

# Evaluation Report

## The 'Surf Action Sharks 2015'

### An Integration Project Supporting the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Children in Families of Former and Serving Military Personnel

01/04/15 – 30/09/15



Kindly Funded by:

**The Duchy Health Charity**

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# SURF ACTION

Surf Action was established in Cornwall in 2009 and is now a registered Charity (number 1140191). An award winning and pioneering project, Surf Action aims to promote and protect the physical and psychological wellbeing of serving and former serving members of the armed forces and the blue-light emergency services and their families who are living with physical and/or psychological difficulties as a result of their service and to assist them into making the transition into civilian life, in particular but not exclusively, by:

- Introducing them to surfing, high intensity water sports and involving them in peer group activities.
- Providing access to support, guidance, signposting and education.
- Providing access to information and peer support relationships for their families.
- Engaging them in various projects within communities.

By making use of the stunning coastal environment and offering holistic support which takes into account the practical, social and psychological difficulties which some service-users can experience, we do not seek to replicate the valuable work carried out by existing military and civilian organisations and charities, but to complement, signpost to, and work with them to fill the gaps identified by the service-users who come to us. Published PhD research recently carried out with Loughborough University has lent support to the Surf Action model and significantly extended previous knowledge on physical activity, military veterans and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) by highlighting how nature-based physical activity – encapsulated in the conceptual notion of the “Blue Gym” – can significantly promote well-being among military veterans and other service-users.

**Surf Action is the only organisation providing evidence-based ocean therapy to support the mental health and wellbeing of serving military, veterans and their families in the UK.**

Rogers C, Mallinson T, Peppers D (2014), ‘High-Intensity Sports for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Depression: Feasibility Study of Ocean Therapy With Veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom’, *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* 68, 395-404.

Caddick, N., Smith, B., & Phoenix, C. (2015). The effects of surfing and the natural environment on the well-being of combat veterans. *Qualitative Health Research*, 25, 76-86.

Caddick N & Smith B (2014), ‘The impact of sport and physical activity on the well-being of combat veterans; A systematic review.’ *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* 15, 9-18.

Thomson Koon, J. Boddy, K. Stein, K. Whear, R. Barton, J. and Depledge, M.H. 2011. Does Participating in Physical Activity in Outdoor Natural Environments Have a Greater Effect on Physical and Mental Well-being than Physical Activity Indoors? A Systematic Review. *Environmental Science and Technology* DOI: 10.1021/es102947t

Since being founded Surf Action has also championed **social inclusion** and **cohesion** between the **military, veteran and civilian communities**. It has sought to help individuals, families and communities by providing educational information as a tool with which to empower them to make positive changes in their lives and communities.

# The 'Surf Action' Sharks Project



## Background

The 2014 Duchy Health Presidential Lecture – 'Medics in a War Zone' highlighted the increase in trauma and PTSD in serving personnel. This complemented the growing bank of evidence to show that children of military families often experience multiple stress factors before and during their parent's deployment and when they come home. Without appropriate mental health support systems, children of military personnel may be at a significant disadvantage compared with their peers in non-military families. The increase in active deployment, use of reservists and the lag in identification of and support for PTSD in military veterans is increasing the range and intensity of the issue and building up huge capacity issues for children's mental health services.

Research has shown that children from military families experience relatively high rates of mental health, trauma and related problems. Military life can be a source of psychological stress for children. Multiple deployments, frequent moves and having a parent injured or die is a reality for many children in military families. Wartime parental deployments can be one of the most stressful events of a child's life. Behavioral changes include changes in school performance, lashing out in anger, worrying, hiding emotions, disrespecting parents and authority figures, feeling a sense of loss, and symptoms consistent with depression.

In depth studies of children with deployed parents in the US showed that:

- High levels of sadness were seen in children in all age groups
- Depression was seen in about one in four children
- Academic problems occurred in one in five children
- 37% of children with a deployed parent reported that they seriously worry about what could happen to them
- Parents reported that one in five children coped poorly or very poorly to deployment separation

- Media coverage of war posed a significant source of stress for children and made it much more difficult for children to cope with a parent's deployment

In late 2014 Surf Action applied to the Duchy Health Charity for funding to run a project which would explore and evidence the benefits of early intervention to support, and in doing so reduce, the increasing demands for the services of the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). We intended to do this through a programme of activities that integrate children from forces and non-forces families through surfing and beach related activities. A recently published doctorate based on the Surf Action Ocean Therapy Course evidenced the link between surfing and beach activities and increased mental health and wellbeing of participants. We wanted to explore the benefits of this approach for the children of military and veteran families and to try to measure the benefits for the children.

The project intended to enable forces children to better integrate in their communities, make new friends in non-military families and cope with change, feelings of anxiety and loss.

## The Duchy Health Charity



The Duchy Health Charity became a grant making body over 21 years ago with the sale of the Duchy Hospital whose proceeds were placed into a charitable fund to improve health, well-being and the provision of healthcare throughout the length and breadth of Cornwall.

In February 2015 Surf Action was kindly awarded a grant of £10,000 by The Duchy Health Charity to fund the 'Surf Action Sharks' project.





# Project aims

The aims of the project were:

1. To explore and evidence the benefits of early intervention to support the mental health and well-being of children in families of former and military personnel.
2. To help to reduce the demands on the services of the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) by:
  - a. Supporting the physical and psychological wellbeing of the participants.
  - b. Encouraging participants to make friends, reduce isolation, build self esteem, and build self-confidence and self-reliance.
  - c. Provide families with the opportunity to take part in surfing and beach activities thus developing and strengthening family ties.
  - d. To build emotional resilience in the participants and make them better able to deal with the absence of a deployed parent.
3. To encourage conversations between the parents of the participants so as to strengthen contacts within the civilian, veteran and military communities thus widening the support available to the spouses and children of deployed partners.
4. By engaging families in a healthy, demanding and fun activity such as surfing, something which most will not have tried before, to encourage parents to take the time to re-assess their family dynamics and the way they interact with their children and to see the considerable benefits which healthy outdoor activities can bring when they are participated in as a family.
5. To continue in helping develop the project expertise and knowledgebase with Surf Action

## Methodology

### 1. Participants

The participants came from 3 sources:

1. RAF St Mawgan families
2. RNAS Culdrose families
3. Local schools
4. Veteran families known to Surf Action

The project was advertised through social media relevant to each source and through the Family and Welfare organisations of the military establishments and local education facilities. The interest was immediate and the various courses available were rapidly filled. From the outset Surf Action tried to achieve a satisfactory service background and gender balance for the project. The maximum number of child places available was 60 (10 per course).

### Surf Action Sharks 2015 Overall Gender Distribution

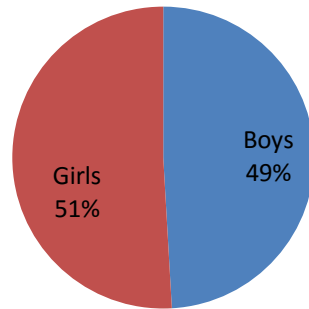


Diagram 1

### Surf Action Sharks 2015 Overall Service Background Distribution

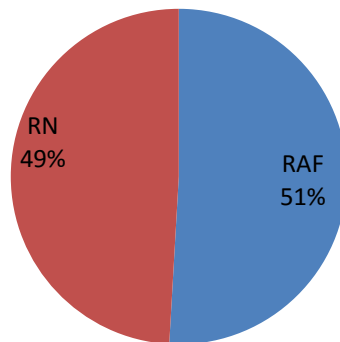


Diagram 2

### Surf Action Sharks 2015 Overall Age Distribution By Service Background

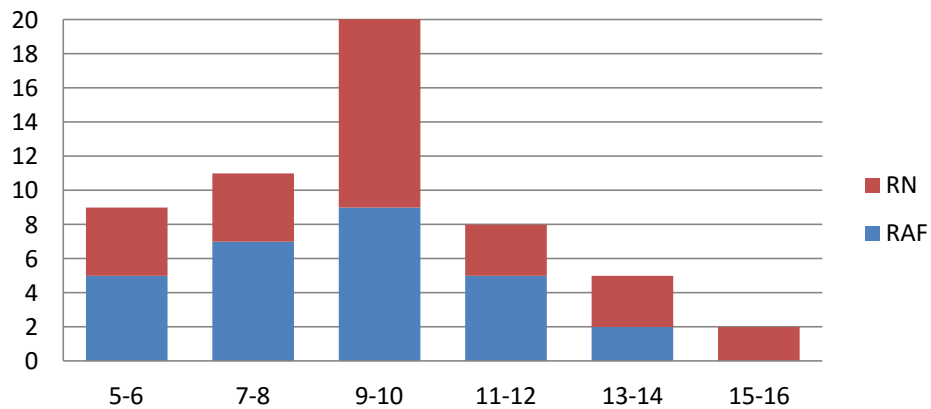


Diagram 3

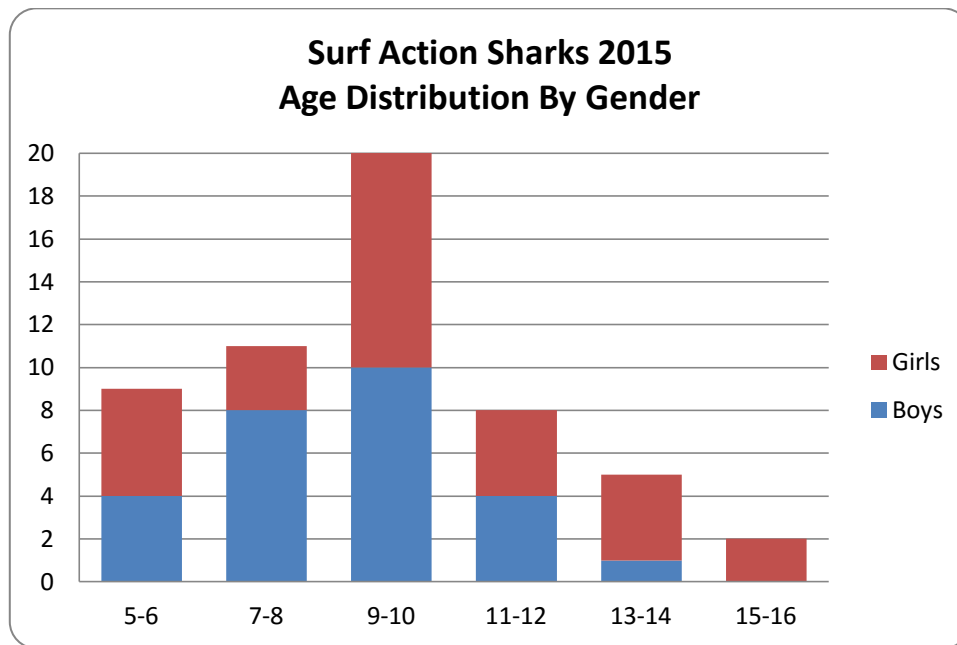


Diagram 4

The range of ages was 10 years with the youngest child being 6 years old. The mean age was 9.5 years. A total of 55 children/young people fully participated thus filling 92% of the 60 available places.

## 2. Client Ethnicity

Due to the ethnic make-up of Cornwall all the clients were white. This is consistent with the demographic of the county as a whole in which 98.7% of the population define themselves as white (ONS 2008)

## 3. Activities

Surf Action decided to adapt Surf Action's community-based, sports-oriented, fully risk assessed occupational therapy course (Ocean Therapy) which uses the high-intensity sport of surfing in an experiential, skills-based experience specifically adapted for military personnel and veterans seeking mental health services. Consistent with conceptualizations of the transformative nature of engagement in meaningful occupations and the dynamic influence of environment on a person's performance this course combines surfing performance, focused group processing, and social participation to create opportunities for veterans to examine ways in which their individual values, abilities, and experiences can support successful transition to civilian life. By providing individual support in the water for each child, preferably from one or both of their parents, to help build confidence and by adding extra fun challenges and games in the water we hoped that it would have similar beneficial effects on the children as well as their parents. Parents who did not go into the water but who remained on the beach whilst their child was in the water then had the opportunity to chat to other parents from the civilian and military community for a couple of hours and to discuss a wide range of common issues etc in a very welcoming atmosphere and environment.

Six, eight week, Ocean Therapy Courses were run with three each at Newquay (using Great Western or Tolcarne beaches on Saturday mornings) and Praa Sands (on Sunday mornings). These venues were selected as they were the best suited for RAF St Mawgan families (Newquay) and RNAS

Culdrose families (Praa Sands). There were always two courses running at any one time with one at each venue and they were run back to back from May until October. All equipment such as wetsuits, boots, gloves and surf boards were provided by Surf Action. Fully trained Surf Action surf instructors and lifeguards were in attendance at all times.

## 4. Evaluation Measures

An important part of the project was evaluating whether the sessions had a positive effect on the participants.

Psychological well-being is now largely accepted as covering two perspectives: (1) the subjective experience of happiness (affect) and life satisfaction (the hedonic perspective); and (2) positive psychological functioning, good relationships with others and self realization (the eudaimonic perspective). The latter includes the capacity for self development, positive relations with others, autonomy, self acceptance and competence. Thus we wanted to use an easy but psychometrically robust, validated wellbeing scale which would reflect both the hedonic and eudaimonic perspective. Our preference was for the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) with its respondent 1 – 5 Likert Scale.

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale was funded by the Scottish Government National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Well-being, commissioned by NHS Health Scotland, developed by the University of Warwick and the University of Edinburgh, and is jointly owned by NHS Health Scotland, the University of Warwick and the University of Edinburgh.

It is a positively worded scale measuring emotional and psychological wellbeing, validated with children aged 8 upwards. Because of the simplicity of the measure we decided to extrapolate its use to the age of 6.

We asked the children to complete a simple questionnaire that used this scale to measure their self-esteem, self-confidence, relationships and achievements.

The abbreviated WEMWBS form consisted of 7 positively worded statements:

1. I'm feeling good about the future?
2. I've made new friends?
3. I've had fun today?
4. I feel better about myself?
5. I've had fun with my family?
6. I've learnt something new today?
7. I am looking forward to my next session?

There were 5 possible responses to each statement:

- All of the time (scoring 5 points)
- Often (4 points)
- Some of the time (3 points)
- Rarely (2 points)



- Not at all (1 point)

The minimum score possible on each form was 7 (a score of 1, meaning 'not at all', for each of the seven questions) and the maximum score possible was 35 (a score of 5, meaning 'all of the time', for each of the 7 questions). In order to make the questionnaire easy and fun for the very young clients to complete we included facial emoticons within it to guide them. Volunteers and parents were also on hand to guide them if required.

The WEMWBS form was completed at weeks 1, 4 and 8 during each course. 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 and improved family relationships. Any participant who was absent at week 1 or failed to complete the week 1 WEMWBS report was asked to repeat it at week 2 so that good base-line data was achieved. The week 4 WEMWBS reporting score was used if a participant missed the final reporting cycle at week 8 and thus it gave us a sufficiently robust intervention data set. Qualitative data was also collected from the adults by way of conversations and social interactions. At the same time Surf Action was able to gain a good awareness of current and looming problems amongst the families/communities.

Gender based means and group means for each of the 7 questions were then calculated (falling between 1 and 5) and the data analysed. By virtue of the questions being positively worded the lower the WEMWBS score the more stressors are indicated in the participant's life. Means and standard deviations were extensively calculated for each individual, gender, service background and the overall group so that progress could be tracked. An improvement in wellbeing would be indicated if there was an increase in the mean at the end of each course and a narrowing of the standard deviation thus indicating more consistent grouping around the improved mean. This could then be validly interpreted as an improvement in wellbeing. Before and after total WEMWBS scores were also calculated for each individual, gender and population. By knowing the background of all participants we could eliminate population bias at the outset.

## Results and Findings

### 1. Attendance

Surf Action Sharks 2015: Attendance	
27 Boys	87%
28 Girls	85%
55 Total	86%

The overall attendance figures were very high and this was indicative of how enjoyable the participants found their course. Considering that courses were run through the late spring, summer and then well into the autumn with the attendant common problems such as bad weather, illness, school commitments and family holidays etc, this was most gratifying as was the fact that only one session of one course had to be cancelled due to the weather making it unsafe to go into the water. We would hope that this will encourage the youngsters to continue participating in healthy outdoor activities at weekends.

## 2. Participant WEMWBS Results: Full Data Set

Initial WEMWBS Scores												
	Age		I'm feeling good about the future	I've made new friends	I've had fun today	I'm feeling better about myself	I've had fun with my family	I've learned something new today	I'm looking forward to my next session	Mean	ST DEV	Initial WEMWBS Score
Boys	8		4	3	5	5	5	5	4	4.43	0.79	31
	10		5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4.86	0.38	34
	8		5	5	5	5	4	5	5	4.86	0.38	34
	10		4	4	5	3	1	3	4	3.43	1.27	24
	8		5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4.86	0.38	34
	10		5	5	5	5	4	5	5	4.86	0.38	34
	11		3	1	5	2	1	1	5	2.57	1.81	18
	6		4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.86	0.38	34
	12		3	3	3	4	4	4	4	3.57	0.53	25
	10		5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35
	7		5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35
	8		5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4.57	0.53	32
	7		5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35
	10		5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35
	6		4	4	5	3	3	4	5	4.00	0.82	28
	10		5	3	5	5	5	5	5	4.71	0.76	33
	6		4	4	4	4	4	5	5	4.29	0.49	30
	9		4	3	5	4	5	5	5	4.43	0.79	31
	10		3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3.14	0.38	22
	11		4	3	4	5	3	4	4	3.86	0.69	27
	10		3	1	3	3	3	4	3	2.86	0.90	20
	13		3	3	4	4	4	4	4	3.71	0.49	26
	12		3	4	4	4	3	5	5	4.00	0.82	28
	8		3	4	5	3	3	5	5	4.00	1.00	28
	9		5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35
	7		5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35
	6		4	4	3	3	2	5	5	3.71	1.11	26

Final WEMWBS Scores												
I'm feeling good about the future	I've made new friends	I've had fun today	I'm feeling better about myself	I've had fun with my family	I've learned something new today	I'm looking forward to my next session	Mean	ST DEV	Final WEMWBS Score	% Change in Mean		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	12.90		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	2.94		
5	5	5	5	4	5	5	4.86	0.38	34	0.00		
5	3	5	5	5	5	5	4.71	0.76	33	37.50		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	2.94		
5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4.71	0.49	33	-2.94		
4	3	5	4	3	4	5	4.00	0.82	28	55.56		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	2.94		
4	4	5	5	5	5	5	4.71	0.49	33	32.00		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	0.00		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	0.00		
3	5	5	4	5	5	5	4.57	0.79	32	0.00		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	0.00		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	0.00		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	25.00		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	6.06		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	16.67		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	12.90		
4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4.00	0.00	28	27.27		
5	5	4	5	3	4	5	4.43	0.79	31	14.81		
4	4	5	4	3	4	5	4.14	0.69	29	45.00		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	34.62		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	25.00		
4	5	5	5	5	4	5	4.71	0.49	33	17.86		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	0.00		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	0.00		
5	5	5	5	4	5	5	4.86	0.38	34	30.77	14.81	Av % Boys

Girls	10		4	5	5	4	5	5	5	4.71	0.49	33
	14		4	4	5	4	3	3	4	3.86	0.69	27
	13		3	1	5	3	3	4	5	3.43	1.40	24
	6		5	5	5	4	5	4	5	4.71	0.49	33
	6		4	5	4	3	5	5	5	4.43	0.79	31
	6		5	4	4	5	5	5	5	4.71	0.49	33
	8		5	4	5	4	5	5	5	4.71	0.49	33
	9		5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35
	9		4	4	4	2	5	5	5	4.14	1.07	29
	10		4	5	5	4	4	5	5	4.57	0.53	32
	11		5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35
	12		3	3	4	4	4	5	5	4.00	0.82	28
	11		3	4	5	3	4	5	5	4.14	0.90	29
	10		5	3	5	4	4	5	5	4.43	0.79	31
	6		4	4	5	4	4	5	5	4.43	0.53	31
	14		5	1	4	5	4	5	5	4.14	1.46	29
	6		3	4	5	3	3	4	4	3.71	0.76	26
	13		4	5	5	4	4	5	5	4.57	0.53	32
	10		3	1	5	3	4	5	5	3.71	1.50	26
	9		3	4	5	4	4	5	5	4.29	0.76	30
	9		5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4.86	0.38	34
	10		4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.86	0.38	34
	11		3	5	4	5	4	3	5	4.14	0.90	29
	15		4	4	5	4	5	5	5	4.57	0.53	32
	16		4	4	5	4	4	5	5	4.43	0.53	31
	9		3	4	5	3	3	4	4	3.71	0.76	26
	7		4	3	4	4	4	5	4	4.00	0.58	28
	8		5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35
	Mean	Mean	4.11	3.96	4.67	4.11	4.11	4.58	4.73	4.32	0.32	5.06
55	9.45	ST DEV	0.81	1.20	0.58	0.88	1.01	0.79	0.53			3.07
		Total	226	218	257	226	226	252	260	237.86	17.67	4.14

5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4.86	0.38	34	3.03		
5	3	4	5	5	5	5	4.57	0.79	32	18.52		
4	3	5	3	4	5	5	4.14	0.90	29	20.83		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	6.06		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	12.90		
5	5	5	5	4	4	5	4.71	0.49	33	0.00		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	6.06		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	0.00		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	20.69		
5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4.86	0.38	34	6.25		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	0.00		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	25.00		
4	5	5	5	5	4	5	4.71	0.49	33	13.79		
5	4	5	4	5	5	5	4.71	0.49	33	6.45		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	12.90		
5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4.71	0.49	33	13.79		
5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4.86	0.38	34	30.77		
5	4	5	4	5	5	5	4.71	0.49	33	3.13		
5	5	5	5	4	5	5	4.86	0.38	34	30.77		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	16.67		
5	5	5	5	4	5	5	4.86	0.38	34	0.00		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	2.94		
3	5	5	4	4	4	5	4.29	0.76	30	3.45		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	9.38		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	12.90		
3	4	5	5	3	5	5	4.29	0.95	30	15.38		
4	5	4	4	3	5	4	4.14	0.69	29	3.57		
5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5.00	0.00	35	0.00	10.54	Av % Girls
4.75	4.75	4.93	4.75	4.64	4.84	4.96	4.80	0.12	2.20			
0.55	0.58	0.26	0.48	0.65	0.37	0.19			1.91		12.64	Overall %
261	261	271	261	255	266	273	264.00	6.35	2.04			

# Surf Action Sharks 2015

## Initial WEMWBS Scores for 55 Participants

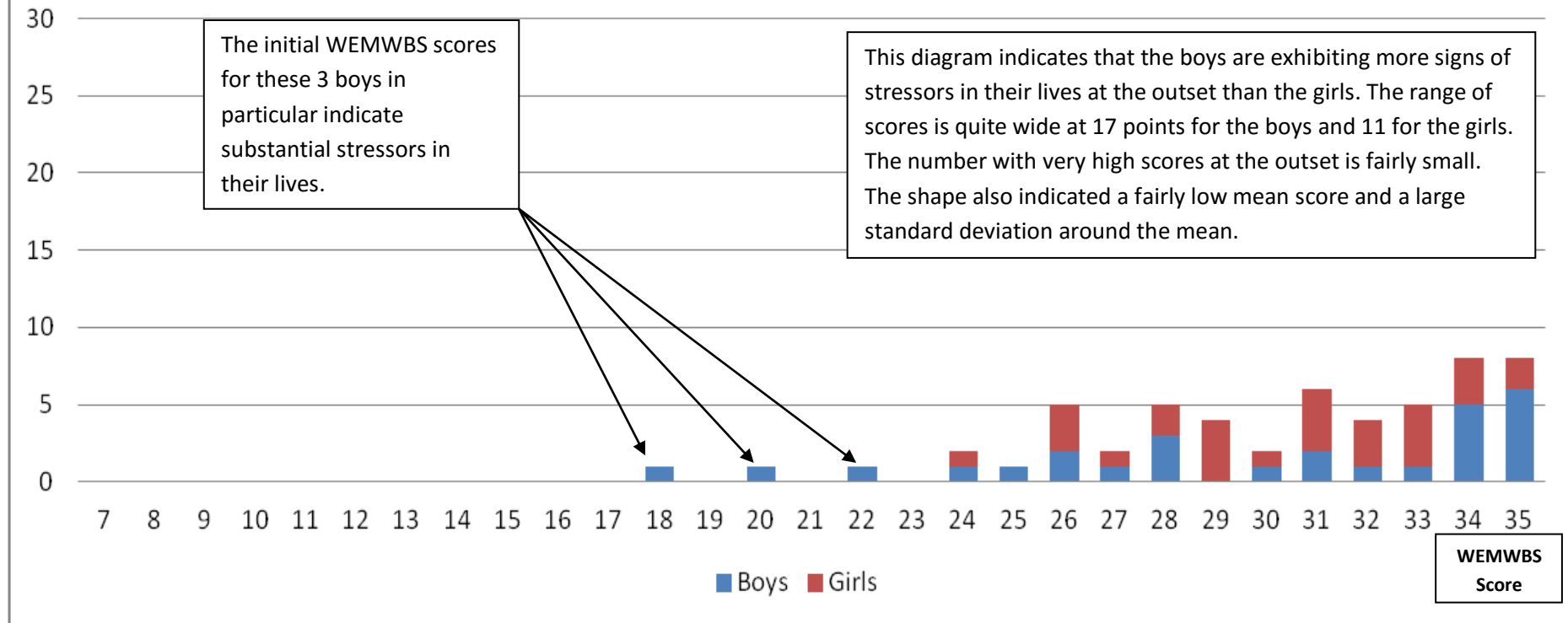


Diagram 5

The range of boys' scores is  $35 - 18 = 17$  WEMWBS points, and the mean score is 30 with a standard deviation of 5.06 points  
 The range of girl's scores is  $35 - 24 = 11$  WEMWBS points and the mean score is 31 with a standard deviation of 3.07 points  
 The overall range of scores is  $35 - 18 = 17$  WEMWBS points and the mean score is 30 with a standard deviation of 4.14 points



## Surf Action Sharks 2015 Intervention WEMWBS Scores for 55 Participants

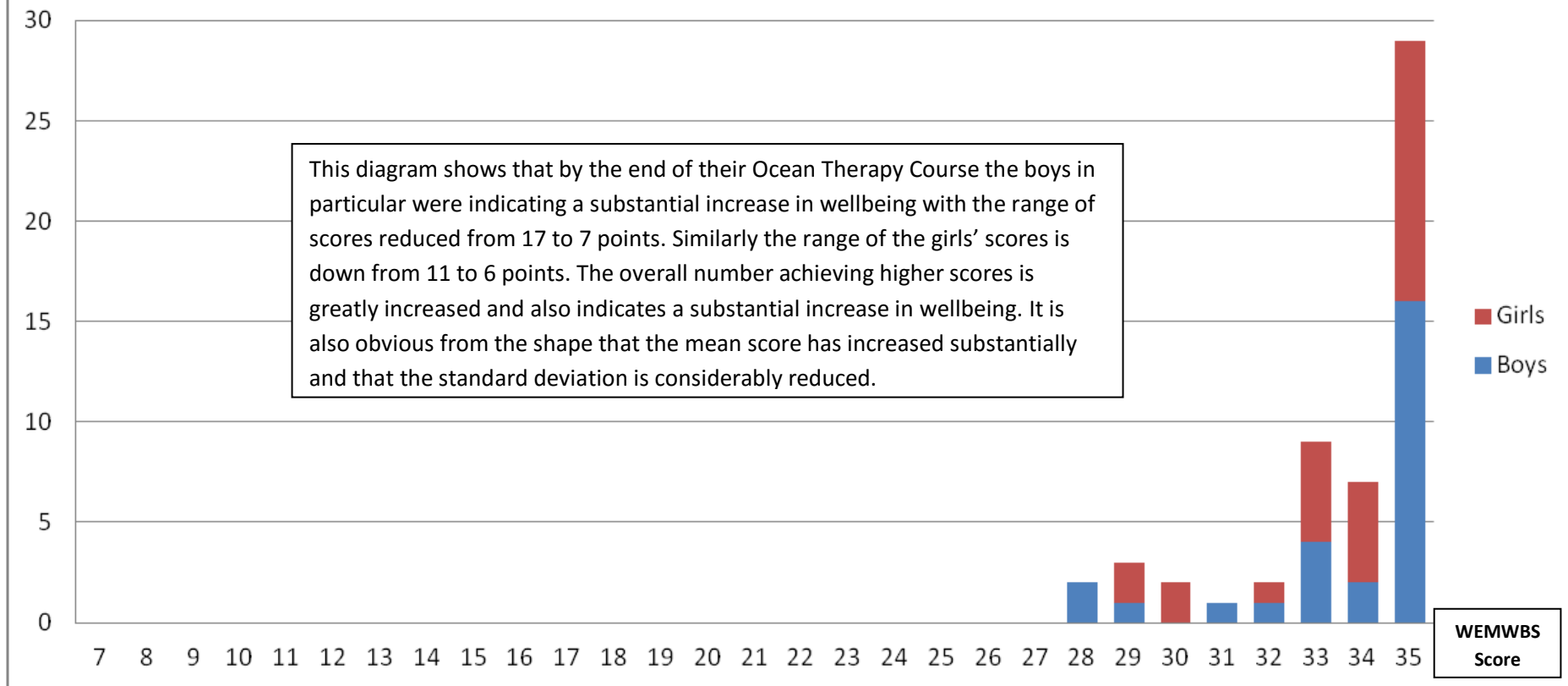


Diagram 6

The range of boys' scores is 35-28=7 WEMWBS points and the mean score is 33.5 with a standard deviation of 2.2 points  
 The range of the girls' scores is 35-29=6 WEMWBS points and the mean score is 33.5 with a standard deviation of 1.91 points  
 The overall range of scores is 35-28=7 WEMWBS points and the mean score is 33.6 with a standard deviation of 2.04 points

# Surf Action Sharks 2015

## A Scatter Graph Showing the Individual Spread of WEMWBS Scores for each of the 55 Participants



Diagram 7

The Minimum possible WEMWBS Score is 7 and the maximum possible score is 35  
 The greater the difference between the initial and final WEMWBS scores indicates the change in wellbeing

## Surf Action Sharks 2015

### Overall Group Total WEMWBS Scores Per Question

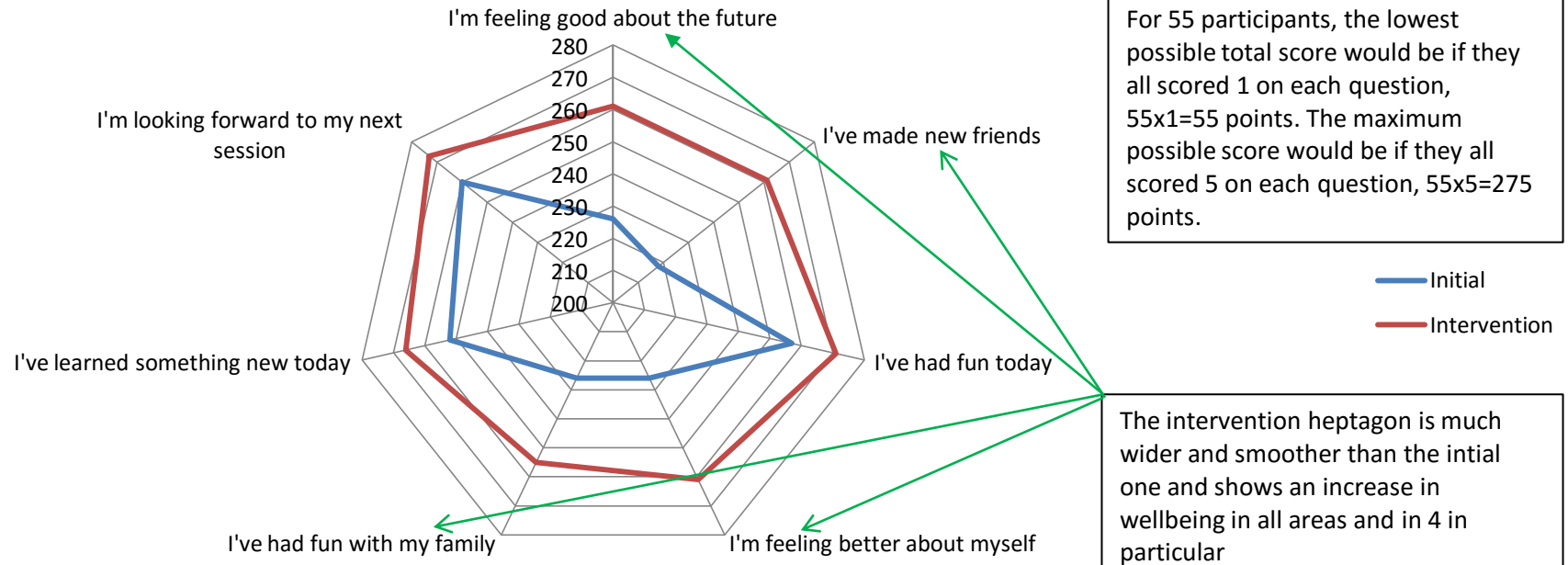


Diagram 8

Total WEMWBS Scores	I'm feeling good about the future	I've made new friends	I've had fun today	I'm feeling better about myself	I've had fun with my family	I've learned something new today	I'm looking forward to my next session
Initial	226	218	257	226	226	252	260
Intervention	261	261	271	261	255	266	273
% Increase	15.49	19.72	5.45	15.49	12.83	5.56	5.00

## Surf Action Sharks 2015

### Overall Group Mean WEMWBS Scores Per Question

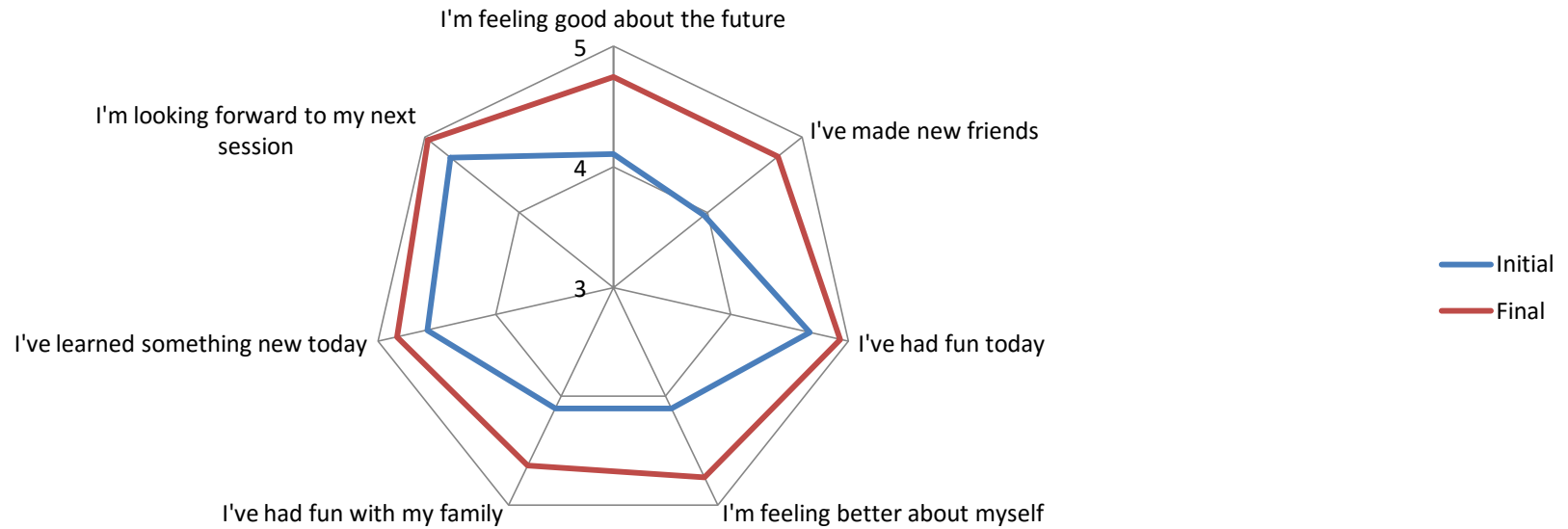


Diagram 9

WEMWBS Scores	I'm feeling good about the future	I've made new friends	I've had fun today	I'm feeling better about myself	I've had fun with my family	I've learned something new today	I'm looking forward to my next session
Initial	4.11	3.96	4.67	4.11	4.11	4.58	4.73
Final	4.75	4.75	4.93	4.75	4.64	4.84	4.96
% Increase	15.49	19.72	5.45	15.49	12.83	5.56	5.00

## Surf Action Sharks 2015

### Grouped Mean WEMWBS Scores/Question for the 27 Boys

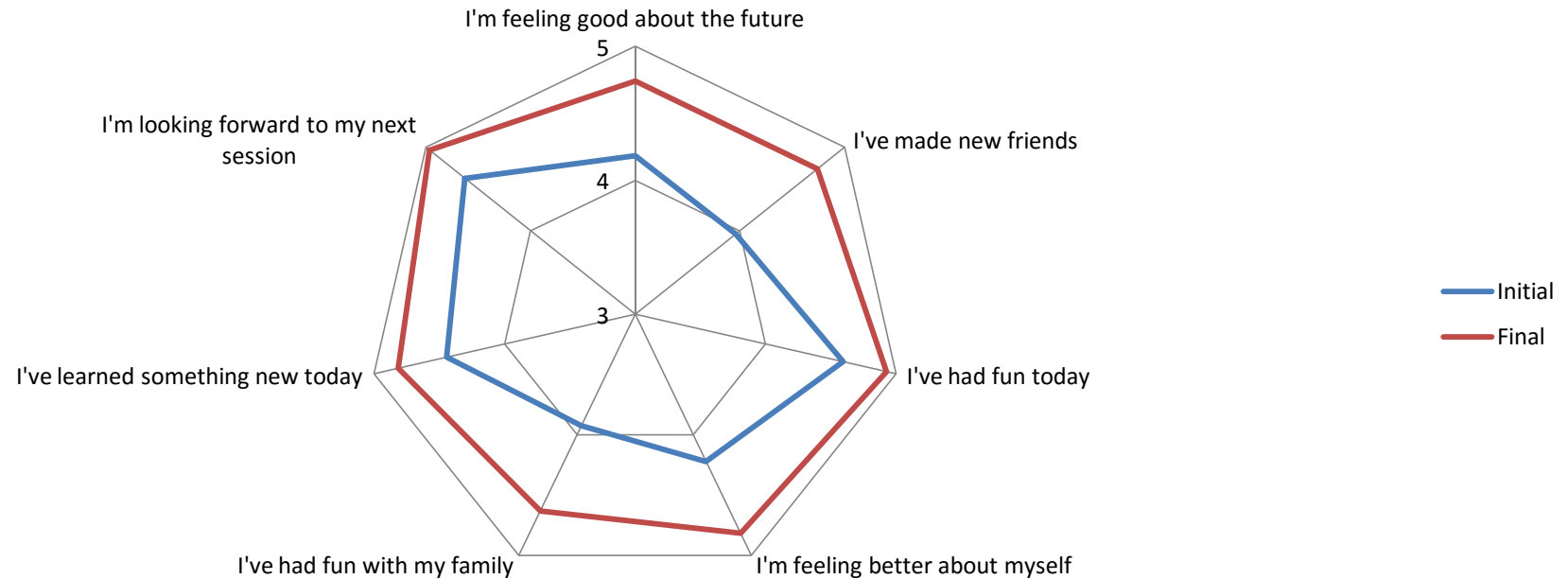


Diagram 10

WEMWBS Scores	I'm feeling good about the future	I've made new friends	I've had fun today	I'm feeling better about myself	I've had fun with my family	I've learned something new today	I'm looking forward to my next session
Initial	4.19	3.96	4.59	4.22	3.93	4.44	4.63
Final	4.74	4.74	4.93	4.81	4.63	4.81	4.96
% Increase	13.13	19.70	7.40	13.98	17.81	8.33	7.13

## Surf Action Sharks 2015

### Grouped Mean WEMWBS Scores/Question for the 28 Girls

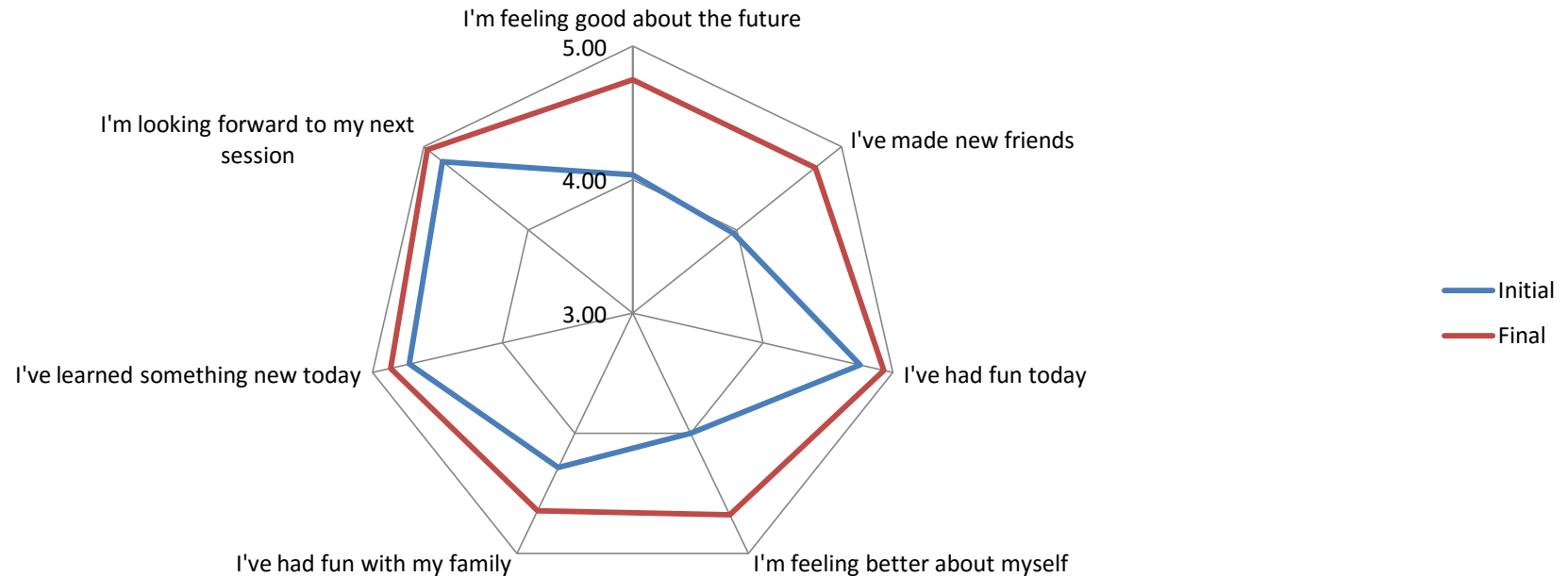


Diagram 11

WEMWBS Scores	I'm feeling good about the future	I've made new friends	I've had fun today	I'm feeling better about myself	I've had fun with my family	I've learned something new today	I'm looking forward to my next session
Initial	4.04	3.96	4.75	4.00	4.29	4.71	4.82
Final	4.75	4.75	4.93	4.68	4.64	4.86	4.96
% Increase	17.70	19.82	3.76	16.96	8.33	3.03	2.96



# **Surf Action Sharks 2015** **Overall Mean WEMWBS Scores/Question for the 12 Boys and 15 Girls with a** **Royal Navy Family Background**

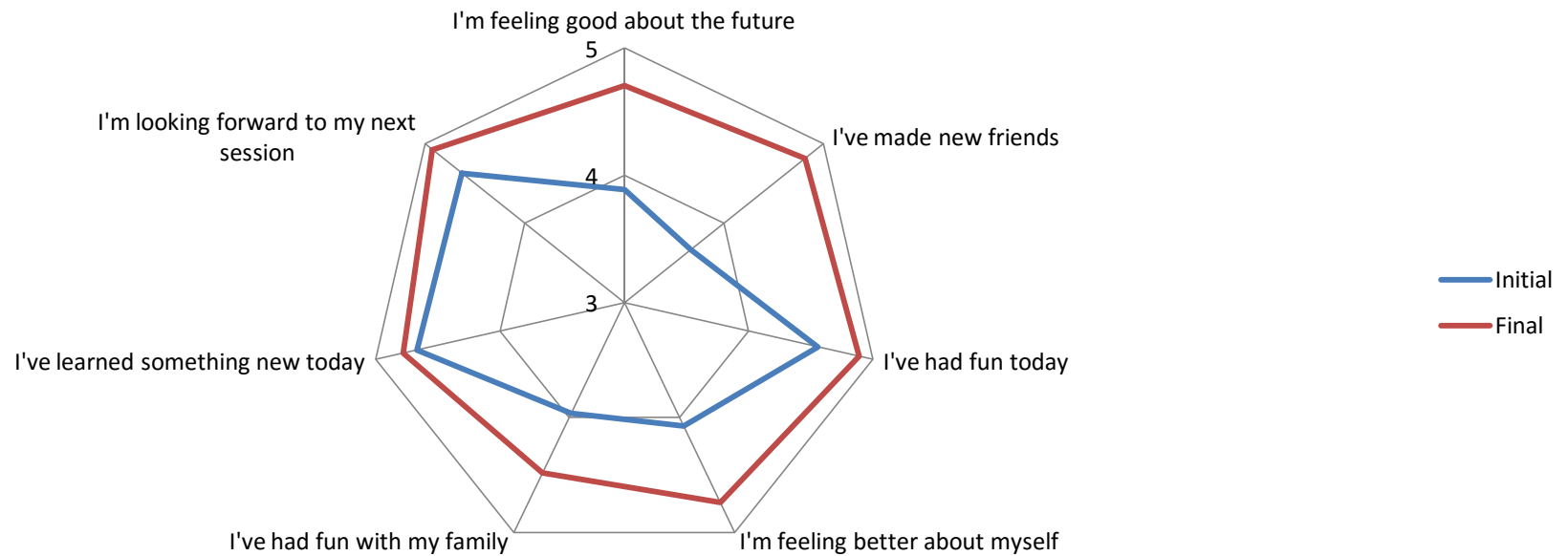


Diagram 12

WEMWBS Scores	I'm feeling good about the future	I've made new friends	I've had fun today	I'm feeling better about myself	I've had fun with my family	I've learned something new today	I'm looking forward to my next session
Initial	3.89	3.67	4.56	4.07	3.96	4.67	4.63
Final	4.70	4.81	4.89	4.74	4.48	4.78	4.93
% Increase	20.95	31.31	7.32	16.36	13.08	2.38	6.40

# **Surf Action Sharks 2015** **Overall Mean WEMWBS Scores/Question for the 15 Boys and 13 Girls with a** **Royal Airforce Family Background**

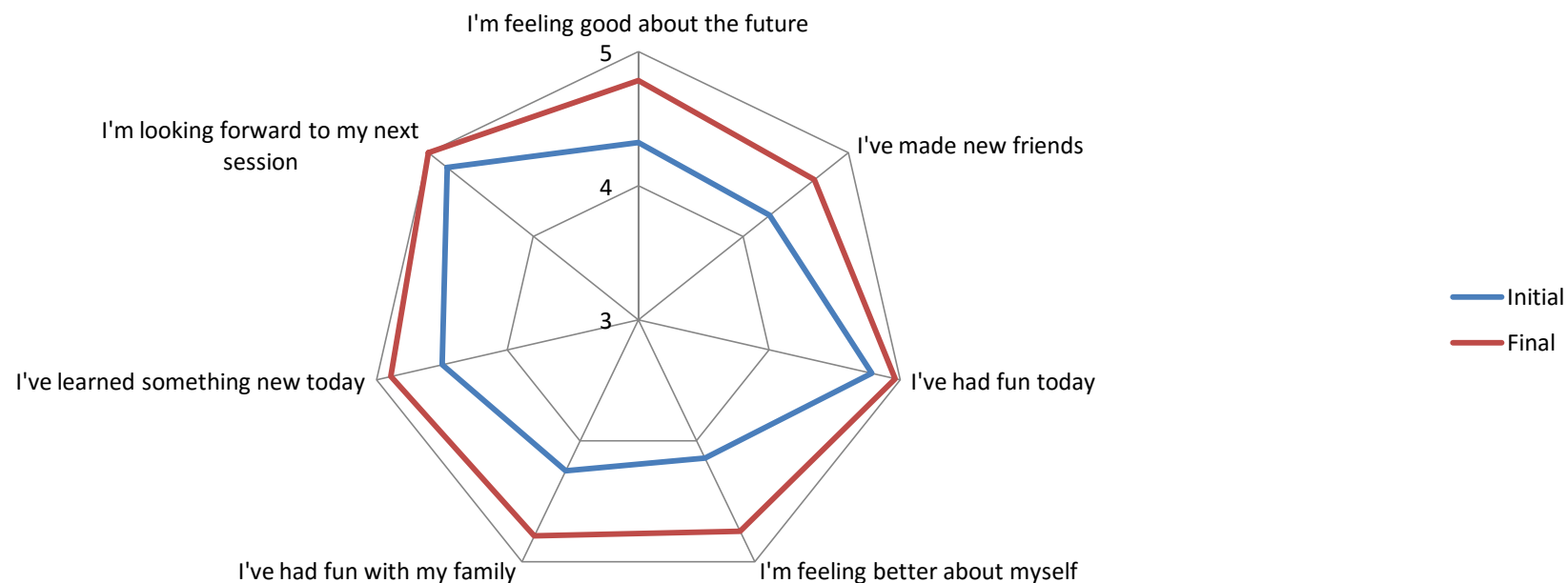


Diagram 13

WEMWBS Scores	I'm feeling good about the future	I've made new friends	I've had fun today	I'm feeling better about myself	I've had fun with my family	I've learned something new today	I'm looking forward to my next session
Initial	4.32	4.25	4.79	4.14	4.25	4.50	4.82
Final	4.79	4.68	4.96	4.75	4.79	4.89	5.00
% Increase	10.74	10.08	3.73	14.66	12.61	8.73	3.70

## Surf Action Sharks 2015

### The Boy showing the most improved WEMWBS Scores

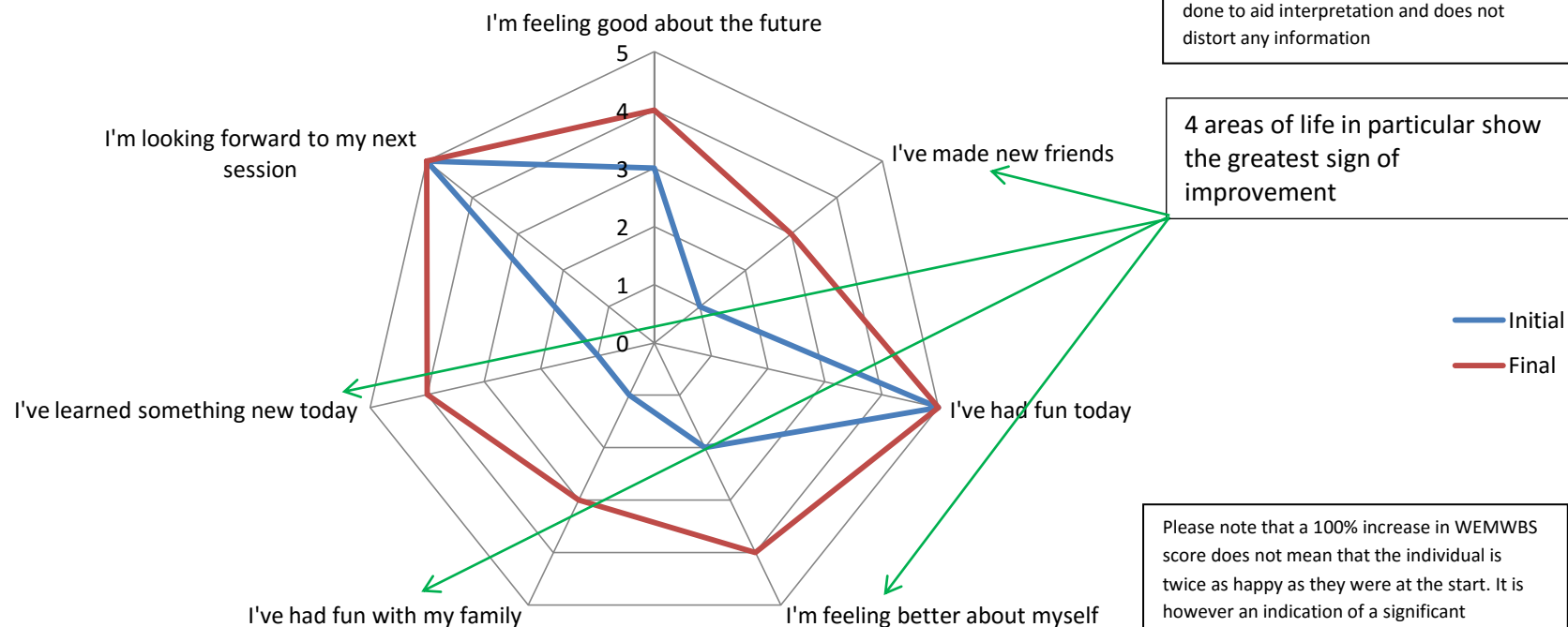


Diagram 14

WEMWBS Scores	I'm feeling good about the future	I've made new friends	I've had fun today	I'm feeling better about myself	I've had fun with my family	I've learned something new today	I'm looking forward to my next session
Initial	3	1	5	2	1	1	5
Final	4	3	5	4	3	4	5
% Increase	33.33	200.00	0.00	100.00	200.00	300.00	0.00

## Surf Action Sharks 2015

### Girl with most improved WEMWBS Scores

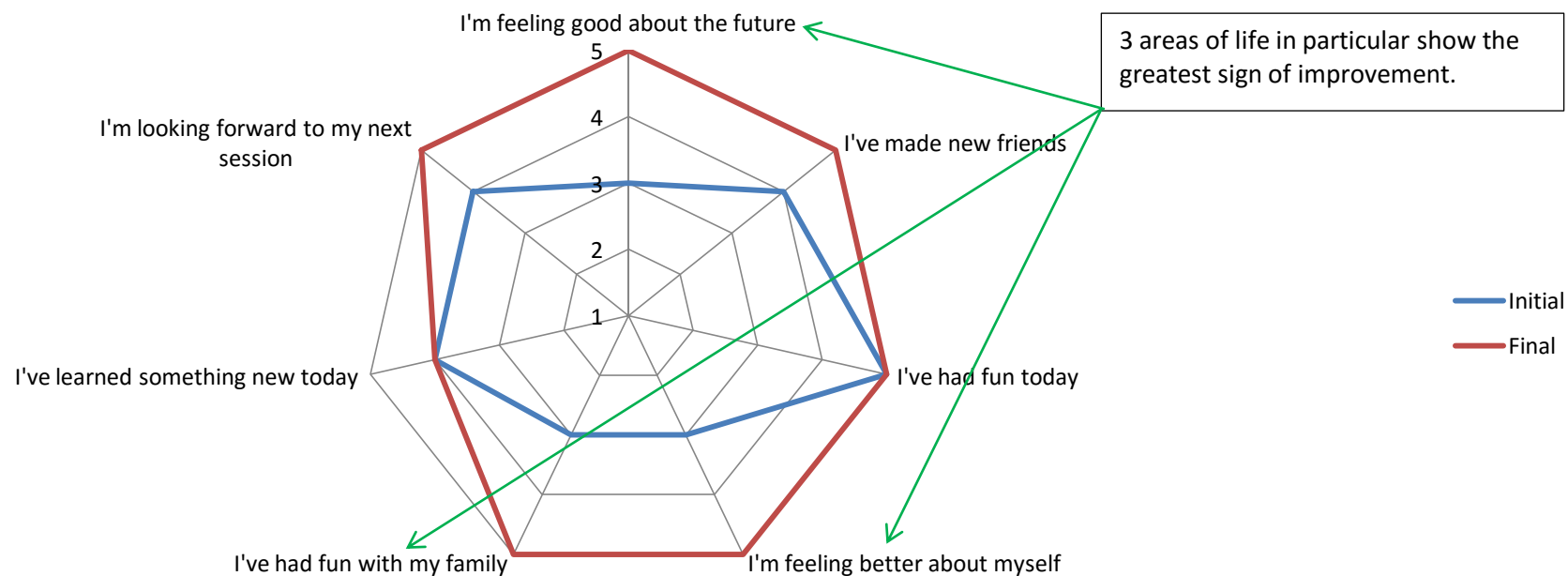


Diagram 15

WEMWBS Score	I'm feeling good about the future	I've made new friends	I've had fun today	I'm feeling better about myself	I've had fun with my family	I've learned something new today	I'm looking forward to my next session
Initial	3	4	5	3	3	4	4
Final	5	5	5	5	5	4	5
% Increase	66.67	25.00	0.00	66.67	66.67	0.00	25.00

### 3. Findings:



#### Children

The diagrams above consistently show a significant improvement in the mean WEMWBS wellbeing scores/question amongst the participants.

% Improvement in Mean WEMWBS Wellbeing Scores	
27 Boys	14.81
28 Girls	10.54
55 Participants Overall	12.64

For the boys this ranged between a 55.6% increase for one boy whilst 8 boys who scored 35 on both initial and final WEMWBS forms showed 0% change by definition. One boy did show a 2.94% decrease but this was from a very high initial WEMWBS score and is thus not statistically significant.

For the girls it ranged between a 30.77% increase and 0% change for the 3 girls who scored 35 on both initial and final WEMWBS forms by definition. 2 other girls showed 0% increase but again this was already from a very high score and is not statistically significant.

For both the boys and girls the mean WEMWBS score/question increased and the standard deviation decreased thus indicating a general increase in the wellbeing measure with the scores more tightly packed around the higher mean.

Diagram 5 clearly shows that at the outset the group range of scores was between 18 and 35. It is also fair to state that the boys were showing more stressors in their lives with 3 scoring below 24, the lowest girls score.

Diagram 6 clearly shows that by the end the range of scores had been reduced to 7 and the boys and girls scores were much more similar. Thus we can say that the boys showed a greater increase in their wellbeing scores and caught up with the girls.

Diagrams 10 and 11 also confirm the statements above.

Diagram 7 confirms this for the participants as a whole with the blue rhombus marks of the initial scores being plainly much more widespread than the red squares which show the final scores.

From diagrams 12 and 13 it is possible to say that the children from a Royal Navy background showed more indications of having stressors in their lives than those from a Royal Air Force background at the outset. For both groups the blue initial irregular heptagons show this and even at the end the irregular red heptagons still show a small difference. It is not a large difference but definitely shows itself in the results.

Looking at the results in terms of the individual questions, four questions in particular showed indications of being stressors in the lives of the participants from the initial scores:

1. I'm feeling good about the future?
2. I've made new friends?
3. I feel better about myself?
4. I've had fun with my family?

Diagrams 8 to 15 all demonstrate this with the irregular blue initial heptagons being closer to the centre at these points. Even the final irregular red heptagons still show a flattening at these points. It is not indicative of being a major stressor overall but the standard deviations show that there was significant variation in the original scores. It is reduced in the final scores with a smaller standard deviation around a higher mean score. The diagrams show that this is true in all the sectional analysis involving gender and service family background. Diagrams 14 and 15 in particular show this for the individuals concerned.

## Parents

- It was predominantly the husband who was the serving partner. The parents and fathers in particular, loved the project and enjoyed participating in the activities with their children each week. Some fathers said they'd spent more quality time with their children during the 8 week course than they had during the rest of the year. This did create some feelings of guilt but it was offset by the hope that they would continue doing it. Surf Action was surprised to find that up to then many of the service partners spent an extensive part of the weekends in particular away from their families and with their service mates playing sport etc even if they had been away from home during the week.
- During conversations over a coffee away from their partners it became apparent that there were considerable stresses building up in some families:
  - In particular in those where the serving partner was about to take early retirement/redundancy from their respective service:
    - The wife was often much more grounded in the day to day reality of civil life and took charge of the family and paying bills etc and had considerable reservations about life outside the service and felt that their partner was being too optimistic about the ease of the transition and the future. They



found it hard to talk about it to their partner without it seeming they were trying to undermine them. Children in particular were picking up on these tensions. Housing and schooling were a continual worry to those who would have to leave married quarters.

- The husbands often seemed to be living in a bubble of optimism and had friends who were in a similar position with the same attitude. People they knew who had already left always seemed to be positive in conversations with them yet their wives were telling a different story to the other wives.
- The wives were very glad to have an opportunity to discuss these matters away from their partners with others who were in the same situation or who had already been through it. Similarly their children were benefiting from the wider social contacts with the children of veterans.
- The current political instability in many parts of the world is resulting in increased short notice deployments of unknown duration. This is having a substantial effect on some families. The huge amount of coverage of the news in all formats means that children are no longer easy to isolate from reality and they are already showing signs at home of increased stress and worry as events unfold.
  - At the time of writing some local squadrons are changing from 'planned deployed' to 'short notice deployments with 24 /48 hours notice'. This is likely to have an impact on family life and local schools have been warned that they may notice a change in children's behaviour.
- In response to feedback from the parents Surf Action moved one of its weekly Surf Clinics in Newquay to a Saturday morning so that many of the families will be able to continue to access its services. An extra Ocean Therapy course was also provided in Newquay on Sunday mornings due to demand.



## Summary

Surf Action is delighted by the outcomes of the 'Surf Action Sharks' project and has learned an enormous amount which will help set the future direction of its services:

- The Ocean Therapy approach has been very successful with the youngsters and all measures have shown significant improvements in wellbeing which should also sustain good psychological health and emotional resilience. Its success beyond the adult age group will be developed and refined.
- The participants have made new friendships within a wider social circle and this has helped reduce isolation and helped to build and sustain their self-esteem, self-reliance and self-confidence. This should help them to deal more effectively with the stresses and unpredictability of service family life.
- The families have thoroughly enjoyed the Ocean Therapy course and its attendant spin-offs. Most would not have ever thought of participating in such activities despite living so close to some of the best beaches in England. By providing a Saturday Surf Clinic at Newquay Surf Action will help the families to remain active as a unit and to benefit from the beautiful Cornish ocean environment and the resultant improvements in their physical and psychological health.
- The partners have made good use of conversations with those in similar situations and those who have already experienced them. They now have some strategies to use in raising some difficult issues within the family whilst minimising the stresses on their children. These enhanced societal connections will also support them when their partner is deployed.

Surf Action would once again like to thank The Duchy Health Charity for their financial support. We would also like to thank the proprietors of 'Seascape Lodge' in Newquay for their wonderful generosity in allowing us to use it as a super base from which to run many of the activities.



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