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# Angling and Young People

## In Their Own Words: Young People's Angling Experiences.

### Part 2: Maximising the Benefits of Angling Participation

An Interim Paper from Social and  
Community Benefits of Angling Research

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## Part 2: Maximising the Benefits of Angling Participation

### Introduction

This report focuses on the barriers to participation identified by young people. The preceding report, *The Wellbeing Benefits of Angling Participation*, demonstrated that young people derive multiple benefits from angling. This can include the development of confidence and self esteem, supportive social relationships, as well as re-integration into communities and facilitating a sense of belonging often missing amongst young people.

Understanding which aspects of angling participation young people value most should help plan future angling developments, but it is also important to consider what barriers to participation currently exist. For many young anglers, the opportunity to go fishing is integral to their ability to manage their own wellbeing. Recognising the barriers to angling participation and attempting to relieve them where possible is essential to supporting young people's continued participation in angling as well as assisting them to cope with the stresses and challenges they encounter in life.

This report draws on qualitative fieldwork between May 2009 and November 2010 and interim findings from our Young People's Angling Survey. The angling survey remains open until September 2011, but for the purpose of this report we have used findings from the 183 responses received by Nov 2010. As covered in Part 1, respondents to the survey came from a range of social-economic backgrounds and were between the ages of 5-18. The respondents indicated that they were mostly coarse anglers (81.7%), with sea 9.5% and game 8.9% (n=169) making up the rest.

This report considers the barriers to angling participation that young people themselves have identified. It focuses on:

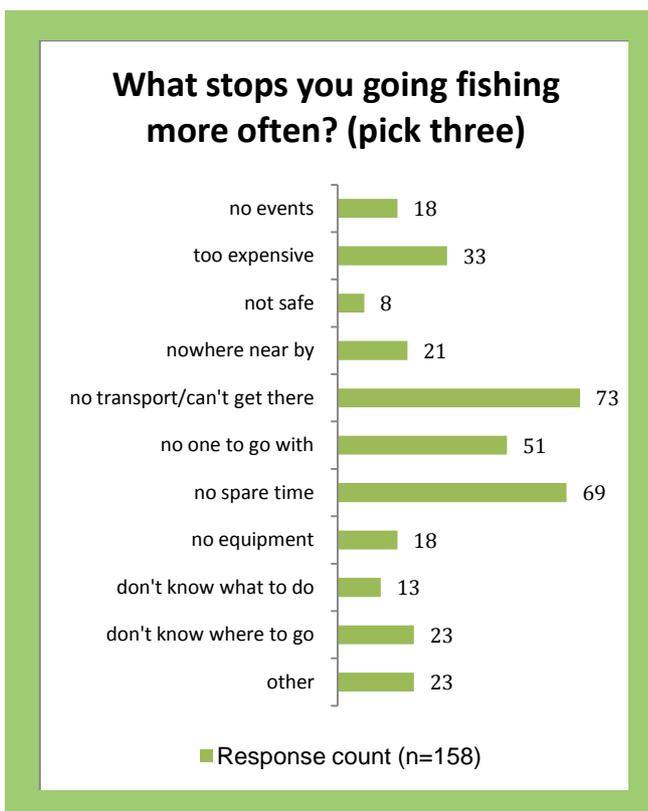
- Angling venues
- Junior angling clubs
- Coaching events
- Access to information
- The cost of fishing

The report makes a number of recommendations for minimizing these barriers throughout the document.



## 1. The barriers to young people's angling participation

Young people are clear that they would like more opportunities to go fishing. In our survey **95.8%** (n=168) said they would like to go fishing more often. However 28.3% disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement *“it is easy for me to go fishing when I want to”*. So what stops young people angling as much as they would want?



Lack of transport and not being able to get to venues on their own (**46.2%**), lack of time often due to other commitments such as school/college (**43.7%**), having no one to go with (**32.3%**) and the expense of fishing (**20.9%**) were the top four barriers to fishing participation identified by young people (n=158). Our interviews and open ended survey responses showed that often it was a combination of these factors that conspired to prevent young people being able to fish as often as they wished.

*“[It’s] not a problem for me personally, but working in a tackle shop, you get to hear many stories from young anglers, mainly about not being able to afford things, and the lack of events for young*

*anglers, such as small matches. Matches on a Sunday are a problem for many as it is a school day the next day. These should ideally be run on a Saturday or on a Friday evening. BUT by far the problem that most youngsters I talk to mention is the inability to get to venues to fish as parents are busy. This is not helped by the fact that many parents do not fish.”* (Male 18)

While little can be done to counter the lack of time young people have for recreational activities, it is important that when they do find time to go fishing, participation is made as accessible as possible. As the previous quote summed up, the main barriers that need to be addressed relate to getting to venues, lack of events, the cost of fishing, and recognition of the extent to which young people's angling participation has come to rely on willing, supportive parents.

## 2. Finding the right venues

It is little surprise that young people cited lack of appropriate venues as a major obstacle to participation. Their venue responses highlighted a distinction between:

- not having adequate transport to get to fishing venues
- not being able to go unaccompanied by an adult
- not being enough local junior clubs in their area.

### 2.1 Getting to fishing venues

Getting to fishing venues is a problem for many young people. At **46.2%** *“no transport/can't get there on my own”* was the top barrier to participation cited by young people in our survey (n=158). Many still water fisheries, particularly commercial fisheries, are located in out of town areas. Young people often mention that they have to go by bike, take equipment with them, and often walk long distances from trains or bus stops.

Parents, and young people themselves, tend to see commercial still water fisheries as safe. Unlike fishing a river where parents may be unsure of their children's exact whereabouts and where there may be less people around to keep an eye out for them, commercial still water fisheries are often contained areas with an adult usually on site. If young people get into difficulty they know

there is someone they can ask for assistance.

But while many parents willingly take their children to out of town fisheries, the inability to get to such places on their own restricts young people's ability to participate further. Young people are clear: providing safe, locally accessible venues, or at the very least public transport to get there on their own, is critical to increasing participation.

We asked **"What could be done to improve young people's fishing experiences?"**

*"Free places to fish within walking distance. I normally only ever go to a couple of ponds I know of that don't really have an owner and good fish in there. I go because it is easy to get to and I can get there on my own without having my parents take me". (Male 13)*

*"For the day tickets to be cheaper and a bus for easy transport to the local fishing places". (Male 16)*

*"Give us more places to fish in the city. There are very few places in the city that you can go. Like the park, people rob your stuff. I went fishing in the park once and got threatened with a gun. That's why I never go. It was mid day. A fishery is safer because you don't get these types going there, well you get them going but they don't rob your stuff because there are other people there". (Male16)*

Providing, safe local fishing opportunities is the best way to increase participation because it allows young people the flexibility to fish when they want without having to rely on lifts from adults. Local parks in particular are ideal venues because they are usually central with good transport links. When organised properly parks can be safe places. The best examples have wardens, facilities such as toilets, safe open aspect waters where young people are visible to the many people that use the area, and the exceptional ones have junior angling clubs or regular coaching/match days.

*"Lots of parents find it hard to let young people out because they're afraid. But Stanley Park has transformed a lot. It used to be a more dangerous area, but now it has a city watch van, cameras. It's safe even to pass in the early evenings and*

*that's made a big difference. I go there now and so do the other lads because it is safe. There's lots more people go fishing there now. Before it was done up, lots of people said they'd prefer to go to a fishery where they felt safer, but now the park is just as good really." (Male18)*

Making the most of community assets such as park ponds should be considered part of local strategies for improving not only young people's angling participation but also securing their wellbeing. A forthcoming report highlighting how Local Authorities can best utilise public waters will be available on the angling research resources website in early 2011.

## 2.2 Adult accompaniment and young people's changing needs

Our survey found the third most common barrier to fishing was having 'no one to go with' (32.3%). This statement is a little more complicated than it appears and relates to two slightly different issues. While younger children want and need someone to go fishing with them, older teens often state that they would rather go on their own or with friends but are restricted by requirements to be accompanied by an adult.

*"There's an age limit, where I fish you have to be 16 to go on your own (Male 15)*

*More places to go by myself as most of the time you have to go with adults. (Female 13)*

*The best thing about my club: wide range of pools & you are allowed to bring your friends. (Male 14)*

Providing for young people means recognising how young people's needs may change with maturity.

We asked young people to rate on a three point scale how important it was for them to spend time with friends, family or to be independent and able to do things on their own. (n=149)

- More of the younger respondents (7-12 yrs) rated spending time with family as very important.
- By 13 to14 yrs this began to level out with spending time with friends and spending time with family becoming more equal in

importance.

- At **15 yrs** being independent and able to do things on their own becomes far more important although spending time with friends and family remains equally relevant.
- From **16 to 18 yrs** this gradually shifts so that being independent and able to do things on their own is on average the most important of the three followed by spending time with friends.

As young people become older they want different things from their angling experience. Priorities shift from spending time with family to more independent use of recreational time and spending time with friends. We see a similar trend when we considered who young people said they most often fished with by age group (n=157).

- **88.2%** of those aged **5-11** said they fished predominantly with a family member.
- This percentage gradually reduces as young people get older so that by age **15**, only **26.9%** said they fished with family, while **46%** said they fished with friends<sup>1</sup>.

Developing angling provisions that engage young people throughout their life course requires recognising i) the importance of family fishing for younger children and ii) the desired independence of older teens.

### **i) Younger children and families**

Young children enjoy angling as a family activity and value the time they get to spend with their parents and carers. Making fishing venues family friendly, having family coaching days targeting mothers and parents new to fishing, and importantly advertising such events widely outside of the angling press, are all potential ways to get more families fishing with their children. Some young people specifically mentioned parents as a barrier to participation:

*“mum- she doesn't like being left on her own all the time” (Male14)*

*“having somewhere nearer to fish and if parent's were into it they could take me and go too” (Male 13)*

*“mum doesn't like me going on my own” (Male 13)*

Making angling into an activity accessible and welcoming to all family members can enrich young people's experiences and enable greater participation.

### **ii) Older teenagers and independence**

Older teens are best catered for through fishing venues that are safe, easy for them to get to with their friends and allows young people to fish together or alone without an adult. It is understandable that many water owners fear the responsibility of allowing teens onto their premises unaccompanied and there is a negative perception of groups of teenagers across society. However it is important to recognise that the majority of young people are responsible when given the opportunity.

Clubs and commercial fisheries that do allow younger teens to fish unaccompanied often do so after they have established a relationship and assessed the young person's maturity through participation in junior clubs, coaching sessions or induction days. These venues help ease the transition from fishing with family to the more independent fishing young people want as they get older.

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<sup>1</sup> The rest are accounted for by responses that included fishing alone, with school groups, clubs or 'other'.

### 3. Junior Clubs

Not all young people are fortunate enough to have adults in their lives that can regularly take them to fishing venues. Access to a club therefore provides not only the opportunity for coaching and learning, but also the opportunity to fish regularly under supervision. However the spread of junior angling clubs across England and Scotland in all three angling disciplines remains limited.

*“As a beginner, it would have been great to have an induction day, where I could have met other junior anglers. Staffordshire really lacks junior angling facilities, my nearest is over 35 miles away and the rest are over 50 miles. My stepfather used to fish when he was my age and has encouraged me to try fishing, but sadly there are no NJJA clubs for miles (35+). I would be really happy to be part of a national campaign to encourage 10-16yr olds to get into fishing”. (Female14)*

*“It's a laugh and safe if it's with coaches so can go more often. I wouldn't go on my own” (Female 12)*

The development of successful junior clubs will depend on whether they provide the supportive environment young people are looking for. In angling, possibly more so than other sports, this can be quite varied.



#### 3.1 What do young people want form a club?

Of our survey respondents 44.4% were members of an angling club. The things young people say they most appreciate about their clubs and what they say they would like to improve gives us a useful template for thinking about club development and the promotion of angling to young people.

We asked **'What is the best thing about your club?'**



*“I can go every Saturday. Sometimes we travel up to Wolverhampton to have matches at other clubs. There are lots of juniors (about 20)”. (Male 13)*

*“Opportunities to go places, like sea fishing trips” (Female 15)*

*“People are always willing to help & do things for you - nice conversations” (Male 16)*

*“Friendly advice and support, also you can borrow fishing tackle”. (Male 12)*

*“I can catch fish locally which is handy because then I don't have to travel miles and miles to get there, and if I'm nearer to home my mum doesn't mind me going by myself so much”. (Male 15)*

*“Transport to fishing”. (Male 15)*

*“It's a nice quiet area so you can go down with your mates and have a good laugh as well”. (Male 15)*



work together to ensure adequate facilities are provided where young people are regularly being encouraged to participate in angling. In some cases this can be facilitated through agreements with local sports centers, café's or other publicly accessible facilities.

### ii) More trips/matches away and more waters

Young people would like more opportunities to expand their experience by fishing more waters and going on trips or matches away. Unlike adults, young people's limited mobility means they are often more reliant on clubs to take them to alternative venues. Matches and trips away enrich not only young people's angling experiences but also contributes to their personal and social development, broadening their horizons and building cohesions amongst groups of young people.

Where club waters might be 'difficult', incorporating occasional trips to fisheries or well stocked ponds alongside training on club waters can provide the 'buzz' of catching needed to maintain interest alongside a growing appreciation of the skills needed for more complex waters.

### iii) 'More young people' and improving the social experience of angling

Angling is a social experience for young people. As a result, not having juniors in a club can greatly diminish their enjoyment. It limits young anglers' ability to make new friends and compete in matches. This is why it is important to look at providing junior clubs rather than just opening club waters to junior fishing.

In the course of our research we encountered two clubs set up by young people themselves. In both cases they were established because there were no other local junior clubs that meet their needs. Both clubs emphasised the social aspects of club participation, including taking part in matches 'for fun' and engaging in a wide range of social activities such as BBQ's, inviting speakers and working on conservation projects.

### Little Windsor Angling Club

Michael (Age 15) has just had an operation on his knee and is unable to do many physical sports. Fishing is more his thing. But across the local angling clubs he found very few young people. This was an issue because what he enjoys most about fishing is taking part in matches. So Michael decided to set up the Little Windsor Fishing Club.

*"The club is for juniors, but they can bring their dads and try and get the family together. It's more of a family thing. The matches are not serious, it's just a bit of fun really and they can get a little prize at the end, see they've done well...We all put in a bit of money to get the actual competition prize, and then we just pay the day tickets, and at the end of year any money left behind we can get bait prizes and rods even"*

The club uses local fisheries but they are expensive and charge the club extra for using keep nets in their matches.

### Staffordshire Youth Anglers

Staffordshire Youth Anglers was set up by young people who wanted to form a relaxed, open club based around a shared interest in fishing. The emphasis is on socialising and they arrange matches between themselves and other local youth groups. They also arrange talks, fishing trips away, and projects such as building bat boxes for the local fishery and creating a pond dipping platform for use by local schools. They are very clear that the club was set up to get away from the strong competition pressures they associated with usual sports clubs and instead provides an alternative model.

While sports clubs have traditionally focused on a sports development approach that identified young people for elite pathways, angling's wide reach into environmental learning, social integration and community engagement, means that junior clubs have the potential to develop wider models of engagement. Having mechanisms in place that allow young people to shape the club as they see fit is the best way to ensure clubs allow for this.

### 3.3 Providing for a difference between match and pleasure fishing

In our discussions with young people it became clear that angling attracts a wide variety of young people who participate both at the level of sport and as a recreation activity. The difference is in the degree of emphasis they place on competitive training.

Some of the young people coming into angling are escaping from the overt competitiveness of traditional school sports. They shy away from the pressures of competitions, have little self confidence, and avoid stressful situations. In contrast others thrive on competition, enjoying the chance to challenge themselves and prove their skills.

In angling, possibly more so than other sports, what may be preferable for one set of young people may be undesirable to another. Getting the balance right in order to cater for both match anglers and pleasure anglers is important if angling is to successfully provide opportunities for *all* young people.

Listening to young people's responses it is clear that they would like to see angling clubs develop both match and pleasure fishing opportunities by:

- Providing training and competition pathways that allow young people from local clubs to build their skills and have the opportunity to progress into national teams.
- Providing social spaces to 'hang out' with friends, meet new people, encourage family fishing and develop their skills through 'fun

matches'.

Ultimately the success of both developments requires that more young people are encouraged to participate so that there are others to both compete and socialise with.

'Will' (18) has been fishing for a number of years, he qualified for Nottingham youth games 2 years in a row and found himself successful in both attempts, but he goes on to explain:

*"That's about as much match fishing as I've done. I'm more of a pleasure fisherman me, I enjoy my fishing, if I did get into match fishing I think I'd get pretty good at it. But I just prefer less pressure than matches, where I can relax, just catch a big fish or a load of little ones, and there's no pressure of beating anybody else. I mean we can get a bit competitive sometimes but that's just having a bit of fun. It's nothing big if you lose."*

'Will' did not join the local club because they tend to use poles and focuses solely on match fishing. He explains that he is more of a rod fisherman and recreational angler so he didn't think they would get on.

### Encouraging more young people

Rebecca Hurcombe (15) is part of the English junior sea fishing team which came away with silver in the SALC1 Home Nations Shore Championship held in Scotland, July 2010. As a child, she was introduced to sea angling by her father and went on to compete in local fishing competitions. For Rebecca the appeal of sea angling is about being in the fresh air and socialising, but it is competition that motivates her. To get into the English team Rebecca needs to compete in regular matches in order to record her scores over the year before being considered for selection.

*“There’s lots of people about to talk to, everyone is really friendly and you rarely meet someone who’s unpleasant, so it’s good socially...But it’s more of a sport for me because I hardly ever pleasure fish. I like the competition or I’d lose my drive to do it...None of my friends fish apart from those I have met through the club. There was one girl around my age but she doesn’t do it any more as she has other commitments. A few others come occasionally for Friday night competitions but not many. I’m struggling for people my age to compete with because I’m getting older so I’ll have to start fishing in the adults unfortunately...”*



*“...I’d like to see more people fishing, especially more girls. These ages you see girls playing football, and rugby, so there’s no reason why they shouldn’t be able to do fishing as well. Especially living here, in an old fishing port, I think it would be great if more people did it...But I think people need a better understanding of it. You hear people walking up the pier, talking about fishing as if they know everything, that it’s a blood sport. They don’t know enough to make that judgment and I think it puts people off. Then you see some anglers that don’t play by the rules, you see them slaughtering fish and I think it gives the general public the wrong idea. I talk to a lot of people in my school, and they kind of look, and they’re like ‘[you do] what?’ It’s not a very well respected sport, and it’s just because they don’t understand it. It’s hard to change people’s minds about things. I think it’s actually one of the competitive sports we’re best at, but it’s just not well known.”*

#### 4. Coaching events and open opportunities: catering for the non-club member

Some young people will never join a club, they do not want the commitment of regular attendance, but they still enjoy taking part in matches and want to learn more about fishing techniques. Open coaching sessions and matches are an important way of providing for non-club members and potentially reaching a wider range of young people. Amongst the survey responses, increasing matches and coaching events was a key area identified for development.

*“Organised days to get people involved can be good, but for beginners/inexperienced people they can be intimidating because people who are better at fishing make you feel embarrassed/uncomfortable, so something which may tackle this may improve things”. (Male 17)*

*“More events and chances to learn from good fishermen. like learning days and stuff” (Male 13)*

*“More coaching days & learning opportunities”. (Male 13)*

*“Make more social gatherings such as fun matches on rivers were you catch small fish and it’s not all carp fishing” (Male 14)*

*“More matches in every region and get more people into fishing and support more with money to be able to fund things like matches. also a regular bailiff at every site” (Male 15)*

*“Training days at the fisheries - more young people at fishing places”. (Male 11)*

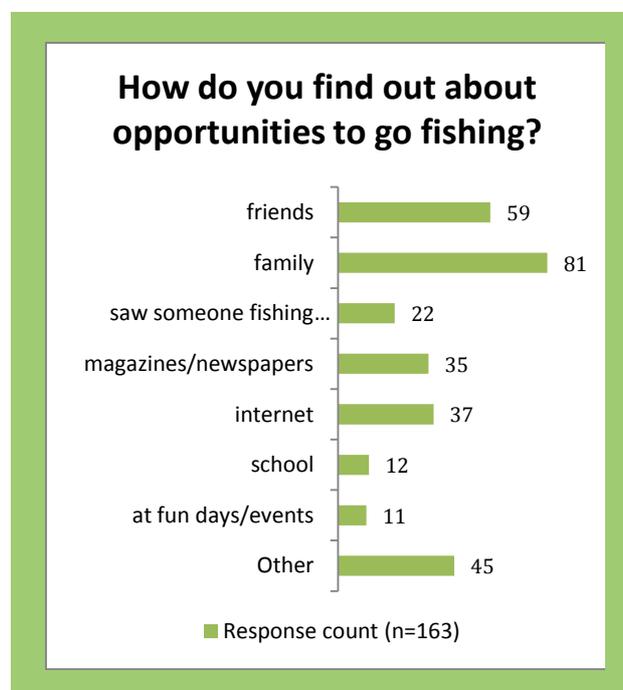
It is clear from young people's responses that the angling events they desire span beyond taster days. While a taster day is an introduction to basic technique and tends to focus on getting young people catching, a coaching event will spend more time on introducing young people to a specific technique. The recent expansion of National Fishing Month, junior clubs and the Angling Development Boards opens up the possibility of providing coordinated open coaching events that will appeal to young anglers beyond a basic introductory level.

#### 5. Finding information about angling

Access to reliable, good quality information is still an issue for young anglers. While the internet makes information instantly available, it remains fragmented and difficult to navigate. Many young people still rely on 'word of mouth', other anglers and their parents to give them technical advice and information about where to fish.

We asked young people: **How do you usually find out about opportunities to go fishing?**

- **49.7%** relied on parents,
- **36.2%** said friends.
- ‘Other’ responses included posters, flyers and information provided by local youth clubs, community centres and local council information. Amongst the angling community, angling clubs, tackle shops and other anglers were also cited as key places to get information.
- **22.7%** said they found out about local fishing opportunities through the internet. (n= 163)



For young people whose friends or family do not fish, finding the right type of information to get started can be difficult.

*“More advice on it, there is nowhere to find information about basic fishing skills if you don't*

*have a parent or friend that fishes that can help you.” (Male 15)*

*“A guide to local fisheries that may be accessible by bike and a guide to clubs and how to join”. (Male 16)*

*“More advertising and more people going” (Female 17)*

The things that young people most want to know include:

- **Information on what is needed to get started** such as licence requirement, basic equipment and the price range they should expect to pay, rules and regulations such as closed seasons and catch sizes, angling etiquette and fish welfare.
- **The location of the nearest** junior angling club, fishing venue, and tackle/bait shops.
- **The availability of public transport** to the above mentioned locations.

- **Information about local events**, matches and coaching days in their area that is reliable, updated regularly, and also advertised beyond the angling community.
- **Guides to fishing techniques** that are accessible and appropriate to young people.
- **Guides on how to fish cheaply**, from mending and making your own rigs, to the use of non bait methods and how to successfully use cheaper or easily accessible baits.

Young people's angling experiences can be improved by collecting together the information young people would find most useful into a single place. Greater publicity is also needed on what information is available and where to find it. Most importantly, in order to encourage more young people into the sport, greater signposting of angling events and information needs to occur outside of the angling community. The use of 'Angling Plings' has emerged as a way to address this.

## Angling Plings

Plings is an online tool that was developed by Substance to help young people discover trusted information about 'places to go and things to do'. The site gathers information on activities from across the country which is then made accessible to young people through multiple websites, social networking sites such as facebook, mobile phone tools, and local authority portals.

Young people and parents can search for activities happening in their local area and have access to information including venue details, maps, public transport information (including cycling and walking routes), contact details and opportunities to leave feedback.

Substance featured National Fishing Month in Plings in the summer of 2010. As a featured Plings activity young people looking for 'something to do' in July and August were directed to one of the many angling events on offer. Building on this development, all angling clubs and projects that are linked to the Angling Trust, Angling Development Board, Get Hooked On Fishing, and the Angling Trades Association, can now use Plings free of charge to publicise their junior angling clubs and events. Substance has also made Plings available to the forthcoming Get Into Fishing campaign as well as National Fishing Month 2011.

Angling clubs and organisations wishing to put their venues and events into Plings should visit [www.plings.net](http://www.plings.net). Click Add Plings, then follow the instructions to register your organisation.

The screenshot shows the Angling Plings website interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs: 'Places to Go', 'Things to do', 'News', 'Apps', 'Search', and 'Random'. Below these is a 'Follow us on:' section with social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. A search bar is prominently displayed with the text 'Search for this thing to do' and a search button. The search bar contains the text 'fishing | angling'. Below the search bar are input fields for 'Postcode', 'From (format 13/07/2010)', and 'Until (format 13/07/2010)'. A 'Go' button is located below the search bar. To the left of the search bar is a small image of two people fishing. Below the search bar is a 'Related Links' section with a list of links: 'Get Hooked On Fishing help young people & create opportunities through angling' and 'Angling Trust Organisation for Anglers'. Below the related links is a 'Disclaimer' section with a warning icon and the text 'Sorry, but Plings are not responsible for the content from or on websites we link to.' To the right of the search bar is an 'Upcoming activities' section with a red header. It lists an activity: 'Staffordshire Youth Anglers' on 'Wednesday 19th Jan 9:30 AM' at 'Carney Pools, Bishton Lane, Stafford'. Below the activity list is a 'Time Trap' section with the text 'Wednesday 19th Jan 10:00 AM' and 'Town Hall Square, North East Lincolnshire'.

## 6. The cost of fishing

20.9% of young people said the reasons they did not fish as much as they wanted was because it was 'too expensive'. Understanding where that burden of expense lies is vital to being able to address this barrier. Most often it is the regular, relatively smaller costs that young people struggle most with, particularly when considered in combinations- such as the cost of bait, venue and public transport for a day's fishing.

*"I have no money to pay 'on' to the venue sometimes". (Male 13)*

*"Money sometimes, some places are really expensive". (Male 14)*

*"We need: Cheaper fisheries available for fly fishing" (Male 18 )*

*"Too expensive for rods & bait (groundbait/luncheonmeat). Have to bike there." (Male 13)*

*"Too expensive - mum has to buy everything because I can't get a job at 15yrs. Bait is expensive and I always have to ask her because she has to drive to the shops". (Male 15)*

*"Don't have money for bait". (Male 16)*

### 6.1 Bait

Not having money for bait is without a doubt what young people most commonly cite as the key expense barrier to fishing. While bait appears to be cheap (in many cases young people are talking about the cost of a tin of sweet corn or luncheon meat) it can soon accumulate throughout the weekends or holidays given that young people often have no income of their own.

Young people can be extremely reluctant to continually ask their parents for such items, particularly if they feel they cannot afford it. Having spent time with coaches working in some of the most deprived areas, it is clear that for those on low incomes, with many other children in the household, £1 every few days can be too much of a regular expense for keeping just one child occupied over the summer holidays.

Fishing may look cheap when compared to other activities young people engage in such as computer gaming, but what young people are telling us is that these alternative recreational forms often require no additional participation costs following the initial expenditure. In contrast young people are finding that angling nearly always requires some additional cost, even if it is in the eyes of a working adult, quite minimal.

The angling community can assist young people by:

- **providing** gift vouchers for local tackle shops (bait suppliers) as prizes for competitions.
- **advising** young people on cheaper bait options and how to use them successfully.
- **teaching** young people how to successfully use non bait methods (such as spinners, feathers and flies).

It is frustrating that bait is the most cited expense as it relates to relatively low cost items. Local clubs, fisheries and tackle shops may want to consider what they might be able to do to make this less of a barrier. Already many anglers gift left-over bait to nearby young people at the end of fishing sessions and this should be encouraged further.

### 6.2 Venues

Venues (both clubs and fisheries) were cited as something young people felt could be cheaper. The restricted number of available fishing waters open to juniors means that young people have little choice but to pay the rates set by the local clubs, syndicates or most commonly the nearest commercial fishery. Providing young people with access to suitable venues mean being aware of cost.

While day rates may appear minimal to adults, young people wanting to fish regularly throughout the holidays soon find that the costs add up. Providing options to pay a cheap, one off price for regular fishing as opposed to day tickets can make venues more affordable and give young people the option to fish as regularly as they want.

Understandably commercial fisheries, as businesses, have their own costs to consider, however from the perspective of encouraging more anglers into the future, proving safe, cheap, and accessible venues is central to enabling participation.

Free fishing, as many young people point out, would of course be the best option. An extremely promising free fishing scheme has recently been launched across Scotland.

### The Scottish Canal Project

The Scottish Federation for Coarse Anglers (SFCA) has struck a landmark deal with British Waterways that will now allow SFCA to offer free fishing to under 16's on the lowland canal systems that runs across the central belt of Scotland. Gus Brindle chairman of the SFCA explains that it is their intention to establish coaches and Angling Induction Centres across the canal system to coordinate junior angling clubs, coaching and education.

To fish for free will require signing up for a free junior SFCA membership, and means young people are incorporated into the angling network from an early age where they will receive the training and support they need to become successful anglers. The Scottish canal system is an excellent resource as it passes through many deprived urban centres. Encouraging fishing access on these waters maximises local resources to provide a positive activity that will have a direct impact on young people and community wellbeing.

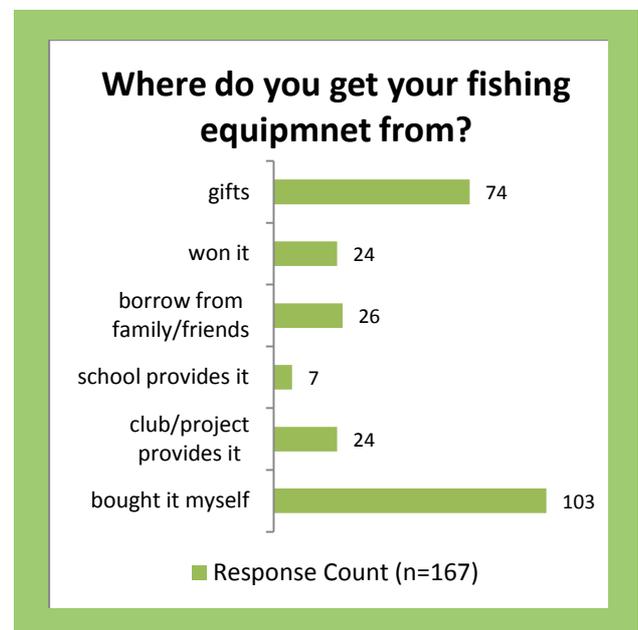
Taking the lead from SFCA and British Waterways it is important for Local Authorities and land owners to re-appraise their waters and consider whether they could be put to better use supporting the wellbeing of young people and their local communities through angling provisions.

Providing young people with reduced rate or free fishing options will ensure that young people are

able to participate in angling without being overly restricted by cost.

### 6.3 Equipment

While equipment has the potential to be extremely expensive, often reaching thousands of pounds for a single item, very few young people, **11.4%** (n=158) cited not having equipment as a barrier to fishing. In most waterside interviews young people claimed to have good basic fishing sets that they were happy with and few specifically mentioned the cost of equipment as a barrier. So where do young people get their equipment from and what does this tell us about managing the cost of angling?



- **61.7%** of young people said they bought their equipment themselves, often saving up Christmas or birthday money or using their allowances.
- **44%** said they had received equipment as gifts<sup>2</sup>.

Our discussions with parents highlighted that many felt happy to buy equipment for presents once they were sure the young person was committed to angling. Buying essential core equipment such as tackle boxes, rods and reels, as well as weatherproof clothing often amounts to

<sup>2</sup> Does not total to 100% as more than one choice was allowed.

a one off spend that can be absorbed into money put aside for Christmas or birthday presents. However parents did feel more independent guidance on what to buy, appropriate to young people's needs and local area, would help them navigate what can be an extremely dizzying array of costly equipment. Practical information on stockists for waterproof clothing in smaller children's sizes would also be useful.

We also found a significant amount of young people borrowed equipment (15%), used equipment provided for them at clubs and events (14%) and supplement their angling equipment through winning prizes (14%). Providing opportunities to access equipment is important for encouraging participation amongst some of the most deprived households. In the Household Below Average Income Survey for 2008/09<sup>3</sup>:

- **17%** of households in the poorest percentile reported wanting to buy children leisure and sports equipment but not being able to afford it.
- While **15%** of the poorest percentile said they could not afford for children to take part in leisure activities.

Angling has benefits for all children and poverty should not be a barrier to participation. Hire equipment, competition prizes, and opportunities to borrow equipment such as through Tackle Libraries<sup>4</sup>, are important ways in which to support families on the lowest income levels.

Having observed practices in GHOF and across angling club visits, it is clear that winning equipment assists young people who may otherwise struggle to amass the necessary items. Drawing on our observations we have identified best practice to include:

- **Giving out more than one prize** so that other young people, including novices, have

the potential to win alongside regular match winners. This could include prizes for specimen fish, first fish of the day, good behaviour, sportsmanship, and/or taking part for first time

- **Including a varied range of practical prizes** such as bait boxes, rod stands, nets, waterproof clothing and/or vouchers for the local tackle shop, so young people can build a full kit rather than duplicating rods and reels.
- **Prizes do not have to be expensive.** Young people appreciate those things they struggle most to replace regularly, in particular tackle and bait.
- **Trophies and medals are still important** for recognising and celebrating achievement.
- **Local tackle shops and angling organisations sponsoring and gifting prizes** in regular support of local junior events.

The Environment Agency in particular assists many projects and events by providing equipment, such as whips, as prizes. We have also found tackle shops to engage in sponsoring events, providing bait or prizes, volunteering to coach young people, and providing 'tackle surgeries' where they advise young people on the appropriateness and correct use of their equipment.

Local tackle shop involvement provides an important opportunity for young people and their parents/carers to build contacts within the local angling community, reducing the intimidation of not 'knowing' what equipment to start with, and providing a trusted place to seek future advice. Feedback from events, clubs and young people's angling organisations suggest however that this is an area the tackle trade could develop further. There is potential here for local angling shops to be at the forefront of a network that allows the angling trade to contribute more directly to the support and promotion of junior angling at a local level. If tackle shops are to take up this role, they will need to be open and welcoming places for young people, families and inexperienced or new anglers.

<sup>3</sup> HBAI 2008/09. Department of Work and Pensions. [http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/hbai/hbai\\_2009/index.php?page=contents](http://statistics.dwp.gov.uk/asd/hbai/hbai_2009/index.php?page=contents)

<sup>4</sup> A scheme developed by Les Webber MBE to assist local schools and junior clubs.

## 6.4 The combined cost of the 16 to adult transition in angling

While young people highlighted the reoccurring costs of bait and day tickets as a potential obstacle to participation, the relatively static costs associated with the 16 to adult transition was also an area of concern. Understanding the 'lived experience' of angling from young people's perspective means understanding those transition moments that cause the most difficulty.

*"I'm going to use my college EMA<sup>5</sup> money to pay for my licence if I go to college otherwise it's too expensive." (Male 16)*

*"I believe that membership prices for people still in education should be the same price as a juniors because they do not work and therefore struggle to find the money they need. Another of my local clubs requested that because I am 16 I need pay £30 instead of the £6 I paid last year." (Male 16)*

*"Cheaper tackle should be made available, most of us aren't earning reliable money so discounts would definitely be greatly appreciated. The charge for a fishing licence for coarse fishing is £5, until you are 16, I think it should be until you are 18." (Male 15)*

### 6.4.1 Licences and Membership fees

At the transition from the March 2008/09 season to the March 2009/10 season, of the 11,309 Environment Agency junior licence holders who were then eligible to buy an adult licence, only 3891 renewed them. This amounts to a **34.4%** retention rate, or a loss of **65.6%** of juniors<sup>6</sup>. The loss of so many transitioning juniors raises questions about whether the shift from £5 to £25 pounds at 16 is prohibitive for many young people.

<sup>5</sup> Education Maintenance Allowances (EMA) have been stopped as of 2011. They were open to all 16-18 yr old going into training or education where household income was under £30, 810 a year. An amount from £10 to £30 a week was paid into a young person's bank account to use flexibly to support their education. They have been replaced by learner support funds provided through colleges. It is unclear what amount of discretionary flexibility will be involved.

<sup>6</sup> In total 8229 licences were sold in 2009/10 to young people who would have been juniors the preceding year. 4338 of the licences sold were to new anglers (or those who were not previously junior licence holders.)

As 16 yrs old strive to become more independent they can be reluctant to rely on parents for funds, particularly in times of economic uncertainty or in areas of high deprivation and unemployment. Studies have shown that young people often restrict their own demands in response to the relative poverty they understand their parents to be in<sup>7</sup>. There is a risk that the steep transitional cost from junior to adult means young people risk dropping out of angling and the benefits they get from participation, or they begin to engage in fraudulent behaviour that makes them avoid angling authorities and organisations<sup>8</sup>. Amongst young people I have encountered tales of hiding from bailiffs, night fishing restricted locations and 'sharing' of licences between groups, as well as a sense of unfairness about why they should have to pay adult prices when they quite clearly have no funds.

The change from junior to adult EA licence fee cost across England and Wales is just one amongst a range of changing angling costs that hit young people as they turn 16. It is the cumulative effect of having to pay extra for licences, club membership, and venues, which makes the burden of cost unmanageable.

### 6.4.2 The limited access to funds of the 16+ age group

According to the Office of National statistics young people have historically experienced the highest rates of unemployment compared to other age groups<sup>9</sup>.

- Amongst young people aged 16 and 17 unemployment rates Jan to March 2009 stood at **29.3%**, while the rate for wider society (everyone 16 yrs and over) stood at 7.1%.
- This meant for the Jan to March 2009 period, 16 and 17 year olds accounted for **9%** of all

<sup>7</sup> See for example Chin, E 1999. *Purchasing power: black kids and American consumer Culture*. University of Minnesota Press.

<sup>8</sup> The EA recognises that each year a number of transitioning young people will change their date of birth to remain in the junior category.

<sup>9</sup> ONS: *Labour Market: unemployment rates for those aged 16 and 17*. <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nugget.asp?ID=2205&Pos=1&ColRank=2&Rank=1000>

unemployed peoples over the age of 16.

For those young people aged 16 and 17 who are not in education or training, finding a job and accessing disposable income, is extremely challenging.

In turn, for those in education or training, the potential for having a disposable income is extremely slim. As one respondent highlighted, Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) grants would have once provide an opportunity to pay for licences and membership fees. However the status of this source of funding is now under review. In addition from 2013 it will be compulsory for all 17 year olds to remain in education, training, or apprenticeships. This is set to rise again to 18 by 2015.

Given the higher levels of unemployment amongst this age group and the likelihood of them being in education or training without a secure income, the accumulated costs of the post 16 change in the cost of rod licences in England and Wales, club membership, and venue prices, places a significant added burden on a group with very limited potential income. To address this disproportionate burden, we recommend the angling community ends the practice of charging 16-18 yr old the same price as adults in line with the coming changes to compulsory education.

### 6.4.3 Young people's wellbeing at 16+

Addressing the increased financial burden of angling at the 16 to adult threshold is important to ensure young people are able to continue accessing the benefits of angling during the sometimes difficult transition into adulthood.

As we have already set out in Part 1, young people proactive manage life stresses through participation in angling. Amongst the 16-18 age group in our survey:

- **80.6%** agreed and strongly agreed with the statement "*angling makes me feel better when I am stressed or upset*" (n=36).
- The top motivation for participation was "*to be peaceful, relaxed or less stressed*" (**47.2%**, n=36).
- When asked what they would miss most if they could no longer fish 16 to 18 yr olds opted equally for peace and relaxation as well as the buzz and excitement of fishing (**22.9%** n=35)<sup>10</sup>.
- The cost of fishing was the third biggest barrier to participation at **33.3%** falling behind '*transport/can't get there on my' own*' at **60.6%** and not having enough spare time at **36.6%**. (n=37)

Given the limited time 16-18 yr old have available with commitments at school or college, making opportunities to fish as accessible as possible is extremely important for maintaining their wellbeing.

<sup>10</sup> This differs for the overall survey results which held the 'buzz' and excitement of fishing to the thing most missed at 27.4%, almost twice the repose rate to any other option.



**ii) More respect of young people**

*“Older anglers treat us with more respect and don't act snotty to us. Because if you treat us with respect we will treat you with respect. And don't be stereotypical to youths, we are not all bad”  
(Male 15)*

**iii) More junior events**

*“Fisheries should have more children's days. Also less pressure, so more spaces so I can use the pegs & fish more”. (Male 11)*

*“More events and people your own age in clubs”.  
(Male 15)*

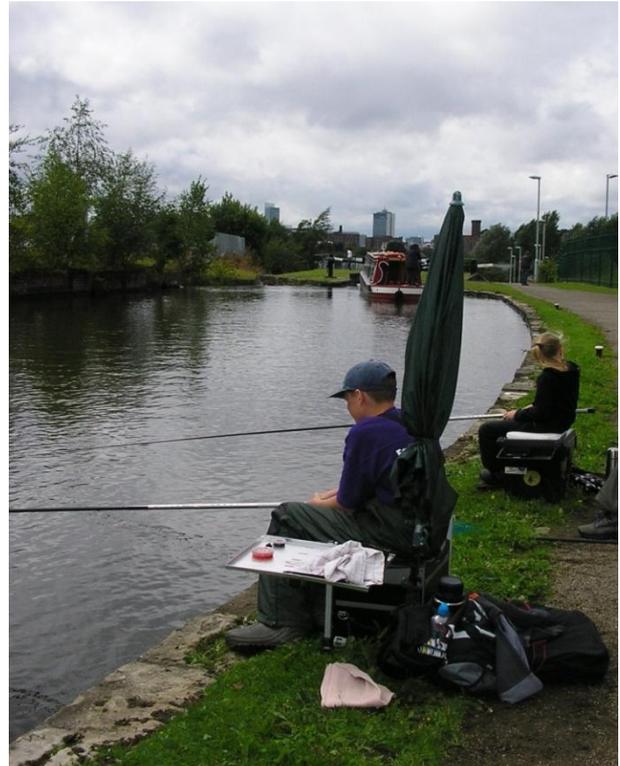
**iv) Competitions and structured pathways into angling teams**

*“Make fishing teams more readily open and cheaper for children, prices are to dear in clubs and for tackle” (Male 14)*

*“More competitions & practice for sea fishing”.  
(Female 12)*

**v) More fishing in schools**

*“[I would like] Fishing trips in schools and fishing clubs”. (Male 10)*



## 9. Summary Conclusions and Recommendations

Angling plays a significant role in young anglers' proactive stress management and improved wellbeing. It is therefore in the interest of society and not just those wishing to safeguard the future of angling as a sport, that young people are given the opportunities to participate in angling and develop their skills.

This report has highlighted numerous ways to improve young people's angling experiences. The most pressing are:

### 1. Providing safe, cheap and accessible venues

Local Authorities, angling clubs and land owners need to re-assess their policies and ask whether more can be done to maximise the resources they hold for the benefit of young people. This should include:

- **Opening up suitable park waters, canals and safe stretches of river for the development of free or low cost junior fishing.**

### 2. Addressing the cost of angling

Young people tell us it is the small, regular costs of angling participation that they struggle most with. The reoccurring cost of bait and day tickets soon add up when participating regularly throughout the holidays. Assisting young people to offset and manage these costs more effectively will help them get the most from what funds they have.

### 3. Reducing the increased costs for 16-18 yrs

Given the rising age for compulsory education, and 16-18 yr olds limited means of income, the cumulative effect of price as young people turn 16 can leave 16-18 yr olds disproportionately shouldering the burden of angling costs across venues, club memberships and EA licences.

- **As an example of best practice the Angling Trust has recently made membership free to ages 17 yrs and**

**under, and introduced a Young Adult membership (ages 18-21) at the reduced rate of £10.**

- **We recommend that the angling community follow this example and end the practice of charging 16-18 yr olds full adult prices. This should be applied across Angling Clubs, Fisheries/Venues, and the Environment Agency Angling Licences. We have provided the EA with our research findings to support this. Such a change would bring significant long term benefits for young people's participation and the sport.**

### 4. Encouraging more young anglers

Because angling is very much a social activity for young people, improving young anglers' experiences requires encouraging more young people to participate alongside them. The best way to achieve this is through listening to what young people want. This includes:

- **Having the right angling infrastructure in place by coordinating the development of quality, accessible and affordable local junior angling clubs.**
- **Organising regular open angling events to attract beginners and develop the skills of young people already angling.**
- **Publicising the benefits of angling and the opportunities to get involved to young people and parents outside of the angling community. Plings ([www.plings.net](http://www.plings.net)) offers one way for organisations to do this, but angling also needs to use local media, schools, youth services and other community networks to communicate beyond its own constituency.**
- **Involving young people in the promotion of angling to their peers.**

This report represents our interim findings for year two of *The Social and Community Benefits of Angling Research Project*.

The Young People's Angling Survey remains open until Sept 2011. Young people wishing to take part should visit:  
<http://www.anglingresearch.org.uk/youngpeoplespage>

The interim results from the Young People's Angling Survey will be available in an interactive format on our angling resources website by early 2011. [www.resources.anglingresearch.org.uk](http://www.resources.anglingresearch.org.uk).

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