

Sailing as a Therapeutic Intervention

'Sailing to Succeed'

Introduction

Research has demonstrated that participation in sailing can enhance the physical and mental health of young people. Benefits include the development of functional life skills and the promotion of self-esteem (Cotterill & Brown, 2018). Literature has described how being in and around coastal environments can positively influence well-being (Nichols [2014], Gascon et al, 2017) and has even suggested that adults who had close contact with natural spaces during their childhood could have a better mental health than those who had less contact (Preuss et al, 2019).



SET Outdoors

The aim of SET Outdoors is to support Children's Services working in the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust (SEHSCT) area to help improve the health,

wellbeing and quality of life of vulnerable young people (aged 0-18*) via engagement in outdoor, nature-based and/or animal-facilitated activities and/or outdoor therapy.

*0-24 if Looked After Child/Prison Healthcare

From the SET Outdoors' perspective, the main objectives for this sailing intervention are to:

1. Increase opportunities for vulnerable young people who are engaged in SEHSCT Children's Services to participate in outdoor activities with the goal of improving mental health and wellbeing.
2. To design and deliver (in association with CAMHS and Education Authority sailing instructors) a group programme which offers vulnerable young people an opportunity to participate in sailing as a therapeutic medium.
3. To develop ways of effectively evaluating the impact of the 'Sailing to Succeed' programme on participants and staff.



The SEHSCT is an organisational member (level 3) of The Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL). As such, programmes operated under the umbrella of SET Outdoors, and all SEHSCT staff operating under guidance of the Health Development Specialist will be expected to adhere to The IOL 'Members Code of Conduct' and 'Statements of Good Practice'. Further details can be found at <https://www.outdoor-learning.org/>

SET Outdoors operate in accordance with the Outdoor Mental Health Interventions Model (Richards, Hardie and Anderson 2019).

'Sailing to Succeed' sessions will be co-facilitated by:

- Barbara Johnston (Clinical Psychologist CAMHS)
- Ruth Fenlon (Nurse Practitioner).

- Joanne Foreman (Educational Authority Youth Worker/Sailing Instructor).
- Tim Crean (Educational Authority Youth Worker/Sailing Instructor).

Figure 1 – Zones of Practice – Range of Outdoor Mental Health Interventions

Zone 1		Zone 2	Zone 3
Self-led Activities	Outdoor Engagement	Therapeutic Enhancement	Integrated Outdoor Therapy
Choosing to engage in activities and experiences in the outdoors to sustain or improve own health & well-being.	Adding a psychological or outdoor dimension to enrich the experience provided by a session or service.	Using complimentary outdoor activities and psycho-therapeutic practices to enhance the approach and benefits offered.	Integrating professional competences in both outdoor learning and psychological therapy to provide unique and dynamic interventions.

This intervention sits within Zone 3 of the Outdoor Mental Health Interventions Model as it will be facilitated by a clinical psychologist and nurse in collaboration with highly trained and skilled outdoor instructors.



Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

CAMHS aim to provide therapeutic help for children experiencing mental health difficulties and to promote the psychological, emotional & social development of children & young people within the context of their family and wider community (Northern Ireland Bamford Review Group and MindWise, 2021). North Down & Ards is a Step 3 CAMHS service.

CAMHS will be responsible for recruiting up to 8 young people onto this weekly group intervention which will be 6 sessions in duration.



Education Authority Outdoor Learning Service

The EA Youth Service provides opportunities for children & young people to engage in outdoor learning opportunities as part of their school curriculum or via youth work programmes.

The EA offers residential accommodation and outdoor learning day centres, a Peripatetic Instructor Service to schools and youth groups and supports the delivery of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme across the EA.

From an EA Perspective, the objectives for this programme are:

- Young person increased self- esteem, confidence and understanding of own abilities.
- Young person increased understanding of what resilience is and how to overcome life's challenge.
- For young people to see how different experiences can be connected, to be able to ask for help and to understand how to be a team member.

'Sailing to Succeed' Group Objectives:

- To allow young people to access therapy which is enriched by being experienced in nature.
- To allow young people the opportunity to engage with other adolescents who experience similar mental health symptoms thus providing opportunities to develop social skills, confidence and peer relationships within a safe, therapeutic environment.
- To allow young people to confront anxiety symptoms via a meaningful, novel and motivating therapeutic activity.
- To promote healthy attitudes to safety, self-care and relationships via psycho-education and therapeutic conversations.
- To provide young people with an innovative and quality healthcare intervention.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Young people must have had an initial 'Choice' appointment (mental health assessment) recorded on Paris, and, have been accepted by CAMHS for intervention.
- The young person must have had an updated (within 2 weeks of acceptance onto the group) FACE risk assessment recorded on Paris.
- Young people attending the group programme must be 16-18 years of age.
- Prior to acceptance onto the group, the young person must have completed the Beck Anxiety Inventory for Youth.

Exclusion Criteria:

- A young person cannot attend this group programme if they are under 16 years of age or over the age of 18 years.
- Any young person deemed to be under influence of drugs or alcohol (including from the night before) will not be permitted to participate in a group session.
- Any young person who is under medical investigation, or has a new/unresolved medical condition should not participate in the programme.
- Deliberate self-harm is not a reason to exclude a young person from participation. However, a young person who has open wounds should not enter the water (possible during water-based activities)
- A young person should not attend the group within 48 hours of vomiting or diarrhoea. Covid-19 guidelines must be adhered to.

Risk Management

Risk assessment will be completed in line with SEHSCT and BHSCT policy for each individual patient (including Covid-19 pre-session questionnaire).

CAMHS staff must ensure that their mandatory training (especially basic life support) is up to date.

Local (SEHCT/BHSCT) and regional child protection policy will be adhered to.

The Education Authority will be responsible for risk assessing water-based activities.

Education Authority staff will make the final decision in relation to weather, situational and activity-specific risks during the group sessions.

The sessions, and discussions that occur within the sessions are confidential. SEHCT/BHSCT staff will adhere to local policies in regards confidentiality. No photographs should be taken by staff, participants or the EA with the exception of SET sanctioned publicity/media.

Families will be encouraged to ensure that their child is appropriately dressed for the weather conditions (including sunscreen).

Session Plan

Session 1:

- Welcome and introductions.
- Discussion re: equipment, safety and the fitting buoyancy aids
- Familiarisation of marina.
- Therapeutic discussion/activity – check-in/relaxation or mindfulness/worst case scenario or fears/reality check/goals for programme.
- Getting onboard.
- Being afloat.
- Reflections on the session & plans for next session.

Session 2:

- Welcome and introductions.
- Discussion re: last session. What worked well/what was difficult?
- Boat familiarisation.
- Therapeutic discussion/activity – what is anxiety and how does it present in our body. Fight/flight/freeze responses.
- Sail around marina into outer harbour.

- Reflections on the session & plans for next session.

Session 3:

- Welcome and introductions.
- Discussion re: last session. What worked well/what was difficult?
- Sailing across the wind and being on the helm.
- Communication onboard.
- Therapeutic discussion/activity – how do we communicate when anxious? Why is important to communicate to adults/important people when we feel stressed? How does anxiety affect our thoughts, behaviour and communication style? Discussion re: core beliefs.
- Reflections on the session & plans for next session.

Session 4:

- Welcome and introductions.
- Discussion re: last session. What worked well/what was difficult?
- Sailing across the wind and being on the helm.
- The role of the crew when sailing further afield.
- Stopping
- Therapeutic discussion/activity – Exposure and why we sometimes need to 'sail on through the storm'. How do we interrupt or 'stop' anxious thoughts and body signals with coping strategies.
- Reflections on the session & plans for next session.

Session 5:

- Welcome and introductions.
- Discussion re: last session. What worked well/what was difficult?
- Sailing across the wind and being on the helm.
- Working as a crew.
- Reefing afloat.
- Returning to berth.
- Therapeutic discussion/activity – coping strategies continued, e.g. breathing, body-based regulation techniques, etc.
- Reflections on the session & plans for next session.

Session 6:

- Welcome and introductions.
- Discussion re: last session. What worked well/what was difficult?
- Sailing trip
- Anchoring & rowing ashore
- Therapeutic discussion/activity – what changes have we made during the programme, how can we include these into our everyday lives? What did we enjoy about the programme, what was difficult?
- Logbooks, Level 1 Certificates and review.

Outcome Measurement

Outcome measurement will be a crucial aspect of programme delivery. Participant and staff qualitative feedback will be collected at the end of the group programme. Quantitative feedback will gathered prior to and at the end of programme.

The Beck Anxiety Inventory for Youth

The Beck Anxiety Inventory for Youth (BAI) (Beck et al, 2005) is a self-report tool (for children aged 7-18 years) which reflects the young person's worries about school performance, the future, negative reactions of others, fears including loss of control and physiological symptoms associated with anxiety. The BAI is widely used in research to monitor the responsiveness of interventions.

References:

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Nichols WJ (2014) *Blue Mind: The surprising science that shows how being near, in, on, or underwater can make you happier, healthier, more connected, and better at what you do*. Little Brown Spark: New York.

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