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# Angling and Young People

## **In Their Own Words: Young People's Angling Experiences**

### **Part 1: The Wellbeing Benefits of Angling Participation**

An Interim Paper from Social and Community  
Benefits of Angling Research

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# Part 1: The Wellbeing Benefits of Angling Participation

## Foreword

In a time of austerity, when difficult decisions have to be made on how to spend limited resources, it is more important than ever to understand the full value of young people's services and opportunities. Listening to young people's own experiences and perspectives is critical to getting services right. This year's interim report is focused on young people's voices. It draws on research gathered over the last two years of *The Social and Community Benefits of Angling Research Project* to illustrate the benefits and barriers to angling participation experienced by young people.

The report is split into two parts (each a separate document).

- Part 1: *The Wellbeing Benefits of Angling Participation*, explores the role angling plays in securing young people's wellbeing.
- Part 2: *Maximising the Benefits of Angling Participation* considers the barriers to participation identified by young people and how their experiences can be improved.

An additional report, *The 'Added Value' of Angling Intervention Programmes*, will be available from Jan 2011, and looks at young people's experiences on angling intervention programmes working with some of the most socially marginalised.

All three reports focus on young people's own experiences. They represent interim findings to be read alongside the reports from year one and future publications. Through these reports we hope to present evidence about where angling delivers social benefit both for young people in general (as sport and recreational activity) as well as specifically as part of targeted intervention programmes. The research will look at how support of further angling development can also support young people's wellbeing.



## 1. Introduction

This report has been produced as part of *The Social And Community Benefits of Angling Research Project*. The interim report from Year One focused on scoping the range of youth engagement work being delivered through angling across England and Scotland. It identified a typology of approaches and highlighted the key outcomes of such work.

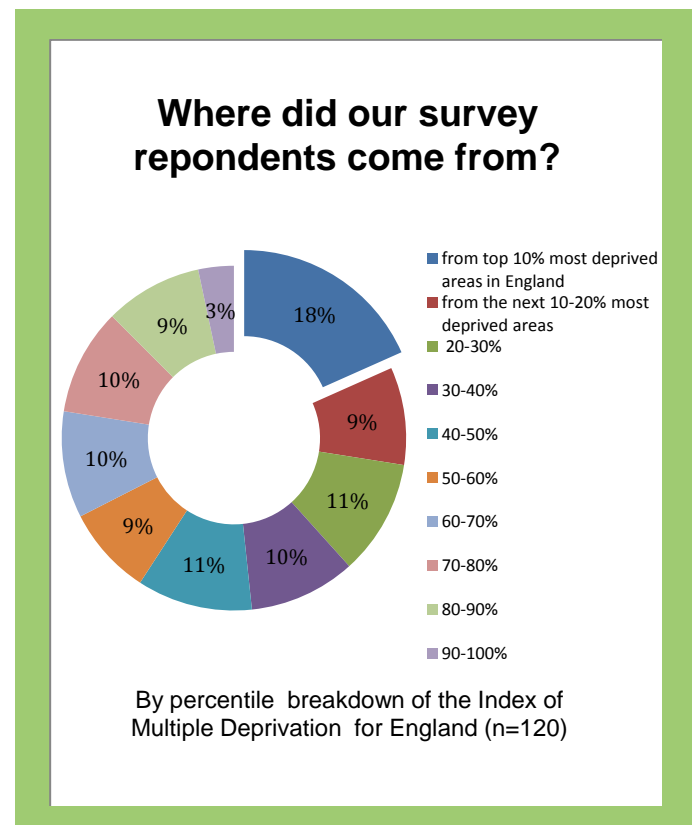
The interim reports for year two focuses more on young people's experience of angling engagement. It is based on research conducted between May 2009 and Nov 2010. This included:

- **observational site visits.** In total we made 94 site visits to angling projects, clubs and events across game, sea and course fishing. This amounted to a total of 422 hours of on site observation and interviews.
- **case study tracking** of young people as they passed through national charity Get Hooked On Fishing's (GHOF)<sup>1</sup> schemes.
- **interviews with 178 young people** aged 18 and under.
- **interviews with 280 adults** made up of project coordinators, coaches, teachers, parents, and members of the police and children's services.
- **A young person's angling survey.** (the survey remains open until Sept 2011)

In March 2010 we launched the Young Person's Angling Survey. The survey gathered basic data from anglers aged 18 and under about the wellbeing benefits of angling and barriers to participation. This data complements our interviews and observational site visits amongst some of the most socially excluded young people. In total, by Nov 2010 we had collected 183 responses online and at site visits, including at the Go Fishing Show 2010. Site visit collection was included to try to ensure we reached young people who did not have access to the internet, were not club members and/or were unlikely to find out or participate in the survey through other means.

We compared respondent postcodes to the Index of Multiple Deprivation for England to indicate socio-economic backgrounds. On the whole we had a balanced sample of young people. **18%** of our respondents originated from the top **10%** most deprived areas of England. This is an extremely positive result as these young people are often the hardest to reach. They tend to be disenfranchised from the usual mechanisms of participation and risk being overlooked in an online survey.

Of the respondents 82.2% were male, 17.8% female (n=157). The majority of young people indicated that they were predominantly coarse anglers 81.7%, with 9.5% sea, and 8.9% game (n=169). While we had a good geographical spread across England (65.6%), only 2.2% of responses were from Scotland, and 6% from Wales. 26.2% did not leave their postcode. The full results from the survey will be freely available in 2011 as part of our resources website.



<sup>1</sup> Get Hooked On Fishing is a charity that uses angling to engage socially excluded young people across England, Scotland and Wales. <http://www.ghof.org.uk/>

## 1. 1 Young People's Angling Participation

There are no accurate figures available for the number of young people that take part in angling across England and Scotland although there are estimates. For the year April 2009 to March 2010, the Environment Agency sold 129,645 junior (under 16) game and course fishing licenses across England and Wales. This amounts to approximately 3.7 % of young people aged between 12-16 in England and Wales<sup>2</sup>. As a representative guide for percentages of all anglers under 16 in the UK, it is extremely conservative. Being based on junior EA license holders, it does not take account of the numbers of young people fishing under the age of 12 who do not require a licence, the numbers of young people who despite requirements fish without a licence, and those who take part in sea angling where no licence is required.

There is no equivalent data to draw on for Scotland because there is no rod licence, but the most recent Sports Scotland figures estimated the number of young people fishing between the ages of 8-15 to be 6%<sup>3</sup>. This number is extrapolated from a representative sample of 1005 young people who responded that they had fished in the last 4 weeks during the most popular two recreational months in 2002. While it does take into account sea angling and under 12s, it also includes those who may not be regular anglers<sup>4</sup>. As a result it may well be a slight overestimate as a guide figure for the total number of regular young anglers throughout the UK. We would expect the numbers of under 16's regularly taking part in fishing of any kind across England, Scotland and Wales to lay somewhere between 3.7% and 6%.

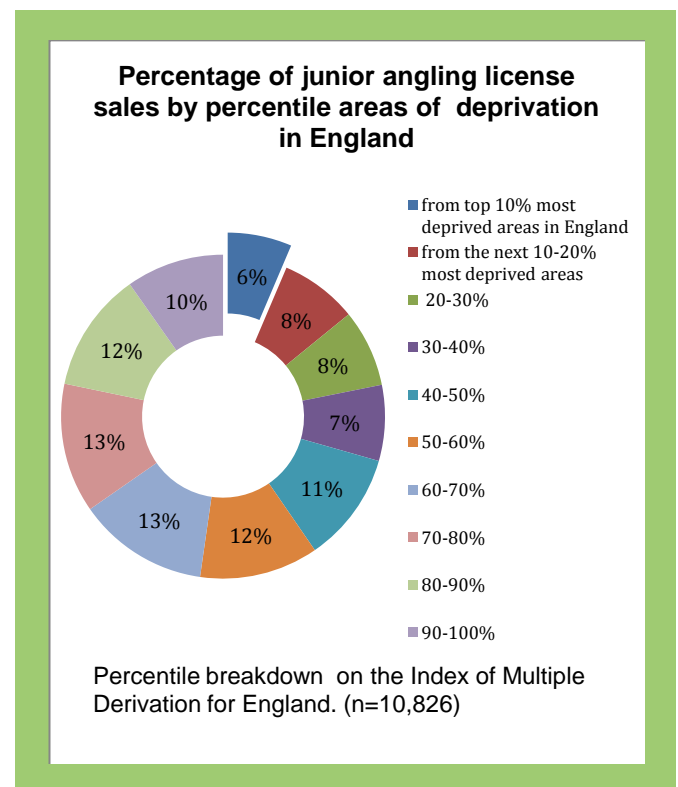
<sup>2</sup> Drawing on 2006 ONS population breakdown in England, Wales, being 50,726,900 and 2,965,900 respectively. And that 1/5 of the population are 16 and under, giving a total estimate of young people at 10,745,760. Taking account of a reasonably static birth rate we further reduced this number to the proportion of 12-16 yr old. The total estimated population number for 12-16 yrs olds in England and Wales was 3,466,374. This is a working number used to provide a guide estimate only.

<sup>3</sup> Pg 6. *A Profile of Angling In Scotland* Oct 2002. Sport Scotland.

<sup>4</sup> Young people could have been fishing in the last 4 weeks as part of a holiday or for the first time.

Using the EA licence data for 2009/2010 season, we found the uptake of junior licences to be evenly spread across England, including 6% of licences being bought in the top 10% most deprived areas of England. This confirms that young people participate in angling from a whole range of socio-economic backgrounds, making it a particularly inclusive sport.

This wide engagement makes angling a potentially useful tool for improving outcomes for young people across a wide socio-economic spectrum. Interim report *The 'Added Value' of Angling Intervention Programmes* illustrates this further by looking at angling as it is successfully used to deliver education, health, wellbeing, and social inclusion outcomes to some of the most disaffected and hard to reach young people in the UK.



## 2. Results from the Young People's Survey and Waterside Interviews

### 2.1 The role of fishing in Young People's lives

It is important to consider young people's own perspectives in order to fully understand what they appreciate most about their angling experiences.

In our survey we asked **'what are the two main reasons you go fishing?'**

At **34.8%** the top motivation for angling was *'to be peaceful, relaxed and less stressed'*, this was followed by *'to catch fish'* **32.3%**, and jointly at **21.5%** *'to improve fishing skills'* and *'to get a buzz/excitement'* (n=158)<sup>5</sup>. The range of responses reflects the multiple reasons, backgrounds, and personalities of young people which need to be taken into account when providing for young people.

To get an understanding of what young people appreciated most uniquely about fishing we asked **'what would you miss most if you couldn't go fishing any more?'**

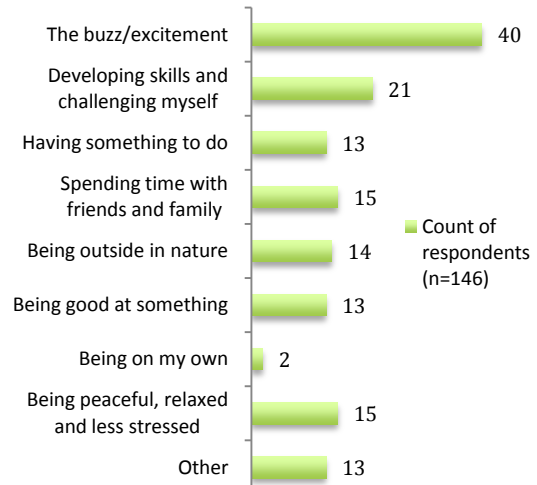
**27.4%** of respondents cited *'the buzz and excitement'* of catching fish as the thing they would miss most. During questionnaire collection at the bankside we had the opportunity to allow young people to explain this answer a little further. Young people pointed out that the buzz of catching a fish was not something that could be experienced through other activities which was why they thought they would miss it most.

*"It is the best thing about fishing. Kids don't really understand it but they get a big rush, it's the adrenaline. Especially when I've never caught the species before, It can be big or small, but if I've never caught it before, I'm like shaking."* (Level 1 coach, Male 18)

#### What are the two main reasons you go fishing?



#### What would you miss most if you couldn't go fishing any more?



<sup>5</sup> Responses do not total 100% as we asked young people to give two answers.





The uniqueness of the fishing offer was also highlighted by young people who cited 'holding the fish' or 'looking after the fish' as key responses in the 'other' categories<sup>6</sup>.

This correlated with our observations and discussions with young people. In particular younger children and those new to angling were fascinated about how fish would feel, and took every opportunity to hold the fish they caught. The majority showed exceptional concern about how best to handle fish without harming them. Across many angling engagement programmes young people's fascination with this 'extra-ordinary' experience and the desire to learn about responsible handling, is used to teach young people awareness about the wider impact of their behaviour on not only the environment but also society around them. This is explained further in *The 'Added Value' of Angling Intervention Programmes*.

It is worth noting that while very few respondents ticked 'being on my own' for motivation or what they would miss most, young people often mentioned 'getting away' during bankside interviews. One survey respondent described his motivation as: "To be outside and away from my brothers." (Male 12).

<sup>6</sup> For motivations, 4 out of 30 'other' responses, and for 'miss most?' 5 of the 13 'other' responses related to 'the fish', most commonly holding the fish.

The implication is that while young people might be motivated by getting away and the chance for peace, it does not mean they enjoy being on their own and are adverse to socialising or meeting new people. The following sections will highlight this by exploring the wellbeing benefits young people derive from angling in more detail.

### 3. The wellbeing benefits of angling

Securing child wellbeing is important for all societies, but is particularly pressing for the UK given it was ranked lowest in UNICEF's 2007 report on young people's wellbeing across 21 of the richest nations<sup>7</sup>. Wellbeing remains an important part of government agendas, and all services working with young people are expected to work towards securing the wellbeing of their participants.

Wellbeing is a complex process that seeks to acknowledge that living a 'good life' means more than just meeting basic needs. In relation to young people this can mean improving domains that impact on child wellbeing, such as having a sense of belonging, close friends, self-esteem, and opportunities to develop and engage in positive, rewarding activities.

In relation to wellbeing theory, a distinction is often made between future and present orientated practices<sup>8</sup>. Future orientated practices (often referred to as well-becoming) focus on assisting young people to develop the skills, confidence and resilience needed to live happy healthy lives in the future. They include a concern with gaining qualifications and skills for employment, and tend towards seeing young people as 'adults in the making'.

In contrast present orientated wellbeing turns our attention to young people's lived experiences in the 'here and now', orientating us to balance a concern for young people's futures with ensuring there is adequate support and wellbeing enriching

<sup>7</sup> UNICEF, 2007. *An Over View of Child Wellbeing in Rich Countries*. Report Card 7.

<sup>8</sup> Ben-Arieh, A, 2006 *Measuring and monitoring the wellbeing of young children around the world*. Paper commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007, *Strong Foundations: early childhood care and education*.

opportunities in the present. A present orientated approach brings to the forefront young people's subjective wellbeing experiences, asking what makes them feel better, happy, and 'well' now rather than always prioritising what is in their best interest for the future. Both wellbeing and well-becoming approaches are important.

Our Young People's Angling Survey concentrated on indicating which wellbeing domains angling has the potential to impact on. It does not set out to measure the impact or attempt to be a comprehensive review, only to illustrate key domains based on young people's experiences. We included a basic set of questions to sketch the general wellbeing of our survey respondents in order to consider angling's significance in their lives. On average the respondents were doing well.

**40.5 %** said they were only stressed on a few days in the past two weeks. However **28.1%** said they were stressed most days and a worrying **9.2 %** said every day. On the whole home was seen as a relaxing environment with only **4.6 %** saying they could not rest or relax at home in the last two weeks.

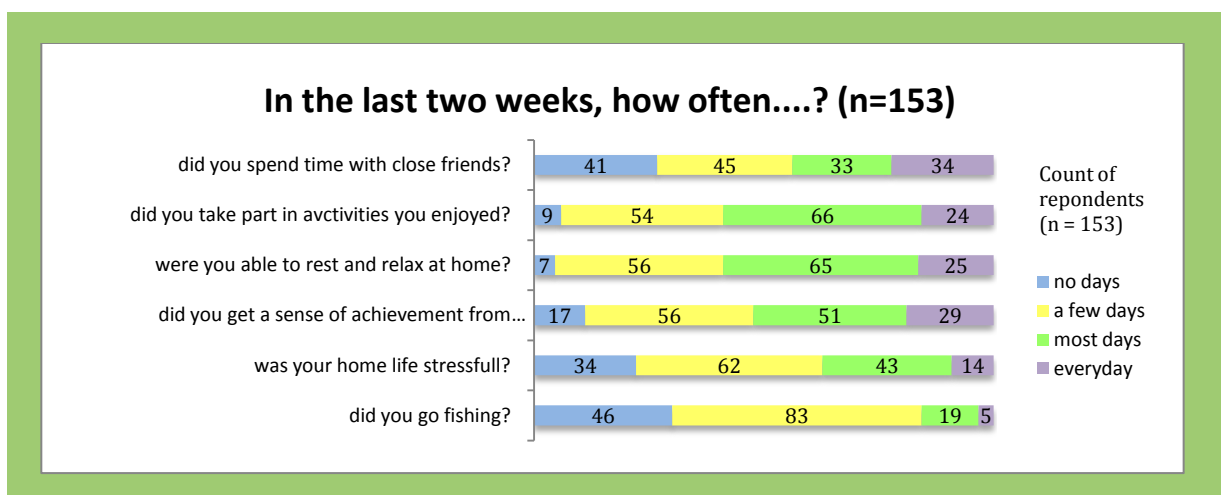
In relations to positive activities, **5.9%** said they had taken part in no enjoyable activities in the last two weeks, while **11.1%** said they had not got a sense of achievement from anything they had done for the same time period. **26.8 %** said they had not seen any close friends in the past two weeks. This number may be high given that most responses were collected during the summer holidays when

young people may not be in regular contact with school friends. However it does indicate the socially beneficial role angling clubs and events could play for more isolated young people during the holidays.

Young people are acutely aware of the worries of their parents, and many deal daily with a range of difficult life situations. Across our interviews, observations, and surveys we have found angling to have a role to play in young lives, particularly in relation to establishing and facilitating supportive social relationships, building self-esteem, providing opportunities for respite, and enabling young people to develop their own coping mechanism to deal with the ups and downs of life.

### 3.1 Coping mechanisms: De-stressing and 'getting away'

Wellbeing is a state that is in constant flux. As we encounter life's difficulties we cope as best we can until we establish equilibrium. As a result, securing wellbeing means supporting young people to build their resilience and find ways of coping with life's challenges. It is clear from our interviews and survey results that angling is part of young people's coping processes. **34.8%** (n=158) said '*being peaceful, calm and less stressed*' was a key motivator for angling participation, hinting at the proactive way young people use angling to manage the stresses that occur in their lives. Another **76.4%** agreed or strongly agreed with the statement '*Fishing makes me feel better when I am upset or stressed*'.



The effectiveness of angling as part of young people's strategy to maintain positive mental health and wellbeing is illustrated best by young people who talk about using fishing 'to get away'.

*"I do it to get away from if anything's happening. It's like stuff bad happening, I can just come down here, I can escape from everything and it's my space to chill out in, relax and do what you want."* (Male 15)

*"I normally go when my mum's all stressing and everything, to get away from the stress."* (Male 15)

*"[It's] just like being away from everyone, you're just at a lake, nice and quiet. You can just relax...that's what I love, just being a round loads of fields, not hearing sirens all the time"* (Male 18, London)

*"I just come out and relax and get away from people...It gives you time to think really don't it"* (Male 17)

*"I do it to get away...when I want to be by myself, it's places like this. It's nice you know, be in the fresh air, sit down with a flask and a couple of sandwiches and it's nice...Mum's got a baby, she's 7 months now. It don't bother me nowt, I love her, but I like to get away sometimes, just have a bit of 'me time' basically...My mum kicked her boyfriend out the other week, because he was treating her like dirt..."* (Male 15)



*"I love fishing. You know when you're at home and you're angry and that, you know when you're really annoyed with someone, you come down set up a rod, chuck it in, bring you're radio out, your snack, you're sorted right, just chill out."* (Male 18)

Providing young people with greater opportunities to go fishing will without a doubt give them the means to find ways of coping with stressful occasions in their life. By allowing them to grab moments of respite fishing has a direct impact on young anglers' ability to proactively maintain their own wellbeing.

### 3. 2. Establishing positive social relationships

Social relationships are extremely important to living happy, healthy lives. Childline has seen the numbers of children counseled for loneliness tittle over the last five years, particularly amongst boys<sup>9</sup>. A recent study by the Princes Trust also found that more than 1 in 5 young people aged 16-24 felt isolated most of the time<sup>10</sup>.

Participation in angling offers countless opportunities to interact with community members across an extremely varied range of ages. *'Have you caught anything?'* serves as a greeting and conversation starter that both adults and young people seem willing to actively engage in. In this respect fishing becomes the bridge that allows adults and young people to forge a relationship. The sharing of tips and tricks creates further opportunities to cement this.

<sup>9</sup> From April 2008 to March 2009, Childline received 5525 calls where loneliness and isolation was the main problem. This number rises to 9924, when loneliness is mentioned in addition to other problem. Hutchison, D. and Woods, R. (2010) *ChildLine case notes: Children talking to ChildLine about loneliness*. London: NSPCC.

<sup>10</sup> Prince's Trust 2010 study of 2226 young people, between the ages of 16-14. [http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about\\_the\\_trust/what\\_we\\_do/make\\_a\\_change\\_week/one\\_in\\_three.aspx](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk/about_the_trust/what_we_do/make_a_change_week/one_in_three.aspx)



### Field notes: Belonging to a community

On a cold February morning, while fishing the Sunderland estuary with GHOF and two young people, a man in his late 50's/early 60's cycled past and came over to speak with us. He asked us if we'd been catching. The conversation soon turned to local gossip about the local fishermen they knew, who had been catching what, and which baits had been successful. The young people with me were quickly absorbed into the conversation, contributing their own commentaries about the local people they knew.

The man was not their relative or a neighbour, just a fellow fisherman. I asked the lads how they knew so many local people. 'Pete' (17) explains that last summer he'd spent three consecutive nights fishing on the pier...

*"When I stayed the three days I was with my friends, but you meet people on the pier. When I stayed those three days I met load of people...that guy we just met. I met him on the pier...I didn't really know anybody on Rocka pier but who I was going with...[but] now people just say hello, you know what I mean. It's mint man."*

Across all the angling disciplines young people are being introduced to a 'community of practice'<sup>11</sup> with its own rules and norms of behaviour. This type of socialisation can help spark the process of reintegration into community life and the development of a sense of belonging important to wellbeing. Organisations such as Get Hooked On Fishing who work with socially marginalised young people, instrumentalise this feature of angling participation to draw young people back into society, but it is something all young people have the potential to benefit from.

In our survey **65.1%** (n=149) of young people agreed or strongly agreed with the statement **"Through fishing I have met people I can share my problems with and ask for advice"**. Such relationships have the potential to develop into

important safety nets, particularly for young people who for whatever reason may not be able to get similar support at home.

Another **63.8%** (n=149) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement **"Through fishing I have met friends I feel close to"**. The establishment of close friendships is not only important for wellbeing, countering feeling of loneliness and isolation, but also for directing young people away from negative peer influences<sup>12</sup>. What is unique to angling is that these friendships and supportive network cross generational boundaries.

### Intergenerational friendships

**'Dean':** *You're mixing with older people, so you start to have more respect for them, where as when you're just walking round the streets, you're walking around in your own group, you're not mixing with different age groups and different people...You see all my friends I used to knock around with, it's a good job I don't knock about with them now. One's ok but the rest of them are in trouble all the time, always getting arrested.*

**Interviewer:** So I guess you've got a whole new bunch of mates now?

**'Dean':** *Yeah like different ages. Like I've got Mick and Kipper, and they're in their 40s, but I'm friends with people who are like, 13, 12 yr olds, where as if I'd went to one of my mates of old, oh I'm going to see my friend and he's 13, they'd just laugh. (Peer mentor with GHOF since he was 13, now 20)*

<sup>11</sup> See Lave, J and Wenger, E for further description of 'communities of practice' and 'situated learning'. 1991. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. New York, Cambridge University Press.

<sup>12</sup> Our interviews with young people on angling intervention schemes highlight this in particular. For more details see Part 2 of the interim reports.



### 3.3 Spending time with family

Our survey found **78.8%** (n=170) of young people reported that someone in their family fished. On the bank side we found that most often it was a family member who had first taken the young person fishing. Amongst our survey respondents **52.6%** (n=173) said they fished most often with family, and on average more younger people (7-12yrs) rated spending time with family as 'very important'.

Family remains an important part of young people's fishing experiences and both males and females tend to talk about fishing in relation to the family members they spend time with.

#### 'Danny' Age 12, living with his mum

*Interviewer: What would you miss most if you couldn't go fishing anymore?*

*'Danny': Hanging out with my dad. I just go fishing with my dad, when my dad ask me do you want to go fishing I say yeah...I'm not allowed to go fishing whenever I want to, and I don't have a licence.*

*Interviewer: Are there places nearby to go?*

*'Danny': Well, no because my parents are split up, and I've got hardly nowhere to fish, and I have hardly no fishing stuff here. Whereas near my dad there are a couple of rivers there. My dad normally takes pictures of fishing places, and one day he took a picture of this pond, black diamond pond, the first time I went there I was ten and I caught a couple of little fish. I'd like to go there more often.*

It is often assumed that young people enjoy angling because it is a 'male' activity, something primal or masculine. However careful listening to what young people say reveals that young people are keen to participate not because the sport is for men, but because it brings them closer to male members of the family. Being interested in fishing gives young people the opportunity to talk about, bond and engage with uncles, grandfathers and dads through a shared interest. In some cases these are family members that they have had a hard time trying to establish a relationship with in the past. As one teacher described it:

*"I think it helps link them with distant fathers and grandparents. Lot of them don't have dad's at home, so when we take a few of them out when they come back they say, "my dad he used to go fishing, I'm going to go fishing with my dad", or "I'm going to go fishing with my granddad", where they haven't done that before. So they're out making better links, forging better links with distant parents. I think it's great in that respect" (Tony, vocational tutor working with disaffected young people)*

#### Reconnecting a family

'Ethan' (16) has severe ADHD. He was excluded from primary school several times, and his uncontrollable behaviour had put a severe strain on his relationships with his father (his principal carer) and extended family. However, when he started working with Get Hooked On Fishing in secondary school, he really took to fishing and it opened up the opportunity to transform his behaviour and rebuild some of his family bonds.

*'Ethan': I bought all that gear basically. My granddad's helped me, he's given me the pole that I've got now...All my family has been into fishing, just not me or my dad. And my dad's into it now because of me.*

*Interviewer: From taking you fishing all the time?*

*'Ethan': Yeah, because, he was sitting there doing nothing. Yeah, all my family has been into fishing, my granddad and that. I haven't seen him [granddad] for ages but we are supposed to be going fishing with them soon. Just out with all the lads. They see match men as amazing at fishing, and for me to have been fishing for a year or two, and they found out I'd been fishing matches when my dad said, and they've been like what?! [wow!]. So I'm going out with them soon, just to show off basically.*

Recognising the importance of angling in establishing relationships with participating adults, as opposed to a simpler association between angling and masculinity, is important because it does not exclude women anglers or girls. Indeed it recognises that for many girls, spending time with their dads or male relatives though angling is one of the few opportunities for strengthening these relationships. For both sexes then, angling is about:

- **spending quality time with others**
- **participating in a shared interest**

While the language of masculinity is often used to describe angling, it should not be seen as the defining characteristic of participation.

### 3.4 Achievement and Self-Esteem

In an era of continuous assessment and comparison at school, it is clear that some young people struggle with their confidence and self-esteem. Talking with teachers, coordinators and young people themselves, it is apparent that low self-esteem and lack of confidence is usually an underlying part of problem behaviour or reason for referral to angling intervention schemes. Part of the solution is often finding activities that young people feel they can be good at in order to develop their self-esteem and positive self-image.

*"A lot of our young people are lacking confidence in their own abilities and they just need support really, to be shown...If you tell a young person they're bad often enough they'll start believing it. If you tell a young person they're naughty often enough they'll start believing it. If you tell a young person that they're rubbish at school often enough they'll start believing it. And sometimes when they go fishing there's not much that can go wrong and they just get such a level of pride that they've done it. To succeeded in something. I guess that's why it's so successful with the young people that we work with".* (Early Intervention Worker, Tyne and Wear)

In our survey over **79.9%** (n=149) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *"fishing is something I am good at"*. While **8.9%** (n=146) said *'being good at something'* was what they would most miss if they could not fish any more.

### 3.5 Keeping busy and having something to do.

A great advantage of fishing is that it can be an extremely cost effective way of keeping busy. Young people are happy to spend hours, often whole weekends, fishing stretches of water. When venues and provisions are affordable this can make it extremely cheap per hour of entertainment.

Fishing plays an important role in young people's diversionary activities. Young people point out that there is always something new to learn, new stretches of water, new techniques and challenges to keep them occupied. They also appreciated that angling is both an activity they can do with their friends, but also when they were bored and on their own as these two quotes illustrate.

*"There was nowt to do on a weekend. I used to play cricket but that was like an hour if you're lucky on a Sunday morning, apart from that there's nothing else. There's swings and playgrounds but you get to a certain age when they're no good...Fishing is one of those things that you can do when you want. If you've got bored you can go out for a couple of hours. It's much better than walking around which is what I used to do, walk up and down the street, and there's only one street! So fishing was my things.* (GHOF peer mentor, 19)

*"By the time I was really starting into fishing I was hanging around with the wrong sort of people, and fishing kept me occupied. I started fishing when I was 8 but I didn't really get into it until I was 12 or 13. I had two choices, it was either fishing or go out and start taking drugs, and yeah, I chose fishing. I think it's good to offer angling to young people. It gives them options. If they haven't experiences it before, it gives them another path. At the end of the day it's a personal choice but if you open this up to someone and show them, they might just choose it.* (GHOF peer mentor, 18)

With **13.9%** (n=165) of our survey respondents claiming not to participate in any other forms of recreational activity, angling clearly plays an important role in keeping young people occupied and constructively engaged. Amongst our survey respondents **8.9%** (n=146) said that *'having something to do'* was what they would miss most if they could no longer fish.



### 3.6 Fun and enjoyment

Having opportunities for fun and enjoyment is an essential part of wellbeing. In our survey **5.9%** of young people said they had not taken part in activities they had enjoyed in the past two weeks even though the majority of responses were during the summer holidays.

It's easy to forget, in justifying the benefits of positive activities, that having 'fun' is an important part of young people's lives that can be neglected. Providing fishing opportunities is about providing not only social support, self-esteem and opportunities for learning but also an opportunity to have fun and enjoy one's self. **96.6%** of young people agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "*fishing is a fun activity that I enjoy*". The following quote sums up just how special the fishing experience can be for a young person.

*"I first went fishing when I was about 10 years old. From the first time the float slipped under I have been addicted. Most of my friends play football, but give me time by the lakeside any day. There you can have time to be alone and be close to nature...I have had some amazing moments in just these 5 years of fishing. I have seen a heron dive in and catch fish only metres away from me, I have had a minnow that managed to get hooked despite that fact that my bait was a whole earthworm...I've seen huge carp warming themselves in shallow water that was inches deep and I've even caught a fish even when the bait had come off my hook..It has taught me patience, understanding and many other important lessons...It has given me the opportunity to experience an evening beside a lake in summer, to watch the sun set and to feel like the day could not have been better spent any other way". (Male 15, web site submission.)*



#### 4. Recognising the benefits of angling participation: Interim findings

Securing young people's wellbeing is about assisting in the development of a supportive environment that will allow young people to thrive. While it is difficult to change many of the structural factors that impact negatively on young people's lives, angling has a clear role to play in supporting young people's own ability to proactively cope with life's challenges.

Listening to young people's voices it is clear that angling forms an important part of how they deal with stressful situations, seek moments of peace and take time out to relax and enjoy themselves. In addition, angling can be a means to strengthen familial bonds, develop young people's confidence and self-esteem, and facilitate supportive young people/adult relationships within the local community. This last point is extremely important given the way groups of young people are often represented negatively, feared and ostracised from community centres.

What makes angling particularly relevant is that it is a remarkably inclusive activity. This makes it a useful tool for improving young people's wellbeing across the socio-economic divide. In recognising the wellbeing benefit of angling participation, it is important that steps are now taken to further secure young people's ability to participate. This means ensuring provisions are delivered in a way that maximise the benefits for all young people, including those that may be hardest to reach.

Part 2 of this interim report, *Maximising the Benefits of Angling Participation* highlights the barriers to participation identified by young people themselves and suggest how their experiences can be improved.

The Young Person's Angling Survey remains open until Sept 2011. Young people wishing to take part in the survey should visit:

<http://www.anglingresearch.org.uk/youngpeoplespage>

Interim results of the Young Person's Survey, with interactive access, will be available on our Angling Research Resources website early 2011

([www.resources.anglingresearch.org.uk](http://www.resources.anglingresearch.org.uk)).

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