



Review of 2022

The sailing season began on 23rd March with some of the most glorious weather we have ever enjoyed so early in the year!

The first client of the year was Greig City Academy in Haringey, north London, who sent us a group of 12- and 13-year-old girls with an immense diversity of family backgrounds. They had a week of sunshine in the Solent, with visits to the beach where they even tested the water temperature! At anchor in Totland one night they were spotted by a professional photographer, Sienna Anderson, who took some amazing shots:



However, these conditions could not last, and the next voyage, with young people in care in Southampton, faced 40-knot squalls and horizontal rain. This was a real insight into the challenges faced by looked after children, as four of the initial group had changes of foster placement shortly before the start of the voyage, and the profoundly unsettling effects of finding yourself living with strangers, often with very little notice, were clear to see. Some of the most heartfelt comments at the end of the voyage were about the friends they had made: it was clear that some had bonded over shared experience.

Every year our major sponsors MDL Marinas send some exceptional young award winners to sail with us – young people who have experienced genuine adversity but are still making a positive contribution to their schools, families or communities. This year's group was outstanding, as ever. Skipper Holly wrote: *"I'm quite proud of this voyage, in that I think it encapsulated why sail training exists: a group of very deserving young people from diverse backgrounds became a fun, supportive, and efficient team. We sailed decent distances, enjoyed downtime at anchor and whilst exploring new locations, and ultimately had fun with new friends. Everyone received a competent crew award, but the bigger achievement was ultimately the feeling we all got at the end of the trip: that of being a family."* One young carer said: *"I feel like the best thing that has happened to me ... I would definitely go on this experience again ... I think the most memorable is probably everyone just getting along and just having fun because that's really all that matters"*; and a 17-year-old who has faced a lot of challenges in her life said: *"Loved the trip. It was a great way to disconnect from the outside. Hope to be back *soon*."*





Our Easter voyage included a lot of young people who had been awarded funding support for various reasons – there were lots of young carers needing a break from demanding home situations, and others with additional needs. A 15-year-old said her best bit was when she and one of the younger boys were *“cranking the winch because I would see him struggling and then I'd get my hands on there and we'd be going so fast. And the kind of euphoric feeling of how quickly we were able to hoist and tighten any ropes. And I'd say my best bit in terms of the most kind of challenging thing where I really felt like I pushed myself was with the mainsail hoist. That was a, you know, very kind of out of my comfort zone experience.”* A 13-year-old said: *“My most memorable part is going on the bowsprit for the first time, and like seeing how good I am at heights and stuff like that”* and another said he would remember: *“Just yelling my lungs out to 'Living on a Prayer' whilst doing extreme washing up.”* One of their support workers told us: *“I am really glad he went along, the recent loss of his mother has made him start to disengage so the fact he was able to get away and have some respite will have been really beneficial”*; and the mum of a girl who has used sailing to overcome bullying and lack of confidence said:

“Just to say a massive thank you so much for the recent trip that [my daughter] took last week. She had an amazing time and has not stopped talking about it. She enjoyed every single minute and thought the whole thing was fantastic...she has even taken "happy hour cleaning" to our home and also the washing up routine so, as a mum, I would like to thank you for that too!!! ... She would definitely like to be considered as a volunteer for future trips. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.”

On a voyage for children in care in Hampshire, a 14-year-old girl who lives in a children's home said: *“I loved every minute of it, it has changed my thoughts about going outside and getting stuck into things.”*

A teacher who accompanied students from two schools in the west midlands said: *“My favourite memory is watching how everyone's grown. I've tried to have little individual chats with you from both sets of schools, just to try and find a bit of information about you, and kind of the challenges and barriers that you have, and your dreams and hopes for the future, and I have no doubt that this trip will have a massive impact on you and get you to be focused on what you want, and I think that's incredibly fortunate to have that experience of watching people grow.”* Friendship was a big theme of this voyage: a 14-year-old said: *“The best part about this trip was definitely the dinners here with everyone, it just, it feels so nice to sit around a lot of people from different backgrounds and just talk like we've known each other for ages, 'cos at home I don't get that opportunity”*; and another said: *“It's taught me skills and it has brought me out of my shell!”* and *“I really loved this voyage because it has really boosted my confidence”*.



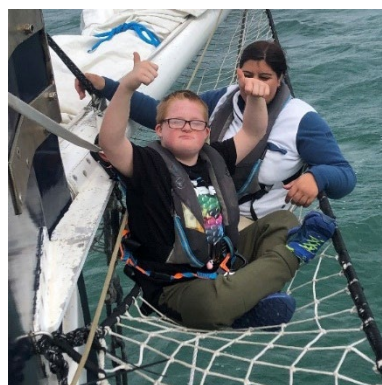
Following the pandemic, we have seen a huge increase in the number of young people living with mental health issues including anxiety and depression, and others who are acutely aware of all that they missed during lockdown. On a voyage for Applemore College, near Southampton, one student said: *“This trip was the best since I hardly ever go out, this was great because I somehow learnt a lot”*, and a parent wrote: *“Wanted to pass on a massive thank you to the team looking after Applemore College this week. my daughter was part of the group and absolutely loved it. She had a bit of a panic attack aboard but the way the staff dealt with her was perfect and we are both really grateful. Really impressed by how it is all run and the way the kids were looked after. She will definitely remember the trip for life.”*

A second Applemore voyage produced these comments: *“This trip has made me more confident in staying away from home”*; and *“My team got on good and as the days went on I trusted them more ... I got on with other people well and it was like having a different family for a week”*.

The Amber Foundation is a great charity which offers residential support for young adults who have been homeless, many with other problems including a history of drug and alcohol use or domestic abuse, or mental health issues; but they became a fantastic crew, and their voyage reports - showing that they were able to learn new skills, work well in a team, follow safety instructions, turn up on time, and do their best even when finding things difficult – could help them move on into employment and independent living. One said: *“This voyage was an amazing opportunity and has taught me a lot about the sailing lifestyle. It has really helped me in overcoming challenges and being more comfortable with new experiences”*.



A new client, Portsmouth Virtual School, sent an incredibly impressive group of young people in care, aged 14-17. Two had travelled unaccompanied from Syria and three from Afghanistan – one of those had become separated from his family in Europe and has still not managed to find out what has happened to them. Some displayed real courage by coming sailing, having had bad experiences making journeys by small boat. They also did very well to cope with the voyage given that English was not the first language for most. They came on board with an adult leader who said: *“My most favourite thing is watching you all laughing so much together and being kind, taking care of each other so much, it's been amazing to see that in all of you.”* A girl aged 15 said: *“This voyage has been much better than I ever thought it could be! The mates and crew have been spectacular there was nearly always a laugh and best of all when I first boarded I knew nothing of sailing now it's all I talk about!”*



Alfreton Park Community Special School is a client which has worked with us for many years, sending students with complex needs including Downs syndrome, cerebral palsy, global development delay and more, plus adult carers who said: *“Wow. What a week ... Staff were amazing by explaining things and being great with the students”*; *“What a wonderful week and breadth of experiences for our young people, all of whom had such a brilliant time. The crew were so supportive and hard-working too”*; *“Another amazing week - the staff makes everyone feel welcome and settles us in well and the students. The staff were great with the students and their confidence just grew through the week”*; and *“Amazing week, all staff were fantastic, they included all pupils and adapted activities so they could be involved. Made us all feel welcome.”*

Young people from all backgrounds can benefit from our voyages. Bruern Abbey is an independent school working with boys with dyslexia, dyspraxia and other learning difficulties, and their confidence was memorably boosted by their success in taking charge of the vessel and navigation on the last day: *“My most memorable thing of this trip is probably working as a team to get back to Ocean Village. I really enjoyed it and it was the best thing of this trip”*.

It has always been immensely important to OYT South that we should keep up links with our earliest days as the Ocean Youth Club, and ensure that the spirit of the founders lives on, as well as recognising the contributions of all the very many staff and volunteers who have kept the charity going for 62 years so far! In June we were delighted to see some old friends on board, including Kit Power who was a governor of the charity in the 1960s, and took great pleasure, at the age of 88, in breaking the record for the oldest person to go out on *Prolific's* bowsprit.



Harris Merton school in south London had been waiting for their voyage since before the pandemic: this is a school with a high proportion of students from Afro-Caribbean backgrounds and many eligible for Pupil Premium funding and free school meals. There were lots of examples of how their confidence had improved over the voyage: *“Spoke to more people, made friends”*; *“Being able to do things independently”*; and *“Feeling confident in steering”*.



Next came a day sail for sponsors and donors, including a representative of the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire: *“I so enjoyed my first sail on Prolific on Friday, and the more I think about it the luckier I feel to have experienced such a perfect sailing day in so many ways. I was hugely impressed by the crew, who made us all feel so welcome and who gently involved every one of us in the running of the ship, as evidenced by the glowing tributes expressed at the de-briefing. I am so glad to have the opportunity to experience all of this and to be able to convey the Lord-Lieutenant’s appreciation of the wonderful and hugely beneficial work that you all do for the community on board Prolific.”*



As we moved into the summer period, we started to have more voyages for individual bookings – and we managed our first Channel crossing since before the pandemic, sailing to Guernsey and Alderney with a crew of fourteen young people, six of whom were on the autistic spectrum or had experienced issues with mental health and anxiety. A 17-year-old who went into care after the death of her mother said: *“Had such a wonderful week! Was very overwhelming because of all the happiness I got ... thank you all, I have never felt happier ... My most memorable bit I think is probably just the peace you got with yourself when you were like at sea and like everything just felt perfect. As cringey as it sounds ... I just felt really at ease and just happy with myself, and yeah, it was just nice.”*

The Ellen MacArthur Cancer Trust brought us ten young men with experience of cancer. Their comments included: *“My best bit is a close competition between the teamwork and just working with everybody who, we were all just strangers about seven days ago. And now we’re a good, solid team, that’s just amazing ... the most memorable bit, that I’ll tell my great grandkids, is probably just the ability for a boat to make a team out of total strangers. That’s special.”*

The MACS charity sends us young people born without eyes or with under-developed eyes, as well as a number of sibling carers. One said: *“It’s just been really nice to not feel like different for once because of an eye condition and to be with other people who are similar, it’s been really nice to get involved and meet people like that.”*

A voyage for a mixed group including some very deserving individuals with bursary funding produced a letter from the mum of a boy with ADHD who sums up what so many people tell us a voyage can mean for people facing difficulties in education and everyday life: *“I can’t tell you how much this kind of experience means to a child who struggles at school, rarely gets praised by teachers, often feels a failure, not reaching the mark, needs to try harder, could do better etc...etc.... What an absolute boost to his self-esteem this week has been ... When he came home yesterday he was on such a high ... Many many thanks to everyone involved, it is appreciated in so many ways.”*

Voyages also had a positive effect on people who had missed out on social development during the pandemic: *“I’m not that great at making friends but I have made friends with everyone here and I think the trip went really good”* and *“I was pretty nervous as I got on the Prolific but after a day I felt at home because of the people and welcoming and kind atmosphere”*. A mum wrote: *“I just wanted to drop a line to say how much my daughter enjoyed her voyage which ended last Monday. I don’t think I’ve ever seen her so enthusiastic both throughout the time she was on the boat and all she’s talked about since she’s come home. She loved the teamwork, the way the leaders knew how to get the best out of them all and of course living life at sea was amazing to someone who’s lived in London all her life.”*

The summer holidays ended with a voyage from Poole back to Southampton where a crew member said: *“My favourite bit, I think that was actually probably doing where we were steering ourselves and planning our own route because that felt like a really big achievement”*, and a parent wrote: *“Clearly the OYT has bagged some absolute gems of staff; they were obviously patient, humorous, helpful but firm by turns.”* Another mum who sent three children on two different voyages this summer wrote: *“I wanted to say what an incredible experience all three of my children had on Prolific, this summer. It really was ‘one of the most awesome things’ they had ever done! and they all missed being on the boat for some time afterwards ... It had obviously taken a really special place in their hearts. ... They had huge praise for all the staff and volunteers who made it such a super experience ... These people will be ones that stay in their memories forever; real role models to keep hold of, as they tackle life’s many challenges ... Most of the magic and memories will be theirs to keep inside - but all the touches we heard about made it well over and above what we expected: e.g. the fantastic and plentiful food and the bedtime story for all ages - inspired. Parents and grandparents loved following it all on social media and in your newsletter - so thank you for that, and we have now discovered that shipping tracker apps are very addictive!!”*



This year OYT South had a generous grant from the Gipsy Moth Trust to support a voyage for young people making the transition from teenage crew to trainee watchleaders and bosuns, leading, teaching and supervising others. One said: *“My memorable bit was when I was told I had to take down the mizzen and I had to lead it and I stressed myself out and I knocked my confidence by doubting myself and I was going like, ‘I can’t do it, I can’t do it,’ and then I done it and then Andy [first mate] took me to the side and he said, ‘you just did it, you can do it,’ and I think that was just like a really nice, just a really nice little chat”*. Another said: *“My favourite bit has just been*

really watching everyone throw themselves into leading stuff, it’s been really really impressive. But also how everyone else supported them when they were doing leading, that was really really good.”

Southampton International Boat Show asked us to organise a day sail for Redbridge School, based near the port of Southampton – the school chose students from a project to develop resilience and worked with them in advance on trying new experiences and having a go at things even if you feel nervous. One girl was terrified of going out on the bowsprit but steeled herself to try, so when she wrote in the comments book *“It was fun and I tried the net of the boat”*, that was a statement of real pride and hard-won achievement.



Shooting Star Children’s Hospices organised a voyage for ten young people who either have a life-limited brother or sister being supported by the hospice, or are from a family being supported by the hospice following the death of a child. A girl aged 14 said: *“The whole trip was a really nice break for my mental health”* and another said her best bit was *“all the new people and how, I dunno, the connections that I’ve made between everyone, like from the beginning to the end it’s just got stronger and stronger ... and the most memorable bit ... all the new skills I’ve learnt, all the things that I was really nervous to do and I’ve gone, ‘I’m not doing that,’ and then I end up doing it and it’s been my favourite bit.”*

A parent wrote after a voyage for Cowes Enterprise College: *"Thank you all so much, he has really enjoyed his time with you guys, an amazing experience for him and it's lovely to see him come out of his shell and his comfort zone. He hasn't stopped talking about his time away which really isn't like him."*

In October we had a training weekend for adults who are interesting in joining us as sailing volunteers. One said: *"Above all I have this real sense of the culture on this boat which I think is one of professionalism, it's one of learning, one of team spirit, and importantly too, one of humour. I've really enjoyed it, favourite moment no doubt was having a cup of tea on the bowsprit, for those of you who said you wished you had the superpower of flying, I would liken it to that."* Another said: *"I'd echo the professionalism and I think the standard of training is really brilliant and particularly I wanted to mention that all the permanent crew and the watchleaders were so good at giving instruction: you were making it very clear, and you were being very courteous and being extremely patient with us, and I thought your communication was really good and inspiring to draw out the best in people."*

The final youth voyage of the season was for east London charity Ambition, Aspire, Achieve, which supports young people from the borough of Newham. One boy said: *"Everyone was co-operating and it was lovely because everyone*



made new friends, they had fun, everyone had to work hard and some people even enjoyed sleeping on the boat ... it's an amazing co-operation where people can always go on the sea, do a lot of hard work, it's like five days off from the land and you enjoy yourself on the boat, it's like a new experience for everybody because some people haven't been on a boat before, and it's lovely." Another said: *"My favourite bit is the fact that I know how to sail a boat without no-one like to help, I just know how to do it".* One of the adult leaders who came with the AAA group told us: *"A really good part for me was getting to see all the young people that I work with, working as a team together and putting their differences aside, and focusing on what needed to be done ... Lots of learning and development made, thanks to you all"* and after the voyage was over, the AAA organiser wrote to say: *"I would like to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you to you, the crew and the captain for their patience and understanding and making the voyage a wonderful and fun experience for the young people. I know the young people were the most challenging we have sent on this trip. The young people were all smiles and talking about everything they had learnt and how much they had enjoyed themselves over the five days."*

That completed our first full season since 2019, after losing the whole of 2020 and half of 2021 to Covid.

Ocean Youth Trust South would like to record our immense gratitude to the sponsors, donors, clients, volunteers, staff and other supporters who saw us through the long months of the pandemic and ensured that the charity returned in a strong position to support the young people who who are still living in the shadow of lost opportunities, missed milestones and restricted development. The need for activities which take young people out of doors, learning new skills, developing independence and maturity, making new friends and overcoming anxiety and lack of confidence, is all too clear.

This report shows some of the broad range of young people who have sailed with us and how much their voyage experience meant to them as well as their families, schools and other organisations who helped to put their voyages together.

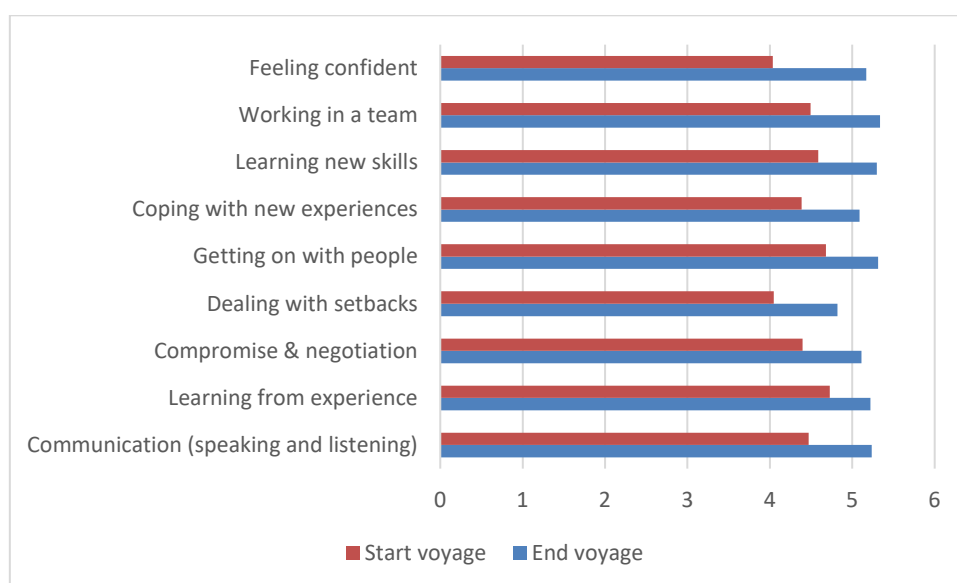
We are so grateful to everyone whose support helped to make this possible.



Facts and figures

- We ran a full programme of 47 voyages and day sails from March to November with only one and half voyages lost to Covid. This compares with 23 voyages and two day sails running in 2021 and none at all in 2020.
- *Prolific* sailed 4,745 miles during the 2022 sailing season.
- We had 597 crew berths available; we allocated 594 of them (99%); and 549 people actually sailed in crew berths (92% occupancy). Twelve people should have sailed on the voyage which was entirely cancelled due to Covid, and the remaining 33 unfilled berths were a combination of last-minute cancellations (often due to positive Covid tests) and clients who wanted to keep an exclusive booking despite having fewer than 12 people in their group.
- We also filled 234 volunteer berths, with volunteers giving 1,043 days to make these voyages possible. A quarter of volunteer berths were filled by people aged 16-25, almost all having sailed first on an ordinary youth voyage and impressed the skipper enough to be invited back for further training.
- 488 berths in total were filled by people aged 25 or under, including staff, volunteers and crew.
- 348 (63%) of people in crew berths had some specified disadvantage and a further 29 places went to adults essential for disadvantaged young people to sail (e.g. carers and support staff) – making 377 (69%) in total. 187 people had some form of physical or learning difficulty or mental health issue.
- 429 people completed pre- and post-voyage Outcomes Wheel self-evaluation sheets giving themselves marks out of 6 in different areas. Average changes during this year's voyages included:

	% change
Feeling confident	+ 28%
Working in a team	+ 19%
Learning new skills	+ 16%
Coping with new experiences	+ 16%
Getting on with people	+ 14%
Dealing with setbacks	+ 19%
Compromise & negotiation when living with different people	+ 16%
Learning from experience	+ 10%
Communication (speaking and listening)	+ 17%
Looking after myself	+9%



- 276 people earned RYA Start Yachting certificates, and 82 earned the more advanced RYA Competent Crew certificate. We always stress to young people and the staff working with them that these certificates represent much more than basic sailing competence: they can be used as evidence of transferrable skills. To earn a certificate, young people have to be able to listen, concentrate, work in a team, persist where they initially struggled, contribute to cooking and cleaning as well as the more exciting jobs, cope with living in an entirely unfamiliar situation and being away from home, undertake tasks which some will have found really challenging, take responsibility when asked, and much more.
- 83 people did well enough to earn a recommendation to come back and train as volunteers on our voyages – though in practice we don't expect everyone to take up their recommendation, and training berths will go those who are most keen and committed. Excluding adult and mates' training voyages, 53 sea staff recommendations went to people sailing on standard youth voyages.
- Among our volunteers, two people passed first mate assessments this year; five second mates; 15 third mates and three bosuns.

2023 boat visits for sponsors, donors and other supporters

Ocean Youth Trust South welcomes sponsors and donors who would like to visit *Prolific* or even come for a sail. Dates of 2023 day sails may include:

Sat 20th May
 Sun 21st May
 Sat 17th June
 Sun 18th June
 Sat 16th September tbc
 Sun 17th September tbc

Any of these might provide an opportunity for you to come and see our boat and find out more about how we work. The day sails run 0930-1700 from Southampton and we will sail in the Solent with lunch on board. No previous sailing experience needed! It is also possible to arrange shorter visits to the vessel in harbour in between youth voyages. Email caroline.white@oytsouth.org to arrange a visit or a day sail.



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