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2019 programmes

Wilderness Therapy Trail Programme: Information for parents

Learn from the past – challenge the present – improve the future

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Overview

What We Do

- Therapy (by proper, qualified, registered professionals)
- Experiential learning (through outdoor and adventure activity)
- Community living (shared tasks, meals and space)
- Time outdoors (base-camp living and multi-day expeditions)
- Intensive, immersive, challenging

What We Don't Do

- Boot/brat camp
- Holidays or respite breaks
- Psychiatric services (or a replacement for community services)
- Substance dependence detox*
- Crisis intervention
- Alternative to curriculum
- Physical control or restraint

* If your child needs a medical detoxification from drugs or alcohol, for their safety and wellbeing, this will need to be completed prior to their enrolment and embarkation on our programme. If you need advice on whether this is necessary, seek medical advice from your GP, or call us to discuss.

Our Mission

“To improve wellbeing through connective outdoor experiences”

Our Core Principles

- Support a greater depth of understanding of the self and the situation
- Empower maturation and transition into healthy adolescence and beyond
- Consider constructive alternatives to destructive expressions
- Provide space for reflection and recalibration
- Focus on the strengths and assets of character
- Believe in the potential for change

Who We Are

Venture Mòr is a social enterprise, owned and operated by [Venture Trust](#). Venture Trust has over 20 years pedigree in delivering some of the most innovative and collaborative programmes of community and youth justice and personal development for marginalised and vulnerable groups in Scotland. Personal Development programmes in the wilderness are our niche and Venture Mòr is a natural extension of these expertise. With an impeccable safety record and the recognition of repeat funders including Scottish Government, Big Lottery, Comic Relief and Inspiring Scotland, we hope that Venture Mòr will be able to make some important contributions to the diversification and sustainability of this work.

What is it?

There are various forms of therapy that people can engage in. Ours is offered mostly outdoors and forms an integral thread woven within an **extended, intensive, immersive residential experience** over a period of multiple weeks. During that time participants will embark on **reflective, therapeutic tasks** alongside several **expedition phases** through the **inspiring Scottish landscape**. Working through themes of attachment, resilience, challenge, transitions, independence and loss, participants will have the space and time to tend to their own psychological struggles, grow in self-awareness and develop effective strategies to cope better that can be transferred home. If you would be interested in reading some general information about the approach, you could read [this](#) (International Adventure Therapy website). **Our programme and approach is unique within the UK** and, as you will read, this model of treatment has decades of success in other parts of the world, in particular the USA, and is growing.

Our focus is on the therapeutic task. We don't do activities for reward, or for no reason. The activities we undertake are **essential, experiential opportunities for challenge and subsequent reflection**. We might hike to camp up on mountain ridges and high peaks; we might canoe down river rapids and across expansive lochs flowing out to a coastal beach; we might slow the pace in a woodland and sleep in hammocks around a campfire to focus differently during our time outside. Whatever form it takes, the trail will be led by our team of outdoor guides and facilitators who have **unrivalled experience** delivering developmental and therapeutic programmes in the most remote and wild parts of Scotland. A **qualified and professionally registered therapist** will be dedicated to each group to deliver group and one-to-one therapy sessions during the programme.

Activities

As mentioned above, the kinds of activities that the group *may* undertake during their programme include, but are not limited to, nor are they guaranteed:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hill walking • Wild camping • Canoeing • Indoor rock climbing • Outdoor rock climbing and scrambling • Arts & creative tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solo camping • Fire lighting • Bush-craft & wood carving • Canoe sailing • Gorge scrambling (summer) • Sea swimming
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Who Might Benefit?

We strongly believe it is imperative for the success of this programme that the young person has **recognised a need for change** and made a **commitment** to this by making the **choice** to attend. There is no legal mandate in place to keep a child against their wishes and so it is their absolute right to choose to leave at any point where it is practical and possible to do so.

The experience is two weeks long and will be open to young people aged 14-18 years old who are experiencing emotional challenges. These might be expressed through destructive, 'anti-social' behaviour, or equally through introversion and reclusion. This may have begun to affect education or future employment prospects. It is likely to be **significantly affecting relationships**. People will be

concerned for their wellbeing. It may be particularly effective for people who have tried traditional therapeutic or statutory support (counselling; psychotherapy; CBT; GP; CAMHS etc.) but have not been able to make the changes they were hoping for.

We see this programme as being an **extension of and complimentary to** any other kind of emotional support or therapeutic work that your child may already have engaged with. If they have not had any other input to-date, then this is a great starting point to **build the foundations** from which to make the most of treatment during our programme and beyond. We believe this will also be effective for young people who are **struggling to engage in other forms of therapy**, but who realise that **all is not well in their world** and want some support to get beyond their current difficulties. We find that people who are 'sent' on our programmes and see their time with us as a punishment will engage less well and enjoy a lower level of improvement.

It is absolutely essential that any participant attending the programme is told **the truth** and given as much information as is helpful about why you think it would be beneficial for them to attend the programme. So ask yourself – **"what are my motivations?"** We can help to mediate this process if required. Deception and deceit only create further barriers to overcome and delays our work with the most important material. We require to have at least one consultation either by phone or Skype with the proposed participant prior to their arriving. During this they can give us an account of themselves and get a sense of who we are and what they might gain from attending. Even the smallest amount of **agreement and commitment** from the participant is what we need to progress.

Outcomes

We know the financial investment is not a small one, so we do everything we can to make sure you feel really comfortable that **what we offer is exceptional value**. One way to improve this likelihood is if your child has been a part of the process of considering the programme, making decisions around whether it is right for them and accepting that your motivations are with their care and support firmly at the centre. If a child feels that they are being "sent away" or "got rid of", this is an **unhelpful place to start therapy**. No matter how relieved you may be to know that they will be **safe and cared for** with a team of caring professionals; no matter how much you feel you need respite from the chaos of their behaviour, remember that **they are your child** and you want them to get better. Everything you can do to **model honesty, consistency, humility and empathy** will form firm foundations for their return.

Reasons for the presenting behavioural patterns may be known, or suspected (e.g. marital separation; bereavement; academic pressure/anxiety; bullying etc.), or **there may be no clear cause**. It should be understood that the benefits and outcomes of therapy are **highly individual** and so to make claims here might encourage expectations of a 'standardised effect'. This will not be the case. Improvements from such programmes are well documented and if you would like to read a thorough academic article on it, please read [this](#) (Russell 2003).

Results in Russel's study showed reductions across all sub scores contained in the chosen clinical assessment measure (the Youth Outcomes Questionnaire, or YOQ). These subscales include content areas designed to assess symptoms associated with:

- **Interpersonal Distress** - Anxiety, depression, fearfulness, etc.
- **Somatic** - Headache, stomach, bowel, dizziness, etc.
- **Interpersonal Relationships** - Attitude, communication and interaction with parents, adults, and peers.
- **Critical Items** – Paranoid or suicide ideation, hallucinations, delusions, etc.
- **Social Problems** - Aggressive or antisocial behaviours, breaking social norms.
- **Behavioural Dysfunction** - Organize and complete tasks, handle frustration, impulsivity, inattention

It further outlines that on intake 100% of participants report being significantly above the 'normal' range of functioning and at discharge 85% report significant improvements and 46% of participants now fall into the 'normal' range overall. This was shown to sustain and in many cases improve at a 12 month follow up.

This approach to therapy is proven to be effective by Russell and others for a number of reasons. These can be primarily distilled into three factors, outlined in more detail in the article but in brief:

a) The promotion of **self-efficacy** through task accomplishment facilitated by natural consequences in wilderness living (Hans, 2000)

b) A **restructuring of the therapist-client relationship** (a more balanced power dynamic) (Russell, 2001)

c) And the promotion of **group cohesion** and development through group and outdoor living (Bandoroff & Scherer, 1994; Davis Berman & Berman, 1994; Russell, 2001).

Furthermore, due to its **clinical robustness and efficacy** as a method of monitoring participants' journeys towards improved wellbeing, we have chosen to engage the YOQ as our chosen form of clinical reporting. We will be working closely with the development team to ensure it remains the best fit for our needs to **support our participants** during our programme and beyond. We will normally ask participants to complete the YOQ questionnaire prior to arrival, at the end of each phase of our programme and at three, six and twelve month intervals post discharge. These **post course updates are so important** to us being able to report on our longer-term impact which helps us to improve the service and programme to make it **even better for all our participants**.

What to expect

You can expect the utmost in **professionalism and care** from the outset. Our enrolment and assessment process aims to guide you every step of the way. We know that making a decision like this is ultimately with the best interests of the child and the wider family at heart. So we always bear in mind the emotional challenges that the parents and families of the child being enrolled have endured. It's not an easy decision and you need to feel that this is **the right course of action** to move beyond the current situation. We will support you in that.

What We Provide

We provide a programme of engagement for participant's that will **challenge** them, but keep them **safe**. We know how to look after people's **emotional and physical safety** in these **remote, tough environments**, so you can rest assured they are receiving the best possible care. The living is basic. It's

not Five Star luxury, but they will learn how to look after themselves here. We will send you a kit-list of everything they need to bring to keep them **comfortable** and anything you don't have access to, we can organise for hire (details on schedule of cost).

All food and accommodation is included in the cost of the programme. This includes a mix of youth hostel/bunk house, base-camp and wild camping. Food will be a mix of fresh, healthy shared meals whilst at base, and individually prepared food cooked over a camp stove whilst on expedition. The **work we undertake is exhausting** (it's no holiday!), so keeping well fuelled and hydrated is essential and we take it very seriously. All travel within the programme is accounted for from the agreed start and finish point of the programme. It is the primary carer's responsibility to ensure the participant is brought to and picked up from this pre-arranged location. It will be within easy reach of a train station and/or airport near our base in Scotland (usually Stirling: [FK9 5QD](#)).

What if a Participant Wants to Leave Early?

We cannot and will not detain participants on the programme against their will. If there is a categorical request to leave the programme we will do everything practicable to facilitate this within a reasonable time-scale. In this instance, there must at all times be a **responsible adult** available to receive the participant back at a pre-arranged return location i.e. a train station local to your home. If an individual's conduct puts their own safety or that of others at risk, we reserve the right to remove them from the programme in order to **maintain the integrity** of the programme for other participants. In this instance there will be a no refund policy. We recognise that many participants attending may have difficulties adhering to boundaries or desire to actively break or test them. We always aim to work **with** any behaviour unless it contravenes these specific conditions of attendance.

Our conditions of attendance that we will not accept compromise on are as follows:

- No drugs or alcohol
- No threatening or violent behaviour (to staff or other participants)
- No theft
- No exclusive or sexual relationships

We reserve the right to refuse enrolment to anyone that may, by inviting them, jeopardise their own safety or that of any other group member. In these cases we will take time to assess very carefully the risk associated with that person's ability to participate fully. If necessary, **we will seek advice** from our team of specialist advisors. The types of condition that might effect a participant's ability to stay safe and participate effectively include, but are not limited to:

Current and active eating disorders or other self-harm; specific personality disorders; uncontrollable psychosis or mania; disabilities affecting cognitive functioning; significant physical disability; schedule one offenders and those convicted of a sexual offence.

NB. We are **fully committed to INclusion** and making our programmes accessible to as many individuals in need as possible. There are however certain practical realities about the programme content that make this prohibitive for people with certain needs.

What are the “Conditions of Attendance”?

We know that people who arrive on our programme are there because some of the behaviours they present can be challenging for those who encounter them. We are **committed to working with anyone** we believe can benefit from the programme (please see ['who might benefit'](#)). There are specific, and relatively rare, circumstances in which we are unable to continue engaging with a participant's behaviour. These are when the immediate **safety** of that individual or that of others is at risk of being significantly compromised. **We take emotional safety just as seriously as physical safety**, as you might expect from a programme of this nature. As outlined in the previous section, the elements that are non-negotiable are:

- No drugs or alcohol – **Be your whole self the whole time**
- No threatening or violent behaviour (to staff or other participants) – **Everyone has the right to feel safe, including you**
- No theft – **Trust is a starting point for all other work**
- No exclusive or sexual relationships – **Focus on yourself and share yourself equally**

We believe that within this is enough flexibility to work with most of the challenges that we see regularly. The way we work with behaviour is on a ‘traffic light’ **support plan** system. If someone is expressing themselves in a way that comes close to the boundaries of the conditions, we will implement **support at an appropriate level**. The plan will be made in collaboration with the individual and will include co-constructed goals, and strategies to work towards the goals. Once goals have been achieved, the support plan is de-escalated or removed. Or, if opportunities are missed, it may escalate. If a participant finds themselves on a red support plan, this will trigger a one-to-one meeting with the therapist. If things have not improved within an agreed period then we will consider the participant's ability to engage with the programme as being in jeopardy. We will then contact the primary carer to inform them of the situation and our intentions going forward.

As a **last resort**, if we have no choice but to end a child's involvement in the programme, it will be the responsibility of the primary carer to make themselves available to pick the child up from a pre-agreed location. This will usually be a train station close to your home. We will buy the child a one way ticket to this location and ensure they have all the information they need to **make the journey safely**. If you wish to make separate arrangements, this can be accommodated on a case by case basis, but as per our T's&C's, once they have been discharged from our care responsibility reverts to the primary carer.

Regardless of whether a participant completes the programme or their time comes to an end prematurely, we aim to provide **comprehensive aftercare and post-course support** to ensure the **sustainability** of the development that occurs. There is often a great deal of learning and reflection that goes on if someone leaves early, so this outcome can still provide some **high value learning**.

Ethics & confidentiality

Clinical Confidentiality

Therapeutic processes are **highly personal and sensitive**. We are fully committed to ensuring confidentiality of client material and personal, identifiable client information at all times. The **exception** to this, where the **assurance of confidentiality cannot be given**, is in the case of allegations or the receipt of information which indicates or could “reasonably and in good faith” raise suspicion that child abuse or neglect has taken or is taking place, or that a child is at risk of abuse or neglect. **The safeguarding of children is the responsibility of everyone.** Passing this information on is not considered to be in breach of confidentiality and should be considered a moral and arguably legal obligation. Venture Mòr child protection policies and procedures will be used to inform staff actions and are available for your information upon request.

Physical Intervention

There is no situation where we see it as justifiable to plan to use restraint. In the decades of our operation in the charity sector, there have been a tiny proportion of incidents that have become physical. Staff using restraint during these incidents would not have made the situation better in almost any case. In the highly unlikely event that physical intervention is required, we reserve the right to exercise reasonable and measured physical exertion to ensure the safety of all participants and staff members. We will only intervene in this way as an **absolute last resort** if a participant cannot or will not comply with agreements made about general conduct on a programme. We **implement positive behaviour management**, de-escalation strategies and take the advice and guidelines of expert agencies including the Department for Education.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation takes place at the start (baseline), during and after the programme. This is intended to ensure we are doing the best job we can possibly do. It helps us to see that our **participants do make positive changes** and helps inform prospective participants of what they can hope for after they have engaged with the programme. In enrolling on the programme, you should be aware that we will use this (anonymised) data to publicly promote our work. Neither participants nor their family’s personal details will ever be identifiable within any of our publicly available literature. **We take your privacy very seriously.** No information of any kind will ever be shared with third parties without your express and explicit permission (this may include therapist introductions, contact with other professionals or school or any other service relevant to a participant’s enrolment or aftercare). No information of any kind will ever be sold to third parties.

What Happens After the Programme?

If you are sending a child away in the hope of them returning “fixed”, then you are likely to be disappointed. We think of what we offer as a crossroads on a path. **Family is a complicated part of any journey.** Family can be a hard place to exist, particularly when there is emotional unrest. But there is little point in an individual engaging in a change process without the **engagement and support** of people that they are closest to and that they will go back to. Families are like ecosystems; the components within them exist in a certain way only because of the others. When you remove one of the elements, things inevitably have **space to shift**. When the part that was removed is returned, how will the other elements **accommodate that part and the changes that it brings?** You and your family will need to reflect on the best ways to support the child who is attending the programme, not only before they attend, but whilst they are away and most crucially, once they return.

We plant seeds. It might take some time for a participant to really understand the meaning of some of the learning they do whilst on the programme. **Realisations, processing, dreaming, accepting, understanding** are all processes with no discernible beginning and ending. You should expect to continue to engage with issues that arise. Emotions still exist, people still affect other people and there may be honesty that the child wishes to share **that may be hard to hear**. For example: how they feel about their relationship with you; they may have felt hurt by you; how they wished things had been; their perceptions of their needs being undervalued or overlooked; communicating feelings of anger or betrayal at having been ‘sent away’.

One of the fundamental strategies that we believe helps to balance significant emotional responses is to **speak openly** about them. Without blame or judgement or intending to wound. Just honest. **We would always recommend that you seek and attend your own therapy**, and we can provide contacts for reputable practitioner networks that we are aware of in various locations, or ways to find them if we have no direct links. A good place to start is the [BACP](#) or [UKCP](#).

Consider carefully how you will respond to your child’s difference. Consider too, that **they may not be ready to show you their difference immediately**. They may look for signs of change in you and the wider family too. **There is no rulebook**, there is no way to predict individual reactions. But in short, the more work you do as a family, the better the outcome will be for every individual within it.

Aftercare

As a part of our commitment to ongoing support towards a smooth transition homeward, at the end of the programme we offer each participant three further therapy sessions to help them continue to make sense of their experience back in the home environment. These sessions will normally take place by phone or video-call and will ideally take place weekly within the first few weeks of return and will normally last 1hr. We will be as flexible as possible to schedule them in at times that suit you and the situation.

Furthermore, it has been recognised that for some participants, it is appropriate that we recommend ongoing weekly therapy. In this instance, it may be the case that the bond they have built with the therapist on-programme is such that it would be beneficial for them to continue that ongoing work with the same therapist. Where caseload allows, we will always try and facilitate this ongoing relationship

from our end, providing it is felt by the participant and their family to be the right course of action. Details of cost are outlined [here](#) and is in-line with market rate. If the participant or family feel it would be best for ongoing therapy to be carried out face-to-face/by a therapist previously know, then of course we will facilitate a handover there if requested. After the participant has returned to the family and engaged in the three aftercare sessions, if it is felt that they will not require further sessions, they will be 'discharged' from our caseload.

Reports

On request, we can provide a full report of progress on a participant's time with us. These can be used as evidence of efforts and investment in moving towards positive behaviour change. They can be presented to schools, colleges, potential employers, Children's Panel or Youth Justice Workers or any other professional who may have interest in the child's involvement in the programme. These will be authored sensitively, with care given to respect the confidentiality of the therapeutic relationship. It will include the YOQ scores and brief analysis at start, mid and end points of the programme which gives insight into clinically measurable improvements made. The report may not be felt to be needed by all families and there is no obligation to commission one. As such there is a small charge outlined [here](#).

Who Are Our Staff?

With a maximum group size of eight, our staff team is made up of **four consistent workers**. At least three of these will be **skilled and experienced outdoor facilitators**. The other will be a **professionally qualified, registered therapist**. This gives a consistent maximum ratio of 2:1 for the entire duration of the programme. This ensures individuals have plenty of time available to explore their individual journey with the support of staff. We do not have multiple shifts and we do not have anyone working 'part time' on our programmes. The staff are as committed to the journey as the participants. There may, on occasion, be other workers who provide logistical and transportation support, or trainee therapists on placement who are supervised by senior staff members and will always be supernumerary. We will inform you if we are planning to have a trainee involved on a programme you are planning to book. All of our Field Guides are completely comfortable with the therapeutic process and many have additional training in counselling skills or foundational trainings in a variety of therapeutic approaches. Our staff are hand-picked to meet a strict set of standards that we adhere to including operational procedures relating to adventurous activity. This enables us to uphold our licence to operate with the Adventure Activities Licencing Scheme, a part of the Health & Safety Executive ([Licence No. 12700](#) NB. This licence is shared with Venture Trust operations and covers all activity carried out as Venture Mòr).

Guide – Defined:

An Individual who is appropriately qualified in a range of outdoor activity provision with considerable experience facilitating a range of groups, particularly young people. They undertake regular, ongoing outdoor emergency first aid training suitable to satisfy all prerequisite requirements of other qualifications. They will usually hold a minimum of any three of the following: Summer and/or Winter Mountain Leader Award; Single Pitch Award (Rock climbing instructor); Mountain Instructor Award; UKCC Level 2 paddle sports coach; UKCC 4 Star Leader in open canoe or sea kayak and Mountain Bike Leader Award. As an outdoor learning professional, it is likely they will also hold or be working towards Institute

of Outdoor Learning ([IOL](#)) accreditation. Many also hold postgraduate qualifications in related subjects. E.G: Outdoor Learning; environmental and ecological studies; natural history; Geology; PGCE etc.

Therapist – Defined:

An individual who has undertaken an appropriate academic training qualification (most are taught at Postgraduate level and take approximately 4 years study) after which they have become eligible to join a recognised professional governing body e.g. BACP; UKCP; UKATA; BPS; BAAT (or international equivalent)*. They will be listed on an [HCPC/PSA](#) register and will hold membership to said body and be committed to upholding their ethical framework which can be found on the relevant website. They will be held accountable to this organisation under their professional conduct process i.e. a board that can revoke registration, certification, accreditation, or licensure for ethical or scope of practice violations relating to mental health practice.

*the modality of the therapy offered will depend on the orientation of the training the therapist on the programme has undertaken. This could be: Psychodynamic; Person Centred; Transactional Analysis; Art Therapy; Cognitive Behavioural; Integrative or others. It is not possible to guarantee which therapies will be offered on specific programmes.

Schedule of Cost

Programme cost – includes all food, accommodation, transport and full programme of therapeutic and adventure activities: £3995

Kit hire (optional) – includes all kit and equipment to keep a participant safe and comfortable for the duration of the programme: £350

N.B. If you prefer to provide your own kit and equipment, we will send you a detailed kit list. If you need individual items to supplement your own (a tent or a sleeping bag), these can be hired on a piece-by-piece basis. If we consider equipment you have supplied to be unsafe or not to the standard we require, we will give the participant this equipment and invoice you accordingly.

Comprehensive post course tailored reports – for education, social work, youth justice or any other purpose you require: £200

Ongoing tele-therapy (counselling by Video call or phone) – we often recommend a commitment to a series of ongoing hourly sessions beyond the three ‘homecoming’ sessions. We recommend these be undertaken weekly. They can be booked prior to attendance on a programme or at any time after a child’s return:

Ad-hoc or single session: £85

Block of five: £375

Block of ten: £700

If you would prefer, we can invoice for any additions along with the final programme balance, due 28 days prior to the start date. Of course, we will need to be informed of any additions before this date. Any request for additional services received after the final programme balance is due will be invoiced separately and will be payable immediately.

Refund Policy

If a child is removed from the programme for breach of the conditions of attendance, there is a no refund policy, regardless of when this occurs.

If a child makes a decision that they no longer wish to engage with the programme, we cannot and will not keep them against their will. We will do everything we can to facilitate their continued engagement with the course. If there is an enduring concern or overt request that the child is considering not completing, we will make contact with parents as soon as humanly possible. We will always endeavour to make a decision about a participant’s early departure with the parent’s input.

In the event that it is mutually agreed that the child will return home, you will be entitled to a refund of any full weeks left to complete i.e. if the child decides to leave on day three of week two, you will be eligible for a refund of ONE week’s fees, minus a £500 admin and transportation fee.

Please check Terms and Conditions for any further detail.