

Growing2gether Impact Report (February 2019- July 2019)

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Introduction

So far, Growing2gether has reached 628 children and young people across the Highlands. Growing2gether is a new experiential learning programme for schools in Scotland that supports disengaged young people to develop confidence and self-belief by mentoring small children, nurturing their potential and developing trust in their community. Growing2gether addresses many of the challenges experienced by young people through transformative psychology in order to support the young people to become successful learners, responsible citizens and effective contributors, whilst earning a nationally recognised qualification by mentoring a small child. Young people become mentors to small children, supporting their development, which provides the young people with work experience, a responsible job to do and a respected role in their community. With Growing2gether, young people have an opportunity to build self-confidence and self-belief through intensive group work not provided as part of Curriculum of Excellence. This helps them to re-engage with their community and their education in a positive way. There is increasing evidence that positive psychology interventions enhance wellbeing and this is being recognised by The Scottish Government. This has further created many initiatives to address the significant challenges that children and young people in Scotland are facing today: Closing the Attainment Gap, Getting it Right for Every Child, the Curriculum for Excellence, and Developing Scotland's Young Work Force. Growing2gether aims to address these issues by working with disengaged young people and children who are in need of additional support.



Growing2gether and Positive Psychology

Growing2gether 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 lead 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 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.

Growing2gether from a Developmental Perspective

In developmental psychology, learning is based on experience, which helps us to understand the impact that Growing2gether has on not only the teenage participants, but the children too. The theories of *Lev Vygotsky (1976)* have probably had the most influence on our ideas about how young children learn. More specifically, Vygotsky looked more closely at the way children acquire knowledge through interaction with more experienced people, and at the role language plays in the process. We often forget to acknowledge the benefits that the child gains from the Growing2gether programmes as much of the focus is on the young people. The impact on the child is an area we are looking to explore further in partnership with the University of Highland and Islands.

Experiential learning is at the heart of Growing2gether, where both child and adolescent learn and develop through interaction, modelling, and positive reinforcement. This perspective is referred to as Constructivism. Constructivists view knowledge as something that individuals construct out of their own experience and reflection, rather than something that is passively absorbed. During the programme, both the teenagers and children are constructing their own social reality and learning from this experience. Key messages are reinforced by the facilitators, who discuss and support this journey to self-discovery. Learning through experience is thought to create an opportunity for participants to more fully integrate their learning and increase the likelihood of a lasting effect. Throughout this process participants build aspirations, life skills, and confidence which ultimately increases the likelihood of educational attainment, self belief to achieve their potential and enhanced emotional wellbeing. This process is often (but not always) made more impactful by carefully matching child and adolescent on the basis of their behaviours and personality. For instance, a shy and withdrawn teenager would ideally be matched with a shy and withdrawn child. The facilitator would be able to discuss certain aspects of the child's behaviour during the classroom session, allowing the young person to draw comparisons with themselves. This is a less threatening method of encouraging self-reflection in order to raise self awareness.

Growing2gether and Connectedness

Connectedness plays a role in the programme's efficacy. Connectedness, or bonding, refers to the emotional attachment and commitment a child/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). Growing2gether understand that many of these young people on the programme come from unstable and ever-changing environments. It is important to understand the mechanisms by which teenagers make sense of their world as well as the relationships they have with significant others within the social context. Adolescents make special bonds with their assigned child, their facilitator as well as others in the group. The experience encourages the young people to feel more connected with their community and realise the consequences of their actions and how they can help others. Our evaluations reveal that the young people enjoy volunteering in the nursery and are inspired to become involved in the community, which prompted Growing2gether to extend the programme (Growing2gether in the Community). Thanks to The Aspiring Communities Fund, we have been able to extend our programmes in order to facilitate the implementation of community groups and third sector organisations to improve the most deprived and fragile communities by running an 18 week youth-led workshop. The development of the community programme is necessary as it impacts on education, health, recreation and employment.

Growing2gether and Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1961) combines cognitive learning theory (learning that is influenced by psychological factors) and behavioural learning theory (learning is based on responses to the environment). Four requirements to learning were identified; observation, retention, reproduction, and motivation. Bandura conducted experiments on how children learn and concluded that children learn social behaviours through observation learning, or watching the behaviours of others who model that behaviour. These studies revealed how influential models can be. Modelling and observational learning is of particular interest when understanding Growing2gether programmes. Young people on Growing2gether programmes are empowered by being a role model to the younger children. Throughout social psychology, it is known that modelling is a very important aspect of social behaviour and how we learn. In society, children and adolescents are surrounded by many influential models, such as parents, teachers, peers, and even television. These models provide examples of how we should behave. If a child imitates a model's behaviour and the consequences are rewarding, the child is likely to continue performing the positive behaviour. So, if a young person praises the child for good behaviour, they will continue to behave this way, meanwhile reinforcing the importance of being a good role model to the child, hence raising the young person's self-esteem. Similarly, when the facilitator praises the young person, they too feel good about themselves and will continue to behave in a positive way.

Growing2gether and Mental Health

A National Statistics publication for Scotland, "*Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in Scotland 2018*" reported that 10% of children and young people have a clinically diagnosable mental health problem and 20% of adolescents may experience a mental health problem in any given year. This number is increasing. For instance, 4,664 children and young people started treatment at Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in Scotland, which is an increase from the previous quarter, (3,995) hence demonstrating the need for mental health interventions. Interventions, like Growing2gether, which include components of mental health and promote wellbeing, may encourage young people to seek help from professionals, or even teach young people coping mechanisms while they are waiting to be seen by CAMHS. Such interventions are perceived by the young people as being important. A recent consultation paper (Humphrey, 2018) using Growing2gether graduates, (recruited pre-programme) revealed that many young people were concerned about mental health problems, which includes depression and anxiety. Furthermore 70% wanted a programme that could provide emotional support and 88% wanted a programme that could build on their confidence, hence, reiterating the need for programmes that can enhance wellbeing.

Unfortunately, more adolescents are experiencing the debilitating effects of anxiety and depression, particularly those who experience life events at such an early age (Heubner et al, 2018). Due to the fact that anxiety and depression are easily concealed, teachers and parents are often unable to detect the adolescents as having emotional/behavioural problems until the symptoms cause significant interference in academic and social functioning (Muris & Meesters, 2002). More recently, however, the ability to detect depression and anxiety is further exacerbated by some adolescents spending less contact time with people, and spending more time on electrical devices (Twenge et al 2018). More specifically, higher suicide and depression rates were found in adolescents who spent more time on new media compared to adolescents who spent more time on non-screen activities (Twenge et al, 2018).

Poor mental health during childhood impacts on school as demonstrated in a paper, which revealed that poor mental health is correlated negatively with educational attainment (Brännlund, Strandh & Nilsson, 2017). Given the strong link between educational success and adult life, more resources are required to support children with mental health problems. A study on teenagers, found evidence to suggest that interventions that promote emotional wellbeing amongst targeted groups of individuals can have an impact on the way young people perceive problems (Humphrey, 2016). Findings suggest that Negative Problem Orientation (NPO; the extent to which people do not believe they can effectively cope with problems) can be reduced through an 18-week intervention that teaches social-emotional learning through an experiential learning model. This reinforces the impact of socio-emotional learning and experiential learning has on minimising NPO and subsequently to enhance mental wellbeing. This has long-term implications as interventions such as these, have been shown to have the largest impact on student's academic, behavioural, social-emotional and motivational outcomes and produce benefits to pupils' health and wellbeing (Korpershoek et al., 2016).

Growing2gether and Emotional Wellbeing



Emotional wellbeing is fundamental in children and young people's mental, psychological and cognitive development as well as their general health. The period of adolescence is increasingly recognised as a key formative period for positive assets that underpin wellbeing where good emotional and mental health is important in helping to strengthen the capacity for relationships, improve educational attainment, promote social inclusion, expand opportunities and improve general health and wellbeing (Patton et al 2017). Positive Affect (PA) describes feelings that reflect a level of emotional wellbeing and

happiness with the environment, such as excitement, happiness, enthusiasm, and contentment. Positive affect reduces the health harming effects of psychological stress (Oakley et al 2017). Higher PA has been associated with better health practices such as improved sleep quality more exercise, as with lower levels of the stress hormones (Oakley et al, 2017). Growing2gether teaches young people how to manage their emotions and self-regulate, which contributes to feelings of Positive Affect, such as satisfaction, happiness and wellbeing as young people are more equipped in dealing with stresses and managing relationships through developing a positive sense of self. To become emotionally and socially skilled as well as mentally healthy, young people need positive reinforcement and support. Facilitators are trained to support the young people in a positive and reflexive way so that these individuals become better at self-management and self-awareness, which lead to better mental health. This extends to physical health, as young people are encouraged to take their health seriously and discouraged from taking unhealthy risks, such as taking drugs, having unprotected sex and drinking alcohol. Furthermore, young people are encouraged to become open and self-aware so that they are able to ask for help from professionals if they (or others) recognise they may have a problem, hence seeking treatment before it becomes more difficult to manage.

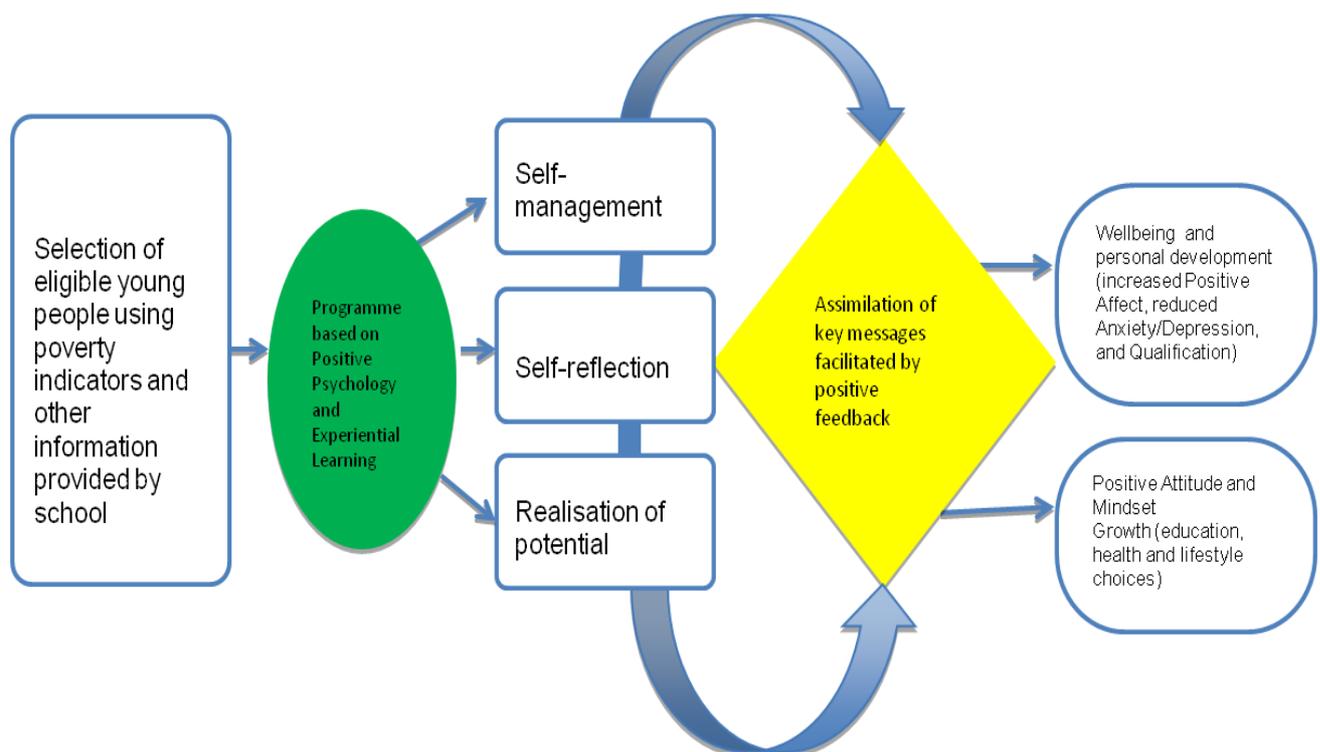
Self-esteem is commonly regarded as the most significant measure of psychological wellbeing and mental adjustment. High self-esteem is related to greater motivation, academic achievement, personal and social responsibility as well as coping behaviours, whereas lower self-esteem is related to poor mental health and depression (Gardner et al 2019). One study explored the association between self-esteem/affectivity and General Well-Being (GWB) in Scottish adolescents. Results revealed that self-esteem was found the strongest predictor of mood/affect and wellbeing (Karatzias et al 2006). It is hypothesised that positive appraisal received (by toddler and facilitator) within a supportive environment enhances the individual's self-esteem. Evidence from teachers and the young people themselves reveal that the programme is effective in raising self-esteem.

Growing2gether and Growth of Mindset

An individual's attitude or mental state is referred to as their mindset, which may be perceived as fixed, or growing (growth of mindset). In a fixed mindset, people believe their basic qualities, like their intelligence or talent, are simply fixed traits that you are born with. Conversely, individuals who believe their mindset can be developed and grown (growth of mindset) believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work. This attitude creates a desire to learn and resilience, leading to successful and well-accomplished individuals.

Dweck (1986) maintains that teaching a growth creates motivation and productivity, particularly in relation to education. For example, individuals who believe intelligence is malleable (a growth mindset) are better able to bounce back from failures than those who believe intelligence is fixed, (Dweck, 1986). With regards to the latter, these people tend to feel helpless after encountering failures and this can have profound effect on learning achievement, skill acquisition, personal relationships, professional success, and many other dimensions of life (Dweck, 1986). Not only does mindset have implications for educational outcomes but recent research suggests that stressful life events depression, substance use, and motivations for non-suicidal self-injury were weaker among those with more of a growth mindset relative to those with more of a fixed mindset (Schroder et al, 2017). These findings suggest that anxiety mindsets function in a similar way for mental health resilience as how mindsets of intelligence function for academic outcomes (Schroder et al, 2017). Throughout the curriculum, Growing2gether refers back to growth of mindset and encourages young people to perceive this as being malleable, hence realising their own potential to achieve goals. See **Figure 1** for summary.

Figure 1: Summary of Growing2gether



Method

Participants

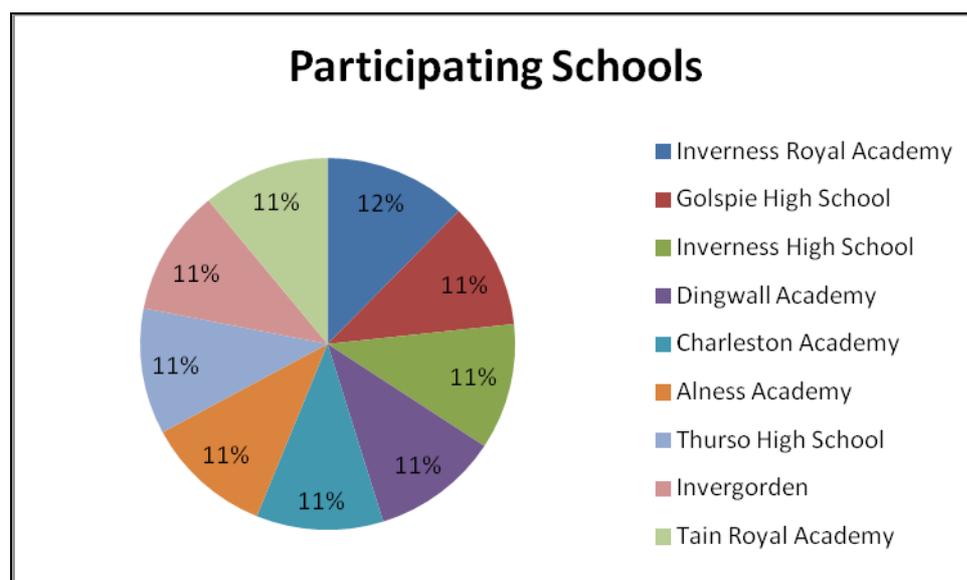
Young people were selected for the programme on the basis of one or more of the following criteria indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: To be eligible for the programme, the young person may...

be eligible for Free School Meals	have difficulty interacting with peers
be involved with Guidance	appear unhappy and disengaged
come from a troubled family/have poor family support	appear to have low confidence
be in care/ LAC	have poor attendance or a truanting record
be bullied or is a bully	be known to engage in risky behaviour
be withdrawn or socially isolated	appear to feel disinterested about their future
have received counselling or psychological intervention	have behavioural problems (including anger and acting out behaviour)

The programme consisted of 72 participants, who were predominantly female (77%) with one individual reporting that this was not the gender they were born with, however the gender that they identify with. 90% described themselves as being heterosexual, 2% as gay (male) and 8% as bisexual. The age range was 12-16 years old (Mean = 14.0, SD = .57). In total, 3% reported that they had an impairment and 6% described themselves as being religious. With regards to ethnicity, 79% described themselves as White Scottish, 5% White Polish, 2% Asian, and 14% White British.

Figure 2 displays participating schools.



Intervention

The programmes run for 17-18 weeks and each session is divided into 1.5 hours of mentoring, whereby the young person mentors their assigned toddler, and 1.5 hours of classroom time, where young people work towards gaining a Level 3/4 SCQF Qualification in "Personal Development: Self in Community" and "Self-Awareness" units.

Procedure

Participants were provided with a battery of measured before and after the programme.

Measures

Teacher's check-list eligibility questionnaire

Teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire prior to the programme's commencement in order to obtain basic information to assess eligibility.

Teacher's pre and post questionnaire

Teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire on the student's behaviours and attitudes prior to the programme's commencement and at the end of the programme. Pre and post test scores were then analysed to measure impact.

Programme Impact of Emotional wellbeing

The Positive Affect Schedule (PAS) component of PANAS (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) is one of the most robust and widely used scales to measure mood and subjective wellbeing. The scale is comprised of 10 items, with 10 items measuring positive affect (e.g., excited, inspired). Each item is rated on a five-point Likert Scale, ranging from 1 = Very Slightly or Not at all to 5 = Extremely, to measure the extent to which the affect has been experienced. High scores are indicative of high positive affect and therefore greater subjective wellbeing. The responses range from 10 – 50, with higher scores representing higher levels of positive affect. Mean Scores: 33.3 (SD±7.2). Responses are evaluated before and after the programme in order to measure impact. Self-esteem was evaluated using a visual analogue scale. Each question is scored on a 1 (Strongly Agree) -10 (Strongly Disagree) scale. Lower scores represent higher self-esteem. Responses are evaluated before and after the programme in order to measure impact.

Programme Impact on mental health (Depression and Anxiety)

The Revised Children's Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS) is a 47-item self-report measure consists of questions relating to emotional wellbeing such as "I feel worried when someone is angry with me" and "I feel sad or empty". Each question is scored on a 4-point scale (0=never, 1=sometimes, 2=often and 3=always). This measure is intended to assess children's symptoms corresponding to selected *DSM-IV* anxiety and major depressive disorders and is considered to be a suitable instrument to assess anxiety levels across adolescence (Mathyssek et al, 2013). Global scores were calculated before and after the programme. Low scores correlate to better mental health (i.e. lower depression and anxiety).

Programme's impact on growth of mindset is evaluated using one measured before and after the programme. This was evaluated using a visual analogue scale. Each question is scored on a 1 (Strongly Agree) -10 (Strongly Disagree) scale. Lower scores represent greater growth of mindset. Responses are evaluated before and after the programme in order to measure impact.

Programme's impact on health This section asks young people to rate on a scale of 1-5 the extent to which the programme has helped them view their mental and physical wellbeing for example encouraging them to think about the consequences of their actions and encouraging them to look after their health. Each question is scored on a 5-point scale (1=Not at all, 2=Not much, 3=Unsure, 4=A little, 5= A lot). These questions are measured at the end of the programme only.

Programme's impact on attitude. This section consists of questions relating to the young people's attitudes regarding school, confidence, openness to feelings and community. Each question is scored on a 5-point scale (1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Unsure, 4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree). These questions are measured at the end of the programme only.

Programme's impact on self-efficacy was evaluated using a visual analogue scale. Each question is scored on a 1 (Strongly Agree) -10 (Strongly Disagree) scale. Lower scores represent higher self-efficacy. Responses are evaluated before and after the programme in order to measure impact.

Satisfaction and feedback. This section asks for feedback on young people's experiences on the programme. (e.g. enjoyment, relationships, community, engagement with school, confidence in abilities). This section also allows for young people's comments. Each question is scored on a 5-point scale (1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Unsure, 4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree).

Case study. Please see appendix 1 for a case study written by the facilitator

Parent questionnaire

During the award ceremony, parents were asked to complete a short questionnaire about their child.

Analysis

Standard descriptive analyses were performed to report the respondents' ratings on feedback questions using SPSS version 23. T-tests and Bivariate correlations were conducted to detect any differences in respondents' answers. Significance levels for all tests were 2-tailed.

Findings

Table 2 displays information on the number of young people who started and finished the programme, the retention rate and number of people who attained a SCQF (Qualification, Level 3 Unit, in "Self in Community2") **100%** of those who finished the programme received their qualification and **100%** passed their qualification (ie everyone who submitted their portfolio had passed). The last two weeks of the programme is dedicated to finishing their portfolios and young people are given a choice whether or not to complete this. The programme is designed this way in order to build a bridge between what the young people have learned on the programme and school. This term, young people moved up academic year before the end of the school year and some of the young people are curious to find out about their new classes and hence may decide not to continue with their portfolio. We are encouraged by either choice as by continuing on the programme results in a qualification, yet deciding to joining their new class suggests that they are more interested in their education since working with G2G.

STARTERS	FINISHERS	RETENTION	SCQF	SQF retention (those choosing to continue and completing)	Pass rate
72	62	86%	62	100%	100%

Teacher's questionnaires

The statistics below are based on teacher's answers to the questionnaire relating to the participant's profile. Only "Yes" and "No" answers were used in analysis and "Think so" and "Don't Know" answers were removed from analysis.

	%	N
Eligible for Free School Meals.	40	43
Involved with Guidance.	78	49
Come from a troubled family/have poor family support.	60	45
Have been in care/LAC.	24	45
Bullied or is a bully.	53	45
Withdrawn or socially isolated, not be taking part in class activities.	76	45
Have received counselling or psychological intervention.	59	46
Have difficulty interacting with peers.	74	46
Have low self- confidence.	72	46
Have behavioural problems (including anger and disruptive behaviour).	46	46
Have poor attendance or a truanting record.	46	44
Seem to be dis-interested in their future.	48	40
Known to engage in risky behaviour, frequently use alcohol or drugs.	32	41
Comes from a single parent family	46	35
Parents receive income support	60	35

Teacher's Questionnaire....

T tests were applied in order to detect significant differences in the answers teachers provided before and after the programme. Significance levels for all tests were 2-tailed. Significance levels are used to refer to a pre-chosen probability and the term "P value" is used to indicate a probability that you calculate after a given study. The significance levels were less than .001, meaning a 99.9% chance that there is no difference between Time 1 and Time 2.

Table 4 displays percentages which have been converted from Mean values at Time 1 and Time 2, percentage change and significance value (n =39). **Table 5** displays the percentage agreement for statements relating to the programme.

Table 4: Percentage scores before and after the programme				
Question	Time 1	Time 2	%age	Significance
Overall, the student is....	Before Programme	After programme	Change	
engaged and interested in learning	11.9	16.8	41%	P < 0.01
achieving grades they are capable of	12.4	18.6	50%	P < 0.01
making the effort to reach their potential	12.5	19.2	54%	P < 0.01
making a conscious effort to do as well as they can	12.6	17.6	40%	P < 0.01
likely to achieve the grades they need to progress to further education	11.7	16.9	44%	P < 0.01
Is confident in attempting new tasks and seeing them through	9.7	16.9	74%	P < 0.01

Results show a significant positive impact on engagement and interest in learning, achieving grades they are capable of, making the effort to reach their potential, self-efficacy and achieving the grades they need to further their education.

Table 5: Teacher's questionnaire		
Since completing the programme.....	N	% agreement
the student appears to be more confident	38	89%
the student appears to be happier	38	85%
the experience has helped them emotionally	38	95%

Teacher's comments...

At the end of the questionnaire, teachers were asked to make comments regarding the young person's behaviour. Below are a selection of comments....

"X seems happier in her presentation and does not come to guidance nearly as often if ever. She definitely is inspired to peruse a career in childcare."

"X has really grown in confidence and is really engaged in her subjects. She is determined to succeed in school and her relationships with her peers has really improved. She has really matured in the last 6 months."

Participant questionnaires

Impact on mental health and emotional wellbeing

Depression and Anxiety, Self-Esteem and Positive Affect

The results show that there was a significant improvement in emotional wellbeing and mental health as measured by The Revised Children's Anxiety and Depression Scale (RCADS) and Self-esteem Scale.

Statistical analysis was applied revealing a **significant improvement** in RCADS ($t = 3.89$ (53), $p = <0.01$) and self-esteem ($t = 3.39$ (51), $p = <0.01$) scores before and after the programme, (Lower scores indicate reduced anxiety/depression and increased self-esteem.) indicating that the programme can enhance young people's mental wellbeing. There was no change in Positive Affect.

Table 5: Mental Health Outcomes

Scale	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Percentage Change
Positive Affect Time 1	33.0	54	7.8	No change
Positive Affect Time 2	33.0	54	7.8	
RCADS Score Time 1	57.5	54	9.88	17% (sig)
RCADS Score Time 2	47.6	54	9.88	
Self-esteem Score Time 1	5.0	52	3.1	30% (sig)
Self-esteem Score Time 2	3.5	52	3.1	

Positive Affect responses range from 10 – 50, with higher scores representing higher levels of positive affect with Mean Scores: 33.3 (SD±7.2) as advised by the authors of the scale, which was in line with our results suggesting that young people, on average did not have particularly low Positive Affect to start with.

The sample was divided into two categories above the Mean and below the Mean. Individuals who scored below the Mean (33.3) in PA were selected for secondary analysis. Results revealed that individuals with lower than average PA scores, (for example less than average feelings relating to positive emotions and expression, including cheerfulness, pride, enthusiasm, energy, and joy) actually **significantly improved** by **25%** by the end of the programme.

($t = -3.662$ (21), $p = <0.01$)

The results suggest that individuals with low Positive Affect may benefit from the programme.

Most young people felt that the programme influenced them to make better decisions in relation to their lifestyle and become more conscious of the consequences to their actions. (n = 59).

- **75%** agreed that the programme encouraged them to take their health more seriously
- **82%** agreed that the programme made them aware of themselves and the consequences of their actions.
- **74%** agreed that the programme encouraged them to consider the consequences of having unprotected sex.
- **65%** agreed that the programme influenced them to make good decisions about their lifestyle (i.e. not drinking or taking drugs).

Impact on attitude and mindset and self-efficacy

Statistical analysis revealed a **significant improvement** in Growth of Mindset ($t = 3.64$ (53), $p = <0.01$). Although there was an improvement in self-efficacy, this was not statistically significant. **Table 6** displays Mean at T1 and T2, standard deviation, percentage change and significance. Each question is scored from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree" therefore lower Means indicate more positive scores in this case.

Table 6: Mental Health Outcomes				
Scale	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Percentage Change
Mindset Score Time 1	5.0	54	2.1	30% (sig)
Mindset Score Time 2	3.5	54	2.1	
Self-efficacy Score Time 1	4.7	54	2.6	6% (not sig)
Self-efficacy Score Time 2	4.4	54	2.6	

Most young people felt that the programme was influential in relation to being confident in their abilities and recognising how education can provide them with more options (n = 59).

- **78%** agreed that education provides them with more opportunities in the future
- **78%** realised the importance of education in getting what you want in life
- **66%** agreed that Growing2gether has made them feel more confident in their abilities.

Satisfaction and feedback

Many young people made positive comments regarding the programme. Below is a selection of those comments.

"I enjoyed being on Growing2gether and getting a qualification in childcare"

"I liked that I could show a better side of me that I didn't know I had"

"I like getting to know everyone and if I never come I wouldn't be able to be myself and be open about my feeling"

"I liked feeling involved and listened to"

How can we make Growing2gether better?

"Have more time in the nursery"

"Nothing you are doing great jobs!"

"Maybe let us work in primary as well as nursery"

"We could do a day trip with them (children) about wildlife or something to benefit them and ourselves"

Young people were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements about the programme (n = 59).

- **92%** found the subjects that were covered informative
- **92%** enjoyed building a relationship with their toddler
- **86%** enjoyed working with others
- **93%** would recommend the programme to other young people

Parent questionnaire

Below are the responses to the parent questionnaire. The sample is small; however, the comments are encouraging.

Table 8 Parent questionnaire		
	N	% Agreement
my child appears happier and more fulfilled	12	92
the experience has provided my child with a sense of clarity with regards to their future	12	83
my child seems more engaged with school (wanting to try harder)	12	92
my child appears more open and communicative	12	92
my child has become more responsible	12	92
my child appears more confident in their own ability	12	100
I would recommend other parents to encourage their children to participate	12	100

Please see below comments from parents.

"I am very proud that my daughter has taken part in this. I feel it will help her confidence as she starts to think about career paths."

"I have noticed much more confidence and feeling happier with a sense of achievement."

"I feel very proud to see X achieve and graduate. She has really enjoyed taking part"

Discussion, Limitations and Conclusions

Results revealed that the Growing2gether programme can positively impact on young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing as well as encourage growth of mindset. The programme can encourage young people to consider their futures with regards to their education, health and relationships while preparing them to assess the consequences of their behaviours in everyday situations.

There was a significant improvement in mental health scores, measured by RCADS (which measures depression and anxiety) and self-esteem scores. Enhancing mental health and emotional wellbeing is extremely valuable as it correlates with academic, behavioural, social-emotional and motivational outcomes. This outcome is particularly important as depression in teenagers can be a particularly risky time as they may not be as open to seek advice or recognise the signs, rather they will participate in high risk activities, get involved with drugs or get into trouble in school. It is very important to provide some intervention to help young people deal with their emotions, seek help or be able to learn strategies to help. Positive Affect (PA) did not change, however secondary analysis revealed that those individuals who scored below the Mean score prior to the programme starting, showed a significant improvement (25%) by the end of the programme suggesting that individuals with low PA may benefit from the programme.

Growth of Mindset, a construct linked to academic resilience, improved significantly (30%) by the end of the programme. Not only does mindset have implications for educational outcomes but recent research suggests that stressful life events depression, substance use, and motivations for non-suicidal self-injury were weaker among those with more of a growth mindset relative to those with more of a fixed mindset (Schroder et al, 2017). Throughout the curriculum, Growing2gether refers back to growth of mindset and encourages young people to perceive this as being malleable, hence realising their own potential to achieve goals.

We did not see any significant improvement in self-efficacy although there was an improvement (6%). Typically, in these kinds of programmes, the changes that we find in the analysis are often smaller due to problems with disclosure and acquiescence. Young people may be reluctant to provide honest answers at the beginning of the programme, when they don't know the facilitators. Throughout the programme, the young people often become more open and honest with their answers, hence resulting in little change in pre and post scores. Initially, young people may not want to be perceived in a negative way (even though facilitators are highly trained and non-judgemental), consequently choosing a more positive response to the question, so that they are seen to be choosing the "correct" answer (demand characteristics).

The parent and teacher questionnaires added value to the research. They added another angle in which to evaluate the impact and hence strengthening the research. Time 1 and Time 2 questionnaires for teachers to complete before and after the programme revealed significant differences in relation to engagement and performance in school, which is most encouraging. With regards to attitude, most young people felt that the programme was influential in relation to being confident in their abilities, teaching them about the consequences of having unprotected sex, taking their health seriously as well as agreeing that the programme taught them the importance of education.

In future, many changes could be made in order to reduce confounding variables and bias. We have to acknowledge that there are often extraneous variables, which may affect the outcome that should be explored further. Making questionnaires anonymous in future may reduce the issue of acquiescence and disclosure. The facilitators already inform the young people that there no right or wrong answers and encourage them to be honest, however this may not be enough. A focus group with young people could be useful in ascertaining the extent to which this issue may bias results.

Overall, the results show that the programme has potential to enhance young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing, self-esteem, growth of mindset, attitudes towards health and education. It is clear from the feedback percentages and comments made by the young people, that the programme was well received. Also, the very high retention rate is commendable, especially with such a hard to reach and transient group. The case study (Appendix 1) and comments illustrate how people's experiences can't always be captured quantitatively and that the programme can offer so much support and opportunity to young people who are experiencing great challenges and difficulties at home.

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Appendix 1

FACILITATOR CASE STUDY

Name: Brendan

Age: 14

Gender: male

NEED

Brendan had been recommended to join the programme by his guidance teacher although he was not keen. A recent marital breakdown had contributed to his inability to deal comfortably with his anger and upset. In school he was constantly asking to be permitted to leave class and seek solace with his guidance teacher, or being sent out of class because he would always let his teachers know how unhappy he was and this was often done in a manner perceived to be rude and inappropriate.



Brendan is a very bright, intelligent and articulate young man who relishes a good argument and who is confident of his abilities to win such arguments. He is a sociable and very likeable young man who has come to rely heavily on his guidance teacher for a variety of guidance and advice. This was to our advantage as it was the only reason he agreed to 'give it a try'. It was felt by the teacher that it might help him to find some inner peace and to be able to relax away from the

school environment where he was constantly in a 'triggered' state. Her hope was that he would be better able to manage his emotional reactions to people saying things he disliked/disagreed with and engage more fully with his academic studies after Growing2gether and when S4 courses began.

PROGRESS SEEN ON GROWING2GETHER

Brendan presented at the induction session as a friendly and co operative young man, but he did warn us all of his fondness for debate and argument and defied anyone to have the ability to beat him. When we discussed the non negotiable issue of 'no phones in nursery', he baulked at this and was very clear about his disapproval. He had been late back and had actually missed a bit of explanation about this so; to some extent we were to blame for not having handled this more sensitively. We left that day, unsure about whether or not we would see him again because the strength of feeling had been so apparent and he had believed that he would be able to persuade us to change our minds.

He did indeed miss the first nursery session but was persuaded to give us a chance by his one and only trusted teacher. He returned to Growing2gether and ensured that we knew this. Once he was in the nursery environment, he was quite happy as he is a smiley, considerate and emotionally aware teenager who was very capable of interacting with the adults there. When he was paired with a child who had communication difficulties, this worked instantly. Brendan's eyes lit up with amazement and pride when he realised that, on the very first meeting between them, he had managed to get a word out of the child.

Nursery staff were quick to say how unusual and how great this was and to record the communication for their file and for the parents. Brendan was hooked and he made it his mission to improve the lad's vocabulary and communication skills in general. He was diligent and creative and took the responsibility very seriously. He was keen to demonstrate his prowess to us whenever we approached the pair. He was happy to have his efforts acknowledged. It was interesting for us to see such a talented communicator work with a youngster who struggled so much and became frustrated because of his lack of skills. Brendan understood the child's frustration as without words he himself would be lost. We had several interesting conversations about the use of language as a tool/ weapon and Brendan showed a mature appreciation of this.

On a few occasions we saw Brendan lose his cool. At times it was the phone handover which caused it, at others it was a word from one of us which had been innocently used but interpreted as a negative/insult. Brendan was very honest and open about his feelings at these times and was willing to be coached through the situation. On one occasion in nursery, another young person had unwittingly caused upset and he would not leave my side because a) he wanted me to know the strength of his emotions and b) he wanted to work through this triggered state and find some equilibrium.

In another group situation we saw Brendan become very upset and then even more upset because of the agitated state he was in. He acknowledged that he was getting better at dealing with such episodes and we saw him being able to listen better than he would have done at the start of the programme. He also reported how things were similarly improving at school and he attributed some of this to his Growing2gether experience.

By the end our relationship was still delicate but he was very happy to complete the programme and missed only one session once he had started. He also elected to complete the SQA award and accepted our appraisal of his efforts with good grace and a polite thank you.

He knows there is work to be done before he has the ability to manage his emotions in a way that he finds comfortable but he also acknowledges the possibility that this will happen and thanks Growing2gether for the part it has played.