



# OARSOME CHANCE

Enabling young people to

**‘FEEL SAFE  
BELONG AND  
ACHIEVE’**

OARSOME CHANCE

# WELLBEING PROGRAMME

Three year update, Aug 2020 – Sept 2023



## Wellbeing Programme

**Three year report:** Aug 2020 - Sept 2023

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## INTRODUCTION

### Oarsome Chance, delivery model

Our core delivery model delivers a blend of practical learning alongside physical and complimentary activities, to young people who are referred to OC's curricular programmes through our commissioning partners including SEN schools and the local authority. All our referred students are disengaged from the educational system, at risk of exclusion from school or on very short timetables - the combination of physical and practical activities in a supportive and safe environment is effective in re-engaging and reintegrating them into their community.

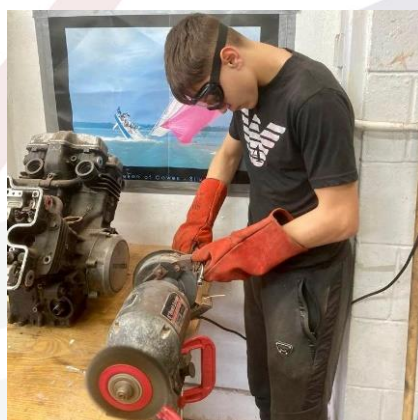
**Rich blend of activities:** Each day is divided into three sessions, with morning focus on workshop or studio learning with the afternoon session rewarded with physical activities (skateboarding, rowing or mountain biking). The breadth of activities is purposeful, to deliver a range of experiences to help young people understand their strengths and interests and identify new skills and opportunities.

### The Boathouse (Gosport) activities:

- Marine engineering and carpentry
- Art and craft
- Rowing (on-water and dry)
- External (e.g. boxing, skatepark)
- Sailing

### Apex centre (Havant) activities:

- Bike maintenance
- Mountainbiking, scooting and skateboarding
- Engineering
- Music (on-site small studio)
- Art and craft



**Outreach / family liaison** has become a key area of support - for many of the students who attend OC we are the agency of trust. We forge constructive communication with families which delivers better outcomes. Over the last three years this has been more important than ever in the results we are seeing.

## OC'S BENEFICIARIES

**Over the three years of the Wellbeing Programme to date, OC has worked directly with 98 young people, delivering over 5,500 participation days (where 1 participant day = 1 student attending for 1 day).**

These are young people who have not been regularly attending mainstream school for an extended length of time, sometimes years, due to a variety of factors but usually related to challenging or aggressive behaviour with other pupils and/or staff, prolonged non-attendance at school or complex learning difficulties, including neurodivergence - and often a combination of any, or all, of these issues.

The reasons behind young people's disengagement are revealed by the multiple risk factors in their lives: 29% with drug and/or alcohol abuse within the household; 40% have used substances themselves; 33% unemployment in the household; 27% in precarious housing; 53% have offended; 29% experienced violence in the home; 29% are care experienced. 75% of our young people have some form of neurodiversity, e.g. ADHD or Autistic Spectrum Disorder, and a third of those are presenting with more than one form of neurodivergence.

Furthermore 69% of our cohort have suffered Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) e.g. mental and physical health issues at home, loss of family members, neglect or domestic violence, with 35% having experienced 4 ACEs or more. As highlighted by the Wave Trust (Trauma Informed Schooling, 2019), 51% of children with up to 4 ACEs are likely to have learning / behaviour problems, compared to 3% for their peers who have none.

Barriers to engagement include:

- Struggles with self-regulation and recognising triggers
- Disenfranchisement causing a disconnect from peers and community
- Lack of trusting relationships, particularly with adults
- Lack of advocacy – no one fighting their corner
- Poor emotional maturity or resilience
- Lack of support to address their needs (over-stretched schools and agencies)

These multiple and complex issues, in combination with their disengagement from learning results in reduced opportunity to thrive.

The words of 16-year-old A: *"School was not for me. I struggled with managing my anger and I was getting myself into a lot of trouble. Oarsome was good for me because it taught me things that I actually use, like building and repairing boats, carpentry and music. I have made lifelong friends with the students and staff. I find it easier to work at Oarsome because there is more freedom to be myself and I don't have to work in big groups of people which suits me... I have had help from Oarsome to gain a place at college doing music."*

## WELLBEING PROGRAMME (FORMERLY 'ESP')

### Project background

The original long-term aim for the project was to ensure we not only continue to provide a 'place to belong' for our beneficiaries, but also, where mental health issues are presenting to deliver seamless interventions to ensure the best possible long-term outcomes for every individual we work with. This would be achieved by bringing in mental health expertise to evaluate our provision and implement a programme of additional activities to ensure we are providing the best outcomes for our beneficiaries with mental health issues. Any new approaches would be sensitive to our beneficiaries' vulnerabilities and

implemented in a well-resourced framework to protect young people's progress and provide support for the staff team.

Our Extended Support Programme (ESP), later titled Wellbeing Programme, has delivered against the original aims, in relation to evaluating our provision, implementing interventions to provide better outcomes for young people with mental health issues, strengthening our resource framework, while also addressing the wellbeing needs of our staff team. However, over the four years since this application was written, there have been changes to the original plan, for instance a greater focus on overall wellbeing and pastoral care as opposed to clinical interventions. These differences have been in response to the needs of our beneficiaries, but also to the unprecedented external circumstances we have navigated, not least a global pandemic. Despite these changes, we believe the overall aims of understanding how our provision best supports the vulnerable young people we work with, establishing a framework to implement that support and how to measure and evaluate the difference we are making, have all been met. Furthermore, the project has outlined how we will continue to develop and grow to best meet the mental health needs of the young people we work with into the future.

## PROJECT ACTIVITIES

### Recruiting the ESP / Wellbeing Leads:

**Melissa, ESP Lead Sept 20 – Mar 22.** Highly qualified mental health specialist, with a BA in Psychology and Sociology and BABCP accredited CB Psychotherapist. 10 years' experience as a CB therapist and over 30 years' experience of working with children, families and adults with a wide range of difficulties and traumas.

**Gemma, Wellbeing Lead July 22 – present.** Gemma has a degree in Childhood and Youth Studies and is currently working to complete her MCS in Psychology. She has a student and family support work background with an excellent grounding in the challenges faced by OC students. She has worked with high-risk young people and their families for many years and has a drive for ensuring young people share and set their own narrative.

### Summary of Wellbeing Programme activities:

#### Year 1: 2020/21

Melissa undertook face-to-face work with a broad range of students and 1:1 case work (including CBT counselling) with select students. Average number of contacts each week were: 7 x 1:1 sessions per week, 2 x group activities, 2 parental contacts, 2 external meetings, 1 agency referral.

Staff received Mental Health First Aid training in the first year, provided by Havant & East Hants MIND (delayed until April 21 in order to allow the training to be face to face rather than online).

During the covid lockdowns through 2020/21, OC remained open throughout, facilitating education bubbles. Daily testing with Lateral Flow Tests and using PPE meant that some 'normality' could be maintained. This gave students and their families a sense of structure, with additional support offered by telephone, home visits and outreach to young people at home.

Southampton City College enabled OC to engage with an Oxford Brookes research project whereby all staff were trained in a basic understanding of attachment and trauma.

#### Year 2: 2021/22

Melissa took the decision to move into a role with a more clinical focus. At this time, with Melissa's input, we took the opportunity to review the needs of our cohort and how the ESP Programme could best support them. The role had settled into co-creating support plans for each student alongside the support staff at OC. As well as liaising with families and external agencies to ensure their mental health and wellbeing needs were being met.

Melissa's replacement was consequently given the title 'Wellbeing' Lead, to reflect the change in focus, picking up on the wellbeing support strand of the ESP role, which became the priority as the work developed. We recruited Gemma to fill this post and she began working in July 2022.

### A summary of Gemma's work over 2022/23:

Gemma picked up the baton of Melissa's face to face work, with a focus on:

- Maintaining a robust ethos, and system, for wellbeing education and mental health awareness
- 1:1 check in's with students.
- Student self-awareness and self-regulation.
- Outreach work with students in schools.
- Parental engagement.
- Staff wellbeing.
- Staff training.
- Safeguarding practices.

Gemma has ensured the Wellbeing Programme work is collaborative with all agencies involved, with OC undertaking interagency referrals where necessary, working closely with CAMHS and cultivating parental support. Her activities have included:

- Supporting students in their school setting.
- Outreach work, including in external settings when not attending inhouse programmes.
- Carrying out home visits offering parenting support.
- Attended and supported at school meetings.
- Delivered regular training and facilitated regular professional reflective practice sessions.
- Changed over safeguarding systems (we are now using C-POMS).
- Developed a staff wellbeing offer.

## ALIGNING WITH OUR STRATEGIC VISION

In March 2023, OC launched its new '[Vision Strategy 2023-2026](#)', a three-year strategic plan which established the mission of helping young people Feel Safe, Belong and Achieve as its core principle.

Gemma has set about embedding the Feel Safe, Belong, Achieve mission across our programmes:

### Feel Safe

**Why?** 69% of our cohort have suffered Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) e.g. mental and physical health issues at home, loss of family members, neglect or domestic violence, with 35% having experienced 4 ACEs or more. Trauma shatters the belief that the world is safe and consequently many of our students have challenges around emotional regulation, that means their emotional wellbeing can be very temperamental and fluctuate easily and rapidly.



**How?** A delivery model that allows security, and feelings of safety, but also flexibility to adapt support to the individual student's needs.

**What?** At the start of each session, we have an informal breakfast and allow time for adjustment to their surroundings, peers, and staff. Staff can check in and engage with students, to understand the emotional capacity of that moment. For example, it is not uncommon for students to arrive heightened following arguments at home. This system gives us the space to plan accordingly, work out if they need individual work, in which case, Gemma has the flexibility to be on hand to offer support at the moment of need.

As a service, we have found that there is an amount of residual stigma for students about receiving 1-1 support and talking about emotions. Gemma has been checking in with all students at least once each term, often with an indirect approach, e.g. take them off the site or participating with them in tasks. These check-ins help her to understand their strengths and abilities, and to build a working relationship to break down barriers to them accepting emotional support. From these sessions, Gemma can ascertain if additional more regular 1-1 sessions are suitable and in what setting, e.g. outreach at a student's school to help them identify triggers in that environment.

### **Belong**

**Why?** A breakdown in their relationship with school, and often with other trusted adult relationships, results in an ingrained negative response to any form of education or intervention, and often leaves young people entrenched in a defensive cycle.

**How?** We create a sense of belonging, by supporting them with social and emotional learning and allowing them space to develop multiple key relationships with staff. Previously, putting emphasis on only one key worker has subsequently presented itself as a barrier to students, rather than helping them to move forward. Good relationships are however still a crucial factor in our offer.

**What?** We structure the day to offer enough time for students to work with and build relationships across the support team. This supports them in learning how to navigate different social relationships and means that there are more staff that they feel safe and secure with.

### **Achieve**

**Why?** When our students feel safe, and have a sense of belonging, they are more likely to be in a better frame of mind to achieve. Completion of practical projects, in the timeframe they need to complete them, provides a rare opportunity for feelings of accomplishment, and tangible evidence to the young person of their own progress.

**How?** We work to ensure students have the right conditions to feel secure and valued so that we are able to make meaningful differences to them and help them to move forward.

**What?** By providing a range of practical activities, students are afforded the opportunity to identify their strengths, and what sparks interest for them. In the last 12 months we have introduced a new curriculum based around NCFE Occupational Studies, which provides OC young people the opportunity to achieve accredited qualifications in these practical subjects such as carpentry, gardening or cooking. (NCFE are one of the largest providers of vocational qualifications in the UK).

In addition to supporting students, developing a consistent approach from staff has also been a key ethos in our strategic plan. We have been holding regular team professional reflective practice, building a more collaborative enhanced training program, and ensuring we have a comprehensive wellbeing strategy to support staff wellbeing too. Our aim is to improve staff retention levels and promote / role-model wellbeing at the core of our service. Therefore, we are striving to deliver an indirect, but holistic approach to support our students comprehensively.

## THE RATIONALE BEHIND THE OARSOME CHANCE APPROACH TO WELLBEING

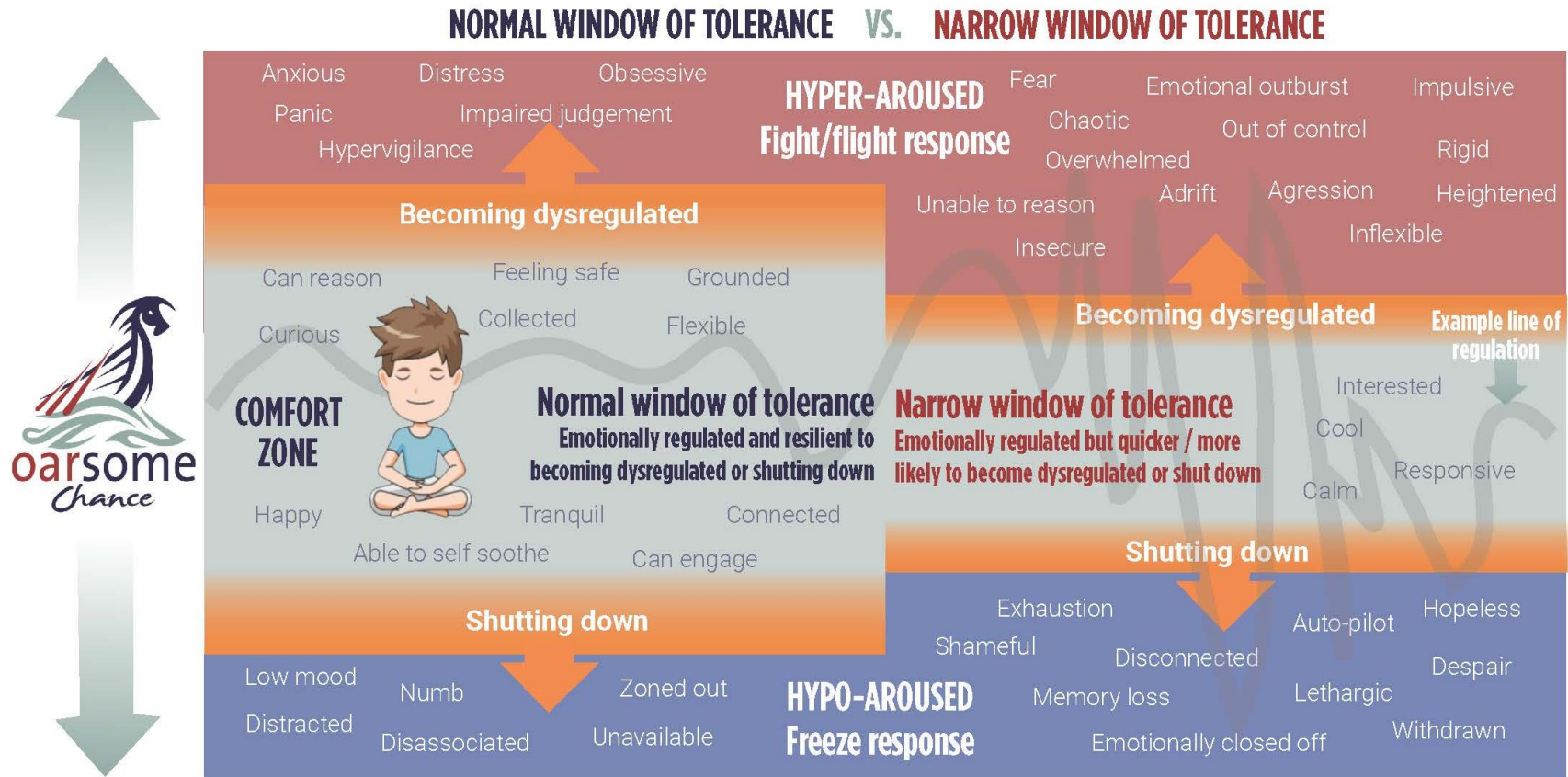
The inspiration behind 'Feel Safe, Belong and Achieve' is Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, a theory whereby human needs are arranged in the form of a hierarchy, with physiological (survival) needs at the bottom, and the more creative and intellectually oriented 'self-actualisation' needs at the top:





The work around the Wellbeing Programme has also identified that the OC approach to supporting young people results in widening their 'window of tolerance', the time and space where a young person can remain emotionally regulated. A theory adapted from Dan Siegel's Window of Tolerance theory:

# WELLBEING: Window of tolerance



Oarsome Chance aims to support individuals to widen their window of tolerance. For example, we work with flexibility to meet the individual's needs in that moment. Wherever they are in their window, be that regulated or unregulated, we aim to meet their needs accordingly

A person with a narrow window of tolerance will still be able to experience feelings of calm etc. However, it will be harder for them to remain there; they are more likely to be unstable and find it harder to return to emotional regulation.

*Adapted from Dan Siegel's Window of Tolerance theory*

## RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

### Evaluation methodology

Melissa trialled My Mind Star and SDQ methods but found neither to be suited to OC students' needs. Consequently, she began work on a bespoke outcome focussed evaluation, informed by the students, recruiting a part time undergraduate research assistant, Ellie, to support. Melissa and Ellie completed the first stage of evaluation research, by identifying nine key areas that the students identified as the most important for success at OC (in red below). In further developing the evaluation framework over the last year, our new key aim of helping young people Feel Safe, Belong and Achieve aptly integrated with the identified nine key areas:

#### Feel Safe:

- Emotional self-care, wellbeing and coping strategies
- Boundaries and self-management
- Confidence and self-worth

#### Belong:

- Staff inclusion and belonging
- Motivations and aspirations
- Relationships and social competence

#### Achieve:

- Peer leadership
- Tangible skills
- Education and skills

N.B. we found while carrying out the initial evaluation work that regular surveys with OC young people is often unworkable (distrust of 'interviews', lack of focus or will to 'sit down' with staff, giving any answer just to get it over with, etc).

### New bespoke evaluation framework: FSBA Metric

In conjunction with the staff team, we are now trialling a metric, we're calling FSBA (after Feel Safe, Belong and Achieve), which is a simple scale based on staff observations, and incorporated as a part of the daily reports staff already complete for students. The idea is a student will move from feeling safe, to belonging, to reaching a mindset where they can achieve, and staff will observe how far along that path they are at different times of the day - when they arrive, at the middle of the day, and when they leave.

#### FSBA Metric rationale:

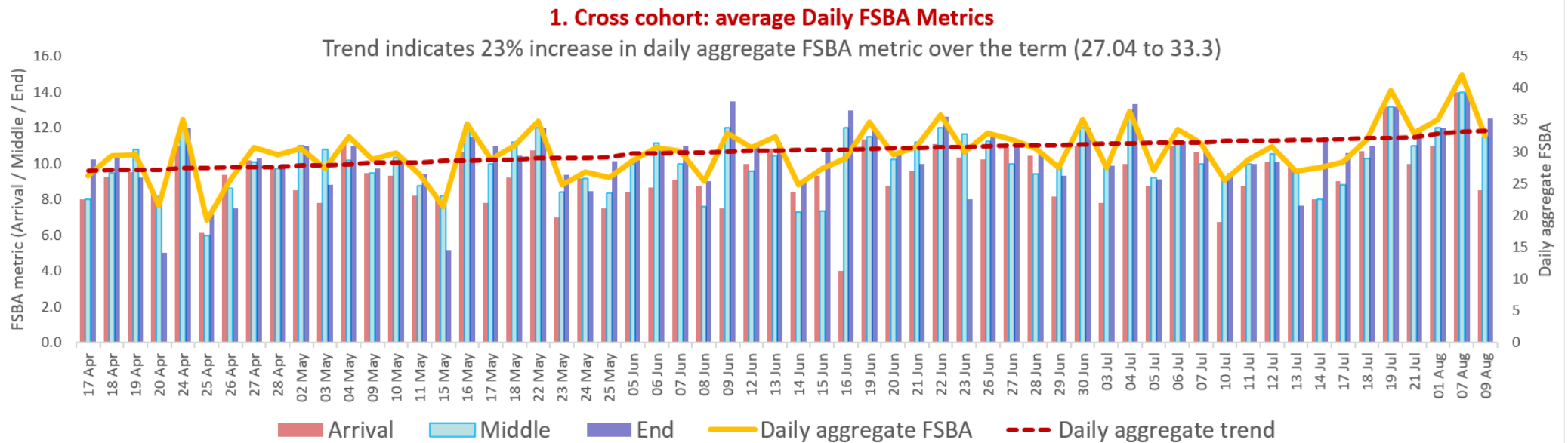
- The aim is not to track tasks achieved by students, this is a wellbeing tracker, looking at a student's emotional wellbeing, their mindset and their emotional capacity for that day.
- Although for analysis purposes there is a number allocated to a metric, we are being careful not to refer to this as a 'score'.
- The aim is to reveal patterns / progress for both individual students, and across the cohort, e.g. times when students are more heightened, etc.
- The FSBA metric aims to illustrate individual and cohort progress on difficult to measure indicators, such as self-regulation, resilience and stability.
- The FSBA metric aims to provide 'snapshots' as well as progress over time, aiding recognition of difficult to measure markers, such as recognising triggers, times when behaviour / engagement deteriorates or improves, changes in self-regulation, etc.

We began using the FSBA metric in April 2023, and the aim is to provide data which can reveal patterns / timeframes for individual students as well as across the cohort as a whole, e.g. times when students are more heightened, etc. This will meet the challenge of obtaining a picture of students' journey with OC as it will still be relevant for students who are in different places, at different ages and engaging with OC at different levels.

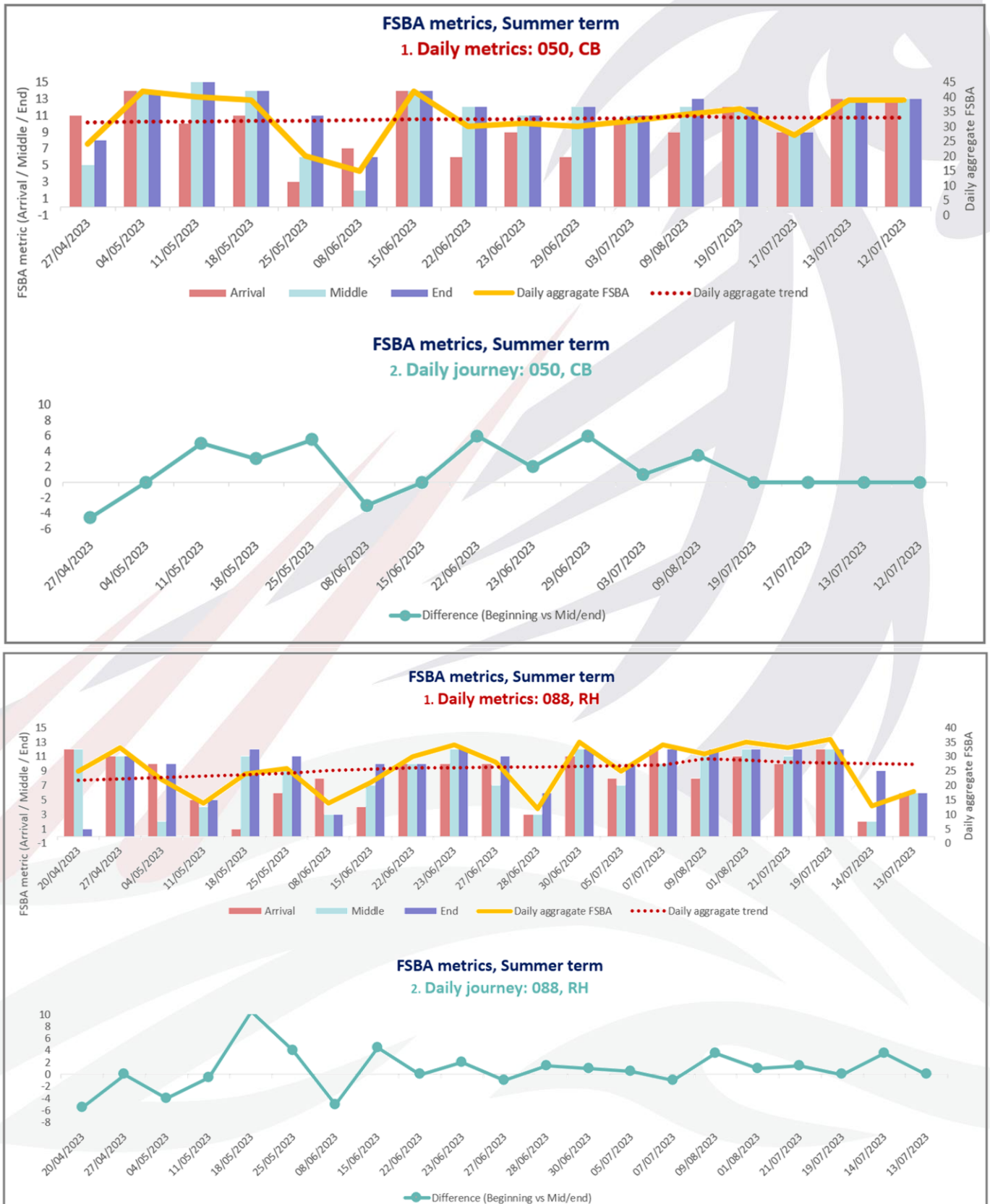
### Initial FSBA Metric analysis

First analysis of the FSBA Metric appears to show successfully progress over time, as well as revealing difficult to measure markers, such as recognising triggers, self-regulation etc. An unexpected insight is found when tracking the difference between the Metric at the beginning and end of the day - tracking this difference with individual students is revealing a recognisable pattern where the line fluctuates strongly at the beginning of the term and flattens over time around zero, giving an indication of an improvement in stability

The analysis of these initial results is already proving to be useful when looking at the metric across the cohort as a whole, where a positive trend in the daily FSBA Metric aggregate (total average FSBA Metric each day) can be measured .



The FSBA Metric is proving equally useful for tracking individual student’s progress, where variations in their ‘Daily Metrics’ graphs are indicating their journey of ups and downs, highlighting when they have and haven’t been engaging well, allowing staff to respond to the patterns being revealed. The corresponding graphs tracking the daily differences, what we’ve called the ‘Daily Journey’ provides an additional illustration of stabilisation, where the line of the graph flattens around the zero level towards the end of the term, as illustrated by these two individual student examples:



**We will continue with the FSBA Metric trial to establish whether the metric is serving its purpose as an evaluation tool, which we believe will be clear after a further two terms (completing an academic year).**

**Further external research by Wellbeing staff:**

Gemma's Masters thesis just gained ethical approval, titled: *"Gaining Insight and Understanding Student Perception To Enhance Wellbeing As A Tool In Alternative Education Provision."* This will include semi-structured interviews with six young people (including past students who were with us for two years or more as well as current students).

Ellie also interviewed OC staff for her dissertation *"The Use of Alternative Education Settings (AES) to Reduce Adolescent Participation in Antisocial Behaviour"* for her Criminal Justice degree. This is undergoing final ethical approval and then will be available for OC to inform our programme development.

*"Oarsome Chance has been a real lifeline to B and given him a sense of purpose when he's been at his lowest. B has not enjoyed school from day one and would have rather started working from age 12 I think – so this opportunity has given him the freedom to develop some of his vocational talents and have something to look forward to each week."* School partner SENCo

*"I'm really pleased with how R is progressing... he has fantastic relationships with the staff in which he feels safe and feels he can talk to if he needs to."* Year 10 parent

## **OUTCOMES**

### **Outcomes for young people**

In the last 18 months:

- 80% of post 16 students moved into training / employment.
- 46% pre-16 students restarted school attendance (FT/PT).
- 42% aged 15+ achieved 1 or more accredited qualifications.
- 76% learned new practical skills.
- 62% have improved life skills.
- attendance has averaged 92%.
- 51% students continue to attend our programmes.
- 68% of students on EHCPs (40% of cohort) met EHCP targets.

Based on support staff case observations:

- 64% have improved self-regulation.
- 67% have displayed improved confidence.
- 69% have improved relationships.
- 62% display better communication skills.

Via our Measuring the Good impact measurement, over the last three years, our 1:1 beneficiary Engagement surveys showed that on average 93% of our beneficiaries agreed with positive statements about feeling useful, doing something valuable and being proud of achievements. Our Passionate Care survey, measuring how beneficiaries were feeling about OC, gave a range of statements to choose from (e.g. 'I learn new skills', 'It's boring here'). Results showed 94% of responses were for positive statements with over 63% being strongly positive.

As outlined above, the new FSBA Metric tool is helping us to evaluate our students' journey over time, as opposed to providing a 'snapshot' each term, which was an identified limitation of our Measuring The Good system.

## Outcomes across the organisation

**Staff training** – the level of staff training has been enhanced by the ESP / Wellbeing programme, including the Mental Health First Aid across the team and regular reflective practice sessions, where the team will examine example OC student cases as a group, considering underlying factors and an agreed approach to improve outcomes.

**Staff wellbeing** – a high % of the OC team have Adverse Childhood Experience themselves, which is often a motivation for people to work in this sector. The benefit of this is they have a deeper understanding of the challenges young people face as a result of childhood trauma and so are in a place to support from. However this must be delicately managed as the work has the potential to be triggering for them and consequently it is important to have a strong support structure for staff as well as students. In addition to staff training, all staff have regular 1:1 supervision with their line manager, as well as external counselling, which is free to access if they choose to. We also conduct an anonymous staff wellbeing survey, which in the Summer 2023 indicated:

- 85% of staff feel very happy to come to work.
- 92% are proud to work for Oarsome Chance.
- 92% said they felt they would be listened to if they raised concerns.
- 100% of staff feel that Oarsome Chance cares about staff wellbeing.

## LEARNING

**Identifying who Oarsome Chance are:** For us, the key learning through the implementation of the ESP / Wellbeing Programme has been the insight it has provided in us identifying how the OC holistic model helps to deliver change for young people with mental health issues relating to Special Education Needs. As a part of our strategic development, we are able to describe our programmes, how they integrate and furthermore identify that Wellbeing is at the heart of everything we do:

## OARSOME PROGRAMMES

### OARSOME FOUNDATIONS

PRE-16 ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

### OARSOME PATHWAYS

POST-16 ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

Support team

OARSOME COMMUNITY

Wellbeing

Training & work experience

Participation

OARSOME ENTERPRISE

### HOLIDAY PROGRAMME

HIGH NEEDS STUDENTS

### ENRICHMENT OFFER

EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

### COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

LOCAL COMMUNITY, OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS

### CANVAS WORKS

### BIKE WORKS

### Key elements of our learning from the work include:

- Identifying the importance of helping young people understand their triggers and barriers to self-regulation (see above illustration around the Window of Tolerance).
- That building trusting relationships with young people with multiple complex needs (neurodivergence in combination with Adverse Childhood Experiences, etc) necessitates a slow and intensive intervention to address the barriers to engagement.
- It requires a broad and flexible range of activities to help young people identify strengths, learn skills and alter their mind set to consider future options.
- We've also learned what doesn't work. In terms of establishing relationships and channels of communication with young people with high needs, it is almost impossible to engage them with formal approaches such as traditional 1:1 scenarios, or any form of questionnaire. This approach is met with instant suspicion as they are tired of constant enquiries, and interviews. Staff find out infinitely more from a conversation while participating alongside them on activities, or informal situations, like going out to a local café or going for a walk.
- Capturing these conversations is not an easy task, so we have also learned that staff's observations via daily reports is an effective way to record the ebb and flow of a young person's progress while they are with us.

### CASE STUDIES

**X aged 15** - X has been attending Oarsome Chance for four years. X has a diagnosis of autism and is also suspected of having ADHD. X has struggled at school as far back as he can remember; X told Gemma about times when he had hurt staff at junior school and appears to hold a lot of residual issues over this. X is a kind, caring young man, who struggled to understand some of his triggers and found it extremely difficult to talk about situations where he had become dysregulated, where it had escalated to hurting another individual.

X was highly anxious and would spend his whole day working on wood projects in the carpentry workshop, but due to his anxiety would not depart from what had become his 'comfort zone'. While X was engaging, learning skills and benefiting from attending Oarsome Chance in other ways, he was also missing out on opportunities to socialise and work with other students and staff. Gemma set about building trust with X, which was a gradual and lengthy process.

Gemma began to approach this by simply working alongside X in the carpentry workshop, making this slowly more frequent over time. X wouldn't want to join in when Gemma took students off-site, so she would make sure to bring him a drink back instead, to begin to incorporate him into the activity. Gemma continued to slowly build the conversation with X, while also encouraging him to try other activities elsewhere other than the workshop.

During these conversations, Gemma was able to work with X to help him identify what some of his triggers were, understand why his body was responding this way and some basic strategies that may help him plan for this. Now that Gemma had gained his trust, X has gradually engaged with more activities, in small manageable steps. He now has an established peer group and engages in a much wider variety of enrichment activities off-site and has a wider interest in engagement while onsite too.

During the year, Gemma has also supported X in school for a few outreach sessions, this has helped Gemma to support X in close proximity when incidents have occurred, which has helped her to help X unpick the sequence of events to better understand his needs and triggers when they happen. Support offered to X has been flexible, and adaptable to meeting his evolving needs over time.

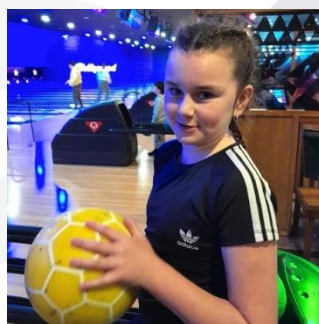
**Y aged 15** - Y has been attending Oarsome Chance for two years. Y has experienced multiple traumas and is now living with his grandparents. Y has no awareness of his triggers, and he will often escalate into a dysregulated place without warning. Y has shown a high level of violence at home towards his grandmother. Y was repeatedly excluded from school and was no longer able to take a taxi to school due to his violence in the taxi en route. Y would not engage with CAMHS support and would only establish a relationship with one member of staff.

To support Y, Gemma had to build support slowly and gradually, to establish a trusting relationship. This was a mixture of working alongside him on activities, taking him to the local coffee shop and building a trusting connection. This meant that when Y was ready for support, the relationship was already established. In the Summer holidays Y's violent behaviour at home escalated again, leading to a temporary time in respite care. It was after this incident that Y decided he was ready for the support of more regular sessions.

These sessions generally last about 1.5 hours each time. Gemma will collect him from home, and they will drive to get breakfast. Although the sessions last 1.5 hours approximately each week, it is often only around 20 minutes of the session spent on emotional regulation work. The rest of the time each side of that is taken up with general conversation, taking the pressure off the session itself. This gives Gemma the opportunity to help Y reflect on the conversations had that day, in relation to the emotional regulation work in the session, helping to make it relevant to him and his context.

The key to this support is small steps, repeated, and refreshed. Now Gemma knows Y well, she can gauge where he is emotionally each day, and she will tailor the session to meet this. Due to Y not engaging with CAMHS, Gemma is now supporting Y on a 1:1 basis with the guidance and resources provided by CAMHS. For a part of each session Gemma will focus on encouraging Y to access external therapy and support services, as well as focusing positively on other relationships, such as other support at Oarsome Chance, school and home, while supporting Y to understand himself and his needs.

These sessions began in the Summer holidays as outreach work, and have continued into the Autumn term. Crucially, they will not be restricted to a fixed time period, for example, 6 weeks of support. Y has a team of support around him - Gemma and the Oarsome Chance team are a small, but important part of this support. Since the summer, Y is making slow but steady progress; there has been a reduction of incidents at school, Y has not been physically violent at home, and has been engaging more in activities when he attends Oarsome Chance.



**Z aged 15**. Z had a lot of confusing emotions, arising from his life experiences and has recently gone through a transition between homes. Challenging behaviour when at school was escalating, and Z was finding it difficult to engage in lessons. Initially Gemma went into school weekly to work with Z in order to identify and implement plans to identify and address his triggers. One of which was that Z was getting up late and rushing to school without breakfast making him hungry and more agitated.



Reflective sessions with Z around optimising his school sessions to meet his needs, identified that Z's favourite school lesson in school was PE, a non-GCSE subject which was due to cease. Due to the crucial timing of his GCSE preparations, it would have caused him more harm than good to remove him from the PE classes, not least due to the importance of building his resilience through participating in lessons he enjoyed.

With the flexibility of the Wellbeing Programme, Gemma was able to arrange with school and home that once a week, she would take Z for breakfast and drop him at school to enable him to continue his PE sessions. This worked well for him and gave Z the space to access the support. This is an example of how Oarsome Chance's collaborative approach can deliver significant impact, which for Z incorporated: in centre sessions building Z's vocational skills and confidence, emotional support to identify triggers, support linked with school, support linked with home, opportunities for work experience, and communication with school to coordinate around the intensive support provided by them. Oarsome Chance was also able to, through our Career's Coordinator, provide intensive careers support to help him secure a place at Post 16 college, while practical support helped him to achieve his CBT motorbike licence. This wrap-around holistic approach has made it easier for Z to achieve continuity with his education and learning - he has now successfully attended his exams and has a future plan ahead of him.



## LOOKING AHEAD

### Wellbeing Strategy 2023-2026

Based on the learning of the Wellbeing Programme to date, Gemma has developed a Wellbeing Strategy, with the aim of further embedding meeting mental health needs across our service delivery. This will involve:

**Setting up Wellbeing Rooms in each of our two centres.** The Wellbeing Rooms will be separate quiet spaces where young people can go when feeling overwhelmed, each room furnished and equipped with a focus on reducing sensory overload. Young people are often dealing with heightened levels of stress and anxiety, which can often be exacerbated by external stressors; a calm space away from the more hectic and noisy workshop spaces will help them to re-regulate. If a young person's behaviour is becoming heightened, this can also affect the learning and environment for others, causing additional triggers.

**Improving resources to improve mental health awareness across the organisation**, including increased staff training, such as more regular face to face training in trauma informed practice. Plus internal initiatives such as regular team reflective practice sessions, and external supervision, led by an Educational Psychologist. Continue to improve the support structures for staff which will in turn improve staff retention (important for developing trusted relationships, as changes in staff team is difficult for young people).

**Establishing a network of external specialist agencies to work alongside us for young people with needs we cannot meet internally** (led by our Wellbeing Lead). Many students are awaiting an assessment/diagnosis of a neurodiverse condition or mental health issue and this can support and help them prepare in the short term. (Currently the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) waiting list is over 2 years). This will require us to establish the connections and networks across multiple geographic areas, which will require time and resource

**Mental health resources for families and establishing a signposting framework to other local support.** As a part of our holistic approach, we would look to provide suitable support to families of YP. This would include regular information sessions for parents, such as 'understanding the teenage brain' as well as outreach to households to identify need, etc. Increased 'Voice of the Child' workshops, getting young people's insights into the areas of OC's work which directly affects them.

**We are immensely proud of the journey Oarsome Chance has undertaken in the last three years; the work of the Wellbeing Programme as a part of that progress and learning has been absolutely key. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Berkeley Foundation and The Tudor Trust for the grants which have supported the Wellbeing Programme development during that time.**

