



The Wave Project

Scotland

Evaluation Report East Lothian pilot

April - May 2014



An evaluation of the impact of surfing on 20 young people in East Lothian facing personal and emotional challenges

Wave Project Mission

The Wave Project aims to change the lives of young people by using surfing, peer-mentoring and friendship.

Our aim is to give clients the skills, confidence and self-belief they need to achieve their goals, no matter what additional challenges they face.

We recognise that everyone young person is different and each responds to challenges differently. But we believe that with the right assistance and support *they can do it*.

Background to this project

The Wave Project has been running a surfing therapy programme for young people with mental health difficulties since 2010. The aim is to provide an inspirational experience that helps to promote healthier lifestyle by using the local environment as a form of therapeutic activity.

One of the instructors who delivered these sessions, Jamie Marshall, felt the project would work well with young people in Scotland. It was agreed that he would run a pilot scheme in Dunbar, East Lothian, to see if the Wave Project model was as effective in Scotland as it has been elsewhere in England.

Various local charities agreed to fund a five-week pilot of The Wave Project in Scotland, based on our successful model used in Cornwall and Devon. The pilot offered a five-week course for 20 children and young people aged between 8 years and 18 years old who are already working with professionals in mental health and social services.

The purpose of the pilot was to use this project as a springboard to attract further funding, to establish The Wave Project as a service in Scotland.

Project aims

The aims of the pilot project were:

1. To help build self-esteem and self-confidence in young people
2. To encourage participants to make friends, build confidence and self-reliance
3. To set up a surf club which would enable clients to develop close links with the local community for on-going emotional wellbeing and social inclusion.



Clients

Twenty clients were referred to the course, and 19 completed the course. Clients were all aged 8 to 18, and were referred by professionals working in health and social services. Partner organisations who made referrals included East Lothian Council, NHS Lothian, North Berwick High School, Law Primary School, The Action Group (a local charity supporting people with learning disabilities) and Richmond's Hope, a children's bereavement charity.

Most clients were aged under 16. The ratio of male to female was 5:1 (see below)

Table 1: Client gender / age

<i>(Age)</i>	<i>8-11</i>	<i>12-15</i>	<i>16-21</i>
Male	6	9	2
Female	0	2	1

Due to the ethnic make-up of the local area, all but one of the clients was white. This is consistent with the demographics of the East Lothian region as a whole, in which 98% of the population define themselves as White, and 1% describe themselves as Asian or mixed race Asian / British (Scotland's Census 2011).

Table 2: Client gender / ethnicity

<i>(Ethnicity)</i>	<i>White British</i>	<i>White Scottish</i>	<i>Mixed British / Asian</i>	<i>White Other</i>
Male	13	1	1	2
Female	3	0	0	0

Intervention

The project was modelled on previous successful Wave Project courses in South West England. Clients were referred by local services and placed on a course lasting five weeks. Sessions took place after school on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, between 4.30 and 6.30pm. Sessions ran from Belhaven Beach near Dunbar, East Lothian. Kit, wetsuits and water safety were provided by Coast To Coast surf school, and sessions were managed by project coordinator Jamie Marshall. Jamie, a qualified surf instructor, led the sessions in person and coordinated teams of volunteers to work 1: 1 with clients in the water.

Funding for transport was available, so taxis were provided for clients who needed a lift to the sessions. Generally they were collected from school and taken home after the session.

Clients met up at the surf school where they got changed and took part in some warm up games. Then they walked about 200m to the beach carrying their surf boards. (This required a walk across some marshy land between the surf school premises and the beach). Clients assembled on the beach for a safety briefing with the volunteers and they all got in the water together. Clients had their own personal volunteer, but it was not necessarily the same person at each session. However, in some cases clients gravitated towards a specific volunteer who they felt comfortable with, and they were left to work together. This method empowered the clients to decide who they wished to work with.

Over the course of the five weeks, clients got to know the volunteers and each other, worked on their surfing and gained more confidence in the sea as they improved. They coped well with the cold water. A bad-weather plan had been put in place in case of high winds or flat sea, but in fact the conditions were benign throughout the course, with clean waves and consistent swell.

Evaluation measures

An important part of the project was evaluating whether the sessions had a positive effect on clients. We used a validated tool - the Stirling Child Wellbeing Scale - to measure changes to their wellbeing before and after the course. This is a positively worded measure developed by Stirling University in 2010, with 2 sub-scales measuring emotional and psychological wellbeing, validated with children aged 8 upwards.

We asked clients to complete a simple questionnaire that used this scale to measure their self-esteem, self-confidence, relationships and achievements. This was completed pre- and post-project. Success was determined on measurable self-reported improvements in mental health and self-confidence, but also included qualitative feedback e.g. enjoyment of learning a new skill, meeting new people and being part of a community.

We also looked at hard measures such as session attendance figures, and positive changes clients made to their lives after the project, such as joining a surf club or another club.



Results and Findings

1. Attendance

Attendance was very good. The mean attendance score for the project overall was **93.3%** (where 100% would indicate each client attending every session).

Each referred client had six available sessions. The table below shows how many clients attended a session each week.

Table 3. Session attendance

	<i>Week 1</i>	<i>Week 2</i>	<i>Week 3</i>	<i>Week 4</i>	<i>Week 5</i>
No. clients attended /20	19	19	18	19	18
Percentage	95%	95%	90%	95%	90%

Clients who disengaged

Out of 20 referred clients, only 1 did not complete the full six week course. This was a young man with autism who had sensory anxiety about mud. Unfortunately access to the beach at Dunbar required a walk through a marshy field which had no boardwalk, meaning that volunteers had to carry the client over the marsh. Although he enjoyed his first surfing lesson, the client said he found the marsh offputting, and did not return for further lessons.

Since then an application for better access to the beach has been submitted to East Lothian Council to ensure that the beach is fully accessible for people with disabilities.

Results and Findings

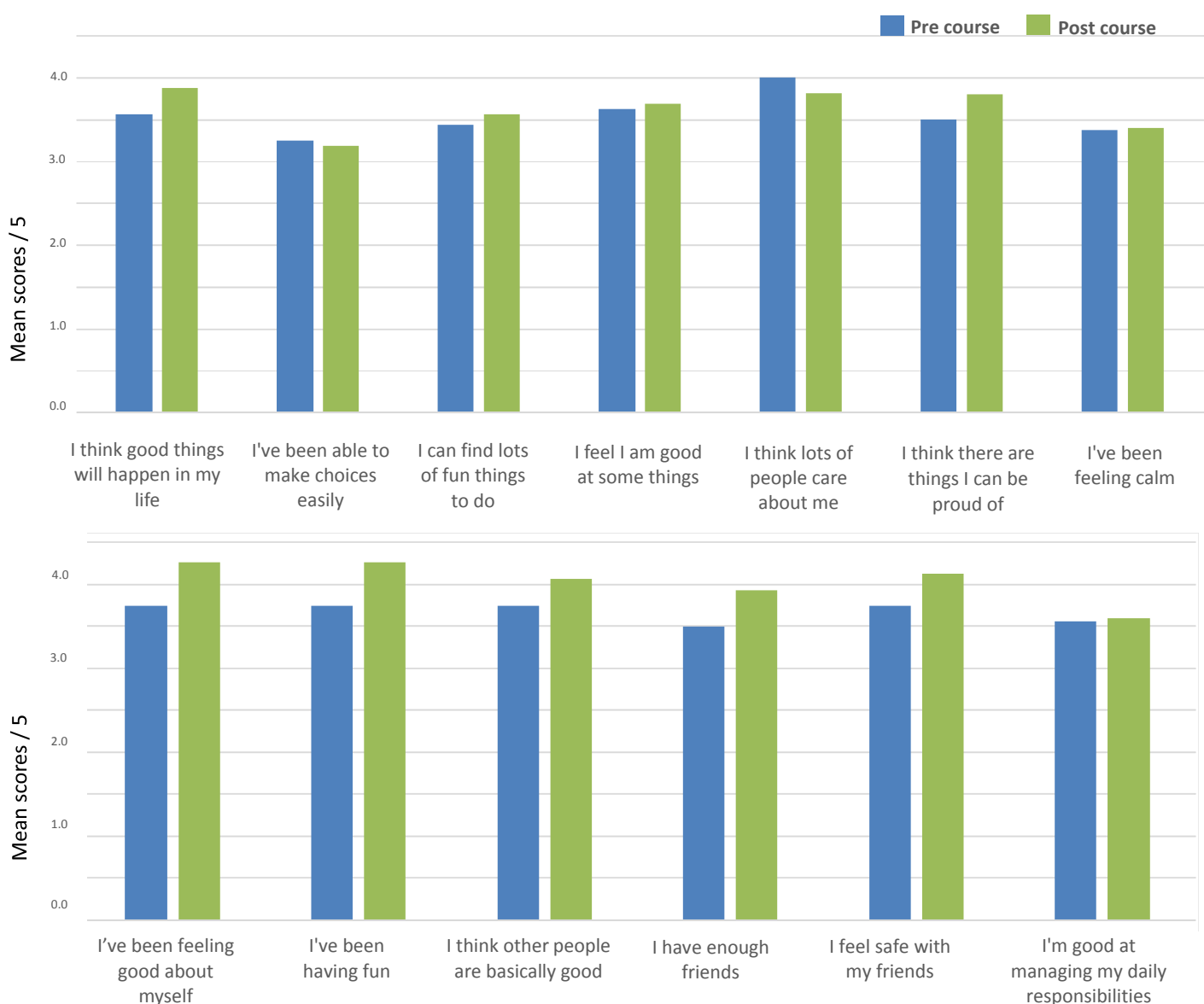
2. Clients' self evaluation scores

Out of 19 clients who completed the course, 16 correctly completed both pre and post evaluation questionnaires.

The pre-evaluation questionnaires were completed around 2 weeks before the clients started the course, while post evaluations were completed at the start of their final sessions.

The table below shows the group mean scores of all clients (based on 12 completed forms). Clients were asked to rate their wellbeing using on a scale of 0 to 5, using different evidence-based measures of wellbeing.

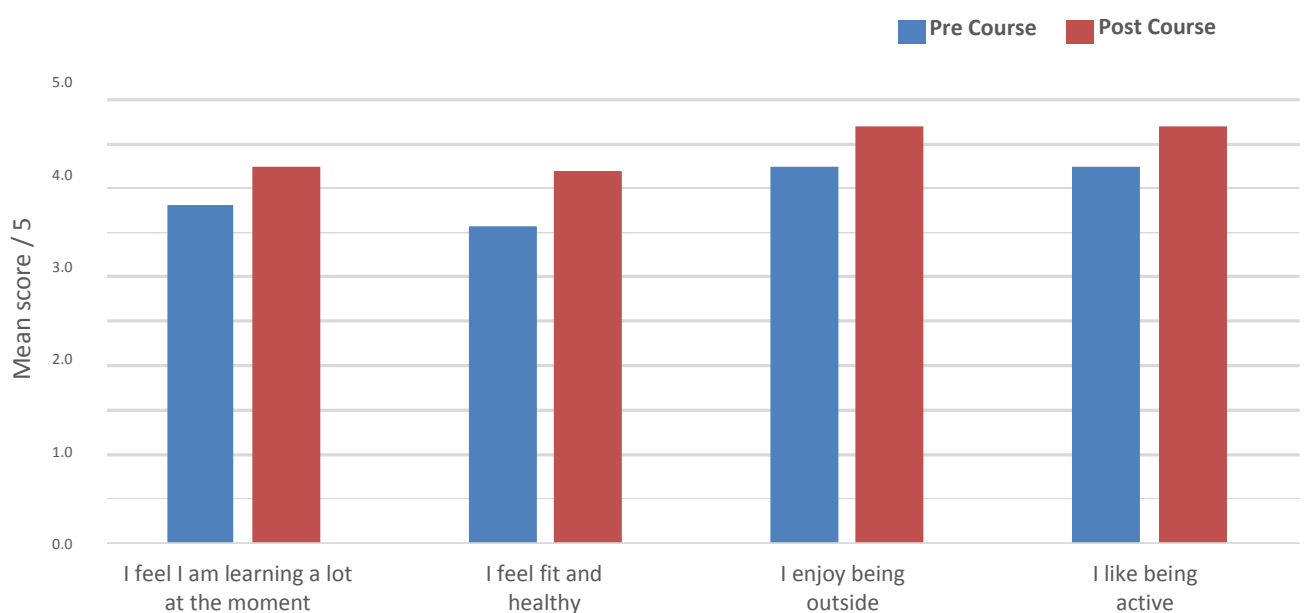
Table 4. Changes to clients' wellbeing (group mean)



Results and Findings

Clients also answered questions about their attitudes towards learning and healthy living, and these changes were measured in the same way.

Table 5. Changes to clients' attitudes towards healthy living (group mean)



These findings indicate that, as a group, clients showed positive change across 15 of 17 measures, which is consistent with other Wave Project courses in England and Wales. Generally the increase in scores was modest, with a typical mean score increase of around 0.4 points.

Clients showed the biggest improvement in the measure “I feel fit and healthy”(mean score increase = 0.6pts); and the least improvement in the measure “I think lots of people care about me” (mean score decrease = 0.2pts).

Results and Findings

Clients were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the project by answering Yes or No to questions. They were also asked to give the project a safety score out of 3, and an overall satisfaction score out of 10. Unfortunately only 7 clients filled in the second part of the questionnaire due to an administrative error.

Table 6. Number of client registering positive change (/ 7 clients)

<i>Satisfaction measure</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Satisfaction rating %</i>
I feel better than before	7	0	100
I feel more happy	7	0	100
I feel fitter than before	7	0	100
I made new friends	7	0	100
I had fun	7	0	100
I want to join a surf club	7	0	100

Table 7. Number of client registering positive change (/ 7 clients)

<i>Satisfaction measure</i>	<i>Very</i>	<i>Fairly</i>	<i>Not safe</i>	<i>Safety rating %</i>
How safe did I feel?	5	2	0	90%

Table 8. Client satisfaction scores

<i>Satisfaction measure (score out of 10)</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>8 or less</i>	<i>Satisfaction rating %</i>
How good was it to go surfing?	4	2	1	94

Results and Findings

3. Clients' descriptive words

In post-evaluation, clients were asked to write down up to 10 words to describe 'Me and Surfing'. This was designed to give a different insight into their experiences. More frequently occurring words have been written in a bigger font:



Results and Findings

4. Clients' feedback

Clients were asked to describe what made them feel different, and what they felt they achieved, from taking part in The Wave Project. They were also asked for any general comments about the project. Seven clients completed this section of the post evaluation form. The feedback was very positive - what follows is an annotated version of clients' comments.



- I feel more confident around people at school and I'm more alert in classes. I want to do more after school and I am more enthusiastic about doing things. I hope to join the local athletics club and I'm coping better with homework. I feel like school isn't as much of a challenge - I feel more confident about myself and less nervous about speaking to new people.
- Surfing is the best feeling ever. It was much better than I thought it was going to be. The best bits were catching a wave for the first time and then standing up for the first time, I felt about twelve feet tall when I managed to stand up. [...] I felt really safe. The instructors gave us lots of attention and advice; we weren't just thrown in at the deep end. It was exhilarating, but safe at the same time. As well as learning a new skill, and I can't wait to go back to the summer club, I feel that the surfing project has helped me become more resilient. I think I am a calmer person, I don't think I get wound up as easily.
- [M]y social skills are a lot better. [I have] more confidence about going out and doing something. [I feel] more independent and [am] really proud of myself for doing it, learning how to stand up!
- My social skills, communication and confidence [have improved]. I loved it all.
- I loved the one to one support. I did need help to get the suit on and off and I got that help that I needed.

Results and Findings

5. Quantitative feedback from professionals

Three professionals who referred clients to the pilot scheme completed a feedback form, which represented 9 clients referred to the scheme. Professionals were asked a series of Yes / No questions, and asked to write down any further comments in their own words, about what had worked well, or could be improved.

Table 10. Client progress (/ 4 professionals)

<i>Client change measure</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>Positive change %</i>
They were more positive	2	0	0	100
They felt happier	3	0	1	75
They were more active	3	0	1	75
They made new friends	3	0	1	75
They had fun during sessions	4	0	0	100
They had fun after the course	4	0	0	100
They demonstrated improved behaviour	4	0	0	100
They demonstrated better self-management	4	0	0	100
They demonstrated a more positive attitude	4	0	0	100
They demonstrated more empathy	2	0	2	50
They demonstrated better communication skills	2	0	2	50
They demonstrated more self-confidence	4	0	0	100
They demonstrated a healthier lifestyle	3	0	1	75
They demonstrated progress with surfing	4	0	0	100
They demonstrated progress with education	3	0	1	75

Results and Findings

Table 11. Client outcomes (/ 4 professionals)

<i>Client outcome</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>Positive change %</i>
They have joined a surf club	3	0	1	75
They have shown interest in joining a surf club	4	0	0	100
They have joined another club	3	0	1	75
They have volunteered on a project	2	1	1	50
They have shown interest in volunteering	2	0	2	50
They have made new friends	3	0	1	75

Table 12. Satisfaction with service (/ 4 professionals)

<i>Satisfaction with service</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>%</i>
Overall I am satisfied with this service	4	0	100
I would recommend this service to others	4	0	100
I would refer other clients to the Wave Project	4	0	100
Waiting times for the project were satisfactory	4	0	100
The project met the outcomes I expected	4	0	100
They have made new friends	4	0	100

Results and Findings

6. Comments from professionals

Professionals were asked to describe how their clients had changed, if at all; and to identify anything in the project could be improved or that worked well.



• During attending the Wave Project with [my client] I noticed he became more motivated as the weeks progressed. He had started to get his passion back for surfing and find a positive focus in his life. He enjoyed the teaching points he received from Jamie from the Wave Project and was keen to learn more. I wouldn't change anything about the project. I feel the volunteers worked positively with the children to support them in having a good experience/fun and of course this has to be the main focus. I think the project is a great experience for young people .

Nicola Balderstone, NHS Lothian

• [My client's] confidence was already on the increase however after taking part in the pilot, she was actually beaming. [She] really enjoyed being back in the water and thrived as a result of being involved. I am really glad that Jamie [the Wave Project coordinator] made the contact with our charity and as a result [my client] was able to take part in the Wave Project. Her self esteem and confidence have increased and most of all it made her happy. [She] was enthusiastic about her time at waves and would have loved for it to have been longer. We would definitely recommend to others and will refer other young people in the future due to the benefits it offers and the impact it made on [my client]. Thank you

Donna Hastings, Richmond's Hope, Children's Bereavement Charity

• A fantastic project - the clients loved it and the commitment from the team was so evidence. Next time it would be good for school staff to try and make time to go and join in / observe some of the sessions.

Lara Neri, Deputy Head Teacher, North Berwick High School

• [My client] was having such a difficult time at school prior to starting the Wave Project that school would not confirm his place on a residential school trip. Having participated in surfing, [he] showed increased self confidence through succeeding pretty well at a new skill, an increased ability to listen and follow instructions, and better self management in terms of being part of a group. School, his carers, his mum and grandfather all commented on his improved self confidence and presentation.

Gillian Warren, Senior Practitioner in Children's Wellbeing, East Lothian Council

Results and Findings

7. Quantitative feedback from parents and guardians

Parents and guardians were also asked to offer their observations about how the course had benefited their children. Two parents completed this questionnaire:

Table 12. Client outcomes (/ 2 parents)

<i>After my child did the Wave Project, my impression was that:</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Not sure</i>	<i>Positive change %</i>
They were more positive	2	0	0	100
They felt happier	2	0	0	100
They were more active	1	0	1	50
They made new friends	1	0	1	50
They had fun during sessions	2	0	0	100
They had fun afterwards	2	0	0	100

8. Comments from parents and guardians



- [My child] has become more positive and less anxious and self-doubting. She’s been more pro-active in arranging events (including fitness-based!) with friends, and has also approached the head teacher at school to discuss ongoing support for the hockey team, and trying to get staff support to run the D of E scheme this year. I think this has all been directly connected to her time at the Wave Project.

Mrs S.H., parent

- [My child] was more confident talking to us especially after surfing and needed no encouragement to get his stuff ready the night before. This surf course has been a real boost to his confidence and self esteem. Also it has made [him] much more confident and active in the swimming pool. [My son] is very keen to embark on another surfing course with the Wave Project as he did not manage standing up on the surf board and feels next time he could do it!! This has been a really fantastic experience for [him].

Mrs S.R., guardian

Conclusions and Discussion

1. Main Findings

The results from self evaluation, client and professional feedback and (in particular) attendance levels give a strong indication that the surfing project had a positive impact on the lives of clients who took part. Nineteen out of 20 clients completed the course, and attendance did not drop below 90% on any one session. Of the 19 young people who completed the course, all showed positive change across at least one measure of wellbeing. Clients recorded an improvement on 15 out of 17 measures, which indicates that the course had an overall positive impact on the wellbeing of the group. These changes were reflected by professional feedback, which found that all clients for all demonstrated a healthier lifestyle. Professionals' satisfaction rate with the project was 100% across all measures. Two clients have gone on to volunteer with the project.

Clients narrative feedback also reflects these qualitative measures. Some of the narrative reports given by clients described beautifully their own personal, social and emotional progress. Those clients who were less able to articulate their feelings were able to describe their progress using individual words. In this exercise, the same (positive) words came up again and again - fun, exciting, enjoyable, happy amazing. A few less positive words also appeared - cold, difficult, sinking, falling, overwhelmed; but invariably the same clients also used positive descriptive words too. Interestingly, the words that appeared most frequently are almost identical to another Wave Project pilot scheme delivered 6 months previously with 20 different clients at the other end of the country, in Bournemouth. This suggests Wave Project model produces consistent outcomes.

2. Challenges / Problems

Overall feedback from clients and professionals was very positive, but some also made suggestions for improvements. These included:

- **Time spent in the water:** Several clients reported that they wanted the sessions to be longer. However, there was also the issue of
- **Cold:** The surf school provided some of the best quality wetsuits available, but a few clients complained of being cold. However, no clients dropped out or missed sessions for this reason.
- **Transport:** We used a combination of taxis and volunteer drivers to get children to and from the session. On this pilot scheme, the system worked well, but the taxis were somewhat expensive. For

Conclusions and Discussion

2. Challenges / Problems (cont)

future schemes it would be useful to train up volunteers to provide lifts and apply suitable insurances to enable them to do so.

- **Access to the beach:** One client dropped out of this course because there was no path across the marshy land between the surf school and the beach. The Wave Project is supporting Coast 2 Coast Surf School in calling for a pathway to be put in to improve disabled access to the beach.

3. Next Steps

No further funding is currently available to continue The Wave Project in Scotland. However, on the basis of this successful pilot, it seems clear that a service would benefit young people with mental health challenges in Scotland, just as it has in England and Wales. The next step will be to try and obtain further funding to continue the programme in Scotland and set up a local surf club that will provide ongoing opportunities for clients who have completed a course.

An ideal scenario would be one in which The Wave Project worked with local funders to support an ongoing project. This could be done with one of the major funders such as the Big Lottery Fund supporting the post of project coordinator and providing a local office for the post; and The Wave Project seeking funding to run the sessions. The coordinator would also be responsible for raising money towards the projects. This system has worked well in Cornwall and Devon, where over £200,000 has been raised towards surf therapy projects.

Longer term, it is hoped that some clients who take part in The Wave Project in Scotland will go on to volunteer on projects, and help run the surf club. In fact this has happened already, with one of the clients from the pilot scheme already signing up as a volunteer for future projects.

Appendix 1: Press coverage

LOCAL COVERAGE:

- East Lothian Courier
- Third Force News
- BBC Radio Scotland

NATIONAL COVERAGE:

- The Scotsman
- Scotland on Sunday

Appendix 2 :

Project coordinator's report

The Wave Project in Scotland was coordinated by Jamie Marshall. Jamie had previously delivered several Wave Project courses in Cornwall and had the idea of delivering the project in Scotland. This was Jamie's report from his own point of view of how the pilot scheme was delivered, its successes and problems.

The Wave Project's first foray into Scotland has proved an incredible success. The first thing to note is that the reception by both the Scottish surf population and the professional organisations we worked alongside was very encouraging. At many sessions we were over our quota for volunteers and of note is the significant support from 3 separate universities through fundraising, volunteering and other support. A fourth university got in contact once the course was up and running. I could have easily doubled the number of courses given the scale of interest from referral organisations. One or two said they would quite happily have filled out our entire quota of clients with their referrals.

The Scottish press were also very quick to get behind the project alongside our local MSP upon hearing about the project. I am currently working towards several follow up stories with some of the newspapers we originally worked with.

There were a few problems that had to be ironed out. These were primarily to do with transport and the lack of a community transport scheme however these were soon ironed out. The primary issue that specifically affected one client was access to the beach which ultimately led to him dropping off the course. Access currently includes walking across a small patch of marsh land and with the individuals sensory challenges this proved a little difficult. We are currently working to deal with this problem alongside the local surf school and local council, which should not only prevent this problem in the future, but would assist with disabled access to the beach for the whole local community.

The conclusions I draw from the Wave Project Pilot in Scotland are primarily of excitement for what the future holds for the Project here. Having worked with the Wave Project previously I was aware of its positive effects however having now run a project I have seen it in a new light. The achievements and improvements of the group of young people we worked with since I first met them before the course began have astounded me and subsequently fostered a real drive to sustain these positives and reach more young people. There is a clear need from a range of different services in Scotland for interventions that foster confidence and boost the emotional wellbeing of young people and I look forward to the Wave Project in Scotland providing such a service.

Jamie Marshall

24 July 2014

