



Growing2gether in the Community Impact Report February 2021 – June 2121

Kirsty Humphrey, Research Health Psychologist

Summary

Growing2gether in the Community is an innovative programme where young people design and deliver their own youth-led community projects, supported by community mentors. Throughout the process of designing and implementing projects to make their community better, young people acquire valuable skills that will help them in their future careers as well as in their educational and personal lives. Furthermore, by setting small individual achievable goals as well as achieving group goals, participants develop the self-efficacy and confidence in achieving what they set out to achieve. This leads to raised aspirations, enhanced wellbeing and connectedness in their community and strengthened relationships with peers and family. This is a systemic approach where young people are encouraged to discuss ideas with their families. The programme has been developed to promote psychological growth by allowing young people to feel in control of setting their own goals and group projects (autonomy), by helping them to build confidence through the acquiring of new skills in order to achieve these personal and group goals (competence) and through providing positive reinforcement and facilitating connectedness with others (relatedness). Young people will be more motivated to achieve their goals if they are supported by others and feel a sense of belongingness to the group as well as to the wider community. This report focuses on three main outcomes of the project(s):

- Improved life and employability skills
- Improved aspirations and wellbeing
- Positive relationships and connectedness with the community.

The results indicate that the project had a positive impact on the young people's mental health in terms of increasing wellbeing (as measured by YP-CORE). Mean scores revealed that there was a 20% improvement in mental health where 80% of participants showed an improvement in pre and post-test scores, indicating greater mental wellbeing by the end of the programme. Young people's skills relating to employability (Listening, Problem Solving, Teamwork, Relationships, Efficiency, and Leadership) increased significantly by the end of the programme and their willingness to seek advice on careers significantly increased by 50%. Other results show improved positive feelings in relation to confidence, self-efficacy, aspirations (regarding employment) and empowerment. The impact of these projects benefitted the wider community and helped spread positive messages regarding anxiety and depression, NHS frontline workers and young carers. The involvement from trusted adults, including our experienced facilitators, other local organisations and charities, equipped the young people with new skills as well as provided a sense of connectedness amongst the community.

Introduction

Adolescence

Adolescence is a developmental period characterised by multiple changes in virtually every aspect of an individual's life. The prefrontal cortex (front part of the brain) is responsible for teenager's ability to plan and think about the consequences of actions, solve problems and control impulses when making decisions (Lang et al., 2016). This developmental phase continues until early adulthood and consequently, when making decisions, teenagers are more likely to rely on the amygdala which is associated with emotions, aggression and impulses (Lang et al., 2016). It is therefore unsurprising that these dramatic physiological, social and cognitive changes may exceed the coping abilities of young people, leading to maladaptive coping mechanisms and behavioural problems such as substance misuse, engaging in unprotected sex as well as experiencing mental health problems (Galván, 2012). Research indicates that adolescents use different coping mechanisms to deal with problems compared to adults, suggesting that interventions need to be sensitive to these developmental changes (Vanucci et al 2018). The findings illuminate *when* and *how* associations between specific coping strategies and depressive symptoms may emerge and change across developmental age. It is therefore important that teenagers who are struggling are targeted and intervention is offered. Growing2gether programmes are youth led and are facilitated by professionals who are sensitive to these changes as well as to the young person's psychosocial background, and who tailor their approach in order to maximise the experience for young people. Many young people recruited onto the programme lack the support and encouragement from others to achieve their aspirations and goals. In some situations, they feel a lack of connectedness to others, which has impacted on the mental wellbeing and reduced their motivation to achieve their goals.

Self-determination theory

Self-determination theory assumes that people are actively driven towards growth and development. Gaining mastery over challenges and taking on new experiences are vital for developing an individual's self-identity. To encourage a person to pursue a particular goal, there are two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to a person's engagement in a particular behaviour that is personally rewarding to them, while extrinsic motivation refers to one's engagement in certain behaviour because of external outcomes, such as social recognition and financial benefits (Williams. 2012).

According to self-determination theory, psychological growth is facilitated by autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy refers to an individual's need to feel in control of their own behaviours and goals. Competence refers to the ability to gain mastery of tasks and the acquisition of new skills in order to achieve desired outcomes. Relatedness refers to the need to be feel a sense of belonging, acceptance and connectedness with others, as well as to love and provide care for others and for this to be reciprocated (Deci & Ryan 2000). The absence of relatedness is likely to result in failure to achieve intrinsic motivation which can also negatively impact on a person's mental wellbeing. However, offering positive encouragement and feedback on a person's performance on a task can increase intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan 2000). The programme has been developed to encourage psychological growth by allowing young people to feel in control of setting their own goals and group projects (autonomy), by helping them to build confidence through the acquiring of new skills in order to achieve personal and group goals (competence) and by providing positive reinforcement and facilitating connectedness with others (relatedness). Young people will be more motivated to achieve their goals if they are supported by others and feel a sense of

belongingness to the group as well as the wider community. It is hypothesised that the interpersonal skills developed on the programme, combined with the novelty of creating totally youth-led projects can encourage young people to strengthen relationships at home.

Community Programmes and Connectedness

Community programmes targeting younger adolescents are important as it gives young people a chance to respond and learn from their experience, potentially modifying their behaviours (for example not being confident to ask for help, not resolving problems and turning to drink/drugs, showing aggression etc.) before they become established and more difficult to change. Facilitating this process is connectedness, which refers to the emotional attachment and commitment an adolescent makes to social relationships in the family, peer group, school, community, or culture (Visser, 2017). Research places great importance of connectedness in relation to positive youth development programmes and claims to protect young people from sexual risk taking as well as performance in school (Visser, 2017). Findings from a study on youth work illustrated the importance of an ecological approach to reducing adolescent sexual risk behaviours through the engagement of parents and increased school connectedness (Caderbaum et al 2017). Connectedness has been linked to many of the influences of suicidal behaviour and suggests that it may be a powerful tool in preventing suicide (Walsh et al, 2019). A recent study examined the potential protective role of school connectedness in the relationship between cyberbullying and suicide risk behaviour. Findings indicated that being a victim of cyberbullying, was associated with increased risk of suicide and that connections to school moderated this relationship in that, among victims of cyberbullying, those more connected to school were less likely to report suicidal behaviour (Walsh et al, 2019).

The ability to connect to others and build positive relationships are among the most commonly listed employability skills in job advertisements and is in demand across most industries, disciplines and professions. Not only is it a desirable quality, but it allows people to build positive networks and consequently opens up and broadens employment opportunities. Connectedness and feeling a sense of belonging promotes mental wellbeing, and increases people's confidence to talk to others, allowing them to practice and develop on their communication skills. Through the Growing2gether in the Community programme, young people are encouraged to communicate with peers, family, facilitators and other agencies as part of their project, allowing them to confidently seek advice regarding their health as well as employment. Growing2gether in the Community understand that many of the young people in the community come from unstable and ever-changing environments. Providing an opportunity to work with other young people and adults in their own community to achieve a shared goal provides a sense of stability, connectedness and empowers the individuals involved.

Positive Psychology and Growing2gether in the Community

Growing2gether in the Community is underpinned by transpersonal psychology, which provides a holistic psychological approach focusing on enabling individuals to access more of their potential; on developing self-awareness and personal responsibility and on recognising the importance of meaning as requirements for wellbeing and positive engagement with society. Combined, we find a congruent pedagogy with transpersonal psychology and positive psychology, a branch of mainstream psychology, which was founded 1998 by Seligman (Seligman 1998). Positive psychology has added scientific rigour and has become more established over the past decade. More recently, a systematic review of 36 papers concluded that interventions using Positive Psychology led to reductions in anxio-depressive symptoms

as well as increases in wellbeing (Sitbon, Shankland, & Krumm, 2018). These interventions are extremely useful and popular, considering their large-scale development and low cost. Growing2gether in the Community focus on bringing out the unique potential of young people, rather than seeing them as a 'problem', empowering them with life skills, work experience and a deeper understanding of who they are.

Method

Participants

In total, 18 young people started the programme (10 Female and 8 Male) and 15 completed it (83% retention). The Mean age of participants was 15.8 (SD = .78) ranging from 15-17 years old. Sixteen participants described themselves as "White Scottish" and 2 described themselves as "White British". The young people attended three schools in the Highlands; Inverness High School, Dingwall Academy and Charleston Academy. The Dingwall Academy group comprised 5 young people from different schools: Inverness Royal Academy, Tain, Dingwall Academy and Millburn. We also trained 3 Young Leaders to co-facilitate the programmes, building their confidence, skills and experience.

Intervention

Growing2Gether in the Community centres around the concept of choice, whereby young people lead the process in terms of how they run the project. During the research process, the young people must research the needs of local residents, which involves communicating with their parents and other disadvantaged young people, hence facilitating connectedness and improving relationships with others. Through a democratic process, all ideas are assessed in terms of what they believe would make the biggest contribution. The facilitators encourage lateral and free thinking, which enhances creativity as well as maintaining interest. This continues with exploring various ways that they might address their community topic (a film, an event, posters, social media, talking to the community etc.). Facilitators ensure that each participant is included and valued for their thinking and contributions. The process of this positive reinforcement encourages the participants to share more ideas, thereby increasing their confidence. Once the means of delivery for their projects is chosen, a project planning tool, designed for use by young people, allows them to plan their work and how they will deliver their community project. Each participant expresses what they love to do and, where possible, their passions are actively engaged with project planning. Each member takes on a delivery task (e.g., managing the budget, writing copy, artistic design, distribution of the project) as their responsibility, hence acquiring valuable life skills in the process. Depending on the project subject, the group searches for an expert local community mentor and enrolls them for support.

Throughout delivery of the project, each session begins with a 'check-in' where every young person is consulted on how things are developing. This includes the group dynamic and what is needed to continue working together in a positive, inclusive way. Young people self-assess that they are using their skills in the way that they intend. Where necessary, short-term goals for increased participation are established. Leadership of the check-in is rotated to enable each participant to have this experience. Once the community project is complete, the young people develop further distribution to the target audience to ensure maximum reach (e.g., social media/press/within school). Through a de-briefing session, the young people assess what worked and what they would do differently, providing a sense of closure and a reflection on learning from experience. Facilitators ask questions and empower young people to find their own answers. Respecting their needs and choices, they help them to set personal goals

and build skills throughout design/delivery of their project, and to exercise their personal power of choice in a positive way; They are building this capacity for their future.

Procedure

The youth led sessions were conducted mostly online, lasted one hour and took place once a week. In line with COVID restrictions, some sessions were face-to-face.

Measures

Life Skills

Facilitators encouraged young people to identify a major goal in relation to their employability and rate it on a scale of 1-10 (1 = not confident in achieving the goal and 10 = very confident in achieving their goal). Goals were reviewed at the end of the programme. In addition, participants were asked to identify 10 important skills that are valuable for future employment and to subsequently rate on a scale of 1-10 how weak or strong (1 = very weak and 10 = very strong) they are for each skill. The skill sheet was completed before and after the programme. Young people were asked a series of questions relating to skills in the post programme questionnaire. Each question is scored on a 5-point scale (1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Unsure, 4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree).

Aspirations and wellbeing

The Young Person's Clinical Outcomes in Routine Evaluation (YP-CORE; Twigg et al., 2009) is a measure of psychological distress designed for use with young people in the 11-16 age group attending counselling or therapy. The measure comprises 10 self-report items relating to wellbeing, symptoms/problems, functioning, and risk (to self). Research into the reliability and validity suggest that the YP-CORE satisfies standard psychometric requirements for use as a routine outcome measure for young people (Twigg et al 2015). All items address the same time period (the preceding week) scoring from 'Not at all' (0) to 'Most or all of the time' (4). The total clinical score is obtained by adding together scores for each item (range 0 to 4) so the possible scores range from zero to 40. Although a clinically validated cut-off has yet to be determined for the YP-CORE, a score of 11 or above on the CORE-10 indicates clinically significant distress. In addition, scores on the CORE-10 can be divided into categories of distress: Healthy (0–5), low (6–10), mild (11–14), moderate (15–19), moderate-to-severe (20–24), and severe (25 and above). These cut-offs were established by asking a large sample of the UK population to complete the questionnaire and comparing their scores statistically with those for large samples of clients in therapy (Connell and Barkham, 2007).

Young people were asked a series of questions relating to aspirations in the post programme questionnaire. Each question is scored on a 5-point scale (1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Unsure, 4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree).

Positive relationships and connectedness

Young people were asked a series of questions regarding connectedness and relationships in relation to employment, for instance who supports them, how confident they are in their ability to support them to seek employment, how likely they are to ask other organisations for help and advice. Answers were represented on a "happy face scale" whereby each number 1-10 corresponded with a face (sad to happy),

Case studies

This report contains observational case studies written by the facilitators of the projects as well as quotes from the young people.

Young people were asked a series of questions relating to relationships and connectedness in the post programme questionnaire. Each question is scored on a 5-point scale (1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Unsure, 4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree).

Analysis

Standard descriptive analyses were performed to report the respondents' ratings on feedback questions. Paired samples T-tests and Bivariate correlations were conducted to detect any differences in respondents' answers. All analyses were performed using SPSS 27 for Windows, and the significance level was set at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed).

Description of the projects

Project 1: Anxiety and Depression

Project 1 consisted of 7 pupils from Inverness High School. The group explored the possibility of creating a community intervention to help young people with anxiety and depression, extending this to the wider community for ideas in order to facilitate community connectedness. Young people's ideas were expressed in the form of Graffiti Art. The group were mentored by Duncan Wilson for the Graffiti element to the project and filmmaker and Highland Highlife Youth Development Officer, Rhys Campbell, who filmed the project and mentored a member of the group to be the photographer for the day. The finished artwork will be displayed at Eden Court, Scotland's largest arts organisation, and will become part of the exhibition space dedicated to the work of young people. This will enable the family and friends of the young people and the public who visit Eden Court to view the work. One of the young people on the project is an active member of the Highland Youth Parliament and suggested they should contact the Highland Youth Parliament conference to inform them of the project as the focus of the conference is on mental health. Consequently, the group are able to showcase the finished film at the online conference in the Autumn.

Figure 1: ITC Team showcasing their Mental Health Mural



Case study A (Young Leader)

“X is 16 years old female participant who had previously participated in both the main Growing2gether nursery programme and a previous In the Community project, where the focus was on self-harm. She is a natural leader and has some experience already in taking on this role from her work as a Young Leader with Highlife Highland. She is a keen researcher and brings up-to-date knowledge about the topic of mental health and encourages open discussions in the group. X is also a very creative individual and considering this is well matched to facilitate the process of envisaging the final project in the group as a whole. One learning from her part in the project was that as the group are also her friendship group, we felt that the boundaries for her at times were not clear. Even though she had more experience due to doing an In the Community project before and she was now a Young Leader, we felt that this new role was hard for her to hold. This was of course understandable and created no real issues as what she brought to the project was invaluable.”

X was able to reflect and share her thoughts on her experiences as a Young Leader on the programme:

“It was good to learn something new, a new skill and to see the others develop skills too and to come together to create something good that had a message to it. Although I was friends with most of the people on the project, as we were dealing with a sensitive topic and people were really open about their experiences, I learned more about them as people. I found it difficult to find my position in the group but the more I checked in with people during and after the sessions to see how they were, the more comfortable I felt as a Young Leader. I would say that during the project, I developed teamwork skills and how to compromise on ideas...the planning and time keeping skills I learned are also useful in the project.”

The link below shows the journey young people went through in developing their project.

<https://youtu.be/kBkqr0H0lhU>

Project 2: Young carers

A group of 6 young people from Charleston Academy decided to focus on 'young carers' for their community project. The topic emerged from the experiences of three young carers in the group, including the Young Leader. The group created a series of activities for young carers online and were advised by an organisation called 'Connecting Young Carers'. An individual from the organisation provided an overview of the challenges facing young carers and facilitated group discussions amongst the young people. What arose from these discussions, is that young carers needed a break from being a carer and not to be seen just as a 'young carer'. The group subsequently developed a google survey which they sent out to 300 young carers affiliated to 'Connecting Young Carers' to find out what activities they would like to be offered online. In addition, the group discussed ideas to offer art and music sessions as well as create a Virtual Gala Day as their project offering three activities: a cookery class; a pet show and tell and an art competition with two categories for under 12s and over 12s. The event was attended by 13 young carers. Each member of the Charleston group hosted an activity supported by the Growing2gether facilitators and members of the organisation, "Connecting Carers". This event revealed the leadership skills of the group members as well as their growing confidence to present themselves in front of a virtual audience. The feedback from the young carers was extremely positive. This was a motivated and cohesive group with many members knowing each other from the Growing2gether nursery mentoring programme two years previously.

Figure 2: Young people setting up for the carers BBQ



Case Study B (Participant)

This is a case study of a participant on the programme. The name changed to protect the participant's identity.

Background:

Robyn was lacking in confidence and self-belief at the beginning of the programme and had a low sense of self-worth, which was often reflected in her comments where she would belittle herself. She was also under a lot of stress at home from their role as a young carer for her Mum. Robyn had previously been a participant on the Growing2gether Schools programme as well as a previous Growing2gether in the Community programme.

Young person's journey:

When Robyn joined the current In The Community group, she found it challenging to speak up in a group and didn't believe that their opinions had any value. When we were discussing possible community topics to explore during the pandemic, Robyn suggested that we could create a project for 'young carers'. This idea came directly from her experience of being a young carer. Robyn shared their personal experience of being a young carer with the group in which they explained that her mental health had deteriorated and that the responsibilities of being a young carer had also impinged on her sleep and affected her attendance at school. This was a very brave and deeply personal sharing by Robyn which took immense courage.

Once the group had decided on the topic of young carers and to hold an event for those young carers, Robyn showed great initiative by liaising with Heather Mackenzie, community worker at Connecting Carers with whom she already had an existing relationship. Robyn and the Charleston Group worked together to get the ball rolling on the project and sent out a google survey to Heather asking the community of 300 carers what kind of activities they would like to participate in. Robyn also developed a poster promoting the virtual gala event which was sent to Heather and distributed among the community of young carers. The creation of the poster was Robyn's idea showing great creativity and leadership skills. Robyn volunteered to host the cookery class which was one of the virtual activities on offer to the young carers. This demonstrated an increasing sense of confidence and the courage to put themselves in front of an audience.

Robyn also demonstrated great leadership qualities by being a host of this event. Feedback on the cookery class was overwhelmingly positive and it was wonderful to see Robyn's personality and self-expression flourish as the host of this event. On a personal level, Robyn disclosed they were [REDACTED] to the facilitators which also reflected an increasing sense of confidence in themselves and again, demonstrated a level of courage [REDACTED]

Quotes from Robyn...

"I have learnt that I can do things and that I don't have to sit in the background and I can control the situation," remarked Robyn, aged 16 from Charleston Academy.*

"I want to be a teacher involved with young kids. It's a big passion of mine working with primary school kids or younger."

Comment from Heather Mackenzie, community worker for Connecting Carers.

"I have known Robyn now for four years through different roles. The difference I've seen in Robyn has been amazing. Robyn is a young person that doesn't always know where they fit into the world and can find it very difficult to navigate new people and new situations. In fact, they would historically avoid situations that they imagined to be difficult. The difference I could see this time was that Robyn has been supported through this by Growing2gether Facilitators, Duncan and Karen, to help them find their place. This allowed them to then be relaxed and able to achieve their full potential. The biggest difference I saw in Robyn was they were able to speak up and put their opinions across. They felt valued, including all things SHANARRI. Robyn was able to speak up with regards to what the group and the event could be and they appeared to be a huge force in moving it forward. I really feel the nurturing, bespoke care and support that they received was the contributing factor to their growing confidence and self-esteem."

Project 3: NHS frontline workers

The final group comprised 5 young people from different schools: Inverness Royal Academy, Tain, Dingwall Academy and Millburn, hence creating a diverse, yet cohesive group from different areas of the Highlands. Through the implementation of a voting system, the group decided that frontline NHS staff were most in need of community support at this time. Two members of the group had family members who worked for the NHS and were privy to first-hand information regarding the impact the pandemic on the physical and emotional wellbeing on NHS staff's families.

The young people explored how they could help frontline NHS staff, for instance arranging online yoga sessions and delivering care packages. However, they decided that they wanted to raise awareness of the pressures that NHS staff experience and how people can manage their behaviours to ensure nurses feel valued and supported. Subsequently, they explored several ways of achieving this such as creating a poster and an animation. The group became very excited to be given the opportunity to work with an animator to guide them through the process of creating a short animation. The group created a storyline involving 'Nurse Susan' who expressed the challenges and rewards of her job on a daily basis. The main aim of the 30-second animation was to raise awareness that Nurses have had a difficult time during the pandemic and to ask the general public to be kind to them. Although one member illustrated, all other members of the group contributed to the animated video by supplying text, font sizes and types to convey the mood of the scene as well as sourcing sound effects. The animation was completed and shared with and will be promoted through NHS Highland social media platforms. It can be accessed on <https://youtu.be/jrHmyibvGBc>

Figure 3: Displaying project planning meeting and the character, “Nurse Susan” for the animation



Case study C: Young Leader

“X is 18 years old and a former pupil of Dingwall Academy who was recruited for the post of Young Leader before the first lockdown when we had to suspend our project. X went on to study Health and Nutrition at Abertay University and was keen to re-join as our young leader when we resumed the programme online. X is an enthusiastic youth worker who has a great relationship with the group with a consistent approach. She is encouraging and supportive of the young people, is open hearted and willing to have fun, so the group have warmed to her and treat her as one of their own. X showed excellent leadership and organisational skills when she took charge of one session and assigned tasks and deadlines to each group member. This helped hold the group participants accountable and kept them on track to deliver their elements of the animation, whether that were drawings, font types or sound effects.”

Reflecting on her experiences, she said:

“I thoroughly enjoyed my time as a Young Leader for the In the Community project. I can’t fault the group I worked with. Having come from different areas they worked well together, formed friendships between themselves and they all contributed something positive towards the final project. Both Duncan and Karen were very welcoming to the project and made me feel at ease and included in every session.

I contributed to this project with my practical way of working, I helped the girls allocate tasks between them and create a task list for them to follow. This ensured we stayed on task, the girls knew when their deadlines were, and all their materials were gathered in on time. Although I like to get things completed, I like to think I can still bring a load of fun and laughter

to the group. I also like to ensure everyone feels supported and comfortable within a group as this is something I benefited from myself as a young person apart of Dingwall Youth Forum.

Having had previous youth work experience, this was another opportunity for me to use my skills in an area which I enjoy working in. I have dealt with some challenging behaviours and busier environments in the past. I personally didn't find this a challenging group to work with. In fact, I really enjoyed the different way of working, it was a much more relaxed environment and I feel we had more time to gel as a group. Being a part of the In the Community project definitely helped to further develop my confidence by working with a different group of young people in a different setting.

When working with a group of fellow young people, I aim to ensure everyone feels included and safe when working together. With the added challenge of being online, I think we rose to this well. I made sure I was present and not distracted during each session, which I think in return helped the girls feel confident and supported by me. I feel I connected well with each member of the group, in particular the Dingwall girls as I was a familiar face to them having been a pupil at Dingwall Academy myself and having worked with them both previously in my role with Highlife Highland.

Overall, I am happy with how I worked as a Young Leader for Growing2gether. It was a shame to not get to experience the whole project in person due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but we enjoyed one session at Bellfield Park where we got to meet each other face-to-face."

Findings

Life Skills

All analyses were performed using SPSS 27 for Windows, and the significance level was set at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed). Significant increases were found in Listening, problem solving, teamwork, relationships, efficiency and leadership skills. **Table 1** displays Mean at T1 and T2, standard deviation, percentage change and significance.

Table 1: Skill Outcomes					
Skill	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Significant
Listening	7.0	13	1.68	11%	$p < 0.05$
	7.8	13	1.57		
Problem solving	6.1	14	1.51	16%	$p < 0.05$
	7.1	14	1.49		
Communication	6.6	13	1.76	14%	Not significant
	7.5	13	1.27		
Teamwork	6.8	13	1.79	18%	$p < 0.05$
	8.0	13	0.91		
Relationships	6.6	13	1.89	21%	$p < 0.05$
	8.0	13	1.47		
Initiative	6.4	14	2.06	10%	Not significant
	7.1	14	1.17		
Efficiency	5.9	12	1.73	15%	$p < 0.05$
	6.8	12	1.85		
Positivity	7.0	14	1.41	6%	Not significant
	7.4	14	1.65		
Creativity	7.0	13	1.15	6%	Not significant
	7.4	13	1.33		
Leadership	6.4	14	1.60	19%	$p < 0.05$
	7.6	14	1.22		

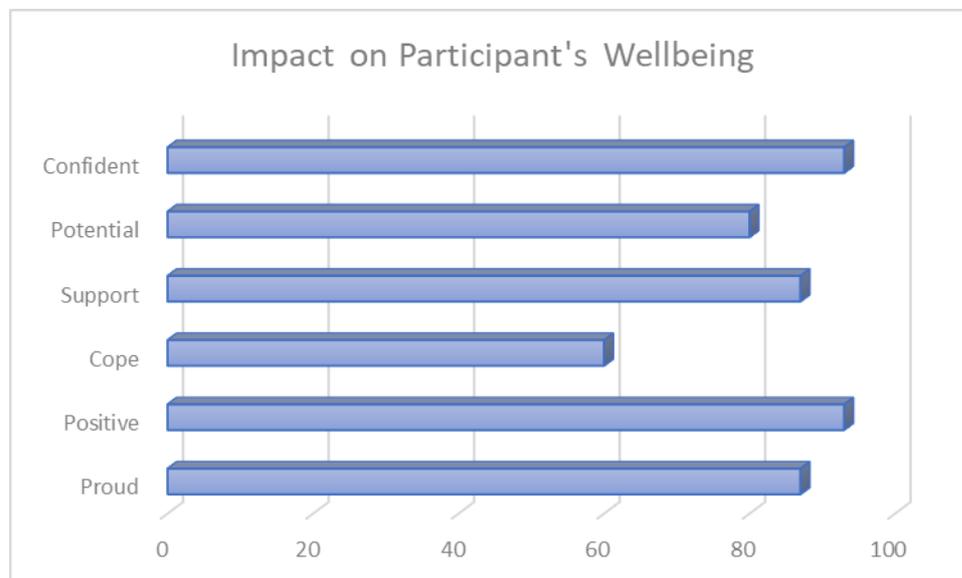
The table below provides feedback from the young people regarding the programme's impact on their skills and future employment.

Table 2: Responses to programme evaluation		
	Percentage Agreement	Frequency
I am more confident in communicating with others	100%	15
The programme has made me feel more confident in my abilities	100%	15
The programme has increased my chances of getting a job	80%	15

Aspirations and wellbeing

Graph 1 illustrates the extent to which "Growing2gether in the Community" impacted on the young people's feeling about themselves and contribute to wellbeing.

Graph 1: Impact of participant's wellbeing and sense of self

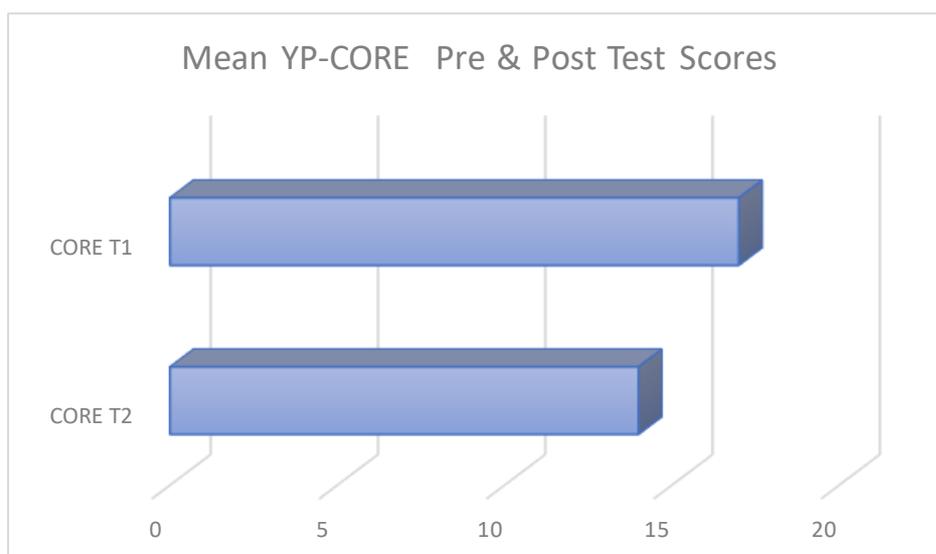


In total, **87%** of participants agreed that the programme had made them feel proud, **93%** reported that it had made them feel more positive about themselves. **60%** agreed that it taught them how to cope better with their problems and **87%** reported that the experience had supported them emotionally. **80%** felt that they learned more about themselves and **93%** reported that it had increased their confidence.

The table below displays outcomes relating to aspirations and wellbeing.

Table 2: Responses to programme evaluation		
	Percentage Agreement	Frequency
The programme has given me a sense of purpose	87%	15
The experience has made me feel more empowered	80%	15
I would recommend the programme to others	100%	15

YP-CORE baseline scores that are below 5 (as recommended above under "measures") represent a "healthy" response and therefore were eliminated from the analysis leaving 10 participants. The mean scores reduced from 17.3 to 13.8, a reduction of **20%**, hence showing an improvement in mental wellbeing. **80%** of individuals showed an improvement in pre and post test scores. See **Graphs 2** and **3** for mean and individual pre and post-test scores.

Graph 2: Mean Pre & Post-test YP-CORE scores

Positive relationships and connectedness

The table below displays pre- and post-programme outcomes relating to relationships and employment. More specifically, it shows positive increases in willingness to ask for help regarding career advice, confidence in asking for advice from others and happiness to be working as part of a group. The table below displays Mean values at T1 and T2, standard deviation, percentage change and significance.

Table 3: Relationship Outcomes					
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Percentage	Significant
Happiness to be in a group	8.7	13	1.03	3%	Not significant
	9.0	13	1.07		
Confidence in significant others to help with employment	8.0	13	1.68	6%	Not significant
	8.5	13	1.56		
Willingness to ask for help	5.2	12	1.95	50%	p < 0.05
	7.8	12	1.48		

Table 4 displays post programme evaluation percentages in relation to relationships.

Table 4: Responses to programme evaluation		
	Percentage Agreement	Frequency
I enjoyed building relationships with others	100%	15
I have become more connected with my community	93%	15
felt the experience made me more connected to others	93%	15
I enjoyed working with others	100%	15
Contributing to the community has been a valuable experience	93%	15
I feel encouraged me to be more involved in my community	67%	15

Discussion and Conclusion

It is evident that the young people involved on the project had made a substantial contribution to their community and were able to promote discussions and raise awareness about important topics such as young carer's, mental health and NHS frontline workers. The young people have been given the opportunity to work with charities and organisations who have helped teach them new skills which will help them in the future. Consequently, the young people have developed the self-efficacy and confidence to achieve their goals, while raising aspirations and ultimately increasing their confidence regarding future employment.

The results suggest that the experience made a positive impact on the young people's mental health in terms of increasing their wellbeing (as indicated by YP-CORE). The mean scores reduced from 17.3 to 13.8, a reduction of 20%, hence showing an improvement in mental wellbeing. A score of 11 or above on the CORE-10 indicates clinically significant distress and with average scores remaining above the threshold of 11, young people would be approached and signposted to Growing2gether Mentoring. Nevertheless, 80% of individuals showed an improvement in pre and post test scores.

Young people's skills relating to employability (Listening, Problem solving, Teamwork, Relationships, Efficiency, and Leadership) increased significantly by the end of the programme and willingness to seek advice on careers significantly increased by 50%. This is extremely encouraging as gaining confidence in their own goals through this supportive process enables the young person to feel more in control of their behaviours and goals, hence increasing their autonomy. Acquiring and mastering new skills increases the young person's competence which builds on their intrinsic motivation in relation to pursuing a career. The social recognition and positive feedback from peers and facilitators further increase their extrinsic motivation, hence encouraging them to continue with positive behaviours. Furthermore, the young people are more confident in asking others for help, hence indicating progression with regards to communication, connectedness and relationships. This is echoed by the positive scores in the post-programme evaluation questionnaire. For example, 87% of participants agreed that the programme had made them feel proud, 93% reported that it had made them feel more positive about themselves, 87% reported that the experience had supported them emotionally, 80% felt that they learned more about themselves and 93% reported that it had increased their confidence. In addition, 100% reported feeling more confident in their abilities and 80% felt that the programme can improve their chances of getting a job, while 87% reported that the programme has given them a sense of purpose and 80% agreed that it made them feel more empowered.

A limitation of this study is that the sample size was very small which reduces the power of the study and increases the margin of error. However, the case studies and quotes within this report suggest that the projects benefitted the wider community and helped spread positive messages regarding anxiety and depression, NHS frontline workers and young carers. The involvement from other local organisations and charities, equipped the young people with new skills as well as provided a sense of connectedness amongst the community. The programme has been successful in encouraging psychological growth by allowing young people to feel in control of setting their own goals and group projects (autonomy), building their confidence through acquiring new skills in order to achieve personal and group goals (competence) and by providing positive reinforcement and facilitating connectedness with others (relatedness). Young people will be more motivated to achieve their goals if they are supported by others and feel a sense of belongingness to the group as well as the wider community.

Acknowledgements

A big thank you to all the young people for creating and developing such amazing youth-led community projects and to the Young Leaders, for their brilliant support of their peers. Thank you to our community mentors, Rhys Campbell, Youth Development Officer with Highlife Highland, Heather Mackenzie from Connecting Carers and Fraser McDonald, animator and teacher, and to Growing2gether Youth Led Facilitators, Duncan Wilson, Karen Higgenbottom and Anna Larson for empowering the young people to develop these projects. Our grateful thanks to the Inspiring Futures programme, a joint funding partnership between BBC Children in Need and the Young Futures Foundation, and Young Start, delivered by the National Community Fund, for their generous funding.



Scottish Charity No. SC023976 Private Limited Company with charitable status SC290434

References

Deci, E.L.; Ryan, R.M (2000) The “what” and “why” of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychol. Inq.* 11, 227–268.

Lang,C.,Feldmeth,A.,Brand,S.,Holsboer,Trachsler,Pühse,U.and Gerber,M.(2016),“Effects of a physical education-based coping training on adolescents’ coping skills, stress perceptions and quality of sleep”, *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, pp. 1-18.

Galván, A., (2012), “Judgment and decision-making in adolescence”, in Reynda, V., et al. (Eds), *The Adolescent Brain: Learning, Reasoning, and Decision Making*, American Psychological Association, Washington, DC, pp. 267-289.

Cederbaum J., Rodriguez A., Sullivan K ,. Gray K (2017) Attitudes, Norms, and the Effect of Social Connectedness on Adolescent Sexual Risk Intention. *J Sch Health.* 87, 575-583.

Walsh, K, Pike, E & Thompson, E. A. (2019). Cyberbullying and Victimization and Youth Suicide Risk: The Buffering Effects of School Connectedness. *The Journal of School Nursing.*

Patrick, H.; Williams, G.C (2012) Self-determination theory: Its application to health behaviour and complementarity with motivational interviewing. *Int. J. Behav. Nutr. Phys. Act.* 9, 18

Seligman, M.E.P (1998). *Learned optimism* (2nd ed.). New York: Pocket Books.

Sitbon, A., Shankland, R., & Krumm, C.-M. (2018). Interventions efficaces en psychologie positive: Une revue systématique. / Effective interventions in positive psychology: A systematic review. *Canadian Psychology/ Psychologie canadienne*. Advance online publication.

Vannucci, A., Flannery, K., Ohannessian, C., (2018) Age-varying associations between coping and depressive symptoms throughout adolescence and emerging adulthood, *Development and Psychopathology*, 30, 665-681.