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Angling and Young People

In Their Own Words: Young People's Angling Experiences

The 'Added Value' of Angling Intervention Programmes

An Interim Paper from Social and
Community Benefits of Angling Research

Dr Natalie Djohari
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The 'Added Value' of Angling Intervention Programmes

1. Introduction

There are many 'angling engagement schemes' across the UK. These schemes take multiple organizational forms and include angling clubs, school groups, charities and social enterprises. While they all share the use of angling to engage young people in positive activity, they differ greatly in their approach and the outcomes delivered.

In year one, we established a typology to clarify the range of work being carried out¹. We identified four key approaches:

1. Sport development
2. Diversion
3. Education
4. Personal and social development

In this second year, to explore the impact of angling as experienced by young people, we have further clarified the delivery of angling activities into 'intervention programmes' and 'universal or open programmes'.

A distinction needs to be made between angling as a recreational sport, (commonly catered for by provisions such as sports coaching, angling clubs, and matches) and angling as it is used for intervention work. While both provisions benefit young people, and there is a degree of overlap, angling as applied to targeted intervention work describes a more specialist form of delivery that deliberately seeks to improve outcomes for the disadvantaged. As such, intervention work is orientated to producing competent young people, not just competent anglers.

Our interim report for 2010, *The Wellbeing Benefits of Angling Participation*, looked at the wider benefits of angling participation accessible through universal provisions. This report highlights the role of targeted angling intervention programmes in improving the lives of socially excluded young people in relation to:

- Education and employment
- Anti-social behaviour
- Civil Society
- Health and wellbeing

In doing so, this report focuses on the 'added value' of angling when used as part of a personal development approach to engage disadvantaged young people. Recognising the value of intervention work also recognises and celebrates the achievements of disaffected young people, acknowledging the obstacles they have had to overcome and the positive contributions they make to society through angling intervention programmes.

Methodology

This report is based on 18 months of qualitative research conducted between May 2009 to Nov 2010 as part of *The Social and Community Benefits of Angling Research Project*. This included:

- **94 site visits** across our principle case study Get Hooked On Fishing, 11 other angling intervention programmes, and angling events across the UK.
- **422 hours on site** observation of delivery.
- **178 interviews** with young people
- **280 interviews** with adults including project staff, teachers, parents, youth services, police and members of the local community
- **183 responses** to the Young People's Angling Survey (ages 18 and under).

Extensive on site engagement has allowed us to observe and listen to some of the most disadvantaged young people, often the least heard because they seldom participate in questionnaires, join youth forums or engage in participatory processes. This has been achieved through intensive action research with the charity *Get Hooked On Fishing* (GHOF). Repeat visits have allowed us to get to know young people and track their progress through the schemes. As a result, the majority of cases in this report relate to the work of GHOF. We have also included responses and findings from our visits and interviews across 11 other intervention projects. A full list of the projects visited can be found at the end of the report. Further details of their work are available as 'fact sheets' on our resources website. www.resources.anglingresearch.org.uk

¹ See Summary Interim Report 2009. Available at www.resources.anglingresearch.org.uk

2. What is an 'Angling Intervention Programme'?

Angling intervention programmes use angling as a 'tool' to 'intervene' in the lives of some of the most hard to reach young people in society. Young people find themselves marginalised because of a number of overlapping factors. Issues such as substance abuse in the family, behavioural problems, being carers, low self-esteem, and deprivation, can leave young people isolated. These young people often retreat from society and/or engage in anti-social behaviour that further sets them apart. They have lost trust in adults and have little regard for authority figures, or are too shy, embarrassed or self critical to proactively seek help. More often than not they are rejected by a society who eyes them suspiciously as 'trouble makers'. It is the *combination* of these factors that defines young people as particularly 'excluded'.

Angling intervention programmes build on the general wellbeing benefits associated with angling participation, adapting angling practice to deliver specific outcomes for these marginalised young people. Key characteristics include:

- **Drawing in 'hard to reach' young people and establishing initial contact** through young people's fascination with the 'otherness' of fish and the excitement of catching.
- **A holistic approach** that works on young people's personal and social development, *and* their relationships with society.
- **A mixed range of activities** that maintains interest and is applicable to improving outcomes across the breadth of young people's lives. Activities can include sports coaching, environmental education, community restoration projects, peer mentoring, 'catch and cook' healthy lifestyle programmes, OCN, BTEC and other accredited courses.
- **Facilitating social integration and minimising the stigma associated with targeted intervention** by delivering within or alongside universal provisions. Most commonly this involves the use of peer mentors to deliver school or public 'open day' angling programmes.

- **Establishing exit routes** that assist young people to progress into angling clubs or further education, employment or training following the end of the intervention programme.

Get Hooked On Fishing

Get Hooked on Fishing (GHOF) is the principal case study for the Young People and Angling section of the research. First established in 2000 by Mick Watson it has since expanded into an incorporated Charitable Trust working with young people between the ages of 5 to 25. In 2010 GHOF was working with **5,576** young people across England, Scotland and Wales.

GHOF projects use angling as an intervention tool to engage socially excluded young people. They work in some of the most deprived communities across the UK to deliver a range of angling related activities suitable for both males and females of all abilities. At the heart of the programme is its peer mentoring scheme which deploys youth volunteering to build self-esteem, confidence, and transforms young people's behaviour and relationship with society.

GHOF projects can be found working alongside local authorities, schools, police, pupil referral units and local residents to transform outcomes for young people and the communities they live in.



Who do angling intervention programmes engage?

Examples from Get Hooked On Fishing (May 2009-Nov 2010)

Self harm

'Kylie' 14, has low self esteem and negative body image. Her parents are separated. She lives with her mum and assists in the care of her younger brother who has ADHD. Her mum had recently come home to find her self-harming.

An estimated 1 in 15 young people aged 11-24 self harm. Self harm is more prevalent in older teens and amongst girls more so than boys.¹

Living in care (children's home)

'Tyler' 13, is living in a children's home. He doesn't want to be there and is desperate to return back to his mother. He is constantly breaking his curfew, spending time on the streets in order to get away.

There were 69,000 children in the care of local authorities on 31st March 2009 in England. 41% were aged between 10-15. 10% were living in children's homes.² In Scotland the number of children in care for the same date was 15,288. 9.7% were in residential accommodation.³

ADHD/ADD (hyperkinetic disorders)

'Ethan' 15, has been repeatedly expelled from school for disruptive behaviour. He was diagnosed with ADHD at an early age but even on medication his family have found it hard to cope.

It is estimated that 1.4% or about 62,000 young people have severe ADHD⁴. Hyperkinetic disorders disproportionately affect white boys with a high proportion of children being diagnosed amongst the poorest income households.

Depression

'Jake' 14, suffers from depression. His family had been through a difficult separation. He has a speech impediment, was bullied at school and would always compare himself unfavourably to his more popular and outgoing brother. (Pre-2009 case)

1.4% or about 62,000 young people aged 11-16 are seriously depressed⁵. While a further 2.2% of 16-24 year olds in Great Britain are thought to have experienced a depressive episode.⁶

Parents misuse of drugs/ substance abuse

'Lee' 9, his parents have been caught with drugs in the house for the second time whilst on probation and are now awaiting sentence.

Estimates suggest there are between 200,000 and 300,000 children in England and Wales where one or both parents have serious drug problems. This represents about 2-3% of children under 16. It is estimated that the number is between 41,000 and 59,000 for Scotland.⁷

Anxiety problems

'Will' 17, is suffering from major anxiety problems. He had been bullied at school and is often reluctant to leave the house on his own. His mother recently left the family.

4.4% or about 195,000 young people aged 11-16 yrs have an anxiety disorder⁸. While a further 3.6% of 16-24 year olds are thought to have a generalised anxiety disorder.⁹

Young Carer

'Troy' 16 had stopped regularly attending school at a young age to care for his mother. As a result he is unable to read or write well. While confident in most situations, not being able to read or write clearly dents his self esteem.

There is an indicated 175,000 young carers in the UK. The majority spend up to 19 hours a week caring for parents, friends and neighbours.¹⁰ The most recent BBC survey however puts the number at 1 in 12, making estimates closer to 700,000 young people involved in care duties across the UK.¹¹ A survey of 6178 young carers in 2004 found 22% were missing school and or having educational difficulties because of care duties.¹²

² All references in this section are available in the accompanying endnote.

Domestic violence

'Brian' 15, his father is a lifetime methadone addict. After his parents separated, he went on to witness domestic violence between his mother and her new partner.

Department of Health 2002 estimates 750,000 children a year will witness domestic violence across the UK.¹³ Children living with domestic violence can experience emotional trauma, and develop behavioural problems and mental health issues in later life.¹⁴

Parent in prison

'Jacob' 15, his father is in prison. His mother recently met a new partner who Jacob does not like or get on with.

There are 160,000 children in England and Wales with a parent in prison. 7% of children will experience their father's imprisonment before they leave school. 65% of boys with a convicted parent go on to offend.¹⁵

Bereavement

'Louis' 15, his father died within the last year, his parents were already separated, mother is an alcoholic and he has often had to break up fights between his mother and her friends.

Over 24,000 children and young people are bereaved of a parent each year.¹⁶ While bereavement can affect young people in multiple ways, it is an extreme sad finding that 12% of incarcerated young offenders were found to have lost a close relative.¹⁷

Returning from Prison

'Danny', convicted for arson with intent to danger life received 5 years in custody. When he came out he was picked up by GHOF. Now in full time employment, he has not re-offended. (pre 2009 case).

At any given time, between 2,000 and 3,000 children aged 10 to 17 are likely to be in custody, either under sentence or on remand, in England and Wales. Around a fifth of sentenced children had been imprisoned for breaching conditions of community sentences, of ASBOS, of licences following earlier release from custody or for failing to surrender to bail.¹⁸

The most recent reoffending rates show that nearly three-quarters of children who are imprisoned reoffend within a year of release.¹⁹

Excluded from school

'Micheal' 12, has been excluded from mainstream school. He is predominantly looked after by sister. He seeks attention, deceives, and will not conform to authority. He is now educated permanently in an Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (EBD) school, until his behaviour changes.

In 2008/09, there were 6,550 permanent exclusions of pupils from primary, secondary and special schools in England. There were an additional 363,280 further fixed period exclusions. Boys represented 78% of the all permanent exclusions, and 75% of fixed period exclusions. Around 52% of permanent exclusions were from the 13-14 age group (years 9 and 10). Children eligible for free school meals were around 3 times more likely to receive permanent and fixed term exclusions compared to those who were not eligible.²⁰ For Scotland there were 30,144 exclusion for 2009/10 of which 64 were permanent.²¹

Neglect

'Kirsty' 13, has poor attendance at school, she is always late, always tired in school, and has a poor attitude in response to constantly being reprimanded at school. She lives with her mother and new partner, who often leave her alone to care for younger siblings. The GHOF coordinator suspects neglect.

Neglect is the most common category in the child protection registry in England, accounting for 43 per cent of all entries in the year ending March 2006.²² An NSPCC study found neglect to be prevalence amongst older children (10-15yrs) not just youngest ages as is commonly expected.²³

3. How can angling improve outcomes for the socially excluded?

As the preceding examples demonstrate angling has wide applicability not limited by gender or social background. This is because angling intervention programmes do more than just take young people fishing. Instead, angling is effectively applied by intervention programmes to engage young people in a positive activity and work with them on their personal and social development. This approach transforms young people's relationships with society and improves outcomes across a range of sectors.

3.1 Angling, Education and Employment

Angling intervention programmes are a valuable resource that can be flexibly applied for alternative education provisions as well as early intervention and preventative work within schools. They play a role in facilitating pastoral care, improving self-esteem and contributing to the delivery of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), as well as improving educational outcomes.

Deprivation disproportionately affects educational outcomes. Over recent years attention has been repeatedly turned to the significantly lower numbers of boys from lower income backgrounds achieving basic GCSE grades. In 2009, 19% of boys eligible for free school meals did not obtain 5 or more GCSEs. This compares with 12% equivalent girls and 6% of boys not eligible for free school meals³. School exclusions, both permanent and temporary, also disproportionately affect boys and children from low income backgrounds⁴. There is a pressing need to find ways to successfully engage and transform outcomes for this particular cohort.

GHOF's long experience working within and alongside schools in deprived communities has consistently shown how angling intervention programmes can be successfully applied to:

- improve attendance
- reduce disruptive behaviour

³ DfE 2009 GCSE Attainment by pupil characteristic in England 2008/09.

⁴ DfE (2010) Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions from Schools in England 2008/09. <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000942/index.shtml>

- improve relationships with teachers
- re-establish interest in education
- reduce the need for permanent exclusion
- reintegrate the excluded back into mainstream education
- achieve GCSE equivalent grades
- encourage progression to further education, employment or training

3.1.1 The financial cost of disengagement with education

i) Exclusion

In 2008/2009, there were 6,550 permanent school exclusions in England and 64 for Scotland⁵. The government estimates the financial cost of a fulltime placement in a pupil referral unit (PRU) following exclusion to be £15,000 a year. In contrast a pupil remaining in mainstream schooling costs around £4,000 a year.⁶ These figures demonstrate a compelling argument for the use of early intervention programmes that are able to keep young people out of pupil referral units. Angling intervention programmes working to re-engage young people in education and transform disruptive behaviour can cost in the range of £3,900 per student (for GHOF's most intensive package of 1-to-1 engagement twice a week over a school year of 39 weeks) to £219 per person (average cost of participation in GHOF Modules 1 and 2, and small group work totaling 48 hours).⁷ These programmes are commonly used for early intervention to work with young people at risk of exclusion as well as assisting to re-engage young people in PRUs and smooth the transfer back to mainstream education.

⁵ DfE (2010) Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions from Schools in England. And Scottish Government: (2010) Summary statistics for schools in Scotland 2008/09

⁶ DCFS 2008. *Back on Track: A strategy for modernising alternative provisions for young people.*

⁷ These costs are averages only and GHOF projects operate a number of differing scales. Participation in modules is calculated on groups of 12, which reduce the overall cost per student.

ii) Lack of Qualifications

In 2009, the percentage of young people ages 16-24 with no qualifications in England, Scotland and Wales respectively were 11%, 9.2% and 12.4%.⁸ The Princes Trust estimates that on average people without qualifications experience a loss of earnings of 10% over their lifetime.⁹ Angling intervention programmes deliver a wide range of qualifications, from OCN to BTEC and job related training. Importantly they also assist to re-engage young people in education and reduce persistent truancy during GCSE years where it is likely to have a greater impact on qualification attainment.

iii) Not in education, employment and training (NEET)

There are an estimated 208,000 young people aged 16-18 not in education, employment or training (NEET).¹⁰ Research by the Audit Commission suggests that the potential long term cost of a 16-18 year old NEET is over £155,000, with short term costs in the range of £8,000¹¹. Angling intervention programmes can address the numbers of NEET by working alongside schools and Connexions service to raise young people's aspirations and encourage young people into education, employment or training.

3.1.2 How do angling intervention programmes address disengagement with education?

Angling intervention programmes are successful because they work simultaneously on many of the underlying causes of disengagement. Our interviews with teachers and young people on intervention schemes reveal multiple reasons for poor performance or disruptive behaviour in school. Most commonly:

- frustration, insecurities and anxieties over not being able to keep up

⁸ Princes Trust (2010) *The Cost of Exclusions: counting the cost of youth disadvantage in the UK.*

⁹ *ibid*

¹⁰ DCSF (2009) Statistical First Release: Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 yr olds in England.

¹¹ Audit Commission (2010) *Estimating the Lifetime Cost of NEET: 16-18 yr olds not in education, employment or training.*

- not 'fitting in' with peers
- lack of confidence and self-esteem
- lack of interest in subjects and inability to see their future relevance.
- inability to control anger and disruptive behaviour exacerbated by poor social skills and awareness
- lack of respect for authority figures
- underlying emotional or behavioural difficulties
- distraction of problems at home

Five aspects of angling intervention practice best demonstrate how they tackle some of the associated causes of disengagement and work alongside young people to improve their education and employment outcomes. These are:

- Changing venues
- The therapeutic nature of angling
- Apprentice style learning
- Raising aspirations
- Building self-esteem, confidence and resilience

i) Changing venues

For some young people school is an extremely stressful environment, incorporating both a pressure to achieve academically and socially, as well as an expectation to conform and manage their behaviour. Many angling intervention programmes actively take students out of the pressure and rigidity of institutionalised learning by teaching in offsite classroom or at the water side. Our interviews and observational research has found that:

- **Outdoor learning, allows young people to manage their behaviour and frustration** by providing the space to step away from a negative/stressful situation and calm down. They are consequently able to return and deal with the cause of their frustration or anger with a cooler head and refocus on learning.
- **Off site learning allows young people the chance to escape from the social pressures associated with trying to 'fit in'** at school. They are often placed in a smaller peer group, strengthened by activities that build teamwork, shared interest and opportunities to build peer respect through positive achievements such as a successful catch.

- **Free from the constraints of many schools, angling intervention programmes can provide an individually tailored learning environment** that is more sensitive to young people's differing needs. They have smaller classroom sizes and greater opportunities for one-to-one engagement. This flexibility means teaching is adaptable to the pace of the student. As a result students begin to build self-confidence in their own abilities and focus on what they can achieve rather than feeling 'left-behind'.

"This is more relaxed than school, you can get on with people and you don't have any enemies either". (Male 16, Nacro Reading Angling Project)

"The coaches are more chilled. If you make a mistake, it's a mistake, but with a teacher they flip". (Male 13, GHOF).

"I'd say it's calmed me right down coming here, I feel more relaxed in school. In school I wouldn't follow instructions, I didn't used to listen as much as I do now. Now I'm much more focused. It's nice to come down here one day a week. I can still get taught like at school, but in a more relaxed environment, doing something I enjoy and gain qualifications from it. I can sit in the class room [at the angling centre] and they go through it step by step and they don't rush you on. You go at it in your own pace in the whole class room, it's good...The project keeps me on the right track at school. It's something to centre on isn't it." (Male 15, Inclusion Through Angling, ITA)



GHOF Shropshire BTEC Classroom session

ii) The therapeutic nature of angling

Participating in activities within green spaces has long been associated with improved wellbeing.¹² Engagement in activities within green environments is thought to reduce attention fatigue and facilitate mental restoration.¹³ Water has also been associated with improved self-esteem and mood.¹⁴ Our observations and testimonies from young people demonstrate that young people find engagement in angling calming and feel more able to cope with a return to the pressures of school work afterwards.

"When I first started school I couldn't cope with a full week of school. Since I've been here I've got more confidence. You keep calm more and it keeps you out of trouble. It's helped me with my temper, just coming here, chilling out, being part of this. I was put on tablets to keep me calm, which I take twice a day, two in the morning, two at night, and then I come here, and then I don't need to do them, it keeps me calm full stop."(Male 15, CAST Angling Project)

Angling intervention programmes make use of the restorative and calming affects of angling to:

- **Provide restorative 'breaks'** from the mental efforts associated with learning.
- **Reduce young people's anxiety** so that they are more able and willing to talk about their problems.
- **Calm hyperactive or easily distracted young people** so that they are more capable of responding to further assistance and refocus on learning.
- **Provide respite and a chance to 'get away'** for those who may be dealing with difficult home lives.

¹² In particular see Louv, R 2005. *Last Child in the Woods*. Algonquin Books, Carolina.

¹³ Kaplan, S. 2001. Meditation, restoration and the management of mental fatigue. *Environment and Behaviour*. Vol 33, no 4.

¹⁴ Barton, J and Pretty, J 2010 'What is the best dose of nature and green exercise for improving mental health. A multi-study analysis. *Environment, Science and Technology*. Vol 44, 10.

iii) Apprentice style learning

It is the quality of the relationships established between young people and intervention workers that determines the success of intervention work with the socially excluded. In contrast to the authoritative teacher/student relationships young people experience at school, Angling intervention programmes are characterized by an apprentice/mentor style relationship. This includes:

- **A commonality of shared interest to establish a relationship.** In most cases this is built around a passion for fishing, but can also include developing a shared interest in coaching or care of the environment.
- **Mutual respect** based around acknowledgement of experience and expertise.
- **Focus on the transmission of skills** and practical learning.
- **Self-motivated learning** where it is up to the apprentice to practice skills, try new techniques and ask for further instruction on skill areas they wish to develop further.

Building an apprentice/mentor relationship allows young people who may have lost trust in adults and/or have little respect for authority, to develop a supportive relationship. As a result many feel able to discuss underlying personal problems and concerns, and significantly, take on board the help and advice offered.

“In school, I would sometimes hang out with the wrong crowd, older boys than me, but now I don’t. If someone asks me I just say I don’t want to do it. I’ve become more confident and listen to people when they’re trying to help me. Before I used to never believe anyone wanted to help me as much as they were, Now I’ve started to listen more. The coaches are good like that, they listen to you, they respect you as long as you respect them back.” (Male 15, ITA)

“You could probably speak to the coaches about whatever, where as a teacher you wouldn’t.” (Male 15, GHOF)

“They’re teaching us something I like, but it’s almost like they are just your friends, they’re not someone just hanging over you saying “you’ve got to do this, and you’ve got to do that”. These are just showing you, they’re just showing you how to do things” (Male 15, ITA)



iv) Raising aspirations (further education, employment or training)

To motivate young people to re-engage in education, or even consider further education, employment or training, requires dealing with two key barriers: a lack of self-belief and an inability to see the value of education due to low aspirations.

The majority of young people passing through angling intervention programmes have extremely low self-esteem and little confidence in their own abilities. As a consequence many avoid the emotional risks of failure by refusing to attempt tasks they consider difficult or divert attention away from their performance through ‘messing about’. Angling intervention programmes address this by:

- **Using young people’s interest in angling** to motivate engagement in practical tasks that may appear less threatening.
- **Recognising multiple points of achievement**, such as setting up equipment, fly tying, building a peg, or calculating weights.
- **Encouraging attainment of qualifications** that can be built upon with subsequent courses.
- **Focusing on individual progress** and achievement rather than measuring achievement and delivering teaching in comparison to standardised testing and peer groups.

Young people on intervention programmes exhibit a genuine pride in their achievements and talk positively about their futures. Influenced by their

experiences young people commonly express a desire to go into fishery related work, wider land based industries, environmental care, youth work and sports coaching. Signposting young people to the range of careers available in subjects that interest them, motivates young people to re-consider further education, employment and training. This makes angling intervention programmes effective in targeting young people before they become NEET as well as re-inspiring those who are already disengaged. Intervention projects facilitate this by:

- Introducing young people to professionals across the angling industry and beyond.
- Provide information on further education courses, training and potential employment opportunities
- Take young people to college open days
- Provide access to training courses, such as coaching levels and first aid
- Provide work experience opportunities
- Build workplace skills and experience such as punctuality, team work, and communication skills through peer mentoring.

"I'm looking into sports coaching or youth work now. Since I've been with GHOF, being a youth worker and seeing what goes on, it looks interesting...I've been on a few courses, equality and diversity, child protection and I've done my first aid. So gradually I'm getting to know it and my confidence is growing." (Male 18, GHOF)

"Before I thought there was just working in the tackle shop or being a bailiff. But there's lots of other jobs: you can look after the waters, help the animals, be a water keeper, be what they call a gillie, have a career in angling...I have to change my CV now, then I could get something to do with angling and the environment. (Male 17, Nacro)

I've cut down my drinking a lot now and due to that I've done probably 5 or 6 qualifications in sports and fishing. I wouldn't have dreamt about it before, it wouldn't have even gone through my head. Now just from coming on one coaching course it's made me want to be a coach, and I've been offered a part time job with Sporting Chance." (Male 17, CAST)

Angling Resource: Post 16 Education

In 2013 the age for compulsory education in England will rise to 17, increasing to 18 by 2015. The success of these changes will depend on directing young people to suitable courses that hold their interest and allow them to thrive.

Across England and Scotland we found 13 major colleges and institutions delivering angling/fishery related courses suitable for all levels of school leavers. Courses range from BTEC Diplomas in Fishery Studies to higher level courses in Marine Ecology and Conservation. Courses typically focus on practical vocational training, and allow young people to build their qualifications through course progression. This makes it particularly suitable for young people who may have low attainment at GCSE level but demonstrate an aptitude for practical learning in fishery related subjects.

Many angling intervention programmes are beginning to strengthen their links with these institutions in order to direct young people to potential courses. A full list of the courses and colleges we have found have been collected into a searchable directory and institution map that is freely available on our angling resources website www.resources.anglingreserach.org.uk

v) Self-esteem, confidence, and resilience

Schools are at the frontline of identifying and supporting vulnerable young people. Government agendas clearly specify that schools will continue to deliver pastoral care, working on self-esteem, healthy lifestyles and Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE)¹⁵.

Angling intervention programmes are built around activities that develop social and emotional skills, making them useful as part of a whole school approach and with targeted groups of vulnerable young people.

Improving self-esteem, confidence and resilience enables young people to tackle the root cause of poor performance and disruptive behaviour not only in school but across all aspects of their lives. Overwhelmingly, young people interviewed about their experiences on intervention projects cited

improved self-confidence as the most significant outcome of engagement. They also pointed to the sense of achievement they had developed from activities such as cleaning a stretch of river, building a fishing peg for the local fishery, or representing their school in angling competitions.

Significantly, for young people who seldom excelled academically or in the usual school sports and arts programmes, having their angling achievements recognised in school assemblies and wall displays boosted self-esteem.

“It’s a way really for children who do not excel necessarily academically, do not excel on the sports field, they don’t fit into those areas in school where they get a lot of praise, it’s where they can actually achieve. But it’s where any child can achieve, where even the brightest child can achieve, it really is equal for everybody which is why it works so well” (Teacher, interviewed at GHOF Shropshire session)

Peer Mentoring and the Primary to Secondary School Transition

Research has shown that difficulties making the transition from primary to secondary school can result in a ‘dip’ in attitudes, engagement and performance in education.¹⁶ Programme that bridge primary and secondary schools, work on young people’s self-esteem, and assist them to form friendship networks minimize the stress and disruption of transition.

The GHOF Easington Transition Programme, uses peer mentors from Easington Community Science College to deliver an angling engagement programme to students from the feeder primary school. Potential peer mentors were identified amongst those who would themselves benefit from improvements in confidence and self-esteem. As a team, they took part in sessions to build their angling knowledge and develop their mentoring skills before being introduced to the primary school students.

Over the course of three sessions mentors coached small groups of primary children, giving them opportunities to talk more generally about what to expect in secondary school. Peer mentors provide transitioning young people with a point of contact within secondary school. The same peer mentors also coach at Easington College’s whole school activity days, where they have the potential to re-engage with students starting their first year.



¹⁵ DoH. 2010 *Healthy Lives, Healthy People: our strategy for public health in England*.

¹⁶ DCSF Research Report 2009. *What makes a successful transition from primary to secondary school?*

3.2 Angling and Anti-Social Behaviour

Anti-social behaviour and/or involvement in crime, has an effect on the wellbeing of communities as well as the long term outcomes of young people themselves. It remains a key concern for local communities, with police and local councils looking for cost effective measures that go beyond temporary diversion in order to provide long term solutions.

Home Office figures suggest that the cost of criminal damage is on average around £992 per incident¹⁷. The average cost of one incident of non-serious wounding is £9,231, common assault £1,650, robbery £8,344, burglary £3,745, non-vehicle theft £726 and vehicle theft £4,741 - all crimes most commonly associated with young people.¹⁸

Our interviews with police, youth offending and early intervention teams identify a combination of risk factors that signal the potential for young people's engagement in crime and anti-social behaviour. These include:

- Lack of positive adult influences/role models
- Negative peer groups
- Low confidence and self-esteem
- Lack of positive direction
- Lack of awareness and concern for the consequences of behaviour
- A lack of empathy that limits the ability to understand the world from another's point of view and manage one's own behaviour accordingly.

Angling intervention programmes have many years of experience working to transform criminal and anti-social behaviour. Their success is attributable not to short term 'diversionary' provisions, but long term behavioral change achieved through repeat engagement. It is the time invested in building relationships with young people and working progressively on their personal and social development that delivers lasting results. Consequently angling intervention programmes work

in both early intervention (amongst those showing signs of being at risk of offending), and amongst those who already engaged in anti-social or criminal behaviour by tackling root causes. This involves:

- Introducing young people to a **recreational activity** that leads to constructive use of leisure time
- Introducing them to **potential career paths** that motivates direction in life
- Providing **positive adult role models**
- Providing opportunities to develop **healthy relationships with authority figures** and members of the local community
- Building **confidence and self-esteem**
- **Introducing new positive peer groups** that involves healthy ways of building social status and peer recognition
- Developing social skills, particularly empathy

Two aspects of angling intervention best illustrate how programmes transform anti-social behaviour.

i) Positive peer groups

Establishing a sense of belonging amongst a supportive peer group is important to young people's wellbeing. At times the drive to belong may result in association with negative peer groups or gangs that increases the risk of engagement in anti-social behaviour. Even if young people recognise they are being led astray, it is not always easy to make 'new' friends on their own. Angling intervention programmes bring young people together, offering them the opportunity to build alternative friendship groups built around a constructive activity.

Peer mentors in particular are drawn from young people with a variety of backgrounds and abilities, integrating those who are more responsible and generally well behaved with those who may be engaged in anti-social behaviour. The result is a system of positive peer influence that causes young people to reflect on their own behaviour and find the alternatives available. Young people often cite the new friendships they develop through angling intervention programmes as an influential part of the intervention experience.

¹⁷ Based on Home Office figures for 2003 and taking into account inflation. Home Office (2005) *The economic and Social Costs of Crime against individuals and households 2003/2004*. (London TSO)

¹⁸ *ibid*

"I changed, I've got new friends. I never drink on the streets anymore, or in the parks...you can't blame it on the people you're hanging round with because it's all up to you at the end of the day. But it's all different for me now, ever since I walked away I've never looked back on old friends...Most people just see CAST as fishing but it's not, it's about making new friends". (Male 17, CAST)

"I used to be a right bugger. Police home a few times, stuff like that really...but things changed I think it was just getting involved with more kids, getting new friends and that. I calmed down a bit" (Male 18, GHOF)

ii) Peer mentoring and the development of empathy

Peer mentoring is a useful tool for developing social awareness and interpersonal skills. Young people with conduct disorders who engage in anti-social forms of behavior, often exhibit a lack of awareness or concern for how their behavior affects others around them. Peer mentoring reverses this by encouraging young people to reflect on how their

actions are viewed from the perspective of others. Successful peer coaching depends on peer mentors developing an acute awareness of the needs of children in their charge. GHOF use 'games' to train peer mentors to think about experiences from the other's point of view. These valuable interpersonal skills can then be applied across young people's social relationships.

The development of empathetic skills are observable in the ways peer mentors learn to adapt their teaching practices to suit particular groups and the way they explain mentoring.

Interviewer; so what makes a good teacher or peer mentor?

"Listening to what you've got to say, because sometime adults just tell you to do something without asking you. So when being a peer mentor, sometimes you'll watch and the kids will say they want to fish on something else, like if they're fishing on a whip, and their arms are aching and they might ask to change to a rod because it's a bit lighter. So you listen to them and give it a go." (Male 15, GHOF)

Volunteering: the GHOF Liverpool Peer Mentors

There were 22 peer mentors between the ages of 13 and 17 registered with the GHOF Liverpool project for the year Jan 2010 to Nov 2010. The majority completed over 50 hours of volunteering, and were awarded their V50 award. In many cases the number of hours far exceeded the required 50, with one peer mentor totaling 147 hours. In a year, GHOF Liverpool peer mentors have the opportunity to volunteer over the course of 9 weeks covering the school holidays (excluding the Christmas break and spring half term) where they assist in taster days and open sessions at local parks. To receive their V50 awards peer mentors averaged 22.2 hours a month, with the maximum being 65.3 hours a month. To put this in context, the 2008-2009 Citizenship Survey-Volunteering and Charitable Giving Topic Report found young people between the ages of 16-24 engaged in formal volunteering for an average of 7.4 hours in the four weeks prior to being surveyed.¹⁹

The extensive hours young people spend volunteering during their free time is testimony to their commitment and enjoyment of the schemes. For young people often seen as non-contributing members of society, taking on the responsibility and position of trust associated with being a peer mentor is a novel, esteem building experience. Peer mentors find it personally rewarding. They take pride in what they do, enjoy spending time with friends and the project staff, and describe a 'buzz' from helping other young people catch their first fish. It is also an opportunity to belong to a positive peer group that brings together young people from different backgrounds.



¹⁹ This number may be low as the survey was not conducted during the summer holidays when young people potentially have more time to engage in volunteering. (Communities and Local Government Report)

3.3. Angling and Civil Society

Policy focus is increasingly turning to the development of opportunities that encourage people to actively engage in civil society. Angling intervention work is one way to ensure young people are also included in the benefits of active citizenship. Young people are often isolated from community life. There are few opportunities for them to engage with community members from different generations and they lack a sense of local belonging outside of their immediate peer group. In turn the local community often views young people with suspicion and further marginalises them from society. Lack of a sense of belonging is detrimental not only to young people's sense of wellbeing, but also to community life as young people engage in anti-social behaviour and exhibit a lack of concern for the local environment or community members.

Angling intervention programmes work with young people to build social cohesion through:

- Environmental education
- Community improvement projects
- Community angling events that bring young people and members of the community together.

As a result intervention projects are able to:

- **Transforms local community prejudices and negative stereotyping of young people.** Delivering programmes publicly within the local community allows residents the opportunity to work alongside young people and get to know them.
- **Establish intergenerational social networks within local communities** that positively impact on young peoples behaviour and wellbeing and provide a social safety net for those who are often most isolated or 'hard to reach'.
- **Teach young people about responsible citizenship** through caring for environment, developing ethical behaviour and awareness of the wider consequences of personal action.

3.3.1 The role of environmental learning in developing citizenship

The fascination of fish and the desire to learn about correct handling and care is used by intervention programmes to motivate learning about responsibility and awareness of how individual behavior impacts on the environment.

Studies suggest that developing young people's concern for animals and the environment can have a positive impact on young people's understanding of the consequences of action and the development of empathic skills that may be transferable to human relationships²⁰.

Amongst our survey respondents **84.9%** (n=152) of young people agreed and strongly agreed with the statement '*fishing has taught me more about caring for the environment*'. This makes angling quite unique amongst sports and allows angling to be used to develop young people's social awareness and sense of ethical responsibility.

"The biggest thing was that it wasn't just angling I was learning about. It was maths, English and the environment. I didn't really think about it before, but now I think about where people put their litter, what they do about it, the animals, how to take care of them. I've actually thought about the environment and the animals." (Male 16, NACRO)

"Now I know how to fish properly. When you understand fishing, you start to look at the welfare side of it, you want to look after the fish, because if there's no fish there's no fishing." (Male 18, GHOF)

"I've learnt to treat the environment with more respect, before I used to just chuck rubbish anywhere, but now I go and put it in the bin" (Male 15 GHOF)

²⁰ Fawsett, N and Gullone, E. 2001. 'Cute and Cuddly and a whole lot more? A Call for empirical Investigation into the therapeutic benefits of Human-Animal Interaction for children'. In *Behavioural Change*. Volume 18.

Environmental Clean ups

GHOF build environmental care into their programmes. All sessions include learning about fish welfare and many incorporate environmental clean up projects. Developing young people's environmental awareness alongside the empathy required to be a good peer mentor is at the heart of successful angling intervention work. As part of our research we observed two sessions, a river clean with GHOF Shropshire and a beach clean with GHOF Easington.

The GHOF Shropshire programme emphasised the building of community relationships. It drew together young people from the local estate with the local police and Community Support Officers (CSO), the Environment Agency, and the Local Angling Club. Young people assisted in removing litter from a local stretch of the river Rea Brook and in the process learnt about the effects of pollution of fish stocks. West Mercia police have been working with GHOF Shropshire for a number of years, and find opportunities such as this to be invaluable for improving police/young people relationships.

"We have seen huge reductions in anti-social behaviour, year on year...It's more to do with the relationship that's been built than the few hours we keep them employed. The spinoff is they all know us very well and there is not a stigma attached to getting in touch and speaking to the police."
(West Mercia Police Sergeant)



Beach cleans are part of an environmental learning package developed by GHOF Easington that has been used for personal and social education in schools and to bring together young people from two 'rival' communities. Alongside activities such as sea fishing and rock pooling, the beach clean encourages young people to think about the origins of the litter they find and how it might impact on their participation in other activities. It culminates in the creation of a litter collage or creative drawing activity that explores the consequences of litter for local wildlife.

Both programmes encouraged young people to reflect on how their own behaviour, including littering or vandalism, may have consequences for the world around them. Rather than being 'told' the right and wrongs of responsible behaviour, young people come to their own awareness and understanding by exploring for themselves the potential impact of their actions.

3.4 Health and wellbeing

The Marmot Review into health inequalities set out a holistic approach to improving health and wellbeing across society. It drew attention to the importance of combating social isolation, providing access to restorative quality local environments, and the role of positive social networks in improving health and wellbeing outcomes.²¹ As our 2010 interim report, *The Wellbeing Benefits of Angling Participation* illustrated, angling participation address these three aspects as well as building young people's self-esteem and ability to cope with life's challenges. This makes it particularly useful for working with young people in deprived communities where health inequalities are greatest.

3.4.1 The cost of poor health

i) Children and adolescent mental health disorders

The Kings Fund *Paying the Price* report estimates the total service costs of children and adolescent mental health disorders to be £143 million in 2007.²² This covers conduct disorders such as violent outbursts, emotional disorders such as anxiety and depression, and hyperkinetic disorders such as ADHD. While this figure results in a speculative average of £235 per young person²³, the cost per person does not reflect well the wide variation determined by severity of illness. In addition, the financial cost of child mental health disorders is greater when the impact on education, youth offending, future employment as well as mental health care into adulthood is taken into consideration.

ii) Obesity

3 in 10 young people aged 2-15 are identified as overweight or obese.²⁴ Using National Audit Office estimates, the cost of treating obesity in relation to

GP/hospital admissions for a single treatment can be on average £1,926 per person treated. The cost increases significantly when one considers the impact obesity has on associated conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and strokes.²⁵

3.4.1 The role of angling intervention programmes

As part of a targeted approach, angling intervention programmes introduce young people who may otherwise not access general angling provisions, to the wellbeing benefits of angling participation. They also run courses that specifically aim to promote healthy lifestyles, covering diverse areas such as healthy eating and physical activity to drug and alcohol awareness. Angling intervention programmes stand out further however, for the unique impact they have on those diagnosed with mental health disorders, particularly attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and anxiety disorders.

i) Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

Research has shown that ADHD is more prevalent in areas of high deprivation.²⁶ As GHOF projects deliver in some of the most deprived communities in the UK, we have had multiple opportunities to observe and interview young people and their carers about the role of angling and ADHD. Hyperkinetic disorders can impact on all aspects of young people's lives. It can:

- Negatively affect young people's social relationships with their peers, family members, teachers and authority figures.
- Disrupt progress in education and affect attainment
- Lead to engagement in disruptive or anti-social behaviour.
- Negatively affect young people's self image and confidence in their abilities.
- Ostracise young people and their parents from society as a consequence of the negative perception of ADHD.

²¹ *Marmot Review: Fair Society, Healthy Lives* 2010

²² Kings Fund 2008. *Paying the price: the cost of Mental health care in England to 2026*. The Kings Fund report calculated service cost arising from prescribed drugs, inpatient care, GP contacts, accident and emergency visits and outpatient attendance.

²³ Our calculations based on Kings Fund Figures where they estimated the number of young people with mental health disorders in 2007 to be 607,402.

²⁴ ONS Children, Health: 3 out of 10 children are overweight or obese.
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=2196>

²⁵ National Audit Office, Report by the Comptroller and Audit Office (2001) *Tackling Obesity in England* (London:TSO)

²⁶ *'Unhealthy Lives': intergenerational links between child poverty and poor health in the UK* End Child Poverty Briefing 2008.

Angling intervention programmes improve the quality of life of young people with ADHD by:

- **Building the ability to maintain concentration, filter out distractions, and control impulsive behaviour.** The concentration and quietness needed to fish is a learnt behaviour. Our observations have found that while young people new to fishing usually struggle to sustain focus initially, with each subsequent session, the length of time they are able to concentrate increases. Experienced young anglers eventually find less effort is required to maintain attention and angling subsequently becomes relaxing.²⁷
- **Taking part in a calming activity.** Contrary to expectation, young people with ADHD are able to spend many hours calmly engaged in angling. As a result, young people and their careers have the opportunity to spend quality time together where the focus is on positive achievements without the worry of disruptive behaviour. This helps to rebuild strained relationships, allowing adults to see young people with ADHD in a different light and in turn improve young people's self-esteem and recognition of their capabilities.

The Studio ADHD Center

The Studio ADHD Center in Surrey is a charity that works to support young people with ADHD and their families. Part of their engagement process involves offering angling activities assisted by the West Sussex Angling Academy. The Studio works on transforming the way young people with ADHD and their parents view their condition. Nancy Williams, director of The Studio, explains that a positive reframing of ADHD focuses on young people's strengths and abilities.

Angling fits into the centers work because it allows young people to positively focus on what they can achieve, taking part in accredited angling courses, and working on developing confidence and self-esteem. Importantly angling engagement also assists young people to develop a greater degree of social awareness, build concentration, focus their attention, and develop control over impulsive behaviour.

A Parent's Perspective

'Linda's' son is a peer mentor with GHOF. He also has ADHD.

"From the age of eight I wanted to kill him, because he was hypo, naughty. Out of sheer desperation Dad took him out fishing one day, and he phoned me up, and said, "you've got to come down and see this. You won't believe it". So I went down and he's sitting perfectly still, wasn't fidgeting, wasn't twitching, or being a pain and was focused on a float. Dad had said to him, see that float, if you miss it you miss the fish. So from that day on, especially when he was feeling stressed, fishing was what he did. When he was doing his GCSE's in school, rather than do revision, he used to do a 4-5 hour fishing session, just relaxing and getting away, chill out and then he was quite happy about going into school..."

...Once they get that bug, I think it's a combination of things, the environment they're in, other like minded people, common interest. He's in control of what he's doing, and there's a routine to things, which for kids with any sort of cognitive issue, it seems to work. It's also short bursts of concentration followed by a reward. It's not landing fish all day, it's the peace that goes along with it. It's repetitive. It's a structure."

²⁷ This experience echoes studies on 'focused attention' meditation that suggest improving attention can be the product of trainable skill. Lutz, A; Slagner, H, Dunne, J; and Davidson, R. 2008. 'Attention regulation and monitoring in meditation'. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*. Volume 12, issue 4.



ii) Anxiety disorders

A number of young people referred to GHOF projects have anxiety disorders. These range from panic attacks and agoraphobia, to obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). Young people also exhibit milder forms of social anxiety and nervousness brought on by social situations such as meeting new people. In most cases these symptoms are linked to:

- low confidence and self-esteem
- anxiety over perceived social/academic pressure
- feeling of not 'fitting in',
- experiences of bullying
- limited social skills
- isolation and limited friendship networks

As already highlighted in this report, angling focuses attention and has a therapeutic affect which young people find calming. This makes it particularly useful for working with young people with anxiety disorders. Angling intervention programmes create a safe, supportive environment to work on many of the features that exacerbate anxiety disorders. They:

- **Use the calming nature of angling to manage anxiety during engagement sessions.** This allows intervention workers to introduce young people to social situations and experience that may otherwise heighten anxiety.

- **Adapt the social practices associated with angling to increase or reduce the intensity of social interaction.** Gradually young people are encouraged to take part in a range of social activities that build their confidence and social skills. This can include fishing public places like piers or marinas, peer mentoring, or giving presentations and demonstrations at public events.

As a result of engagement young people learn to manage their anxiety, overcome their fear of social situations, and develop social skills that lead to greater confidence in social interactions.

"Fishing relaxes me so much. I used to get panic attacks in year 7. And now I'm dead relaxed, it's weird because I used to have panic attacks at school, and then one day I just couldn't breathe, and the next day I was with GHOF again and I was fine. It happens when I have something on my mind to do, coming to school. Where as tying hooks and all that, having something to do where I'm just sitting here, something to relax. It calms me down." (Male 13, GHOF)

Angling and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

'Jack' (16) was diagnosed with OCD as a child. Having already developed a keen interest in fishing, the GHOF project was able to use angling to work on 'Jack's confidence, social skills and overcome the anxiety that often triggered OCD behaviour.

His father explains that much of the work with GHOF is about introducing 'Jack' to new experiences that demonstrate there is nothing to fear. The supportive environment normalizes the experience and develops 'Jack's confidence in his ability to deal with social situations.

Activities have included river clean ups, peer mentoring and captaining of the school angling team. 'Jack' is now in college on a fishery management course that includes a work experience placement with GHOF. He also continues to volunteer as a peer mentor.

Challenging the rise of Obesity: GHOF 'Catch and Cook' Programmes

With 3 in 10 children aged 2-15yrs identified as overweight and obese²⁸ steps to engage young people in healthier lifestyles is increasingly urgent. Obesity increases the risk of developing health problems such as heart disease, diabetes and reduced life expectancy. It also has social consequences such as discrimination and exclusion leading to low self-esteem and reduced emotional wellbeing. Improving young people's health requires innovative, holistic, 'fun' approaches that challenge young people's behavior, encourages a more active lifestyle, as well as changes in diet and nutrition.

GHOF's 'Catch and Cook' programmes exemplify the role angling can play in promoting healthy lifestyles. We visited two programmes, GHOF Shropshire delivering to a school group from GHOF Liverpool, and GHOF Easington, to observe how the programmes were used in combination with game and sea fishing respectively. The 'Catch and Cook' sessions are designed to not only build teamwork, confidence and self-esteem, but also encourage young people to think actively about where their food comes from and have fun preparing healthy meals. The programmes can be flexibly commissioned but in essence contain an element of:

- learning about fish and food production
- physical activity (catching the fish)
- food preparation

Both sea and game fishing require physical exertion but remain accessible and appealing to those who may be intimidated by the high intensity activity associated with other 'sports'.

Catch and cook sessions are adaptable to provide different learning experiences. At GHOF Shropshire the focus was on outdoor 'woodcraft' cooking, while GHOF focused on cooking as a profession, providing tuition from a local chef on correct fish filleting and pin boning, as well as answering questions about the experience of a career in food preparation.



²⁸ ONS Children, Health: 3 out of 10 children are overweight or obese.
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=2196>

4. Conclusions

Angling has 'added value' as a tool to intervene in the lives of marginalised young people. As a social, environmental and therapeutic practice, angling can be effectively adapted to work on individual behaviour and development as well as young people's relationship with society. GHOF is the leading example of this approach.

Angling intervention programmes such as those delivered by GHOF, represent a valuable resource for strategies seeking to improve outcomes for some of the most socially excluded. As this report has illustrated, young people's engagement in intervention programmes can:

- **Improve outcomes in education and employment**, by motivating young people to re-engage in education, achieve qualifications and aspire to further education, employment and training.
- **Transform anti-social behaviour** by developing young people's social awareness, interpersonal skills and engagement with positive peer groups.
- **Encourage young people to be productive members of society** by engaging them in

volunteering, community improvement work, environmental care and forging a supportive network of relationships within the local community.

- **Improve health and wellbeing** through engagement in a constructive, therapeutic activity, which has particular relevance for those with ADHD and anxiety disorders.
- **Develop young people's self-esteem, confidence and resilience** so they are better able to make healthy life choices and cope with future life challenges.

Because angling intervention programmes work on these aspects simultaneously, tackling multiple features of social exclusion, they can produce a genuine transformation in behaviour and can improve outcomes across the breadth of disadvantaged young lives. While participation in angling as a sport and recreational activity undoubtedly benefits young people, commissioners seeking more targeted developmental outcomes and value for money should be looking to organisations such as GHOF and the more specialist work of angling intervention programs.



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- Angling For Youth Development (AFYD): <http://www.afyd.co.uk/>
- BAIT Project: <http://www.bait-project.co.uk/homepage.php>
- Borderlines: www.borderlines.org.uk
- CAST: <http://www.castangling.co.uk/about.html>
- CAST North West: www.castnw.co.uk
- Catch 21: <http://www.thames21.org.uk/Catch21.html>
- Fishing4u: http://www.hastings.gov.uk/active_hastings/fishing_activities.aspx
- GHOF: <http://www.ghof.org.uk/>
- Inclusion Through Angling (ITA): www.inclusionthroughangling.co.uk
- Les Webber's Angling Projects: www.angling-projects.org.uk
- NACRO Reading Angling Project: <http://www.nacro.org.uk/services/thames-valley/nacro-reading-angling-project/>
- The Studio ADHD Center: <http://www.studioadhdcentre.org.uk/>
- West Sussex Angling Academy

For more information about these projects visit our 'Fact Sheets' page on our resources website www.resources.anglingresearch.org.uk

Endnotes

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