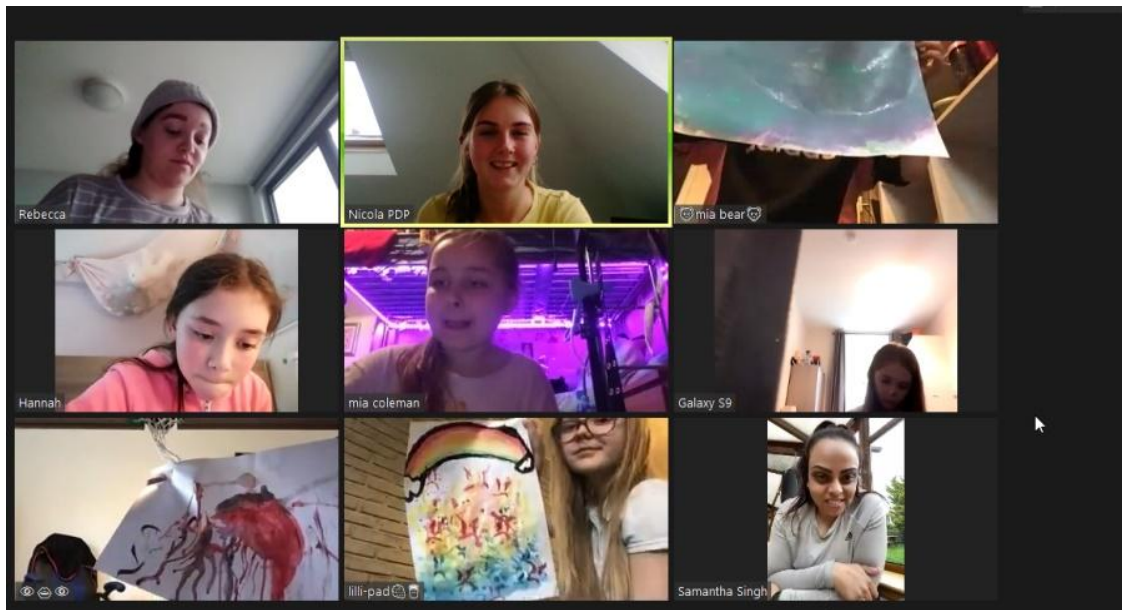


## Pilmeny Development Project Girls Mental Health and Wellbeing Project Report 2020/2021



### Background

Following a consultation exercise with vulnerable local young people in our area, girls told us they felt socially excluded and uncomfortable in mixed gender settings and that they would benefit from a girls only group where they can express their emotions and explore strategies to support their mental and emotional wellbeing, particularly in coming out of lock down. We developed a proposal based on the girls identified needs to address social exclusion, inequality and target BAME girls experiencing cultural barriers accessing mixed gender groups, mental health and wellbeing issues exacerbated during COVID-19.

### The Project

Funding was achieved to enable us to run a Girl's Health and Wellbeing Group in partnership with YMCA Edinburgh, managed and based in Pilmeny Development Project (PDP), Leith for 30 weeks (10 weeks per term x 3 terms) during 2020/2021.

Each session ran for 2 hours, supported by PDP youth development worker, two sessional staff and volunteers, with an average of 10-15 girls participating per term aged 9 – 16yrs.

The group programme was conducted via Zoom initially with a few face-to-face sessions for a physical activity or trip out etc. We provide a tailored; gender specific group allows girls to explore topics such as body image and sexual health in a relaxed atmosphere. Topics covered online included health and wellbeing, stress, mindfulness and building relationships, stress ball making, face masks, mindfulness colouring, circus skills, games such as Simon Says and a scavenger hunt.

### Target Group

Through our consultation we identified that the majority of the girls do not attend anything else out with PDP. We targeted girls in NE Edinburgh who are not engaging in any other services, many of whom have additional learning needs, are best suited to a girls group, as they find generic youth groups challenging.

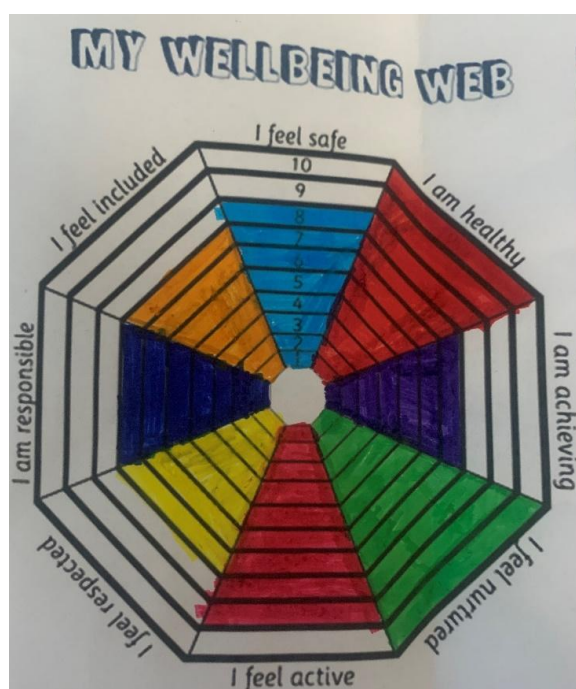
## Monitoring and Evaluation

We have undertaken a range of formal and informal monitoring and evaluation methodologies, including session planning/evaluation sheets, use of SHANARRI wheels to help measure key health & well being indicators, focus groups and 1:1 case studies.

An evaluation was completed with the girls based on GIRFEC's SHANARRI indicators (Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included). The terms were simplified and examples were given to ensure all participants understood the words in order to answer accurately and reliably. Each of their sheets was then handed back for evaluation. These indicators ensured emotional, mental health and wellbeing could be measured in relation to the impact that the group had upon the girls.

Participants' answers were compiled into a table and initials used to ensure confidentiality and adherence to data protection regulations. The answers detailed in the table are scored out of 10 – 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest.

Name	Safe	Healthy	Achieving	Nurtured	Active	Respected	Responsible	Included
M(i) C	10	7	6	9	9	8	8	6
FB	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10
M(a) C	4	6	9	9	8	9	9	8
AK	6	8	7	10	10	10	10	10
HR	8	10	7	10	9	7	7	7
AM	10	10	9	10	9	10	10	10



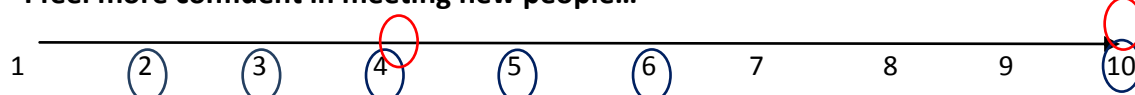
Example of a participants well being web

### Evaluation questions:

Between 1 and 10, how has being part of the group made you feel happier?"



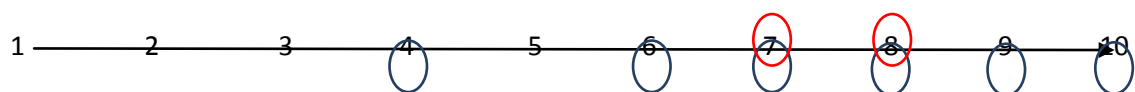
"I feel more confident in meeting new people..."



"I always felt included in the sessions..."



"I know how to look after my mental and physical health better"



The questions and answers detailed above provides a useful analysis as to what topics or activities were enjoyed most and least along with suggestions for further topics. In particular, the scaling questions prove useful as to how the young people feel about the group itself and how much they have learnt from it. Generally, the responses to the scaling questions were positive and show that the girls felt that they took something from the programme. However, some responses also portray what topics should be focused on if the group programme begins again. For example: Confidence and building relationships may prove beneficial for the young people. Furthermore, from a staff perspective, it is valuable to learn that some of the young people did not feel entirely included, so that is an area for staff to improve upon.

Prior to the group commencing, goals and outcomes were set.

One of the goals was to **undertake evaluations to measure progress** in developing healthy lifestyles. The focus of the group in general, was around emotional and mental wellbeing but also included physical health. There were discussions around stress, mindfulness, physical activity and relationships which are all important for a healthy lifestyle. The girl's engagement/ discussions portray their understanding of a healthy lifestyle and its importance. Furthermore, the answers relating to 'healthy' from the wellbeing web are all fairly positive as to how they felt at that moment.

### Outcomes

Positive impact, benefits and key outcomes from this work include:

#### 1. Improved participation in youth activities:

- A local girls group is allowing girls to engage in an additional youth service which previously would not have been available to them.
- Girls in NE Edinburgh who were not engaging in any other services now successfully participate in the group
- Girls with additional learning needs who find generic youth groups challenging are better engaged.

#### 2. Improved Inclusion to access activities:

- PDP Girls Group has created a relaxed and calming atmosphere, encouraging suitable for girls with Additional Support Needs (ASN) to participate.

- PDP Girls group has opened up opportunities for BAME girls experiencing cultural barriers in accessing mixed gender groups.

### 3. Increase access to learning activities:

- PDP Girls group seeks to increase the access to girls work and education surrounding emotional and mental health. They have explored a range of topics including: Sexual Health, drug and alcohol, relationships, mental health, emotional health, healthy eating, cooking, sport and exercise.

### 4. Increase Employability/Volunteering:

- PDP Girls group provides support and guidance around employability and volunteering.
- We provide help to access other services that could support them further with their career goals

**Improvements in confidence and self-esteem.** During the programme, girls were asked about their feelings around it being an only girls' group. All participants stated that they preferred it this way as if there were boys present, they would not feel confident enough to talk. After each session, an evaluation was completed which monitored participation levels and confidence of each young person. The majority of girls participated very well and they were confident in articulating themselves over Zoom. A couple were quiet, but when asked a question or during an activity they too engaged well. Face-to-face sessions for games, physical activity and further evaluation helped girls who were quieter through ZOOM but were more confident and engaged very well in person.



**Recognising the strengths and abilities of individual girls** was another goal.

During sessions, girls were praised for their opinions, answers, completion of activities and tasks. During the evaluations, the level of engagement between the young people and the praise they gave one another was measured. More generally, the group provided participants the opportunity to build relationships, be emotionally well and physically well through the variety of activities and topics. Confirmation of this can be seen through the responses from the question around these areas.

**Barriers to physical activity** were also removed – for example during some COVID compliant face to face sessions the girls engaged in circus skills which they stated they all enjoyed and would like to do again. The young people also engaged in dancing through zoom and a scavenger hunt.

In relation to **resilience**, the work around stress and mindfulness aimed to cover this. A discussion was generated with the girls around what stress is and what causes it, along with signs that a person may be stressed. In the activity packs, they received a mini booklet which detailed ideas around positive activities to deal with stress. These included: writing in a diary, drawing a picture, talking to someone, listen to music, exercise or play with a pet. Each girl was asked what their favourite activity from the booklet was, along with if there were any other suggestions that were not included in the booklet.

We have also developed a number of case studies (included at the end of this report) which provide some further detail re the girls we engaged with.



### Future Action

We have been able to secure funding to develop and sustain this work and will now be able to continue the Girls group for at least another 2 years.

### Conclusion

This n innovative new area of our work - to develop a gender specific approach to local girls who are excluded or do not feel their needs are being fully met in mixed gender youth work settings, has as allowed local girls to engage in an additional youth service which previously would not have been available to them.



Pilmeny Development Project

@PilmenyDevProj



For [#WorldMentalHealthDay](#)  our girls group learned about ways to contribute to our own positive mental health. [@YMCAEdinburgh](#) 



6:11 AM · Oct 11, 2021 · Twitter Web App

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100% of the money raised goes to charity

## **Individual Case Studies**

**A. Name: AM Age: 12**

**Why do they come to group:** To do fun activities with others online. To learn new ways to talk about emotions **Support needs/ BAME:** AM needs support with anger issues and self-confidence. AM struggles to main good friendships and changes friends regularly. Shy when participating online.

She has built her confidence levels and is more aware of how to manage particular emotions.

**B. Name: HR Age: 10**

**Why do they come to group:** To engage in activities and likes the fact it is all girls. To make new friends **Support needs / BAME:** Anger issues, childhood PTSD, and coercive control in family. HR needed a safe environment to express her emotions and understand how to improve on her health and well-being.

**C. Name: AK Age: 11**

**Why do they come to group:** One of her friends participates and told her the group was fun To make new friends, Shy when participating online. **Any support needs / BAME:** Family issues around alcohol. This means she tends to be away from home a lot. English as second language. She was provided with a safe space to engage in conversation around health and well-being.

**D. Name: MC Age: 9**

**Why do they come to group:** Wants time to play with friends and have fun because she does not get to do that very often due to caring responsibilities. **Any support needs / BAME:** Mum has a physical disability. As a result MC has a lot of caring responsibilities and does not get time to herself very often or time to play with her friends.

**E. Name: Mb Age: 9**

**Why do they come to group:** She would like time away from her twin brother. Lots of people associate them as one, and they do lots of things together - she would like time away from this perception to allow her to do her own activities. **Any support needs / BAME:** Lots of adverse childhood experiences. Witnessed extensive domestic abuse.

She has now been able to enjoy herself, not worry about things and do activities that separate her from her brother.

**F. Name: LH Age: 9**

**Why do they come to group:** To meet new people, have fun, increase her confidence and self-esteem. **Any support needs / BAME:** Experienced extensive domestic abuse. Mum has mental health problems which has affected her emotional development. Her physical needs are met well, but emotional and mental health has been affected due to her mum's mental health issues. Very aware of the abuse that has happened which has affected her attachment to her mum and dad who have since divorced.

**G. Name: FB Age: 11**

**Why do they come to group:** To do new activities and make friends. To learn ways of controlling her anger so that she does not lash out so easily. **Any support needs / BAME:** FB is a carer for her older brother who has autism. Fights in the family home which is very cramped and fairly overcrowded. Quite often gets in fights at school.

The group has been beneficial for her to have her own space to participate in activities.