' aspects were dominated by sailing-related observations (53%, 10 responses). There were other responses about the challenge and watching young people develop, and their need for tolerance on board.

The more physically and/or mentally challenged that a crew is, the more they benefit from the voyage.

It's not about the sailing but the journey (voyage).

Respondents were asked to rate statements on a Likert scale (0 – did not apply to 4 – a lot) about their mindset (replicating the format of the OYT North 2013 -2016 end-of-voyage feedback<sup>11</sup>) – 'I did something I did not think I could do', confidence and learning a skill that they would be able to use at home. In all these, a positive incremental trend towards a lot (44 – 47%) occurred. The examples given in the former were predominantly sailing skill related although there was mention of the challenge of being away from home and with limited access to their mobile phone for five days, and leadership. Leadership was also an example given by a number of respondents in respect of gaining confidence and included subsets of skills such as delegating and being decisive. Having confidence about asking for help and not letting people down was another interesting response. In the skills that respondents could use at home, these varied from cooking and cleaning, knots and splicing ('strangely'), to listening and not talking over people, co-ordination, organisation and time management, and leadership skills in the workplace.

The statements about feeling comfortable about asking for help and information were more evenly rated and self-evaluation of skills again illustrated that 44% of respondents viewed the gain in this area as a lot, although the 0 and 1- 'not much' ratings were split, possibly due to sea-staff responses. 'It's a strength to ask and a weakness to struggle when asking is an option'. Respondents commented that they could teach sailing better after the voyage(s) and communicate better with young people but there was also personal development in terms of having faith in oneself and handling stressful situations whilst remaining calm.

The survey asked participants what the most important thing was that they learned on board the sail training vessel. Only two of the responses related to sailing skills and the majority (80%, 12) concerned respect for others and teamwork. One referred to the 'larger sense of responsibility and confidence than I already had.' In terms of the aspect of the on-board experience that facilitated this, the staff particularly the skipper, played a large part in this learning as well as the activities and environment (including adverse conditions and unfamiliar people) and the need to work as a team.

In respect of learning new things on board the *James Cook* or charter vessel, by far the majority strongly agreed or tended to agree that the activities (82%, 14), the staff (88%, 15), and living, cooking and eating together (77%, 13) supported their learning. 65% (11) felt that they could learn at their own pace.

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<sup>11</sup> The low response to the online survey does not provide a large enough sample to conduct a meaningful comparison with the analysis of 2013-2016 end-of-voyage feedback above.

## Differences that the experience has made

The differences that the experiences on the *James Cook* or charter vessel have made as reported by these participants can all be classified as social impact; for example, respect for, and cooperation with others, self-confidence and a greater appreciation of capabilities. I am 'proud to be associated with OYT'. In terms of transfer into everyday life, most respondents highlighted social skills such as listening more than talking, tolerance, interacting with unfamiliar people, patience, confidence and time management. Two others mentioned skills of the galley and sailing knots. 67% (12) thought that they had learnt a lot or a great deal through their sailing experience(s) and all thought that their experience on the voyage with OYT North was worthwhile. 89% (16) rated their experience of OYT North as excellent or very good and 94% (17) thought that their experience sailing with OYT North was positive.

## Challenges

Heavy weather and its effect on sailing the vessel and on the wellbeing of participants (seasickness) were cited as challenges by several respondents, including the need to look after and encourage crew in these conditions. The crew and sea-staff were also mentioned as challenges, in the context that one respondent (a group leader) sensed tensions within the sea-staff team, and another (a volunteer) felt they were imposing in the established team dynamic, as well as the responsibilities and nature of the watch system. The reasons given that these were challenges included being in new and difficult situations, needing to carry on despite feeling seasick, managing disaffected young people, personnel issues and confidence – although in respect of the latter, there were comments about this improving over the course of the voyage.

## Stakeholder perspectives

All the stakeholders felt that the sailing experiences were positive for the young person who sailed with OYT North. All respondents felt that the experience had equipped them with technical and social skills with the majority (90%, 9) feeling that the sailing experience had helped them to become more confident and equipped them with life skills, deal with responsibility and improve the way that they learn. Responses were more mixed concerning whether or not the young person had learnt how to navigate. A range of reasons were given as to why stakeholders chose to sponsor a voyage with OYT North including an approach by the organisation, seeing the benefits as a previous participant themselves, an awareness of the benefits of *Adventure under Sail*<sup>®</sup> and being a sailor themselves. Two further respondents reported some incentive of sponsorship (Rotary Club and Charitable Trust).

## Interviews

Is there a longer-term impact of sail training voyages for crew participants and full-time and volunteer sea-staff?

It is difficult to compare the diverse outcomes from any type of activity or intervention without the benefit of before-, during- and after-data; this is true of sail training when the participants only occupy the vessel-bound setting for a short period of time, e.g. overnight, a weekend, or five- or six days; the exception to this caveat, in this study, were responses from sea-staff. In conducting this study interviewees, ranging from former young crew, a teacher to full-time and volunteer sea-staff, were asked about the characteristics of the sail training experience and their thoughts on any longer-term outcomes. The interviews allowed the study to ask respondents what they thought were the outcomes for sail training participants and reflect upon their own development. The quotes set out in this section are verbatim extracts from the interview transcripts.

Interviewees were unanimous in proposing that there were outcomes for sail training participants, including confidence in meeting the demands of social situations as well as in their own abilities, some of which are observable:

*'Confidence building, definitely. You know, when you first see a bunch of kids ...I mean one or two of them can be loud, but you see the ones that are really quiet and, kind of, withdrawn and that. And then to see them come on, just after a couple of days, even a weekend trip is just quite amazing really.'* (Former OYTN volunteer. Interview December 2018).

*'Confidence. It was after a trip on [James Cook], it was one of them transition voyages I remember this really young lad, he would not say a word, like he wouldn't even say his name sat around the table, and I spent 10 minutes with him the following day as he was struggling to put his life jacket on, going 'If you need help just ask', 'I'll help you if you just ask' and [...] eventually he went 'Will you help me?', and I went 'Yep', and that gave him the confidence to, later on that day when he was packing up all of his stuff, he came and found me, walked through the boat and going 'Will you help me?'. That's the kind of thing you would hope he will have the confidence to do things like that, slowly getting over the anxieties, like for him you'd hope that when he went to secondary school, he would have that confidence to go 'Will you help me?'* (Former James Cook crew, OYTN volunteer and now a sail training skipper. Interview December 2018).

These observations tend to confirm the subjective end-of-voyage feedback demonstrating increases in confidence, and in the last extract, the development of help-seeking behaviours (pp.6/7). A father of a crew participant described the personal growth he had observed in his son:

*'I would say is [...] he's quite a shy lad and I think going on the boat, meeting new people apart from people at school was a good thing, and I think that has given him the sort of eyes to say 'Do you know what Dad, [...] I am going to buy a ticket to [go overseas], I am going to go on my own and I'll sort myself out when I am there'. [...] I won't say that he wouldn't have done it without the sail training, but I do think it's a contributory factor to him feeling confident in what he's capable of doing. [...] he was with a group of new people thrown together for a, relatively speaking, short period of time and having to work as a team quite quickly. So unless you got on with it you couldn't actually sail the boat as well.'* (Interview, December 2018).

A former volunteer, reflecting on their vast experience of sail training, recalled that change often occurred in a short period of time aboard *James Cook*, and that whilst some crew participants may have been uncomfortable in the novel setting their experiences were mostly reported as positive, resonating further with the end-of-voyage feedback:

*'I observed many visible changes in children. You get rash lads on the dock and then timid girls, and you get them five miles out to sea with all of the sails up and no sight of land, and you've got a role reversal. The lads became cowed and they're basically worried, and the girls came to life. [They] would have a bash at steering and all sorts of things. Often taking them to sea changed their personalities a bit, once they got back on shore, they seemed to revert ...I notice that quite a bit, and I think it did have an effect. [...]*

*I always thought the kids enjoyed it and got something out of it. I never had a child come up to me or a young person and say. 'I didn't enjoy any of this', there were one or two people who didn't enjoy the food – we didn't do burgers and things every day, and the one or two who did not enjoy getting wet or cold and didn't like coming out at night. But I have never had anyone, as far as I can recall, who ever said to me, 'I didn't like that', even though they might have started off saying they didn't like it and then they actually came to terms with it.'* (Interview December 2018).

There were two former OYT North volunteers (who had ceased volunteering before the OYT North (2013) *Volunteer Survey*) who expressed some negativity from their experience; this mainly related to a lack of challenge and to the relationships with the skipper or full-time staff:

*'The only negative thing I could think of [...] was the amount of responsibility given to the volunteers. As I reached a point in my training where I could take the ship through a lock, park it in the marina, create a sail plan, operate a sail plan and virtually sail the ship as a skipper, and over time as skippers changed that responsibility ebbed away and eventually I found myself really just acting as a Watch Leader sitting with the kids at the back of the boat, and instructing them on moving the sails and general direction, and teaching them to helm the ship. [...] That for me was a negative, something that finally decided me that I had had enough. You can only sail from North Shields to Blyth and up to the Farne Islands and back again so many times before it gets repetitive.'* (Former volunteer. Interview December 2018).

*'[...] I found some cliquey-ness in the sea-staff. I would come on for a few weeks at a time when I was a student, because you could do that, so you got into it and it was much easier. Coming back when I had a job and I was taking my annual leave it was quite hard to come back and get into – that was more of a negative experience, but that's partly because I was doing it less frequently and that wasn't anybody's fault, and I don't know how you would get around that.'* (Former volunteer. Interview January 2019).

With few exceptions the academic literature has not explored the processes of sail training or how outcomes might be achieved, in this study interviewees were invited to offer their own thoughts about why it works:

*'Surprisingly, it might be different for everybody but for myself - you get thrown in at the deep end, if you like, when you get put onboard a vessel with people that you don't know, you've never met before in your life and you have to work together to get things done, and to be put in that situation over a short period of time it's amazing how quick you build a rapport and friendship with people. Obviously, you're putting your life in their hands, type of thing. If you don't do what you're supposed to do at the right time it could be catastrophic. If you're put in that situation it gives you a sense of achievement once you have finished what you are doing, and then you make great friends and meet great people along the way. [...] the experiences you have in the past you bring in to your future.'* (Former crew participant sailed aboard *James Cook* in 1992 with OYC. Interview December 2018).

*'It acts as a catalyst for personal development. You are taken away and you are in this little box and the people that you've got where you are that becomes your world, and it's then you can't leave it. Then you learn from that quite quickly, get on with the team quite quickly and it accelerates what other things try to do on land; because on land you don't quite have the same sort of escape [...] I think it is the social side, the sailing just helps the social side. It helps with the team work. It is like the sailing gives you the time to be social, you've got the cooking and things like that [...] but it's when you're in port and you've got time to play games and things or when you're on a long passage and you're on watch then you've got time to sit and chat and make that connection. It was always like that saying 'They don't care that you know until they know that you care'<sup>12</sup> [...] you need the social connection first before you can win them over.'* (Former *James Cook* crew, OYTN volunteer and now a sail training skipper. Interview December 2018).

*'Some of the young people that I sailed with, it was the first time that they had been told that they were good at anything or had had the opportunity to try anything new. A lot of young people in school they are told that they are not academic or not very good at things, and to suddenly be in a new environment encouraged to try something and find they're good at it or can do it well that can have quite a difference and give them more confidence and about how they feel about themselves.'* (Former crew and OYTN volunteer. Interview January 2019).

Interviewees were asked to consider what difference sail training had made for them. Those who had sailed as *James Cook's* crew were able to attribute some aspects of their personal development

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<sup>12</sup> The full quote is: 'People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care' variously attributed to Theodore Roosevelt (former US President) or John C. Maxwell (Author).

to their voyage. A member of *James Cook's* crew for a 1992 voyage in the Irish Sea, referring to his voyage certificate, reflected about his successful career in the maritime sector that:

*'I've turned out at the end of the day because of the things that I have done in the past, and sail training is one of them. [...] I mean at that time in my life, it wasn't the best, where I lived and how they can turn you out, it was a reprieve, it was an escape, it potentially steered me on to the right path, if you like. It puts the World in to perspective. It makes you change and decide what you want to do for the rest of your life.'*

Interviewer: [...] Did it change your approach to school?

*Yeah, I think it did a little bit, yes. I gave it a little more respect for the education, especially teachers at school. There were some that were prudent and some that were not too good. More respect, it's a hard job being an educator, in whatever you do, and a lot of them don't get the respect they really deserve. It gave me a little bit more understanding and patience with them, that students can be difficult people.'* (Interview, December 2018).

Other former crew, from more recent times, reflected on their time aboard *James Cook*, and what had prompted them to become volunteers:

*'As a young crew member, I think, it's partly what interested me in my current career, which is youth work, and I think I used the experience both as a crew member and a volunteer actually very much in job interviews and shaping what I did. If I hadn't come on as a crew member I wouldn't have volunteered – I wouldn't have had the experience or the background to be able to do that. That was the initial difference it made and then I used that experience definitely in terms of what I do now. It sounds quite boring but in terms of job applications and in thinking of examples of where I had worked with people or led groups of young people, or youth experience to develop young people. [...] It's very general but I think in terms of myself the difference it made in [...] how confident I felt in doing it and carrying on to do other things. I was quite a shy teenager, but I kept persevering with volunteering ...some of my experiences were really positive and I enjoyed it and I got a lot out of it, and then when I was thinking about... when I was finished university, I didn't know what I wanted to do ...community work broadly... I think I applied to be a community service volunteer and ended up working in a young offender's institution and I don't think I would have had the confidence to do that if I hadn't had the experience volunteering with the Ocean Youth Trust [North]' (Former OYTN volunteer. Interview, January 2019).*

*'It's a good self-confidence thing. [...] even my own self-confidence, it's great that way and, as I say, working as a team; I am kind of used to that from the forces but the job I have now I tend to work on my own a lot so it's nice to be involved in a team onboard, you know. It's something different to the daily routine at home and at work. [laughing] I don't do a lot of cooking at home, there's definitely things that you do on board that you would never do at home or at work. It's great, it's varied.'* (Current OYTN volunteer. Interview December 2018).

*'It definitely made me more confident socially interacting with people, definitely 100%. [...] I feel that if you can overcome that challenge you can overcome other challenges [...] It is an experience that is quite a big experience, one of those lasting ones so it sits with you and just changes you in every situation, with school, in social interactions, I've put it on a CV when applying for jobs and that stood out, interviewers have asked about that and said, 'Tell us about this, this looks really interesting' so it has helped in that respect, having it on a CV or having it to reference it helps. I know people were quite impressed by it when I was applying to be an assistant teacher at school, I said 'I've done this, and this is what it entails. I've done this training that involves this work with kids and stuff'. That's something that you will be doing in the school, so I think it helped in that situation. [...] It changes something about you in a positive way and just, kind of, sits with you for the rest of your life after that.'* (Current volunteer. Interview January 2019).

*'It has been sort of life changing because never for one moment would I have thought that I would be doing what I am doing now – my life and my career. Before I went sailing I was highly academic, very*

*much had the idea you go off to uni, get a degree, get a job, find the man of your dreams, have a house and just the stereotypical path through life, whereas, because I found sailing I am now sailing all over the world, doing lots of adventures and for now I have said 'Goodbye' to the academic. [...] I am doing something that makes me happy, and I will keep doing it until I decide actually, I want to have a land-life now.'* (Former OYTN volunteer and now sail training skipper. Interview December 2018).

Do 'commissioning organisations' observe benefits following a sail training voyage?

In the context of this study, 'commissioning organisations' are the schools and youth organisations which have funded or sponsored and secure places for children and young people on a sail training voyage. There are two dimensions of OYT North's provision which were mentioned in responses during the interviews or focus group; these variants, tailored to the needs of the organisation or sector, were the *Rotary Youth Development Under Sail* and *Primary to Secondary Transition* voyages.

#### Rotary Youth Development Under Sail (RYDUS)

Since 2010, in partnership with Rotary International District 1040, OYT North developed the *Rotary Youth Development Under Sail* (RYDUS) programme; a series of summer voyages that has, to date, enabled 242 young people to embark on an *Adventure under Sail*<sup>®</sup> sponsored by Rotarians, from 26 different Rotary clubs. Trevor Woodward, Rotarian co-founder of RYDUS, developed the selection process for this programme looking for those young people who might benefit most from the sail training experience, for example, those lacking confidence in their own abilities or who might have:

*'lost their way in life because of a lack of confidence, being used by a peer group getting them in to trouble so they'll never go forward because they're in the black-book all of the time.'* (Interview November 2018).

Using this approach RYDUS has canvassed nominations from schools across the 1040 District, inviting young people for interview and, if successful in securing support, are then required to return to their sponsoring Rotary club to tell members about their voyage. The sail training voyage is offered both as an opportunity and as a challenge, sometimes branded as 'work experience' aboard a sailing vessel. For one young man who had been living with his grand-parents and could be described as 'lost', Trevor recalled, the challenge had manifested in change even before he set sail:

*'He signed up. A week before he was due to go his mum rang me, she says, 'I want to thank you'. I said, 'Why? He hasn't gone yet'. The young man's mother had observed change in her son at the mere prospect of the voyage: 'I don't care if he doesn't go. He has spoken to us for the first time in three years' (Interview December 2018).*

With a history of reactionary behaviour and outbursts, when Trevor picked this young man up after his voyage, he noticed an enthusiastic attitude that he had not seen during the selection process:

*'He asked: 'I want to be a marine engineer, how do I do it?'. I said the first thing you do is go back to school and speak to [the teacher] and tell him what you want to do, [they] will advise you what you now need to do; and he went in to school with so much enthusiasm that he wanted to learn; the first time in his life he wanted to learn because he had a target to go for. He suddenly recognised what he wanted to do in the future!'. (Interview December 2018).*

One former teacher from an inner-city secondary school which engaged with RYDUS since its inception, and had sponsored a second student for each voyage from their own funds, said:

*'I just thought that for our learners, [...] some of them are not independent at all and would find going somewhere on their own quite challenging.'* (Interview December 2018).

The way in which RYDUS crews are required to mix with their crew mates, from different backgrounds, is thought to be a factor in the success of sail training:

*'The perception from a lot of families from middle-class, lower-class, upper-class is that they can't work together, and James Cook gives them that opportunity to work with people from different backgrounds and realise that you can work together and that you can become friends.'* (Trevor Woodward. Interview December 2018).

*'One of the lads said [...] it gave him the opportunity to meet people from different backgrounds, different to school [...], from completely different areas which they would not normally meet, different backgrounds, different perspectives.'* (Former teacher. Interview December 2018).

*'I think with sail training it is a completely different environment to what most, me and most people have experienced before, so I think by taking a group of people, taking that collective group of people who are all out of their comfort zone together creates an equal platform for everyone to start from. [...] they feel equal in they're comfortable not knowing the environment because no-one else does.'* (RYDUS 'graduate' and current OYTN volunteer. Interview January 2019).

### Primary to Secondary transition voyages

The transition from primary school (Year 6/ Key Stage 2) to secondary school (Year 7/ Key Stage 3) is a challenging time for most children and their families, as children experience discontinuity in their relationships with peers and teachers, the settings, locations and way they are taught and expected to learn. These challenges mean that, for many children, academic achievement stalls in Year 7 as secondary schools are required to prioritise the pastoral needs of pupils<sup>13</sup>.

In 2015, OYT North, initially in partnership with Skillforce<sup>14</sup>, developed an expedition voyage for Year 6 children as they prepare to move to secondary school. Comprising an 18 to 20 hour overnight residential experience, children board *James Cook* at the marina and explore the River Tyne from North Shields to Newcastle spending the night moored alongside the Quayside under the Millennium Bridge.

In the focus group with staff from a primary school who have used this to develop children in preparation for 'transition', they described how they intentionally mix children from their own and other local primary schools (and who feed in to the same secondary schools), in the unique vessel-bound environment, and that the voyage acted as an 'equaliser', with changes being more observable in some children with behavioural challenges of Special Educational Needs (SEN):

*'... [it was in] no way ... just chatting to your friends from your school, they had to work as a group, collectively. They had to take turns, they had to help each other to achieve things on the trip, so there wasn't the opportunity to just keep to yourselves [...] – because they had to work as a team, they had to be involved with the other children.'*

*I think the actual experience of being on the boat is very, very socially positive more in terms of their understanding of the community, it's an experience ...one of the things we spend a lot of time doing in school is enriching children's life experiences because a lot of our children don't have those opportunities outside of school, and for a lot of those children, therefore, impacts on their education.'*  
(Primary School Focus Group).

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<sup>13</sup> See Ofsted (2015) *Key Stage 3: the wasted years?* Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-3-the-wasted-years>

<sup>14</sup> See <https://www.skillforce.org/prince-william-award-programme/princes-award/>

Even washing-up the dirty dinner dishes is experienced as a team activity that encourages group effort, responsibility and fun:

*'...but it's 'I don't do this at home' but we do it here and they're fighting over the cloth and 'Can I wash?', and the water's going all over the place but it's such good fun.*

*It is made to be fun, and they just love it, the boys especially. They want you to take photographs as proof that they've washed the dishes!* (Primary School Focus Group).

## A conclusion

The benefits for children and young people who have participated in a sail training voyage with the OYT North, and for the full-time and volunteer sea-staff, are complex, varied and individual. Their *Adventure under Sail*<sup>®</sup> represents an authentic, as opposed to contrived, lived experience as each voyage brings together a unique mix of individuals as a group to face the challenges of living and working in a confined and inescapable setting, as they face the challenges of *being at sea*.

Sail training has been used since the 1960s to develop, in the language of the time, the *character* of young people. Today, the idea of character is (re-)gaining traction, for example, the Department for Education<sup>15</sup> propose 'desirable character traits' contribute to improved educational achievement, are valued by employers, and enable children to make a positive contribution to society. Indeed, the Ofsted (2019) Education Inspection Framework<sup>16</sup>, from September 2019, will include approaches to 'develop [pupils] character – including their resilience, confidence and independence'.

This study has demonstrated, albeit from a small number of participants, that there are positive benefits for everyone who is involved in sail training. For OYT North the main social impacts of sail training were identified as increased self-confidence, a greater appreciation of one's capabilities and respect for, and cooperation with others. The study has also illuminated the challenges for future research in studying the longer-term outcomes of this type of provision, such as maintaining contact with younger participants, as well as identifying what should be regarded as an outcome, how best to measure outcomes and the real-world impact for individuals.

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<sup>15</sup> Department for Education (2017) *Developing character skills in schools. Summary report* (Reference: DFE-RR697a). Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/developing-character-skills-in-schools>

<sup>16</sup> Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/education-inspection-framework-2019-inspecting-the-substance-of-education>