



How mentoring and community engagement are raising aspirations and educational attainment for our children and young people in Scotland

## **CELCIS Education Forum**

**Webinar recording**

February 2025

## CELCIS Education Forum February 2025

How mentoring and community engagement are raising aspirations and educational attainment for our children and young people in Scotland

**Featuring:**

**Chair:**

**Michael Bettencourt**, Education Consultant, CELCIS.

**Presenters:**

**Gavin Morgan**, Co-CEO, Growing2gether.

**Diana Whitmore**, Founder and C-CEO, Growing2gether.

### **Michael Bettencourt**

Good morning, a very happy new year to you all. I think I'm allowed to say that, even though it's February, because this is the first Education Forum of the year. I'm Michael Bettencourt, and I'm an education consultant at CELCIS, and I'll be chairing today's forum. It's great to see the number of people who've signed up. There are some familiar names there. You're very welcome, and you're very welcome if you're joining us for the first time. Education Forum is a space for people who care about making education better for care experienced young people, who come together to share ideas, tackle challenges and find ways to

make sure that these learners get the support that they need. We're quite proud of the diversity of our audience. The forum is for anyone who's passionate or cares about education, and it includes quite a broad number of people, including teachers, support workers, leaders, or anyone who has an interest in education. I love looking through our attendance list, and I'm just going to share with you some of what I see, because I think it's useful to know who's in the room. We've got advocacy and participation workers, psychologists, a child poverty development officer, classroom assistants, Promise development leads, education managers. We've got a school nurse, lecturers, operation managers, a paediatrician, programme officer, trustees and careers advisor. Sorry if I haven't name checked your job role, but it was just to give you a flavour of the people who are in the room.

We know that care experienced young people often face hurdles to their education, often additional hurdles, and no one has all the answers. And that's one of the reasons that we're here. It's why we convene this forum. We're here to learn from each other, celebrate and share what works and figure out what we can do better. So, I'm delighted that we can welcome our speakers today from Growing2gether, Diana Whitmore and Gavin Morgan. They're going to be sharing some of their experiences and insights about their mentoring programme, which brings together older young people with younger young people. And we're going to have plenty of time to hear from them, and they'll probably explain it better than I just did then. And we've also got our team from CELCIS in the background who are helping with some of the logistics and who'll be facilitating.

There are two aims to today's presentation. First, Gavin and Diana are going to give us an overview of their two main programmes. One is a nursery mentoring programme, and one the Youth Social Action Community programme, and they're going to share some of their findings around those pieces of work. Secondly, they really want your insight on the value of their programme and a potential proposal for rolling this out with care experienced young people. So, they want your views, they want your insight, any factors that you think they should consider in designing, delivering or evaluating a bespoke programme for care experienced learners. Mentoring is something that we've discussed before in the forum. It's a well-recognised intervention but sometimes misunderstood and it can be overused. At its heart, mentoring brings together two people, usually one with more experience and one with less experience. But it's so much more than just bringing the two people together. It requires thought planning and a structure. And research shows that mentoring programmes, particularly for young people, can be highly effective, but only when it's got that tight plan around it, only when it's carefully implemented, time bound and built on a strong theory of change, which is why we're delighted that Growing2gether are here because they tick all of those boxes. So just to give you a little bit of information, and I'm sure that Gavin and Diana will go into the detail of it. This is my overview: Growing2gether is a targeted youth intervention programme

designed to support young people who face barriers to learning. It's unique in Scotland as it simultaneously brings together those two groups of children.

So, it's those older young people, typically secondary, and it pairs them to mentor children in a nursery or primary setting. So, the dual approach means that younger children, the ones in the nursery primary setting, get that personalised support from a peer mentor, and then the older kids get a range of different benefits, including the experience. They develop leadership skills and can go on to gain accredited qualifications. Growing2gether has had a positive impact, I think, on hundreds of young people in Scotland, I'm sure Gavin and Diana will go into the detail, and has helped them to improve emotional well-being, community engagement, work experience and educational attainment. The work is grounded in positive psychology, and it's got a clear theory of change. So, in their presentation, they're going to cover - there's going to be a setting of the scene around this proposal for a care experienced pilot, the Growing2gether journey, a little bit about their history, how they started. They're going to dig into their evidence base. They've got quite a strong evidence base. They're going to talk about their model, which is grounded, as I said, in positive psychology and around mentoring. They're going to address what I think is the killer question, which is, what is the impact? What difference that they're making? And then perhaps the most important bit they're going to end by seeking your views. They were very keen to make it clear to us today that they want to find out. They want your views on their programme and how it might be rolled out for care experienced young people.

Before we begin, I did just want to read out two quotes that I found which I quite liked and I thought were helpful and highlighted the impact of the work of growing together. So, the first one's from a teacher: "Johnny's attendance has been consistently above 90% since starting Growing2gether. His attitude toward learning has improved dramatically, and he now has the confidence to stand up at whole school events and speak in front of everyone". So that's a quote from a teacher who was part of the programme, and one from a young person, which I really liked: "As the weeks went on, my confidence kept growing, and I realised that being in the nursery was the highlight of my week, every week". I think that motivation, that attitude towards learning is something that all kids should feel about going into school. Sadly, it's not always the case.

Gavin Morgan has over 25 years' experience working across public, private and third sector organizations. He's passionate about community learning and development. He's got extensive experience working with children, young people and adults. He's held national roles, including Who Cares? Scotland, and worked in a local authority before becoming Co-CEO of Growing2gether alongside Diana. Diana is a psychosynthesis practitioner specialising in professional training for youth, work, business coaching, psychotherapy and counselling. She has over 20 years' experience working with young people. Has founded three charities and

focused on proving well-being education and life skills. Delighted to have them here. Diana, Gavin, it's over to you.

## Gavin Morgan

Thank you so much, Michael. And Diana, how lovely to hear those two quotes from teachers and young people.



Growing  
2gether

Scottish Youth Mentoring Children

CELCIS: Education Forum  
11.02.25

[www.growing2gether.org.uk](http://www.growing2gether.org.uk)

So, a huge, huge thank you to all of you that have come. As Michael said, what a wide diverse range of amazing human beings that have come today. And we're really excited to invite you to get curious about the work that we do. And the aim is to just engage with you, to engage with the sector. We believe, since 2016 we've got an evidence base that shows, and it's not in the hundreds and the thousands, but over 2,400 teenagers who are facing disadvantage, mentoring over 2,400 children in different local authorities in Scotland through our Growing2gether programme and having amazing change at a time in their life, for the teenagers where they are really facing difficult times, we're asking them to dig a little bit deeper. We're asking them to pivot and support a child who also needs their help. And that transformational journey for the teenager and for the child is what makes the programme really unique, because it's grounded within our positive psychology model, which we'll say more about.

So yes, we really believe, and that's why we want to reach out to you guys in the sector and also speak to care experienced young people, because we believe in our programme. I was at the SCVO gathering just last week and hearing from the Oversight Promise, and they were just talking about how there's so many great things happening, but there's so much more needed, and we'd love to be part of helping to support Scotland's Promise to our care experienced community. And we believe that our mentoring programme and our youth social

action could be part of this as a really transformative empowerment programme, and we're going to say why.



The infographic features the 'Growing2gether' logo at the top left, which consists of a stylized green leaf icon above the text 'Growing2gether'. A large teal box on the left contains the following text:

- Empowering Young People:**
  - Our programmes help young people build confidence, self-belief, and positivity, supporting their first steps toward positive change and transformation.
- Nursery Mentoring Programme:**
  - Enables young people to earn a nationally recognised SCQF Level 4 Qualification in Personal Development ("Self in the Community"/"Self Awareness" Units).
  - The only programme in Scotland combining mentoring and coaching to support nursery, primary, and secondary pupils.
- Growing2gether Community:**
  - A youth-led initiative where young people assess community needs, identify issues, and design/deliver projects to address them.
- Wide Reach Across Scotland:**
  - Active in local authorities from Highland to Moray, Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen City, and Dundee City.

To the right of the teal box are two rounded teal boxes: 'Our Mission' and 'Our Vision'. 'Our Mission' is connected to the teal box by a dashed line. 'Our Vision' is also connected to the teal box by a dashed line. Below these boxes is a photograph of a group of young people standing in a park-like setting with colorful vertical poles.

**Our Mission**  
We give young people facing disadvantage the support they need to thrive, raising aspiration so they can make positive choices in their lives. We build their mental health, educational engagement and life skills, so that they can contribute to their communities.

**Our Vision**  
A world where all young people can realise their unique potential, improve their lives for the long term, and contribute to stronger communities.

And what is key is getting your feedback on what we think we could do to move forward. So just a little bit about our charity, as we start. We are really wanting to believe in a world where all young people can realise their unique potential, to improve their lives for the long term and contribute to stronger communities. And we know where our care experienced community sometimes feel they don't have that sense of belonging in their communities, and that's why we think this programme can really give them an anchor through mentoring a child and being part of their community, because we believe that by facing disadvantage, we can support them in raising their aspirations, helping them with their life choices, their mental health. We asked a young person recently, why are you coming to the Growing2gether nursery mentoring programme and you're not going to school? And the clear answer from this boy was, if I don't turn up to the nursery that child is looking for me and I'm not there. And that says so much about it being a real anchor, real work experience for them, and something to get them out of bed and go and help. So yeah, we're all about building confidence, self-belief and positivity. Something that Diana will speak to is our positive psychology model which talks about how we're not really there to change young people's behaviour. We are there to help support them in changing their own consciousness, because that's what will empower them to make choices in their lives. And so yeah, our mentoring programme, we're going to say a little bit more about the 16-week programme, and more about how it transitions into our youth led and youth social action programmes, and we're currently delivering, or have been, in Highland, Moray, Aberdeenshire, Aberdeen city and Dundee city.



### Care Experienced Nursery Mentoring Pilot programme (example)

- A 'Growing2gether in partnership' pilot programme for Care Experienced young people (18-24 months) for initially 5 or 6 CE young people (S3-S6) in the group (or more)
- Planning from Feb 25- June 25 / Pilot Nursery Mentoring programme could start in Sept 25 - Jan 26 (Programme 1)
- 2nd Nursery mentoring programme Feb 26-June 26 (Programme 2)
- Youth Social Action (YSA) Programme starts during the 2nd cohort or during summer or from August 26 (Programme 3- flexibility)
- The same young people would go through the whole programme with opportunity to invite new participants if there is drop-off / wider interest/ peer support (initial thinking/feedback is 5-6 is a good size for the first pilot)

We'd love to grow even further with our programmes, and to give you an example of what we were thinking based on all of our years of experience of delivering and impacting outcomes, we think, and this is why we really need to check in with you. We don't want to rush this. We think we have something that could be an offer. I've reached out to Highland Council just initially and today is another reason to reach out to all of you. We think there's an opportunity to combine two cohorts, so a yearlong programme for care experienced young people. So, it's a longer, more in depth, deeper experience for them to mentor a child in nursery or primary one and then move into a community programme. This is just an example. It can happen whenever, and it will take as long as it needs to take. And I think co-design with young people themselves is probably one of the most important key aspects to this as well. So, this is an example where we could start planning it between now and September and start a programme in September. But again, it might take longer. Two cohorts could be a really good way to embed their experience and then they pivot and reframe into their wider community through a youth social action project, which I'll say more of. So, I thought a really nice way is just share a little video that we share in our recruitment sessions with people, with the young people.

### Video:

Various young people being interviewed.

"Hi, I'll be asking the questions, what is the full normal day?"

"Walk in, sign into the office and walk through to the nursery room, get let in, go find your buddy, maybe talk to the staff and have fun, play games with him, and you may be read a book."

(A mentor reading to their mentee) "Terribly big, terribly bad. Levi. Come down the boy."

"We usually go outside with them. We usually play cops and robbers."

"Storytelling, musical statues and football, What's the time Mr Wolf?"

(Narrator) "Why choose to join Growing2gether? Time in the nursery is work experience. The time you spend is recorded as work experience, just like any other workplace, you have the added bonus of it being a fun one. 16-week programme. The programme takes place once a week for 16 weeks. Earn, SCQF level four qualifications. It's your choice if you want to work for the qualifications. Personal development - self-awareness. Personal development - self in the community. Have fun! You will work with kids who need strong role models, kids who can't wait to see you every week. It's your chance to be a young one's hero."

"You come out of the nursery, go back to whatever room you were in, and then do a bit of paperwork, say how the day was, do a diary and, like, get a snack, and then play games. We're like a big family. We definitely got closer as the group went on."

"I'd recommend Growing2gether for anybody who's wanting more confidence or more work experience."

"I think Growing2gether has made me really build up confidence, and it's a really good programme. It helped me speak out in front of others and just talk to people that I wouldn't normally talk with."

"Really good programme. I think people should sign up for it."

"Growing2gether is a really good programme. It's helped me with my confidence, my social skills, and it's gave me a good amount of work experience for me in the future. And it's also really good working with the group, working with our mentors and working with the young people as well."

## Gavin Morgan

So yes, I thought this would be a lovely moment to pass over to you, Diana, to just introduce a little bit about our history, and then also talk a little bit about positive psychology.

## Diana Whitmore

There's lots I could say. We've been around longer than we've been in Scotland. The early days of Growing2gether started in the United States with a woman called Laura Huxley. Laura was the wife and the widow of the British writer Aldous Huxley, and Aldous and Laura spent their entire time together exploring what they called the possible human. Today we'd call that human potential, but that word wasn't so big in those days. Laura was a visionary, and her vision was

put two sets of vulnerable children together, and you'll get a positive outcome. Counter-intuitive as it may sound, we find that she was right.



## Our History

- The early days ....
- Growing2gether : Education Scotland
- 2016 Pilot Programmes in Highland
- 2017 to 2024 we have been delivering our Nursery Mentoring programme in Highland, Moray, Aberdeen, Dundee.
- We believe our early intervention programmes could benefit care experienced young people in improving mental, health, educational attainment, behaviour and their aspirations for the future- We want to hear what you think?



It actually works. So Growing2gether started out as "Children Our Ultimate Investment" in the United States and I, out of my love and respect for Laura, brought the programme to the United Kingdom, starting in England, and by 2016 we piloted our first programme in the highlands in four schools. And as Gavin said, so far today, we've worked with about two and a half thousand children and young people. And you know, it was said that we need your advice. I really want to stress that, that we know that there's no silver bullet. And together, we would like to explore with you - would this programme be useful for care experienced people? And we really want to hear what you think.





## Our Model: Positive Psychology

There is increasing evidence that interventions based on positive psychology enhance wellbeing which has been 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*, *Developing Scotland's Young Work Force*, Christie Commission report ([2011](#)) and the National Youth Work strategy ([2014](#))

Growing2gether highly values these initiative and aims to contribute to them. Growing2gether is underpinned by positive and transpersonal psychology, which provide a holistic psychological approach and focuses 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 well-being 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). 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.

So how do we work? Our model and our whole programme are underpinned by something called Positive Psychology. It's okay if you haven't heard about that. Many people haven't heard about positive psychology, but it was a breakthrough in the world of psychology that said, let's approach human beings, let's approach young people, let's approach disengaged young people from a positive perspective, by looking at what's right for that young person, what are their inherent character traits, what's the potential that we can see in young people? And it's an evidence based positive psychology that actually shows that if you see the best in young people, you'll get the best back. If you believe in young people and have high expectations of them, you'll get that back from them. And a lot of research has been done on this, which I won't talk about, but we know that giving young people an experience of their potential - and I really stress the experience there - it's not okay to say, Oh, you have so much potential, but if you can give young people an experience of their potential, an experience of who they could become, which is what we seek to do in the in the nursery mentoring programme, and alongside that, if you also provide those young people with the life skills that they need in order to actualise that potential, then you've got something that is transformative, rather than transactional, and our young people have demonstrated to us that providing them with this positive experience in the nursery mentoring programme - and it's always been amazing and awesome to me that our young people, many of whom have never had a positive role model in their lives, how do they rise to the opportunity to be a positive role model for a small, four to five year old child who needs additional support? And I'm so happy to share with you that the outcomes, the mentoring that the young people do in the nursery, is unbelievably positive. We've looked at the impact they have on the small children they mentor, and they do an amazing job. And here comes this word potential, that already in the young person, there's something that knows in them, that knows how to mentor and

support another human being. And in that process, what I observe, what we see, is that the young people themselves are served by serving a small child and mentoring a small child. They too are healed in a very positive way. And I'll come to the evidence later. There's a lot more I could say, but I won't go into that now.



## Our programme(s)

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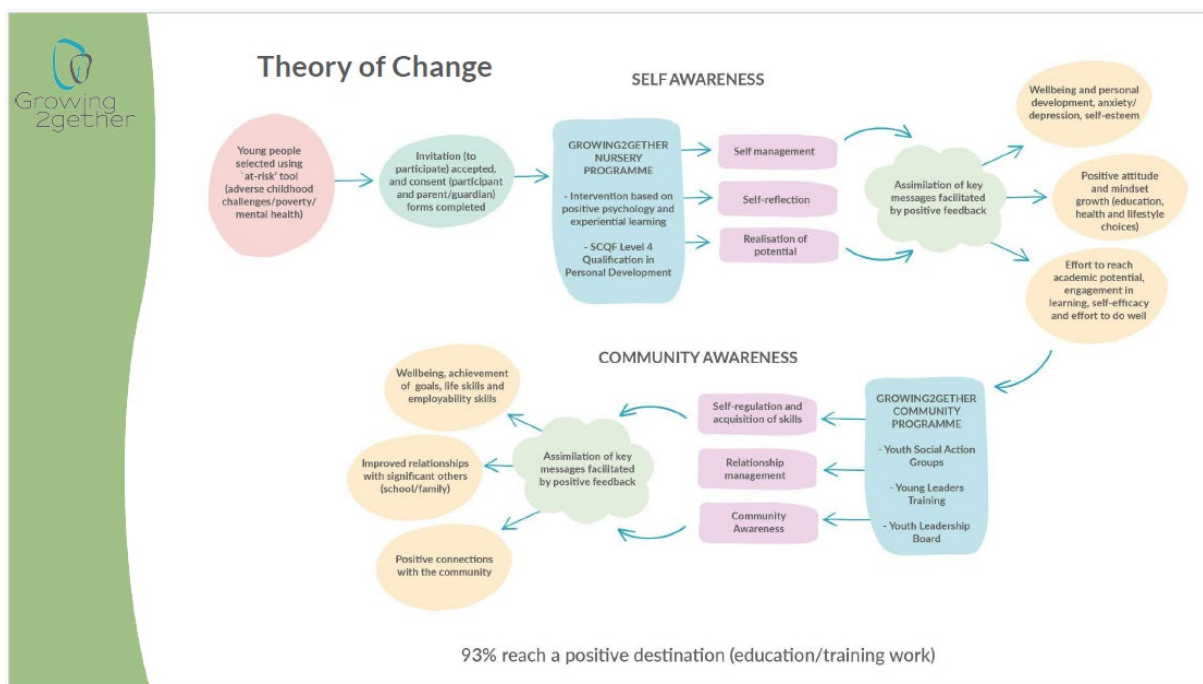
- **Nursery mentoring programme / Community programme** (key elements)
- Eligibility criteria / risk tool
- Curriculum overview ([link](#))
- SCQF accreditation (UHI)
- Pre and post evaluation with teachers/ young people

### Gavin Morgan

As Diana was saying, it's also as an interlude into segueing back into this. Diana and I are both just back from Aberdeen. Yesterday, we just finished our seventh day of training to adult professionals who work with children and young people. We've taken our positive psychology or transpersonal psychology modules that we train our facilitators in, and we've made it bespoke for adults. So, with UK Shared Prosperity funding and Aberdeen City Council, we've had an amazing group of people from third sector, the CLD youth team, education, psychology, Barnardo's, lots of different third sector organizations who've gone through this. And one of the things they thought they were coming to was they were going to receive lots of tools and resources external to them to help them. And what they realised through the programme, this was an experiential looking inside yourself, because we ask our facilitators, who get this training as well, to really step into their role as a human being, seeing the best potential in the young people and set aside unconscious bias and always hold to bifocal vision of no matter what is bubbling away on the surface, there's a deeper need, and there's the higher potential of their magnificence that's emerging. So, it's really, really embedded our whole container, the container for the programmes, is around that positive psychology, and that's what makes one element of it so unique to what we're doing. So, you've heard a little bit about our nursery mentoring programme, and we'll say a bit more about our community programmes. Some of the key elements is that in our traditional model or programmes - and this might change

as we sort of look into how we develop this for our care experience community, we traditionally ask the Guidance team, also the Youth Work team, whatever the best collaboration is, but generally it's the Guidance team who will use our risk tool. It's an eligibility form and we're looking for three ticks to ensure that we're reaching the right, most deserving young people. And it's everything from care experience, edges of care, adverse childhood experiences, you know, school lunches, PEF Funding (Pupil Equity Funding) socially withdrawn, social, emotional, behavioural needs, etc, etc. Really, just making sure that the school have identified young people that they think would really benefit from this experience. Our curriculum overview - I'll run through just a really brief example. You'll have got a sense from the video of what happens. They come to a recruitment session. They take their consent forms and information home. If they want to join, it has to be their choice. They'll come back. They'll start induction session one in the secondary school, which might be different from this care experience pilot, for example, it could be in a care experience hub in the local community. It could be young people coming from different schools, and that's all okay, but in our current model, they will get an induction session teaching them about: get down to the level of the child, so you're making eye contact, talking about risk and risk assessments and safeguarding and protocols. And they'll go for a visit within the nursery, just to meet the head teacher in the nursery, or primary one, and to hear about their school ethos and briefly see the children from a distance, just so they get a sense of environment. Because what's crucial to this programme is from session two, it's one day a week, 16-week programme of three and a half hours a day, so roughly half a day, of which one and a half hours is their actual mentoring. From session two they're leaving the secondary school and going to the nursery or primary. They are staying in a room in the nursery. They're spending their whole day there. They're away from what can sometimes be a tricky environment for them, their own school. Some of them are socially withdrawn. They're maybe not engaging in full time curriculum, etc. But being in the nursery, they're feeling that they're actually taking on that support assistant role, that mentor. They have to step up into their role. What we do is they'll arrive at the nursery, we'll do a check in, they'll see how they feel in the day. We'll then move into a session one. Our curriculum covers risky behaviour, aspirations, thinking about what's working in their lives, what's not, it's developed over time, because in the first few weeks, they are nervous, they are not trusting themselves, each other and the programme and through the journey that unfolds, they form a real bond with each other. A quick example is recently we heard from a girl on the course who said she felt safe enough to tell the group that she was about to move into care, and she was really worried. Where she could have dropped out of school and lots of other things. Her team in the going together programme rallied around her to say, how can we support you? You know that the sharing that she gave was supported, and actually the programme for her in Growing2gether was an anchor to stay in the programme, even though other elements of her life were really disruptive at that time. So, there's different elements of the curriculum. They'll do a session

one, and then they go into the nursery. One thing we do do is we'll hold someone back if for any reason, they're just not quite ready. On very rare occasions, they will actually go back to school because they're not ready to go in. But generally, with a small chat and a little bit of support, the whole team will go down. It's again, generally, for eight young people in a cohort with two trained facilitators. The good thing about the nursery and the primary school staff is they love the fact that we're bringing our facilitators with eight young people, we can split into two groups of four for different classrooms, for example. But the team, the school team, really benefits from our facilitators supporting young people. And we asked the team in school, it's their call- tell us how this will work best. They might buddy them up, one to one with the child. There might be a little bit of group activity, one of the beautiful things, if you ever get a chance to visit, is seeing how the young children gravitate towards the teenagers holding their hands, asking them for help. As we lead into the end of the programme, we pivot and we reframe the conversation, and we say, Hey, would you like to get a qualification? All of the writings, the reflections, the photographs the drawings you've taken, you can create that into a portfolio and receive your personal development level 4 qualification in the first two modules. Generally, they'll all want to do it. Occasionally, there's good reason for them not to, but of those that do, 98-100% will pass and receive that qualification. And we also do lots of pre and post evaluation with teachers, with young people, with parents and carers as well. Though sometimes it's harder to get the feedback from parents and carers, but it is a resounding success. We've heard from parents where the interactions they're seeing with their son or daughter in the home environment, with their siblings, with other young people, has really changed because of their experience.



So, here's an element of our theory of change. So, I've spoken about how we use an at-risk tool. We'll invite them to join the programme. It's an intervention based on positive psychology where they can get a qualification at the end. Some of the key indicators or outcomes is that self-management, that self-reflection and the realisation of the potential they have within them. They have this inside of them already, and this is an example of an anchor to their life, with the mentoring of a child to help them realise how wonderful they are and how they can do so much more. And from that assimilation of that experience, we're seeing benefits in terms of the impact and improvement on wellbeing, personal development, you know, mental health, positive attitudes, growth mindsets. We're seeing healthy lifestyle choices, that engagement back in academic aspirations. And then the opportunity for them - because the second programme, or community programme, was born from young people saying, we want to do more. What else can we do? And they helped create a Youth Social Action project where they will engage with the community and complete a project that benefits the community. So that sort of self-regulation, that learning skills, the relational dynamic between them as a team and the wider community of adults, and that whole community awareness helps them to assimilate that into outcomes that include you know, life skills, improved goals, employability - benefits, in terms of their significant relationships with others, and that positive connection with community, that sense of belonging that we often find feels so lacking in so many young people, and that perception of the community looking in and being proud of young people, which we know is so important.

So, there's a little statistic: 93% of our young people through Highland Council's positive destination tracker reach a positive destination.



## Nursery Mentoring programme

- An early intervention programme that works closely with secondary schools in Scotland to address the needs of young people's social and emotional development.
- Disengaged young people (13 to 15 years), are offered the opportunity to mentor small children in a nursery setting, providing them with volunteering/work experience.
- Whilst supporting the learning of a small child, the young people realise that they have a valuable contribution to make to their community. By choosing to commit to the programme they have the opportunity of developing self-belief, self-management and confidence.
- Throughout the programme, they also can earn a SCQF level 4 Personal Development units: Self in Community and Self Awareness.

So yes, I've explained a little bit about our nursery mentoring programme and some more of our impact.



## Our Impact, Outcomes & Evidence

### Nursery mentoring programme

#### Impact

Significant impact on mental health, growth of mindset and self-esteem, as well as engagement with education

#### Outcomes (Measured using teacher's assessments)

Significant improvement in, engagement and interest in learning, (37%), grades they are capable of achieving, (42%), effort to reach their potential, (43%), effort to do well (62%), likelihood of achieving the grades they need to further their education, (21%), and self-efficacy, (44%).

#### Outcomes (Measured using pupil's assessments)

Significant improvement (18%) in young people's mental health, measured by RCADS ( $t = 6.814$  (109),  $p < 0.01$ ), significant improvement (9%) in self-esteem, measured by Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale ( $t = -4.547$  (206),  $p < 0.01$ ) and significant improvement of 18% in Growth of Mindset ( $t = -7.137$  (186),  $p < 0.01$ )

#### Evidence

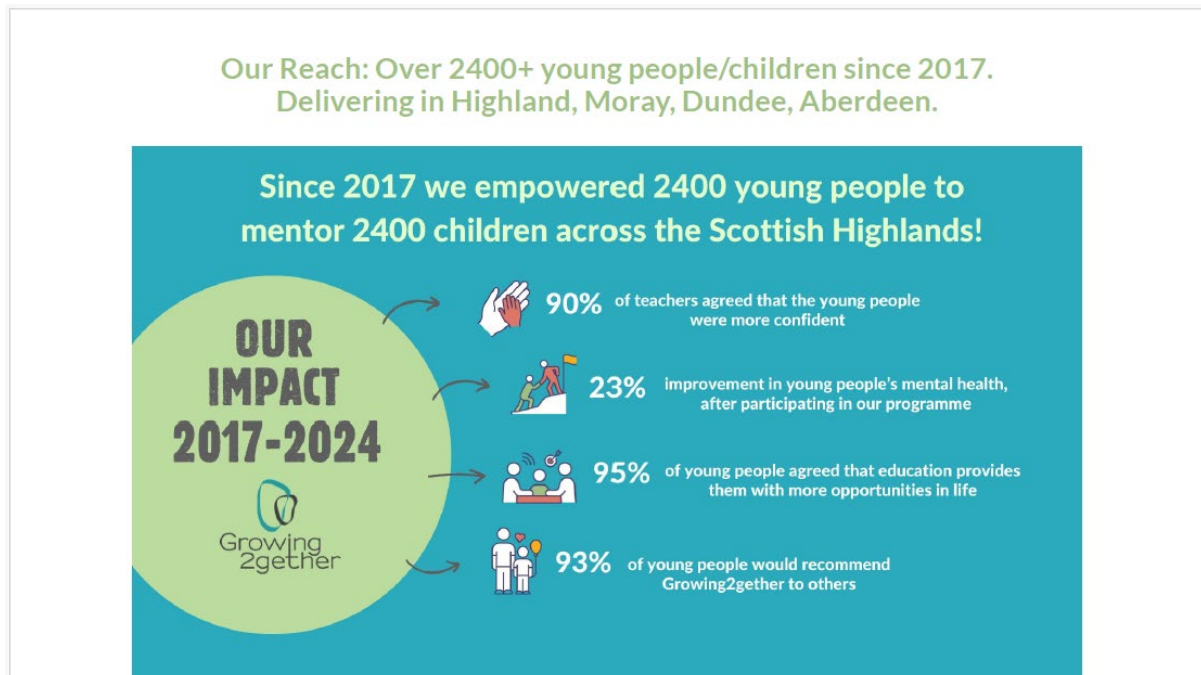
2017-2023 report ([link](#)) 'Exploring the Efficacy of Growing2gether on Mental Health, Education and Behavioural Outcomes', which was peer reviewed by Highland Councils Educational Psychology team.

2023-2024 [Report](#) / school letters of support ([1, 2, 3](#))

We have a health research psychologist. We really make sure we're a research-based charity. We need to know if this is working or what we can do to change things. So, we're seeing great success and outcomes, both from the teachers, both from the young people. As Diana said, we piloted in 2016 in Highland, and then we created a report 2017 to 2023 that Bernadette Cairns, the principal educational psychologist (at Highland Council), her team peer reviewed it. We shared it with Education Scotland, CLD Standards Council, with Michael and

CELCIS and others. Yeah, loads of research we can show around that. Diana, do you want to say a wee bit about our outcomes here?

Diana Whitmore



I think you've covered them. I just want to add that I always get a little bit uncomfortable when we talk about Growing2gether, because it sounds like, 'Oh, this is such an easy process'. And I want to say it's not an easy process. The journey that our young people take from coming, starting the programme to finishing, is a very long, hard journey, and the mentoring isn't nice and sweet in the very beginning, it takes time for the young person to build relationship. And that learning to build relationship is one of the key parts of the programme. Even when it doesn't work, you stay with it, and we work through this. So, I just wanted to be a little more realistic and not sound too idealistic or overly positive. So, what Gavin talked about - Yeah, teachers, 90% of the teachers give us positive feedback and improvement in mental health, We use the RCADS (Revised Children's Anxiety and Depression Scale) pre and post testing, which has to do with young people's levels of anxiety and mental health. We use the Rosenberg self-esteem measure, and we also measure a change in mindset, based on the work of Carol Dweck, because changing from "I can't" to "I can or I can't yet do something" is a huge thing for Young people to make that shift in their mindset to a growth orientated mindset. 95% say, yeah, we know that it's important to stay in school, maybe not for the academics, but for the life experience and our philosophy with the young people is, what do you want to get out of your life? What life do you want to create, and what do you need to develop in yourself and receive in order to get to where you want to go? And that's the point around re-engaging with education, where the penny drops, and young people go, 'Oh, maybe it's not such a bad idea that I stay in school', and that's just joyful for us anyway. And a high percentage would recommend to

other young people that they come on our programme. So that's the overview. There's a lot more we could say, but I'll stop there.

## Sustainability: Upskilling Schools and Staff

- We train a school staff member, e.g. Pupil Support Assistant/Guidance staff and / or a youth worker to deliver the programme, building skills which benefit children & young people.
- Once the school is 'independent', Growing2gether continues to provide quality assurance, outcome evaluation and supervision

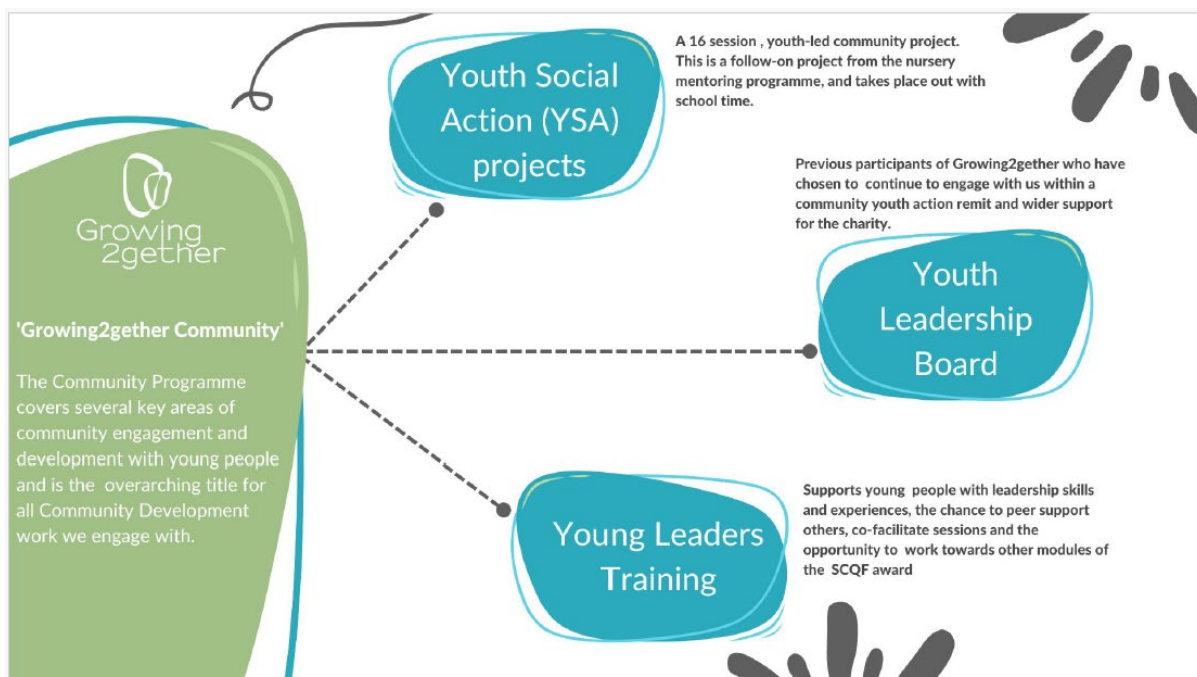
*"The training helped me to develop my active listening skills and allowed me to really 'be' with the young person in that moment. Valuing and listening to the young person allows them to grow and flourish. It is a privilege to see their confidence grow week by week."*

School Facilitator (trained by Growing2gether)

Growing2gether Lead Facilitator Marit Beije (right) and trainee facilitator and youth worker at Elgin Academy, Derri Chamberlin (left).



Okay, so for sustainability, we train in this positive psychology approach, we train guidance, staff members, pupil support assistants, sometimes even some of the teachers are interested in training, and we train them to deliver the programme so that the school is independent with the programme. However, being slightly control freaks ourselves. If a school is independent, they still have to stay in a quality assurance relationship with us and an outcome evaluation relationship with us so we can ensure that we maintain the efficacy of the programme.



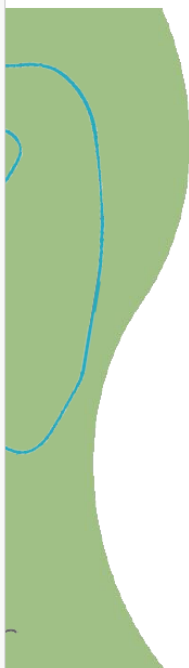


## Gavin Morgan

So yes, and actually that's a really good point around that. We've heard feedback from schools, where actually someone might not stay on the whole programme, and they might have come off it early, but actually it still had a huge impact on them. So, they might have found it a really challenging programme for them, but yet it still helped them in a positive destination or next steps. So, we overview our community programme that leads on from our nursery programme. It is also 16 sessions long, usually sort of around about a term, three to four months, and we're asking them to engage with our community, but there's also opportunities to be part of our youth leadership board or train as young leaders to then peer support the new young people coming through the programme as well. So yeah, and our youth participation, actually, we changed the name to youth leadership to be the third leadership group in our charity alongside SMT and the board, because we really want them to have a genuine say in the direction of our charity.



But a quick overview is just that the youth social action, they get a budget. We give them some money. We say, engage, form your team, engage with your community, create a consultation, a focus group, a survey, find out what the community needs, and decide yourselves with the amount of budget, you've got your own skills, your time, what you think you can do. Find a mentor in the community to undertake that project, deliver it, showcase it, celebrate it. Learn from the impact and the wider learning as well. So, there's something really aspirational, celebratory about them engaging with their wider community.



In total, **210** young people from **Craigie High School** were asked to complete an anonymous questionnaire designed to help provide a better understanding of how Growing2gether can improve their programme, in order to make it more relevant and appealing for young people. Participants were asked to rate how important a series of issues were. Each question is scored on a 5-point scale (1=Very important, 2=Important, 3=Moderately important, 4=Slightly Important, 5=Not Important). The percentage of positive responses is achieved by summing the number of the 'Very Important' and 'Important' responses to each question and then expressing them as a percentage of the overall number of responses.

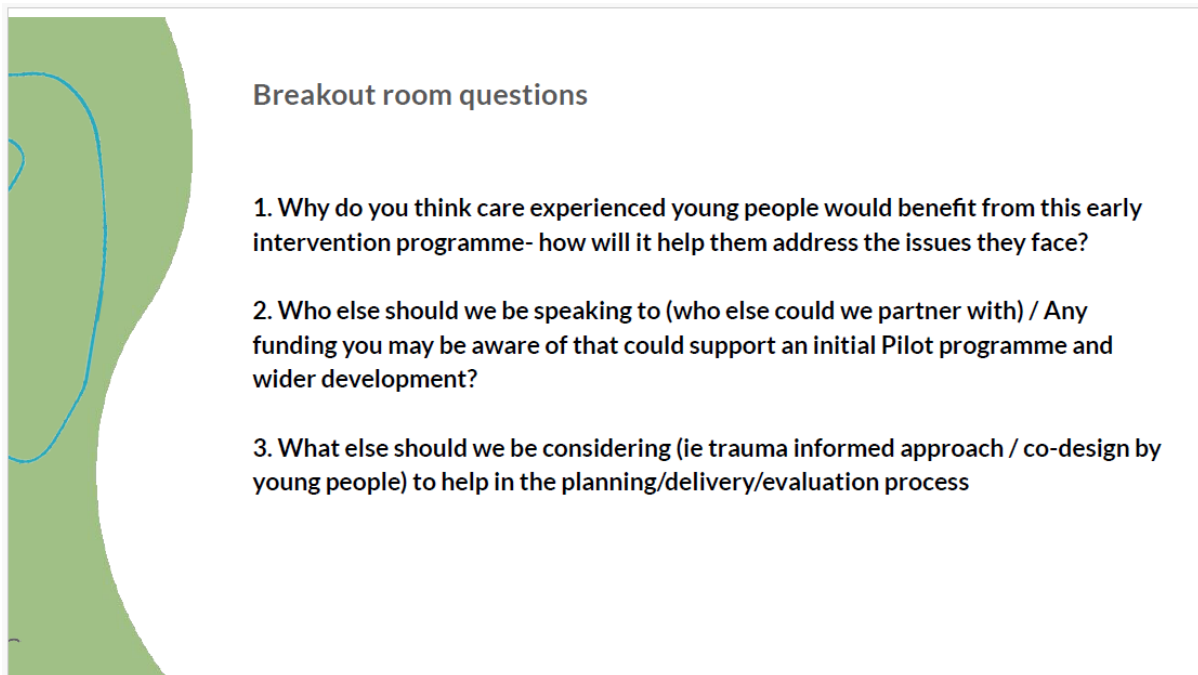
- **98%** agreed that "mental health" was either very important or important.
- **81%** agreed that "school and study problems" was either very important or important.
- **85%** agreed that "communication and relationships" was either very important or important.
- **84%** agreed that "coping with stress" was either very important or important.
- **84%** agreed that "self-esteem" was either very important or important.
- **89%** agreed that "bullying" was either very important or important.
- **81%** agreed that "connecting with others" was either very important or important.
- **76%** agreed that "sexual health" was either very important or important.
- **98%** agreed that "family problems" was either very important or important.
- **85%** agreed that "drug awareness" was either very important or important.
- **84%** agreed that "dealing with emotions" was either very important or important.

[Link](#)

To illustrate the importance of our engaging with young people: we were in Craigie High School in Dundee, and spoke to 210 young people, gave a list of surveys, told them about the programme, and then asked them what they thought about it and also what were important to them, because it's the main way where we will engage with young people, to feel and hear from them and put that into our reports to know that we're really speaking to the young people, hearing from and responding to them.

So, I want to give a wee bit of context. Diana, myself and the team have been to a number of The Promise events over the last two years. And we've, really realised, you know, the call is to ask everyone to find a way to help Scotland keep its Promise to the care experienced young people, to children and young people. And through that process, we've recognised, and I've spoken to Kellie Cunningham within the Virtual School Headteacher Network to see if there's maybe an opportunity to develop a bespoke programme, potentially two cohorts, so it's a full year, and then also progress into that community project. I met with Michael quite early on from CELCIS, and it's just a huge thank you to Michael and the team for allowing us this space to engage with you all. I've spoken to Education Scotland, spoken to the CLD Standards Council. I've linked in briefly with Tom (Boyd, The Promise Team). I'm really keen to speak to more of The Promise team, and I've just initially reached out to Carmel, the Board Chair of Who Cares? Scotland. And I'll speak to some of the team, because I think there's an element of asking young people themselves what they think, so that we can get this right. We're not going to rush anything. We want to just get this right. But the key thing being, we want to hear from you guys, if you think this could benefit our care experience community, we know there's improved mental health outcomes. They're improving their attendance, their participation. They're co-creating that sense of belonging in their community. Their community is turning

and recognising and valuing them as well, and that's something that's often so missing from it, and alongside skills and accreditation and employability and aspirations, it leads towards positive outcomes.



**Breakout room questions**

1. Why do you think care experienced young people would benefit from this early intervention programme- how will it help them address the issues they face?
2. Who else should we be speaking to (who else could we partner with) / Any funding you may be aware of that could support an initial Pilot programme and wider development?
3. What else should we be considering (ie trauma informed approach / co-design by young people) to help in the planning/delivery/evaluation process

So, some of the questions we're really thinking about as we come to the close of this presentation and open up for some questions before going into the breakout rooms, is, who else should we speak to in the sector? Are there people that we should really think about talking to and working this out? If there's the opportunity to pilot this, I'm going to follow up with Kellie and Highland council to see if this is something we can start. We'd love to start it somewhere, learn from it, develop it, and then look to see, is there a way we could roll this out more broadly across other local authorities. I think a key element is just making sure we know where to go for match funding for the support from trusts and grants and etc, or local businesses and to help us. But key is also just speaking to you all to make sure we get this right within our aspiration of taking the next step. So before jumping in and thinking we know it all, it's really about saying we've got something we think can work. We'd really love to speak with you. So, in a moment, we'll have some questions. I'm just going to hand over to Michael in a second, but we sort of created three questions of, why do you think care experienced young people would benefit from this early intervention? How might it help them address the issues they face? We really want to hear from you with that, who else should we be speaking to? Who else could we partner with? Any funding you think we should be looking at that could help us in developing an initial pilot programme and then that wider development or roll out. And really key is also, what else? What are our blind spots? What should we be considering? Could it be a trauma informed approach, definitely embedding a co-design, co-creation with young people in helping them create something for themselves that can benefit others as well.



Scottish Youth Mentoring Children

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So, Wow, we got there, and I've got a short video just to share from one of our young people, and then I'll hand over to Michael. Thank you, everyone.

## Video

A young person being interviewed: "Before the Growing2gether programme, I really struggled with my attitude and my behaviour at school. I really struggled going to my classes and just keeping a positive attitude. But after the programme, it's kind of changed my outlook a little bit. It's made me feel more confident in myself, which has really improved my attitude. And I started going to school a lot more, and I'm really enjoying school now. So I think Growing2gether has really helped me with that."

"So what was it about being around young children, do you think that made a difference?"

"I think it was just seeing the way they learn and the fact that you can be a part of that and then applying that to school. Now the teachers there, they just want to help. So, yeah."

"So, anything else you want to say about Growing2gether?"

"I really enjoyed the chance that I got to be closer with new people that I hadn't met before in school. And I feel like we grew really close as a group as well, which was really nice. I see them in the corridors now and it's, 'Oh, hey', I didn't know who they were before. It's really nice. Yeah, great."

"So, would you recommend Growing2gether to other people?"

"Yeah, definitely. It doesn't matter if you're not struggling at school or if you are struggling at school, it's just a really nice thing to do and be part of that. It's really nice."

Video ends.

## Gavin Morgan

Thank you so much everyone. Back to you, Michael.

## Michael Bettencourt

Thank you very much Diana and Gavin, that was such a lovely overview of your programme. I loved the way that you put it together. The pupil voice, it's really good to hear directly from young people. I liked Diana's observation that there's no silver bullet, and it's not necessarily an easy programme. It's hard. There's work to be done there. They do an amazing job. I've just picked out a quote there, "the kids do an amazing job". And also, I just wanted to reflect, if you see the best in people, you'll get the best back. So those are just some of my reflections. We've got some time for questions that people can put directly to Gavin and Diana. It doesn't even have to be questions. It could just be a reflection, a thought. But it's over to our participants, our forum for any questions for Gavin and Diana.

Claire, I'd welcome your thoughts or question.

Thank you. I don't necessarily have a question, but I did want to comment. I felt really emotional several times throughout your presentation, thinking of the impact that this has on children. And as someone who works with young people and families and who also, through my own lived experience, of the power of mentoring and coaching and personal development upon my abilities, confidence, self-esteem, things like that. It's life changing. And I'm so pleased to see this programme being run out. And I just felt the need to comment on that. So, thank you so much. I think this is absolutely wonderful.

## Gavin Morgan

Claire, thank you. Yeah. I think it's something we really want to share with others. It shouldn't just be ourselves. It's about, how do we collaborate together? And I think when Diana mentioned the there's no silver bullet, it's also recognition that this is about us all getting around. It's the holistic Whole Family Well Being approach of recognising where we fit and where we can support it. One of the beautiful things we love doing is buddying and collaborating with youth work teams, because we recognise that that relationship that's formed, they take them on a wider journey into their community, way beyond the early intervention programmes of Growing2gether. And it's recognising the part we can play, but the part that we all can play as well. So, Claire, thank you.

## Michael Bettencourt

Thank you very much Claire and for being the first person to speak. Would you like to say something, Linda?

## Linda Peat

Thank you, Michael, and a huge thank you Gavin and Diana for that presentation. I think Claire said it really eloquently. I think just about how powerful that was. And I also have to confess that mentoring is really close to my heart. That's where I started my career longer ago than I would like to admit, if I'm honest, but I do understand just the transformative power of it. So it's really great to hear about the work that's being done, but something that I'd be really interested in hearing from you both about is an issue that I often, and I think probably a lot of people in the room, can come up against when we are looking at trying to begin new initiatives, particularly because of the unwarranted stigma that can exist when working with care experienced young people, and that's around risk. I think I know my own personal experience quite often when you're trying to start new initiatives, particularly in schools or early learning and child care settings, is that you come up against almost a sort of a 'computer says no' attitude about it being too risky. But that's obviously something that you've been able to overcome. So, I'd just be interested in your thoughts about how you've done that, and what your key messages would be to other people that are maybe concerned about that area.

## Gavin Morgan

Yeah, so Linda, thank you. I'll pass over to Diane in a second. I think that's a really, really important comment, because it's about breaking down some of the stigma and stereotypes and allowing young people who often don't get that opportunity or that chance, to be in amongst an environment like early years. You know, it's an area that has to be really you know, you talk about risk and safeguarding and child protection. So, one of the beautiful things about the programme is we are in the schools. We're in the school settings. We're working to whatever the nursery or the primary and the secondary schools feel is the most appropriate. We're always working to the Child Protection Committee of the local authority and their rules and processes to make sure we get it right, and ensuring we've got a key contact that's a really strong, good relationship with the guidance team in the secondary school and in the nursery as well. I think there's something important about that. I'm glad you said this, because it should be upfront and named as part of this pilot programme so that we name it a positive way, and we show how we're doing this, but the risk assessments of working with care experienced young people and recognising it. I was speaking in Aberdeen yesterday, where we also need to recognise from a trauma informed perspective. So, one example could be, 'oh, this could be a great programme, because it could help'. This is the uninformed version. It could help a young person whose care experience and experiencing sibling separation; to have a positive experience in the nursery with other children of young age - yet at the

same time, we also need to have that trauma informed support from the local team to really recognise that could open up something or trigger them in a way. So, there's a whole support and platform level that we need to really think about that would help us to identify which young people would be ready for this type of approach. I think when I said it's usually eight young people that we'll take on in a cohort, initial conversations with some people have been like that might need to be less because actually the relational dynamics between them with their peers, with the other teenagers might be too much of those eight of them together, so it might be a smaller group. And lastly, before I hand over to Diana, I think the key element here is we would be building upon existing relationships with the nursery, rather than a new one. To go in fresh in a new one without that relationship, that trust built, that evidence. So, by going to a nursery that we're already in, they trust the process, and I think they'll be more open to recognising that those young people who are care experience are the most deserving young people for this type of opportunity. Diana, anything to add?

### Diana Whitmore

I think what's really important in answer to your question is how we train our facilitators, because they're trained to be a calm, reassuring presence in the nursery. And you know, the four schools we piloted in 2016, we are still there in those schools. Because we reassure the nursery that, and we demonstrate this, that the facilitators are carefully observing our teens at all times. They're observing them in terms of safety and security. The young people are trained that they're never alone with the child. If a child, small child, falls down or something, they immediately go to the one of the nursery staff so it's okay. Yet many of the young people, especially the care experienced ones we've worked with, didn't have very good childhoods. And there's some kind of process that happens in the mentoring and being in the nursery. And as I said earlier, it's not easy. It doesn't happen immediately, but young people learn to play again, and their engagement is so wholehearted with the small child that they're mentoring, and nurseries may be a little bit 'Ooh, they're at risk. Kids. Ooh, is this going to be okay?' But what they actually experience very soon, not in the beginning, maybe it takes a few weeks, is, gosh, these young people are helping. You know, they're mentoring primary one kids as well, and helping with the maths and the reading. And the schools, the nurseries and primaries, eventually, and quite quickly, see this as a help rather than a hindrance. Four extra pairs of hands in the classroom, so to speak. So yeah, I hope that answers your question. I see another hand up.

### Michael Bettencourt

Just before I go over to Alex. There's a comment in the chat that I'd like to ask you: if anyone was interested in developing the programme or want to grow it. What's, the next best step Gavin or Diana?

## Gavin Morgan

That sings to our hearts and our minds. We are really keen. We know this works from our perspective. We need to share that with the sector. We need to share that more broadly. We are currently delivering in, as I said, Aberdeen City, have been in Aberdeenshire, Dundee City, Moray Council, and Highland where we started. And there's definitely an opportunity for us as we gain more funding and we work at collaboration and partnerships to look at other local authorities where we could do this, maybe embedding our regular programme with mixed groups of young people as we also develop something that could be bespoke for care experience. So yeah, please do get in touch with us, because we'd really love to explore that more widely. Thank you, Michael.

## Michael Bettencourt

That's okay. I'm assuming you're going to be sharing contact details, and you're happy for people to reach out.

## Diana Whitmore

Absolutely. And also, we can arrange, not in the beginning of a programme, but once we have built trust with the young people, we can arrange you to come and see a programme which makes the young people feel actually really important. It's great. And in terms of, I see a comment from Michael on young men, and we were funded by Movember, a men's health charity, the moustache charity, to develop our work with young men. And so, we've gone from 18% young, young lads to 46% boys on our programme. And the nurseries and primary schools tell us we want more boys. The boys do a wonderful job, better than the girls, many of the nurseries say, and I think it's because so many children and early years have single parent families, so having this male energy and the activities of young men is really positive for both parties.

## Michael Bettencourt

Thanks, Diana, that was a comment from Fiona from The Promise. I think she's had to leave, but it was really helpful to get some feedback, Alex. So sorry to keep you waiting.

## Alex McTier

Thank you, Gavin and Diana. I'm part of the wider CELCIS team, so working with Michael and others and I too, was going to comment. I was struck by the number of young men involved in young guys. I think that's terrific. But my question is, and I am more of a numbers person, so bear with me. If you worked with 2,400 young people already, I would imagine a good proportion of those may have been care experienced. And so, I'm just trying to understand what's different about the pilot you're proposing. I understand the length - rolling maybe two over 12-18, months. And also, you said the cohort size may be smaller, but I'm just trying to see what would be different to this? And also, what



is there anything specific you've learned from your work to date with care experienced young people that you have to bring into this?

## Gavin Morgan

Alex, thank you. Yeah. And again, I'll hand over to Diane in a second as well. Yeah. So having conversations with Kellie Cunningham and Highland Council, the virtual school head teacher who supports the Chlachnaharry Hub for Kids and young people, we really recognised - we've learned a lot from our main programmes over here and you're right to name that. But this is why we want to engage with you all to see, does it help to bring together, peer experience, young people together in a programme? So, there's, I don't think it's yes or I think it's yes, and it's both, and it's got to be the appropriateness, but and again, this is where we need to develop our wider thinking. And within the Chlachnaharry Hub, this is a place where they've gone through all the other services, they've gone through school, they've gone through every other service, and they've ended up with Kellie and her team at the Chlachnaharry Hub in Highland, and they're doing their best to support them. And we wonder, is this where there's an opportunity for them, they've created a sense of community through that hub, that location. It's outside of school, for example, but yet it will re-engage them with school as well. So, there's an opportunity there for thinking of the initial setting before they go into the nursery. It could be from school, but it could be actually care experience young people from a number of schools in the local authority coming together in a different way to have that sense of collaboration and relational dynamics that happen with them as teenagers and their shared experience, that lived experience, but bringing that in a way that they can co-design it. So I think one of the things is, where our original programmes we also consulted with teachers, with education Scotland, with young people with parents to create the programme, I think it's about starting from scratch and saying, if we want to take this to the care experience young people, how can they help to be involved in creating it? What do we need to think about that might be slightly different or significantly different, not just in where the venue is for them to then go into nursery, and it's all of the blind spots that we currently have that we really want to think about. Diana, anything to add?

## Diana Whitmore

There's not much more I can say, except, that in my experience, attendance and staying for the whole six miles, so to speak, can be an issue for the population that we're talking about, and our thinking has been well, how can we design the very most comprehensive programme? And for me, that does require maybe a longer time and maybe some one-to-one mentoring, included, as well as the group work.

## Gavin Morgan

And actually, to add to that, sorry Michael, for Alex, and it's the partnership with Kellie's team or with whoever, it's actually that one to one staff relationship from the council with them that we will build into this, as opposed to a school where they're maybe not attending or have partial attendance, I think that's a key element. Does that make sense? Alex,

## Michael Bettencourt

We've got a nod from Alex. I'm going to be a little bit strict and ask that we move on now. Otherwise, you're not going to have time to get some feedback from our participants. If there are any questions there that we haven't answered, we're happy to gather them and put them to you directly. I think we're going to try a Menti poll now, before we go into the breakout rooms.

So, what are your initial thoughts on the programme for care experienced learners? Please don't worry if you can't access Menti, it's not the end of the world. We're just trying it for the first time, but it looks as though it's working. It's just useful to get some quick, hot reflections.

Join at [menti.com](https://menti.com) | use code

Your initial thoughts on the programme for care experienced learners

28 responses



Wow. Thanks for that. Okay, Michelle, could we move on to the next question? Now that we're into a bit of a rhythm, perhaps the questions will come in quicker. Who would you sign post us to as collaborators on a pilot? Is there anybody that you think that you would like to point Gavin and Diana to who they may not have caught?

[There were 16 answers to this question:

Planet Youth, Prince's Trust, Canongate Youth, intandem, Youth Link Scotland, The Promise team, Children's Rights and Participation Officers, Articulate Hub, Who Cares? Scotland, Young woman's project, Children's parliament, Carers Trust, Local Authority Virtual Schools, ADES, Scottish Mentoring Network and DYW co-ordinators in schools/councils.]

## Michael Bettencourt

The great thing about this poll is we'll be able to keep it and hand it over and share it with all participants as well. Thank you so much for that. There's one more question, what else do you think we should take into consideration?



We're getting quite a lot for being trauma informed, the importance of being trauma informed something around the ethics of running care experience groups, the importance of co-design.

Okay, thank you so much for giving that a go. We are getting short for time, so I'm keen for us to get into breakout rooms.

[Breakout discussions]

## Michael Bettencourt

Could I go to one of the groups and see if we can get some feedback? Where can I start?

## Laura Quinn, CELCIS

I'm happy to start, Michael.

Okay, so in our group, we spent quite a bit of time just sort of initially thinking about the benefits and really sort of exploring some of the ideas around working with children who had really struggled with secure attachment, and how that coaching and mentoring model might be really helpful, and a wee bit of reflection on the impact on children's trust and confidence, and this idea of, kind of bringing on the silent or the quiet child. We then spent a bit of time thinking about things that might be helpful for people to have a little bit of clarity around. And some of the things we were thinking about were around definitions and parameters, because we've just had a brief overview of the project, and people were quite keen to get a bit of an idea about, how the different aspects of the model worked, and just a little bit more depth in detail around that, and a little bit of the definition of the mentoring relationship. So, there's obviously mentoring between young person and child, but then Michael was saying that there's a bit of an element where young people are mentored by adults in the programme as well. So, a wee bit of clarity in that people thought would be really helpful. We also reflected on how important and impactful coaching and can be, but that we need to be really careful when we talk about mentoring and what supports it around for young people, and when we think about our care experienced young people, we know that we have to be even more careful around those supports and almost double up some of the supports that are offered to people and maybe sort of extend some of those timescales, because we know that our care experienced young people just need a little bit longer to do some of these things. We had a little bit of a discussion about the elements of the model around employability and mentoring and where the crossover of those is. And then finally, we came back to that idea of trauma and the importance of being trauma informed, not only in relation to the older young people who were involved, but also about any trauma that might be going on in that nursery, and how to sort of manage that for our younger children as well. And so, yeah, just lots of interest. People thought it just had a huge potential and a lot of excitement, but just some things that maybe you know, really helpful in looking at it further.

## Michael Bettencourt

Thank you very much, Laura, so I think there was a theme there about wanting clarity of definitions around the different aspects of the programme. There was an intersectionality around work experience, mentoring and development that people were keen to get more information about. Linda, were you part of one group? Are you feeding back?

## Linda Peat, CELCIS

Yes, of course, and I was in a group with Gavin, so Gavin, please feel free to come in if there's anything that I miss. But I think probably the theme in our group was around connection and collaboration, and we had people sharing some lovely information about events that are happening in Highland for Care Experience Week, and an invite to Growing2gether, to go along, to speak to people about the programme in areas where it's not delivering yet, which was a lovely invite, and the person that contributed actually said something. I wrote it down because it was just a lovely observation that even in little communities, there's lots going on. And I just thought about the community youth groups that go on afterwards. I just thought that was a really nice observation to keep in mind, because I know we often hear that places are too small, or there's not enough going on for things to be worthwhile, and just that observation and reminder that even in small places, there's lots of really good work going on that young people can contribute to or be part of. We also had a really good question from someone who made the observation that young people's attendance can often be really low, and that this programme could be very beneficial for that, and a question around how they could persuade their local authority to get involved if they weren't already, which I think will probably be a question that a lot of people in the room have been thinking about. And Gavin went on about, really just the opportunity to speak to people thinking about how we spread the word about this, about thinking about how funding could be accessed for it so that it's a bit easier for people to be able to deliver. So we had a very brief chat about that, and we also just talked about other organizations that might have done something similar, where they've looked at either focusing very specifically on care experienced children, young people and modifying a programme that already exists specifically for that group, or vice versa, and just links that could potentially be made with those organizations to share learning. But as ever, I'll never do justice to the richness of the discussion, and we ran out of time. But Gavin, is there anything that I've missed in that?

## Gavin Morgan

That was brilliant, Linda. Yes please to the link to the Prince's Trust as well. And I think just huge, huge gratitude for all of the insight and the feedback and reflections and that mentor relationship - there's something really, yeah, more detail for you, and a quick example is how we model that positive psychology with our trained facilitators is modelled to the teenagers, who then model that to the children. And there's some techniques we use, 'see and say', for example, one of the powerful things is when the facilitators sit with the teenagers and say, do you know I observed this. I saw you doing this. And there's something really powerful about them feeling the pride in themselves but also opens up the group to self-regulate that and be able to share positive experiences with the group that helps them really focus on that positive mindset of seeing the good things that happen or bringing out issues so they themselves can talk about it and work through it as well. So, yeah, more to describe about that almost three-way

approach of mentoring and coaching, which happens also because the facilitators are coaching the young people in the group, sometimes in one to one. And I think that would be an even bigger aspect of this programme with a care experience community, and just because SDS are here, Ursula, one of our programme managers said she'd spoken recently in Highlands SDS team too, who'd said that they're seeing young people who are going through the Growing2gether programme are more articulate in their job interview preparation and things. So they're really proud they have something anchored in real life experience as a work experience, CV, experience to help them see something in their interviews that helps them progress on that was really interesting to hear as well.

### Michael Bettencourt

Thank you so much, Gavin, and I think we have another group. Is that your group, Craig?

### Craig McCreadie, CELCIS

That's right. I'll try and keep this focused. It was a really lovely discussion, a huge amount of recognition for the value and the depth and the scope of the work that has been done by the organization in terms of everything related to the research and the evidence base that sits within this and how the practice has been built out from that. One of the opening comments was just a reflection about the relevance and the power of the word identity in this conversation and this can be one of those things where young people can start to describe themselves using words like, I'm helpful. I'm a nice person. And we sort of extrapolated that out to I can make a difference. I can make a contribution. There was some really important reflections around the kids who are not ready yet, the ones who, because we talked to you, talked about the importance of there being a sense of readiness to be able to engage in this and still a sense of curiosity about what additional or alternative offers might look like for those who aren't ready yet, or for those who may have disengaged from education, perhaps at a slightly earlier point and might be missing this opportunity. And a bit of a reflection around the language and notion of co-design in this space, which is really important and excellent with us there, and would the co-design element offer ways into the conversation that isn't about the mentoring relationship that maybe not everybody's seeking yet, but it may be around supporting the marketing or the product creation or whatever it may be, that maybe alternative ways to engage. And just a recognition that it'd be helpful to have some practical stuff in relation to funding, cost implications and stuff like that, but also potentially your inbox may explode today, because, you know, you have been warmly received, and will have piqued a lot of interest, and just the implications for what that looks like for people who are keen to get in quickly, but recognise that you may have, you may have piqued demand today.

## Michael Bettencourt

Thank you so much, Craig.

## Diana Whitmore

I'd like to express my gratitude for your support and giving us this time and an amazing opportunity to talk to colleagues that I'm in awe of actually much of the time. So, thank you so much.

## Michael Bettencourt

Thank you, Diana. That does bring us to the end of today's session. I think we've hit our aim, which was to come with curiosity. Gavin, I think people have come with genuine curiosity. They've got lots of questions. There were questions put in the room that we're going to try and capture, and we'll put it in the notes. I think there's something for me about the connections that are already starting. I think Craig referenced it, people are keen to reach out and ask you questions and begin a process which is just exactly what this forum is about and what we want. And so, it's begun to happen. Our next forum is likely to be in May. We'll send out details closer to the time, all the materials from today, including those questions that I was talking about, the presentation and the note from the breakout groups will be shared with you, and they'll all be available on the web page. Thank you so much to Diana and Gavin for presenting today. Thank you to my CELCIS team, who make me look good, and thank you for your contributions. We'll look forward to seeing you again soon.

Thank you.

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