

WHIRLWIND SAILING COURSE IMPACT REPORT SUMMER 2025

The Whirlwind Charitable Trust funded a five-day beginner sailing course at Cobnor Activities Centre Trust for 12 young people aged 11-12 years from Years 7 and 8. There is no doubt that this opportunity had a lasting impact on every participant. Many would not otherwise have had access to such a positive and enriching experience.

Providing opportunities like this is precisely the reason our charity was founded. It is at the heart of our mission to open up access to Chichester Harbour for young people who would benefit the most.

Purpose and timing

The programme took place during the school summer holidays. This time of year can be especially difficult for

families facing disadvantage due to increased isolation, lack of structure and reduced access to supportive environments. By offering a safe and purposeful activity, the programme brought stability, engagement and meaningful connection.

The participants

Participants were identified by local schools and support organisations to

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He came home daily full of stories and knot knowledge. He made new friends and was motivated to be part of the team ethos which is amazing to see. Thank you again for such a lovely opportunity.

Parent of participant





ensure that we reached young people facing significant disadvantage. Each participant was selected based on need and the likelihood of personal growth. To support inclusion and ease pressures on families, the funding provided a healthy lunch each day. These shared meals also encouraged social interaction and helped to build relationships.

Programme delivery

The course included a structured mix of practical and theory-based sailing sessions. These were led by qualified instructors and supported by experienced volunteers. Participants followed the Royal Yachting Association (RYA) pathway. Every participant who completed the full course successfully achieved their RYA Stage 1 qualification.

In addition to sailing, participants completed a Mini Medics First Aid course, gaining practical life-saving knowledge and building personal confidence.

Each day also included an additional activity, either on the water or on land. These included high ropes, aeroball, paddling and raft building. All activities were chosen to promote communication, leadership and mutual trust; skills essential for both sailing and wider life experiences.

Impact and reflections

The programme aimed to develop self-confidence, resilience and teamwork. These skills are essential for wellbeing, learning and future life choices. Feedback from young people and their support workers was overwhelmingly positive. Many participants expressed pride in their progress and showed visible growth throughout the week.

A known challenge for programmes of this nature is maintaining attendance. Two participants were unable to complete the course due to personal circumstances at home. We recognise that this is part of the complex reality for many of the young people we aim to support.



A turning point...

Pre-programme participant surveys revealed that:

- Eight participants were most looking forward to “going on the water”
- Two participants expressed nervousness about “the sea” or socialising
- Five reported feeling “not confident” about making new friends
- Most described outdoor spaces near water as calming, relaxing or enjoyable

Reflections gathered after the course show clear personal growth:

“This experience has made me so much more confident.”

“I was so worried about coming and not being able to talk to anyone.”

“I learnt that I can actually work in a team and make friends.”

“It is ok to be yourself.”

“Being by the water made me feel relaxed and calm.”

Post-programme surveys showed that:

- All participants named something they enjoyed, including sailing, raft building and “everything”
- The biggest challenges included managing emotions, capsizing and heights
- Six participants reported feeling “definitely so much” more confident making new friends
- Ten said they would like to do more outdoor activities
- Several noted that the experience helped them discover they “can have fun,” “work in a team,” and “never give up”

The participants’ feedback reinforces that the sailing programme not only built skills but also nurtured wellbeing, self-belief and a sense of belonging. It confirms that, for many, this was more than a course – it was a turning point.



The programme was particularly well received by Cobnor Activities Centre Trust volunteers and instructors. They brought energy, encouragement and positive role modelling to the group.

Next steps

At the end of the week, all participants were invited to return to Cobnor Activities Centre Trust through further funded programmes. We also offered to introduce them to their nearest sailing club, where they can access a structured youth mentoring programme and continue their development in a community setting.

Looking to the future

This programme has been a clear success. The outcomes, feedback and enthusiasm have shown that outdoor education changes lives. The sailing

course formed the foundation, and the supporting activities deepened teamwork and strengthened the learning environment.

This experience also highlights the value of partnership and targeted investment.

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They had the best time on the sailing week and made so many great memories. Seeing their confidence grow each day was amazing.

Parent of participant

We now seek further funding to continue and strengthen this work.

Our goal is to secure a three-year funding agreement that would enable us to offer this sailing programme to new groups of disadvantaged young people each summer and to support returning participants to progress further along the Royal Yachting Association pathway through additional qualifications.

We remain deeply grateful to the Whirlwind Charitable Trust. Your support has made a genuine and lasting difference. Together, we can continue to reach those who need it most and provide opportunities that inspire, empower and shape brighter futures.

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