

# MyLife, MyFuture

Programme manual and learning report



Mental Health  
Foundation



IT MAKES  
OF RELATIONSHIP  
AND OUTS

ARE LONG LASTING"  
TENCY" "THEY ARE ALWAYS  
THERE FOR ME"  
THERE IS A GOOD BOND"  
ARE A BIG PART OF MY LIFE"  
THE PEOPLE ARE CLOSE"  
INDICATES FOR

# Good mental health for all



Our mission is to help people understand, protect and sustain their mental health.

Prevention is at the heart of what we do, because the best way to deal with a crisis is to prevent it from happening in the first place. We inform and influence the development of evidence-based mental health policy at national and local government level. In tandem, we help people to access information about the steps they can take to reduce their mental health risks and increase their resilience. We want to empower people to take action when problems are at an early stage. This work is informed by our long history of working directly with people living with or at risk of developing mental health problems.

The Mental Health Foundation is a UK charity that relies on public donations and grant funding to deliver and campaign for good mental health for all.

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## About the authors

We are Tash, Amy and Juliet. Our backgrounds are in youth work and we have combined our personal and professional experiences to care for – and about – a group of young people.

### *Tash*

Tash has worked with young people in care for the past 15 years, across both the voluntary and statutory sectors. She has held a variety of roles - including participation officer, youth worker, and mentor - and is now running a small youth-engagement company, Silver Lined Horizons, alongside other youth projects. She also finds time to coach an under-six football team every Sunday!

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## Acknowledgements

Our biggest thanks go to all the young people who participated at some stage in the programme. Thank you for just being yourselves. Even when the numbers were low, you were there. If one of your friends was not coming, you still came. Thanks for participating fully, even when things may have been difficult.

Thanks to all the foster carers for your support and dedication in making sure that the young people could get to and from the sessions.

We are very grateful to our supporting funder, BBC Children in Need, who understood the value of quality over quantity.

Lastly, thanks to the five young people who made it to the end. Thank you for keeping us company for 18 months, and for keeping us up to date with what's going on with you. We learnt as much from you as we hope you learnt from us.

*The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Mental Health Foundation.*

## Who is the manual for?

We have written this toolkit for practitioners working with young people who are either in care or have been in care (for example youth workers, support workers, psychologists and teachers). We hope that they may find it helpful when thinking about setting up a group programme, or when looking for further inspiration for group activities if they're already delivering group work for young people.

## Why have we written it?

As well as writing about how we set up the group, we have shared what we learned from the implementation process. We hope you will find this useful so you can learn from our experiences and feel encouraged to adopt our ethos, which encourages a relational approach to creating a safe environment where young people can talk about serious issues in a fun way.

This manual has been designed to be used alongside the toolkit, which has detailed sessions plans, exercises and activities that you can facilitate with the young people that come to your group. When we started this project and began to develop the programme, we found it fairly challenging to find relevant materials that were engaging, evidence-based and relevant to young people, so we spent a lot of time scouring various places for resources. We found loads of good stuff though, and so we have pulled these resources together for you in the toolkit.

Hello,

Our names are Eyram (14), Alfie (12), Vicky (13), Lewis (14) and Becky (13). This manual (and the toolkit) describes all the activities we have taken part in over the past 18 months. It's not just a list of activities though, it's got stuff about us in it too – our thoughts and ideas as to how you can run groups like ours.

We hope you find it useful. We also hope you like the pictures as these were done by us 😊.

NB. You will find all our thoughts and reflections in orange boxes throughout this report.

# Contents



<b>MyLife, MyFuture: Where it all began</b>	<b>1</b>
Who is the programme for?	2
What did we do?	2
MyLife, MyFuture facilitators	4
The skills and qualities of group facilitators	4
<b>Finding the right facilitators</b>	<b>4</b>
Co-working	6
A reflection: The impact of running the group on group facilitators	7
Supervision	8
Recruiting young people to the group	9
Assessment	9
Venue and location	9
<b>Setting up the group: bringing everyone together</b>	<b>9</b>
Size of the Group	11
Negotiating the boundaries	11
Engagement and retention	13
Celebrating birthdays and achievements	14
One-to-one support during the programme	14
Dealing with disclosures and disagreements in groups	14
Connectedness	16
<b>You get out what you put in: The programme evaluation</b>	<b>16</b>
Emotional wellbeing	17
Confidence	18
Aspirations	18
Enjoyment	19
Planning	20
<b>Structuring your sessions</b>	<b>20</b>
Session format	22
Session recording form	25
Journals	25
Programme trips	26



<b>Getting out and about: Programme trips and competitions</b>	<b>26</b>
Challenges and competitions	27
Involvement with the Mental Health Foundation	27
How do you bring things to a close?	29
<b>Endings</b>	<b>29</b>
The residential trip	30
The last session	31
Keeping in touch	31
<b>References</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Suggested reading</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>34</b>
Young people's glossary	34
MyLife, MyFuture: Social media guide for adults	35
Session Recording Form	36
Organisations and useful numbers	37

# MyLife, MyFuture: Where it all began



Being a young person is hard. Being a young person in care is even harder. While it's by no means a given, children in care are less likely than their peers to do well at school, more likely to come into contact with the criminal justice system, and more likely to have physical and mental health problems (DfE, 2015). Wouldn't it be wonderful if they had a safe place they could go to forge friendships, learn new skills and just be themselves?

Enter MyLife, MyFuture. This programme was set up to enrich the lives of young people in care. We are not there to 'look after' the young people, but to offer something they may be longing for: the opportunity to just be. The seed of the idea came from acknowledging that there can be truly devastating outcomes for young people who are in public care because, often, the committed, ongoing support is not there.

The main aims for our programme were:

1. To increase the young people's confidence in themselves and their abilities
2. To maintain the young people's emotional wellbeing and resilience
3. To promote a greater sense of aspiration in the young people for their futures

The Mental Health Foundation recognises that, for young people in care, one important relationship that should be nurtured and developed is the one with their social worker.

When completing scoping work for the project, we were told by young people that some social workers can be constrained by bureaucratic tasks, and they are often required to be focused on contractual and service-orientated approaches to practice rather than on the young people as individuals. This presents a challenge when trying to develop nurturing and supportive relationships, which can lead to practice being delivered in an inconsistent way. This, in turn, impacts on the decisions made for the young people and, ultimately, on their lives. Examples include:

- Seemingly arbitrary changes in foster carers, or changes that are not clearly communicated
- Changes to contact arrangements with important and loved family and friends
- Unsettling communication and professional contact, for example, numerous different professionals asking young people to recount their history and past traumas with no clear evidence of information sharing

Our aim is to provide young people with something they may be lacking in their lives: relationships. Not just with us, the workers, but with other young people - their peers. This programme provides young people with opportunities that can help with the creation of relationships. It takes a lot of hard work and patience, but it is amazingly rewarding for everybody if you stick at it.



## Who is the programme for?

The programme has been designed for young people aged 11 to 14 who have been or were currently in care.

## What did we do?

We kept it simple. The programme was developed to be underpinned by relationship-based practice and a strengths-based approach to supporting young people. In this way, over an 18-month period we placed a focus on young people's personal development through the use of fun and creative weekly group sessions and termly trips. These group activities were planned by three project workers to address key topics that were relevant to the needs of young people. These included: icebreakers and team-building sessions, discussion sessions, craft activities and skill development (e.g., painting, urban art), as well as additional energetic and fun activities that the young people identified as not having done before, such as ice-skating, go-karting and trampolining.

A list of topics was developed that would be addressed in the group programme, with each topic lasting for 3-5 weeks. The list of topics was co-produced with young people and based on what was important to them, but it also reflected key issues that had been highlighted in research. Over the 18-month programme, we 'sandwiched' the heavier sessions between the more light-hearted ones. The matrix below shows our suggested order for the topics, and how these topics relate to our main aims for the programme.

Groups contained up to 12 young people who would drop-in and out of the programme over the 18-month period. There was value in the group being small (the young people told us this) but, often, activities need more than six young people, which wasn't always viable in our group if some people didn't turn up.

There may be weeks when only one young person comes to your group. We don't want you to panic and think, "Now what am I supposed to do?!" Use this resource to maintain consistency and stickability. The young people *will* come.





Session topics	Programme objectives		
	Increase young people's confidence in themselves and their abilities	Maintain young people's emotional wellbeing and resilience	Promote a greater sense of aspiration in young people for their futures
Happiness			
Aspirations			
Social networks			
Identity			
Stereotyping and prejudice			
Respect			
Emotions			
Stress			
Managing anger			
Self-esteem			
Peer pressure			
Relationships			
Bullying			
Cyberbullying			
Introduction to grooming and child sexual exploitation			
Sleep			
Dreams			
Old age			
Reflections			

# Finding the right facilitators



## MyLife, MyFuture facilitators

It's important to think about the staff you get to run your group. Choose the right people, who are motivated and reflective, and the young people will be encouraged to explore, learn, change and thrive. Your staff will hold an important position that can influence young people's lives.

The programme is facilitated by two practitioners. You do not need to have a particular professional skill or background, but rather a range of knowledge, skills and capacities, which are described below.

The skills and approach that you use to deliver the programme will be as important as its content. Your ability to encourage young people to engage with the programme and make positive changes is critical to its success. Some key things to remember when facilitating this programme include:

### *The importance of relationships:*

The young people's relationships with their facilitators should try to model a safe and nurturing relationship that they can form with other adults. This will help them to engage positively with the programme and interact well with others.

### *The need for a safe space:*

An important role for facilitators is to create a safe space that enables young people to reflect and interact with the programme. If the young people are anxious, they will not be able to benefit from the programme. Clear structures

and simple routines can put people at ease and help to ensure that the young people don't feel overwhelmed.

### *The value of a participative approach:*

You should try to deliver the programme in an interactive and participatory way. A didactic teaching style is less likely to facilitate change and may actually be disengaging, particularly for those who are not getting on well with formal education.

## The skills and qualities of group facilitators

When young people were asked about the qualities they wanted in the group facilitators running the programme, this is what they said...

"It takes patience and time. It's time-consuming. You have to be passionate about young people. If you're not, you're just not going to get on with them."

"They have to be energetic and they have to be caring, so when someone does something to someone else, and the other person gets sad, they have to go and step outside and talk to them."



Together with the feedback from the young people, we have identified the following list of skills and qualities that MyLife, My Future facilitators will need in order to deliver the programme effectively.

*Personal therapeutic qualities and engagement skills:*

- **Authenticity** – relating to group members in a way that seems genuine, honest and confident. We were real with the young people. We brought ourselves to the group, and we were open and honest with them. We didn't shy away from having difficult conversations.
- **Effective communication skills** – including active listening skills, and relating to young people in a way that seems genuine, honest and confident.
- **Humour** – being able to laugh at yourself. The young people may have been laughing at us, rather than with us, but that was fine! There were enough other serious things in the young people's lives (such as court orders and placement moves), and they could come to us for a bit of light relief.
- **Curiosity and respect** – conveying genuine interest in each young person that comes to the group, while maintaining respectful boundaries.
- **Encouragement and warmth** – conveying a deep sensitivity, appreciation and openness to the young people's experiences, and communicating a supportive, reassuring and empathetic relationship.

*Skills in reflective practice:*

- The ability to wonder about the young people's thoughts and feelings; adopting a stance of 'not knowing'.
- The ability to be self-aware and reflective in one's own work.
- The ability to recognise, support and develop reflective practices in others.

*Group planning and recruitment skills:*

- Understanding of local mental health and LAC care pathways.
- Understanding of the criteria that would make a young person suitable to attend the programme.
- Understanding of common barriers that may prevent young people from attending a mental health group programme.

*Group facilitation skills:*

- Understanding how groups function: the patterns of interactions, stages of development and roles taken up in groups.
- Creating a safe group space with the ability to hold, contain and discuss young people's feelings.
- Delivering groups with consistency and reliability in relational style.
- Understanding how to develop an effective, attuned and trusting co-working relationship.
- Supporting the development of a group where young people can become increasingly supportive and reliant on each other.



*Understanding of the mental health problems and social challenges relevant to young people that have had contact with the care system:*

- Knowledge of children and young people's mental health problems, including prevalence, causes, symptoms and their impact.
- Knowledge and understanding of the common myths and misconceptions around mental illness, and the reasons why young people may be reluctant to reveal mental health problems to professionals.
- Knowledge of strategies to prevent or cope with mental health difficulties, such as problem solving, assertiveness communication, behavioural activation and thought challenging.
- Knowledge and understanding of techniques to enhance relationships and social support systems

*Safeguarding knowledge:*

- An understanding of how to work with families with complex and multiple needs.
- The ability (within the context of a light-touch programme) to identify and address risks to the young person. This should include knowledge of how to make referrals to the appropriate services.

## **Co-working**

The relationship between co-facilitators should aim to be co-operative and supportive. It should enable you to plan together, share the workload, explore new ways of working alongside each other, listen to each other's points of view and resolve differences of opinion constructively. The way that you work together should try to model the relationships that you want young people in the group to build.

*Consistency:*

Consistency in relationships will be important for the success of this programme and, therefore, it is recommended that the same two practitioners should run the group each week wherever possible. It may also be helpful to introduce young people to other facilitators who might stand in if one of you is absent.

*Reflective practice:*

Working with vulnerable young people during this important time can be difficult and demanding. To do this work effectively, you will benefit from opportunities to reflect on your own communication style, feelings and experiences. It may be particularly helpful for you to try to be reflective about your own experiences of childhood and adolescence.



## A reflection: The impact of running the group on group facilitators

Running a programme like this can be tiring and draining at times. In our experience, weekly sessions became quite intense. We could plan, but often we had to go with what young people brought into the room.

However, working with this particular group of young people was rewarding. The relationships we developed from meeting every week for 18 months were special, in that the young people did start to open up and trust us with some of their concerns and worries. This was heart-wrenching at times because some of their problems were very hard to hear, particularly when we had very little power to do anything about them other than listen. To hear that a young person who had self-harmed had to wait months for a CAMHS appointment was frustrating. To see a young person return to their mum and then be back in care within a few weeks was sad.

It was often difficult to know if we were actually making a difference for these young people. One particular girl attended the group for over year but did not speak for the first four months. She would

remain silent and sit on her chair outside the main group. This was frustrating because we wanted her to engage, take part, participate. However, we had to reflect on our own feelings as to why we were frustrated and what participation actually meant. Her just being there was a form of engagement and, after four months, she did start to have conversations and join in with discussions.

To see the young people develop was a privilege. We saw a lot of changes over 18 months and to be part of that was rewarding. We built relationships. Some people may call it 'attachment' but these were relationships.

To a certain extent, we had to redefine some of the personal and professional boundaries we adhere to when working with young people in care. Of course, boundaries are essential to help young people and workers stay safe but, when applied too categorically and inflexibly, they can prevent the development of meaningful connections. We used our judgement and, in doing so, developed authentic, significant relationships.



## Supervision

Given all the challenges of working in this context, it is important that group facilitators have access to high-quality reflective supervision to support this work. This should enable you to experience the sort of relationship that you provide to the young people that you work with.

Reflective supervision is valuable for all relationships-based work. It has three core elements (Parlakian, 2001):

### *Reflection:*

Reflection allows people to step back and wonder about the meaning of their experiences. It enables practitioners to examine their own thoughts and feelings, and to reflect on the experiences of the family that they work with. Reflective supervision is characterised by active listening and thoughtful questioning. It enables facilitators to become aware of their strengths and limitations, and to consider how to improve their practice.

### *Collaboration:*

Collaboration involves sharing responsibility, power and decision-making where this is appropriate. In good supervisory relationships, supervisors learn from, as well as teach, staff.

### *Regularity:*

Supervision should take place on a reliable schedule, and sufficient time must be allocated to its practice. Wherever possible, time should be protected from cancellation or rescheduling.

# Setting up the group: bringing everyone together



Before we began the sessions with the young people, there were certain things we needed to consider. We certainly didn't operate under the 'put everyone in a room and hope for the best' mindset. Instead, we planned, we talked and, at times, we pulled our hair out!

## Recruiting young people to the group

Young people could be recruited to the programme through local marketing activity, work with social workers, foster care agencies, GPs, local CAMHS and active outreach by youth workers.

This was challenging for our pilot. We were dealing with a local authority under a lot of pressure, and we found it very difficult to get consistent attention and responses from the workers who could have referred young people to the programme.

Remember that potential referrers may have varying degrees of understanding about mental health difficulties in young people, knowledge of the risk factors and warning signs, and confidence to discuss these issues with young people. For this programme to be successful, it is important that potential referrers understand who they are targeting, what the programme is and why it matters. We suggest that you spend time to support them in this work – possibly by setting up training events and launching the service in your local area to spread awareness.

## Assessment

To facilitate engagement and overcome any barriers to accessing the programme, we chose not to find out about the history of the young people ahead of them attending the group, but instead to let them tell us about themselves and their history should they wish.

The programme was underpinned by a series of ground rules (see the section 'Ground rules' below). We found that negotiating boundaries honestly and transparently with young people was vital for developing meaningful relationships. This was not always easy, but it helped break down what can be very adult-orientated concepts, such as safeguarding. We aligned ourselves as much as possible with the local authority safeguarding procedures and, if we were concerned that a young person may be suffering harm, we had the phone numbers of who to contact and the local young people's services to hand. We also worked very closely and transparently with the young people's foster carers when difficulties and issues arose.

## Venue and location

Making the location accessible to young people is really important and helps with recruitment and retention. However, sometimes finding an affordable space is difficult. We had a lovely venue, but it wasn't the easiest place for young people to get to. Don't underestimate the effort that young people will make to get to you, though. While it was on the doorstep



for some, one young person had to take three buses, which took an hour and a half after school. This commitment reinforces the importance of making sure that the group offers a safe place for young people: a place where they are not judged, and which is somewhere they *want* to go. We were at the same location throughout the programme, at the same

time each week. The young people knew this. Even if only one person showed up, we were there. Where your budget permits, we would always advise you to re-imburse young people for their travel or any expenses paid to arrive at the group.



### *The kit*

There are a number of resources that you might want to think about collecting and preparing before starting to deliver groups. These include the following:

- Refreshments, and access to a kettle, spoons and mugs
- Plates and napkins
- A CD player (or other device) to play music
- Pens and paper
- Post-It notes
- A selection of postcards
- Conversation cards
- Emoji picture cards
- Agree / Disagree / Unsure cards
- Pack of playing cards
- Jenga
- Uno
- Icebreaker games
- Arts and crafts materials
- First-aid kit
- Wi-Fi, so you can bring videos and social media into your sessions and activities.

Another consideration is whether there is storage for resources at the venue where you are running the groups, or if you are able to transport resources in the car (if one of the group facilitators is a driver and there is available parking close by).





## Size of the Group

Groups should include up to a maximum of 10 young people, with each group being led by two facilitators. It's important to try to ensure at the outset that you have a large enough group of young people for the group to be viable, but that it's not so large that they won't individually feel valued and safe.

However, it is important to consider the young people coming to the group and their particular behaviours; for example, larger groups may be inhibiting for some and this can change the group's dynamics.

Below is what some of the young people said about group size when asked:

"I think the maximum group size should be 15. It would take more time but we would get a wider range of opinions. I think six is good as well. We kinda know each other so we sort of know what each person is going to say."

"You have to have more than one or two people coming otherwise it's dead. You have to go on trips."

"It's been OK with six. There's nothing wrong with having six people as it's easier to know everyone, but it would be better with more for the icebreakers and stuff."

## Negotiating the boundaries

Successfully negotiating the boundaries of group work is the backbone of this work, and it will provide you with the foundations for building authentic relationships with the young people attending.

There were both spoken and unspoken rules, plus boundaries that had to be negotiated along the way. Everyone made suggestions, including the group facilitators, and we developed a set of 'ground rules' by about the fourth session when people had started to get to know each other.

### Ground rules

#### *Confidentiality.*

A safe space was created where young people felt they could express their feelings or concerns. There was an agreement that there should be no blabbing about something someone had shared amongst the group. As workers, we made sure that the young people understood that it was our role to balance their right to confidentiality with the need to act on any valid concerns we had about their safety and wellbeing. This had its challenges, but our approach was to have open and honest dialogue with young people as much as possible.

#### *No mobile phones.*

This was a contentious issue. As a group, we agreed that they weren't allowed as they were distracting, but they kept making an appearance. Towards the end of the programme, mobiles were put in a bag and stored away. In certain



situations, it may not be right to take away a young person's property, but because of the relationships we had built within the group, this was accepted, and it allowed us to better progress in the session.

#### *Be reflective.*

As workers, we had to continually ask ourselves if we were being mindful about what we were doing and why. Emotions would often run high, from both the young people and us. There were deep discussions and tears, but we acknowledged these feelings and dealt with them accordingly, either individually or as a group – whatever was judged to be appropriate at the time.

#### *Challenge unpleasant views.*

We did occasionally encounter attitudes that we perceived to be sexist or homophobic. These views were challenged by both workers and young people and used as an opportunity for further discussion.

#### *Don't avoid the issue.*

Inevitably, we found ourselves engaged in some difficult conversations with individuals and as a group. We did our best not to avoid these.

#### *Flexibility of language.*

Some of the words and phrases the young people used left us scratching our heads. We learnt a lot from them about how they communicate with each other, especially via social media. We came up with our own glossary (see Appendices), which was helpful for us adults! This was ongoing throughout the programme, and we added to it as we went along. We can imagine that local dialects and language will be different everywhere, so it would be great if we could compare with others. With the ever-changing media environment, we found that the young people led the way with this, which helped us with our own anxieties on the subject.

#### *Sensitivity.*

When dealing with sensitive topics, although we tried to think ahead as to how the young people might react, more often than not we had to respond in the moment to what was happening. Even though the triggers might sometimes be related to the unique experience of being a young person in care, sometimes these could also be due to the everyday teenage issues they were going through.

"Know the young person really well to know how they are feeling. If you can tell that they are uncomfortable when you go there, you have to then ease out of it."

Eyram

## Engagement and retention

We had to be consistent. Even if only one young person turned up, we were there. The use of a loyalty card and providing food were incentives for the young people to attend.



*We operated a loyalty card scheme, whereby every young person received a £10 voucher after attending 10 sessions. Needless to say, this was very popular!*

We used a number of activities to keep the young people interested, and we tried to offer something that suited everyone. The trips we went on were chosen by the young people. The session time was important: the young people could come straight to the group from school and have food with us. In order to keep them engaged and encourage them to attend the sessions, we sent texts and emails, and posted tweets.

A key to the success of the sessions was involving foster carers. They were a huge source of encouragement to the young people in the early days, and were also a big practical help when they dropped them off on cold winter nights.

We assessed the young people's needs on an ongoing basis as these did change over time. The types of activities we were doing at the beginning changed – 18 months is a long time when considering young people's development. Significantly, during our time on the project, two young people got mobile phones, which massively altered the dynamic of the group. It meant that we could engage with them better from session to session, but it also meant that we had to manage this within the group setting as their new 'gadgets' could be a source of distraction!

This is some advice from young people about engaging in a group like MyLife, MyFuture:

"Have an open mind. Respect others (even though your views and interests might be different). Be prepared to listen. Participate, don't be the odd one out. Be friendly."

Eyram, age 14

"Don't be nervous to talk to new people and socialise. Try and attend as many sessions as you can. Don't worry, they won't eat you!"

Alfie, age 12

"Don't be something you're not. Be honest about your situation. Everybody is going through the same thing. Tell the staff to bring food!"

Becky, age 13



## **Celebrating birthdays and achievements**

Birthdays of both the young people and workers were celebrated with a cake and candles. For all other achievements that young people chose to share with us, or that we recognised, we sent a MyLife, MyFuture postcard through the post. Sometimes we sent one just to let them know we were thinking of them – with messages such as good luck with your exams, sorry things are really hard at the moment, we're here for you. Young people commented on how much they liked receiving these.

## **One-to-one support during the programme**

During this programme, you may identify that you need to spend additional time with some young people. For example, they may have concerns that they do not feel comfortable talking about in the group sessions, or they may be having a particularly difficult time and need additional help addressing their problems.

You and your facilitator only have a finite amount of time, and your priority should be ensuring that the group runs effectively. You will not be able to give all the young people dedicated ongoing one-to-one support, and if they need such support it will be important to identify other providers within mental health or children's services who can provide this assistance.

However, during the programme you will be able to offer some 1:1 support before, during or after a group to young people who request it or display difficulties within the group. The purpose of this

support should be to help young people to engage positively with the group programme, to understand their needs, and to enable you to signpost or refer them to relevant specialist services if necessary.

## **Dealing with disclosures and disagreements in groups**

### *Disclosures*

During a group session, young people may disclose difficult information, such as experiences of bullying, self-harm or domestic abuse.

All disclosures involving recent abuse must be dealt with sensitively and in accordance with local safeguarding policies. If a young person, for example, discloses that another group member is being abusive towards them, the safety of that young person and every member of the group, including yourselves, must be paramount. This means ensuring that the person who has disclosed abuse is not at risk from the perpetrator. Once you have ensured the safety of all concerned, offer support and, after the group, make a referral to the relevant specialist services.

Young people should know that you are available after each group session to reflect with them on any issues raised by the session. On occasion, one of you may need to take an individual aside during a session to work with them one-to-one to contain distress, while the others continue with the group.

### *Challenges, disruptions and disagreements*

The behaviour of the young people within the group could be challenging.



There was a lot going on in the lives of the young people we were working with, and we really did have to look behind the behaviour. We had young people with anger issues, who would swear, punch walls, storm out... and when the challenging behaviour was directed at us, it was tough. Being sworn at and shouted at is not nice. However, it is from these places that relationships can grow.

It can be helpful, at the start of each session, to re-iterate the 'ground rules' about what is acceptable behaviour. The ground rules should be a useful tool to enable you to constructively challenge any difficult behaviour in the group.

The angry and aggressive behaviour was, at times, very hard to deal with, and it did have an impact on the group. If a young person was disruptive in the group, we always took the time to talk to them about this, and how to avoid it happening again. Sometimes we had to ask the young person to leave the room or session, but our approach was to deal with it as a group. Because we were a small group, we were able to talk together about our emotions – both the young people and the workers. We learnt a lot, particularly about setting boundaries and remaining consistent.

Sometimes we allowed young people to get angry and share their feelings. If they needed to vent – about school, court decisions, teachers – we were there to listen. As workers, at the moment in time when the young person was mouthing off, we just had to 'be'. This meant staying with the young person: allowing them to express themselves, helping them to think through their emotions, and challenging them where necessary.

Conflict between participants needs to be managed carefully on an individual basis. If this happens, ask to speak to the participants involved at an appropriate point in the group. Both facilitators should be present at the meeting; the end of the session or at a specially arranged time is probably best. Name the differences of opinion. Refer to the ground rules, and say that conflict in the group is undesirable because it is stressful for other group members. In addition, the group cannot function if there is conflict. If there are disagreements in a group, ask the participants themselves if they can think of how to resolve the differences. Explain that you have to consider the wellbeing of the whole group, and if participants are in continual conflict they may be asked not to attend the group any more.

If anyone is particularly disruptive or menacing in the group, or if they repeatedly demonstrate difficult behaviour, this must be dealt with seriously. Initially, you should ask the person to take some time out while they calm down (if violence is likely, you should call the police). Once the person is calm, you should be empathetic, but say that you need to consider their future on the programme. Talk to your co-facilitator and line manager about how best to deal with this behaviour.

If you decide that a participant must stop attending a group, try to discuss this with them face to face if possible. Anyone who cannot attend the group should also be signposted or referred to alternative support. Once the situation has been resolved, you need to sensitively explain to the group why action needed to be taken.

# You get out what you put in: The programme evaluation



The MyLife, MyFuture programme wasn't just 'something to do' for the young people who participated in it. In fact, we hope that much of what they learned, experienced and contributed will remain with them forever.

To explore their experiences of taking part in the programme, we conducted a process of evaluation by interviewing all the young people and analysing what they said using thematic analysis. Based on their comments and their evaluation of the programme, a number of themes emerged about what they gained from MyLife, MyFuture.

## Connectedness

The young people experienced increased positive relationships by forging friendships with people similar to themselves, and by connecting emotionally with the other group members. Comments included:



*"When I come here I feel more confident than at school, I think it is mostly at school I am a bit more shy and at home and here I am more confident and like when I am not with my few friends at school, I just feel I am a bit of a ghost at school, but here I am always included in everything. I feel like part of the group!"*

*"I feel a bit like they are another family!"*

*"To me this is a place where you can go and you can be yourself, you make new friends. When I first started I didn't really know the people that well now I feel like I am really close to them."*



## Emotional wellbeing

Being part of the programme impacted on the young people's wellbeing in a couple of different ways:

### Someone to talk to and trust

The group provided a safe space for young people to talk about their emotions – to us as the workers and, perhaps more importantly, to their peers. Comments included:

*"I can, like, share stuff with the others."*

*"We just talk about things in general and you won't be alone because there are a lot of other people just like us."*

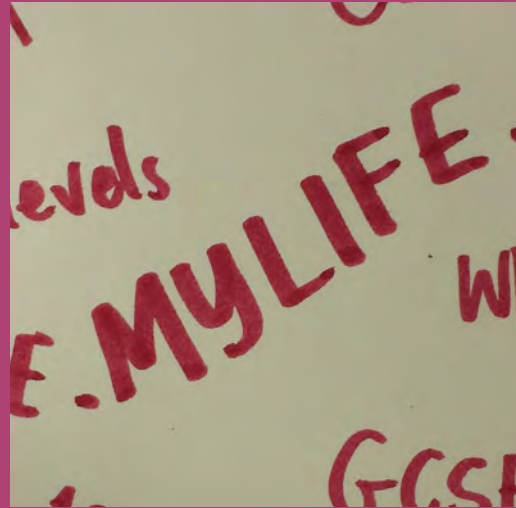
*"I am trusting people a bit more. Like before as I said I was really anti-social but then since I came here they have kind of changed me... they listen to everything you say; other groups I have gone to have just been like 'oh alright' and then like 'fine, it is going to be alright' but then they like help you with it [here]. In that I know they won't spread it around everywhere, like if I go and tell my mates at school they are going to like spread it but I know that this is safe so it's alright."*

### Coping skills and resilience

The group helped the young people understand how to deal with the challenges they may face in life. Comments included:

*"Yes, I think it has [helped] because we have discussed some life problems which we have encountered and stuff."*

*"Because, if other people know what it is like then they already know how to stop it and stuff like that, so you can just go and ask them for advice."*





## Confidence

Over the course of the programme, there was a noticeable increase in confidence among certain young people – both within the group setting and outside. Comments included:



*"I feel a bit more confident because when I first came I didn't really speak to everyone but now I can, like, speak to everyone now."*

*"I have got a lot more confidence about talking to people because (before) I could not talk to anyone that I didn't know. Like, since I came here I have kind of got a bit more."*

*"I also think throughout the year I have been coming I think it has helped boost my confidence because last year, I think 2014, I completely lost my confidence because of what happened and then I started to build it up again, and then when I came here I feel like it has built up more. I think I was probably, if I was on a scale, like a three or four [and now] probably like eight or nine."*

## Aspirations

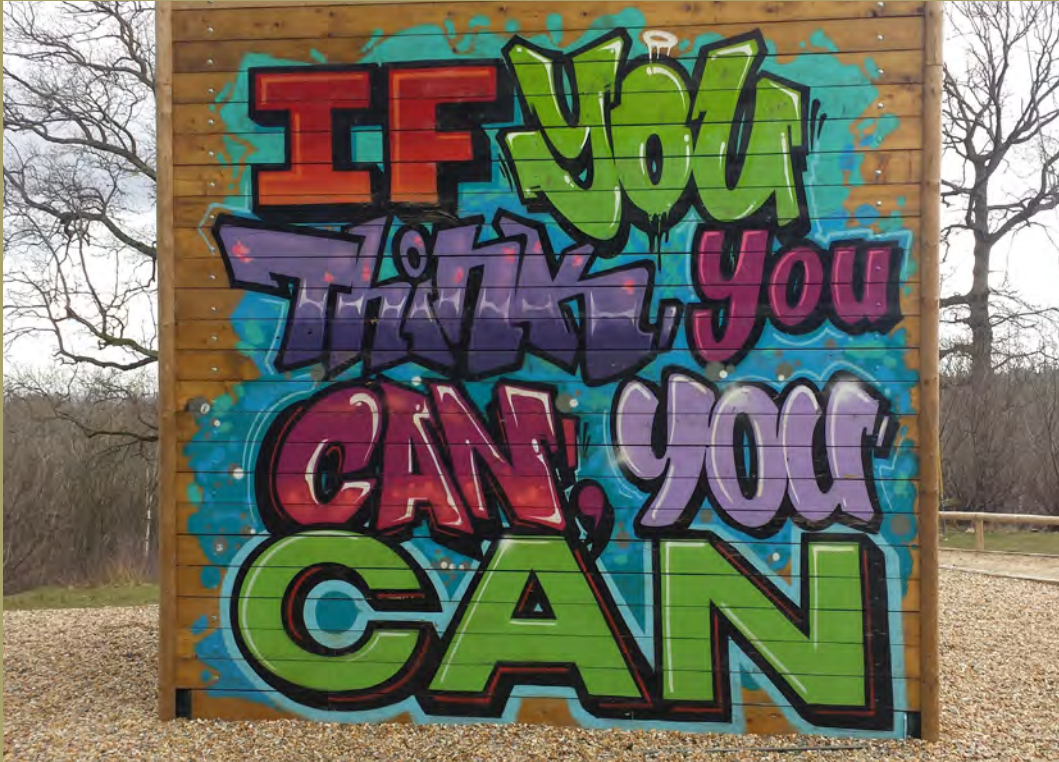
The time the young people spent with us helped them to think about the future and feel positive about what it holds. We helped them to acknowledge their aspirations and dreams. Comments included:

*"When I first came here I just didn't care or anything, but they said to me 'well you need to start focussing on everything at school', because I was going to get kicked out of school anyway but they kind of kept me in."*

*"Definitely! I know what I want to do in like two or three years' time. [The group] kind of contributed to, like, what I wanted to do."*



## Enjoyment



The young people used positive words such as “fun”, “good” and “cool” to describe their experience. They enjoyed it. We laughed, had fun and ate food. It was nice to see the young people enjoying themselves, and, even if one week they were having a hard time, we appreciated their commitment to the group and hoped it could offer some support. Comments included:

*“I really enjoy it and the others, I seem to get the impression that they really enjoy it too!”*

*“All the sessions have been really fun.”*

*“You can meet new friends and like the activities we do are fun and they are kind of like based around stuff people my age would maybe come to deal with or what we would do and we also like do art activities sometimes or listen to music.”*

# Structuring your sessions



## Planning

While there was an informal feel to the sessions, a lot of thought and attention went into planning them to allow for exploration and discussion. **Planning was key, and not to be underestimated.** You and your young people will benefit from preparation: the better prepared you are, the better the session will be. Plus, having a similar format each week contributes to creating a safe and familiar environment.

We recommend that you and your co-facilitator also carefully consider the make-up of your group, the needs of each group member and how you can best respond to these. This includes considering whether any young people are new to the group, and thinking about how you can build and maintain the important sense of trust and security within the group.

We recommend that in your planning you consider the following principles:

- **Pay attention to the detail of the programme.** This will demonstrate to the young people that you really care about their experience.
- **Consider the young people's full 'journeys' through the programme.** Do not just plan the formal activities within the programme, but break down every step of their experience and think about how to get each of them right. This includes considering how you might be in touch with the young people before and between group sessions, and how sessions flow from week to week. This will help you keep them in mind between sessions.
- **Consider the language you will use in the session.** How will you relay important concepts in a way that is meaningful to the young people?
- **Consider all aspects of the young people's experience,** including sights, sounds, smells and physical experiences. How can you make the sessions as comfortable as possible and conducive to positive wellbeing? How can you make the session as convenient and stress-free as possible so that they can engage fully? This starts with arranging for their physical comfort and encouraging them to find a comfortable position.
- **Add a personal touch** wherever you can, demonstrating that you are keeping individual young people and their needs in mind.
- **Consider the young people's emotional state at all times.** How do you want/need them to feel, and how do you get them there?



You may also want to refer to this session preparation checklist:



Even though we planned ahead, we also had to be flexible to address the needs of the young people. There was a buzz of unpredictability in the air. We had to go with the madness, away from the subject that might have initiated the conversation. Admittedly, after putting all the effort into planning, going off on a tangent was sometimes painful, but we knew that we had to respond in the moment, otherwise it was a lost opportunity.

Take into consideration the personalities of the young people attending the group before planning the session (there's

no point in planning a session if you know that the young people will not be interested in it).

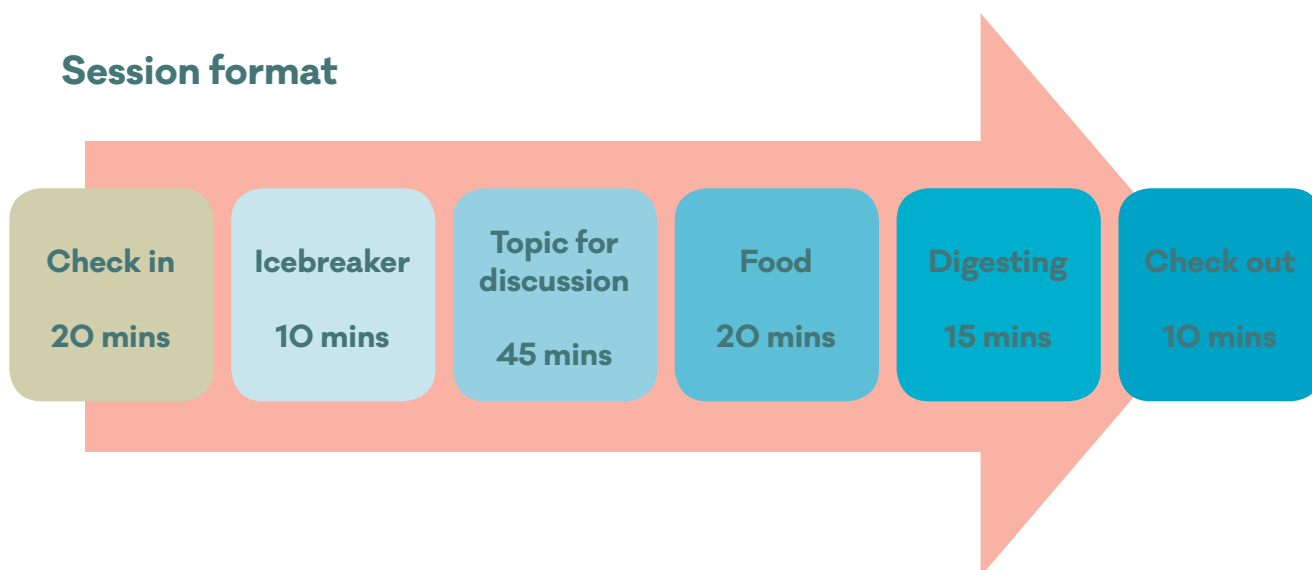
A personal reflection:

"Sometimes young people needed to be gently nudged out of their comfort zone. I spent time getting to know young people and came to learn when they might need a bit of encouragement to try something new and take a bit more of a risk than they normally would."

Amy Glover



## Session format



Throughout the 'MyLife, MyFuture' programme, the weekly sessions followed a similar format (see above).

Before the young people arrived, we set up the session, including the room layout. There were comfy seats and a space at the back where we kept all the refreshments. We always played music as the young people arrived.

"The music before the actual session, well it liked helped us get to know each other sort of."

"It sets the mood for the session."

### *Check In*

At the start of each session, we 'checked in' with each other, using picture postcards or writing down our emotions on Post-It notes to find out how everyone was feeling and how the week had been. As workers, it gave us the opportunity to have a chit-chat/catch up with the young people, to check the current mood, and to find out if there had been any

significant changes or events since we'd last met so that we could be sensitive to these.

"The 'follow your dreams' was my favourite postcard. I think it was useful to know how everyone was feeling so if someone was feeling sad, you could be like oh... why you feeling like that?"

The check-in is also a good opportunity to see how the young people found the last session and whether they had taken anything away from it – for example you could ask them to say three facts that they remembered from the last week session and if there is anything they had learnt that they have put into practice.

### *Icebreakers*

Icebreakers play an important role in getting the group to integrate and connect. They help to build rapport and encourage everyone to get to know each other. Over time, we began to use icebreakers to develop trust and energise the sessions.



The various games/questions/puzzles were met with differing reactions, but we always included an icebreaker in the session. As workers, it was important that we took part and stayed motivated. If something wasn't working, we quickly moved onto the next activity!

The icebreakers presented in the accompanying toolkit have been tried and tested by our young people: they are a selection of their favourites (see Appendices).

"They calm everyone down and get everyone into the session."

"You learn more about the other people there."

### *Topics for discussion*

This was always the main chunk of the session. The list of topics was co-produced with young people and based on what was important to them, but it also reflected the key issues that had been highlighted in research. All the exercises and activities we suggest for each topic are detailed in the toolkit.

The idea of introducing topics was to give young people the opportunity to discuss things that perhaps they couldn't talk about at home or school. The discussions were 'tasters' and lightly explored the subject areas.

Over 18 months, we 'sandwiched' the heavier, more sensitive sessions (e.g. bullying and grooming) between the

light-hearted ones (e.g. aspirations and social media). The list below shows our suggested order for the topics:

1. **Happiness**
2. **Aspirations**
3. **Social networks**
4. **Identity**
5. **Stereotyping and prejudice**
6. **Respect**
7. **Emotions**
8. **Stress**
9. **Managing anger**
10. **Self-esteem**
11. **Peer pressure**
12. **Relationships**
13. **Bullying**
14. **Cyberbullying**
15. **Introduction to grooming and child sexual exploitation**
16. **Sleep**
17. **Dreams**
18. **Old age**
19. **Reflections**

A personal reflection:

"We realised we shouldn't presume that our young people are aware of the topics already. Sometimes we planted a seed of awareness on topic areas and introduced something new to the young people. We had to strike the right balance between leaving them with enough information to know what to do, but not putting them in a place that would worry them, e.g. by introducing bullying and the impact it can have on young people."

Juliet Brown



Not all the themes we initially chose were popular – in fact, some were unsettling for the young people, while others were deemed by them to be too educational (e.g. cyberbullying). However, some were of great interest because the topic was new to the young people and they were keen to find out more (e.g. anxiety and mental health). It can be difficult to find the right balance, but, fundamentally, we were keen to cover a variety of topics that could provoke and inspire.

“The topics are relatable. You get to talk about your experience safely, like you know that they are not going to go and spread it. That’s what I think.”

Some of the sessions ran for one week, whereas others ran over a few weeks. The time taken depended on the response, where the conversation took us and what the young people expressed they wanted to do next.

While this may have felt like the main part of the session, it was not always the most important in the eyes of the young people! Which leads us to...

### *Food*

Food was a valuable part of the sessions. Initially, it was an incentive for young people to turn up, but it became more than that. It was a useful tool to bring the group together. It was viewed as a ‘time-out’, some downtime where the young people had the opportunity to catch up with each other. Each young person got to choose hot food from the menu and were responsible for sharing it out between the group.

“You get to know what people like and what they don’t like.”

“It brings us here, makes us want to come.”

“It gets us energetic. Food is bae (good).”

### *Check Out*

This final part of the session followed the same process as checking in. We’d ask the young people to pick a picture postcard to represent how they were now feeling at the end of the session. We’d be lying if we said that this part happened as regularly as the check in (the young people sometimes rushed off). However, in hindsight, we should have stuck to this more stringently, because it was important that the young people were not left feeling anxious or upset as a result of the session. It also adds ‘closure’ to the session.

There were occasions when the young people approached us individually to talk about a topic. In these instances, we would always ‘check out’ with them that there were okay.

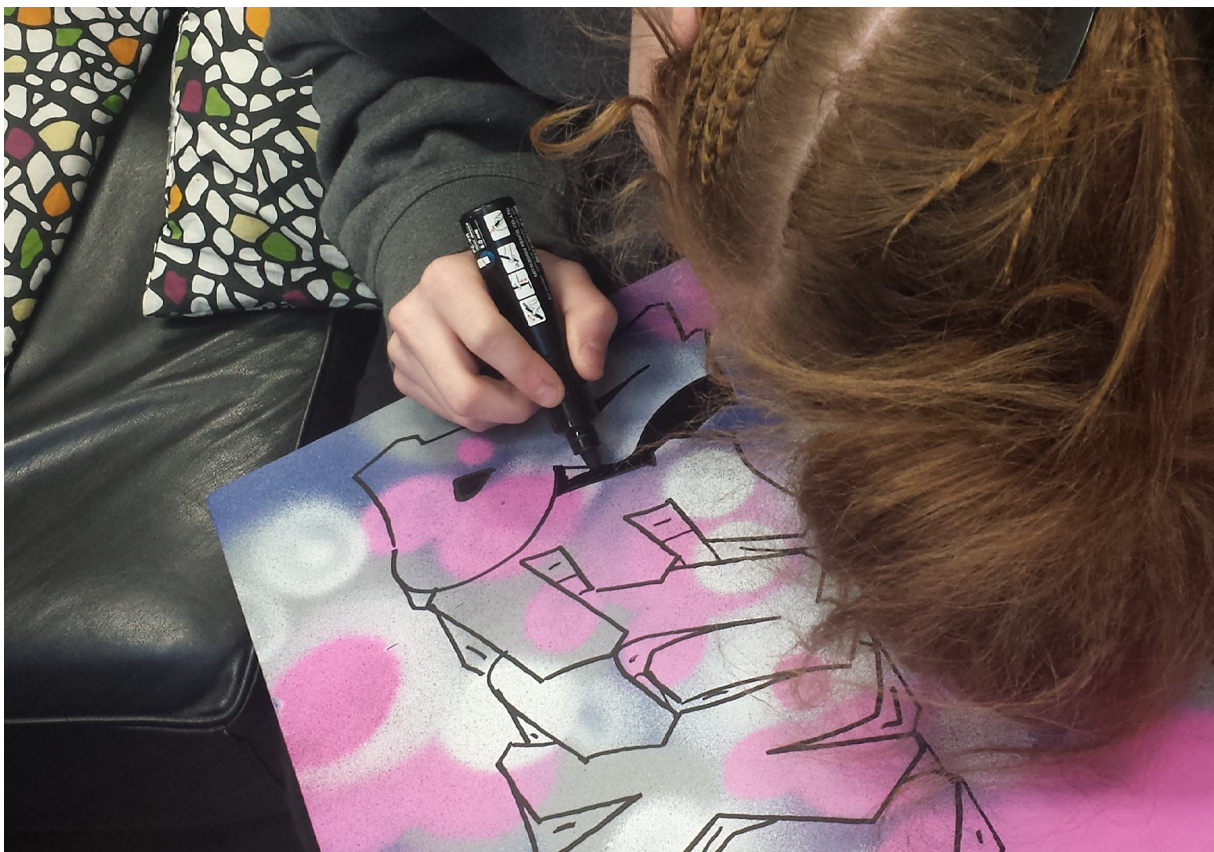
“We kinda did do this and it was important to know how people were feeling as they left. Like a before and after.”

## Session recording form

This was used after each session as a way to capture workers' reflections and experiences (see Appendices). It was useful for us to identify any emerging themes that were coming out of the group; this enabled us to look at future ideas, topics and issues to be addressed. There is the potential for the information to be stored away and forgotten about, so it is important to revisit these forms with colleagues as a reminder of what's been achieved and what you can work towards in future sessions.

## Journals

Each young person was given a journal, which was theirs to decorate and keep. This was more popular with some than others – those who enjoyed using their journal would stick photos of our trips throughout, for example. As workers, we wrote short notes and affirmations to individuals during the project. In hindsight, we should have devoted more time to this activity, perhaps revisiting it half-termly and making it more like a scrapbook to keep memories in (such as sticking in the trip tickets). Young people commented on the change they saw in themselves and others when looking back at old pictures, and it was something that we could enjoy together.



# Getting out and about: Programme trips and competitions



## Programme trips

In addition to the weekly sessions, we organised a number of fun and challenging activities off-site for the young people to participate in during the school holidays and at weekends. The purpose of these activities was twofold:

1. To provide the opportunity to bond with each other outside the regular sessions.
2. To offer the young people a new experience (many of the activities were chosen because the majority of the group had not done them before).

The choice of activities you engage in will be dependent on your young people. We ended up using lots of skills learnt during the graffiti workshop (it's all the young people's own work throughout the toolkit!) because we had a lot of keen and talented artists. Once we'd built up relationships, we knew better than to do drama-based activities!

Some of the activities we participated in are outlined below.

Trampolining



Graffiti workshop



Ice-skating



### Risk Assessments

Make sure that you have risk-assessed all activities that you and your young people will be taking part in. Also, make sure that the young people are aware of their responsibility for themselves and others when out on trips.

Go-karting







## Challenges and competitions

Throughout the programme, we set a number of challenges for young people as individuals and for the group collectively, such as organising a fundraiser and a photography competition. Taking part was always an open invitation, but we usually found that all the young people liked to get involved – especially if there was a prize attached!

The purpose of setting challenges was to engage young people in something different that they wouldn't usually do. Their skills were enhanced and they benefited on both a personal and social level.

### *The fundraiser*

"The day was fun. We went around and talked to different people and asked them to support Children in Need by buying our cakes and donating money. It was a good way of socialising."

One challenge that was set for the group was to come up with their very own fundraiser. As the project was funded by BBC Children in Need, the young people were keen to raise money for this cause. After brainstorming a number of ideas, they decided on a traditional cake sale. They planned everything themselves from start to finish, even making their own T-shirts and cakes. They raised... drumroll please... £152.19!

"It was so good. Lots of memories. The idea that we actually raised money for charity was really rewarding."

### *MyLife in pictures*

We ran a photography competition during the school holidays for young people to enter. We gave each young person a disposable camera, an instruction sheet (see overleaf) and a deadline. They had to present their pictures, which were judged by our Head Office staff, who voted for the best presentation.

## Involvement with the Mental Health Foundation

As our group was run off-site, there were a few opportunities to involve young people in the wider work of the Mental Health Foundation, including a work-experience placement. We also arranged a trip to our Head Office for those young people who expressed the need to build their confidence. They presented information to staff about the programme, as well as their photographs for the competition.

"It was so nerve-racking. Meeting all those people. Doing a competition in front of them."

"The first time I was quite nervous because obviously I didn't know any of them. I actually felt the same the second time round, but it helped to build up my confidence."



# This is your mission, should you choose to accept it

We will be setting you a challenge. It's a big challenge and something that will require a lot of focus, grit and determination.

Part of this challenge requires you to tell us through the use of photography a bit more about yourself and your life. This challenge is FOR and about YOU only!



## *Terms and conditions:*

You will need to take photos which will tell us something about you, your interests, passions, dislikes or what you have done or received over the holiday period. We've outlined some of our suggestions below

In order to stand a good chance of winning, you will have to go the extra mile and include some text or visuals about what the photos mean.

You will be responsible for processing your cameras and pictures. If you prefer, you can use your mobile phones to take pictures and put them into a PowerPoint presentation.

These will be judged and only the best will stand a chance of winning. The prize is something that you WON'T want to miss out on!!! So, if you're ready, let's begin.

## **Deadline for entries:**

# Endings



Everyone talks about the ending of projects being really important. You've spent months building relationships with young people, but it's important to be clear that you've been running a time-bound project and that they must be prepared to say goodbye at the end.

There are two schools of thought in social-work practice with regards to boundaries and endings. Some social workers believe that once a child is assigned to another worker, their relationship with that child should cease. On the other hand, these children have already had a number of fractured relationships and problematic attachment issues, which is why they are where they are. And to end another relationship abruptly, particularly if it's been a meaningful and emotional attachment, is bureaucratic and cruel. Professionalism becomes an excuse for escaping a longer-term responsibility.

People have to decide how they orientate themselves to this issue. The heart plays a big role in working with children and young people. If we lose touch with what our heart and our emotions tell us is right, then we lose touch with a very important part of what makes us good at working with people.

For some young people, the right thing might be to stop seeing them when the programme comes to an end. For others, it may be that the relationship and the support continue beyond the end of the

project, when the funding has stopped. It should be a mutual decision, which comes out of an honest, perhaps difficult, conversation. The key is not to avoid this conversation. What you may not realise as an adult is that the peer support that the young people experience during the programme may have been more important than the one-to-one time they had with you. If this is the case, you might choose to continue running sessions for a group.

If the relationships you've built up are strong on both sides, you'll know it. You should be guided by what your heart and your instincts tell you is right for the young people in the group, putting their interests before anything else. This, at least, is how we have approached this issue. Others may approach it differently.

## How do you bring things to a close?

During the final weeks of the project, we recognised that it was important to leave on a high, so we finished our session plans and turned the last few meet-ups into having fun. We still had deep discussions, but these weren't structured, and they arose out of what the young people chose to talk about freely. We actually found that this was when they revealed some of their more personal thoughts and views. The final sessions included milkshake making, a film night and board-game challenges. Oh yeah, and we went on a residential...



## The residential trip

This was an opportunity to escape the city and try our hand at some outdoor activities. The venue was chosen by the workers and all the activities were chosen by the young people - including archery, rock climbing and abseiling. The purpose of the residential was twofold – first, for all the reasons we know outdoor pursuits are good, such as teamwork, leadership and communication skills. But also, to be away together to mark the end.

We were not disappointed. The young people gained a lot: they formed closer friendships, had new experiences, built self-confidence, developed social and personal skills, and boosted their self-esteem. While only lasting three days, we hope the trip offered a learning experience valued by the young people that they'll remember for years to come. It encouraged them to engage with each other and the workers on a deeper level. It was intense. We had a small group of four, as two group members were unable to make it.

It was amazing to see the young people grow in confidence as they attempted everything, encouraged their friends (and us), negotiated with being away from home, and relished in their independence. They enjoyed the different opportunities that perhaps they hadn't previously been exposed to. There was laughter and, yes, arguments too. Things did happen that we had to deal with, but because of the intensity of being with each other for an extended period of time, we had to negotiate these situations together and compromise. There was conflict, but there was also

encouragement, as we supported each other to have a go at the activities. The conversation flowed. The fresh air filled our lungs. We had fun.

We created shared memories that bonded us. We discovered that we were all fans of Uno. This wouldn't be for everyone, but, somehow, the card game will always be a MyLife, MyFuture thing. It wasn't all rosy. The whole experience required negotiation, communication and co-operation. And you're sleep deprived! It's hard to describe some of the huge accomplishments we saw the young people achieve because, from the outside, they would most likely be perceived as pretty minor. But, for us, they were massive.

"The biggest thing I accomplished was crawling through mud."

"The best thing about the residential was the activities."

"The best thing about the residential was the banter."

"If I could go again I would reattempt the Leap of Faith."

"Something I will never forget is tunnelling in the dark."

"The hardest thing about the residential was Jacob's Ladder."

"I would like us to come again. I would have wanted to stay for longer and try more activities."

"Best memory: playing Uno."



## The last session

We recommend making the last session a celebration. For our group, it was something quite personal and, after 18 months together, this session was a collection of all the shared things we had got to know about each other. Centred around food and board games, our last meet-up was spent reminiscing about some of our best memories and watching video footage of our escapades.

We prepared a bag for each young person, which contained memories of their time on the project – items included an emoji cushion, a stress ball and a pack of Uno cards. We made a graffiti board with our own dedication

to each young person. The board also included leaflets for other opportunities that the young people might like to get involved in.

## Keeping in touch

Towards the end of the group programme, we created a WhatsApp group. It was the right time and, because it was such a small group, the young people had got to know each other well. When we got back from the residential trip, we invited the other group members into the WhatsApp group. We knew we had to keep it small, though – any more than 10 people and a WhatsApp group wouldn't have worked

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# Appendices



## Young people's glossary

(As needed by the group facilitators)

**Bae** – a word for your significant other

**Bait** – obvious

**Baited** – to be found out

**Bare** – lots of

**Body** – to verbally kill someone

**Buff** – good-looking

**Butters** – ugly

**Catfish** – where you look different in your pictures than in person

**Clapped** – ugly, to be slapped

**DMs** – direct messaging

**Doe** – though

**Indirect** – when you post a picture of someone and you don't tag them, but everyone knows who it is

**Melt** – means you're stupid or weak

**Nudes** – naked picture of yourself

**Peas** – money

**Peng** – good-looking

**Yut** – young people

Authored by Eyrarn, Lewis, Vicky, Becky





## **MyLife, MyFuture: Social media guide for adults**

### *Snapchat*

You can chat with others, but things get deleted after 10 seconds. However, you can save things if you wish, and archive them forever. There is also a story section, which stays there for 24 hours. You can chat to your friends, and send messages, photos and videos. You can apply filters to the photos, and every snap that you send on your birthday plays a happy birthday song, alongside a cake and a celebration emoji.

Young people like Snapchat because the content disappears quickly. The minimum age should be around 13.

### *Instagram*

You can change your username to whatever you want (unless it's taken) and write a bio about yourself. You can put pictures up. You can like your own photos. You can follow people but it also has a block button. You can direct-message people. You can follow famous people (you know it's a genuine account because they have a verified tick).

You can hashtag and delete pictures. It's really easy to use, for someone of any age. You can also decide to have a private or public account.

Young people like it because you can attach Vines (7 second long videos) and have fan accounts. It shows them new things. They can talk to new people and you can get 'bare' likes.

### *YouTube*

YouTube is a video-sharing website. There are different types of videos – films, music videos, pranks – and they all have a 'like' and 'dislike' button. It has many positive points; for example, you can post your own videos to the whole world and get subscribers (if you get 100k subscribers, you get paid). There are also tutorials, which some people find much easier to follow in a video, rather than written, format.

### *Twitter*

Young people really like Twitter because they can see what's popular and things spread quickly – often via 'retweets'. More celebrities use it than Instagram. You can like and reply to tweets. Lots of things are 'trending' on Twitter and going viral. There are a few negative points too, though: people can be 'trolled' on Twitter, each tweet can only be 140 characters, and you can't edit tweets.



## Session Recording Form

Name of Facilitator(s):.....

Name of Group: .....

Location: .....

Date and Time of Session:.....

Names of Members Present: .....

Session Aims/Objectives: (What are you seeking to achieve from this session?)

.....  
.....

Session Recording and Evaluation: (What actually took place?  
Were the aims met? How did workers respond to issues?)

.....  
.....

Themes Explored and Learning Outcomes:.....

.....

Needs Identified: .....

.....

Future Objectives:.....

.....

Any safeguarding concerns? (What action was taken?) .....

.....

Form completed by:.....

Date:..... Signed: .....



## Organisations and useful numbers

**Action for Children:** Provides a range of practical and emotional support to young people, helping them build the skills they need for adulthood.  
[www.actionforchildren.org.uk](http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk)

**Barnardo's:** Provides a range of services for children, young people and families across the UK. Services address problems including sexual exploitation, substance misuse and homelessness.  
Tel 0208 550 8822  
[www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk)

**Brook helpline:** Provides free, confidential sexual-health advice and contraception for young people, up to age 25.  
[www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk)

**ChildLine:** Provides a free, confidential, 24-hour helpline that offers support for any kind of problem that YP may have.  
Tel: 0800 1111 [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)  
**Coram Voice:** Enables and equips children and young people to hold to account the services that are responsible for their care.  
Tel: 0808 800 5792  
[www.coramvoice.org.uk](http://www.coramvoice.org.uk)

**Ditch the Label:** Anti-bullying charity.  
[www.ditchthelabel.org](http://www.ditchthelabel.org)

**NSPCC:** Help for adults concerned about a child  
Tel: 0808 800 5000  
[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

**NWG Network:** Offer support and advice to those working with children and young people under 18 who are affected by abuse through sexual exploitation.  
[www.nwgnetwork.org](http://www.nwgnetwork.org)

**Runaway Helpline:** Provides a free, confidential, 24-hour phone line providing support and a 'message home' service.  
Tel: 116 000  
[www.runawayhelpline.org.uk](http://www.runawayhelpline.org.uk)

**The Who Cares? Trust:** A voice and a champion for children and young people in the UK living in care.  
[www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk](http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk)

**UK Youth:** The UK's largest national body for the youth sector, delivering informal education opportunities for young people aged 9 – 25 across the UK.  
[www.ukyouth.org](http://www.ukyouth.org)

**Well Informed:** Provides information about mental health and emotional well-being.  
[www.wellinformed.org.uk](http://www.wellinformed.org.uk)

**Young Minds:** Charity committed to improving the emotional well-being and mental health of children and young people.  
[www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

SEPTEMBER | 2016



**mentalhealth.org.uk**

*Our mission is to help people understand, protect and sustain their mental health.*

*Prevention is at the heart of what we do, because the best way to deal with a crisis is to prevent it from happening in the first place.*

*We inform and influence the development of evidence-based mental health policy at national and local government level. In tandem, we help people to access information about the steps they can take to reduce their mental health risks and increase their resilience. We want to empower people to take action when problems are at an early stage. This work is informed by our long history of working directly with people living with or at risk of developing mental health problems.*

*The Mental Health Foundation is a UK charity that relies on public donations and grant funding to deliver and campaign for good mental health for all.*

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