



LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY CARNEGIE GREAT OUTDOORS



12 Participants – 5 Day Reduced Numbers MAC Report

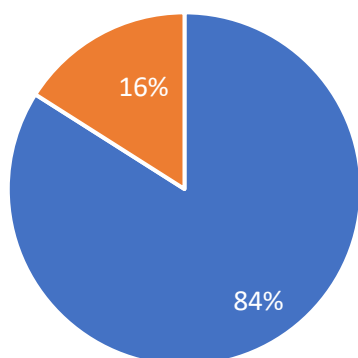


Participant Demographics

This report contains research data from 66 participants who attended a 5-day 12 person 'Reduced Numbers MAC' from 7th June 2021 - 9th August 2021

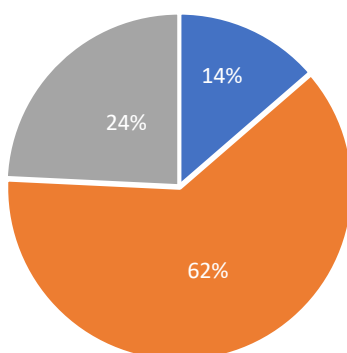
Number of courses run to date - 6, Number of participants to date - 66

Sex



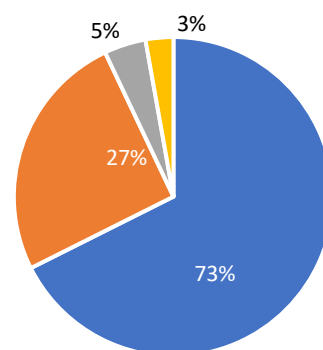
■ Male ■ Female

Service Branch



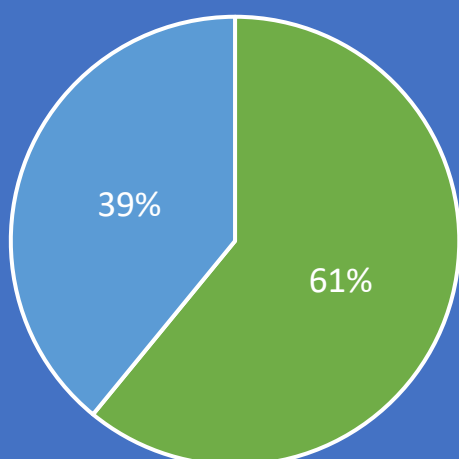
■ Navy ■ Army ■ RAF

Reason for Attendance



■ Sick with illness or mental health issues
 ■ Injured
 ■ Wounded
 ■ Other

Were you nervous or apprehensive about coming on the course?



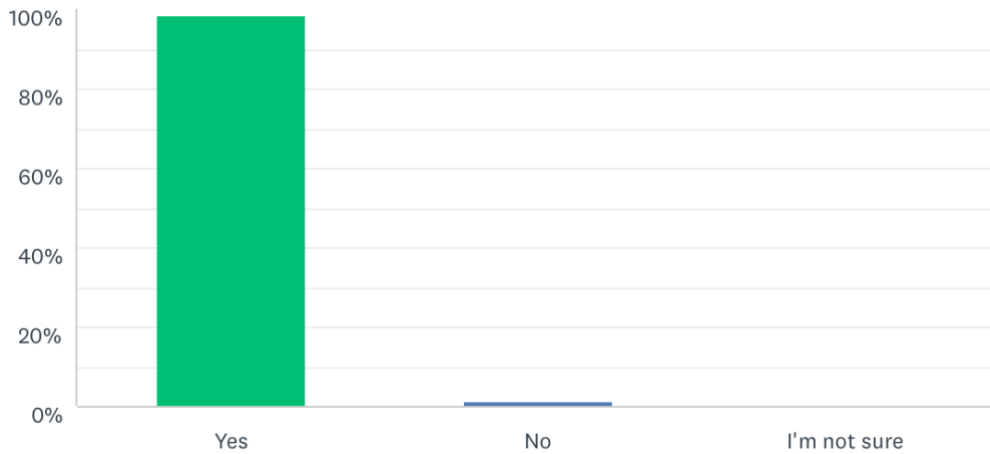
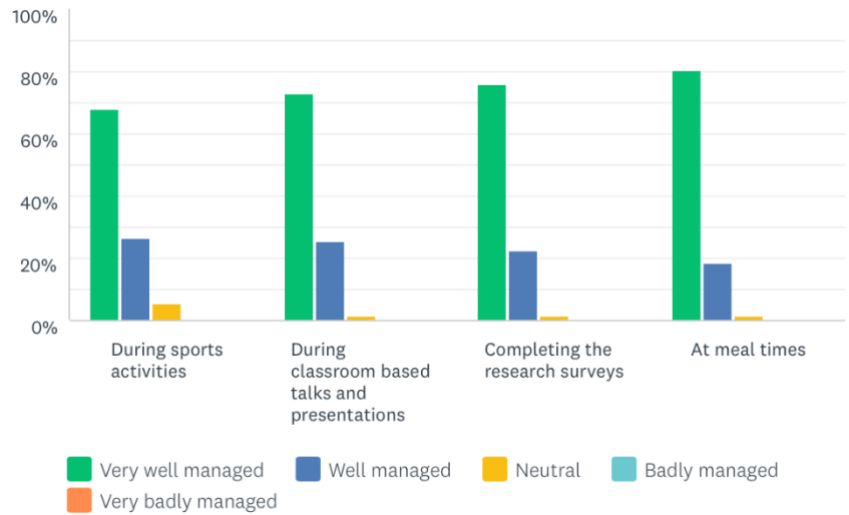
■ Yes ■ No

Reasons why participants were nervous to attend:

- "I have lost confidence in new challenges"
- "If it was another regimented military course"
- "Uncertainty of what would be expected of me"
- "Being around other people again"
- "First time in 10 months I've been in a military group"
- "My anxiety means I haven't been away in about 250 days"
- "Fear of the unknown"
- "Because of the unknown elements"
- "Covid-19 concerns"

Managing COVID-19 Restrictions

During your time at The Battle Back Centre, to what extent did you feel social distancing was well managed?



Do you feel the precautions put in place to reduce the risk of infection or spread of COVID-19 were satisfactory?

Participant comments

"Thank you for such an amazing week"

"This course was a game changer for me. I feel more motivated to carry on and be better"

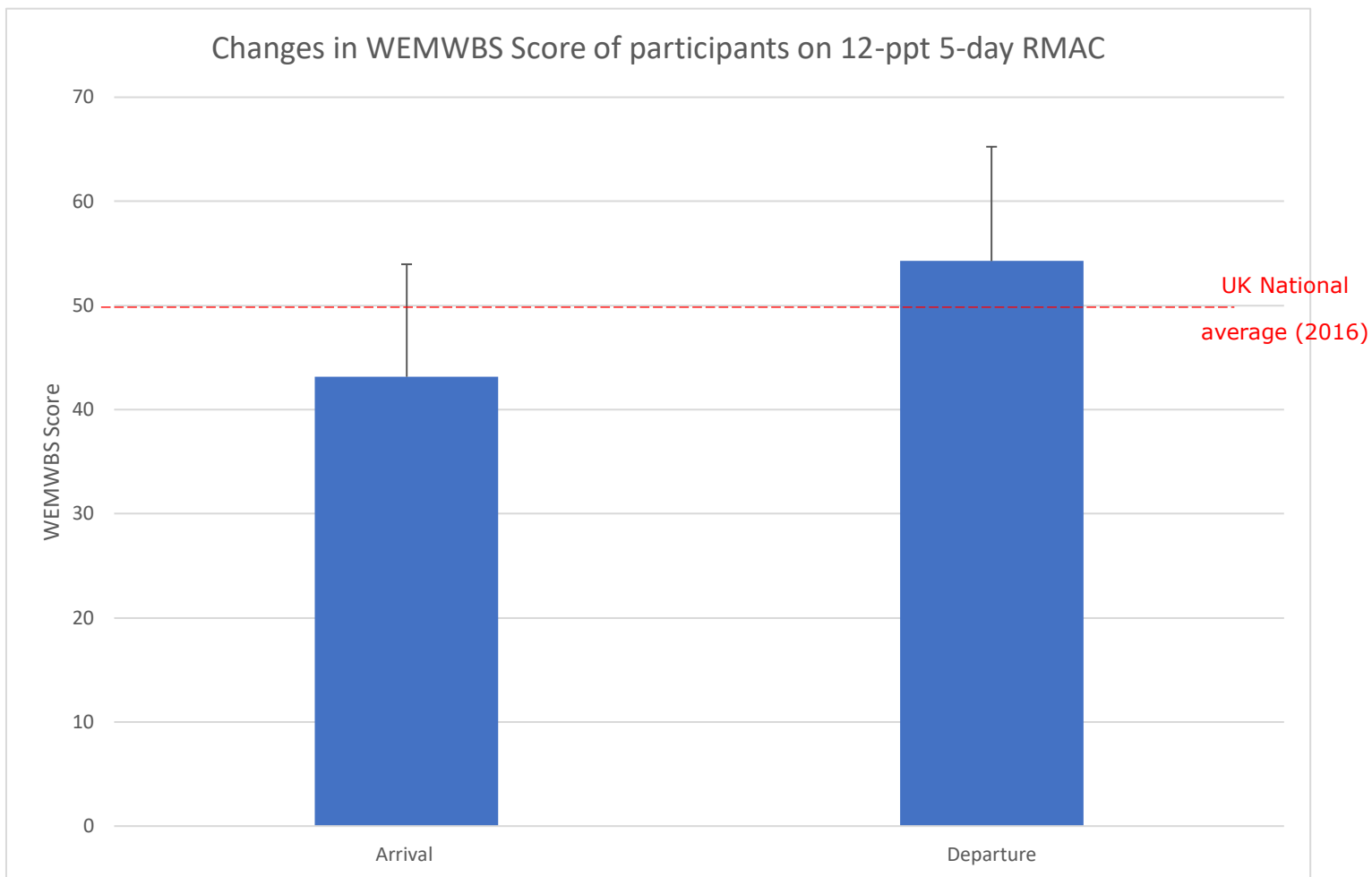
"Brilliant course thank you. It really has helped me to clear my head and for me to get on with "MY LIFE" and makes a change!"

"Thank you for a wonderful course! All members of staff have been great, especially our team leaders!"

"This has been one of the best experiences I've ever had. Thank you so much."

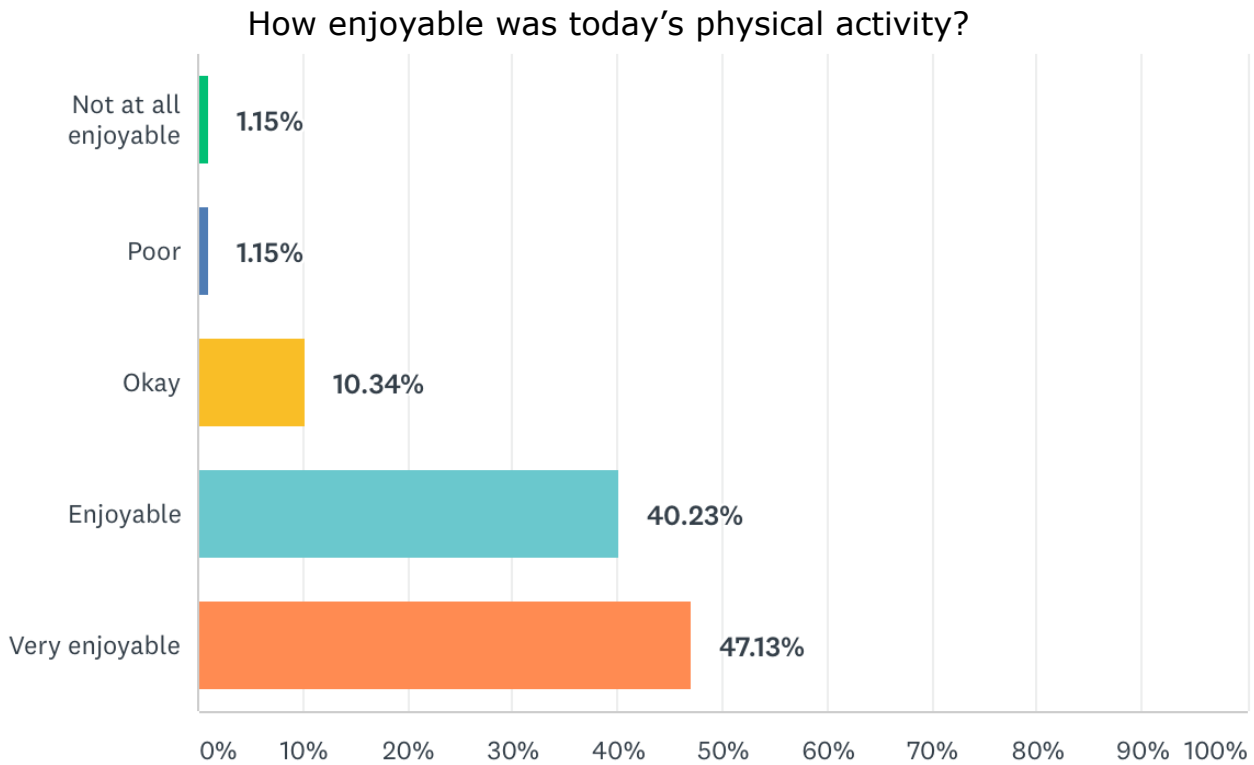
How did the course influence participants mental health?

The average mental well-being score of the participants upon arrival was 43.15. This improved by 25.75% to 54.26 by the end of the courses. The UK National average was identified as 49.85 in the 2016 UK Health Survey. This is the well-being data of every participant since 7th June 2021 – 9th August 2021.



Day 1

The Battle-Backers are split into three groups. This period of time is used by all groups to be introduced to the team they will be working with through various 'icebreakers', to discuss their expectations and to reflect on what they would personally like to achieve during that week. Groups enjoy a walk around the gardens with coaches rotating to get to know participants. All participants then reconvene for a wheelchair basketball activity, including skills games. This soon put participants at ease with lots of fun and laughter. Most participants thoroughly enjoy the novelty of a sport they seldom get the opportunity to taken part in.



At the end of the first day, after the evening meal, the participants attend a short presentation delivered by one of the coaches on the 'comfort zone' model. This model is used to encourage the students to think about the benefits of getting out of their 'comfort zone' and into the 'stretch zone'. Reflection is used as a tool to highlight the benefits of being in the 'stretch zone', being able to learn about true strengths and capabilities, and how that could be practised through the week.

Days 2 and 3

The three groups rotated around several sessions: golf, archery, cycling and tree climbing. They are also given a presentation on the 'Chimp Paradox' model from their coaches. The coach explains that the basis of the 'Chimp Paradox' theory is to help understand the way our brains process information. It revolves around the concept of three portions of the brain interacting, the chimp, the computer and the human. When questioned what they thought the 'chimp portion' was responsible for they correctly suggested "survival", "food", "family" and "sex". The human thinking portion provides a more balanced judgement of situations and relies on an evidence base in its decision-making process. Whereas the Chimp is more black-and-white, is paranoid and catastrophic and involved in the primitive fight, flight or freeze reflex. The coach explains that although the chimp portion is present from birth it can be managed and maintained. With this plasticity in mind they suggest that being aware of these systems in the brain we may be able to alter aspects of our lives more easily, ultimately working towards making permanent positive changes in their life.

Most rewarding part

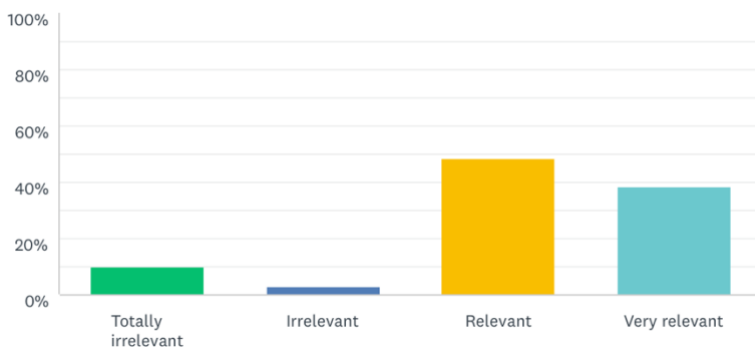
- Feeling myself breathe
- Golf
- Teamwork
- Talking in the morning group
- Challenging activities
- Learning a new skill
- Pushing myself physically
- Getting on a bike for the first time in over a year
- The whole day was fantastic
- Self-reflection at the end of the day
- All of it!

Most challenging part

- Talking about feelings
- Overcoming my fear of heights
- Pushing through my tiredness
- Getting out
- Learning a new skill
- Talking about my specific issues and how I got where I am
- Acknowledging my limitations
- Getting over a negative mindset

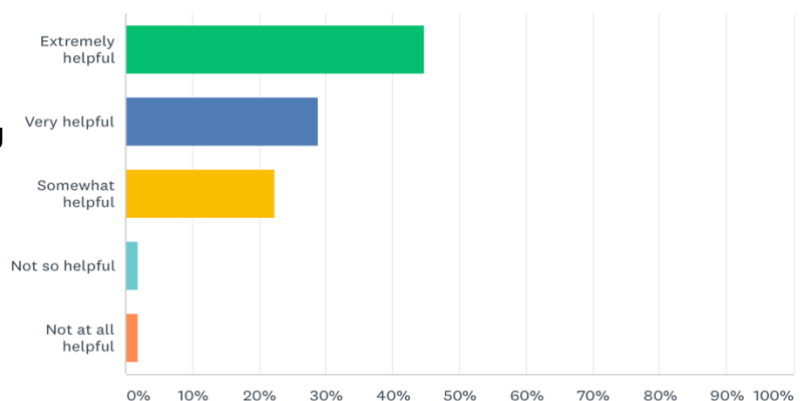
How could it have been improved?

- I was extremely tired after the group talk this morning, though I think if the talk was after the activities I would've been physically tired
- Longer time on the activities, I was really getting into it when time ran out
- We saw the cycling route/terrain before the ride to understand and be less anxious
- Handouts of the lessons taught

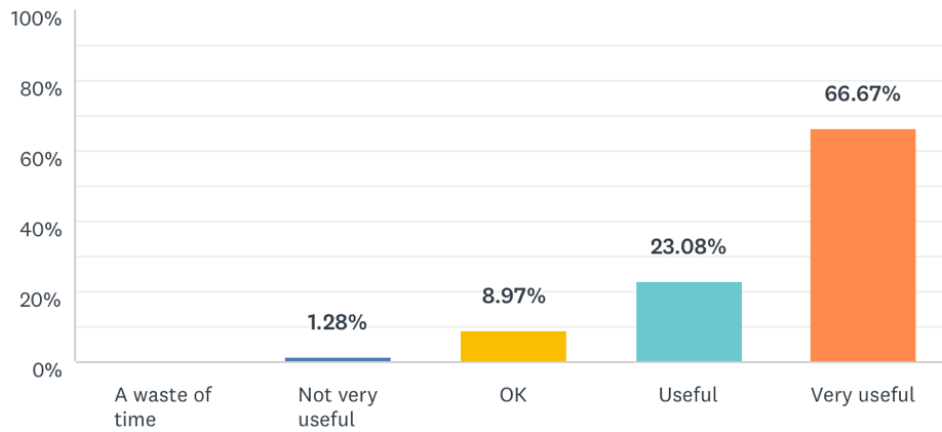


How relevant to your recovery circumstances were the topics you discussed with staff today?

How helpful do you think the coaching support you've had can be for you in your recovery after the course?



Day 4



Looking back over the week, how useful were the conversations and presentations you had with the coaching staff?

Useful because...

- Honest and open
- Gained a better understanding of myself and respect of others
- Reminded me where to focus
- Encouraged me to reflect
- Relatable
- Offer a new perspective

Not useful because...

- Sometimes not pertinent to me but are still useful
- A little repetitive
- Some not evidence-based

After the evening meal on Day 3, participants are invited to listen to an interest talk by one of the members of staff. This normally includes an account of their own narrative, their challenges and how they have overcome them.

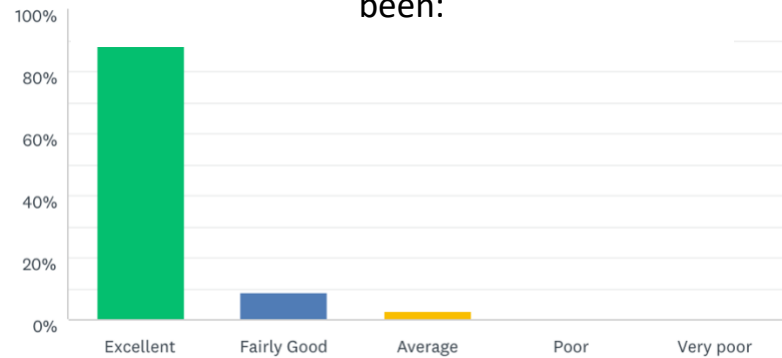
Comments about the interest talk:

- "Fantastic and inspirational"
- "Put things into a bit more perspective"
- "Helped me realise there is life after the military"
- "Invaluable"

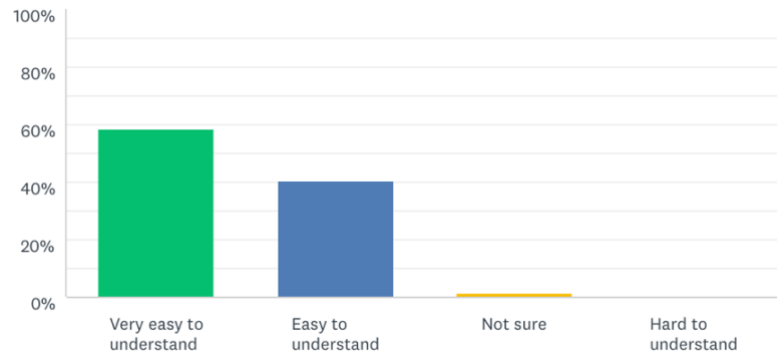
Day 5

The last day sees participants enjoy a final sporting team-activity, such as a tennis skills session. Following this, they attend one more session with their respective coaches and a farewell.

This week, the Coaches knowledge has been:

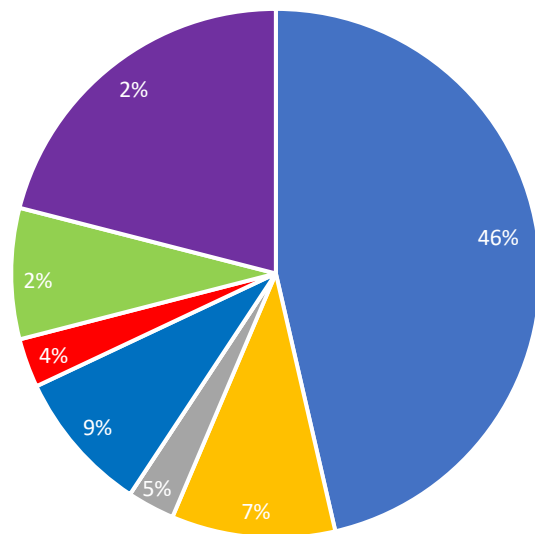


How easy are the coaching morning discussions and daily reviews to understand?



What has been the most useful model during the morning briefs and daily review?

- The Chimp Paradox
- Circles of Control
- Comfort Zones
- Keystone Habits
- The Reticular Activating System
- Wheel of Life
- Triangle
- Other



What is the most valuable thing you have learned?

My self-worth, the original me is still in there!	To forget about the past, concentrate on the present and not worry about the future
It's okay to put yourself first	That I can believe in my ability to adapt, change and develop for the better without allowing the past to hold me back
You can start again. The past doesn't determine the future	To be compassionate with myself
How to have a more positive mindset and trying different types of activities I wouldn't normally try	Being myself again
Relax before achieving. Set small targets.	That I own my recovery
I'm not alone	I am more capable than I realise

A Coach's Review of working on the 12 person RMAC Course

How we begin

At the end of the first afternoon together we sat down to a circle of picture cards spread out on the floor. Each of us chose a card which represented ourselves in that moment, we began to share what we had chosen. A young man begins 'I've been off sick and away from the closeness of my unit for the last 10 months. I miss the camaraderie and friendships. This image [of a brass band playing together] reminds me of how we were together'. The next man, hunched over in his seat, says 'All I want to do is sleep' and points without much effort to an image of a boy sleeping in a hammock. There is a quietness in the group and then a quiet low trembly voice utters 'I feel sad and empty inside, just how this figure looks' He says holding back the tears and pointing to an image of cardboard box figure with a downcast expression walking in the rain. The last member of the group points to an image of a man balancing on a smooth line of string coming out of a tangle and says 'I am trying to make sense of my life and untangle things...'

Sitting together, feeling the full expression of very real emotions, I am touched by the brutal honesty of the group and their ability to share deeply without judgement of each other. One of the coaching staff gently leans into the circle and quietly asks 'Does any one want change?'

Everyone looks up from the images on floor. Some faces appear hopeful and some look suspicious, as though they are asking 'What's the catch?'. There is some silence and then the man who is trying to make sense of his tangled life smiles. He smiles so brightly the room almost lights up, he exhales a relieved sigh and firmly says 'I AM READY FOR CHANGE'. The others nod. This is how we begin our week.

Will the stick change or the change stick?

The accident happened in 2018 and since then he had been told that he couldn't 'do' anything. Two years on and yet another surgery, he explained how he had become less confident in his body, especially not knowing if his knee might give way at an inappropriate time. He sat listening to the introductory briefing in the golf shed not knowing if he would be able to participate but ready to give anything a try because he felt as if he had missed out on so much over the last 26 months.

To his surprise, throughout the session he found that he could move well between the chair and the green and that neither his golf stance or swing caused him any discomfort.

Toward the end of the session he was focussing on how he could get out and play golf with his father-in-law and enjoy the social side of the sport too. Though, it wasn't until time spent on the putting green that he realised how limited his beliefs about his ability to recover had become. He walked with his crutch and putter to each new challenge, put down the crutch and stood up to putt. He then followed the ball, putted again if necessary, removed the ball from the hole and walked back to his crutch where he would bend down to retrieve it and walk assisted to the next hole. After seeing this pattern a few times, the coach asked him 'if you have a golf club in your hand do you need your crutch?' and he replied 'no probably not'. Then it happened, 'I hadn't thought about that, I wonder what else I could do without it?' And what followed was a conversation about improving by 1% each day and what little challenges he could give himself to get stronger and keep his mind active too. Starting to see his recovery as a challenge, like sport for his mind *and* body, ruptured his belief that other people were in control of his healing process. Watch out for your thoughts, they can become your actions....

Once we know something we can't not know it...

Tall, athletic and strong in stature he stiffly limps over to the green to take his first swing of the morning. His frame appears wooden and seemingly too tall for the golf club, he leans forward, lifts the club awkwardly, swings and misses the ball. He looks about, chuckles under his breath 'hmm thought so'... Before his injury he was a keen sportsman and had a passion for basketball, which he could now no longer play. Earlier in the morning he had explained golf was certainly not a sport for him but out of politeness he would give it a try. He dutifully followed the instructions provided by the coach and saw a little bit of improvement through practice.

Once the basics had been covered, the coach moved onto analysing each individual's posture and range of movement. By focusing in on the body and feeling through the full swing motion, the wooden frame of his body began to melt. The coach asked in confirmation 'so it's your left leg that's injured?', shaking his head he replied 'no it's my right'. So the coach enquired as to why was he was holding his tension and weight through his injured leg? Taking this on board he let go of what he had been doing and feeling. In that moment of letting go he struck the ball to the end of the practice green 'Whoosh click!' two more 'Whoosh click' and he stood up straight, tall, relaxed and smiled at his achievement. 'How did that feel?' asked one of the coaches, he smiled widely and replied 'Swe-e-t'. After a few more adjustments here and there, followed by the coaches encouragement to stop thinking and engage his body's senses, he said 'I didn't ever think there would be another sport for me after my injury and certainly not golf. I had no idea I could feel this good again'.

Since leaving the golf green he is moving almost as if he had never been injured, there is flow in his motion again and now he knows he CAN feel different, he can't not know it...

Safe with what I know...

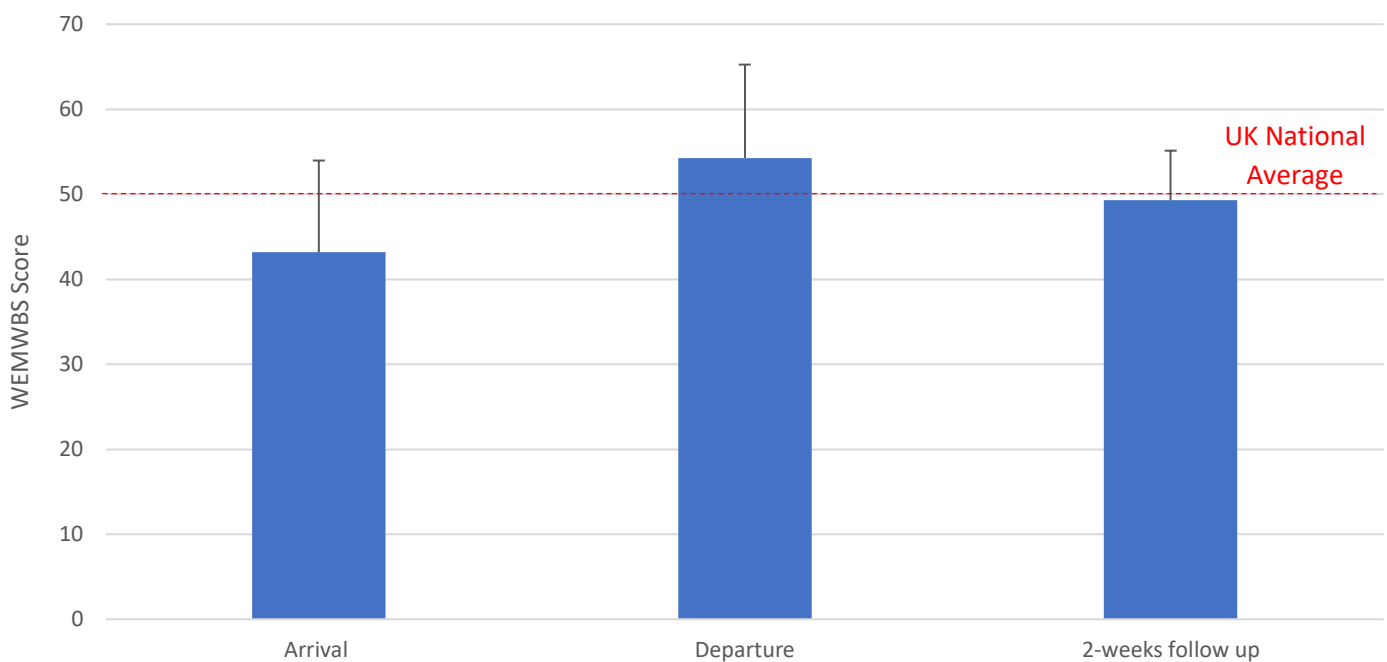
'An eBike? No way! You'll never get me on one of those, it's cheating!'... a familiar statement heard by many coaches when they begin to brief the weekly mountain biking session by asking what type of bike participants would like to try. 'A standard bike for me, that's what I've been using in my recovery, so I'll keep to that' he said. Another participant pipes up 'An eBike, you mean it does the work for you? If that's the case, I'll have one!'

We set off on a bright and crisp October morning, with everyone pretty evenly matched at the beginning of the days ride away from the centre and down to the old railway line. Before we arrive onto the canal path the team starts to spread out, with one coach and two participants quite far behind the others who are already at the rendezvous point. The coach and one participant are on eBikes and the other participant is moving slower and slower on his standard bike. Eventually the coach broaches the subject and asks if he would like to give the eBike a try, 'just until we meet the others'? She is greeted by a very definite refusal, he puts in more effort and continues to struggle along. The coach stops and asks to swap bikes 'just for a moment' and she will catch them up at the rendezvous point. Doing her a favour, he obliges and whizzes along the path with his fellow participant. In the kilometre or so he travels, his body has time to rest, he is using his energy more intentionally and the physical suffering stops.

When the coach catches them up, she asks how the bike was and how he was feeling now? This time he refuses to give the bike back! He is completely converted. It is safe to say that converting someone to choose an eBike was certainly not the point of the day. However, what came from giving something new a try, was an opportunity for a conversation about where else in his life was he avoiding change or not not asking for help and suffering along? The eBike experience became a lens for him to start looking for behaviours to update and become curious to find news ways of approaching problems in his life.

2-Week Follow-up research

Changes in 2-Week Follow-up WEMWBS Scores in Participants on 12-ppt 5-Day RMAC



What part of the Multi Activity Course had the greatest impact on you?

Helped me to decide what is important to me and what I want to do next

Just being in the Battle Back environment. All staff were excellent and have a lasting impression. It's almost like someone pressed a reset button and put me back on track.

Thinking more positively and gaining confidence

My, now more positive, outlook to my situation and life in general

I really enjoyed the coaching lessons. They helped me be more positive and I've felt more relaxed since the course.

Meeting new people and making friends. Positive lessons.

Putting what I learned into practice to get positive outcomes, e.g. small goals

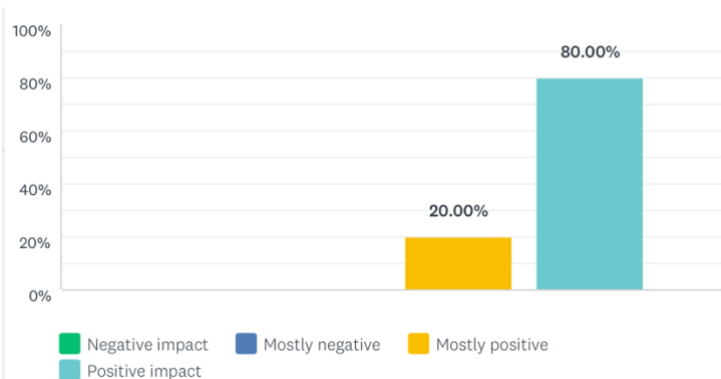
Letting go of the past to get to the future

Social interaction and new activities

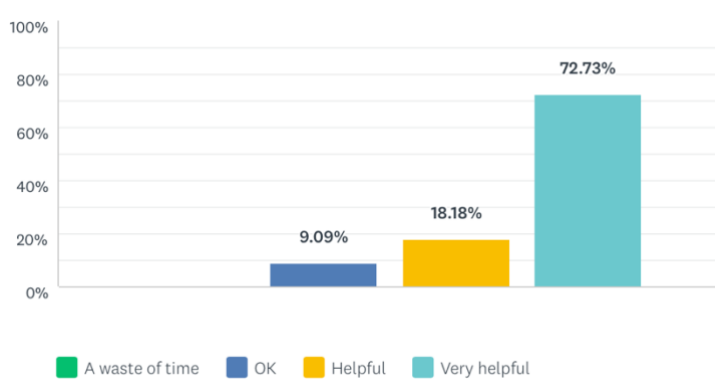
Just generally being around others like myself

Being part of a team again

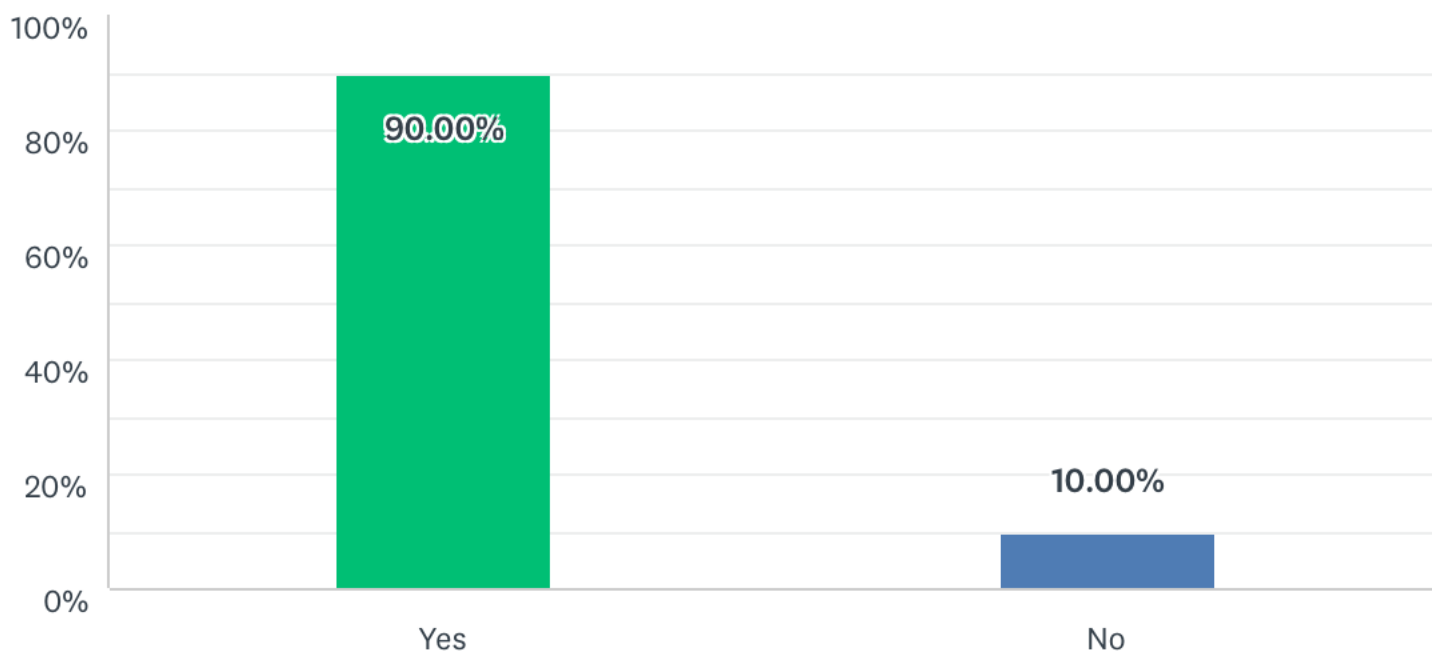
What impact has the Multi Activity Course had on you since the course ended?



In my recovery so far, the Multi Activity Course was...



Since being at the Battle Back Centre have you made any changes in your day-to-day life?



Participants commented they had stopped...

"Being so negative and smoking"

"Wanting to work full time and chase the pay"

"Isolating"

"Being negative about my abilities before attempting the task"

"Dwelling on negative thoughts"

"Being angry about things"

"Worrying about things I can't change"

"Really trying to stop thinking negative about my job but still finding it very hard to do so"

"Over-exerting myself"

"Felling inadequate"

Participants comments 2 weeks after attending

"The fact that the Battle Back staff were very mature and non-military made this a safe space for me."

"I found the course very beneficial and enjoyed every second of it. It was a relaxed environment which was exactly what I needed. The instructors were excellent."

"Coaches and staff were awesome. While I was aware of everything we went through, to hear it in a different perspective or talking about it more openly and not just with a Dr or PRO was really useful"

"This is not just a course; it is a chance for WIS to develop life skills, using sport as the vehicle. it also provides the chance to make new life long mates; who can provide support when required as they can understand what you are going through and the challenges that presents, either because they are going through the same or 'just know' the you. Thank-you All"

"The course was brilliant and I am privileged to have taken part"

"A few of us were nervous about coming thinking we weren't worthy enough for it and that there would be people more in need. I was on a covid course the numbers seemed about right. I felt personal and a shared experience, these reduced numbers made it seem like we bonded as a group"